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Editor's Note

Time haunts. It is, they say, is the fourth dimension of Universe. The zeitgeist of human existence, the denominator of the incidence and categories of being, it interacts with the relative aspects of space and supply thoughts on present, history and prospect. Engaged in the discourses of ephemeral and eternal, static and dynamic and immediate and distant, time weaves the textile of the countable and immeasurable alike. Domains and disciplines like physics, mathematics, anthropology, astronomy, history, politics, religion etc. are intertwined with time references to tackle with the epistemological concerns of authenticity, perspective, beliefs and opinions. The fundamental principles of existence find philosophical and semantic interpretations of time which sometimes pose problematic questions due to the peculiarities of truth(s) proliferated through the discourses on time. Manifested through language and numerals, verbalized through material and metaphysical, the ever pervasive nature of time unravels its immense magnitude for explorations. This made time a vital subject matter for literature and life narratives. Not only does it sustain the possible realms of imaginary, the factual perspective on life is also reinterpreted by means of the connotations that time offers. Ranging from Plato to Foucault, Darwin to Newton, the theorists questioned the coherent and independent nature of time. Time invents reality; it alters, demolishes and rebuilds scenarios. Its stride across humanity, body, power, land, science, centuries and cultures affirms the indispensability of discussions on the confluence and the signatures of time. The Singularities International Conference, anchoring on the theme of Time, jointly organized by Singularities, a Transdisciplinary Biannual Research Journal and Department of English, DGMMES Mampad College provides a platform for dynamic deliberations on the concepts associated with Time in an interdisciplinary approach. This is an extension of the academic culture that the journal set, to make the scholars intellectually engaged, not simply through publishing papers, but by means of the dialogues and interactions the Singularities Conferences initiate. By presenting Singularities Time Conference, Second Issue, we offer a reading platform that voices variant nuances of Time.

P. K. Babu., Ph. D
Chief Editor

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Envisaging Emancipation from the Strait-jacket of Time: Tom Stoppard's Postmodern Theatre

Abstract

'Space', 'time' and 'self' constituted the key coordinates of the hegemonically conceived rational consciousness that was instituted by Enlightenment modernity in Europe after the Renaissance in the sixteenth century. Epistemological frameworks built upon spatially and temporally determined patterns of relationship between the 'self' and the 'other' could be seen to orient all aspects of human identity, perception, and interaction, towards a normatively constructed rational 'order'. Human beings who did not conform to these objectively codified and universally applicable principles of spatial and temporal behaviour were categorized variously as abnormal, inimical or even criminal. Literatures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and of much of the nineteenth century, which claimed to be "Realist", actually worked for the perpetration of these arbitrarily conceived notions of time space and self, through discursively organised narratives.

Space, as a more palpable and consolidated aspect of human perception has been more facile in lending itself to literary representation and critical scrutiny. Realist literature is noted for its portrayal of discursively organized spaces that didactically project a normatively disciplined life, through the deployment of appropriate spectacle, verbal interaction and behavioral patterns. Time and self, on the other hand, the former by virtue of its amorphous fluidity and dynamic dimension, and the latter with its inherent intricacies of an ever-problematic disjunction between the internal and the external, have tended to be more elusive with respect to representation and analysis. Alternate schemes of temporal consciousness and existence have been suggested by writers and artists of the avant-garde movements of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The modernist writers and artists present a radically antithetical stance to the rational organization of time in terms of the movement of the celestial bodies and the mechanical contrivance of the clock in Realist literature. But, in their counter-discursive enthusiasm, they invited censure for proffering an equally arbitrary, rather aesthetically esoteric, representation of time.

In a refreshing deviation from the powerfully orchestrated modes of discourses and counter-discourses, the plays of Tom Stoppard, the Czechoslovakia-born English playwright, evince a postmodern sensibility that playfully takes on the Realist and

Modernist notions of time, through the means of subversion and alterity. The proposed paper titled, “Envisaging Emancipation from the Straightjacket of Time: Tom Stoppard's Postmodern Theatre”, examines how Stoppard's plays undermine the previously established normative principles of time, through a deconstructive engagement with the indeterminacies and inconsistencies inherent in them.

Key Words : Theatre, Space, Time, Timing, Temporality, Self, Representation, Discourse, Enlightenment Modernity, Realism, Modernism, Post Modernism

The depiction of all aspects of social and individual life – consciousness, identity, perception, action, reaction – in literature has to be mediated through the twin coordinates of Time and Space. Space, though more materially consolidated in contrast with the fluid dynamics of Time, poses an equally pertinent problematic in both life and literature by way of the principles and intricacies interpolated into the specificities of human interaction – speech as well as action – in hierarchically organized and categorically institutionalised spaces such as home, room, street, office, society, court, Legislature, and so on. Being more readily palpable and thus more readily lending itself to scrutiny, the spatial dimension of human interaction became subject to critical enquiries quite early in the course of intellectual and aesthetic analysis of literature. Time, on the other hand, does not easily lend itself to critical analysis as it is more or less an evasive, rather amorphous/'submorphous' dimension of human consciousness. Alternate perceptions of time which deviate from the temporal schemes dictated by the celestial bodies and the clock are tardy to come by: even William Wordsworth, the self-professed romantic revolutionary could imaginatively diverge from the clock and the calendar for depicting the inner sense of passage of time only to a minimal extent when he writes in the “Tintern Abbey Lines” about his mental state during the previous five years as “ Five long winters with five long summers”, getting essentially circumscribed into a compulsive representation of his inner turmoil through the extrinsically coordinated sense of seasonal variations on earth.

Time, as represented on the stage since the origin of theatre in England, had been in conformity with a discursively organized temporal framework superimposed on the human consciousness through the subtle use of power. Habits, social and biological actions, professions, relationships, in fact every major as well as minute aspect of conscious human existence, had to be meticulously charted in terms of a mechanical, rather than organic, conception of time as dictated by the hands of the clock. All involuntary and voluntary aspects of individual; and social life -- hunger and diet, work, leisure, even sexuality, came to be determined by the exterior indices of time such as day and night, morning and evening and the mathematical calibration of time on the clock. This occurred in neglect, or rather negation of a different, perhaps more genial, inner sense of time or timing. Realist literature, in vogue from the times of Enlightenment Modernity in Post-Renaissance Europe, as represented by the canonical writers like

Shakespeare and Milton, served to institutionalise the hierarchically ordered temporal codes of life into the human psyche. Tom Stoppard, a true wizard of the postmodern theatre in England, famous for his debut on the stage with a deconstructive bang on the Bard of Avon, is to be credited with enormous success in imaginatively reinstating on the stage a long buried inner consciousness of 'time' from the abyss into which it had been relegated by the human anxiety for social conformity. Stoppard's credentials as a playwright with a strong postmodern sensibility is vouchsafed by, among other epistemological and technical shifts he takes from the longstanding theatrical conventions, a subversion of the physical, philosophical and routine notions that tended to contain 'time' and chronology into an arbitrarily conceived framework of rationality. Nevertheless, Stoppard cannot be considered as a pioneer in this aspect as an antithetical, not subversive, stance with respect to the discursively organized temporal consciousness that determined human behavior since the advent of Enlightenment Modernity in the sixteenth century, can be palpably encountered in the artistic and literary works that came from the avant-garde movements of late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Surrealism, Stream of consciousness, Impressionism, Dadaism, Imagism, all tended to question the settled notions of spatial and temporal existence of man in the universe, but they hoisted themselves upon an equally arbitrary and abstract alternative which hovered on the rebellious methodologies of distortion and destruction. Conceived in an intensely subjective mode, the alternate perceptions of space and time they proffer are as rigid or even of a more morbid quality than those which they attempt to counter. Stoppard's literary genius, on the other hand, lies in a playfully deconstructive implosion of the temporal edifice erected by modernity, by highlighting its own inconsistencies and inadequacies. The salient feature of the apparently casual onslaught that Stoppard mounts on the Realist and Modernist schemes of 'time' is its abandonment of the ingredient of 'power' usually associated with narrative discourses and counter-discourses.

Right from his debut as a playwright, with *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* in 1967, Stoppard's ingeniously postmodern theatrical sense could be seen to playfully engage in an implosive treatment of longstanding histrionic notions regarding both "Time" and "Timing". Samuel Johnson's painstaking defence of Shakespeare's violation of the classical 'Unity of Time' seems to have reached a phenomenological culmination in Stoppard as he utilizes the stage to deconstruct both 'time' that had until then been an empirical category loaded arbitrarily with scalar calibration, chronological/sequential/linear organisation and philosophical suggestiveness, and 'timing' which has been hailed as a key aesthetic principle that governed entries, exits, dialogues and action. Not just *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*, but his entire dramatic oeuvre seems to expose a phenomenological consciousness of time in which temporal distinctions such as past, present and future are perceived not as physically compartmentalized entities, but as a mixed conglomerate. His theatre presents an inevitable passage from the aesthetically ordered realm of sequentiality of these temporal distinctions to a hyper-functional mode

of simultaneity or a dysfunctional mode of stagnancy of experience. In this process Stoppard dislodges dramaturgy as such from the structures of temporal certitude meant to determine the perceptual routines of ordinary human beings.

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead is as much a play on 'Time' as it is about the arbitrariness of the discourse that condemns two innocent, rather innocuous men to unmerited death. The coin-tossing game at the beginning of the play captures the stagnancy of time perceived by the two men in the palace, as much as it concerns the dysfunctionality of the law of probability under arbitrarily determined conditions. The compulsive transference from a familiar 'timescape' to an alien scheme of temporal orientation in Elsinore, has hurled Rosencrantz and Guildenstern into an irresolvable confusion whereof they become incapable of striking even such simple distinctions as between day and night or the direction in which they are proceeding. Time has come to a standstill for them in the palace: Guildenstern makes a futile attempt at a residual bit of logical deduction: "If it is, and the sun is over there, (his right as he faces the audience) for instance, that (front) would be northerly. On the other hand, if it is not morning and the sun is over there (his left) . . . that . . . (lamely) would still be northerly. . . ." After a while, as he realizes that it is taking him nowhere, he resigns to his fate: "However, if none of these is the case -----" (R & G 58) Rosencrantz bewails his plight of falling into the fathomless depths of uncertainty: "I want to go home. (Moves.) Which way did we come in? I have lost my sense of direction." (R & G 39) The last bit of memory that Guildenstern, the more composed of the two, retains is that of a messenger from the palace delivering the summons from the palace, and since then time has ceased to register any sense of progress in his consciousness. Thus the coins that come down ninety nine times on 'Heads' become a metaphor for the temporal quagmire or quandary to which they have descended: in Guildenstern's own inconclusively logical reasoning, "time has stopped dead, and the single experience of one coin being spun once has been repeated ninety times . . ." (R&G 16). However, he corrects himself almost immediately with a postscript, "On the whole, doubtful", rendering it, a typically postmodern, subversive engagement rather than an explosion of the essentialist equation of time with interminable and irreversible progress or change. Guildenstern's intellectual dilemma with respect to the inexplicable occurrence of Heads in the coin-tossing game on the one hand, and the enigmatic nature of their presence in the palace on the other, finds an equal match in the anguished and nostalgic cry of the simpler Rosencrantz, "Consistency is all I ask!" (R & G 39). Rosencrantz's agony is all the more intensified by his memory which invokes a time when, "There were answers to everything" (R & G 38). 'Consistency' which can be defined as sustained transactional patterns of stable circumstances and predictable responses governing the social and individual life of man, has been deemed most essential not only for negotiating through life, but also for the dramatic purposes of plot construction and characterization. The character of the Player in Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead seems to have been conceived in subversion of the post-

Renaissance premium on the virtue of consistency. Perhaps conceived as a mouthpiece of the author, the Player is always casually on the move across contingently valid roles, defying the organizational/consolidative thrust of time. Ever prepared to meet any exigency thrown up by time, from time to time, he doesn't have to invent responses at every turn, but has just to carry on with the mode of performance he is always in. He seems to explicate Stoppard's notion that human identity is not anymore to be encountered as a temporally consolidated comprehensive entity marked by fixed beginnings and ends, but only as a free play of contingent performances:

GUIL: Well . . . aren't you going to change into your costume?

PLAYER: I never change out of it, sir.

GUIL: Always in character.

PLAYER: That's it.

GUIL: Aren't you going to – come on?

PLAYER: I am on

GUIL: But if you are on, you can't come on. Can you?

PLAYER: I start on. (R & G 33 - 34)

The Player summarises the 'essence' of time as it is to be encountered in life by 'normal' human beings if they are not to fall into despair, or not to end up “losing your heads”, when he tells Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, “Uncertainty is the normal state. You're nobody special”, and advises them to, “Relax. Respond. That's what people do. You can't go on questioning your situation at every turn” (R & G 66). Death offers the one and only materially reliable certainty available to man in life, but even that residual reassurance is contaminated by the ecclesiastical/philosophical notion of 'eternity of life after death'. Rosencrantz is very clear in declaiming his aversion to the harrowing wait for salvation: Eternity is a terrible thought. I mean, where's it going to end . . . We count for nothing. We count for nothing. We could remain silent till we're green in the face, they wouldn't come. (R & G 71). And Guildenstern renders it a more comprehensive thought by adding, “Death followed by eternity . . . the worst of both worlds. It is a terrible thought” (R & G 72). Rosencrantz's weird fantasy about 'death' as being alive in a box (R & G 71), turns prophetically ironic when the boat on which they sail to England with Hamlet, which is to deliver them to the hands of death, cuts them off all logical link with time:

ROS: We're on a boat. (Pause) Dark, isn't it?

GUIL: Not for night.

ROS: No, not for night.

GUIL: Dark for day.

(Pause)

ROS: Oh Yes. It's dark for day. (R & G 98 - 99).

For a while, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern proceed on a temporal consciousness which is at variance from both the progressive consistency of time they had experienced prior to their arrival in the palace on the one hand, and the stagnant pool of time they found themselves in the palace, on the other. The new mode of contingent existence makes them realise that there is nothing either consistent or stagnant about time. This new notion of time is what is suggested when Rosencrantz and Guildenstern discuss their future prospects:

ROS: We take Hamlet to the English King, We hand over the letter – what then?

GUIL: There may be something in the letter to keep us going a bit.

ROS: And if not?

GUIL: Then that's it – we're finished.

ROS: At a loose end?

GUIL: Yes.

(Pause)

ROS: are there likely to be loose ends? (Pause) Who is the English King?

GUIL: That depends on when we get there. (R & G 105).

The two men recognize that men and matter are variables of time and that life is full of loose ends, not dead ends, and that, as the Player has given them the cue, they have to relax and respond instead of questioning the situation at every turn. However, the discursive script into which they have been contained, like Rosencrantz's conceptualization of the coffin as box in which one remains alive with the futile hope to be called out, insists that they must accept, as the Player says, “Lying down” (R & G 79), the fact that they have been marked to die, and ensures that “everyone who is marked for death dies.” (R & G 79).

Individual consciousness has for long been compulsively conditioned by the hands of the clock into a self-abnegating servility to a socio-political system that functions on 'schedules' 'deadlines' and 'tenures'. A hegemonic order founded on a 'system of Time' which is arbitrarily and unilaterally calibrated in terms of rigorous and inflexible units such as seconds, minutes and hours, and upholding only the principles of punctuality and efficiency, cannot but be apathetic to the psychological needs and constraints of human beings. Human imperatives such as emotional self-fulfilment, the desire for companionship and even physical well-being are relegated to secondary importance under the 'alien' rule of time. A desperate but palpably unsuccessful attempt to subvert the suzerainty of the clock over man's life, constitute the crux of the epistemological concern in Stoppard's 1965 Radio-play, *If You're Glad, I'll be Frank* (1969). In the play, 'time' could almost be perceived as a character of the villainous ilk that has to be somehow bypassed if

human beings have to regain sanity of mind. Frank who is a bus driver, is reminded time and again by the conductress that they are behind schedule 'by so many minutes'. But nobody ever says, nor can say, that they are behind schedule 'by the time the driver took to meet his wife', because it is untenable to a system that works by the precision of the clock. Frank's wife Gladys, being the voice of the speaking clock TIM, has to keep herself abreast with the passage of the clock's time. But her inner voice tells her that it is absurd because it helps them only to know the 'timing' of events, like, when the Olympic record was broken, or when to serve food or to retire to bed. It is not mindful of an alternate time scheme or many alternate time schemes maintained by the individual psyche, whereof food is to be served at the time of hunger, one has to take rest not during the permitted interval but when one is tired, and so on. Her own view from the clock-tower gives Gladys an alternate vision of time:

I don't think I'll bother, I
don't think there's any point
Because
[.]
I'd only be in
the middle of it
with an inkling of infinity,
the only one who has seen both
ends
rushing away from the middle .
You can't keep your balance
after that .
Because they don't know what
time is .
They haven't experienced the
silence
in which it passes
impartial disinterested
god like.
Because they didn't invent it at all.

They only invented the clock. (If you're Glad ... 33-34)

In her marital life too, time had played a deceptive game by letting Frank choose the clock's dial over the mind's dial in determining the time he could spend for her. When they first met, "[t]here was time to laugh then"(If You're Glad ... 38). But then he took his time table seriously: "You could set your clock by him", she says (If You're Glad ... 38). But it is only the needles of the clock that can be set to an externally determined epistemological notion of precision, not the empirical actuality of 'time'. Gladys, in protest against his neglect, left him to accept the job of giving voice to the speaking clock. It is ironic that even then, Frank's effort to bring her back into his life is determined by a consciousness of clock time:

FRANK. Where is he? I've got ninety-five seconds

2ND PORTER. Who?

FRANK. Who are you?

2ND PORTER. What do you want?

FRANK. Where's the other porter?

2ND PORTER. Gone to lunch-it's one-fourteen.

FRANK. Never mind him -where's the chairman?

2ND PORTER. They eat together.

(Door crashes open)

CONDUCTRESS. Frank Jenkins!

2ND PORTER. Like brothers.

CONDUCTRESS. What about the schedule!?

FRANK (to PORTER). Listen -I'll be back here at two forty-seven -

CONDUCTRESS (almost in tears). I ask you to remember the schedule!

2ND PORTER (as the horns sound). Hello -is that your bus out there?

FRANK (leaving hurriedly). Two forty-seven! -tell him it's about

Gladys Jenkins (If You're Glad ... 39-40)

Frank and Gladys' life is in itself tragic and unhappy due to the constraints imposed by their paranoiac adherence to an artificial mode of knowing and organizing time in daily life. The ultimate consequence of such adherence is hinted at, nevertheless passingly, through a less prominent incident mentioned in the play:

BERYL. I'm new.

(Pause.)

1ST LORD. !thought I couldn't account for you.... New what?

BERYL. New secretary, sir ... Miss Bligh. They sent me over from Directory Enquiries last night.

1ST LORD. I see. What happened to my old- to Miss – er BERYL. Apparently she cracked, sir, at 1.53 a.m. I came at once. (If You're Glad ... 29)

This incident in which 'knowledge' or rather 'information' perpetuates itself even at the cost of human sanity, is perhaps the saddest statement made, despite the casual manner in which it is made, by Stoppard in his postmodernist inclination to subvert an arbitrary and unreal or untrue scheme of 'knowing'. In any case, man's lot in the eternal competition between the external physical reality of time and the inner intangible mishmash of temporal consciousness is to be a perpetual loser. And, Time ought to have the last laugh, setting to nought all human efforts to challenge or surpass it.

In *Enter a Free Man* (1968), Stoppard makes a quick leap from the sixteenth –century, Humanist script of Hamlet to the modern world, to carry on with the effort to dismantle the epistemologically and aesthetically consolidated connection between the spatial notion of 'order', the temporal notion of 'progress' and the ethical notion of 'reason' that was constitutive of human identity. George Riley, who believes himself to be an 'Inventor' by profession, is stuck up in time, as his life is marked by continuous failure, shameless dependency and condemnation by folks at home and outside alike. He sustains himself in a bogus sense of self-esteem that is hoisted on a self-deceptive belief that he can make it big in life any moment with just one of his inventions turning successful; but all of them happen to be monuments of senselessness. Riley's wife, Persephone, has been irrationally meticulous, even self-sacrificing, in preserving her husband's illusory self-importance, both materially and psychologically. She had to work in a shop for years to sustain him in his worthless self-indulgence, and more painstakingly afterwards to act as a buffer between Riley and their daughter, Linda who is frustrated as much by her father's parasitic clutch on her as by her own failure to find a suitor. The play begins with the entry of Riley returning from the Pub after drinking with the money borrowed from his daughter, and the play ends with Riley, leaving for the Pub with money lent by Linda, and between the beginning and the end, so much, by way of arguments, altercations, protests, promises, entries, departures, hopes, and despair, has happened. Riley walks out of home with the hope of making a fortune with his idea of the “envelope gummed on both sides”, only to return with his hopes dashed as he is made to understand that an envelope cannot be used twice. He has also invited another woman whom he met in the Pub to share his future life as a millionaire; only to realise later that she had never taken him seriously. However, back home after the fiasco, he is open to the idea of registering his name at the Employment Exchange, which he had vehemently opposed earlier. Linda elopes with a

man, but midway, it turns out that “he was already married. Dead simple.” (Enter a Free man 79). She is back to square one as she returns home, but now she is more accommodative of the situation at home: She willingly hands over a little money to Riley to visit the Pub. It is obvious that Stoppard's intention is to depict 'time' as either 'dynamically stagnant', or 'uneventfully progressive', presenting itself as lending an oxymoronic essence to life whereof one is confronted with the farcically busy undercurrents in what is felt as a cesspool of time, or the essential sameness underneath the stormy surface of life. The characterisation of Linda and Riley also suggests that the Renaissance notion of the 'rationally unified self' is neither feasible nor tenable as the human consciousness is confronted by an array of spatiotemporally distinct sets of relations, stimuli, and psychosomatic impulses. Linda sounds more empathetic than critical of Riley when she benignly acknowledges him to assume quite a different personality with his acquaintances at the Pub: “The point is what is he like? I mean when we can't see him. He's got to be different – I mean you wouldn't even know me if you could see me -- . . . There's two of everyone. . . . You see you need that . . . and if the two of him's the same, I mean if he's the same in the pub as he is with us, then he's had it” (Enter a Free Man 10). And, conversely, consistency of conduct or repetitive stability of responses is found to emerge from an intention to hoodwink, to deceive. Riley demonstrates this to his companions at the Pub by citing the stock response of Governments, from that of the Roman Empire to successive British dispensations, to contain the ire of the common man by deploying “Diversions to keep the mob happy” such as “circuses”, “Football” and “It's cricket now”(Enter a Free Man 14). Time is unnoticeably in a mode of standstill in this kind of historiography. Paradoxically, for the ordinary human being, time is available as a phenomenological conglomerate in which the past, the present and the future are not physically separated, but coexistent or coeval: Riley's mind is perfectly sane in meandering through the three modes of perceiving time when Harry hoodwinks Riley to believe that the Imperial Stationery Company would buy his idea of producing envelopes that can be used twice, for a paltry sum and keep it in cold storage rather than promote it, because it would affect their business:

RILEY: They won't use it?

HARRY: Never.

RILEY: Never?

HARRY: Never.

RILEY: The bastards! Typical! Big business! How could they do this to me? I'll sue them.

HARRY: You haven't sold it yet.

RILEY (in excitement he wanders round the bar and back towards ABLE): I'll sell it

first and then I'll sue them. Able, what are you smoking? I'll get myself a lawyer. (Enter a Free Man 19-20)

And, if it is not either of these – the temporal variations in identity evoked by Riley and Linda, or the artificially repetitive consistency of governments – it is to be a compulsive or morbid obsession with certain ideals, as personified by Persephone in the play, who is almost always absorbed in keeping the house neat and tidy or carefully nurturing her husband's fragile self-esteem against the onslaughts of Linda.

Linda's statement in *Enter a Free Man* that “there is two of every one” at two different places or two different times, is stretched further by Stoppard in *Night and Day* (1978), to suggest the possibility of two of everyone at the same place and the same moment. The play, set in Kambawe, an impoverished, war-torn, “fictitious African Country, formerly a British Colony” (*Night and Day* 15), depicts a typically male-dominated world where the former rulers still maintain unhindered access to their big business interests in the country, the current native rulers as well as their opponents are locked in a ruthless civil war, and the journalists from a West-dominated Press are in an unscrupulously competitive scramble for 'stories' from the erstwhile colony to boost their own image than to enlighten the world on the ground reality in the country. Ruth, the only woman in the cast, is thoroughly disgusted by the double standards maintained by every other character, including her husband. She interacts with them on two parallel tracks, one, an exterior strain of dialogue which is socially conformist, and the other, an inner voice which is perhaps more vehement as a silent interiorisation of her raillery against the hypocrisy and the callousness of the people around her. In the text, the dramatist technically distinguishes her inner voice from her open utterances, both happening simultaneously in live interaction with the others, by assigning the former to 'RUTH' (the name printed in single inverted commas), and the latter to RUTH (printed plainly). When RUTH talks the truth, the alternate 'RUTH' warns her to be discrete, and when RUTH keeps a decorous tone, the inner 'RUTH' raves and rants in frustration. For instance, in her interaction with Mageeba, the despotic ruler of Kambawe, the alternate self is seen to admonish the exterior self on her candid remarks:

RUTH: It's never too late – welcome . . . we're night birds here.

MAGEEBA: How gracious . . . I, too sleep very little.

RUTH: (Gaily) Well – uneasy lies the head that –

'RUTH': (Loudly) Idiot!

RUTH: I mean the sheer volume of work must be enormous, the cares of State, and –

'RUTH': Shut up, you silly woman – (*Night and Day* 75)

And, when her conscience tells her that reality is quite contrary to the falsehood they

all feign to believe in, 'RUTH' is heard on a dissenting note:

MAGEEBA: You see Mrs. Carson, I am like a father to all Kambaweans you're your case, of course, I have to say an adopted father.

RUTH: Of course.

'RUTH': Wrong!

MAGEEBA: Such is our legacy of racial and cultural prejudice.

RUTH: Yes, indeed.

'RUTH': (Loudly) Geoffrey!! (Night and Day 76)

Night and day is an experimental work in which the novel technique of interspersing sequential dialogue with a simultaneous strain of interior monologue on the stage is employed in such a way as to make it look perfectly normal, without any jarring note. But there is more to come from an intelligent artist like Stoppard to amaze the audience with the seemingly casual but shrewd twists he lends to settled notions regarding the temporal orientations of human behavior and communication. In *Rough Crossing* (1984), adapted from the Hungarian playwright, Ferenc Molnar's *Play at the Castle* (1926), Stoppard takes the audience through a deconstructive voyage that shakes their deep seated convictions on 'time', 'timing' and 'timeliness', of verbal interaction, both on stage and in real life. The characters of the play – two “Playwrights and collaborators, of middle age . . . A young composer, aged 25 . . . An actress, aged 35 to 40 . . . An actor, aged 45 to 50 . . .” and “A cabin steward” (*Rough Crossing* 3) – are on board a transatlantic ocean liner trying to rehearse and finalise the climax of the musical comedy they are to perform in New York. On hindsight, at this moment, more than anything else, what is noteworthy is the respective age of each character, as it significantly points to the time of life they have chosen to be what they are and do what they do. Turai and Gal, the playwrights, are certainly not veterans with scripts ready to be churned out of their imagination; they pick up bits from here and there as they proceed, they look up to their fellow artists to devise better endings, and form among themselves an interesting combination of indulgent procrastination and ineffectual urgency. Ivor the actor who is almost past his prime, still persists in his amorous advances towards Natasha whom he had promoted on the stage as a young actress, despite being terrified by the prospects of his wife detecting his philandering. Natasha, who is now past her youth, is the object of the young composer and budding actor Adam's dotage, and Natasha herself has decided to make the crossover from Ivor to Adam. Altogether, these characters seem to suggest that there is nothing that can be termed “wrong time” in the pursuit of one's desires. But, what if time practically turns wrong? Adam, during one of the performances of their previous musical drama, was shocked into a nervous stupor by his insane mother's presence among the audience, and his speech comes to be afflicted with a strange kind of time lag: now all his statements are answers to the “last question but one” (*Rough Crossing* 7). The metaphorical significance

of this malady is that it is resultant from an ill-timed and accidental overlapping between two temporally distinct courses of life – acting or role-play on the stage, on the one hand, and a piece of intimate personal life amidst the audience, on the other. Life, lived as a mixture of both performances and moments of natural interaction, is subject to topsy-turvy as the two components can often converge unexpectedly. Stoppard's purpose in attaching this handicap to an aspiring actor and composer is to demonstrate that despite a break in the temporal linearity of interpersonal utterances, communication can progress without much of a hindrance; and more importantly, it highlights the truth that in human communication, 'meaning' is a hit-or-miss phenomenon that often progresses through modes of right answers to the wrong questions and wrong answers to the right questions. For instance, in the following segment, interaction between the three characters, Turai, Adam and Dvornichek, remains smoothly on course despite the gutters and bumps posed by Adam's affliction:

TURAI: All unpacked? Found a place for everything?

DVORNICHEK: I expect you'd like a drink, sir?

ADAM: Oh, yes, but I haven't brought much with me.

DVORNICHEK: No problem, we've got plenty, you'll be all right with us.

ADAM: No I don't think I will.

DVORNICHEK: Course you will – I trust your cabin is satisfactory.

TURAI: How did you find your lady love?

ADAM: Most comfortable, Thank you.

TURAI: Have you seen her yet?

DVORNICHEK: Are you going to get one in?

ADAM: Not yet, she's still at dinner.

DVORNICHEK: No, I mean a drink. A port, wasn't it?

TURAI: Why don't we wait for her together?

ADAM: No really, thank you. (Rough Crossing 7)

Through the simple distortive technique employed here, Stoppard indubitably puts forth his stance that individual utterances do not constitute temporally finite transactions of signification, but are, at their best, shots fired into an open space, which can collide at random across time, either to end up irretrievably scattered or to coincidentally lead to new collisions which can altogether sustain a system of communication. The oral handicap of Adam is not to deter the playwrights from casting him in the lead role in their forthcoming work:

ADAM: (Finally) All I have to do is anticipate my lines.

GAL: That's a good idea. I see what you mean.

ADAM: Then I'd start speaking just as it's my turn.

GAL: Of course you would! Do you see what he's getting at, Turai?

ADAM: unfortunately I can't time it.

GAL: But you're timing it perfectly.

ADAM: It's a matter of luck if I come in at the right moment.

GAL: Luck? What luck? You've solved it.

.....

