

Singularities

a peer reviewed international transdisciplinary biannual research journal

Vol. 5 Issue 2 June 2018

Postgraduate Department of English

Korambayil Ahamed Haji Memorial

UNITY WOMEN'S COLLEGE

Manjeri, Malappuram, Kerala.

www.kahmunityenglish.in/journals/singularities

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Editor's Note

Beauty, as a conception and manifestation, is embedded in the planet of the existence of man. Not only does it signify the essentials of culture, but also it derails the elite aesthetic doctrines of the times by redefining the rules of the game of seeing and living. The epic proportions of beauty, its shambolic accounts, the perennial aesthetic philosophies, relentless battles on splendour, the voyeurisms, competitive politics behind the making and the matter of the beautiful, the handsomely growing beauty industry and the beauty in association with space and power offer food for interpretation and interrogation. The Singularities International Conference is anchoring on the theme of Beauty, to set the momentum that deconstructs the truth around beauty, in favour of truths that beauty entails. 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. We put the current SICON BEAUTY Conference issue as tribute of love to Dr. V.C. Harris, the advisory board member of Singularities, the academic, critic and theatre personality who passed away on 9 October 2017. By presenting Singularities Beauty Conference Issue, we offer a reading platform that will be instrumental in deconstructing the body of standards, in favour of inclusiveness and pluralities.

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

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Interview with Dr. Fabio Parasecoli, a Professor of Food Studies, NYU

What was it that fascinated you into food studies which is not an area that has been chosen by many?

I come from a tradition where food and table are considered central. Within the family, we used to spend a lot of time around food and so in Italy where special occasions have a lot to do with food and the sense of togetherness that comes with it. For eg: during weddings it quite normal to spend 4-5 hours around food and conversation. Later, I travelled much of Asia, including China, and Morocco, USA, France etc as a part of my freelance writing connected to International affairs which was initially the area I started with. In short, I was eating my way across Asia. I was fascinated by the differences in food habits, tastes and the strong ties between environment, economics, politics and food. The more I thought about it, the more enjoyable became the experience. While pursuing Islamic studies and exploring many parts of Central Asia, Syria, and Lebanon, the differences were so striking, all of which added to my interest in food and nutrition. It was my collaboration with Gambero Rosso, an Italian food and wine magazine, which initiated my writing about food. Being acquainted with the original tastes of food varieties in different parts of the world, they wanted me to write small reviews on ethnic restaurants across Italy. A polyglot by now, I was sent to different places on larger assignments, which finally ended up in a request to drop everything else and join them in New York as a correspondent for the magazine in 1998, a collaboration I continued till 2009. New York University was the only place in New York City that had food studies at that time, where I spend some time attending conferences, doing research, attending lectures meant for the public and when they saw my interest and experience in the field, I was invited to join them as a guest lecturer. I loved the dual role- journalist and teacher- and soon I pursued my doctorate in agricultural sciences in Germany, my thesis entitled, 'Food and Masculinity in Blockbuster Movies'.

In academics do you think food studies is getting the importance it deserves?

It's growing enormously. Food is becoming culturally central in Europe and America and students are growing passionate about studying it throughout the world. Universities are being forced to catch up with this growing student interest. For instance I was hired by the New School University, Manhattan to develop their Food Studies programme. At New York University I am a full time professor now in food studies. All these are indicators of the growing interest in the subject.

Personally your shift has been from history, political science to journalism and over to food. How do you look at transdisciplinary approach when it comes to food studies?

In the new programmes developed in the west, you see faculty coming in from different disciplines, viz. anthropology, history, sociology, physiology, etc and all getting connected by food. But everyone approaches it with their own background, focus, methodologies which widen the schema and also the scope of the subject. It's extremely stimulating, it forces you to be always changing.

Where does food study stand as a discipline in its orientation- more towards science or humanities?

It's not a discipline, it's a field. It works somewhat similar to the way women's studies or cultural studies work. There is a clear difference between food studies done as a part of culture, political, social aspects and studying it scientifically. They can only be integrated with abundant interactions with scholars from both fields. Food is politics, it is economics, it is culture and much more...

Traditionally in India, when it comes to cuisine and culinary skills, we see men in the profession and women mostly restricting themselves to the domestic space. Your comments on this please.

It's very common all over the world. Don't worry, it's not only in India (Laughs) Food, traditionally is connected to care giving and nourishment, and hence it's a feminine domain, unpaid and seldom acknowledged. As soon as you get out of the domestic, private domain to the public sphere, cooking loses its care giving element- it becomes a profession where you need to be trained, create business, making money, expressing creativity, being successful, which links it a lot to masculinity. It is problematic. If you look at many of the fine dining restaurant in the west, the atmosphere is not very welcoming for female chefs. Many female chefs tend to gravitate towards pastry making, away from the fire, or are seen running their own family restaurants. The trend is changing but very slowly. There is a clear gender disparity. I remember in one of my public panel interactions with female culinary professionals, they expressed concern over the lack of respect when they receive food deliveries and surprisingly even difficulties in getting loans from banks. Even banks doubt the possibility for these women entrepreneurs to become successful in their endeavours, so it starts at grass root levels, in the attitudes. Moreover there are certain traditions that keep women away from it. For instance in Italy, in the past, in working class eateries, women were mostly confined to the production area, the kitchen and men to the front, because it was inappropriate for women to be seen where men were entertained. But unlike the USA, today there are more family restaurants in Italy where women tend to be more entrepreneurial and central. In the US there are very few fine dining family restaurants.