GAL: (Ignoring him) I'll cable New York. "Fish overboard, a star is born." (Rough Crossing 12)

Adam's speech defect and the way it is surmounted involves a clever, subversive adaptation of human behaviour to by-pass the arbitrary rule of 'time' and 'timing'. There is still more radical things to happen in the play by way of mounting a sweet revenge on time: if time could determine human life, man too can redefine or reconfigure time to suit his purposes. An intimate exchange in which Natasha detaches herself from Ivor, her erstwhile lover, and Ivor desperately trying to profess his passion for her, is overheard by Tuari, Gal and Adam. The conversation which borders on amorous vulgarity and verbal impropriety leaves Adam crestfallen, and he prepares to abandon the voyage. Turai, the playwright – the one who creates or moulds – sets himself on the task of salvaging the situation. He begs Adam to wait till morning, arranges Dvornichek to detain Adam in his room, and summons Ivor and Natasha to his chamber and tells them to feign to Adam that the interaction between them had been a rehearsal of the new ending they had written for their musical comedy. Time, if it had a spirit, could be seen here to become helplessly subject to will of man, caught in a curious turn where the past becomes the present:

ADAM: Did Ivor write that scene?

TURAI: Every word.

ADAM: Thank God.

NATASHA: You see! (Rough Crossing 61)

Seemingly frivolous but actually embodying the subtle essence of the dramatic purpose of *Rough Crossing* is the character Dvornichek, a steward on the cruise liner, who is always at the wrong place at the right time, or at the right place at the wrong time. For a considerable while his linguistic consciousness seems to be stuck in his past ashore when he had been working as a waiter in a Restaurant. Just a few moments into his acquaintance with Dvornichek, Gal, the hedonistic partner of Turai, instinctively asks, "Do you mind if I call you Murphy?", and Dvornichek answers, "Not at all sir. . . ." (Rough Crossing 11).

And, thereafter Dvornichek is seen to introduce himself on many occasions as “Murphy”, as if he himself believes it to be his name. The seemingly casual substitution actually invokes 'Murphy's law', “an adage or epigram that is typically stated as: 'Anything that can go wrong will go wrong’”, and an “addition to this law reads, 'and usually at the worst time’”. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murphy%27s_law 1) Through the events and characters depicted in the play, Stoppard suggests that time is never tragic or comic in itself, but as the players would have it. Human will could have the last laugh over the farcical vagaries of time.

In Hapgood (1988) and Arcadia (1993) Stoppard makes a more decisive and radical shift of allegiance from positivist science to the principles of quantum physics in his explorations into the nature of time. Both these stories profess that 'time' is devoid of objective reality, and that at any moment what one get to see is what one looks for. Hapgood superficially appearing to be conceived more or less as a sentiment laden spy-story, is actually a literary tribute to Werner Karl Heisenberg, German theoretical physicist and one of the key pioneers of quantum mechanics. Heisenberg was the proponent of the 'uncertainty principle' or 'indeterminacy principle' which states that the position and the velocity of an object cannot both be measured exactly, at the same time, even in theory. The play is crowded, like electrons in an atom, with people who are temporally accelerated across multiple identities as 'agents' and 'double-agents' 'sleepers' and 'joes' and domestic and official affiliations. Like the electrons, as carriers of energy, they are always on the move, and occupying fixed positions only momentarily; their external position is not an indication of the orientation or the pace of their inner energy. Hence, what is one at a given point of time is unascertainable. The character, Joseph Kerner acknowledges that in the immeasurable pace of things he is unable to distinguish his own identity; whether he is a scientist or a spy, a Russian joe or a British sleeper, a British joe or a British sleeper, Mrs. Hapgood's subordinate or the father of her child. But with his background as a Physicist, he is not puzzled, but rather poised in his response to this dilemma:

Kerner The particle world is the dream world of the intelligence officer. An electron can be here or there at the same moment. You can choose. It can go from here to there without going in between; it can pass through two doors at the same time, or from one door to another by a path which is there for all to see until someone looks, and then the act of looking has made it take a different path. Its movements cannot be anticipated because it has no reasons. It defeats surveillance because when you know what it is doing, you can't be certain where it is, and when you know where it is you can't be certain what it's doing: Heisenberg's uncertainty principle; and this is not because you're not looking carefully enough, it is because there is no such thing as an electron with a definite position and a definite momentum, you fix one, you lose the other, and it's all done without tricks, it's the real world, it is awake. (Hapgood 544)

Aspects of temporal calibration such as motion, rest, velocity, position etc. are identified in the play as notions emergent from an artificial mode of rational organization of life. Human consciousness, in reality, is spontaneously, not disobediently, free of any such conceptual codification of identity. The psychoanalytical implications of the scientific orientation of the story is that human consciousness and human relations that are presumably founded on circumscribed affiliations and loyalties are neither secure nor sustainable.

In *Arcadia* (1993) Stoppard carries forward his interest in quantum mechanics and the laws of thermodynamics as bodies of thought which can yield interesting insights with respect to the human consciousness of 'time'. The play charts a temporally scattered plot which curiously presents two time frames – the early nineteenth century and the “present day”, with exactly the same props deployed on the stage in both the periods, and almost similar people, as if the present day figures were a transubstantiation of the essence of the previous ones, constituting the character list. Through this replication, Stoppard seems to imply that time could be perceived to be in a mode of either cyclical or continuous repetition as far as human behavior is concerned. But is it as simple as that? Beneath the surface of the narrative which involves both gentle as well as hilarious humour, carnal as well as platonic passions, and scholastic and mundane preoccupations alike, there is a tone of pathos that embodies an essentially tragic vision of 'time'; that, 'time' rather than a progress towards infinity, is on a course of uninterrupted and irreversible deterioration. Thomasina Coverly, the brilliant and precocious girl of thirteen, on Sidley Park in 1809, studying mathematics, asks her tutor, Septimus Hodge, if he thinks it is odd that when one stirs jam in a bowl of rice pudding in one direction, it spreads itself making red trails, but the jam will not come together again if one swirls the pudding in the reverse direction. The metaphor of the jam in the rice pudding, as Thomasina uses it to speculate about nature of things in the world, actually anticipates the second law of thermodynamics that talks about systems in entropy, in irreversible energy dissipation. And the answer of the Tutor seals it with a fair degree of accuracy:

Septimus No more you can, time must needs run backward, and since it will not, we must stir our way onward mixing as we go, disorder out of disorder into disorder until pink is complete, unchanging and unchangeable, and we are done with it for ever. This is known as free will or self-determination.

And, to describe what remains in between the momentary and the ultimate, between the beginning and the end of time, Stoppard draws on another complex mathematical method called “iteration”. Iteration simply means repetition, but it is repetition with a purpose and a method. In the play it holds good mathematically and philosophically. In mathematics 'iteration' is an algebraic method whereof in an x-and-y equation, every time one gets a value for y, it is used as the next value for x. Thomasina had embarked on this method to chart the graph for a rabbit, but ran out of pages, and Valentine, perhaps a male replication of the Thomasina in the 'present', with the help of his computer, attains

considerable success with the method in his study on the records pertaining to the grouse population on the estate. It is the same thing at different times, as if in substantiation of Septimus' assurance to Thomasina when she laments over the burning down of the great library of Alexandria:

Septimus You should no more grieve for the rest than for a buckle lost from your first shoe . . . We shed as we pick up . . . and what we let fall will be picked up by those behind. The procession is very long and life is very short. We die on the march. But there is nothing outside the march, so nothing can be lost to it. (Arcadia 57)

Conversely, it can also be differential perceptions and responses to the same thing at the same time, as demonstrated by the listeners to Bernard's rehearsal of his presumptuous lecture on the circumstances that led to Lord Byron's hasty departure to America in 1809. Every time he seeks a cue from his listeners on the point to resume his lecture from, he gets a different answer from each of them:

Bernard Where was I?

Valentine Pigeons.

Chloe Sex.

Hannah Literature. (Arcadia 79)

.....

Bernard . . . Where was I?

Valentine Game book.

Chloe Eros.

Hannah Borrowed. (Arcadia 80)

Time, instead of being observed in obsequious deference, becomes a serious subject for epistemological revision not merely in the plays analysed herein, but in the entire dramaturgy of Sir Tom Stoppard. As a playwright with postmodern leanings, he bids adieu to the hierarchically standardised and sequentially unified notions of time passed down from the Middle Ages. 'Time' is encountered in his plays as a decentered, multi-layered and sometimes even stagnant phenomenon, in contrast to the realist synonymisation of time with material progress during Enlightenment Modernity. In form and in content, Stoppard dislodges dramaturgy from its age old temporal certitudes, to present a new fluid fare where neither is man a product of time, nor time of man, but both come to constitute and reconstitute each other endlessly through strictly contingent processes of mutual engagement. Stoppard's credentials as a postmodern playwright is reinforced by the fact that in his plays, as with any other aspect of life approached through the human senses, 'time' too gets dislodged from its morphological foundations and comes to be presented in new and alternate formats.

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A Tenuous We of All: A Biopolitics of COVID 19

Abstract

The world lay in ruins, devastated by the worst epidemic in history - COVID19. However, the human tryst with the pandemic underscores not just the contagious malady's potent and terrifying power in reducing human life to pale insignificance but also the resilience of the human mind in confronting it. A study of the pandemics in literatures across centuries and continents reveals that the metaphor is endowed with incredible tension and conflict. There is a reciprocal affinity between the pandemics and social disorder, the physical disorder of pandemics assumes a metaphorical connotation for the social pandemic. It results in physical pain, in emotional trauma, disintegration of personal identity and disruption of social order. Within the biopolitics of the pandemic, COVID19 unsettles the already precarious position of being human in a posthumanist world. Constructed in the matrix of postmodernity, the surveillance strategies restrict subjectivity to different forms of social control. The crisis of epidemic invades the subject along three intersecting axes -- the subject as the soma (individual body), as body politic and as an agency in the globalised and digitalized ecology. The victim is both subject to and the subject of the disease. A posthumanist view projects a bleak prognosis of the COVID 19. A posthumanistic pandemic perspective would reveal the world of man as a pathogenic reservoir, and the world about him as a precarious perch. The governmental measures to contain the epidemic falter and fail in the face of a virus attack thus attesting to the limits of political sovereignty in the face of the unlimited power of the microbe, in the immediate context and Nature in the larger level. It is imperative for a moral and political rethinking against the backdrop of the pandemic. A neo-environmental approach focussing on symbiotic relationship with microbial and macrobial creatures is mandatory. The saving grace is a move from an anthropocentric world to an ecocentric culture, lest we perish to the peril of Nature.

Keywords : COVID19, biopolitics, posthuman, Anthropocene, absolutism, neo-environmental ethic

The world lay in ruins, devastated by the worst epidemic in history. The everyday statistics of casualty is alarming with death toll on the increase day by day. Against the backdrop of the catastrophe, a wave of changes will likely roll across the continents. The social order of the different nations has been shaken to its roots by the carnage of the pandemic and its turbulent aftermath. The ideologies on which the world has customarily depended, the values by which it has been ruled and strategies which have proved convenient are in deep turmoil. Pandemics have been recurrent throughout history: the

Antonine Plague (165-180 AD), the Plague of Justinian (541-543AD), the Great Bubonic Plague in Europe (1346-1353), the Spanish Flu (1918-20), HIV (1981-), the Asian Flu (1957-58) and the COVID 19 need mention. This is not to argue that there were no other pandemics in the intervening period – small pox, syphilis, cholera, tuberculosis, the yellow fever, SARS, NIPPAH, etc proved devastating portents with terrible impact on humanity. However, the human tryst with epidemics underscores not just the contagious malady's potent and terrifying power in reducing human life to pale insignificance but also the resilience of the human mind in confronting it.

There is a reciprocal affinity between the pandemics and social disorder, the physical disorder of pandemics assumes a metaphorical connotation for the social pandemic. A study of the pandemics in literatures across centuries and continents reveals that the metaphor is endowed with incredible tension and conflict. The plague's threat to the community and to the very existence of a communal social life is as terrifying as its power over individual death. It is a visible reality that the pandemic is both a personal affliction and social calamity. Linda Hutcheon and Michael Hutcheon are of the opinion that it is these parallels between social life and the physical body that give the pandemic its dramatic potential. The pandemic assumes a double-edged sword -- biological and social, affecting both the individual and infecting the society, at the peril of both. Any pandemic, and for that reason, any disease can be seen a double: as a biological event that infects our bodies and a social event to which a variety of meanings are attached by the choices we make in response to the disease (733-35).

The definite analogy visible in the leitmotif is metaphorical of psychosomatic violence and contagious character. Man (supposedly the roof and crown of creation) becomes a helpless victim in the face of massive contamination leading to heavy loss of lives and making life vulnerable. The pandemics make no distinction of boundaries or class leaving behind bruised bodies, traumatised minds and contained zones. Bodily pain is not the only suffering inflicted on the individual; instead it can result in emotional trauma, disintegration of personal identity and disruption of social order. King Lear and Oedipus, the King present the “ruined human body and the sound of suffering” (Morris, 248). The connecting link among all the pandemics is that the psychosomatic is brought under intense condition by the crisis emanating out of the situation. Death and casualties make a tenuous we of all.

Epidemics is arecurrent theme in literature; prominently visible in Homer's *Illiad*, Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, Thucydides' *TheHistory of the Peloponnesian War*, Lucretius' *On the Nature of Things*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, Defoe's *Journal of the Plague Year*, Mary Shelley's *The Last Man*, Albert Camus' *Plague*, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice*, Jose Saramago's *Blindness* and Mario Bellatin's *Beauty Salon*, Emily John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, and Stephen King's *The Stand*, to mention only a select few. It spans a whole range of literary and non-literary genres, from pure fantasy to the most positive and

scientific accounts. It is a strange coincidence that there is a weird uniformity to the rendering of the pandemics. The pandemics assume a potent destroyer of specificities resulting in reversal of fortunes and roles. The pandemic overcomes all obstacles, disregards all frontiers; and all life, finally, is turned into death -- the supreme leveller.

Sophocles' *Oedipus the King* is the story of parricide as also of incest and the resultant plague. Scapegoating in *Oedipus* reveals an ethical notion of disease that the plague is brought about by impersonal evil, being interpreted as a divine punishment. Unlike pandemic or epidemic, plague (be it in literature or historical accounts) has implicated a moral blame. Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* set against the backdrop of the Florentine plague of 1348 that killed over 100,000 people, convincingly articulates that the plague was God sent to punish evil and cleanse the city of the spiritual squalor, moral filth and material dirt. The stories narrated by the ten characters who flee the city for safer countryside attempt to capture the clinical horrors of the terrifying contagion in gruesome detail. The panic of mass death, the intermittent passing of the plague cart and horrors of disease make the situation beyond redemption. In the sore affliction and misery of the city, the authority of the laws, both human and divine, was dissolved and fallen into decay. George Deux is of the opinion that the societies were tempted in their disillusionment and despair to find cause in the malevolence of men, witches or prisoners (6). Chaucer's portrayal of plague in the "The Pardoner's Tale" reveal the influence of Boccaccio, not forgetting the fact that England was repeatedly ravaged by plague between 1348-1346.

Dostoevsky, towards the end of his novel *Crime and Punishment*, narrates the dream of Raskolnikov afflicted with a grave illness. The whole world is infected with a plague with no specific medical symptoms. The terrible plague that had its origin in Asia invades the whole Europe leaving men and women mad and ferocious. A new sort of microbes endowed with intelligence strikes at the root of human hubris shattering humanity's moral convictions, scientific studies and hitherto conclusions. Human interaction breaks down and the entire society collapses. Rene Girard observes that the dream of the plague is nothing but the quintessential expression of the Dostoevskian crisis; and, as such, it must extend that crisis to the entire world, in truly apocalyptic fashion (839). Albert Camus' *The Plague*, though inspired by the typhus outbreak near Oran, is an allegory as also a tale of devastating natural calamity. It offers a despairing vision of an absurd cosmos of abstract evil and a manifest reference to Nazi occupation of France. After all, what is left after the end of all the conflict between humanity and the epidemic is a heap of lost memories and future fears.

Within the biopolitics of the pandemic, COVID19 unsettles the already precarious position of being human in a posthumanist world. To view the epidemic from a biopolitical perspective offers insightful information. Constructed in the matrix of postmodernity, subjectivity is the product of societal apparatus, even while the individual subject is bound to the ideological, linguistic, economic and political systems at the same

time. The state sovereignty and the surveillance strategies restrict the subject to different forms of social control. To borrow Stephen Greenblatt, there is at once an interplay of “self-fashioning and self-cancellation” (13). The crisis of epidemic invades the subject along three intersecting axes -- the subject as the soma (individual body), as body politic and as an agency in the globalised and digitalized ecology. The victim is both subject to and the subject of the disease. The subject thus becomes part of a larger whole identified according to the distinctive attributes that mark his differences from other individual persons as also from the collective body of which he is a part.

A devastating illness consuming many in the society has been viewed as a divine scourge, a punishment for a specific sin or general evil. An affliction always implies a moral purpose, and hence a metamorphic domain for writing. Many pandemics of the past have raised the vexing question of a divine intention against the backdrop of an ever-decline in the morals of the society and increase in the atrocities against the individuality of human beings. Ernest Gilman traces that the seventeenth century plague was seen as the divine scourge against individual sins as also to his plight of being a descendent of Adam. Thus, the act of sinning and the fate of being a member of human-kind have been the reasons attributed for the suffering and death, the resultants of the plague. This led to the secularisation of the epidemic discourse. This is true of every age, and the common man considers the contemporary pandemic not very differently. The societal response to the pandemic reveals a pattern, repeating the same paradigm even to the present day with the moral notion of COVID19 as divine condemnation.

Opinions are divided as to the cause of pandemics. While some consider pandemics the inevitable products of environmental depletion and pollution, others subscribe to the Galenic tradition of interpreting it from a medical perspective. The vector borne disease often fails to impact on individuals who can muster effective resistance to it. The pandemic takes a heavy toll in the fact that resistance cannot be induced through the available antibiotics. Thus, science and technology, despite the tremendous progress, falter before certain pathogens. A posthumanist view projects a bleak prognosis of the COVID 19. The ever-exploding population growth, depletion of non-renewable resources and humanity's proximity to domesticated animals facilitate the attack of the pathogen from animals to human hosts. Thus, the pandemic from an environmental/climatic perspective can be read as an inevitable product of man's depletion and destruction of Nature; and his attempts to attack and arrest the several creatures on Earth. Famine, war and pandemics will prove global decimators, if not now, sooner or later.

A posthumanistic pandemic perspective would reveal the world of man as a pathogenic reservoir, and the world about him as a precarious perch. A virus bred on a pig or chicken has proved a global killer in days or weeks. The common notion of scientific progress and humanistic evolution seem to appear undermined by such a response to the

auto-immune disease. In the face of medical science having failed in fighting the disease, a myopic obsession with traditional ways of hygiene has become rampant. The medical emergency forcing people to quarantine and forced lock-down with a view to creating geographical isolation against the infection offers no barrier to microbial invaders. The lurking danger of the uncontained virus has led to containment zones. Man has been reduced to a helpless, hapless creature decentered from the once celebrated anthropocentrism.

In Donna Haraway's cyborg world "... people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (154). The possibility of a liberated subjectivity sutures the distinctions structuring the Western self and promises to crack "the matrices of domination" (174). N. Katherine Hayles' cyborgworld envisions a posthuman subject wherein "[T]he posthuman implies a coupling so intense and multifaceted that it is no longer possible to distinguish meaningfully between the biological organism and the informational circuits in which it is enmeshed" (80). It is a strange coincidence that we speak of viral infections world wide and viral infections of World Wide Web. The possibilities of cloud computing, one is not sure, can be arrested by a vector of viral contamination. The hackers are analogical to the evil doers bent on spreading infections for reasons many. Human susceptibility to infections, both physical and digital, is more than a mere trope of rhetoric. Organic infection has infected the humanity as inorganic infection the post- or trans-humanity.

Biopolitics can be extended to incorporate the concepts of Agamben's Homo Sacer, Robert Esposito's Bios and Keith Ansell Pearson's Viroid Life. The pandemic has undoubtedly intervened and impacted the biopolitics. Esposito considers immunity to be the converging point of biology and politics (45). Immunity as the power to preserve life helps build communities which in long run is inevitable to body politic. A political appropriation of immunity would confer it the power to retain population, and for that matter, communities. Pandemic can disintegrate and destroy more human lives than caused by man-made catastrophe. The pandemics with the attendant death tolls exceeding those of violent deaths in the genocidal wars of the last two centuries aggravated by the Nazi death machine and Auschwitz camps reveal the possibility of a therapeutic rather than a thanatopic reading of biopolitical history. Its power to claim over human life beyond the control of nation sovereignty or political supremacy is a truth established beyond doubt.

The cyber-subject or the digital transhuman is subject to panoptic surveillance through the "bits" of information stored with or without his knowledge in digital codes. Each and every movement is tracked whether it be through financial, medical, and government records, social networking sites, databanks, surveillance videos, and who knows where else. It is against this context that biopolitics holds its sway. Giorgio

Agamben speaks of the ruling powers constitutional or constitutive right to define, control, and, if need be, destroy its subjects by a process in which life is captured by a biopolitical regime. Michel Foucault is of the opinion that the sovereign's "ancient right to take life or let live" is "...replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death" in the biopolitical age (138).

Ironically, pandemic reverses the equation wherein Nature reclaims its sovereignty over life. The governmental measures to contain the epidemic falter and fail in the face of a virus attack thus attesting to the limits of political sovereignty in the face of the unlimited power of the microbe, in the immediate context and Nature in the larger level. Even while we acknowledge a vulnerable subjectivity, we have to build a bulwark of resistance, a form of immunization against the infection of biopolitics. It is imperative for a moral and political rethinking against the backdrop of the pandemic. Despite the horrific realities, there are enough reasons to be sceptical of the epitaph as to the end of Nature, and of the Anthropocene's absolutism, the political presumptions it encodes, and the specific histories of power and violence that it masks. A neo-environmental ethic focussing on symbiotic relationship with microbial and macrobial creatures is mandatory. What can prove the staying power of humanity is a paradigmatic shift from an anthropocentric world to an ecocentric culture, lest we perish to the peril of Nature.

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Justice through the Everyday and Ordinary: An Analysis of Police Brutality and Racism in *Seven Seconds*

Abstract:

This paper deals with the dynamics of racism and police brutality against African Americans in contemporary US through the Netflix series Seven Seconds. The wound of racism and history of slavery in American society has been reopened with the recent murder of George Floyd at the hands of a policeman in the US city of Minneapolis. By critically analyzing the series, this paper will argue that structural measures are not enough in curbing racism and hostility between the police and African American community. New understandings of justice require the inclusion of the healing powers of everyday life and community engagement rather than the linear cause-effect understanding of modern justice system. This paper will shed light on how unhealed wounds of racism and slavery cannot ever be removed completely, rather an active and honest engagement on these difficult topics by both authorities and common people must happen within their everyday life. By pointing out certain instances in the series, I hope this paper will be helpful in understanding the current predicament American society as a whole is going through.

Keywords: Justice, Police Brutality, Racism, Violence

Seven Seconds created by Veena Sud is a statement about the racial tensions between African Americans and law and order in America. It is obvious that this tension is a result of the inability of reconciliation between white Americans and African Americans due to the long history of slavery and repression of civil rights of black people in America. But what does it mean to really say that these two races haven't really reconciled their past differences? What is the mechanism through which the past reemerges in the daily encounters between African Americans and the police apparatus of the state? Pradeep Jeganathan's paper "Justice After the Event: Sri Lanka's Civil Wars, Memory, Life and Reconciliation" provides a great help in tackling these questions. In his paper Jeganathan writes: "In Barthes analysis, psychic investments are made in photographs, which may contain a subjective 'punctum', which I have expanded into a confluence of punctuation and wound, above. Two such investments are juxtaposed in Barthes: the 'no longer' and 'has been'. The 'no longer' is a puncture that is lost forever, the 'has been' is a loss that is never let go, it is in some way, ever present" (Jeganathan 75). The lack of reconciliation between the two groups in this series can be seen as a result of collective "has been/melancholia", where the "lost object is incorporated back into a wounded self, that cannot distinguish itself from the lost object" (Jeganathan 75). The lost object here is not just the loss of people and human dignity through years of slavery and oppression, but it also reemerges through the police brutality in America; it's a wound not allowed to heal

but also constantly re-opened. The sociality of African-Americans thus remains sidelined to the mainstream American society; the 'us' hasn't formed yet from 'you' and the 'me'. The series looks at how violence plays a role in the constant re-opening of this wound through police brutality and racism; it also sheds light on the inability of the justice system to give a proper answer to this dilemma. And through this paper, by taking two acts of violence from the series, I will be trying to analytically comprehend the melancholic loss through violence, by looking at the durational connection between these two acts of violence.

Before venturing onto an analysis of the series, it is important to enumerate the ways violence can disrupt the process of total justice and reconciliation. First, there is a way of understanding the durationality of violence through the dual categories of instrumental and expressive. In 'instrumental' the 'cause-effect' or the 'means-end' way of understanding violence is coupled; and in the side of expressive these chaining together is de-coupled. The instrumental nature becomes apparent in how the law and order apparatus understands the first act of violence in the series: the murder of Brendon Butler by police officer Peter Jablonski (the suspect wasn't Jablonski first, it was an old alcoholic named Mr. Dorsey). The motivation was accidental because the suspect was under influence, and the victim was there in Liberty State Park because he was possibly linked to the local gang Five Kings (also he had a BMX bike usually used by the gang members). The expressive side of violence is the way how Brendon's mother Latrice Butler tries to understand how her son got killed. It is the expressive nature of the duration of violence, that this paper will concentrate on more as it is Latrice's and Brendon's family's constant need to come in terms with their terrible loss, that stand at odds with the law and order, and Justice system's understanding of the crime.

Second, there is an inherent autonomous nature of violence which makes it unstable and elusive to both juridical and anthropological process. According to Feldman (1991), this autonomous nature comes into being with the very act of violence where it inscribes certain narratives to both the body and space. Take the example from the series, where officer Jablonski's colleagues and friends, try to cover up the incident by putting the blame on Mr. Dorsey. But the evidence against this cover-up comes from the victim's body itself as the prosecutor K J Harper uncovers residues of a blue car paint from Brendon's body. These deep intricacies from the site of violence in the body produces new narrative durationalities. Another example would be the place Liberty State Park itself. The question of why Brendon was riding a bike in the Park known for its gang activity keeps reemerging in the thoughts of his parents. Or what made Joblonski come to the hospital to visit Brendon and thereby de-stabilizing DiAngelo's narrative. Joblonski felt a sense of guilt, or in other words, the act of violence inscribed a narrative of guilt and accountability in Jablonski that made him go to the hospital and encounter Brendon's mother thereby blowing up his cover. These minute and intricate details go a long way in the process of legitimization and de-legitimization of certain narratives that happens through out the series.

The duration of the ‘seven seconds’ in the series becomes the important scene because within these seven seconds, we get to know that Joblonski actually saw who he hit with his car. But just before this, when he looks at the bike under his SUV, he realizes he actually hit a human being. The burden of culpability of a possible loss of human life has already fallen on him at that moment. The paper crafted seagull made by Brendon on the bike also plays a very important role in the narrative. The seagulls, in my opinion play a role of ‘punctum’ on both Jablonski and Brendon’s mother, Latrice. Barthes explains what he means by punctum in contrast to studium in his book *Camera Lucida*, “The second element will break (or punctuate) the studium. This time it is not I who seek it out (as I invest the field of the studium with my sovereign consciousness), it is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me”. (Barthes 26). Seeing the bike made Joblonski realize that he has hit a human being, but it is the paper crafted seagull that made him realize that he has hit someone who has a “life” of their own. Otherwise, as DiAngelo put, Brendon is just another thug or drug dealer, which Jablonski affirms when Latrice confronts him in a supermarket. The seagull made him go to the hospital; it made him guilty and in Barthes’s words it punctured in him a wound from which he may never heal. In Jeganathan’s (2018) words, this is a puncture of “has been”; what Jablonski lost at that moment is his moral sensibilities. He, in his eyes is has become a morally corrupt person, and is thus alienated from the Jablonski of the past who is a good cop with moral integrity and his own words is someone who “never even took a free cup of coffee working in the East”. The seagull plays as a punctum for Latrice as well as Brendon’s boyfriend, Kadeuce Porter. For Latrice, she’s completely aware of Brendon’s love for seagulls and through this she has a psychic investment on them. They bring Brendon’s lived-memories to her, his creativity, character etc. But the seagull began to have a new meaning for her, when she encountered Jablonski that night in the hospital. From that moment onwards, her psychic investment on that paper craft is based on finding the one who killed her son. Her melancholic loss will never be satiated until she finds the culprit, which leads to another category rising out from the narrative of the series. As written in the last section, the seagull acts as a melancholic punctum to Latrice, and she’s stuck at crossroads. She can never go from melancholic to mourningⁱ without closing the ‘puncture’ made by the seagull. But what this then brings out is, what Veena Das (2007) calls as the “poisonous knowledge.” Das explains “poisonous knowledge” in her book *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, through the story of Asha: “There was the poisonous knowledge that she was betrayed by her senior affinal kin, as well as by her brother, who could not undertake to sustain the long-term commitment to a destitute sister. What was equally important for her was the knowledge that she may have herself betrayed her dead husband and his dead sister by the imagination of infidelity and made a young child, her “special” adopted son, feel abandoned”. (Das 77). The poisonous knowledge betrays “a form of life ii ” (Das 1998). In the series, this betrayal is most poignant in narrative of Brendon’s father, Isaiah Butler. Isaiah worked hard (close to 10 years) to get his family out of the projects and find a new home. But for Brendon and to a

ⁱ Mourning here is taken from Freud’s “Mourning and Melancholia” and Jeganathan’s understanding of him. Mourning is a socially sanctioned process of grief, where the loss is concretized as ‘lost’ or ‘gone’ rather than a ‘wound’ or something ‘unhealable’. Fundamentally, the subject comes in terms with his/her loss.

certain extent for Latrice, the new place doesn't become really 'home'. Brendon goes to the projects to meet his friends; his self of belonging belonged there rather than the new home Isaiah bought for them. After Brendon's death, Isaiah is conflicted with the question of why Brendon was riding a bike (which also forms another question) through the Liberty Park. He first doubts that Brendon was working with a gang, which affected him badly because he bought a new home to prevent this in the first place. But as his inquiry for knowledge progresses, he came to realize the betraying and hard truth that none of his family really wanted to shift to a new place. He realizes he didn't know who Brendon really was at all. But the poisonous nature of his inquiry becomes more acute as he realizes from Brendon's friend Kadeuce, that Brandon was homosexual. It took a while for Isaiah to come in terms with this knowledge. The fact that Latrice left him temporarily alone in his new 'home' was also a form of poisonous knowledge. Here, Isaiah realizes the kind of life he envisioned for his family (a form of life) betrayed him and forced him to come in terms with it.

The duration of the "seven seconds" also resulted in the murder of another character in the series, Nadine MacAllister by officer Felix Osorio. The connection here is not directly related to the exact seven seconds, where Jablonski finds out he has killed an 'African American' human being. But in the investigation and trial of the event, Nadine becomes a vital character as she was the only witness that can put DiAngelo and his colleagues in the crime scene. Through her, the accident can fully become a hate-crime and an instance of police brutality, which eventually results in her death. Her death for my analysis is pertinent because the manner of her death brings out a set of anthropological concepts which will help to understand the unfolding of a violent act. I borrow Jeganathan's (2000) concept of a "space for violence" to understand Nadine and her murder. Nadine was a heroine addict and as well as a girl who lived away from her parents. This makes her a violator of social norms or in Jeganathan's terms, she practiced "shamelessness/fearlessness". Looking through this way, one can already prescribe a "condition of possibility" (Jeganathan 2000) for the emergence of violence in her body. In the series, she was killed by Osorio by an injection of heroin overdose, making the murder as a self-inflicted overdose. But later, when the autopsy was being carried out on her body, the medical examiner declares she died of heroin overdose and given her history of drug abuse (read practice of "fearlessness"), it was declared self-afflicted. But officer Joe "Fish" Rinaldi, who had a form of "transference iii" with her, quickly identified that Nadine only smokes. Here, one again encounters Feldman and his idea of the autonomous nature of violence. Fish's relationship with Nadine, creates a counter-narrative to the officer's narrative that Nadine overdosed herself, thereby de-legitimizing their position as officers of law (Nadine's case is still not on trial but eventually it is going to happen). It can be said that both Jeganathan and Feldman understands violence from two different durationalities of "before" and "after" the act. The before-ness of the violent event for Jeganathan enables the anthropologist to see spaces and instances of anticipation,

ⁱⁱ In Das's paper "Wittgenstein and Anthropology", she talks about "forms of life" and the ability of violence to radically change the form of "life" itself. One way to look at this is how the memories of a violent event brings out new forms of truth or new understanding of life itself.

whereas for Feldman, the after-ness of the violent event determines the moral narrativity of the event. Both of them understands the implicit autonomy of violence as an act that can create social narratives both on body and space. Nadine's murder becomes a perfect example to explain this analytical modality chosen by these two theorists. Both of them creates a "space for violence". In Jeganathan, the space is Nadine's body and her practice of "fearlessness" and in Feldman as well, it is Nadine's body where the act of violence (the injection) creates a narrative of "self-infliction" and "murder".

Nadine's practice of "fearlessness" affects the process of investigation and trial, because the investigators K J and Fish both are unsure whether the judge and the jury will take her witness account seriously as she is a drug addict. This is important because, the process of trial is a production of legitimation of one narrative. Either one is innocent or one is guilty. One must remember what the Defense lawyer Sam Hennessy says: "Welcome to the criminal justice system, gentlemen. No one gives a fuck about the truth". Regardless of the dramatic nature of this dialogue, Sam is talking about an underlying structure/pattern of the justice system: precisely its instrumental nature; the uniformity of narrative and no place for confusions and digressions. There are no half guilty or half innocent under the law. Nadine's witness account can be doubted because she is a drug addict, she has a history of anti-social and anti-normative acts. Brendon's uncle, Seth Butler is prohibited from entering the trial because of his involvement in gang-related activities. But one thing the justice system doesn't take into consideration is the profound effect, the murder of Brendon has had on Nadine and Seth. Nadine in her relationship with Fish finally had a chance to be part of a healthy family; Seth comes to terms with his brother and decided to leave his gang. In both their lives and many other characters' lives, the death of Brendon creates a profound effect that it transforms each of their "forms of life". In an earlier section, I explained how the "poisonous knowledge" influenced the transformation. Here as a concluding paragraph, I would like to go back to the beginning of this paper where I wrote the inability of a justice system to reconcile the wounded body back into the normal society. I say this because the way justice is conceived in modern juridico-political understanding is a transcendental one. Justice, in its idea of reconciliation through compensation equates qualitative and expressive property of loss to quantitative and instrumental property of money or number of years of incarceration. The idea of a victim and a perpetrator becomes a clear-cut duality with out any overlap. Can we really say that Jablonski is an absolute perpetrator (the image of a monster) here, after seeing his family history, the abuse he suffered from his father? In the end, when the court declared Jablonski to be imprisoned for 364 days, the audience along with the side of prosecution felt the disappointment. I think what the show runners wanted to portray here is the ever-present biasness the justice system has towards saving the police as

ⁱⁱⁱ I borrow this term, which is again propounded by Freud in his Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis to explain the relationship between Fish and Nadine. In psychoanalysis, 'transference' is a phenomenon where the patient unconsciously redirects a feeling for another person towards the psychoanalyst. Officer Fish creates a sort of 'rapprochment' with Nadine by finding common grounds, (both of their love for dogs). In psychoanalytic terms, one can speculate that Fish is becoming a 'father-figure' to Nadine, and Nadine a 'daughter-figure' to Fish. A form of transference and counter-transference occurs here.

against the African American minority, and I'm sure the same side will be rejoiced if the sentence was 20 years rather than 364 days. But can we really say, the intensity of re-joicement will be the same for a random protestor and say, Brandon's mother Latrice. She still has to live with loss, the wound that the death of her son has caused. No amount of justice can reconcile the radical transformations each of the character's life underwent (change in forms of life) as a result of Brendon's death. But we see moments in the show, in the end, where the characters begin to come in terms with their loss and actually move on, a transformation from "has been" to "no longer"; the unhealable wound transforming into a visible scar. Latrice returns home to Isaiah after a long- lasted departure, and finds him finishing the wall painting of seagulls in Brendon's room; a symbolism for the reconciliation of the father and the deceased son. Before that, Isaiah was distressed by the unbearable knowledge that he never understood his son and never got to love for what he is and regrets that moment in the hospital where he couldn't tell Brendon how much he loves him. But we see in a scene between Isaiah and Seth where Seth reveals the reason why Brendon loves seagulls so much: it was because his father (Isaiah) took him one day to the ocean and took a photo of him where one can see the seagulls flying in the backdrop. "You ain't gotta say the words, 'Saiah. He knew'", was Seth's reply to his brother's troubled question of whether Brendon knew his father loved him. These last moments of the show are really important because they show what in Das's words, "the only possibilities of recovery through a descent into the ordinariness of everyday life, of domesticity, through which alone the words that have been exiled may be brought back. This everydayness is then in the nature of a return – one that has been recovered in the face of madness." (Das 183). One doesn't go back to the way things are. Brendon's murder according to Das through Wittgenstein will be an extra-ordinary one; not just his murder but the way he was killed, being left to bleed for over 12 hours. There is no way the Butler family can go back to the normality of American society with its virtue of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" embodied in the Statue of Liberty which has a recurring presence throughout the series. But what's important here is not that one doesn't go back; one must come back from the extra-ordinary transformation of a loss of loved-one to the ordinary every-day life. Not to find sanctuary in any transcendental ideas of justice or truth but to occupy the very corporeal "signs of injury" (Das 2007) and loss and take them forward and give them a meaning by oneself.

Mourning here is taken from Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia" and Jeganathan's understanding of him. Mourning is a socially sanctioned process of grief, where the loss is concretized as 'lost' or 'gone' rather than a 'wound' or something 'unhealable'. Fundamentally, the subject comes in terms with his/her loss. ii In Das's paper "Wittgenstein and Anthropology", she talks about "forms of life" and the ability of violence to radically change the form of "life" itself. One way to look at this is how the memories of a violent event brings out new forms of truth or new understanding of life itself. iii I borrow this term, which is again propounded by Freud in his Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis to explain the relationship between Fish and Nadine. In psychoanalysis, 'transference' is a phenomenon where the patient unconsciously redirects a feeling for another person towards the psychoanalyst. Officer Fish creates a

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The Tricky Time and The Existential Fortuity – A Coalesce in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

Time takes it all, whether you want it to or not.

- Stephen King

Time – unbounded and tricky plays a vital role in the life of all living beings and fortuity twines with time to create and teach irreplaceable and unforgettable experiences in the life of human. The literary works of various writers stands the testimony of time and predicts various lifestyles and the society of our predecessor/ ancestors. Literary works enable us to envision time, to imagine time as something tangible and manipulable.

The imagination along with the facts of the glimpses sprinkled in the literary works, help to understand the past. Salman Rushdie, in his *Midnight's Children*, made his characters to walk through the life with the history of the country in which they are born. Even though the characters freely roam around like the real life-time characters in the fictitious world, they are entirely controlled by the existential fate destined to the individual by their birth and the time that supports them in all ways.

One can think about literary history in terms of evolving strategies of accounting for the relationship between self and world. As Jocelyn Holland points in the essay entitled *Literature, Time, and Scientific Revolutions* “The phenomenon of superposed states is also a thought-provoking one for literary writers, because it tests the limits of the discursive structure of language that informs and constrains literary texts, as well as, more generally, our faculty of understanding.” The self of a person determines the life of a person. Whether one wishes or not, the birth is related with the history of the society further leading to the history of a nation.

Saleem Sinai, the protagonist, born exactly at the stroke of 12 midnight, exactly on the declare of Independence to India from the clutches of the British rule. The children born at this odd time of independence, are considered to be imbued with special powers. Saleem on one side was very proud of his time of birth as he was born at the juncture of the declaration of independence to the country and as well regrets the same because of the fate destined on him similar to that of his motherland. The novel opens with his narration of his birth along with the birth of true independent nation:

I was born in the city of Bombay ... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The

time matters too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more ... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival of Independence, I tumbled forth into the world. (*Midnight's Children*. 1)

Saleem, using his telepathic powers, assembles a *Midnight Children's Conference*, reflective of the issues India faced in its early statehood.

History is never past. It plays an active role in shaping the present, and Saleem's story is an attempt to capture the dynamic relationship. He begins his life story thirty-two years before his birth, and from that moment, considers everything that has happened as being somehow related to his life. There is a connection between past and present, between the state and the individual.

The novel portrays the condition of Saleem with that of the nation, taking his ordeal through the historical incidents that happened at that particular period. The events in the novel chronicle the pains and sufferings of Saleem in par with the political and historical events yielding him to be a prey for them. As Saleem points:

I am the sum total of everything that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I'm gone which would not have happened if I had not come. (383)

Saleem cannot come out of the tangles of time as he wished for a change in his life. His pain of the destiny is clearly portrayed in his own words – “Why, alone of all the more-than-five-hundred-million, should I have to bear the burden of history?” (370)

Memory plays a vital role in determining the fate of the people all over the world. The memory is just a recollection of events that had happened in the past and stored deep in the mind of a person. It takes its return journey when the person comes in tact with the same situation. This is not simply a form of nostalgia. The past that the characters seek exists not in an earlier moment in history, but rather can be found elsewhere in the present.

Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates. Minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own. (211)

Time is the best healer of many wounds. One has to learn from the mistakes, if not they haven't learnt from their past, they repeat the same and their fate too remains the same. Time is what matters and it proves to be the best healer in these words: “She says, trying

uselessly to console me: 'What are you so long for in your face? Everybody forgets some small things, all the time!' (222) Padma was consoling Saleem when he went wrong in mentioning the exact time of the election for a reference.

Time is a culprit too. It acts according to the wish of the person. If one with power and potential enjoys the time, he's to reap what he does if time is not favorable for him. Rushdie characterizes time in par with the inconsistency of the day to-day's essential element in the voice of his character as:

... time, in my experience, has been as variable and inconstant as Bombay's electric power supply. Just telephone the speaking clock if you don't believe me – tied to electricity, it's usually a few hours wrong. Unless we're the ones who are wrong ... no people whose word for 'yesterday' is the same as their word for 'tomorrow' can be said to have a firm grip on the time. (402)

The character insists that the time is essential for each and every person who wanted to live the life to the fullest.

Time, of course determines the fate of any individual. The chaos that prevails in the minds of the children born in the midnight resembles the chaos of the nation. This is portrayed in various manners throughout the novel.

Midnight has many children; the offspring of Independence were not all human. Violence, corruption, poverty, generals, chaos, greed and peppercorn ... I had to go into exile to learn that the children of midnight were more varied than I – even I – had dreamed. (54)

Rushdie also portrays that these children born in the midnight possess the qualities of no other children. Saleem acts as a telepathic conduit, bringing hundreds of geographically disparate children into contact while also attempting to discover the meaning of their gifts. They undergo the most turmoil but never lose their hope in living harmoniously in the society. They are clear in their ideologies but also in a state of confusion which is expressed as “... the children of the hour of darkness were born, I'm afraid, in the midst of the age of darkness; so that although we found it easy to be brilliant, we were always confused about being good.” (189)

The children born closest to the stroke of midnight wield more powerful gifts than the others. Shiva “of the Knees”, Saleem's nemesis, and Parvati, called “Parvati-the-witch,” are two of these children with notable gifts and play important roles in Saleem's story. Although Shiva is a violent character, he is, nonetheless, a tragic figure, damaged and shaped by the forces of history and class. During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, Shiva lives up to his name and becomes a war hero, eventually promoted to the rank of major. Along with his military reputation, Shiva also becomes a noted lover among the women of Indian high society, siring a number of illegitimate children. With

unblessed fortune and unlike Saleem, his fate is not a favorable one like Saleem's. In the end, Shiva hunts Saleem down and turns him over to one of the camps opened during Indira Gandhi's state of Emergency, where Saleem, along with the other midnight's children, is administered an operation that renders him sterile. In this way, Shiva manages to effectively destroy the children of midnight.

“Shiva and Saleem, victor and victim; understand our rivalry, and you will gain understanding of the age in which you live. (The reverse of this statement is also true)” (482). The battle between Saleem and Shiva reflects the ancient, mythological battle between the creative and destructive forces in the world. The enmity and the tension between the two begin at the moment of their simultaneous births. The reference to Shiva, the Hindu god of both destruction and procreation, reflects not only the tension between destruction and creation but also the inextricably bound nature of these two forces.

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Machismo and Sexism in TV Drama: An analysis of 'La casa de papel' (Money-heist), The Spanish Netflix Series

Abstract

The modernised world lives in an illusion of equal rights celebrating women's freedom. Social media has emerged as a weapon for the voiceless. In the present scenario, feminism and gender neutral portrayal is demanded through this source of media widely around the world. Undoubtedly, television dramas have a strong impact on the minds of people. Injection of sexism in a discriminatory effect is making an innuendo on disparaging women in the society. Moreover, according to Independent.co.uk, sexual violence has long been television's favourite transgression. It is also interesting to note how sexist remarks are used to illuminate drama. The popular adage 'Female trauma for easy drama' has always been the evergreen trend. This paper delineates various characters of sexism as well as critically interrogates the pride of machismo in the Spanish Netflix TV series 'La casa de papel' translated to English as "Money Heist".

Keywords: Machismo, Hostile sexism, Benevolent sexism, Spanish series, patriarchy.

Fourth wave feminism in the 21st century has become widely popular and threatens the entire facet of misogynistic tribe. Women are becoming stronger day by day. What being a feminist in the 21st Century means: "We say to girls 'you can have ambition, but not too much. You should aim to be successful, but not too successful, otherwise you will threaten the man'" (Adichie). Despite of all the revolutionary movements for women empowerment, media still blindfolds women to become the second gender, subordinate to men. Visual media in turn creates a muscular impact on the society inducing subliminal machismo. In this developed world, media can be used as an effective tool to portray gender equality and as a weapon to eradicate gender discrimination. But the patriarchal dictatorship in media outweighs the laudable achievements of feminism.

It is rather shocking to identify the traces of sexism in the highly sophisticated and developed western culture. Modern day Spaniards are recklessly moving forward with their movement against sexism in language as well as in media. Many actors including Itziar Ituño (money-heist cast) have raised their voices against the prevalent sexism in tv shows. Media is one's spectacle to reality, thus sheds light on the non changing attitude towards women. From Franco's dictatorship denying every democratic right to women,

Spain has witnessed extremely horrible domination restricting woman's legal authority, professional career opportunities whereas praising their role as a confined wife prohibited to contraception, abortion, divorce and permitted to prostitution. Revolutionary feminist protests and movements displayed a transitional phase for woman in Spain by the end of Franco's rule.

The relevant facts about the sexist characters in TV shows are highlighted in their comments while talking about women. Exposure to all the prejudices always begins with language. Thus, discourse plays a vital role in this hypothesis.

Money Heist (Spanish: *La casa de papel*, transl. The House of Papers) is a Spanish Netflix series presenting the world's biggest heist (i.e., Royal Mint of Spain robbery) ever known created by Alex Pina. The professor, mastermind of the heist recruits eight people with specific abilities and names them after certain cities for making his dream come true. Episodes move forward through the bank employees becoming hostages of robbers, the negotiation process and the engaging showdown the robbers put forth for the police. In the first episode dated 2 May 2017, machismo and patriarchy appears as a sublime idea throughout the show, which the audience wouldn't notice because of the vigour the drama creates. Jack Mirkinson, contributor and senior media editor, *The Huffington Post* in his article “I am so, so tired of movies about men” says “I'm just tired of movie after movie about loser men and the brilliant women who melt down over them; of movie after movie that relentlessly privileges the male experience; of movies where all women seem to think about are men”. Apparently in *Money Heist*, we witness similar contradictions. Women are portrayed brave and strong later subjected to surrender before hostile sexism or benevolent sexism based on the “Ambivalent sexism theory” proposed by Peter Glick and Susan.T.Fiske.

Linguistic sexism significantly reigns over the entire series originating from the title itself. 'La casa de papel' or 'The house of papers' indicates the phenomenon of patriarchy in the language. Masculine gender predominates the Spanish language while spoken in the plural form. Masculine and feminine attributes in spanish language have labelled it as sexist. Despite of the feminist movements to transform language, media still propagates veiled machismo through the dialogues. The masculinity in the title thus perpetuates the reality and paves the way for rest of the traces of patriarchy in the series. The series throws light on “unequal social relations sustained through language use” (Cameron,D.2007 , Michelle Lazar ed. Feminist CDA). This is also notably translated to English as “Money Heist.” *La casa de papel*- means “The House of Papers” in English, in which Paper (noun) – Masculine – A piece of paper.

Alex Pina has been so delicate in portraying the entire theme from a women's perspective. Tokyo (Ursula Corbero), the homodiegetic narrator remains as a strong and daring feminist icon throughout the series . However, camouflaged machismo and sexism annoys the deep conscience of an audient only after coming out of the fantastic drama.

Moreover, the mastery of patriarchy is carefully attempted through the characters so that disparagement towards women is seldom noticed.

One among the major characters is Berlin (Pedro Alonso), who can be considered as the “God of Misogyny.” He is definitely one of a kind that no person would want to meet in their real life. Dark and dysfunctional characters have always captivated the minds of the fans. Berlin also makes the story more intriguing and interesting. The weird, narcissist character with homicidal tendencies had few months left for his death. Embracing the two values of honour and dignity he remains the boss of the heist who makes a triumphant sacrifice in the end surrendering himself to death, thereby justifying the bizarre attitude he had (Bye Beautiful, Part 2). Berlin can also be considered as a strong icon of patriarchy. Friedrich Engels defined patriarchy as “the world historical defeat of the female sex” (Engels 30). These traces can be rightly understood from the rhetorical and obscene dialogue delivery of the character. Some of the dialogues are:

“Look kid, women will give you sex and fun because they are programmed to tame you and reproduce. During labour, what comes between her legs is a nuclear disaster that will destroy everything. The wonderful cave where you used to put your thingy will never be the same and while she's cursing your name and asking for the epidural, she will shit herself. She will no longer be sexy and from that day on, that sucker will be her entire world. They are all the same. Believe me, I got divorced five times....” (Berlin to Rio- Lethal Negligence, Part 1).

And at another time, “My teacher gave me her matured body every time as if it were my fucking birthday. You know why? Because they can savour their lost youth before it all goes downhill and they age” (Berlin to Rio- Misfire, Part 2) .

The hostage character 'Ariadna' reinforces the dictatorship in Berlin. Ariadna submits herself to Berlin for mere survival. In a world of developed thoughts, we see that women are still portrayed to be submissive to men and commodified for sexual needs. Ariadna appears as a helpless character who gives up her morality and becomes the sexual toy for Berlin, reminding us that we are still stuck in the past (Cool Instability, Part 1). When Ariadna gets to know about the degenerative disease of her master, she decides to endure his activities as she will inherit the entire wealth of Berlin after his death (Against The Clock, Part 2). This also delineates the forced attitude to whore in order to support herself and hints us that women are still deemed to be the second sex despite all the protests for equality. It is a preset belief that rape can be considered as rape only when there is a “screaming victim,” unfortunately Ariadna becomes the new meaning for rape emphasizing on the fact that anything without consent is an attempt to rape. She was psychologically tortured and physically harassed, but the point is 'she surrendered before him, and its all for her survival'. It is a perturbing vision to watch such helpless woman

characters through which the media criticizes the whole revolution of women.

Raquel Murillo (Itziar Ituno) is another notable character in this series. She is the police officer who negotiated with the robbers but loses her job as the Professor (Alvaro Morte) deceives her with the most powerful weapon called 'love'. Raquel had an unsuccessful married life which ended up in divorce because of the domestic violence by her husband (Do as Planned, Part 1). She has a mother who tries to hide the onset of dementia and a young daughter still shaken by the separation of her parents. To add to her misery, she also has to face sexism and professional rivalry at work (Masked No Longer, Part 2). But at some point of the story even the audience feels like it wasn't the mistake of her husband, and this is where patriarchy hails over everything. The difference in the tonality of portrayal diminishes the woman's rights and veils her endurance. The basic foundation of such characters is definitely the idea of female trauma to initiate drama.

Living in the 21st century, TV dramas are still focused on middlebrow melodrama. Raquel could have been portrayed as a brave, bold and strong police officer presenting the feminine strength. But she is viewed to be the 'wife' over everything else and in instances where women thrive in certain areas, they have references to their marital status reflecting upon the achievement.

Despite all the popularity of the **#metoo** campaign and abortion rights, Denver (Jaime Lorente) persuades one of the hostages, Monica Gazthambide, so hard to avoid abortion (Lethal Negligence, Part 1). It is a women's personal right and decision about her life as far as the present scenario is concerned. The scene as such is not contradictory but the way the scene creates an unconscious impact on the people shows the contradiction. People are unconsciously set into an environment through Denver's dialogue that women must refrain from abortion and it is their sole duty to raise a child. The hostage, Monica Gazthambide (Esther Acebo) is indeed, an appreciable character in the story. She appears as a bold and beautiful woman who is defined to have Stockholm syndrome towards Denver. Later, when they live together after the first heist, and comes back for the second heist, Denver is disturbed. He does not want Monica to get indulged in the heist, he wants her to stay with the baby which Nairobi blatantly calls as Sexism (Aikido, Part 3). It is the political agenda that creates impact on the society leading further to social hypocrisy. Manifestation of woman as child bearers and housewives still proves that the earlier world has not actually left us, instead it normalises certain notions that the society wants to get rid of.

Arturo Roman, another hostage is an unforgettable character who paves the twists and turns into the plot by planning ways to escape. He deceives his wife, he deceives his secretary, i.e., Monica, he deceives another female hostage and all through the sexual weapon (Do as planned, Part 1). Arturo Roman, , the most hated character in the series, indirectly shows that even if it is love or rape, the consequences are wholly for the woman. Men could live a better life even after raping a lady. Those are the manipulated

'Gentlemen traits' to notice in the series. Moreover, in the third season, when Monica is convinced by him about his right to have a look at their baby, even though he wasn't ready to accept the responsibility, it exposes the conventional paternal rights merely based on biological connection (A Quick Vacation, Part 3). This also obliquely promotes the socially acclaimed father and demeans women as a weak minded being. Him attempting to rape one of the hostages shows the dominance of male sex even if both the sexes are captive (Pasodoble& Five Minutes Earlier,Part 4) . It is the lady who endures everything, who fears everyone, who has to protect herself from anyone other than herself. It is of course, the social and political implications that leads to weaker portrayal of woman, but at this moment we have to question how far the feminist movement has been successful when such subliminal sexism still undercover within the TV dramas. The scene created between the hostage Amanda and Arturo after the rape attempt shows definitely what is happening in the society today (TKO, Part 4). He justifies himself concluding it as her illusion or more of delusion from the drug she took from him. She is just another helpless, weak and obsolete woman character.

Apart from these clear cut examples of hostile sexism, the series also displays traces of benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism encompasses subjectively positive (for the sexist) attitudes toward women in traditional roles: protective paternalism, idealisation of women, and desire for intimate relations. Hostile and benevolent sexism may differ in the valence they place on the attitude object "women," but they share common assumptions (e.g., that women are the weaker sex): both presume traditional gender roles and both serve to justify and maintain patriarchal social structures (Peter Glick and Susan Fiske, March 1,1997).

Nairobi stands for the illustration of benevolent sexism. She is the most loved character in the series because of the strong and bold portrayal at the beginning. She represents the vigorous women spirit wholly from the start of the drama. The pure technique is to initiate sexism through benevolence. Later part of the story twists the tale emphasising "the ultimate aim of women to be motherhood" through Nairobi. The strongest character gradually weakens because her whole dream is to see her long lost son (Astray, Part 3). Emotionalised motherhood had always been the weakness of every woman. However this lovable character was shot dead in the fourth season (TKO, Part 4) , creating devastation and sympathy towards the character. 'Sad! She wasn't able to meet her son, her life motif'. She is displayed as such a strong character who questions every instance of inequality but later weakened by the highest calling of a women "become a mother". She even persuades the professor to give her a baby so that his intelligence and charisma will be induced in the child. This also shows women mentally anticipating themselves as weak and considering patriarchy as the dominant and the more intellectual part of the society. 'One way in which women can be anointed saint-like status is through their adherence to traditional gender roles associated to with motherhood'(Huang Y, Davies PG, Sibley CG, Osborne D, 2). "Women have served all these centuries as

looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size” (Woolf, 35).

Mastery over machismo can be clearly understood from the character 'Palermo'. He is more like a cheap replica of Berlin but a little more macho added to it. Similar to Berlin, Palermo's dialogues are the mirror to his misogyny and machismo. Once he makes an abusive remark about Tokyo: “Tokyo wants to use the same tweezers she uses to trim her jungle down there” (Palermo to Denver- Forty Eight Meters Underground, Part 3). Another instance would be when he states:

“The best sex in the world is gay, because there are no women involved. As men we need to expel our poison. Every few hours we need to boom,boom. Afterwards, we feel revulsion towards whatever we expelled it into. It does not matter what it is, we reject it and saunas where they meet up and relieve, it's seminal altruism. Now, where are the saunas for women? Doesn't exist. It's because female sexuality is conditioned by procreation. In one way or the other, you are ultimately looking for men to exchange genes with, to form a family, but we have only one thing to think- ejaculate” (Palermo's speech –Boom Boom Ciao, Part 3).

We understand the extremity of misogyny in Palermo through these dialogues. He is an abnormal egocentric narcissist obsessed with power. For instance, when he loses power over the heist to Tokyo he doesn't hesitate to kill, betray or to create chaos (Anatomy Lesson & Berlin's Wedding, Part 4). Palermo does promote excessive pride of the male gender indirectly inducing hatred towards women, defaming them as incapacitated and submissive.

The robin hood portrayal of professor is incomparable and people unfathomably loves this mastermind. However, emphasising on sexism against women, there are traces of sexual abuses towards men as well. Men are always portrayed as 'the want for sexual pleasure'. Helsinki's blind love towards Palermo shows the weakness among the same gender itself (Boom Boom Ciao, Part 3).

Almost all the characters of the series covered, this paper tries to recapitulate the subliminal machismo and sexism that our media injects subconsciously. The character-persona information leads us to unpin the psychological theories of sexism. As G.D. Anderson founder of The COVA project quoted “Feminism isn't about making women stronger. Women are already strong, it is about changing the way the world perceives that strength”. And of course, the way how a woman is perceived by the world depends upon the perpetuating vision of hers in the media. It is indeed, high time to shatter the preset prejudices and the use of 'her' as a tool for sexism just to make drama more interesting than ever. Such representations even alters women's own perceptions about themselves, because the conscious power of the visual media is immense. Attitudes of people based on drama when viewed through the lens of sexism can be entirely altered by depicting

women as strong and successful human beings who are not mere toys at the hands of patriarchy or mere sex symbols.

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Ritualistic Truth: A Cultural Study of Food Rituals in the Selected Texts of Modern Indian Literatures

Abstract

*In his seminal work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, Durkheim writes that individuals who make up a social group “feel bound to one another because of their common beliefs,” which are supposedly constructed around perceived truths. Further, these beliefs are rendered sacred through various social rituals, as the practise of rituals is the binding force that strengthens a community. Rituals not only pervade the everyday lives of people, but also get passed from generation to generation, thus giving a sense of continuity in life. Each of the rituals that is practised by a community can be said to endorse certain truths about that community and thereby accord a certain identity to its members. A community can be said to become powerful through these ritualistic truths. Michel Foucault, the French theorist makes an interesting connection between truth and power. According to him, each society has its ‘regime of truth,’ its “general politics” of truth, by which he means types of discourses that are accepted and made functional as true. It also refers to mechanisms and procedures which enable an individual to distinguish true and false statements; sanctioning power/special status to those who are in charge of saying what counts as true (“Foucault: power is everywhere”). Therefore, it can be inferred that the truths embedded in the belief system are the building blocks of a society and that rituals serve as material manifestations that uphold community-sanctioned truths. In other words, rituals become a badge of identity both for individuals as well as for a community. In the race for proving the legitimacy of its identity, different religious communities claim their supremacy through a set of religious practices in the form of rituals. By practicing rituals prescribed by a particular religion, the members of that religion claim to uphold truths (discourses) embedded in their religion.*

*The present paper focuses on one such set of rituals constructed around food, because in a multicultural country like India, food is an important cultural sign. The paper examines representations of food rituals with a view to deciphering the underlying belief system in two texts—Vaidehi’s *Vasudeva’s Family: Asprushyaru* (2012) and Baby Kamble’s *The Prisons We Broke* (2009). The texts, being authored by writers belonging to different castes (Vaidehi, a Brahmin and Baby Kamble, a Dalit), present food rituals performed in their respective castes. The paper argues that the conventions related to food rituals in different castes in India remain within the strong hold of religion and the*

truth it subscribes to. In the changing contexts of time, however, do the food rituals remain unchanged or get modified? If so, what happens to the conventionally prescribed identity of communities which are strongly entrenched in sanctified food rituals? What are the underlying power discourses (truths) that these texts unravel through food rituals? These are some of the key concerns of the present paper.

Key Words: Food rituals, Regime of Truth, Power, Discursive Practices, Purity/Pollution, “Organic Intellectual,” “Liminoid.”