Do you see much research happening connecting food and literature?

Well, since my interest is closer to politics, media and cultural studies, I am not very familiar with that area. However there seems to be emerging much in terms of literary criticism, fiction, poems etc dealing with food. There are tonnes of novels where food becomes the focus. Spanish, Mexican, Italian, Brazilian, etc.. in most of the languages you see it growing as a distinct genre, enjoying wide readership. Even movies and food memoirs have been quite successful in sustaining this interest. But I must say the interest you see right now through media is a recent development through programmes like Master Chef, competitions, documentaries etc.

What's your take on Mall culture and food courts?

It's complicated, with its positives and negatives. Food has become central, more and more people talk about food, health and go for choices of nutritious and organic food. Discussions on environment, justice, gender, economics- all centred around food - have become quite common. But at the same time we see change- lots of people are cooking less, spending more time and money especially the middle class workingwomen, managing their

time this way. It has become a kind of enjoyment too.

In these times of globalisation and open market economy, the loss of indigenous food is a concern among few. How does the west look at this?

In the 60s Italy went through economic development; many left the rural, country side, for the cities. Farmers, know-how, skills were all getting lost. Then came the 80's. People having forgotten hunger, poverty and the pains associated, started rediscovering traditional, indigenous food, which became extremely popular. Farmers who were thinking differently started growing them, making more money out of it. This brought in more variety and many forgotten traditions, which was a welcome change giving them more options- mass produced, cheap food on one side and special home grown, organic delicacies on the other. I've seen that happening in the USA, in Brazil and it will happen in India too, or maybe the change is already in.

It is said that a global food crisis is imminent. As a researcher in food and culture, what do you feel about this prophesy? Are there precautions that can help mitigate the impact if it really happens?

In his book 'Meals to come-The history of the future of food' Warren Belasco looks at how the future of food has been imagined since the 18th century, divided between the Malthusian view and the Cornucopian one, a spectrum indeed with two opposites. For the former, the population growth makes a food crisis inevitable, whereas the Cornucopians believe that human ingenuity will find ways to grow their food. On one side people believe that technology is going to be the answer, whereas population, weather, environmental degradation etc are believed to bring in the crisis. We don't know whether a crisis is imminent; if it is, precautions can definitely be taken to ward it off. Let's hope that the best happens.....

A Philosophical Analysis of Austin's Command Theory

Abstract

Jurisprudence is blessed with theories on the meaning, nature and scope of law. In spite of the avalanche of theories, human nature and the dynamic interplay of forces in the society make the quest for continuous theorization a must. J. L. Austin puts up a Philosophy of law that impressed the essence of obedience on man. It is one of those theories that can be easily applied to deter criminals and ameliorate social vices. However, this theory is constitutionally manipulative and can spark anarchy when not properly checked. Thus, this paper explores the fundamentals of Austin's command theory, brings out the flaw and highlight the imperative of moral additive for it to function maximally in the contemporary time.

Introduction

Without law, human life will be a video of anarchy and brute defiance of morality. However, the authenticity and definition of law have been radically probed by scholars in jurisprudence. While the natural law theorist, sees morality as the foundation of the legal enterprise, the legal positivist deviate from this and announce a thesis that separate law from morality. J.L. Austin is one of the legal positivist who discountenanced the facticity of morality in law.

This paper clearly examines the meaning of legal positivism and in extension analyse the command theory of law postulated by J.L. Austin. The inadequacies of the theory is highlighted in spite of the obvious merits there in.

An Idea of Law

The definition of law is a controversial issue. The term law has been given various definitions by legal scholars and Philosophers. Arnorld T. lends credence to this multiplicity views. He writes:

obviously, law can never be defined with equal obviousness. However, it should be said that the adherents of legal institutions must never give up the struggle to define law, because it is an essential of the ideal that is rational and capable of definition. Hence, the verbal expenditure necessary in the up-keeping of the ideal of law is colossal and never ending (Arnold of Lioyd and freedom 1985:52).

Though, there are series of definition on what law is all about, there is a need to give it a working definition. "Law can be simply defined as a doctrine of social rules which has become the fundamental enterprise of the legislature, the judiciary and law enforcement agencies" (Balogun, 1999:24). this implies that law is a set of rules that guide human action. It is a rule of human conduct imposed upon and enforced among the members of a given state (Padfield and Baker, 1988:1). It marks "a set of rules imposed and enforced by a society with regard to the attribution and recourse of power over person or things" (Arnold, 1983:1). Law

can come in the form of command backed by sanction. It demands obligation as a well-articulated process.