India, being a land of many religions and pluralistic cultures, witnesses competing claims of religious supremacy, and hence, a constant struggle for power among different religions. Through its discourses of antiquity and original inhabitancy, Hinduism has established itself as the dominant religion in India. Despite many foreign invasions and modern influences, the caste system in Hinduism has remained more or less stable, owing to the powerful and complex structures of hierarchy, exploitation and disenfranchisement. The overarching traditional theory claims that the caste system in Hinduism is of divine origin, thereby according it a strong irreversibility. It declares that the caste system is an extension of the Varna system, where the four Varnas originated from the different parts of the body of Brahma, the creator of universe. Accordingly, Brahmins, coming from the head of Brahma occupy the highest position whereas the Shudras, coming from the feet of Brahma occupy the lowest position. Hence, it follows that Brahmins are in charge of the specialized knowledge of the rituals and traditions prescribed in Hinduism and by virtue of possession of such knowledge, theirs is the most superior caste. Among all the rituals, rituals surrounding food are the most important in maintaining this hierarchical division of caste.

The structural hierarchy of caste is preserved through various substructures of power division within each caste and through formalized ritual practices. Durkheim’s division of religious beliefs into ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ is relevant here to understand the power struggle (truths) among different castes. It is not an exaggeration that caste system in India is mainly embodied through food practices; they supplement the sacred/profane binary. This binary translates into reality, as Durkheim states that the sacred is made real through various things—what people eat, the material objects (including living things) that they revere, the way special spaces are marked out and the way people treat their bodies. Further, he understands the sacred actions as rituals. In India, where food is an important cultural marker, food rituals gain prominence in upholding religious truths. For instance, among the Hindus, people eating non vegetarian food are considered ‘polluted’ or belonging to a lower caste by the people subscribing to vegetarian food practices, who consider themselves as ‘pure’ and belonging to an upper caste. Thus, food practices and thereby food rituals become all the more significant to understand the social fabric of

Hinduism.

The first text, *Vaidehi's Vasudeva's Family: Asprushyaru* is a sensitive portrayal of the inhuman practice of untouchability through the politics of purity and pollution. The story revolves around Bhaskara (son, of a Brahmin widow Parthakka) who marries a Koosa (low caste) woman. Unable to come to terms with this fact, Parthakka lives with her brother Vasudevaraya, away from her son's family. However, Sheena, Vasudevaraya's son, belongs to a new generation, thinks radically and questions the traditional beliefs and practices, thereby forcing his father to reconsider his thoughts about the traditions that they follow. The text lays open various food rituals that demonstrate some veiled truths about the caste system in India.

Like Durkheim, Brett and McKay argue that rituals protect and nourish a group's culture and identity: "Rituals have the ability to both unify and divide. They are one of the key things that create a group's culture and distinguish one community from another" ("The Rites of Manhood: Man's Need for Ritual"). This can be linked to Foucault's thoughts on power as a major source of social discipline and conformity. Foucault's approach to power is that it goes beyond politics and is an everyday, tangible social phenomenon. Discipline and control of physical bodies give rise to 'discursive practices' that define what acceptable, sanctioned, and deviant etc. is, but these discursive practices are in a constant flux. In the Hindu cultural context, the Brahmins who adhere to vegetarian food practices consider themselves superior and believe themselves to be on the highest rung of the social ladder. The rituals surrounding vegetarian food practices have kept the Brahmin community away from the meat eating people, whom the Brahmins consider as low caste people. In *Vasudeva's Family*, Shami, Vasudevaraya's daughter goes to a Christian midwife's house to call her to their house as her sister is due for a delivery. When Shami is offered milk and bread at the midwife's house, she runs away refusing it, as she is warned by Parthakka, "Don't eat anything in their house! Those people eat meat" (1). Parthakka has successfully instilled in Shami and other family members to conform to the purity/pollution codes of Brahmin caste. Parthakka believes that eating anything in a person's house, who eats meat, will pollute the Brahmins and hence warns Shami. Vegetarianism is not a preference or a choice, but a discursive practice whereby physical bodies are controlled. In another incident, Parthakka insists that Shiva, another son of Vasudevaraya, should take a ritual bath after touching the glass in which a Koosa drank. She advises him to pour water on his head as she believes that head is a superior part of the body and that Shiva will get purified only when he takes a head bath. By insisting that Shiva should have his ritual bath, Parthakka wants to imbibe the notion of sacredness and the purity of their caste in his mind. As Jessica MacLellan points out, as societies evolve and become more complex, people who possess the specialized knowledge about rituals hold a superior position in the social hierarchy. Parthakka, who has lived all her life, strictly following the rituals prescribed by

Brahminism, is an expert in rituals and thereby holds a superior position in Brahmin society. Of all the rituals, rituals related to touch and food are the most intense, and Parthakka zealously guards them. She commands respect as her orders are never overlooked by others in Vasudevaraya's family.

Foucault's assertion that discursive practices of power are in constant flux is validated when Shami, belonging to the new generation, feels that Parthakka should not have restricted her from eating in the midwife's house. She thinks, "So what if they eat meat? Would the bread have eaten meat?" (2). Shami's resistance to the restraints exercised on her, indicates that changes are imminent in the Brahmin household with the new generation. With the change in generations and the transformation of societies from traditional to modern, a drift can also be noted, in the ideologies of people subscribing to religious truths. In this context, Turner's views on the differences between rituals in traditional and modern societies become significant. Turner uses the term "liminoid" to describe the ritual experience in modern society as against the term "liminal" which describes the ritual experiences in the traditional society:

Liminal experiences tend to be collective, centrally integrated into the total social process, structured by collective symbols, and ultimately functional. Liminoid experiences on the other hand, are often individual, develop apart from central political process, are more idiosyncratic, and often contain social critique, exposing the injustices, immoralities etc. of the mainstream economic and political structures and organizations (Bent Steeg Larsen and Thomas Tufte, 93).

Sheena, the son of Vasudevaraya is a rebel in their house with his modern, rational ideas. He is once admonished by his mother for eating in Parthakka's son Bhaskara's house, as Bhaskara has married a Koosa lady. Sheena's mother expresses her anguish saying that the upanayana (initiation into Brahminhood) ceremony performed for Sheena is a waste, because the ritual of upanayana is to uphold the sacredness of Brahmin identity. Thus, Sheena's mother feels that her son has performed a profane act by eating the food prepared by a Koosa. Sheena, however, retorts that at his college he eats with people from different countries coming from different religion and that "in future there might be a separate caste of people who keep harping on caste all the time and that most of the others won't care" (61). With their modern thinking Sheena and Shami, within their family circle, show preference for liminoid experience and question the normative structures of truth (as demonstrated through food practices) related to Brahmin supremacy and power. Changes in power relations, however, at a macro level are only hinted at as happening in future.

The food rituals in the second text, Baby Kamble's autobiography *The Prisons We Broke*, provide a striking contrast to Vaidehi's text. Kamble describes the sad plight of the people of the Mahar caste, who live in destitute conditions, deprived of food and other

basic essentials of living, as they are considered untouchables by the upper castes. The Mahars, unlike the upper castes (who use food to discriminate), have created rituals around food to mainly fill their stomachs. Food rituals give Mahars an opportunity to at least imagine a life of dignity and crave for all that they cannot have in reality. As Brett and McKay observe, “As opposed to seeing things only ‘as-is,’ ritual creates a shared ‘as-if,’ a shared ‘could-be.’” Food that is mainly absent in their everyday lives makes its presence in the month of Ashad, which is filled with food rituals that are meant to gain access to food.

The divine theory of caste disseminates discourses that function as true; the rituals regulate the behaviour of both the upper castes as well as the lower castes. Foucault links the notion of truth to the explicitly political notion of regime:

“Truth” is a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and functioning of statements”; it is linked “by a circular relation to systems of power which produce it and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which redirect it (Lorenzini, 3)

Accordingly, truth is not just an instrument of coercion, but diffusive and discursive. “A regime of truth is thus the strategic field within which truth is produced and becomes a tactical element in the functioning of a certain number of power relations” (Lorenzini, 3). The unequal distribution of resources is strictly organized around the categorization of India into caste groups and their hierarchical positions. The Mahars are forced to occupy the marginal space, to receive discarded products, as per the religious strictures, which further determine their cultural identity of them. Although the Mahars produce food grains, they are reduced to beg for leftovers from the upper castes who take away the lion’s share of the produce.

The inability to consume cooked food and dependency on discarded food from the caste Hindus has serious political undertones. Amidst constant efforts from the upper castes to control and limit various geographical, social and cultural spaces through the denial of cooked food, the Mahar community creates an occasional availability of such food through ritualistic space. The rituals that Mahars perform are all centered on food; these rituals can be read as mechanisms by which Mahars can channel and process that which is difficult to grapple with (death and hunger) and discover new truths about themselves and the world. Since the religious strictures within Hinduism leave the Mahars with less choice to consume fresh/cooked food, the Mahars create a space through rituals to give them a chance to cook fresh food. Such an attempt by the Mahars can be interpreted as their efforts at negotiating the given cultural space. Although the caste hierarchy within Hinduism denies no space for cooked food, cooking food within the caste specific rituals is no threat to the religious subjugation the Mahars have already been pushed into. Thus the small, negotiated ritualistic space represents the hidden desire in the Mahar

psychology to access cooked food. It also exposes caste as the “metapower” or the “regime of truth” that pervades Hindu society.

Kamble describes the month of Ashadh as “A blessing for their starved bodies—when the tongue was satiated with the tastes it loved” (12). In the annual calendar of the Mahars, Ashadh occupies a special place because of food related rituals. This one month of happiness created through food develops an iron will in their hearts to endure the suffering the rest of the year holds for them. The two kinds of freshly cooked food that are associated with the rituals of Ashadh are chapatis soaked in jaggery water and the buffalo meat during the buffalo fair. Cooking and serving these two food items are associated with community-specific rituals, which strengthen the bonding among the people. Women, who are always with empty stomachs are given importance during the month of Ashadh: the daughters-in-law from other families are invited to perform the rituals and are fed with sweet chapatis. The Mahar women’s struggle for existence in their doubly marginalized world is an indication of dissemination of power in everyday life. As Kamble reflects: “If the Mahar community is the ‘other’ for the Brahmins, Mahar woman becomes the ‘other’ for the Mahar men” (xv). After three weeks of Ashadha, during Amavasya, buffalo jatra or rede jatra takes place during which, the whole community shares the sacrificial buffalo meat. The graphic description of this—how the buffalo is bathed, massaged, decorated with flowers, haldi-kumkum and then worshipped before being sacrificed—projects the longing and the reverence the Mahars possess in their subconscious minds towards cooked food. Various parts of the buffalo are prepared into distinctive dishes, thus making these characteristically Mahar food. Kamble says, “Memories of the buffalo fair will help them survive their miserable and wretched lives. They would live in their dirt pits on the periphery of the village, like discarded rags, ignored by society, and wait for the buffalo fair to come again the following year” (35). Thus the rituals of cooked food represent the collective subconscious desire for change, dignity and hope.

The embers of desire and hope for change find their finest expression in Dr. Ambedkar, who is an “organic intellectual” in Foucauldian sense. Foucault believed in our capacities to recognise and question socialised norms and constraints. According to Foucault, it is not to seek some “absolute truth” that someone challenges power, but the desire is “of detaching the power of truth from forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time” (qtd in Rabinow, 1991). Thereby, Foucault renders discourse as a site that transmits, produces power/truth; but also, undermines and exposes it. Kamble elaborates on how Ambedkar as an “organic intellectual,” brought in a radical shift to the existence and identity of the Mahars. By questioning and exposing the hegemonic control of the caste theory of the Brahmins, Ambedkar and his followers put in relentless efforts to convince that the practice of eating dead cattle and leftovers has to be done away with. Kamble’s grateful submission that Ambedkar brought the much awaited change in their food practices can also be placed in the context of Turner’s theory on the

shift from liminal to liminoid experiences of rituals. Change in their food practices, Kamble observes, has enabled the Mahars to come out of the notion of pollution; she proudly asserts that she is a Mahar:

Today, our young educated people are ashamed of being called a Mahar. But what is there to be ashamed of? We are the great race of the Mahars of Maharashtra. We are its real original inhabitants, the sons of the soil. The name of this land is also derived from our name. I love our caste name, Mahar? it flows in my veins, in my blood, and reminds me of our terrific struggle for truth. (Kamble xiii)

From being cast away to the margins of the village and near garbage pits, to reclaiming the land as ‘the original inhabitants,’ describing themselves as ‘sons of the soil,’ Kamble’s narrative not only ruptures the hegemonic, divine caste theory of Hinduism, but also exposes the discursive nature of all such theories.

The texts analysed in the paper demonstrate that food rituals are not just performed to conform to the beliefs (truths) of the communities. They are part of the ‘metapower’ structure that pervades society. The food rituals transcend the sacred/profane dichotomy (Durkheim) and get embedded in the power/truth discourses (Foucault) of caste system. They also become sites of transgression and resistance, as shown in Vasudeva’s *Family and The Prisons We Broke*, when they unsettle the power of truth from the forms of hegemony. In *Vasudeva’s Family*, Vasudeva himself is compelled to think if he is right in subscribing to the discriminatory rituals of his caste; in Kamble’s novel, she urges the Mahar community to give up the food habits imposed by the upper castes, and follow the revolutionary path of Babasaheb Ambedkar. In both the texts, it can be noticed that with modernity, ritualistic truths get challenged and get modified to suit the demands of the times, thereby transgressing the notions of purity and pollution. In conclusion, it can be understood that with modernisation, the ritualistic truths are more prone to be subjected to individual’s rationale much in sync with Turner’s definition of ‘liminoid,’ which may/may not transform community’s power domains; nevertheless, they hold immense potential for transformation.

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An Excruciating Journey into the Traumatized Self: Unveiling the Dark Realities of Urban Experiences in Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*

Abstract

Jeet Thayil's Narcopolis can be called as a piece of innocent nostalgia which focuses on the biological and psychological trauma experienced by the transgenders. Trauma is often described as an after effect of any painful experience whether physical or mental. The novel is a journey to the dark realities of Bombay during the late 1970s and 1980s followed by the open discussions on drugs, sex, addiction, love, God etc. The novel depicts the life of the meanest people who struggles within them for the sake of survival. The plot mainly concentrates on the character Dimple, a transgender whose unconscious mind carries the seeds of past experience and the kind of psychological trauma she had undergone. All the characters in Narcopolis are victims of traumatic incidents. Since the culture of Bombay was immersed with opium production during the late seventies and eighties, many of the characters in the novel finds opium as an antidote for their pain, loneliness and violence. Thayil himself is a recovering addict, which undoubtedly gives him some insight into the interior lives of these addicts. The paper is an attempt to explore the psychological trauma of the individuals who got entrapped in the menacing urban experiences as represented by Thayil in his partly autobiographical novel.

Key Words: trauma, transgender, urban, psyche, stress

Life is always a jigsaw puzzle of varied experiences and putting life into letters is indeed a task that needs exuberant mastery. The craft of writing lives will only bear fruits when the readers are able to relate the experiences that they are going through. Autobiographies, biographies and memoirs are not only pieces of putting life into writing. There are works of fiction where the writer presents before the readers many of the experiences of their lives through fictional characters. Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis* can be called as a piece of innocent nostalgia and the novel is a journey to the dark realities of Bombay during the late 1970s and 1980s followed by the open discussions on drugs, sex, addiction, love, God etc. The novel depicts the life of the meanest people who struggles within them for the sake of survival. *Thayil himself is a recovering addict, which undoubtedly gives him some insight into the interior lives of these addicts.* All the characters in *Narcopolis* are victims of traumatic incidents. The novel becomes more

significant as it also entwines the traumatic experiences of transgenders. The writer being a witness to the simmering transitions of Bombay and the ups and downs of the opium industry poignantly portrays the trauma of those people who lived in the midst of these dark realities of urban life.

The novel *Narcopolis* was shortlisted for the 2012 Man Booker Prize. Some of the critics called the novel as a disturbing tale. In the interview by Anuja Jaiman, Thayil claimed that “his inspiration to write *Narcopolis* was Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*” (2). The impending trauma is the thread that binds the characters of this novel together. Dr. Sigmund Freud, father of modern psychology classified human mind into conscious mind, sub-conscious mind and unconscious mind. Conscious and sub-conscious minds are the means and doors to the unconscious mind. The unconscious mind is the innermost state of mind. Trauma is like wound in our psyche and all the traumatic incidents are stored in our unconscious mind. Human beings lose their normal state of mind when they encounter with an incident which is beyond their control. Such incidents are sudden and happen involuntarily. Trauma is therefore a psychological crack on human psyche. Bassel A. Van der Kolk states: “Traumatisation occurs when both internal and external resources are inadequate to cope with external threat” (393). All the characters in *Narcopolis* are victims of traumatic incidents. Since the culture of Bombay was immersed with opium production during the late seventies and eighties, many of the characters in the novel finds opium as an antidote for their pain, loneliness and violence.

The theoretical framework of trauma is not an easy code to crack as it is based on human psyche. Trauma is often described as an after effect of any painful experience whether physical or mental. It can happen to a person at any time. Human psyche is not too strong enough to take an unexpected wound, which actually causes Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The field of trauma studies in literary criticism gained significant attention in 1996 with publication of Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* and Kali Tal's *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literature of Trauma*. A theoretical trend was introduced by Caruth who pioneered a psychoanalytical approach that suggests trauma is an unsolvable problem of the unconscious. Psychological trauma is like an irremovable mark which is encrypted in our psyche. It will destroy all the tranquillity and severity of the mind and put the individual into a world of depression and loneliness. In the words of Freud and Lacan trauma is the return of the repressed and a sense of absence.

Since many of the anxiety arousing experiences are stored in the memory, there are chances for repressed memories to pop up from the unconscious mind to conscious mind. This is one of the reasons for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Since there are certain loopholes in our memory there are chances that past will infiltrate to the present through these holes. Clark defined trauma as:

The events that involve an actual threat or injury to oneself or others and that are accompanied by feelings of helplessness, fear or horror. Such events can be either discrete episodes such as kidnapping or a rape or prolonged and repetitive occurrences such as ongoing physical or sexual abuse. (196)

Trauma is an emotional shock, producing a disturbance, more or less enduring of mental functions. The concept of shock is central to this definition of trauma. The trauma which happens due to repeated exposure is worse than the other. Here the victim may undergo a perpetual fear and despair. "They may engender feelings of victimization, loss of control, despair and hopelessness and believes that the world is unsafe and unfair" (Moroz 1). The victim starts to see the world as a very mild and alien. The people who have been undergoing this traumatic experience may exhibit the tendency to commit suicide. It is very high in the case of transgender, for they are always in the chaotic situations and crisis. The plight of the people who gets traumatic experiences in the childhood is very worse. The chronic events like harassment, bullying and sexual abuse are the worst among them. They will make un-curable wounds in the psyche.

The youth who are undergoing such experiences often come to believe there is something inherently wrong with them, that they are at fault, unlovable, hateful, helpless and unworthy of protection and love. Such feelings led to poor self image, self abandonment and self destructiveness. Ultimately these feelings may create a victim state of body-mind-spirit that leaves the adult vulnerable to subsequent trauma and re-victimisation. (2)

Such experiences are very much evident in *Narcopolis*. The trauma arising from such childhood experiences leave a mark of dark recess in human psyche. How much the victim tries to forget about the traumatic experience, it will perpetually re-experienced in a painful dissociated traumatic present. The experience of trauma becomes fixed or frozen in time. It refuses to be represented as past, but is perpetually re-experienced in a painful dissociated traumatic present. A flashback is a sudden intrusive re-experiencing of a fragment of one of those traumatic, unverbilized memories. During a flashback, people become overwhelmed with the same emotions they felt at the time of the trauma. Their minds can become flooded with the images, emotions and physical sensations associated with the trauma. It is also a fact that someone who experiences a flashback do not actually remembers the experience rather they relive it.

In psychology, trauma is often understood as an emotion or as a psychic injury. It is a plight that this trauma may last until the victim dies. Psychological trauma is a subject of great professional and public interest. It can cause certain serious emotional behavioural difficulties include expressions of anxiety, aggression, conduct and sexualised behaviour,

eating disorder, somatisation and substance abuse. Human psyche is therefore so tender that if we try to make a scratch, it will make irremovable marks on it. Thayil's *Narcopolis* opens the door to a world of characters moved by this wave of traumatic life.

Narcopolis is a reflection of Mumbai in the late 1970s. It constructs a form which captures a feeling and brings an inclusive sympathy to the possibilities of human and social behaviour. In this novel opium is a symbol of freedom, memory, dream and religion. Every character in the novel has a history infused with trauma. The common denominator of these people is psychological and physical pain. Even though the entire plot seems to be non-linear, one could see the linearity in the psychological agony faced by each character. Thayil divides the entire novel into four books and it revolves around the city of Bombay. Rashid's opium den is the central attraction of the novel. It is the opium pipe who is giving voice to the marginalized and the oppressed suffering with psychological trauma. Thayil introduces all the major characters in the first Book whom he had close relationship with. By providing the title "The City of O", he is actually calling Bombay as an opium city. The use of heroin in the opening sentence is not a misspelling of heroine. Bombay is a drug that sucks people leading them to a seething maw. Much of the plot in the first Book revolves around Rashid's khana.

In the second Book "The Story of Pipe" reader is introduced to Mr. Lee, who is a victim of cracked identity. Being a Chinese refugee running a Chinese khana in Bombay, he does not have a firm ground for himself to claim his identity. He has his own tale of woe, which is infused with memories about the broken relationship between his parents, death of his father, Mao Cultural Revolution, physical and mental torturing from the authorities and finally being nobody in an unknown culture. He had no intention to stay in Bombay but it was the presence of sea that stopped him, the only thing about Bombay that did not disgust him. He did not have any attachments towards anyone expect Dimple. The section is entirely about the traumatic experiences he had encountered in his lifetime. When he came to Bombay the only ancestral property left with him was opium pipes, the only comfort. Later Dimple came to his life as a consoler. He shared his past, present and future dreams to Dimple which he had carried in his unconscious mind for a long time. He saw Dimple as a loophole to fulfil his dreams. Both of them find each other's presence an antidote for their inner turmoil. The memories about the past were like unhealed wound which is more painful than the physical pain which he is currently undergoing. His childhood was completely tortured with fear and cracked family relations. He used to have traumatized dreams in his sleep, being alone and dislocated in a foreign land. When he became part of army he was sent to Wuhan by the Party in order to make a report about the nation. But his visit turned out to be a horrific account of torture and sufferings which entirely changed his career and life as a whole. He had even seen a man being killed and slaughtered without any mercy:

The third Book "The Intoxicated" centres on Rashid and the kind of attachment he

develops with Dimple. Being a sufferer, she is a comforter for many of the people that revolves around her world. One such character is Rashid. Initially he was a skinny criminal trying to make a name and then he turned out to be a fat businessman, an entrepreneur. At the end of it all he would admit: “none of it gives me a moment of peace in my head” (135). He never thought his life would turn out to be an utter failure, alienated from the pleasures of the world. Book Three draws the traumatized stage of Rashid along with the death of his loved ones. Readers could see that he shares his agony, pain, sufferings to Dimple rather than to his family. It is a truthful account deriving the fact that every human being suffering from trauma wants to have someone to listen. It was Rashid who takes Dimple out from the brothel. It is he who changed Dimple to Zeenet. It is after the death of Dimple his mind turned out to be completely blank and sunk into a complete traumatized situation. He missed her presence so badly.

It is only in the fourth Book titled “Some Uses of Reincarnation” one could see the psychological pain in the words of Rashid. Dimple is the one character that embodies the heart and soul of the book. She was charismatic and elegant for the outsiders but within her carries the most painful experience of being a eunuch. She is unable to find a space for herself with others. Buried in Dimple's emotional memories is an unloved childhood, where she is abandoned and sold to a priest by his widowed mother followed by her transformation into eunuch. Even though she tries to forget her past, her unconscious mind revisits her conscious mind and reminds about her incompleteness. “The pain was back and it was as if she'd never been free of it and would never again be free” (69). The only source to ease her pain is through the consumption of opium. Cathy Caruth explains that the victim's capacity to recover repressed memories long after the life threatening event is inherent in the traumatic experience and can enable healing. In the case of Dimple what Caruth put forth is not a practical choice. There is an element within her that reminds Dimple about her past: the pain of castration. Even she does not have the love and care from the society either. It is a truth that traumatized person need the support not only from the family but also from the people around their world. She is haunted by the feelings of loneliness and knows that nothing worse could happen to her. She felt that all those who loved her have died and she too is dead. Death is suggestive of her soul's death. She knew that she is unprotected from herself and from the society. Thayil has portrayed beautifully about the intimate relationship between Dimple and Mr. Lee. Both of them have traumatised past which is broken and haunting. Her relation with him provides her hopes and helps her to accept her identity as a transgender. Dimple narrates her whole story of broken identity to him. She had very few memories of her mother, but they were vivid and she would carry them with her for the rest of her life.

It is a fact that transgender experience physical as well as mental torture. Even though she was taken to the rehab centre she knew that society tattooed her identity as a eunuch. Thayil depicted her identity as a human being as the narrator leaves the rehab centre he

felt “the face of people [he] knew blurred and resembled into the face that seemed very familiar to [him], though [he] couldn't say why, the face of sister [he]'d lost, or a son [he]'d never known or the face of someone loved, who died” (224). Dimple at the end of the novel is crushed by the hands of death, a death born out of psychological trauma. Even after her death she is a haunting presence for Rashid as well as for the narrator. Rashid narrated the pain she had suffered at her final stage. All through her life she was a comforting presence for many people but nothing takes away her trauma. Through Dimple, Thayil is giving voice to the transgenders who are pushed towards the margin of society. Dimple's character typifies the poverty, chaos and unthinkable suffering of transgender.

Thus we it is evident that the novel is a scathing portrayal of the wounded psyche of so many lives that we see around. The excruciating journey into their traumatic selves done by Thayil is a craft of sheer brilliance and prudence. Thus the novel becomes a re-iteration of the life we see around.

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Reclaiming the Self through the Language of Food: A Study of Anita Nair's *Alphabet Soup for Lovers*

Abstract

Food constitutes one of the most interesting languages of communication, and also reflects the shifts in life styles of people of a particular culture. In the book Food and Culture, the French theorist, Roland Barthes states, "Substances, techniques of preparation, habits, all become part of a system of differences in signification; and as soon as this happens, we have communication by way of food" (25). The items of food, the texture of food, the colour, taste, smell of foods, ways of preparation and norms around cooking, eating, and serving tend to become important 'signs' of this language to render the significance of food in a socio-cultural set up. Memories associated with food also become an important signifier in the language of food. Further, food can be viewed as the language of women to 'write their self,' as they are commonly associated with food preparation and serving their families. In the process of expression through food, consciously or unconsciously, women are also involved in articulating their 'self,' and therefore, in constructing an identity for themselves. Does food, as a system of communication, provide a powerful medium for women to bring to fore their problems and struggles they face in their attempt to establish themselves as individuals? Since food is a cultural product, do culinary fictions reveal the contours of a specific culture and its formulations of women? The present paper intends to look into these questions by considering Anita Nair's Alphabet Soup for Lovers as a significant culinary fiction that narrates the journey of two women who reclaim their self-identity through the language of food.

Key Words: Food, Women, Identity and Self-reclamation.

Lena Abraham and KK lives an uneventful married life on the tea estate of Anamalai hills. Komathi is Lena's cook, with a buried past, who shares a fraught relationship with Lena. Going by the advice of her granddaughter, Komathi begins to learn English alphabet through food. ShoolaPani, South Indian cinema's heartthrob, an actor in flight from his own stardom, comes to spend some solitary time at a homestay run by Lena and KK. When Lena meets ShoolaPani something blazes between them that neither could have predicted. Soon Lena becomes ShoolaPani's Lee and he her Ship and Arcadia the place they meet. Komathi narrates Lena's and ShoolaPani's intense tale of passion and love, as she learns each letter of the English alphabet. Each letter starting from A to Z is either related to Lena's present or Komathi's past. Nair serves a delicious soup of

alphabets to her readers through Komathi's alphabet learning exercise, while food gains the status of a character in the narrative. Partly told in Komathi's perspective, Nair enthralls her readers with adulterous affairs of both Komathi and Lena.

Nair's narrative can be analyzed as the process of self-reclamation of her women characters. Within the narrative framework of the novel, Nair develops a parallel narrative through the discourse of food, in the form of description of nature of food items and the recipes of specific dishes. Lena and her cook Komathi undergo a process of self-awareness during the course of the novel. Komathi, the ubiquitous narrator, creates a discourse through food, when she begins to learn English alphabets, relating each alphabet to the name of a vegetable, fruit or a dish in Tamizh language. All set to traverse a new world of learning English alphabet, Komathi proudly asserts "Food, I know, food will never elude me, unlike everything else that has. Be it men, wealth happiness and, it seems, the alphabet" (Nair 4). Thus, begins Komathi's learning experience through the language of food. She finds it easier to understand the world through food and is sure that food will never evade her like other things in her life. Going by the phonetic sound of each alphabet in English, Komathi tries to find an equivalent food item in Tamil language that begins with the same phonetic sound. Her ruminations around alphabets and food items spread across the narrative to reveal the self-discovery of Komathi and Lena Abraham. In the process of learning, each new alphabet brings with it memories that are signified through correlated vegetables and dishes, along with the norms and codes associated with eating, preparing and serving of these dishes. The details about the colour, taste and smell of foods evoke and signify specific moments in Komathi's past life and Lena's present life. These moments hold key to how Komathi and Lena cross-over the phases of self-denigration and move towards self-realization in order to construct a new identity for themselves.