Two prominent schools in the history of jurisprudence fundamentally explore the concept and origin of law. The naturalist best regarded as natural law theorist enunciates the thesis of inseparability. According to them, law and morality are inseparable. They cannot be divorced. In fact any system of law divested of moral foundation does not qualify for the label of law. As explained by Rosco Pounds, morality is the raw ingredient from which laws are united, be it as judicial precedents or as statutes". Thus "the natural law thinkers claim that the law that is not grounded on or founded on an ultimate measure of ideal law should not be respected as a just law" (Balogun, 1999:37). Thus, moral law mediate between moral sphere and law proper, just like two sides of the same coin: (Twining, 1973:275).

Radically, the legal positivists oppose the above claim. To them morality is dispensable on the legal enterprise. According to the legal positivist, the notion of law means nothing more than the position law. Oliverdecision or prediction of authority which has to be sanctioned. "J.L. Austin interprets it as a sovereign's command backed by sanction" while HLA Hart portrays it as a set of normative propositions or a system of rules" (cf Barry R. 2002:84-86).

Generally, the legal positivists attacked the metaphysical foundation of law. They query the possibility of any universal absolute standard to which law must conform and outright denounce moral principles as the foundation of law. They discard legal metaphysics as seen in the words of Duguit

My intention is to completely discard all legal metaphysics. I am not at all seeking to determine what the ideal absolute law is. I am deeply convinced that this could be the object of belief but not of scientific determination. I am only interested in determining at what moment a certain rule of which the mass of individuals of a social group are more or less aware, becomes a rule of law (Pizzoni, 1971:2).

In essence, the legal positivist put up a Philosophy of law that sees law as fact regardless of any moral imperative as foundation. This thesis will be further understood when the command theory of law postulated by Austin is expatiated.

Austin's Command Theory

Law without jurisprudence is a dangerous venture and jurisprudence, when not properly directed by right reasoning, has the potential to cause social breakdown and injustice. While the natural law theorists hammers on the indispensability of morality to the legal enterprise, the positivist argue that such thinking is anomalous and unwarranted. Rather than see law in natural terms, positivist like Jeremy Bentham, John Austin, etc., reduced it to statement of commands by the sovereign. As summarily put by William Idowu, "The key concepts of law are to be found or reduced to the logic of the will rather, than that of reason where every human being in a political society is viewed either as commanded or prohibited. Therefore, to have a legal duty is to be a subject of a command or be prohibited in a particular way" (Idowu, 2005:108). This notion of law which gains radical recurrence in Bentham's Philosophy also enjoyed special attention in the jurisprudence of John Austin.

In Austin's analysis of law, law and morality are not inseparably connected. Morality is

not an automatic guide or element in the definition and administration of law. J.L. Austin describes law as social facts or the command of the sovereign. Essentially, a good law has basic elements of command and sanction with a view to properly regulating human conduct. Thus, the beauty of law is in command, sanction and obedience. This view is underscored by Austin in his separability thesis. He puts it thus

The existence of law is one thing, its merit or demerit is another. Whether it be or be not is one inquiry, whether it be or be not conformable to an assumed standard is a different enquiry. A law which actually exists is a law, though we happen to dislike it or though it varies from the text by which we regulate our approbation or disapprobation (Austin, 1966:95)

Austin, without any fear of contradiction is saying that when the rationality of law is discussed, our attention, first and foremost must not be riveted on morality but on the source: command of the sovereign. This thesis is reinforced thus

Positive laws or laws strictly called are established directly or immediately by author of three kind: by monarchs or sovereign bodies as the supreme political superiors, by men in a state of subjection, by private persons, in pursuance of legal right. but every positive law or every law strictly so called, is a direct or circuitous command of a monarch or sovereign ... to a person or person in a state of subjection to its authors (Austin, 1954:134).

In a more radical expression, Austin submits that only positive laws are laws, every other forms are mere aberration. One thing to be noted in Austin's analysis is that he does not restrict his commandist's approach to law to that which comes directly from the sovereign. The general command of subordinate political authorities or superiors, in as much as they have the blessing of the sovereign and it is his will that they must be obeyed are also laws” (Omoregbe, 2004:132).

John Austin is firmly of the view that legal validity is a function of certain social facts. He argued that the principal distinguishing feature of a legal system is the presence of a sovereign who is habitually obeyed by most people in the society, but not in the habit of obeying any determining human superior (Austin, 1995:166). Primarily, a rule is legally valid in a society if and only if the rule is legally commanded by the sovereign in a given state and it is supported or backed up with the threat of coercion or sanction. The severity of the threatened sanction is irrelevant, any general sovereign imperative anchored on a threat or even the smallest harm is a law.

Austin's analytic approach to law offered an account of the concept of law from a positivist's view point. It sets out to describe what law is in terms of human formulation. It is a form of analytic jurisprudence in so far as it is concerned with providing necessary and sufficient conditions for the existence of law that distinguishes law from non-law in every possible world. Patterson offers a clear interpretation of Austin idea of law. He writes

Austin's particular theory of law is often called the command theory of law because the concept of command lies at its core. Law is the command of the sovereign backed by a threat of sanction in the event of non-compliance. Legality, on this account is determined by the source of norms, but not the merit of the substance. Thus, the answer to the question what is law, is answered by resort to facts not value... the relevant social fact that confers

validity on Austin's view, its promulgation by a sovereign willing to impose a sanction for non-compliance (Patterson, 1990:42).

One point that warrants thorough clarification is that the force of law is predicated on sanction. Besides, not every command of the sovereign translates to law. "A general command is a rule and when it comes from a sovereign and is accompanied with a threatened punishment that will be inflicted on anybody who disobeys it, then it is a law" (Omeregbe, 1990:132). In the words of Austin

Now where it obliges generally to or forbearance of a class, a command is a law or rule. But where it obliges to a specific act or forbearance, or to acts or forbearances which it determines specifically or individually a command is occasional or particular (Austin, 1964:19).

In addition, the commands need not come from the sovereign alone. Thus, the general commands of subordinate political authorities stamp by the sovereign is law. The same principle applied to the command of previous sovereign. If it is the wish of the incumbent sovereign that the commands of his predecessors still retain the power of law, then they are qualified to be law. Hence, command can be direct from the sovereign or circuitous form subordinates or erstwhile sovereign must approve of it.

In a summarized form, Austin sees law as the command of the sovereign who receives habitual obedience from the bulk of the people without necessarily reciprocating the same habitual obedience. The sovereign has a will which must be obeyed but he himself stand outside the said law. William Idowu expatiates this point

... obligation to obey the law arises out of the sovereign's command that a particular thing or action be done and failure to comply with such rules will eventually lead to the individual being punished or met with some harm. The implication of this is that obedience of the law is an end product of the fear of sanction ... (Idowu, 1999:84).

Thus, the fear of pain, harm, punishment, etc, command obedience to law. J.J. Austin wants us to note that the enactment of law must not be troubled by morality. A law is in fact enacted as law irrespective of whether or not it agrees with any standard. As amplified by Twining, "The question of validity necessary presupposes the positivist thesis namely, that the existence of a judicial order can be verified and described independently of every moral order" (Twining, 1973:275). Law does not have to be in conformity with morality for it to be valid" (Balogun, 1999:49). This is the central point of Austinian command theory.

Critique

Austin's command theory is remarkably significant to the advancement of jurisprudence, but it misses vital point on some basic issues, especially on the question of legal obligation. Not everybody obeys the law because of sanction. Austin has hyperbolically narrowed down the issue of legal obligation. Austin positivism lacks an in-depth and thorough analysis of the reasons why people obey the law, if they obey the law at all. In fact, to claim that people have legal obligation for obeying the law because failure to do so will be met with the threat of punishment, seems to be a fallacious appeal to force" (Idowu, 1999:86). In extension, Idowu regards Austin's legal positivism as a weak one.

One major area of difficult is Austin's view that the sovereign law making authority is transcend legal obligation. A sovereign cannot be legally constrained because he or she

cannot coerce himself/herself. Some constitutional provision limit the authority of the legislative body to make laws, Austin is forced to argue that the so called constitutional law is really not law at all but a matter of positive morality (Austin, 1977:107). Indeed, Austin's view is difficult to reconcile with constitutional law.

Austin's command theory rest excessive power on the sovereign. He placed the sovereign above the law thereby making him vulnerable to despotic display of power. It can lead to disposition and anarchy. This resort to anarchy is inevitable when morality is not considered important.

Basically, Austin's idea of law is offensive to the intellectual mind of scholars like William Blackstone.

Blackstone asserts that... the laws of God are superior in obligation to all other laws; that no human law should be suffered to contradict them; that human laws are of no validity if contrary to them; and that all valid laws derive their force from that original divine law (cf Immunity, 2009:49)

In essence, Blackstone is saying that any law which contravenes the divine law is not law but Austin considers this view an aberration.

Conclusion

The intellectual division between the legal positivist and the natural law theorist is more than mere masturbation with idea. It fundamentally affects the application of law but a reconciliation of facts and morality will go a long way to give law a strong defense of his theory. The theory justifies obedience but it is constitutionally damaging when not properly checked.

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'Beauty as Discourse': The 'Woman' Image in Indian Popular Culture

The ideal of femininity constructed through cultural forms tend to be closely intertwined with normalised projections and conceptions about beauty. The hierarchical assumptions implicit within the system of gender difference are, in fact, based on diverse forms of stratification by which women's roles and situations are emphasised as being different and subordinate to the male. Such machinations organised around gender are implemented through the formulation of discursive patterns that are detrimental to women's true understanding of their own selves.

The significations pertaining to beauty represent such subtle workings of cultural hegemony whereby women are required to embody standards of perfection and attractiveness that adhere to dominant societal definitions. Women are thus required to act out the attributes of 'womanliness' that are conceptualised in terms of the varied determinants of beauty. Such gendered categorisations function as coercive tools that structure the lives of women and also restrict them from realising their full capabilities. Consequently, they serve to ensure the permanence of established relations of power existing between genders. Since different cultural products maintain a close relationship with prevalent social formations and processes they are often looked upon as potential sites of critical inquiry as well. Moreover, these cultural artefacts also play a significant role in furthering and reproducing accepted notions and concerns, while at the same time incorporating oppositional modes of thought.