Komathi's understanding of the first alphabet in English, 'A' sets the tone of the novel, as the narrative is interspersed with recipes. Komathi points to Lena and her husband KK, who live a monotonous and uneventful marriage of convenience and mutual tolerance "dead as a doormat" (93). In Komathi's perspective, they live like "store-bought Appalam. Seemingly perfect but with neither flavour nor taste" (Nair 5). So, Komathi's alphabet A is represented by homemade Arisiappalam that is suggestive of fullness in taste. She muses telling Lena, (whom she calls Leema) that she needs an arisiapplamin life too. Komathi feels a husband and wife's relationship should be a mix of love, hate, joys, sorrows and other emotions like the various ingredients that add to make tasty Arisiappalam, if they are to lead a happy married life. The alphabet C is a metaphor for Colocasia or Cheppankizhangu, a tuber buried like Komathi's past. It stirs up her memory of her aachi giving her a life lesson in the guise of a cooking lesson of how to pick the perfect cheppankizhangu, asking Komathi to "look for the plump, rounded ones not the hairy knobby ones; they will be mealy in the mouth" (27) when she teaches Komathi about it for the first time. Komathi relates it to Leema saying Leema "pretends to be a hairy,

knobby person when what she is, is plump and rounded” (28). So, now as a cook while cleaning cheppankiahangu, she is reminded of the process of cleaning it by putting it in a cloth and beating it against a stone after which the skin flakes off. Relating it to Leema's life, Komathi feels someone has to violently and patiently flake the skin off Leema, who now leads a repressed life with KK “with an ease that comes from long years of having shared a bed, board and roof with him” (15). Komathi observes Leema getting close to the actor, ShoolaPani; who comes to stay at Leema's homestay in their tea estate. Komathi thinks that ShoolaPani will flake the skin off Leema, and bring her back to the vitality of life. Komathi like her aachi uses Arisiappalam and Cheppankizhanghu to reflect on Leema's lifeless marriage and on Leema's meek submission to assuming a false self. Like Swagata Ray and Rajni Singh mention in their essay, “Food and Femininity in Fay Weldon's *The Fat Woman's Joke*,”

Food is related to multiple number of signifieds such as intelligence, sex, loneliness, emotional nourishment, satisfaction, middle-class housewife image and disintegration of marriage and power structure. It is used as a medium to express or assert the suppressed 'self' of woman and finds its association with women, body marriage, sexuality, and becomes an instrument of assertion (61).

Along the same lines, it may be noted, how Komathi uses food to convey Lena's loveless marriage and give a picture of Lena's submissive self to readers. Cooking, being a run-of-the-mill routine for women, they find it easy to relate to food. From sheer experience, Komathi like her aachi, is able to relate Lena's life to food to signify Lena's subservient self.

The alphabet D appears as Daangar Chutney, a dish that gives readers a glimpse of Komathi's forgotten past of honeyed desires and Leema's present life of stolen pleasures. Komathi senses a strange pleasure in Leema when she asks her to make ShoolaPani's favourite, daangar chutney. Komathi does not like Daangar chutney; Komathi also reveals to readers that it is a Marathi dish and that she was in love with Raghavendra Rao, the man who taught her this dish. While the dishes open Komathi's closed doors of yesterday to reveal her impeded self-identity, for Leema they direct her into the world of desire, molding the contours of her promising tomorrows. ShoolaPani, the actor in flight from his own super stardom, is the flavour added to enliven Leema's bland life, to enable her to bring out her repressed self. As they enter into an affair, Leema and ShoolaPani communicate their desires through the language of food, expressing love through freshly brewed filter kaapi. Observing Leema setting out the tray with coffee pots and mugs at seven in the morning and eagerly waiting for ShoolaPani, Komathi remembers how she (Komathi) used to clean the steel glasses to serve coffee to Raghavendra Rao, when he came looking for her. Thinking of youthful ways of women who are in love, asserting the selfless submission of a woman to the man

she loves, Komathi contends “We women are so naïve, I think. We forget who we are when we let a man find a place withing us” (54).

While Lena becomes more vibrant and expressive, Komathi is drawn back to her past of disowned self. Being a part of Leema's family for years she has adopted to the ways of the family. When she learns her alphabet J as Jeera, she reflects how, many things about her have changed, including her language. She hadn't realized how much the family and their ways had become a part of Komathi until one day Leema said to her, 'Akka, it's funny that you say jeerakam like we say in Malayalam and not seerakam like in Tamizh” (81). Komathi becomes a part of Leema's family to the extent that she even adopts their language and culture in order to fall into place with the ways of the family. She feels one can get used to anything after a while. It may be observed that by burying her past Komathi wants to deny the existence of her self and tries to acclimatize herself to the new family, its culture and tradition. She possesses a sense of an unfair criticism of her past life that she wants to break away from her own self.

Though Komathi suffers from a denigrated self-image, she becomes assertive while approving of Leema's affair with ShoolaPani. Komathi connects alphabet L with laddoos, the shape of which enables her to reflect on the society's imposing nature on individual's choices. Komathi feels square laddoos will taste the same as round ones. Similarly, Komathi is aware that in life too, “if we want to live our time on this planet differently from what is the accepted way, they mock you and make you feel you have done nothing that matters. Such is life and the making of laddoos” (95). Komathi's approval of Lena's affair is the beginning of self-assertion for Komathi herself. Komathi ended her extra marital affair with Rayar, as she was scared of the society. The knowledge that she has not been happy losing Rayar, and that she leads a life of self-denigration prompts Komathi accept Lena's relationship with ShoolaPani. Her/Lena's rebellion against society is conveyed through the shape of laddoos. She takes a clear stance to state that, for her it does not matter that Leema is not married to ShoolaPani as long as Leema is happy with him. Further, she wishes for Leema's happiness unmindful of the ways of the world.

Murungakai surfaces as Komathi's alphabet M taking her back to her affair with Rayar.

In the Indian cultural context, murungakai is believed to increase the libido in men. She recalls how her Rayar was drawn to her after eating the murungakaisambhar telling her that “It makes a man want to do things to a woman he is drawn to” (106) and how she turned into a young girl, when she was with him. Komathi decides to cook murungakaisambhar for lunch one day hoping that it would awaken sexual desire in KK towards Leema, and that finally he will treat Leema like a woman and prevent her from going towards ShoolaPani. Komathi also connects quollu with letter Q. In the Indian cultural context quollu or Madras gram as Leema's mother called it, is believed to increase the strength of a man. Specific dishes and food items associated with sexual

desires is unique to cultures across the world. There are norms and regulations to govern the usage of such food items in every culture. For instance, Joan Jacobs Brumberg, in her essay, "The Appetite as Voice," mentions that in the Victorian era, "Doctors and patients shared a common conception of meat as a food that stimulated sexual development and activity" (166). Brumberg explains how the Victorian women were restricted from consuming meat, if they were to avoid moral anxiety, as in the Victorian society appetite was a barometer of sexuality. However, Indian culture poses no such restrictions on women. Accordingly, Komathi remembers that she loved eating meat when she was a young wife.

Komathi thinks of Oorkai for alphabet O. She remembers the various rules around making oorkai. That it should not be made on a Sunday, Tuesday or Friday, that it should be made before the Moon disappears entirely, that it should not be touched when you are menstruating or after being with a man. Komathi's exhaustion with rules around oorkai is indicative of her exhaustion with the norms of society. Komathi had dreamt of growing old with her Rayar and had thought of herself as "the most fulfilled woman to walk the earth" (137) when he was there in her life. None of her dreams could be realized as situations turned against Rayar.

Recalling Leema to be the reason for her Rayar to go away from her life, Komathi snaps at Leema. Komathi who is otherwise her taciturn self is now a transformed woman, as she musters courage to talk against the woman, whom once Komathi was even hesitant to address her by her name. Later Komathi regrets her act and as she thinks of asking forgiveness, she thinks of Rava her alphabet R. Writing the letter R on the kitchen table Komathi thinks of her Rayar. She recalls that her Rayar detested ravakesari while Leema loved it. Further, she remembers the bad incident when Leema's mother had sent her Rayar away when she had seen Leema feeding Rayar, ravakesari. Komathi contemplates going with Rayar but thinks of her son, who is staying with her brother. She fears her future with Rayar and dreads that the society may not accept her relationship with Rayar, which may also affect her son.

Komathi being brought up in a tradition, where extra marital relationships are forbidden, surrenders to the dictums of the society. However, in the present modern context, she affirms of Leema's affair with Shoola Pani. Regretting her rudeness towards Leema, Komathi decides to make ravakesari when Leema comes for breakfast. Komathi thinks, "I'll serve it to her. My kesari will say forgive me, better than words can" (145). It may be observed here food comes in as recourse to Komathi to convey her emotions to Leema. She considers food to be a stronger language than verbal language to convey her emotions. By cooking ravakesari, she thinks she can please Leema to beg forgiveness which she feels words cannot convey.

Sharing life lessons with readers Komathi learns T as Thayir. Comparing thayir to an affair of the heart, Komathi feels people need to take a conscious break from each other, to

understand each other better. She thinks Leema and KK need a break from one another, to see if they can still hold on to their marriage. Associating U with Uzunthuparpu, that needs to be measured out with careful hands, for the batter to remain useable, Komathi compares it to hope. She thinks that she was very ambitious about life and dreamt without measure, that has landed her in a life of compromise and unhappiness. Wendiyaum is Komathi's alphabet W, which she compares to advice. She recalls that Leema's grandmother had made wendiyaum rice for her on the day she had aborted Rayar's child.

When finally, Leema decides to leave KK and move with ShoolaPani, Komathi also reaches towards learning the last letter of the English alphabet Z which she associates with 'Zigarthanda.' Komathi confidently asserts that

I know the Zigarthanda should start with a J, but this is my alphabet book. What is right for the world may not be right for me. I have always called it Zigarthanda and this shall be my Z. The drink with a cold heart. The drink that makes you step into the unknown, not thinking about what you have left behind or what lies ahead (202).

Komathi justifies Leema's decision to go with ShoolaPani, despite knowing that ShoolaPani is a married man with kids. Komathi is aware that Leema is heading towards the unknown. Yet she feels Leema has gone by her heart and wishes her life to be happy though she knows that she herself may be sent to hell when KK and other family members get to know of what Leema has done. Leema's life, like Zigarthanda, symbolizes stepping into the unknown not thinking or knowing about its pros and cons. It is interesting to observe that Komathi who disowns her self at the beginning of the narrative has now grown through her memories of food and her new found language of food. A shadowed self of Komathi is now transformed into an expressive self.

Interestingly, the women in the story set out to write themselves by their own movements as Helene Cixous writes in her essay, *The Laugh of Medusa*, that “Woman must put herself into the text – as into the world and into history – by her own movement” (875). Cixous urges women to make known to the world their muted desires. Along the same lines, it may be noted how both these women set out to write themselves breaking the cultural norms of the society in a country like India, where adultery is a hushed-up affair. The women who do not articulate themselves in the beginning tend to express their individuality towards the end by using food as a means to assert themselves.

Negotiating the world through her language of food, Komathi grows through the story as a strong woman. She wants Leema to enjoy, by being with the one she loves and lead a peaceful life though Komathi herself has a tragic past. Her assertion about the alphabet 'Z,' emphasizes the fact that Komathi is able to look at Leema's life in a new light, though Leema transgresses the accepted norms of the society, when she decides to move on with ShoolaPani. Interestingly, it can be observed through the culinary fiction; Nair empowers both her women characters to find their 'self', to identify their 'self' or rather to empower

their 'self'. Gender related issues such as sexuality, loneliness, desire and language get articulated through food in the course of Komathi's narration. Food in this novel becomes an important vector to reveal the 'self' of the two women characters, like how Anita Mannur in her introduction to culinary fictions asserts that "food is an important vector of critical analysis in negotiating the gendered, racialized and classed bases of collective and individual identity" (24). Going beyond the bounds of class and gender, both Komathi and Leema emerge with a new identity of their self towards the end of the novel. Each alphabet is laced with the description of a food item foregrounding the cultural supposition about the food that is mentioned. Nair uses the culinary fiction as a genre to vanguard women's identity in the present modern cultural context in India.

Through love-hate relationship of Komathi with food, Nair gives a picture of a self-denigrated Komathi being transformed into a self-empowered Komathi at the end. As Shari Daya states in her essay, "Eating, Serving and Self-realization: Food and Modern Identities in Contemporary Women's Writing,"

... food plays a central role in enabling and symbolizing the 'new Indian woman' who is modern in her values and sense of self, though not always in expected ways. Through eating and not eating, cooking and serving many of the characters... develop their identity and take charge of their lives even against powerful familial and social expectations (486).

Nair empowers both her women characters to establish their 'self' and defines a new identity of the modern women who take charge of their lives much against the socio-cultural expectations. Narrating through food, Nair gives voice to her two women characters to speak for their self. Further Daya states in her essay

For women, domestic spaces have historically been the primary, sometimes the only sites for... contestation, making food a vital tool for their self-determination. Discursive negotiations of food preparation, serving and eating can therefore be read productively as political statements that encourage a culture- and gender-sensitive reading of modernity (479).

It is interesting to note how Nair uses food in her culinary fiction as a tool to bring about the self-realization of her women characters enabling them to transgress the traditional expectations of women in society. Often women whose voices are confined to the kitchen are made to talk through food to enable their voices to reach the world. For Komathi her alphabet learning exercise through food in the end culminates in transforming her own blemished self, evicting the ghosts of her past life, while it indicates an unknown yet a joyful life for Leema. Thus, as a modern Indian English writer, Nair sends out a strong message to her readers that food serves as a tool for women not only to realize their 'self' but also to empower themselves.

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The Human Dream of Transcending Time: An Analysis in the Light of Science Fiction in the Digital Era

Abstract

Time is the most concerned thing in his life according to a human being. The proverb “Time and Tide waits for none” is very true and therefore “Time is precious than money”. Everything is running to the past from the present as the time moves forward, as each second in the clock passes every moment before is added to history. There are people who regret about the past, and there are many who are tensed about the future. A large number is concerned only about the present. But every human being might have dreamed at least once of having some extra hours in their life as the lack of time is one of the most serious issue that disturbs a huge number of people. It is actually the nature of time, which does not wait for anything, running in a constant speed in which a man cannot always run along with, that worries man. Overcoming this challenge raised by the time is something that is interesting according to the creative minds. Science fiction works which portrayed time travel is actually rooted in man's wish to conquer time. In the digital world, the advanced technology helps man to easily recall the past and schedule something to be done in the future. The growth of digital technology has made many “impossibles” possible and the reliability on the technology prompts man to dream big. This paper looks into the intensity of human aspiration to conquer time in the light of science fiction works which are based on the new digital technology. The journey to another time line is another dream of man which is often fulfilled in science fiction works. What keeps man alive is his ambition and the challenge of time is something that always threatens him. He beats time at least in his creative thought process. The paper also analyses the human craving to alter the changes made by time on him leading to a stage where he is unaffected by the time.

Introduction

“Don't waste your time” is a phrase that every human being has heard at least once in his life, as an advice or a reminder or sometimes as a warning. This is rooted in the knowledge that time is something that cannot be regained, once it is passed. Therefore the importance of making use of time productively is often taught to the young minds and proverbs like “Time and tide wait for nothing” and “time is precious than money” are used as reminders, especially by teachers. So basically every human being is raised being cautious about time. But human mind has not completely given up his attempts to overcome the hurdles of time.

Technology, Time and Human Desire

Scientific advancements have totally changed the living conditions of human beings. The pace of life has got a tremendous increase and the world runs faster than ever before in the digital era. Knowledge at fingertips makes human being feel stronger but he is still afraid of time. Whatever be the technological advancements and the speed human beings has acquired with the help of technology, time still remains something which man loses his race to. It is not an opponent which increases its speed in the race to win, but something which moves forward with a constant speed and man fails to run along with it always. As the time changes, changes occur to everything in the world. The energy and enthusiasm of everything reduces as the time moves forward. From a common man's perspective it can be said that the nature of the time remains constant for ever and what changes with time is not actually the time itself but everything else in the world. Human being as one of the components of the world also changes according to the changes in time, he grows older, becomes less energetic as the time moves forward and after a certain period of time his life functioning stops, what he calls death, which is the complete shutdown of the human system for ever. Since this shutting down is a necessity as per the rule of nature and the technology he has built is unable to do anything to change that, time matters. Every change that occurs in the human body is an effect of time. The wear and tear of anything is the result of the action of time on it. Therefore, the existence of something can be explained as the state of that thing in a particular point of time. The alterations occurring to it are the changes with respect to time. In this sense, the life span of a human being or anything is determined by the time, which is very obvious. But what human beings constantly try through the scientific and technological development is to improve his living conditions and that the medical science basically aims is to increase the time period of a man's life in this world. It aims at the increase in the period of time just because it cannot alter the effect of time on any thing in the complete sense. Even though there are surgical methods and other treatments to hide the old age, the human system itself will not take a pause in the process of aging. Every such treatment helps just to look young, not to make young. This consciousness actually disturbs every human being. The consciousness of being alive and the awareness of death after which nothing is actually known other than some believes and guesses prompts human being to sustain as long as he can in the state of being alive. To be precise there is a fear of death in the mind of almost all human beings and the fear of extinction in the mind of the human race as a collective. The end of one's life can happen in anyways, which is unpredictable. But this, as every other moment in human life, is depended upon the flow of time. The forward motion of time turns every second into history and therefore, undoing something that is already done in the past in order to make another result is impossible. The technological growth has made many "impossibles" possible, but rewriting the past is still something beyond the reach of man. But human being, as an emotional, ambitious creature with a lot of desires, though he knows it is beyond his abilities, dreams of overcoming the limitations

of time in his life. Every man might have wished at least once in his life for some extra hours in a day. The constantly running time frightens man not only with deadlines, but also with the results of an action done in a particular moment of time. There might be a wrong decision made in that moment which results in something that is unfavourable or harmful. It is not a new thing that man regrets on some of his decisions and helplessly faces the consequences. Something that has gone wrong or that was missed in a particular moment of time is sometimes able to destroy all the happiness and peace of mind of a person in his entire life. The incident can be anything and the person himself or any other person or any other forces can be responsible for that. Whatever it may be, the result of an action instigate man to recall that particular moment of time and curse it if it was unfavourable. These are the instances that evoke human thought process to conquer time, which sometimes act as an invincible villain.

Digital technology and the related gadgets, which are basically computers in different forms, have provided many facilities that help in preserving precious moments in the past and scheduling something to be done in the future. Programmes can be scheduled to be executed at certain point of time in the future using computer, just as an alarm is set. The photographs and videos are in a sense preserved fossils of the past time. Even the dead keep cracking jokes, laughing, dancing or even crying in those video clips as long as computer networks exist. The digital technology helps in storing, retrieving and sharing them but altering the past events to make a desirable future still remains a dream. Since the human craving for this is too intense, he gives life to his dreams where his imagination works without any limits, that is in creating fiction. When the possibilities of technology was incorporated with the imagination and desire of the human mind, science fictions came out which are mirrors of human dreams. What that is practically impossible in the worldly life are made real in fiction. Transcending the limits of time is done in the silver screen and the printed pages with a convincing support of the use of technology. The time travel thus recurs in the sci-fi movies of the digital era and they are accepted by the public as it is something they wish to be possible.

The Time Machine is the name that comes into the mind of every single man whenever he thinks of time travelling. The device that takes one to the past or future according to his/her desire is a dream project that is materialised in the science fiction. H G Wells' novel by the same title and the film adaptations of the same features the wonder machine that takes human being beyond the limits set by time. The scientist protagonist who develops this kind of a machine is the epitome of human desire which tries to rewrite the past and manipulate the future. It is human to ensure that every incident related to him is favourable and makes him feel better. None of the human beings want to suffer from any kind of pain or be disturbed by any kind of undesirable situations arising in his/her life. Therefore, if there is a chance to rewrite the history, man will definitely do that in order to erase the pain and loss he is suffering from by correcting the wrongly gone action in the past. It is not just staying alive, but ensuring that his/her dear ones are also alive makes a

man joyful, for he is a social animal.

Most of the Sci-fi movies that portrays a time travel reflects the human ambition of securing his existence by eliminating the negative forces from the timeline and his attempt to regain the lost. In this attempt, the characters travels back and forth according to need. The 2002 sci-fi movie *The Time Machine* portrays Dr. Alexander Hartdegen, the scientist who builds a time travelling device, trying to alter the past so that he can save his fiancée Emma, who was killed by a mugger. He saves her from being killed but only to witness her dying in some other way. He realises that her death occurs through other circumstances even if he tries to save her from one. For the favourable rewriting of the past he travels to the future to find scientific solutions in a more technologically advanced world. But he realises that the undoing of her death is quite impossible because her death is the cause for the invention of the time machine.

The 2016 Tamil science fiction thriller *24* portrays the making of a time travelling watch made by a scientist cum watchmaker Dr. Sethuraman and his evil twin brother Arthreya trying to steal it. Here the time travelling device is made as part of business and what creates a mess in the characters life is the human greed. Here Dr. Sethuraman actually addresses the human ambition of controlling time, to freeze it, travel back and forth for a period of 24 hours thus making life much better. At the same time Arthreya stands for the evil minds that aim the manipulation of the incidents in the world for making profits and he finds that the control over time is the best way through which he can do that. Dr. Sethuraman is killed by Arthreya and after a series of events Mani, Sethuraman's son, upgrades the watch enabling its user to travel back and forth in time without limits once he realises the cause of death of his parents and undoes the tragic events destroying the evil men.

“Bring back what we've lost. I hope, yes. Keep what I found, I have to, at all costs.” The words uttered by Tony Stark in *Avengers: Endgame* (2019) comes out of the at most pain of losing the dear ones due to a single snap of Thanos, the mighty villain who vanishes off half of the entire population of earth using the power of six infinity stones. Thor is portrayed as a character who regrets about the moment he didn't go for Thanos' head in his dual with him and he wishes somehow to correct his mistake. “Five years ago we lost. All of us. We lost friends. We lost family. We lost a part of ourselves. This is the fight of our lives.” The words of Steve Rogers marks the human love for life, the need of coexistence with those who man love and care and above all ensuring the further existence of the very human race. The movie, rather than a superhero film with mind blowing action sequences, can be observed as the portrayal of human struggle for existence by defeating the dark forces that aims the complete annihilation of the human race. Since everything happens according to the progression of time, what they actually fight with is the time. The rewriting of the undesirable past and sequencing the upcoming events in a way that favours man in creating a peaceful future is the aim of their time

travelling. It's all the matter of time because without the movement of time nothing happens around and it is practically impossible by man to freeze or rewind time. Every sci-fi movie that portrays time travel shows how time plays the vital role in determining man's fate. Therefore time itself is the greatest villain and the greatest hero that every living being confronts with. This makes a human being continuously dream of transcending the limits of time.

Even when most of the people believes that time is a constant, Albert Einstein defined time as a fourth dimension which is relative that vary for different observers depending on their speed through space. Also time has direction and it moves only forward. Through theory of general relativity Einstein put forth the possibility of time travel if one could achieve the speed of light. This became the base idea of the time travelling in several science fiction works were the application of quantum physics justify the logic. The severe gravity of black holes that can engulf even light, which Stephen Hawking explained, shows how the aging process of man stops as he is in a very fast motion with respect to time. In *George's Secret Key to the Universe* Hawking portrays a scientist named Erick, whose aging stops when he is stuck in a blackhole. For an observer from the earth several years have passed but for Erick it was just a matter of minutes when he came out of the blackhole. The same logic is applied in *Avengers: Endgame* based on the experience of Scott Lang who got stuck in the quantum realm for five years and felt like just five hours. Similarly every other seemingly fantastic elements is backed with the support of the science and technology. Along with this, the super computers and artificial intelligence which has proved themselves to be efficient in resolving many degeneration of things and human body are convincingly incorporated with transcendence of time. Technological awareness and theoretical knowledge give wings to the logical portrayal of human defeating time in these science fiction works.

Conclusion

Time travel is theoretically possible but even with the help of all the technology available till the date, it is not practical. But the human desire for it never ends because he has realised that time is the greatest challenge that he has to face in his life, the determining factor of his fate. He cannot ignore any possibility of changing his unwanted past and knowing the future to adjust the track of life because he is a conscious being with a fear of extinction. To be alive is the primary necessity of a living thing and then to make the living environment favourable for it, exterminating all the dangers, is a basic nature of a living organism. This effort made by man to sustain himself is reflected in the sci-fi movies and novels that features time travel. The creative minds are making this dream of transcending the limits of time a reality in the silver screen. People accept it and applaud for it because the time travelling portrayed is one among the dreams of man which he craves for. His dream of beating time is fulfilled at least in fiction and it also paves way for new thinking and research on the same. The reliability digital technology and gadgets that

has improved human life is incorporated in the portrayal of this dream as a reality in the fictional space. Human beings who are afraid of the supremacy of the time and at the same time believes in the power of technology continues with his expeditions to conquer time like anything even if he knows that if “You mess with time, it tends to mess back” as Tony Stark said. (*Avengers: Endgame*)

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A Study on Resistance Towards on-line Teaching with Reference to The Literary Theories, Through Psychological Lens

Abstract

This paper proposes to assess the new intervention of time, in association with the presentation of time in new facets at each point of time in the past. Here is an evaluation on the prevailing flux in the educational pop culture of online class affair that caused a kind of intransigent resistance among the stakeholders of the academic world. The need to sort out such inhibitions has created this paper with the objective of analysing and scrutinizing the position by reaching out to an interdisciplinary approach of psychological theory of Kubler Ross Model in connection with the trajectories of literary theories in the world of English literature. The acceptance of change which stems out or may tumble down, could be pursued while one analyses the historical trajectory of English literary theories and its flights facing advancement and accomplishments. Equivalent experiences from our past beckons towards the wisdom of agreements and receptions through wise judgements. The inhibition on a particular psychological stage causes an inertia to try out change and thus continues to hunt reasons and anxieties than exploring new versions and promises. Among the pros and cons of technological based learning, especially online teaching and learning, the cons could be sorted out by advanced settlements, for this the experts need to be cooperative with the situation. While being thoughtful of the educational system, one has to strengthen it from knowledge acquisition facet to its social, cultural as well as the behavioural aspects of the learner. So, the stakeholders have to join their hands together to meet these requirements by appropriating and utilising the state of art. So, this paper takes through the experiences of gone-days with its success stories and progressions, to prove that the psychological stage of acceptance is required, within no time to exploit new opportunities and promises of the future in the field of education.

Keywords: education, English literature, flux, history, online classes, pop culture, psychological theory, time

Introduction

Time has always laid out its power throughout the formation of generations. Now it's a new intervention of time which we are witnessing. It brings quiet logical reasons to veil its purpose of change which it imposes upon the human race. It takes a lot of attire, which seems suiting, while people call it reality and some others revolution. Today we have to

encounter it with our medical reasonings as it has come in the attire of a virus. Though this much exchanges may sound hackneyed, it's trying to catch up a pertinent thread of thought, which finds its relevance in discussion. As man has beheld many folds of time hither to, which made sudden radical as well as factious shifts from ingrained register settlement of social, educational and economic footing of mankind, it's not a new ball game for him to hug the state-of-the-art which time shows him at each time. The affair is nothing but the pertaining scholastic culture which has popped out. We may flag it as the recent pop culture of online teaching and learning. The culture of education or more specifically the shift of culture in education that we are entering currently has taken its turn though welcomed or not. Many anxieties could be seen and heard from the stakeholders of education on the future of its functioning. The Covid-19 has put into a situation in which one feels locked up in an imposed system which creates a sort of resistance in our mind from getting adapted to be an avantgarde. Indeed this paper is to take you to the query on mental analysis behind this resistance. Why man always gets into a sort of resistance when subjected to a change? Why he feels anxious and become dubious? Why feels depressed and reluctant? Why not acceptance? Why couldn't these questions be answered through the lens of the new call of the time. This type of defiance could be seen far and wide through the trajectory of a diachronic study of literature and its criticism. Whenever revolution occurred and obstinances towards it are a bilateral deal that is obvious. It's better to skim these resistances of history occurred and accept its cognizance by checking out the worthiness of such speculations and its traces. This evaluation could be done by adopting the psychological theory of Elisabeth Kubler Ross with her Kubler Ross Model, which hand out the psychological reasons for the unmoved resistances found in the behaviour of man while subjected to a twist from the set positioning and shows a nature of inertia to hurdle on the stage of acceptance, which is been placed as the successful stage by Kubler Ross in her model. And it's found progressing whenever such hurdles are taken by the theorist, in the field of English literature, in the history of English language and literature. So here by the positioning in the discipline of English literature, an interdisciplinary evaluation with the psychological tool is been used. The trajectory through the literary critical world to prove the essentiality of accepting the prevailing call for the change in the educational system is the speciality of this paper, which again knits to one more discipline of educational pedagogy or even in andragogy.

A Glance Through English Literary World

In the world of literature, it's quite interesting to trace this type of changes from the prevailing the concepts of great thinkers on literary theories to newborn thinking and its resistance seen in the world of literature as well as those hold it as true. The point which is flagging here is that, time has shown the continuance of the changed one. To make this argument more solid and substantial is required to gain ground on some stages in the

world of literature. For the time being we are confining the discussion within the boundaries of English literature. The Scholars to be discussed are figures of French authors who are to be encountered in due course in this paper who now form a permanent part in the field of English literary theories. quite interesting fact is that the French Scholars who work within the French intellectual tradition and their works were available for the English Scholars only after a very significant delay like the work of Michael Foucault, 'Folie et Deraison' (1965), was available after 4 years as a translated version 'Madness and Civilization' (1965). Again, Jacques Derrida's French original work 'De la grammatologie' (1967), was translated into 'Of Grammatology' by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, with a delay of 11 years. " This notion of literary theory arriving from outside of the universities of the English speaking world is translated into a devastating but witty metaphor by Terry Eagleton (1943) in his book 'Literary Theory: An Introduction' (1983), he describes 'how the job of a section of British literary critic was reduced to waiting at the port city of Dover to receive the latest shipment of theory dispatched from Paris which on an average took a decade also to sale across the channel separating France and England". Even these theories of outsiders which were available for the English-speaking world after a significant delay of time period were Awaited by the English scholars with an acceptance of attitude towards flux in the literary world which should be remarked as the greatest factor for the growth of literary theories in English literature.

To blaze the trail, it could be started with the ancient Greek intellectual and move along further through the forthcoming scholars, though 1960 is regarded as a watershed moment of literary theory.

Socrates'Objection to Poets and Aristotle's Critique on Mimesis:

Socrates'famous suggestion to ban poets from Ideal state as mentioned in Plato's 'epublic'in which Socrates'arguments were with reference to imitative painting to the form of visual mimesis and considering it as corrupted asmimesis deals in appearances rather than in reality and is situated at a third move from the true form of a thing and believed that it confuses our sense of distinction between knowledge and ignorance We can see in Book X, The Republic, painter will paint a cobbler, carpenter or any other artist, though he knows nothing of their arts and, if he is a good artist, he may deceive children or simple persons, when he shows them his picture of a carpenter from a distance, and they will fancythat they are looking at a real carpenter Aristotle, the famous student and rival in same of Plato,with his concept and his contributions to mimesis could be observed in his text 'oetics' which can be read in the form of dialogue between Plato's concept on mimesis and my mimetic art, and Aristotle's critique on it which forms a kind of departure from that of Plato'. Plato presents mimesis as a flawed mirroring and Aristotle presents mimesis as an icon making process This shift had brought a tremendous influence in the history of human thoughts. Aristotle himself puts the point, in one of the

Poetic' more suggestive pronouncements, 'orrectness in poetry is not the same as correctness in politics or in any other art. Here as often, an implicit response to Plato can be detected. e develops a whole theory of his own which is opposed to Plato's much as their whole philosophical systems are opposed to each other and Aristotle reacts against Platonism in all areas of knowledge. He does not believe that the world of appearances is an phemeral copy of changeless ideas rather he believes that essence of things is not in the transcendent world of ideas, but rather in the things themselves. Further, through many studies these grudges in thoughts and deconstructions could be seen. But in spite of this inertia to change it explicit that changes are the path to progress and development. hange does not imply falsity, things have a nature, a vital principle of unity through change, the passage from potentiality to act. Change is a fundamental process of Nature which is regarded by Aristotle as a creative force with a direction in itself So, while subjected to change, one does not need to be inert to switch on to the new version of time. It' an act of time, to make changes over changes. Here it's obvious how Aristotle became himself apart from just a follower of Plato.

Flux Featured by Neoclassical Scholars

Next, it' found relevant to observe on the period from late 17th century to late 18th century, which saw the emergence of an attempt to theorize literature in the public sphere of English society that gave rise to English literary studies as a new field of discourse and pave way to the development and progress of the literary world. No doubt it is the neoclassical literary theory ahead. Here the rise of the bourgeoisie brought with a new version of literature or a new literary genre like the novel. In the history of British literary world each major socio-political change has resulted in the creation or adaptation of some new kind of literature or the other. For instance, the Norman Conquest of England in (1066), resulted in a great social as well as political shake up of the country, and as a direct result out of it we see the emergence of merical romances which occupies such a crucial place in medieval literary history. As the discussion rounds on the neoclassical period, there comes a flux in the social as well as political sectors. urgen Habermas (1929) in his book 'he Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere'1962), who says that public spheres are constituted by different social institutions which provides a platform for debates and discussions through which public opinion can be shaped. o, feudalism gave way to the public sphere which very strongly influenced the enlightenment, that prioritised rationality, as the touchstone to judge and make sense of the world contradictory to the voice of the single divinely guided voice of the monarch Thus, the prominence of a democratic political structure could be traced in the English history that again gave a new turn in the literary critic world. John Dryden in his 'rounds of Criticism in Tragedy' has quoted itary criticism should be founded upon good sense and sound reasons, rather than an authority. hough this period gave birth to capitalism under the hands of bourgeoisie, that was corrected by the time in its next turn of thought named Romanticism.

Romanticism With its turn on Changes

It's known to all that this was a period of remarkable political upheaval of French Revolution, with the storming of the Fortress of Bastille in Paris by a raging crowd in 1798, which ingrained a radically changed cultural milieu. The Revolutionary ideas through which man got prominence over anything and give notion of how man and the universe around him is to be conceptualized. This was a great jump taken by the social thinkers from the shade of bourgeoisie to real enlightenment. It could be witnessed such wild exhilaration in the lines of poetry of William Wordsworth.

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statue, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!

(The Prelude by William Wordsworth)

It is to be noted that the values of the two concepts are overturned, like rule, conventions, and laws, which were dear for a neoclassical brain is negated through its association with the oppressive regime of the old guard and romance acquires its position. The literary theorists of this time including William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge identified and accepted this transformation spirit. Thus, a great change occurred in the thought of scholars, which was a transformation in the handling of the literature genres by the middle-class bourgeois limited in the coffee houses and cafe corners and was completely alien for the common men. By this change the common and rustic life came into discussions, even in the diction of literary works, from classical to simple. Apart from this, a new relationship between man and nature is the noteworthy feature of Romanticism, which was a totally ignorant concept when we evaluate the genres so far. By picking up the thread of the discussion on the readiness to accept the change which time presents, this particular period can be soared to a lofty position, because it's here that the human image was found at the heart of the romantic worldview than as the matured intellectual adult man of the bourgeois public sphere. The oppressed, disenfranchised, and marginalized figures are found to be bothered by foregrounding them in the romantic works with a blending of natural beauty in it, so much so that they become one. In the poems of William Wordsworth like 'Female Vagrant' 'Evolution and Independence' 'The Solitary Reaper' 'The Idiot Boy'

.. near the waterfall,
Which thunders down with
Headlong force,

Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,
As careless as if nothing were

(The Idiot Boy' William Wordsworth)

t' not only in the poetry of Wordsworth that intertwining nature with man is seen, but in many other romantic poems this is obvious. Anyhow this was a great change of time which could be noticed as an important juncture in the attitude of man that drove him towards advancement.

The Intervention of Time in Creative world of Literature

Further the socio-political revolution has led to the entrance of new cultural theories about how to create and how to read literature. In that, New Criticism, the new intellectual movement came to existence and can be located in the outbreak of the first world war in 1914. The aftereffect of world war is something that is always brought into discussion whenever this period is observed. The wound and damage of war can never fall in cliché even if it's related a thousand times. That was a face of time in which it took the cruel attire. Here man took a little while to take the position of acceptance and perhaps, travelled through the whole psychological stages. But in turn of time he caught the thread of acceptance, especially in the literary world. An ear to this quote makes it clear, 'en returned from the battlefield grown silent, not richer but poorer in communicable experience?' (the Story Teller' Walter Benjamin). He argues that the past experiences of war made them communicate with the world around and realize the depth of destruction of the first world war. He again quotes or never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school in horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny fragile human body. (Walter Benjamin). So, man is in a swaying state of desire between rediscovering for oneself the lost sense of traditions through literature and literary appreciations and the effort to read literature without the help of any context which has been made meaningless by the experience of first world war. The literary theory 'New Criticism' a product of this fragile human being, can be found observed rising in this environment by taking its wings through T.S Eliot, who represents the first pool of theoretical work with his essay, 'Tradition and Individual Talent' in which he says, 'the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its present'. The interesting observation is the constant fitting in of the present within the past as a dynamic process. In the second half of this essay he asks the poet to sacrifice his personality, which further implies that the author is divorced from the business. 'No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead

poets and artists. You cannot value him alone you must set him, for contrast and comparison among the dead. 'tradition and Individual Talent' T.S Eliot). When it comes to the other side I.A Richards takes the chair with Practical Criticism in effect. He says, we should be better advised to acknowledge frankly that, when people put poems in our hands, what we say in 9 cases out of 10 has nothing to do with the poem, but arises from politeness or spleen or some other social motive. It would be an excellent thing if all critical chit-chat which reproduce on these locations were universally recognised to be what it is -- social gesture Now along with the personality of the poet the social context is also taken off in reading a particular work.

the same wave has beaten the Russian scholars of this time, which was named as Formalism, and can see three related points in this regard, the first one is that according to Russian formalist the source of literariness in a particular work is neither the author of that work, nor the context of that work nor is of its theme or the subject on which the work is produced. The second point is that the source of a piece of literature is its language and the third point is that this literary language is different from the literary non-literary uses of language because the literary language is structured differently

this is something which might have agitated the authors of that era. But the change took its position and marked a place in the literary world. This adaptation to time could never be blurred from the thought of mankind, as it is the best illustration which man has to recollect in every curve of time. Acceptance again has played the key role here.

The Turn Taken by Linguistics

Structuralism analysed human phenomena such as language, literature, and culture as structured systems with mutually interrelated elements such as phonemes, morphemes, words and phrases". The theory of Structuralism named after Ferdinand de Saussure was actually a take up of change by the French anthropologist Claud Levi Strauss through the insight from de Saussure' lectures which states that he studies not individual poems and plays (paroles) but the system (langue) which produces them This particular approach stepped into the grammatical structuring of language with rules and regulations to be followed, then many turns were taken. Grammar underwent many changes like Traditional grammar to Structural grammar then to Phrase Structure grammar, again to Transformational Generative grammar, which was a revolutionary change to a new approach of grammar, put forward by Noam Chomsky. These shows great shifts in the world of language and linguistics. Then, Roland Barthes with his essay 'Death of the Author' was recognized as an important figure of transition in connecting bridges with Structuralist insights to Post-Structuralism ". Important responses from Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida on the essays of Barthes could be focussed in which, Foucault wrote his seminal piece 'What is an Author' (1969) which was believed to be an attempt to criticize Barthes and on other hand Derrida wrote a homage to Barthes after his death that is 'he

Death of Roland Barthes' All these could be assessed as a serious trajectory of changes and acceptance made by intellectual scholars.

Other Changes Shown by Time

When it comes to the educational system, there has been a regular upcoming awareness of the requirement of transition and advancement for the students in this highly demanding environment. In confronting this the complexity of learner and learning methods should be taken into consideration and this is the very reason why the learning process is undergoing tremendous changes. In a wink it could be told as a shift from Teacher centred to Learner centred, which was first denied and argued by the teachers but then agreed when CCCE came and started to lash on it. Even it was mocked as Continuous Confrontation and Confusion Evaluation. Then came the need to apply technology in the learning process which was just confined inside the educational workshops. Now when online teaching and learning process popped up, the technology has taken its head and instantly teachers found it as a great jump as something new to them has happened. Actually, a teacher is supposed to be mastered in the areas where students have knowledge. In future blended teaching is expected to take charge of time. But a delay is found in our educational system due to the inhibition of certain psychological stages which adversely affects our educational opportunities.

The Psychological Reasons For The Reluctance and Acceptance

Here comes the psychological reasonings which can sort out the issue that is described so far. The English Literature history showed us its advancement which is now accountable in the intellectual world. How was it possible in each turn of time' interventions? Though ignorant of psychological theories, unwittingly each change found its amelioration which was the root cause for English Literature to catch up a position in the educational field in its full term. As today psychological researches have gained its job of mending and refurbishing whole sectors of human entanglements, it's quite desirable to seek guidance from it. In this juncture one may adopt the theory of Kubler Ross with her Kubler Ross Model. This is well appropriate to identify the dealings with unforeseen significant changes that come across in human life. Elizabeth summarises with this model that there are various emotions that a patient goes through when diagnosed with a terminal illness that starts with denial and ends with acceptance. In 1969, Elisabeth Kubler Ross described five popular stages of grief in her book 'On Death and Dying' popularly referred to as DABDA. they include:

Denial

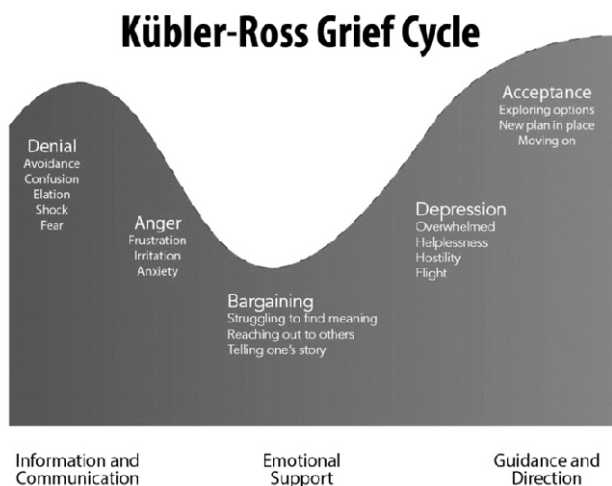
Anger

Bargaining

Depression

Acceptance

These stages are used as a tool to evaluate the arguments of this paper. Each historical turn discussed so far could be brought under this lens to prove that the progress found in the discipline of English Literature without getting inhibited at any stage and could find it itself in a worth position in the world of education both in curricular as well as out of its reach have enlightened a footpath for the world of education to follow it, so that the educational system could be set in forward motion without getting stuck at any obstacles.



Denial

This stage talks about the meaningless and overwhelmed mental stage of a human being when he undergoes an unexpected change in his life. Actually, denial is an escapism from the adverse situation, due to the lack of confidence to face the issue by a client and its survival method which help to cop up and make survival possible, this can be counted as its positive interpretation, but this cause a great loss of opportunity to which a person should catch hold on in his life. “You might think life makes no sense, has no meaning and is two overwhelming. If you start to deny the news and in effect, go numb. It's common in this stage to wonder how life will go on in this difficult state of shock because life as you once know it, has changed in an instant”, and starts to deny the change.

Anger

Anger is the emotion which we are mostly used to and the truth is that anger has no limits. It can broaden not only to your friends, the colleagues, your family, yourself and

your loved ones, and also the very serious one is the anger which has been expressed at the workplace or to the situations which life shows you in its curves. This stage can also be interpreted in a positive perspective by considering it as a healing process, because the more one expresses it the more it will begin to dissipate and the more it gets healed, but besides the person or the situation which is to be dealt with will be missed. So, to understand and manage this particular reflective action is the important thing which a person should achieve. “Once you start to live in 'actual' reality again and not in 'preferable' reality, anger might start to set in. It is a common stage to think “why me” and “life is not fair”. You might look to blame others for the cause of your grief”. It's felt like all control has been taken away, and life has drastically changed in a short face of time and feels angry.

Bargain

This stage find the client with a sceptical mode, questioning and bargaining in their mind in all possible ways, like “why this is happening”, “why we educationists have to suffer”, “why this lockdown” “why couldn't we go to the normal old condition”, “why to hold on a new type of system”, “what could be the demerits of the new system?” as if the prevailing one is free from all its flaws. Even on knowing that it won't help, they keep on bargaining with the situation. This is caused because before a loss it seems like the client will do anything to retain his own status. “You might falsely make yourself believe that you can avoid the grief through a type of negotiation. 'If you change this, I will change that', you are so desperate to get your life back to how it was before the grief event”. Normally this is the stage when the client gets engaged in negotiating with God, because in his inner mind he knows that there is no room for this bargain in reality and feels like only supernatural interference could help him, though there is a very good option of switching on to the change.

Depression

When the client continues to be in a stage which gives no effect on bargain, then depression comes in him and in effect all the negative thoughts rush into the mind and feels that “this change is going to eat up the whole profession of educationist”, “In the future nobody will be in need of any teacher or lectures”, “the whole process of educational institution is going to meet a doom”. “It represents the emptiness we feel when we are living in reality and realise the person or situation is gone or over. The world may seem too much and too overwhelming for you to face. You don't want to be around others, don't feel like talking, and experience feelings of hopelessness.” It is important to understand that depression is not a sign of mental illness, actually it's a response to the great loss which the client is facing in his life, a stage of withdrawal from life. The fact is that those who are dynamic according to the flux in popular culture are going to play the game. Opportunities are not going anywhere but our minds are shocked with many anxieties and are found locked up.

Acceptance

Acceptance can also be called Integration as it is making an integration between the past experience and the following situation. This stage will give a clarity for the client to act accordingly and figure out what would be done worth it. The acceptance of reality that “gone is gone and this new reality is the permanent reality”, is the remarkable feature of this particular stage. “In this stage your emotions may begin to stabilize, you re-enter reality, you come to terms with the fact.” It's a type of learning to live with the situation. Learning to reorganize roles, reassign them to others, and take them on ourselves. This is a sort of settlement of mind which is now calm and instead of denying we listen to our needs, we move, we change, we grow, evolve, start to reach out to others and become involved in life, we invest in our colleagues, organization in which we are committed to, in our relationships and even in the relationship with ourselves. We believe and begin to live again.

Though these are the stages which come in a linear fashion in a human mind, the degree and intensity varies from person to person. Some people get stuck in some stage, it takes time for some clients to move from one stage to another. Those who undergo the transition faster and get into the acceptance stage earlier are going to take up the wonderful and novel positions earlier. Others who are getting stuck in a particular stage keep on giving justification for their thoughts and would find themselves in the whirlpool of problems, rejections and depression. This may lead to mental illness. Acceptance helps to clear off the storms from our mind to prepare it for a clear positive platform to move forward and thus guides us to find out what can be changed and how to get hold of the helm of the new change to drive it in order to meet our valuable needs and purposes. For this the waves of the whirlpool caused due to the inhibitions on change must get settled first so that the sail could be yielded in the right direction of progress. It's time to think out of the wall positively.

Conclusion

The attention to the paper was taken through the timely intervention of time that has created and will keep on creating flux in the contemporary culture of that particular time. It calls for the need to evaluate these interventions and catch hold of the thread of success which was allowed by each phase of time. The caught grip should never be slipped off from the responsible hands, and for this new tools and methods could be pre-owned, by a travel through the other disciplines. To be more specific, this study could bring forth the idea of handling the present time with reference to the past lessons.

As the paper starts with the current issue of educational systems which is found in some sluggish hands, it is advisable to draw a suggestive conclusion on this case. For this purpose, right through the paper scans the English literary theories and its reason for advancement by setting substantial examples as touchstones. In each example the

relevance of quick positioning in the acceptance stage, of which the psychological theory of Kubler Ross refers to, at every juncture of change is been pinpointed. Right from the acceptance of change by the Athens, it moves through the emergence of metrical romance in Mediaeval Period, to the democratic transfer of the public sphere in Neoclassicism, to the revolutionary change made by the French Revolution voicing for the oppressed in Romanticism, to the new culture in reading and critiquing a work, that was brought by New Criticism as well as Formalism, and again to the flux undergone in the world of Language and Linguistics.

Thus, it proves that, the faster one achieves the final stage of Acceptance the faster he can place himself in the chair of opportunity. So, changes should not ground inhibition in man. Psychology talks about three types of developmental changes in mental abilities, that are 'multidimensional' and 'multi directional' and development as 'plastic' or 'open to change'.

So, to be subjected to development and to get reinforced in knowledge, one has to accept change, the distress which has been experienced due to a sudden change could be managed with more psychological insights like, 'problem centred coping' and 'emotion centred coping'. The adults who effectively reduce stress use a mixture of problem centred and emotion centred techniques. With these techniques one can cope up with the troublesome stages without getting stuck at a particular stage, and can easily find oneself in the final stage of Acceptance.

So, to conclude it's worth bringing forward the swinging issue of online teaching. To speak the truth, literally the change happened is only in the traditional way of learning process, all other technological instruments and tools on which nowadays the instructors are tackling with were to be used along in years, maybe from 10 or 12 years in the past. A blended teaching and learning process were expected from the instructors but it was confined to the practice of very limited smart instructors. Collaborative teaching, freedom of choice, collaborative research, excelling oneself, all these are the world of opportunities in the educational system. Even the term 'teacher' is outdated rather than it, 'instructor, may be fine with. An instructor is supposed to interact and guide, and instruct the students to go through all possible windows of education and experience the integrated learning which may or may not be the sessions of that particular instructor itself. It's foolish to think that my student should learn within my parameters of knowledge. Digital transformation is less about technology and more about attitude because one can purchase technology but your ability and willingness to adapt matters.

It's better to make peace with the changing truth of life. One can never get rid of it but could accept it and turn out to be a personality worth living in the changed space. The fact is that changes keep on changing. If it can't act now then it is sure to get wiped out from the scene because it's the time of the Z-generation. They are digital natives, so it's compulsory to be a digital immigrant. So, hurry up to the stage of Acceptance which could settle the

froth of anxieties that may spill out the skilled and qualified intellectuals from the vessel of educational opportunities, just by reason of negligence.

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- https://youtu.be/_5tHNiqoRfM
- <https://youtu.be/VTKLCHAGH7U>
- <https://youtu.be/u6q7GpTBChY>
- <https://youtu.be/lpgWaaFMbU4>
- <https://youtu.be/7qRKWFFcGDw>

Utopian Vision and Dystopian Reality in Paul Auster's *In the Country of Last Things*

*Dystopian Literature is a genre of fictitious writing, where writers explore political and social structure in an apocalyptic world. The term dystopia literally mean where people living in an imagined society under a highly restraint system. Works of dystopian literature evokes fear and sense of futility. In an imperfect society, awful things happen which shocks the readers into accepting humanity's imperfection as an inexterminable and thereby working towards a fine society rather than a perfect one. Paul Auster's works experiments the boundaries of fact and fiction. His passion with games and chance permeate his writing with a sense of persistent discovery. His stylistic innovation captures the readers. The novel *In the Country of Last Things* set in apocalyptic background marks Anna Blume's journey to find her brother amongst uncivilized country. Believing that she will definitely survive in that barbaric country writes her thoughts and experiences in the letter. In that unnamed country, no industry takes place and most of the people involved in collecting garbage or scavenges for objects to resell. Keeping her brothers photo she embarks her journey in that country. Later she realizes that it was not only things and people have gone invisible but the whole country has been demolished. Fortunately, she meets Isabel and befriended her. But Isabel's husband tried to rape her; Anna tried to scare him and accidentally started to strangle him and gives up before he dies. After being homeless for a period, she meets Samuel Farr, lived with him but her happiness did not last for long time. With much difficulty she came to Woburn House and became close to her colleagues. Bitter incidents started to happen in Woburn House so Anna decided to leave the city telling the unknown acquaintance to whom she is writing the letter from the beginning till now that she will write again after reaching another world.*

Keywords : dystopian, apocalyptic, barbarism, optimistic

Paul Auster has always capitulated to Postmodern attitudinize in his novels. His works are delineated by rumination about the process of creating literary work, through a definite and imaginative exploration of the past of writing and the figuration of space. Auster's artistic and fictitious are austere comprised of reconfigured plotting and composite motifs drawn from the American literature history and also from his past experience.

Paul Auster is one of the remarkable American postmodern writer born in Newark, New Jersey, USA. He graduated B. A. English at Columbia University in 1969 and M. A. English the following year. His uncle Alan Mandelbaum, a translator gave him a box full

of books to him which kindled Auster's interest in literature. In spite of his hardship he pursued his writing and won many awards. Some of his notable works are *Squeeze Play* (1982), *In the Country of Last Things* (1987), *The New York Trilogy* (1987), *The Book of Illusions* (2002), *Oracle Night* (2003), *The Brooklyn Follies* (2005), *Travels in the Scriptorium* (2007), *4321* (2017). Paul Auster is known for his blend of probing narrative techniques and precise writing. His work *In the Country of Last Things* focuses on the theme of Dystopian, where the protagonist Anna Blume gets trapped in a dystopian society. Her life is filled with chaos, struggle and survival.

Coming to dystopian literature it is a manifestation of speculative fiction that began as a literature response to utopian literature. Dystopian novels offer a vision of the future. Dystopian societies are in calamitous decline with characters who fight environmental devastation, technological control and government ill treatment. Depiction of settings in most of the dystopian novels will always be against the writers' ethos. Dystopian novels have aided as requisite instruction to the readers.

In this novel daring Anna goes on a wilderness journey in search of her brother William Blume, who was a journalist. She relates her experiences through a letter when she steps into an unnamed country. She experiences a weird kind and states:

It is all happening too fast [...] these are the last things. A house is there one day, and the next day it is gone. A street you walked down yesterday is no longer there today. Even the weather is in constant flux. A day of sun followed by a day of rain, a day of snow followed by a day of fog, warm then cool, wind then stillness, a stretch of bitter cold, and then today, in the middle of winter, an afternoon of fragrant light, warm to the point of merely sweaters. When you live in the city, you learn to take nothing for granted. Close your eyes for a moment, turn around to look at something else, and the thing that was before you is suddenly gone. Nothing lasts, you see, not even the thoughts inside you. And you mustn't waste your time looking for them. Once a thing is gone, that is the end of it. (1-2)

In the apocalyptic country created by Paul Auster *In the Country of Last Things*, the process of history is changed. The linear development is governed by degeneracy and retrogression. The established order gradually disassembles. In that apocalyptic country material goods are depleted. The educational institutions, rituals, signified practices which add a colour in human life but all are worn out in that country. People don't receive any education, the legal system ceased to exist. Art has vanished. Suicide becomes a predominant practice in that unnamed country. Deaths are more dramatic. There are two set groups of people in that society whom they term as The Runners and The Leapers. People join in any one of the groups and voluntarily involve in Death. But still they manage to live "For death, too, has become a source of life" (13). Not everyone has courage like

Runners or The Leapers. Even language makes no sense to anyone. Beside these, socio-cultural accords give life to certain par for the course and make communal experience feasible.

In a world which is deprived of conventions, each individual has to look after and provide for oneself, without any help from others because anything may happen at any moment, while past experience is totally pointless this is the life in that country. Anna Blume states the dreadful condition “All around you one change follows another, each day produces a new upheaval, the old assumptions are so much air and emptiness” (20). The worst situation is “In order to live, you must yourself die. That is why so many people have given up. For no matter how hard they struggle, they know they are bound to lose. And at that point it is surely a pointless thing to struggle at all” (20). It becomes very hard to survive in that society.

There is no human civilization only barbarism prevailing. The law and rules are barbaric takes over in the society. Every country tends to equalize it with the growth of the production and utilization of commodities through the means of free enterprise, but in this unnamed country everything is contrary; it has retrogressed into brutality. Anna befriended Isabel. Both met in an unforeseen circumstance, were Isabel takes Anna to her house and introduces to her husband who enlivens himself in contriving miniature ships in bottles.

In that country, searching through the ever increasing mound of waste may remunerate the industrious scavenger with found objects that are still comparatively intact and can be recycled. Anna narrates the practice of scavenging in the letter as follows:

Everything falls apart, but not every part of everything, at least not at the same time. The job is zero in on these little islands, and those islands to still others, and thus to create new archipelagos of matter. You must salvage the salvageable and learn to ignore the rest. The trick is to do it as fast as you can. (36)

Life continues for the people with great difficulty. Survival becomes a great challenge for people as well as for Anna. She eats very little food, because plenty of food, sumptuous meal cannot be expected in that country. It is so strange that people don't think about God, Isabel says to Anna “I know that people don't talk about God anymore” (49). Paul Auster develops insights in an original manner. He shows the figurative nature of the catastrophic paradigm in a certain type of image. For example, Ferdinand is driven by the increasing shortage of materials to construct smaller miniature ships. The art of reduction becomes a sheer necessity, “From whiskey bottles and beer bottles, he worked his way down to bottles of cough syrup and test tubes, then down to empty vials of perfume, until at last he was constructing ships of almost microscopic proportions” (55). Though it

shows Auster's figurative nature but he has clearly brought out the poverty, reduction of material goods.

Anna's life became more troublesome after the death of Isabel. She was homeless so started to loiter around the streets. Losing her friend Isabel, Anna in the beginning struggled but as days pass by she became shrewd enough. She states "Just because you are able to get in, that does not mean you will be able to get out. Entrances do not become exits" (85).

As the novel progress, Auster's genius in art of writing can be seen. He gives a doom picture during winter season though people struggle every day but still during winter its worse. People deplete all the available material things in order to keep them warm from bitter cold. Anna tells:

People would smash up their furniture and burn it for a little warmth, and many of these fires got out of control. Buildings were destroyed almost every day, sometimes whole blocks and neighbourhoods. Whenever one of these fires broke out, vast numbers of homeless people would flock to the site and stand there for as long as the building burned revelling in the warmth, cheering the flames as they rose up into the sky. Every tree in the city was chopped down during the winter and burned for fuel. Every domestic animal disappeared; every bird was shot (92).

Fortunately Anna meets Samuel Farr, friend of Anna's brother William who has engaged in writing about a book on the unnamed society in which he is living. Anna was eagerly waiting whether Sam would give her happy information about her brother, about the unnamed society but Sam gave her in pessimistic answer "Nothing is definite in this place" (103) he further added "I'm not giving to give up hope. Not until I know for sure" (103).

In the apocalyptic society, Jews community people were evacuated. Auster shows the absurd and distress show of force, an arbitrary attack on those who were incapacitated of defending themselves in the society when new laws were imposed. Unfair new law started to stand as a hindrance to the religious group and they lost their academy status.

Anna was astonished when she saw human slaughter houses existence in that country. She had heard rumours circulating that human slaughter houses existed; situation brought her, where she witnessed from her own eyes:

I was able to see clearly into the other room, and there was no mistaking what I saw in there: three or four human bodies hanging naked from meat hooks, and another man with a hatchet leaning over a table and lopping off the limbs of another corpse. (125)

Finally, somehow she managed to escape from that place and reached Woburn House. In such a ruined society, only one hopeful and happy place was Woburn House. It has been considered as one the most elegant private residence in the city. When the period of troubles began Dr. Woburn calls the number of homeless people and gave them refuge. Auster from the beginning he showed the darker side such as torment life of the people, depletion of things, unfair laws in that unnamed country. Eventually approaching to the climax of the novel, the writer gives a ray of hopefulness to Anna as well for the readers. Mr. Woburn was a respected doctor from an important family; his statements were given a fine deal of publicity, and it soon became vogueish in wealthy circles to support his cause. But it was not long lasting, conditions started to grow worse, and the success of Dr. Woburn's project was gradually eroded. The condition was "rich people absconded, stealing out of the country with their gold and diamonds, and those who remained could no longer afford to be generous" (131). Dr. Woburn with his daughter's support he decided to open up his house to strangers. Indigents were allowed to stay for ten days; the desperately ill could stay longer. Everyone was given a clean bed and two warm meals a day. Nothing was able to be solved, but at least people were given a respite from their troubles, a chance to gather strength before moving on. Somehow Anna was able to manage her life in Woburn's house. Her life condition was much better but it was not enduring when Boris Stepanovich, who supplies to Woburn House states to Anna that "You must understand that it's all an illusion [...] Woburn House It's built on a foundation of clouds" (154). The optimistic thought did not stand for a long period for the readers as well as for Anna. Auster creates a tension and suspense.

Finally, Paul Auster's creativity about the apocalypse world cannot be regarded as a prophecy of annihilation but as an inquiry into the little that is essential to make life worthwhile. His experiment in depletion shows that basic necessary are not an absolute, but a relative combination because the value and importance of those goods that people tend to value, increases the ratio to their attainability. Therefore there is no proof which could inform us the end of the world history. No such revelation can be prophesied. According to Jacques Derrida, "The terrifying reality of a nuclear conflict can only be the signified referent, never the real referent (present or past) of a discourse or a text" (12). One can come to a point that apocalypse can only exist in fiction it can't appear in reality. As Anna says *In the Country of Last Things* towards end of her letter:

I've been trying to fit everything in, trying to get to the end before it's too late, but I see now how badly I've deceived myself. Words do not allow such things. The closer you come to the end, the more there is to say. The end is only imaginary, a destination you invent to keep yourself going, but a point comes when you realize you will never get there. (183)

Finally, Auster gives an optimistic ending, were Anna assures that she will continue

her writing after reaching another city “This is Anna Blume, your old friend from another world. Once we get to where we are going, I will try to write to you again, I promise” (188). Even though Anna lives in a bleak and despairing world but she was able to communicate certain preposterous hope. Paul Auster's fascination with a sense of abiding discovery gives a sheer delight to the readers.