Popular culture has quite often been regarded as being instrumental in perpetuating stereotypical conceptions about women that go a long way in consolidating skewed perceptions about female identity and freedom. With the proliferation of mass media, such attempts have, indeed, been accelerated resulting in the negation of women's interests and attitudes. Though the contemporary era may boast of increased opportunities and avenues for fulfillment for women, pointing to the realisation of women's individual rights and privileges, it has also to be asserted that pervasive patriarchal control continues to express itself through manifold ways, aiming to limit women's experience of autonomy. The expectations around female beauty have exerted tremendous control in this regard, endeavouring to curtail female independence, disregarding the achievements of the women's movement.

Naomi Wolf, in her seminal work, *The Beauty Myth*, ponders over this ingenious form of social control that invariably links questions about female liberation to female beauty. She says: "The more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us. Many women sense that women's collective progress has stalled; compared with the heady momentum of earlier days, there is a dispiriting climate of confusion, division, cynicism, and above all, exhaustion" (10). She significantly points out that the cultural descriptions of beauty work to nullify the vision of women's freedom by regulating women's desires and ambitions for social power and recognition. She, therefore, declares: "We are in the midst of a violent

backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement: the beauty myth...As women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it waned to carry on its work of social control” (10). She observes that this ideology of beauty that functions as a tool of control has strengthened itself to “take over the work of social coercion that myths about motherhood, domesticity, chastity, and passivity, no longer can manage. It is seeking right now to undo psychologically and covertly all the good things that feminism did for women materially and overtly” (11). These critical insights provided by Wolf pave way for a rethinking of the emerging discourses about women's independence and advancement. They also emphasise the need to resist new, evolving forms of social marginalisation that get enforced with a definite political agenda. In fact, such attempts also establish paradoxical subject positionings wherein the woman is inspired to embrace symbols of resurgence and liberation offered by modern society and is also expected to remain within the confines of patriarchal stipulation. This reflects the fundamental prejudices governing gender relations and identities, as they have traditionally conspired to consolidate the subordinate position of the woman. It is also not surprising that such biased beliefs and attitudes have informed the workings of cultural practices, products and events, aiming to perpetuate assumptions about womanhood and its acknowledged manifestations. Popular cultural artefacts have very often been considered as effective platforms for disseminating such value-systems that represent dominant political formulations, especially those pertaining to gender.

Within the Indian context, where conventional patriarchal codes of conduct still hold sway over a large amount of women, such ideas about gendered roles and responsibilities, along with a multitude of other fixities related to womanhood create a tremendous impact upon the constitution of gendered identities as well. Notions about 'beauty' form an integral part of such cultural standards that are imposed upon women, endeavouring to establish a heightened conception of femininity that is predicated on women's adherence to certain physical attributes and traits. Cultural products employ different methods and strategies to 'normalise' such ideals that are expected to be fulfilled by the Indian woman. What evolves as a result is the stratification of women in terms of an ideology of perfection that is based on the determinants of beauty. Accordingly, there comes into being an exclusionary practice that pressurises women into defining themselves as the privileged category that enjoys a considerable amount of superiority in comparison to those who constitute the subordinate side of the binary. In other words, women attempt to represent the characteristic elements of 'perfection' embodied within the discursive framework of 'beauty' so as to position themselves in accordance with the suppositions surrounding female beauty and identity. As a result, women, who find themselves unable to live up to these expectations about identity, end up being defined in terms of a 'lack' that labels them as misfits in society owing to the lack of certain attributes considered as appropriate for women. The most prominent among them are those related to fairness and slimness, two makers of beauty that have of late attained supremacy as much adorable features of the perfect female body. Not surprisingly, popular cultural images have played a significant role in the proliferation of such conceptions that are communicated subtly and also in explicit terms.

The present paper attempts a close reading of representative instances taken from the field of popular culture with a view to identify the means and methods through which the discourse of beauty is constructed with regard to women's existence. In Chetan Bhagat's

novel *One Indian Girl*, which purportedly puts forward the image of the liberated, successful and confident career woman, there runs an undercurrent of meaning that highlights the ingenious ways in which women become subject to the ideological formations of beauty. The protagonist Radhika comes across as an economically independent, capable young woman who has managed to break the glass ceiling in terms of her social position. Even when she speaks about her enviable academic progress by drawing comparisons with her elder sister Aditi, the emphasis is laid on the aspect of attractiveness as the distinguishing feature that sets them apart. She reveals that on realising the fact that she did not possess the so called markers of feminine beauty, which her sister was abundantly blessed with, she decided to immerse herself in the world of books as the only means through which she could assert her identity. Through the character of Radhika's mother, Bhagat exposes some of the prejudices cultivated with regard to a woman's dreams and aspirations. Her ideas about an Indian woman's future are invariably tied up with conceptions about the acceptability of the woman in the marriage market. This explains her persistent concern for her 'less' privileged unmarried daughter who, she believes is unconventional and anti-traditional. Though the text makes a deliberate attempt to infuse Radhika's character with a certain amount of resistance in terms of her attitudes and beliefs, as the story develops it becomes evident that her actions contradict such assumptions about defiance made with regard to female appearance. She announces her decision to give up her "nerdy, unfashionable days far behind" (33) and is overwhelmed by every single complement she receives about her looks. In her interactions with her male companions she is quite conscious about her attractiveness and is extremely pleased to welcome words of praise "from a worthy man" (173). She makes it a point to dress up and to present herself as admirable during such rendezvous. Such a facet of her personality stands in opposition to her apparent contempt of the accepted definitions of beauty which are upheld by her mother.