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Gendered Spatializations and their Negotiations in Contemporary Indian Writing in English

Abstract

*The concept of spatiality demonstrates that “space is socially produced, but space is also a condition of social production” (Rendell 101) and that the conceptual framework of space and the society are realized through simultaneous structures of feeling. Though the writings of Marxist geographers such as David Harvey and Edward Soja promote the aspect of positionality by intertwining the social and the spatial, they preclude the techniques in which gender structures space and society. Feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey and Gillian Rose propound that space is produced by and is productive of gender relations (Massey 124). Feminist critical purview identifies the public/private binary as one of the sites in which the structures of gender and space overlap. The public/private binary demonstrates how the privileging of the public over the private generates discursive practices of femininity in which space emerges as a mode of control and of limiting women's mobility. The cultural artefacts constituting what Henri Lefebvre terms “representations of space,” instantiate the signifying practices in which gender structures space (73). The novels such as Manu Joseph's *Serious Men* (2010) and Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) are embedded in these gendered spatial practices which determine the positioning of women apropos the public/private binary. The paper attempts to explore how spatial practices of the public/private binary determine the modes of femininity that emerge from *Serious Men* and *The Inheritance of Loss*.*

Keywords: spatiality, space, gender, positionality, representations of space, public/private binary

From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit, to straightforward exclusion by violence, spaces and places are not themselves gendered but, in their being so, both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood (Massey 179).

The socio-economic restructuring of societies in the aftermath of the Second World War delegitimized the dominance of the concept of temporality and decoupled the notions of time and progress. These changes destabilized the perceptions of traditional history as a progressive movement towards enlightenment and of space as de-politicized (Westphal 14, 25), generating a world of free-floating signification, characterized by

massive movements of populations of exiles, refugees, soldiers, tourists, and émigrés. The displacement and transgression of the traditional notions of time, space, history, and progress inaugurated a mode of “spatial imagination capable of confronting the past in a new way” and unearthing “less tangible secrets off its spatial structures” underlying the “organization of cultural and libidinal economies and linguistic forms” (Jameson 364-5). Marxist geographers such as David Harvey and Edward Soja conceive Jameson's spatial imagination as a dialectic between the spatial and the social. Space is structured by material realities and cultural codes and defined through power relations. Feminist geographers such as Doreen Massey, Liz Bondi, Linda, McDowell, and Gillian Rose articulate space and gender, maintaining that space structures and is structured by gender relations.

The articulation of space and gender relations emphasizes the primacy of representation in the gendering of spaces. According to the Marxist philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, representation helps produce and is productive of social space, through three different processes: spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space. The paradigm of the separate spheres, exemplified by the public/private binary, is a pervasive representation of gendered space. Philosophers like Immanuel Kant articulated public/private binary with mind/body dualism and located reason in the public sphere (Duncan 17). The delegitimizing of the body is, according to Iris Marion Young, embedded in liberal political theory which relies on “an opposition between public and private dimensions of human life, which corresponds to an opposition between reason on the one hand and the body, affectivity, and desire on the other” (qtd in Duncan 22). Kant's disembodied Enlightenment individual is defined by his willingness to use reason in a public space and was embedded in structures of masculinity. The materiality of women's bodies forecloses their participation in the public space and instead relegates them to the private space which structured by feelings rather than the universal principle of reason and knowledge. The mind/body dualism and its accompanying public/private binary promote the exclusion of women from the public space and from domains of science and knowledge. This oppositional and hierarchical system promotes the separation of the dominant public male realm of production from the subordinate female private sphere of reproduction. The ideological assumptions concerning gender, sex, and space concerning the public/private binary are reproduced in cultural representations of space. The paper identifies how the ideology of the separate spheres informs the portrayal of Kalimpong in *The Inheritance of Loss* and urban Mumbai in *Serious Men*.

Set in 1986, the narrative arc of *The Inheritance of Loss* centres the household of Jemubhai Patel in Kalimpong, a mountain village near Darjeeling, A former judge who lives with his cook and his dog, Jemubhai is a recluse, whose life-world is limited to his bungalow, remaining physically and emotionally disconnected from his family and the society of Darjeeling. His disconnected existence stems from his education in 1930s London, which interpellated him into Western discourse while simultaneously

positioning him at the receiving end of racism, and thereby fragmented his sense of identity. His fragmented identity condemns him to a life of perpetual disconnect and placelessness: “The solitude became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow” (39). The arrival of his granddaughter, Sai in the bungalow does not deter him from his sense of placelessness. Until her arrival in the bungalow, she was positioned under the impersonal and disciplining vision of the nuns in her convent school, which foreclosed her sense of privacy and place. However, her life away from the nuns' security-paranoid gaze did not facilitate her sense of belonging in the bungalow in Kalimpong:

Every now and then she looked up at Kanchenjunga, observed its wizard phosphorescence with a shiver. The judge sat at the far corner with his chessboard, playing against himself. Stuffed under his chair where she felt safe was Mutt the dog, snoring gently in her sleep. A single bald lightbulb dangled on a wire above. It was cold, but inside the house, it was still colder, the dark, the freeze, contained by stone walls several feet deep (67).

As Sai falls for her tutor, Gyan, she develops a sense of security within the walls of the bungalow in his presence: “When they would finally attempt to rise from those indolent afternoons they spent together, Gyan and Sai would have melted into each other like pats of butter—how difficult it was to cool and compose themselves back into their individual beings” (122). This sense of belonging and security is violently interrupted when Gyan starts to get involved in the Insurgent Movement for Gorkhaland. Fearing the sudden erosion of her place in Gyan's absence, she tries to confront him only to be beaten up by him. This episode deepens her vulnerability and forecloses possibilities of finding a home in the household of Jemubhai Patel: “The simplicity of what she'd been taught wouldn't hold. Never again could she think there was but one narrative and that this narrative belonged only to herself, that she might create her own tiny happiness and live safely within it” (193). The bungalow does not translate as a safe refuge for Jemubhai either; it shields him from the outer world without offering him a sense of place. The boundary between the outer world and his house is constantly breached by outside threats, as exemplified by Gorkhaland insurgents harassing him and murdering his dog. Thus, Desai dismantles the ideology of domesticity underlying the public/private divide by constructing the bungalow as a space constantly breached by external threats.

The mountainous rural setting of Kalimpong in *The Inheritance of Loss* is in contrast to the sprawling urban landscape of contemporary Mumbai in *Serious Men*. Its protagonist, Ayyan Mani, is a cynical Dalit man in his late 30s, who works as a peon in the Institute of Theory and Research, an elite upper-caste bastion of scientific research. He spends much of his time plotting against Acharya, the upper-caste head of the Institute who is forced to resign after his affair with Oparna, a young researcher. If the private space in *The Inheritance of Loss* is an empty space evocative of Jemu's and Sai's

loneliness, the home in *Serious Men* is an overcrowded chawl where each family is consigned to a room. This home setting denies a sense of privacy to its dwellers and thus does not inspire emotions of security or place in them: “In some rooms here, over a dozen lived. So the newly-weds lived on the illegal wooden lofts with the unspoken assurance that the rest of the family would not look up” (8). Most of the women in the novel are consigned to such impersonal private spaces, be it Ayyan Man's uneducated wife, Oja or the innumerable “hungry housewives, whose saris slipped off their blouses as they innocently enquired in how many colours the vacuum cleaners came...upon the incandescent sight of the Eureka Forbes salesman” (83). Unlike the women who are expected to occupy the domestic space, the male characters move freely between the public (workspaces) and private spaces (home). These practices of spatial organization produce and are productive of ordering of sexual difference:

Societies have generated their own rules, culturally determined, for making boundaries on the ground and have divided the social into spheres, levels and territories with invisible fences and platforms to be scaled by abstract ladders and crossed by intangible bridges with much trepidation or exultation as on a plank over a raging torrent (Ardener 126).

One of the exceptions in this schema of gendered positioning of characters is in locating Oparna Goushmoulik, the head of the Balloon Mission Project within the Institute. Her positioning in the male bastion of the Institute is inscribed in gendered spatial practices public spaces where women in public spaces are the objects of visual consumption for the looking male subjects:

Oparna Gaushmaulik was still not granted the peace of anonymity, but she was now an insider. Those cold gazes when she went down the corridors in the wooden beat of her low heels, the number of old scholars who wanted to show her the right path while staring at her breasts, and their wives, some of them, who arrived to have an accidental meeting with her and see for themselves the talk of the Professors' Quarters—those days were over. Only minor assaults remained. Some wiry postdoctoral students still gaped at her with infatuated eyes, an ancient professor of Number Theory who inhabited the corridors these days waylaid her and showed her his nature poems (32).

Oparna's professional space is inscribed in the sexual politics of vision in which the social ordering of the gaze operates to secure a particular organization of sexual difference. Within the gendered practices of the public/private divide, women are permitted entry into selected locations only to be limited by the structuring principles of femininity.

The structuring principles of femininity and masculinity are determined by Enlightenment principles which privileged reason (mind) over corporeality (body). This mind/body dualism conflates with the ideology of the public/private divide which further regulated the significations of masculinity and femininity. The private space was fashioned as a feminine realm though it was not relegated exclusively to women. The spatial practices of masculinity accorded greater mobility to men which enabled men to move freely between the separate spheres. The public sphere was the space of activity and freedom whereas the private sphere was designated for men as a place of refuge from the hullabaloo of professional life. Cultural artefacts are imbricated in the public/private ideology which regulated men's and women's behavior in the respective public and private realms. The spatial configurations of masculinity and femininity in *Serious Men* are embedded in the ideology of the separate spheres which consigns public spaces as masculine and private spaces as feminine; where women are enabled access to the masculine domain only as objects of visual consumption. On the other hand, *The Inheritance of Loss* responds to the hegemony of domesticity by dismantling the representation of home as a place of refuge from the outside world. Except for the duration of Sai's romance with Gyan, Sai leads a life of perpetual detachment and placelessness though she is located for most part within Jemubhai's household. The violent and constant intrusion of insurgents into the household militates against the construction of home as a safe refuge. This dismantling of public/private divide proposes possibilities of resistance to gendered hierarchies of spatialization and promotes critical purview on in-between spaces.

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Teaching English for Specific Purposes through Programmed Instruction

Abstract

English for Specific Purposes is a part of a larger group of English as a second or foreign language. One of the major dissimilarity lies between the scholars and their purposes of studying English, usually ESP learners are grown up persons and who would have certainly some familiarity alongside English language and for communicating certain professional skills and to carry out the language for certain job related functions. Therefore, the programme for ESP is aimed for an appraisal of intention, and necessity and the function wherefore English be in need of. To a great extend, English is used with certain purposes. In recent years, different branches of English have been started using abundantly for academic purposes. But, it focuses on more of language of context oriented than on teaching grammar and language structure. It covers different subjects from bookkeeping or Science of Computer, tourism and language of business management. As per ESP Centre of activity, it is not taught as a new subject unrelated from the world of reality or longing. As a substitute, it is amalgamated into a branch of study which is significant to learners. It includes business english, medical, technical and English for academic purposes. Programmed Instruction is the best method of teaching English in the ESP classroom because, in it subject matters are divided according to the level of learners. It can be easily differentiated from universal motives of a course by their considerable prominence of essentiality to set-up and connect the necessity of learners and additional collaborators. Mostly, it is confined only one or two of the four master skills. Normally, it is smaller and many a time, it motivated learners than the purpose of common course.

Keywords: ESP is a part of second or foreign language, major dissimilarity of learners and their purposes, aimed for appraisal of intention, language of context, programmed instruction, restricted to only one or two of the four skills.

Introduction

In ancient times onwards, methodologies of teaching English language have been developed from compressed procedure depend on to a composite post-method teaching practice. Various teaching methodologies and approaches to E.L.T have been drafted and practiced in language world-wide classroom, and it is often victorious, and a number of challenges have come out, possibly due to their imitation in nature.

Methods of teaching, broadly and post method conditions, precisely, for those who

were beginning their studies in this field or whose knowledge of language teaching is tangential. Then it gave a brief overview of different teaching methods and afterwards elaborates on post-method condition.

It is a part of English as a second language or foreign language. Usually, it makes reference to English language teaching to the learners of university or to the employees those who are already familiar with English language terminology. Like any other language taught for specific purposes, English for specific purpose too will spotlight on activity or vocation. As such, English for particular subject, scientific English, English for medical professional, English for waiters, English for tourism etc are come under this category. Even though it has bounded target, a path of ESP can have a panoramic impression. If English is taught for academic purposes to learners before or during their degree course, is a kind of ESP as is English for medical professionals. Just like that aviation English is learned by pilots, air traffic controller and civil aviation cadets to facilitate clear radio communication.

Actually, ESP is a perspective to the pedagogy of English determined for particular motive. The ESP is depended on the plan of the specific course to present with reaction to the necessity of learners who are beyond the learning of the common language, which demands a practice concerning positive competent zones. Originally, the ESP had commenced in the 20th century, after second world war, there was a great change in science and technology along with the advantageous position in economic and commercial systems brought about that professional from different region demanded the necessity of a customary language that would make certain and expedite global communication. Consequently, it evolved into an international language of communication. This means that English language have a few actual needs that have directed a progress in the lexical sphere over the learning of recent approach and design about language and teaching, and a development in procedure and application of teaching English.

Over the years, ESP has gone through various stages, mainly in five stages have improvement, that make design in different five perspective or concept. This change happened in the sixties. The main intention of this change was to identify between the specialized language and customary language by making a curiosity to distinguish the syntactical and literal characteristic of these register's and to shape the teaching materials. The important reason at the rear of the register analysis was to make the instructional objective of the ESP course applicable to learners necessity

The rhetorical or discourse analysis stage which was started to use in seventies. The basic hypothesis of this change was to speak concerning the strangeness of learners with the English application and how sentences are used in the various communicative functions. The third approach named Target Situation Analysis was appeared in the eighties and its

main aim was to connect language study very closely with learners. So, the ESP course was arranged according to the motivation of the learners to learn the language and the circumstances. Another important approach also was appeared in the eighties known as skills and strategies which was focused on listening and reading strategies of the learners and finally, ‘ A learning central approach’ suggests the query that how to teach and learn, acquire more significant information than the language uses and contents.

English Languages

Language which is the conventional system of spoken, manual or written symbols by which human beings as a member of social group, express their culture themselves. Even though there are number of definition have been proposed for the same. English linguistic scholar named Henry Sweet has stated that language is the expression of ideas by means of speech sounds(August 15, 2012).In it expression are combined into sentences that are made the ideas into thoughts. But American linguist Bernard Bloch(May,27,2015)opinioned that “ A Language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols by which a social group cooperates. That is various types of communication constitutes different languages. It has a number of characteristic , but the subsequent are the most important ones. Actually, it is arbitrary, creative, productive, vocalic, social, non-instinctive and conventional. It provides for invention and new formations. That is, a language that lacks the ability to adapt and allow change with time and space often end up

It is a west Germanic language which was spoken first in the early medieval England and finally it became a global language.It is named after angels, one of the Germanic tribes migrated to Great Britain and later took their name as England. It has taken more than 1400years to reach into the present level.Early modern English began in the late 15th century with the beginning of printing press to London. By 18th century onwards, English has been advancing across the globe due to the British imperialism and the United States.All types of electronic and printed media started to publish through the English language. In accordance with the number of speakers English is the largest language in the globe.After Chinese and Spanish, it is the most spoken native language in the world.More over , it is the most widely learned second language and official language.Great number of people are learned it either as a second language or official language in almost 60 covering states.Application of English language is getting bigger.Constantly and country by country, domestically for global transmission. It also has been always adopting new vocabulary from other languages across the globe. Most of the words, approximately 75% of words have been derived from Greek and Latin Since it is malleable words are also being invented regularly as well.

Importance of Language

Language is primarily used to communicate the thingswith others, to express state of

mind, feelings, concept, news, incident etc. Definitely, language has a very important social purpose mainly because it is used for linguistic communication. The knowledge of having in English will assist for getting a good job in international companies within or outside the country. It's also the medium of international communication and e-commerce. Hence, the learning of English is necessary for interacting and entertaining community besides work. Since it is the language of science and technology, tourism, politics, business and diplomacy. Of course, the efficiency in English language will enhance the possibility to get a good job opportunities across the globe.

In fact, English is not the most spoken language in the world, it is used as the official language in 53 countries and is spoken approximately 1.5 billion people all over the world. It is used as the most common second language in the globe. To make effective the communication between two countries, they are spoken different languages, will be compelled to speak English as the medium of exchanging information. According to the study conducted by British council, at the end of 2020, more than two billion people will be studying English, to communicate easily with the global citizens. Since it is the prominent business language, people have to use English to access a global work force. Investigation all over the world has shown that cross-border business is always taken place through the medium of English language. Hence, multinational companies are given priority to those who are fluent in English

Popular films, books and music are published and produced through the medium of English language. That is, by learning English, can be accessed to the rich source of entertainment and will get a chance to understand prominent culture. It is the language of internet and it is estimated that 600 million people are used internet every day and most visited website in the world displayed in the English language. It is necessary to learn English because it cover more than half of the internet information. By learning to read English, a person can access to billions of pages of information which may not be otherwise available. Even though learning English is a difficult and time consuming one, but it can make number of job opportunities. It is not only a means of communication but it can mould friendship, cultural ties, and economic relationships. It is one of the most important tools available to our children

Functions of Language

Language plays an important role in the lives of human beings. Actually it is a social occurrence. The first and foremost aim of a language is to communicate with people and understand them. As long as someone talk with certain aim that he / she intends to carry an information. That is to say, an individual can use his language for various purposes. In reality, we can use language in diversified manner. Such as informative, expressive, and directive, phatic, and the aesthetic. It is used as a part of society and according to the nature of society, language will be different. People use the language, accordance with the

situation, social back drop of an individual play an important role in the nature of language and it plays a significant role in the life of a human being. Informative function mainly focuses on message and information. At the same time, expressive function is used to express the feelings and attitudes of the speaker or writer. It is used to induce certain action and reactions, social control and interpersonal interaction. Reaction of the listener is more important than a thought expressed by a speaker. But in the aesthetic function of language, which has no special purpose. In it words and sentence are regarded as linguistic artifacts. It does not use both as a request or a message. The phatic functions of language maintain social relationships and to begin or continue the conversation. It even doesn't express our feelings, but it help us to interact with people., to think and remember the events which had taken place before. It is practically impossible to callback or think without the use of words or sentences and therefore language. It helps to record experiences and convert into intelligible language. In addition to these exclusive functions, language perform social functions too. Namely, it serve to develop a sense of social identity. Language used in both creative and imaginative activities, plays a crucial role. It is impossible to write a novel or a poetry without language, that is language helps us to control and regulate our perception. In one sense, it can be said that language play a very significant role in human life. Apart from the common expression and communication. Apart from the common expression and communication language has an important role in psychological and social level and becomes more and more important in today's world.

What does it mean by ESP?

It is one of the teaching methodology which is used for teaching professions in various fields, according to the style of expression, grade vocabulary and formal arrangement of words etc all these things are used in a specific manner in it. 'Business English' is the most common ESP used by the people. Along with itself, English for law, English for medical purposes, English for tourism, English for Science purposes are also come under this category. It is founded or progressed through exercise. That is to say, English language instruction is occurred in specific context. In reality, it is an approach giving importance to learners than teacher, for educating English as a supplementary language, in which centre attention is given on talkative capability in a particular discipline as such technical English, medical English, English for tourism, business teaching, speech, writing, astrology, legal proceedings, and English for academic writing.

ESP is generally used to fulfill the particular requirement of the students. It applies prime procedure and exercises of the subject matter it serves. It is focused on the system of words for communication suitable to the exercise with regard to the rules of language and expression, learning expertise, communication and classification. That is, it designed for specific disciplines, specific teaching situations, and is used different teaching methodology different from general English. Especially, it is presumably

designed for adult learners, either at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation and it could however be used for learners at secondary school level too. Normally, it is designed for intermediate or advanced level of learners. Some basic knowledge of language is assumed through this course. In short, ESP is adversed with general English. Certainly material writers material writers very vigilant and active concerning objectives of learners each and every stages of material presentation. It is noticed that ESP community has been growing and flourish. It is important to understand what ESP actually mean is.

Actually, ESP was started not based on any theory or principles or ideas in any field. It was the need of time, which gave the form of present ESP. That is to say, necessity of time helped the origin of ESP which has been changing due to the evolution of science and technology, trade, global economy, applied linguistics etc. According to Hutchinson and waiters(Nov.12,2012) want of courageous world, linguistic revolution and requirement of learners were the prominent reasons for the birth of ESP. This approach to language teaching in which all things as to content and methods of teaching are decided depend on the learners reason for learning. Like other human development ESP was not planned and attractive one but it is a phenomenon growing out of converging trends. The development of science and technology after post world war, soon generated a need for an international language, English was granted this role. At first, second world war made a lot of changes especially in politics, U.S became the world super power. The expansion of science and technology growth of global economy which made English as the international language for communication. Oil crisis of 1970s foreign currency and new awareness started flowing into the oil rich country. Quite naturally, English language became the source of knowledge. As a result of that, there was a great pressure to modify its approaches, methods, and materials according to the requirement of the learners and consumers. Now it has become subject matter of the wishers, necessity, and demands of people apart from language teachers. Consequently, linguistics viewed language as a means of communication used in the context. Then there was a shift from teaching method and to the learning and the learner. Learners are use different learning techniques and strategies, learners are different and their requirements are divergent. In reality, all these things are lead to the different needs in learning context.

Teaching ESP through Programmed Instruction

Since ESP is a part of a larger group of English like a foreign language or second language. It allude to educate English language to university learners or human beings earlier in service, with regard to, the specific vocabulary and expertise they require. Similiarly, how other languages are used for specific purposes. the given ESP too will target on one activity or career. Such as English for technical purposes, scientific english, english for medical science, professional writing, and tourism etc. In spite of restricted focus, a system of ESP can have a broad covering influence, as in the case with physical English.

As ESP is focused on learner's needs, necessity, and learning content, these special or variety of skills can be provided through programmed Instruction. It is a technique through which subject matters are presented to learners according to the level of students in a sorted manner. Here learner can toil freely through this material by themselves at their own disposal. Furthermore, immediately after each stage, learner's comprehension will be tested by asking comprehensive question or by filling a diagram. Since, it is a research based system that assists learners to work flourishingly. As it presents the materials in small pieces quicker response will be got from the learners. The subject matters are broken down into tiny steps named frames and organized subsequently. Instantaneous corroboration of correct answers or rectification of erroneous response are provided by the learner and the programme is emphasized in the programmed learning. Hence, the learning teaching activities can make easy in the ESP classroom by using the method of programmed instruction

Methodology of ESP

ESP too have a methodology like other content subject, but ESP methodology integrates language learning approaches with subject learning approaches. ESP has linked essentially with areas of different activities like academic, professional and job-oriented. That is ESP uses different methods of learning teaching activities like case studies, project work and tasks, video, OD-Ram, the internet, e-mail and computer aided language learning, hot play, role-play, real-play, and stimulation have a key role in the ESP class-room. A good ESP teacher should try to minimize the negative effects of the learners reaction. This methodology put forward the use of pair work or group work to reduce the level of stress in speaking in front of others. It suggest to give time to think and do, listen to the learners, give enough time to think and allow them to complete. Emphasis is given to process than product. In it, includes fun, various and varieties and it discourage monotonous and mechanical teaching. From the above discussion, it could be understand, a comprehensive methodology can be applied for teaching ESP

Conclusion

Generally all four master skills are (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) given importance in the ESL / EFL classroom while in ESP, learners needs and context that decides which language skills are forced, and the course is designed accordingly. ESP students are usually intermediate or advanced adults, definitely who will have some acquaintance with English and are learning the language in order to communicate in a particular academic or professional context. Practically, ESP combines subject matter and English language teaching together. Above all the origin of ESP lies in satisfying learners needs. Therefore, evaluation of the course helps to assess how far the identified needs have been satisfied. There is no dominating movement in ESP now; however, there

are different approaches, materials and methods used in ESP. To conclude, ESP always goes with ESL/ EFL teaching, but whatever the current trend is,,it is the responsibility of ESP practitioners to be sensitive to learners needs and their learning context.

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Subjugation and Resistance in Maya Angelou's *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings*

Abstract

The paper entitled 'Subjugation and Resistance in Maya Angelou's "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings"' is an attempt to shed light on the lives of Afro- American women who have been marginalized from the main stream. The present study attempts to analyse the oppression that the woman writer had to face from society and how she has managed to overcome this is also taken into consideration. This study focuses on the subjugation of women in general and marginalized women in particular. The double marginalization experienced by the women writers are explicitly depicted in literature. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is one such masterpiece of writing where the author in detail explains the kind of discrimination which she had to undergo. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is a coming of age novel which portrays the early life of Maya Angelou as a young girl. During her early life itself she had to face gender as well as racial discrimination. This autobiography can be considered as a landmark in the history of Black feminism where Angelou breaks the silence and sets a mark of her own despite the hurdles. She flays the picture of the unjust society which muted and marginalized her. The rise of the new liberated woman which leaves a note of optimism can be explicitly seen in this autobiography. "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" is critically analysed in the light of feminism and the double marginalization which she had to undergo is also taken note of.

Key Words: Gender discrimination, Racial discrimination, Double marginalization, Subjugation, Resistance

Women who participate in various activities play an integral role in society. The way women are treated in a particular society determines how civilized the society is. Even though women are labelled as providers, goddesses they are always considered as subservient to men. Most of the cultures prefer rather follow the male line of the family. As Simon de Beauvoir observes, "the world of women is everywhere enclosed, limited, dominated by male universe; high as she may rise herself there will always be ceiling over her head, walls that will block her way." (Beauvoir 325). Even after excelling in many fields their victories still remain unrecognised. The shackles of patriarchy had always restricted her from marching towards excellence.

Women writers across the world used their pen to highlight the social evils experienced by women in their respective communities. Women's writing has grown

considerably and has become more open. Those voices which had been muted for many years have started raising loud cries which disturb the peaceful scenario. Issues like subjugation of women, women's desire for freedom, womanhood and the right for individuality have become the subject matter for discussion. The stories of many muted women are coming into light nowadays with the rise of feminism. The case of Afro-American women was more pathetic when compared to others. They were twice marginalised from the main stream first in the name of race, second based on their gender. They didn't have a voice or identity of their own. These women were assaulted not only by the whites rather by the men of their own race.

In the post-colonial world feminism is one of the widely discussed topics of interest. Feminism aims at eliminating the inequalities imposed on the basis of gender and targets at bringing social, political and gender equality. Thus, the two terms gender equality and feminism go hand in hand. Feminism is rather a broad term which encompasses several types including radical feminism, marxist and socialist feminism, eco-feminism, black feminism and several others. Racism and gender subordination marginalized the women of Afro-American community. The double marginalization lead to the rise of Black feminism. Black feminism emerged out of activism in by Maria Stewart, Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks and others. The first two waves of feminism failed to address the needs to the African-American women, they were still considered as subhuman inferior species. The ultimate aim of black feminists was “to establish their identity, against patriarchy in their culture and the models established by main stream feminists” (Mukhopadhyay 83). Maya Angelou was a respected spokesperson of Afro- American people in general and Afro-American women in particular. Women's oppression is the most widespread and the deepest form of oppression in society. Patriarchal society had always offered women a position which is always inferior to men. She is considered as downtrodden born with social ability to obey everything. Virginia Woolf once pointed out that in most part of history, women remained anonymous.

A well-known poet and an acclaimed writer Maya Angelou in her autobiographies points out the difficulty in growing up as a black woman in America. Even being a victim of double marginalization, she had raised her voice for fighting against all kinds of injustices and discriminations that women had to face in the society. As a writer Maya Angelou exposes the double marginalization which woman of Afro-American descent had to face. She became the voice of the voiceless. She is a victim of cultural hegemony created by the whites. This cultural hegemony was the product of racism. Throughout her career she had published numerous poems, autobiographies and children's book. The autobiography of Angelou is not merely a personal narrative rather it is the voice of many silenced and subjugated women who have been muted for years. The autobiography is one of the best ways for depicting the self as it is and at the same time away of attacking the pseudo socio- political hegemony.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings is one of the ground breaking works of Maya Angelou. It narrates the saga of fight and survival. The growth of an oppressed girl is well narrated in this autobiography. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a bildungsroman which narrates the childhood of Maya Angelou. As a young girl she and her brother were labelled with tags and transported like baggage to southern part, Arkansas where segregation was at its peak. The phenomenal woman Maya Angelou recollects her own story upto the age seventeen in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. The book gives a detailed account of the inflicted inferiority that a young girl had to face in her society as well as in her home. Maya Angelou points out the difficulty to grow up as Black woman in a White dominated society, "If growing up is painful, for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat." (Angelou 6). The 'caged bird' is a symbol of all the African-Americans who have been enslaved for years.

The inequitable distribution of power leads to the domination of one individual over the other and thereby leads to corruption. Maya Angelou had to face oppression in different forms starting from racial to physical and psychological torture. As a young girl Angelou had to face the worst form of oppression from a dentist to whom Angelou's grandmother had lent money, interest free and as a favour. The white doctor refused to treat her and added "...my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth in a nigger's (Angelou 203). She always felt awful as a young coloured girl at school. Once Angelou said "It was brutal to be young and already trained to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my colour with no chance of defence. We should all be dead". (Angelou 194).

The rise of the new generation female artists and writers questioned the outdated stereotypes concerning woman's place in a society and thereby challenged the patriarchal social structure. Angelou deviated from all kinds of established feminine notions in the society by becoming the first female car conductor. This is considered to be a landmark incident in the history of Afro-American women. Initially when she discussed with her mother the plan of becoming a street car conductor her mother warned her that "They don't accept coloured people on street cars" (Angelou 284). However, after along and tiring quarrel with the receptionist she became the first black girl street car conductor in San Francisco, "On a blissful day I was hired as the first Negro on the San Francisco streetcars." (Angelou 289)

Patriarchy and sexism are the root cause of unequal power relations. Maya Angelou had to face double marginalization. Racism was at its peak when Angelou was a young girl. She herself was a victim of the racial oppression. Racism and sexism crushed and muted many women of her community. Angelou's grandmother, Momma was openly discriminated several times. Once she had to undergo a court trial for hiding a man who was hunted down for assaulting a white woman. The judge publicly assaulted her because

she belonged to the African-American community.

The judge asked that Mrs. Henderson be subpoenaed, and when Momma arrived and said she was Mrs. Henderson, the judge, the bailiff and other whites in the audience laughed. The judge had really made a gaffe calling a Negro woman Mrs., but then he was from Pine Bluff and couldn't have been expected to know that a woman who owned a store in that village would also turn out to be coloured. The whites tickled their funny bones with the incident for a long time, and the Negroes thought it proved the worth and majesty of my grandmother. (Angelou 52)

In an attempt to change the tradition that has silenced and marginalized woman, the woman writer tried to rewrite the history of oppression from their perspective. Angelou questioned and reshaped the traditional role of female in her writings. Breaking the stereotype needs lot of courage. Maya Angelou had successfully managed to set a benchmark of her own. Even though she had to become a mother at a very young age, it didn't kindle her spirit. Resistance which is a by-product of oppression is very evident in her writings.