This element of contradiction informs the textual content thereby placing the central female character within a system of ideological control that is detrimental to the full realisation of women's independence. Even though the novel ends with a strong proclamation about the woman's free will, defying conventional expectations about dependence, loyalty and passivity, the manner in which the woman becomes subject to the pressures of conformity enforced in relation to standards of feminine beauty, connects with the idea of the beauty myth envisaged by Wolf. Though Radhika embodies courage, confidence, and self-sufficiency, she is conscious about fulfilling the normative requirements for physical appeal and charm and knowingly/unknowingly caters to those needs in pursuit of the perfect female body. Such representative instances point to a kind of subtle manipulation that ensures the subjugation of women and their allegiance to existing patriarchal principles of womanhood. Women, thus appropriate the societal principles of femininity, the beauty ideal being the most valued among them.

Popular cultural forms also play a role in diversifying this concept of 'beauty' by representing the female body in terms of certain enhanced features and qualities that are compartmentalised and differentiated. For instance, advertisements repeatedly emphasise aspects such as slimness, fairness, smoothness of the skin, flawless perfection of the human body and the like as some of the most desirable factors that contribute to the woman's appeal. These elements are glorified to the extent of eclipsing women's existence as independent individuals who have a voice of their own and control over their own bodies. By presenting women images that are assumed to be representative of the 'liberated' status of the modern

Indian woman who has assimilated the feminist zeal for resurgence and renewal, these cultural forms generate meanings that are deceptive and manipulative with regard to the status of the Indian woman. This is largely because, through the perpetuation of ideas and beliefs that are expected to connote 'independence', they contrarily grant priority to the very same ideological notions infusing societal mechanisms and institutions.

In the well-known fairness cream brand Fair & Lovely, which has over the years underscored the importance of fairness as an attribute for the woman, has organised a number of its advertisements on the basis of such a disguised and generalised form of coercion over women's bodies. Consequently, women have been led to think about their bodies as possessing an 'imperfection' that has to be rectified through the use of the particular product. Moreover, the most visible ploy employed by such advertisements is to seemingly favour the realisation of women's dreams and aspirations by highlighting their will power and determination. But the obvious implication is that the woman can achieve her goals only with the help of the product. For instance, in one of its advertisements, a middle-class girl with moderate looks is portrayed as being deeply pained by her father's statement that he wished he had a son to look after him, hinting at the fact that only a son could provide for the family. She happens to see the advertisement for the cream almost simultaneously while searching for good job opportunities in the classifieds page of the newspaper and focuses on the advertisement for the post of an Air Hostess. She is shown using the cream and evolving into a markedly different person, who confidently faces the interview and gets selected. In the next shot she is dressed as a modern girl in Western outfit and with absolute confidence takes her parents to a high-end restaurant, apparently having emerged victorious. The suggested meaning is that she has proved herself as a capable individual who can achieve what a male can or perhaps, even more. However, this implication about female empowerment is conveyed by privileging the brand and not the woman. More importantly, societal conceptions about complexion are once again reinforced, in a manner that is detrimental to women's interests. Equally significant is the fact that fairness and thus the appropriateness of the female body is assumed to play a role in determining women's prospects and achievements in society.

The 'right' size and shape of the female body is another societal norm that has been devised in conjunction with the stipulations of normality and perfection. Being 'curvaceous' and also being 'size-zero' are different versions of the same ideal. It is interesting to note that consumer goods try to communicate such messages not just through the content and narrative techniques, but also through the very forms in which they are packaged. The shape of the bottle for Parachute body lotion can be cited as an example in this context, taking into consideration the visible parallels it draws with the 'shapely' body of the woman. Added to this is the aspect of the smooth skin that the product necessarily promises for the woman, so as to ensure a strengthened bond with her male partner, even years after marriage. A related element is the prospect of ageing which is represented as hampering women's beauty. The endless number of beauty products that offer the benefits of anti-ageing exist as a pointer in this regard. What is worth mentioning is the belief cultivated in women about the need for overcoming such signs of individual growth to cater to the 'myth' about long-lasting beauty that women are expected to fulfill through their allegiance to the norms about femininity.

Again, the advertisement for In-Shape in the popular Malayalam women's magazine Vanitha's December 1-14 2017 issue makes use of the tagline "Shape-Confident" and

constructs the visual imagery of a woman who epitomises this ideal of good shape and confidence. The advertisement stresses on the product as pre-requisite for an attractive body and as providing the freedom to move about comfortably with assurance. The same equation between women and physical perfection in terms of size is reiterated here. It is noteworthy that by choosing a female model, meanings about women's bodily perfection is communicated, quite naturally targeting the intended audience of female readers.

The ideological underpinnings informing women's relationship with the body and beauty are also very well evident in conceptions about slimness constructed by cultural products in connection with the accepted notions of femininity. It is to be noted that the cultural obsession with the idea of slimness, very often gets communicated through discourses about healthy living. However, by emphasising the need for maintaining the perfect body that symbolises normative standards as the primary need, mostly for women, rather than men, it becomes clear that societal notions about fitness in terms of the rightly proportioned body relates mainly to women, thereby affirming the political implications associated with gendered status and behaviour. In a section on health that comes in the Sunday supplement of *Times of India* newspaper, the focus is on the best ways to lose weight. It can be understood that the article is meant for the health conscious reader. But by representing the content along with the visual image of a woman who appears to match the accepted signs of perfection, the idea projected is about the undeniable connection that is contrived between women and the body ideal, and thus, in wider terms, to a major conceptualisation of 'beauty' itself.

These random samples are illustrative of the subtle ways in which popular cultural products that permeate everyday lives of people organise meanings and ideas that are intended to consolidate existing systems of domination and control. They reveal the different methods through which "the body that we experience and conceptualize is always mediated by constructs, associations, images of a cultural nature" (35), as observed by Susan Bordo. They also serve to proclaim the continued existence of patriarchal power-systems that employ newer and more invasive forms of cultural surveillance by which the gender hierarchy and the 'Othering' of women prevail even within the more liberalised spaces of modern living. Though these products seemingly align with notions about the empowered status of the Indian woman who is free to pursue her desires, they are articulated firmly remaining within the bounds of cultural sanction, with regard to gender norms. Therefore, the construct of beauty represents one of the various modes of patriarchal hegemony that is oriented towards ensuring the powerlessness of the 'female' and also her perpetual subordination to normative codes and principles.

Wolf's statement about the construction of the 'beauty myth' thus contains the potential to relate to such contexts of societal regulation that function across different cultural backgrounds. Moreover, it also points to the persistence of belief-systems that are meant to contradict claims about women's independence and development. If, on the one hand, there is recognition about women having assimilated the ideals embodied within the feminist movement, there is an oppositional strand of thought that works to situate women within larger contexts of oppression and denial. Popular culture, that exerts a tremendous influence on popular perception, becomes a convenient channel for imposing such views about selfhood that confine women within claustrophobic patterns and thought-processes. They thus end up reinstating stereotypical ideas and beliefs that the feminist movement has been countering through years of struggle and resistance. While initiatives made towards women's

rights, and in particular, towards women's economic sufficiency, have been gradually realised and is still in motion, it is equally pertinent that with evolving times, women are being continuously subject to mechanisms that are restrictive in nature. Women are thus drawn towards a process of confrontation and negotiation with such structures of cultural monopoly that emerge at different periods and attempt to hinder their possibilities for self-realisation and development. The reformulation of women's identities would certainly be necessitated by such circumstances of manipulation and control, leading to a re-definition of their selves as well.

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Beauty, Food and Marital Relationships in Bulbul Sharma's "Sweet Nothings" and Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*

Abstract

The present paper looks into the plight of corpulent women protagonists in Bulbul Sharma's "Sweet Nothings" and Anita Nair's Ladies Coupé. Reshma and Margaret suffer severed marital relationships, as they are rejected/neglected by their husbands due to their corpulent bodies. Being brought up in Indian culture, these two women are trained to devote themselves to their husbands and families. Balancing their lives post marriage, between household chores and feminine nurturance, these women hardly find time to maintain their ideal beauty and eventually lose it. The loss of beauty, these women feel, is directly related to the loss of their husbands' attention. Reshma and Margaret try hard to make changes in their dietary habits to regain their ideal of beauty to sustain their marriages and retain their husbands' love. The paper aims at examining the connection between the concept of beauty and the notion of food in marital relationships, through the critical frames of food and culture.

Beauty, food and women are inextricably linked with one another. The body of a woman is an overt form of expression of her beauty, as many cultures define beauty of a woman through her physical appearance. In a sense, woman's body becomes her identity and a cause for her social acceptance or rejection. A woman with slender body and fair complexion is considered to be an ideal beauty in patriarchal societies of some cultures. Joan Jacob Brumberg explicates an interesting fact that during Victorian period, "In Britain the dread of fat weighs like an incubus" on romantic youngsters who consumed vinegar "to produce thinness" and swallowed rice "to cause the complexion to become paler" (171), as a woman who possessed slender body with fair complexion was considered the ideal of beauty. Young women were so passionate about the ideal of beauty, that they were ready to follow even the most uncommon practices to possess it. Brumberg further explains that "If plump [the girl] berates herself as a criminal against refinement and aesthetic taste; and prays in good or bad earnest for a spell of illness to pull her down" (171). Such was the obsession of Victorian women to be thin, that they wanted to remain thin and beautiful even at the cost of their health. These notions posited by Brumberg are prevalent in many modern societies, where woman's slender body is treated as synonymous to her beauty. A woman who befits the norms of the ideal of beauty, with a fair slender body, feels more confident to assert herself in social circles.