The struggle that Angelou has undertaken shows her resistance against this unjust world. The resistance offered by Angelou is not implicit rather it is quite explicit. The growth of Maya Angelou as a young mild and meek girl into a strong and bold woman was quite transformational. The resistance from Angelou's part was subtle, a passive protest against maltreatment of whites later when she grew up it became an active protest, followed by overt objection from blacks against racial acts. She adds:

The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice white illogical hate and black lack of power. The fact that the adult American Negro female emerges a formidable character is often met with amazement distaste and even belligerence. (Angelou 291-292).

The book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is dedicated to "All, the strong black birds of promise who defy the odds and gods and sing their songs" (Angelou 1). She never wanted herself or the members of her community to be muted rather wanted all women of her community to be strong, bold and diffident. She was raged by the inflicted inferiority bought upon the people of her community. "It was awful to be Negro and have no control over my life. It was brutal to be young and already to sit quietly and listen to charges brought against my colour with no chance of defence." (Angelou 194). As a young girl she was disturbed by "the heavy burden of Blackness" (Angelou 202).

Angelou had to face abuse from her own step father who raped her. She adds, "The act

of rape on an eight-year-old body is a matter of the needle giving because the camel can't. The child gives, because the body can, and the mind of the violator cannot" (Angelou 84). A note of optimism runs throughout her writing. "Life is going to give you just what you put it. Put your whole heart in everything you do and pray, then you can wait" (Angelou 288).

Analysing from a feminist theoretical perspective most of the women characters in *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* stands unique. Angelou's grandmother Annie Henderson, whom she addresses as "Momma" is portrayed as a bold, strong and independent woman. She owns a store in Arkansas. Though Momma is portrayed as an independent woman who could stand on her own feet she never dared to speak out against white people. "Now the humiliation of hearing Momma describe herself if she had no last name to the young white girl was equal to the physical pain" (Angelou 202). She instilled in Maya and Bailey the importance of education and cleanliness. Similar to Momma, Maya's mother Vivian Baxter is a bold, beautiful and financially independent woman. Maya always looked up to her mother's beauty. She says, "My mother's beauty literally assailed me. Her red lips split to show even white teeth and her mouth beyond her cheeks beyond her ears and seemingly through the walls to the street outside" (Angelou 65). She is also depicted as a woman with too much maternal instincts who loved her children too much. When she knew that Mr. Freeman assaulted Maya she threw him out of the house.

Apart from the women characters Maya's uncle Willie also suffered from discrimination. He is a disabled person who had to face double marginalization. Maya says,

In our society, where two-legged. Two-armed strong Black men were able at best to eke out the necessities of life, Uncle Willie, with his starched shirts, shined shoes and shelves full of food, was the whipping boy and butt of jokes of the underemployed and underpaid. Fate not only disabled him but laid a double- tiered barrier in his path (Angelou 13)

Even after being a male he was kept aside because of his disability. Others made fun of him whenever they got an opportunity to do so. Willie in a way had to face oppression in a subtle way which again overshadowed things that are going to happen in Maya's life. Despite all the adverse circumstances her brother seemed to be a source of inspiration throughout her life. This leaves a ray of optimism.

Breaking stereotypes and setting a unique path takes lot of courage. Maya Angelou still remains a source of inspiration for many more yet to come. Angelou has set a path which inspired many who came after. She urged not only the members of her community but also all the women who were silenced and subjugated to stand out, raise voice against the injustices and to set a mark of their own. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* is a conglomerate of resistance and survival.

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Upsurge of Transgender Identity: A Study on Transgender in the Specimen Novel *Narcopolis* by Jeet Thayil

Abstract

Transgender is about gender identity. It is also called as 'Third' gender. Today's society is not sober in terms of accepting the transgender community. The majority feels that they are others and not to be taken into consideration and are not to be included. They don't fit in the present established Indian society, so this type of marginalization is always in vogue.

Jeet Thayil's novel Narcopolis delineates the story of Dimple, a transgender 'person' as the protagonist. She is a sex worker worked part-time at the brothel and part time at an opium den. The main story of the novel revolves around Dimple, whose story tells us about the difficult lives led by hijras in India who are left to choose professions such as prostitution as their gender identity is not socially accepted.

This paper focuses on the way how Jeet Thayil, the author, treats a transgender person in his novel Narcopolis as the protagonist. He tries to give them 'voice', a 'space' among the public and a very heavenly and safe place to belong. As a writer, he is too careful and bold to bring a Hijra as the main character to this narrative, though there was no attention and response given to the transgender persons' claims and rightful demands at the time of writing this novel. Dimple is working as a centre of everyone's attention in the opium den as well as in the novel, thus, she rules the roost there.

Key words: Transgender, Upsurge, Marginalization, Hijra Community

Transgender is sometimes called 'Third' gender. Third Gender is a term used by some Western anthropologists when talking about other cultures that have societal gendered roles for people who can be thought of as under 'nonbinary' and transgender. Third gender includes 'Two Spirit', Hijra, and many other nonbinary identities worldwide. The persons addressed here do not necessarily call themselves anything analogous to the label "third gender," as the term is applied to them by external ones. Moreover, our culture itself may not necessarily think of there being three genders, either. Some Western writers have used "third gender" only for people who they consider to be on the male-to-female spectrum, and "fourth gender" for people on the female-to-male spectrum. Other writers use "third gender" to include both. There has been discussion about the use of the term 'third gender' in anthropology; and for this reason it is important to make the distinction that only people

of the ethnic group which uses a particular designation are entitled to use it as an identity. For instance, someone who is not from India or of Indian descent should not refer to themselves as hijra, as this is a kind of 'cultural appropriation'. Although there are strong historical patterns of the term “third gender” being used by white colonialist anthropologists to erase ethnic genders among 'People of Colour', it is important to remember that many white cultures have also had nonbinary genders.

“Transgender” is an umbrella term that is used to describe a wide range of identities, one among is hijra. It is applied to persons whose gender identity does not conform to their biological sex. There is limited data on the estimated population of India's transgender community, but anecdotal evidence puts it between a half a million to two million individuals.

Many forms of transgendered cultures used to exist throughout the world. However most of these cultures became extinct as Christian social mores spread and transgendered cultures were banned, stigmatized, or absorbed into modern gay-culture. In Indian society, however, there still exists a third gender called Hijra that is distinctly different from the Western concept of transgender.

The Hindu god Shiva, the supreme Lord, is sometimes described as a hermaphrodite and Indian society sees the existence of a middle gender that combines the characteristics of both man and woman. Hijras are seen as neither man nor woman, and fulfill a socio-cultural role that is reserved only for them. The most well-known role for Hijras is the performance of religious ceremonies at weddings and for new-born male babies to bring fertility and good luck.

Transgender people in India have always had to define themselves on government forms as either a “male” or “female.” But that is about to change. In a landmark ruling, India's Supreme Court has recognized a third gender option to be created for transgender people, or “Hijras,” as they are often referred to in South Asia. “The spirit of the Indian Constitution is to provide equal opportunity to every citizen to grow and attain their potential, irrespective of caste, religion or gender,” the court said in its order, which is expected to alleviate the conditions of transgender people in India, through access to welfare programs, employment opportunities and education.

India's Election Commission allowed a third gender of “other” on voter registration forms for this year's election. Nearly 30,000 people designated themselves as “other” and there are an estimated 2 million transgender individuals in India. India is not the first country to recognize a third gender, as Nepal and Bangladesh have also passed similar legislation. 8

When the British came to power in India, the community's fortunes changed, with the disgusted colonists passing a law in 1897 classing all eunuchs as criminals. Since then many have been ostracized – either for cross dressing or being intersex – and have gone on

to form their own communities, around a guru or mother figure to provide emotional and financial security. More recently, hijras have been seen as auspicious and are often asked to bless celebrations such as marriages and births.

Yet, despite welcoming the change in the law, Indian activists warn that not all transgender people feel comfortable being referred to as “third sex”. Many prefer to be classed simply by the gender they have chosen, as women or men. Campaigners point out that more needs to be done to stop transgender people and hijra communities in particular, from being criminalized – such as overturning the controversial section 377 law that makes homosexual acts a crime.

Today's society is not sober in terms of accepting the transgender community. The majority feels that *they* are *others* and not to be taken into consideration and are not to be included. *They* don't fit in the present established Indian society. The “Other” is a concept of the identity of difference that is discussed within literature and in the social sciences. The state or characteristic of “the other or Other” is meant by “being different from or alien to” the identity of self or social identities. As such, the “other or Other” is perceived as dissimilar or opposite to being “us” or the Same. The terms the “other”, “Other” and “Otherness” refer to who and what is distinct or separate from the symbolic, the real, aesthetic and/or political norm, identity, and the self. When used as a verb it means to distinguish then label then identify as belonging to a category and then exclude those who do not fit a societal norm. In geographic terms “to other” means to place outside of the center, somewhere along the margins where the societal norm does not reside.

In literary theory, the process of “othering” is the depiction of another person or a group of people as distinctly different from the writer's or speaker's own group often with overtones of dehumanization. The term “othering” originated in Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism*, and the theorists often capitalize the term as “Othering,” and they do likewise with corresponding terms like “the Other,” and “Otherness.” It is a key concept in postcolonialism, psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

Partly this kind of a mental process allows the thinker/speaker to do violence or harm to the Other without feeling due guilt for one's actions, which can make othering a dangerous phenomenon in multi-ethnic or multi-cultural societies. On the other hand, othering may have a positive function in helping to form one's identity as it is one way to create a sense of self by contrasting one's own group with external ones. In its original use, Said's interest was in how European writers “othered” the cultures of the Middle East and Asia, depicting them as mystical rather than rational in mental outlook. At best, western writers would use the Orient as a contrasting point with their own cultures, and at worst, psychologically project their own repressed desires and practices on them. However, the term is widely applicable even outside of the Oriental context.

The concept of the 'other' has been explored in terms of gender and culture however

one of the numerous benefits of literature, is the ability for writers to explore the mysterious realm of the unknown. The use of the imagination allows exploration and different interpretations into hidden cultures, animals, objects, humans, groups etc.

The term "hijra" applies to a very diverse group of people in India who identify as neither male nor female. These third-gendered people can range from a natural hermaphrodite to a male cross-dresser in a sari. The subjects here, who fall within this spectrum, are eunuchs. There are an estimated 5 to 6 million hijras in India. Less than 10 percent are eunuchs. ³India, along with a host of other South Asian nations, is home to a group of transgender people called "hijras," who have long served as culturally significant ritual performers.

Hijras commonly live in communities and traditionally undergo an extensive initiation process, including a ritualistic and crude castration. For centuries, they have regularly performed at weddings and childbirths in exchange for payment. According to religious folklore, hijras have the power to both bless one with fertility and also assign curses. Because of this "power," for much of Indian history, hijras garnered significant respect as an important group of ascetic people. But in today's India, the hijras are largely stigmatized, often functioning as an institutionalized third gender for who access to education, jobs, and good housing are scarce. Over the years, with increased ostracism, Hijras have often been relegated to a life of begging, prostitution and extortion.

Hijra community is, nowadays, trapped by the dreadful marginalization in the Indian society. They are not given the least nominal consideration as the common individual in the nation. They are living as not better than dying. People don't value them, nor validate their presence, intellectual and social contributions as we do to the male and female population. This community has to hide from centre of the society and are compelled to live in the ditches by begging, doing mean jobs, performing as sex workers etc. for a very meager income. That is how we meet them only in the India Railways shamelessly begging for a ten rupee note that we find of no value at the present financial condition. By appearing in front of media cameras and in the pages of newspapers, novels, poetry and also by writing their own memoirs and autobiographies they try to show their real face and their real worth of them by ripping their heart apart to convince us that they too are humans.

"Like the underdog, we are respected by nobody. Except for the newly introduced "Adhar Card" we have no "adhar" or official recognition, or support from any quarter whatsoever. We are thus destitute. Estranged from family and ostracized by society, people couldn't care less how we earn a livelihood, or where our next meal comes from." (Lakshmi)

They too want to live as they are born; and in need of a livelihood: food to eat, a place

to sleep, and a tear of cloth to cover their 'strange' or 'different' body and identity. In a nutshell, they need to work. But the questions are; what? Where? How? Etc. People and especially our Governments are not ready to appoint them in some posts or give them some daily-wage jobs. So they gained qualification to beg, but many a time their pots did not jingle with even little coins. We did not entertain or enjoy their 'claps' or their dance performances were not 'outstanding' or 'awesome', so they did not get selected but eliminated from the sight. They were denied even their right to employ and to make their both ends meet. A hijra says:

Our main occupation is to perform *badhai* at weddings, or when a child is born. At such times we sing and dance to bless the newlyweds or the newborn. But can *badhai* alone fill our stomachs? Obviously not, and so we supplement our earnings by begging on city streets, and performing sex work, and dancing in bars and night clubs. Dancing comes naturally to us hijras. (Lakshmi)

People usually sympathize on them, but with sympathy alone they cannot push their lives ahead. How long can they live out of others' sympathy and sympathetic or strange look? But, alas, we are not even ready to support them financially or socially. An Indian Blogger John P. Matthew expresses his wonder on the pathetic lives of hijras in his review on Jeet Thayil's *Narcopolis*:

If a child is born with inappropriate sexual organs he is castrated to be a eunuch. A eunuch thus castrated can only become a beggar or a sex slave. Nothing could be sadder than a story of a eunuch in the class- and community-conscious Indian society. (Matthew)

Jeet Thayil's novel *Narcopolis* delineates the story of Dimple, a transgender 'person' as the protagonist. She is a sex worker worked part-time at the brothel and part time at an opium den. The main story of the novel revolves around Dimple, whose story tells us about the difficult lives led by hijras in India who are left to choose professions such as prostitution as their gender identity is not socially accepted.

Dimple, the central character of the book, a hijra or “female eunuch” sold into transgender prostitution. Jeet Thayil comments on the character Dimple as:

“She's based on somebody I saw two or three times in a den on Shuklaji Street,” he says, referring to a street once lined with opium dens. “Then she disappeared, as people in that world often did. I remember watching her as she made the pipes. She was absolutely self-possessed, quiet, elegant, attractive and very polite. I only spoke to her maybe once, but she always stayed in my head,” (Thayil)

This present paper focuses on the way how Jeet Thayil, the author, treats a transgender

person in his novel *Narcopolis* as the protagonist. He tries to give *them* 'voice', a 'space' among the public and a very *heavenly* and safe place to belong. As a writer, he is too careful and bold to bring a Hijra as the main character to this narrative, though there was no attention and response given to the transgender persons' claims and rightful demands at the time of writing this novel. This kind of a novel prepares a 'paper' boat for these little beings who are drowning in the sea of discrimination and marginalization. Dimple is working as a centre of everyone's attention in the opium den as well as in the novel, thus, she rules the roost there.

As the plight of hijras is a great issue of this century, India's Supreme Court handed down a landmark ruling for hijras and other transgender Indians, by recognizing a third gender under the law that is neither male nor female. This decision defines their rights and the state's obligation to them as one of India's most marginalized groups.

With the motivation and help of the very Indian government, they too reached in a position enough to argue and demonstrate for the rights and protests and agitations against the mainstream. Abhina Aher, a hijra person representing all other hijras in India says: "What we have done is that we have put a foot inside a door, which is a door of hope, and we will open it — very, very soon." (Aher)

For the social, cultural and economic benefits and upliftment of hijras the Rights of Transgender Persons Bill 2014 was passed in the Rajya Sabha and is headed to the Lok Sabha. But how much has changed for the community since last year's landmark judgment? One of the leading newspapers of India, *The Hindu* asks this question.

In the novel *Narcopolis*, Jeet Thayil gives an upsurge of identity to the transgender person, novel's protagonist Dimple by figuring her as the protagonist of his novel, in one sense. There are plenty of novels being published on everyday basis in India too, but the novels with transgender persons as main characters are very rare and limited in number. It is an author's discretion to decide or to select who should be the protagonist and who else should show their faces in the novel's pages. Here, Jeet Thayil, being different as an Indian author in his selection of the characters to his debut novel *Narcopolis*. Therefore, this could be considered or regarded as a kind of voice-giving to the people who got less chance in the literature and life to play roles. Though this kind of an action or an effort from the side of an author may create a problem or a stir in thoughts or in the discussions of the academia and among public, this attempt of Jeet has to be welcomed keeping transgender persons' identity crisis in mind.

Another kind of an upsurge of identity can be seen in the plot of the novel or in its theme. Jeet Thayil deliberately convolutes the story of the novel with these things in mind. The protagonist Dimple is given a privilege of being the main or focused character throughout the novel. Dimple lives busy. She manages multiple jobs at Opium den and brothel respectively. She is the most wanted character in the novel; at the den and brothel

alike. This is also an attribute given to Dimple by the author to make her enlightened or empowered with her own might and for her pleasures.

Through these ways, Transgender/ Third Gender/ Other/ Hijra persons are being lifted and given voice by the model author Jeet Thayil. Here words are being mightier than swords to save those who are marginalized and suppressed by the society. Literature can change things in the society by engaging positively in the problematic lives of the marginalized or suffering people. This kind of novels or any piece of literature can give them a life and can preserve their rights, moreover give them voice to express themselves to demand their neglected or denied freedom. Indeed, Jeet Thayil creates a magic of upsurge of the transgender identity through the depiction of the single character Dimple.

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Changing Modalities of Space: Redefining Social Space at a time of Social Distancing

Abstract

Perhaps a few decades prior to Lefebvre's Production of Spaces, the term space had a strictly geometrical explanation. A discussion upon an idea like social space therefore would have sounded strange. Having shared roots in traditional metaphysics, philosophy soon took up space which till then was a monopoly of the sciences. There is a continuum or schema of free space wherein all physical objects and events find their place. But with the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown and imposed social distancing norms, the very concept of space calls for a contextual redefinition. This paper essentially provides a peek into those percepts of social space that might probably undergo a new rendition and the possible prospects of alternative virtual spaces at the face of a global pandemic such as the one we currently confront.

Keywords: Social space, Social distancing, Virtual space, Virtual world, COVID-19

Introduction

Every culture resonates a system of thoughts shared by those who are part of it. The life force of such a system is directly proportionate to its communicability. Essentially each system of thought is the coherent, orderly arrangement of concepts and values which is in turn recorded into materials and employed in a *message space*. Thus cultural and communicational elements can become operational only by availing a specific *space*. There is a continuum or schema of free space wherein all physical objects and events find their place. But with the global outbreak of COVID-19 and the ensuing lockdown and imposed social distancing norms, the very concept of *space* calls for a contextual redefinition. Despite the disparity in intensity of the counter measures and restrictions, a common thread of uncertainty and fear as to how the pandemic might remodel our sense of place and space runs through people of all geographical locations. But prior to an investigation on how the norms of social distancing and the fears of contracting the virus might change our perspectives on *space*, it is inevitable that we take a glance at the various notions associated with the concept of *space*.

Defining Space

Perhaps a few decades prior to Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974), the term *space* had a strictly geometrical explanation. A discussion upon an idea like *social space* therefore, would have sounded strange. Having shared roots in traditional metaphysics,

philosophy soon took up *space* which till then was a monopoly of the sciences. *Space* was assessed as an area calling for serious philosophical research. Two basic philosophical questions that hold great complexity in magnitude were taken up at this point: Is space something or nothing? If it is something then what is its structure? These questions aren't new, of course, but the postulations constructed thus far have often been of conflicting natures which leave the notions inconclusive. More often than not we tend to speak about the word *space*, in popular discourse or academic, without being fully conscious about what we mean by it. The ancients spoke of space as *the void* which seems to be a subtle way of saying that space itself is nothing. But modern researches have provided new hypotheses which tend to refer space as:

Simply that in which reactions and interactions may take place without itself taking part in the proceedings. It necessarily remains passive and neutral throughout... Surely the existence of space is immediately evident to anyone who uses his eyes-or for that matter his hands. Where then have we gone wrong? (Hinckfuss 4)

Hinckfuss discusses two perspectives, *relational* and *absolute*, have gained acceptance weaving theories around the idea of space. Relational theories of space, in Hinckfuss' own words are, "any statements purporting to assign any property or properties to space are to be reconstructed as assigning relationships to pairs or groups of pieces of matter" (5). This view treats the logic of space much on the same lines as one might look upon notions like friendship. Relational theories have been in the lime light for over ages now.

Standing in exact antithesis to this perspective we have the absolute theories of space which sets up the hypothesis that space between objects cannot, without loss, be equated to descriptions of relations as space is an entity in its own right with properties of its own. For the absolutist, empty space can be referred to as a space containing no substance but it is not, what one often tends to call it, nothing. The properties that are associated with the concept of space vary from one absolutist to another.

As a matter of fact instantaneous locus and boundaries of objects can only be stipulated with respect to some reference-frame(s) in space. This free space is nothing but a bare infinite expansion by its very nature. Had there been a boundary, the topography of it could have only been defined with respect to a reference-frame, a virtual mathematical construct of a relative perceptual stand point that stands external to free space. But such a postulation can be operational only if all the reference-frames thinkable are inside the free space. Besides, there can be nothing outside the limits of such a boundary other than free space itself. Since these complexities remain unresolved, it is intellectually most comfortable not to define the limits of free-space which is absolutely independent of anything else. This analysis opts for aligning both absolutist and relational approaches towards the concept of space. It also looks into how social relations construct *social spaces*.

What is *Social Space*?

The idea of *social space* evolved as a product of a relational approach that attempts to redefine the notion interpreting it in relation with social realities. It evaluates social space as a social product, breaking away from a standpoint that views space as an independent material reality existing in itself. Spearheaded by Lefebvre, a new postulation came up which understands *space* as fundamentally bound up with social reality. Integrating the concept of city and space into a single comprehensive theoretical framework, Lefebvre opens up new vistas in the understanding and analysis of *space*. In his *The Production of Space* he defines the term as:

(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity — their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder. It is the outcome of a sequence and set of operations, and thus cannot be reduced to the rank of a simple object. (73)

Lefebvre here asserts that *social space* is something that is *produced* and not something that exists independently. He also posits that *social space* is dynamic as it serves as a platform for fresh actions to occur. This is an aspect of *social space* that might get distorted in the wake of the current crisis.

An evident potential repercussion of COVID-19 is a generalized aversion to gatherings in large numbers. *Social spaces* that host large crowds for sporting events, cultural and religious celebrations and even political protests will experience minimal public presence, if not none. As footages flooding the social media indicate, the streets appear deserted, shops remain closed, and life is at a standstill. At this juncture the idea of *social spaces* as a platform for interaction and interrelation stands challenged. Even Massey's postulations about *social spaces* seem to face a deconstruction.

***Social Space* at the time of Social Distancing**

Doreen Barbara Massey, a contemporary British social scientist and geographer, in her celebrated work *For Space* (2005) provides a set of three intertwined propositions. She argues that a *social space* is constituted by numerous *interrelations* (characters as well as events). She observes that space must be recognized “as constituted through interaction, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny” (9). Massey's second hypothesis states that space is always *under construction*. Thus it is in a constant state of flux. It is ever changing and hence cannot have a defined structure. The third observation in this regard is the possibility of the existence of *multiplicity*. She posits space “as the sphere in which distinct trajectories coexist; as the sphere therefore of coexisting *heterogeneity*” (10). With the initiation of a global lockdown and a call for deliberate social distancing these percepts about *social space* incite a new interpretation.

At the wake of this global pandemic, social interaction, of any sort is more often than

not equaled to disease contraction. Just like the Bible advocating to hate the sin and not the sinner, authorities at the center and state alike are compelled to stress the need to disdain the disease and not the affected. On 20th April 2020, the media aired the disheartening visuals of a doctor's burial marred by protests and attacks in Chennai. The 55 year old neurosurgeon was tested positive for COVID- 19. A similar incident took place in Andhra Pradesh a week before this. Health teams were attacked and doctors were injured in Moradabad, UP. The list doesn't end here. All of this point towards a wreck of interrelations in social spaces.

India Today on its March 27th 2020 edition published the pictures of twelve landmarks of major Indian cities left totally deserted as 1.3 billion Indian citizens were locked down within their houses. Construction sites remain abandoned, streets have gone silent, deers and peacocks have been spotted in the open and city landscapes that underwent relentless construction activities in the past confronts an absolute stagnation. Today it seems as though the social space which was in a constant state of flux has attained a definite structure, at the least for the time being, as it lost its possibilities for constructive activities.

The predicted risks associated with large social gatherings are likely to be highly sensitive to heterogeneous cultural norms across cities and regions. In many cities and cultures, large gatherings are simply too important for a city's identity, culture or economy. There exist many religious and cultural celebrations and rituals that have been celebrated for centuries, having survived countless disruptions, droughts, war and unrest. These events require large open spaces.

The public health emergency we encounter today has demonstrated the value of flex spaces. Many convention centres, large green spaces and empty malls have been converted into emergency COVID-19 treatment outlets. Thus large open spaces, which promoted the coexistence of multiplicity, are slowly becoming unavailable. The pandemic possess the potential to develop a new lens through which to think about public space. With high restrictions in movement, heavy surveillance and constant tracking becoming the new normal, aversion to social spaces have become stronger. This indeed cuts off chances for the commingling of people from different socio-cultural, ethnic and economic backgrounds.

The emergence of Virtual Spaces

At the wake of such a crisis, there looms large a need for an alternate space for people to communicate and commingle. *Virtual spaces* gains importance at this point. They offer a social space virtually created via internet platforms. Though these spaces cannot be defined with the same norms as that of a physical space, their effectiveness in the current scenario cannot be overlooked. To make a deeper inspection in this regard, we have to start by answering some basic questions- what are *virtual spaces*? How do they create a

model of the physical social space in a computer mediated setting?

Virtual spaces can be seen as digital domains in which individuals, groups and even organizations communicate in non physical spaces. They offer untapped opportunities for potential users. Virtual space has been defined as “an electronic environment that usually mimics complex physical spaces, where people can interact with each other and with virtual objects...” (Bainbridge 472). Social interaction through a virtual avatar is yet another feature of virtual spaces. Games like Player Unknown Battle Grounds (PUBG) exemplify this aspect. Various expressions of computer mediated communication platforms that are increasingly pervasive and arguably altering the texture of everyday life, are constantly emerging. To relate these frameworks with the pre-existing notions of social space and to evaluate whether they offer an efficient alternate stage, we need to first examine how place is created within a virtual space as a result of interactions with virtual objects.

Physical space is absent in the virtual world. What exist instead are perceptual space and cognitive space in the user's minds. This explains why virtual worlds are often described as three dimensional though they are physically not. They merely provide illusions that hardly exist in analogous physical reality. Their three dimensional appearance is confined to the mental representations of users as they navigate their avatars in virtual worlds. The closer the virtual world stands to the physical world the easier it becomes for the users to accept that imagined reality. Two spatial concepts stand pertinent in the construction of real life *social space* replications in the virtual world namely the notion of *perceptual space* and *cognitive space*.

Perceptual space is defined as “that which can be seen or sensed at one place and at one time,” while cognitive space is “the large-scale space beyond the sensory horizon about which information must be mentally organized, stored, and recalled” (Couclelis and Gale 2). Though the views overlap, they are essentially different. A perceptual space is created initially by means of object manipulation, social interaction and a sensory experience of the virtual world. Further individuals engaged, attempts to understand a new cognitive space by building a metacognition reflecting the interactions that took place in their minds. Thus cognitive and perceptual spaces blend to form new mental representations of place in virtual space. They together formulate a *presence*.

Presence has been attributed multiple definitions. But the two most prevalent views are called *social presence* and *immersion*. *Social presence* perceives that there is personal, sociable and sensitive human contact in the medium (Short et al. 76). Social presence is all about “the technology users' experience of social virtual objects” (Lee 45). It also emphasize on the social cues transmitted by the media. The *immersion* definition views *presence* as the user's coercive sense of being immersed in a mediated space and not where there physical body is located (Nowak and Biocca 482). The focus here shifts to sensory rather than social cues. More and more sensory cues come into play with the

advancement in technology. Thus a virtual replica of the social space is created in a computer mediated platform which we term as a *virtual world*.

We have tried to look into the various concepts of *social space* and how they are being deconstructed at the face of a global lockdown. Further we inspected how *virtual spaces* emerge as alternatives and how they use *presence* to create a *virtual social space* in an electronic platform. This study will stand incomplete if we do not inspect the major impacts of *virtual spaces* upon the various aspects of the society in these turbulent times. COVID-19 timeline has witnessed economic, political and social consequences in magnitude unprecedented. Besides this the pandemic has set in motion an exponential expansion in the use of the online space. With regard to virtual spaces, three major trends, of varying degrees, have emerged. Following is a short discussion on these three waves.

Virtual Spaces and the waves of change

The first wave of change saw governments and multilateral institutions being forced to alter and expedite their modes of functioning. Intergovernmental interactions to international mitigation mechanisms have witnessed the activation of virtual networks at various levels. In collaboration with Google, Facebook and Whatsapp; Government of India has launched MyGov Corona Helpdesk to supplement its information outreach campaigning. Virtual platforms have become a common tool for many governments across the world to expand the reach of their response mechanisms.

The second major change has happened with regard to how people work. Office spaces remain abandoned and working from home is the new corporate culture. Multinational companies have switched to conferencing channels like Zoom and Googlemeet to build co-working spaces. Even architects have turned to virtual worlds. Site visits to social events are all hosted now in cyberspace. Space Popular, a London based design studio created an *Earth Gallery* in virtual reality for the Architectural Association. The project was initiated as part of the celebrations marking fifty years of Earth Day. This environment has been created in Mozilla Hub which makes it accessible even without a VR headset. Computer supported collaborative learning environments are not something new in the field of education. But its use has been immensely amplified once the schools got shutdown. Zoom classrooms and mooc lectures have replaced classroom teaching though its effectiveness might be questionable.

The remarkable surge in the use of social media is the third trend that has emerged during the lockdown phase. Social media has always faced criticism for its potential flaws and adverse impacts. Fake news flooded social media, during the shutdown period, which in turn accelerated the spread of fear and panic among the people. But one must understand that social media being an open platform is always vulnerable to such negative use. On a positive note, a huge bulk of information regarding the social distancing norms, the preventive steps to be taken, governmental support facilities,

updates regarding vaccine development and so on reached the masses with ease through social media.

The global outbreak and spread of COVID-19 is sure to change the very contour of social life. A redefinition of *social space* and the promotion of *virtual space* point towards this imminent change. Amidst the anxieties of a global pandemic and the suffocating restrictions associated, virtual spaces undoubtedly is a rain of relief. This paper has attempted to explore how the concept of space has undergone a metamorphosis at a time of social distancing. *Social spaces* are turning out to be an abstract percept and *virtual spaces* are the new reality.

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