Food plays a significant role in regulating the beauty of a woman. Brumberg observes that in Victorian era, many women handled their food and appetite according to the notion that "sturdiness in women suggested low status, a lack of gentility and even vulgarity" (173). In many contemporary societies too, a corpulent women feels rejected, dejected and eventually loses her social acceptance. In Indian cultural context, the ideal of beauty is more often associated with a slender bodied woman. Therefore, married women, being no exception to

this notion, are also in race to maintain their ideal beauty as they believe that this would ensure love, care and attention of their husbands. However, in India, it becomes a challenge for married women to retain their ideal beauty, as they are trained to devote their lives to their husbands and family, and care less for themselves. Moreover, balancing their lives post marriage, between household chores and feminine nurturance, these women find it difficult to maintain a slender body and even lose it. Once they put on weight, women are often observed to refrain from food, make dietary changes coupled with exercises to regain their slender body. Ironically, the woman who cooks food for her family cannot relish what she cooks, as she is always worried about her body. Swagata Ray and Rajni Singh rightly point out in their essay, “Food and Femininity in Fay Weldon's *The Fat Woman's Joke*,” that the woman cooks food for her family, serves food, starves for food to maintain her measured figure and ultimately is “consumed” (65). A corpulent woman may also lose her husband's attention and become the butt of every joke. When a woman is engulfed in insecurity, her body becomes a site of contest for her own survival. In short, women fall prey to the 'beauty myth' prescribed by the male dominated society.

The present paper examines the lives of two corpulent women protagonists, Reshma and Margaret, who live through disturbed marital relationships owing to their husbands' negligence towards them because they are fat. The role of food, which has an impact on their bodies, and their ideal of beauty, will be examined. In Bulbul Sharma's “Sweet Nothings,” Reshma's husband has an affair with another lady of the same name who is more slender than Reshma. Reshma finds it extremely difficult to accept her husband's betrayal and is also concerned about her two sons' future. She strives hard to regain her slim body by following a strict diet and doing regular exercises, through which, she feels, she can retain her husband's attention. In Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*, Margaret, who puts on weight, post abortion, is insulted by her husband, Ebenezer Paulraj. Margaret experiences loss of selfhood as she also happens to be her husband's colleague. There are many instances, where, Margaret feels let down by her husband before her other colleagues. However, it is interesting to note that both Margaret and Reshma use food to regain their ideal beauty, but unlike Reshma, who foregoes food, Margaret uses her culinary skills to regain and restore marital love.

In both the stories that are being analysed, the protagonists are concerned about their fat bodies. Reshma experiences psychological neurosis, because of her voluptuous body. Goffman (qtd. in *Fat Sex: New Directions in Theory and Activism*) observes, “In Western Culture, fat is not just a failure of the body; it is also viewed as a failure of the person or an abomination of the body (53). Further Gailey quotes in the same book that, “In addition to being considered unattractive, the fat body is radically stigmatized. Therefore it is not surprising that many fat persons internalize fat hatred” (53). In the Indian cultural context too, there is abhorrence for fat. Accordingly, Reshma develops contempt for her own body. She sees herself as a failure, as she feels she no longer befits the role of a wife, as she has lost her slim body. In modern India, it can be said that, slenderness is perceived to be immanent to woman's beauty. The protagonists in both the stories being fat are considered unattractive. Both Reshma and Margaret become obsessed with their physical appearance, when their husbands neglect them. Ignominiously, they start hating themselves, thereby affecting their marital relationships too.

In Bulbul Sharma's “Sweet Nothings”, Reshma feels awkward that her husband has an affair with another woman of the same name. She feels humiliated, as though this woman has

stolen a bit of her too along with her husband. In her dream, Reshma sees Ajay growing round and fat like a gas balloon, but this image fades away soon and an image, where chocolate sauce is being poured on her is what remains. Reshma's dream can be understood as a mirror of her angst towards life. Reshma perceives beauty as slimness; being aware of her husband seeing slim Reshma, a sense of insecurity, seeps into her mind. Her helplessness in real life about her husband's infidelity, leads to imagining Ajay become fat like a gas balloon. This can be read as Reshma's vengeance against her husband. Reshma's dream symbolises her insecurity about her marital life and husband's love, both of which, she now feels, she is losing. Having internalized the fact that she is fat, Reshma hates the other, slim Reshma. However, Reshma is ready to do anything, to refrain Ajay from pursuing his affair. Reshma's mission to somehow dissolve the fat in her body becomes an obsession to overrule other aspects of her life. Giving birth to two sons and having had a miscarriage, Reshma has no control over weight gain and has remained fat at forty four. The biological compulsion is undermined by social expectation and Reshma wonders if she should go in for a liposuction. As Reshma looks at accumulation of fat as her failure in marriage, she directs her energy towards regaining her slim body which she possessed before marriage.

Reshma's everyday life is marked by strict dietary calendar and regular exercises to lose weight. Reshma's day begins with the book titled *Complete Calorie Counter*, the cover page of which has the picture of a blonde girl with a white swimsuit, holding a glass of orange juice in one hand and lettuce in the other. It is interesting to note the marketing industry perpetuating the slim body. Like most women getting attracted to the models in the advertisement, Reshma's eyes too fall on the girl on the cover page. However, Reshma starts hating this girl too, as she hates the slim Reshma because she does not possess a slender body like theirs' and hence considers herself ugly. It can be observed how Reshma is stigmatized by obesity and her overweight. Alice Julier in her essay, "The Political Economy of Obesity" observes, "One major function of obesity is that the obese can be identified and punished as alleged or real deviant in order to uphold the legitimacy of the conventional norms" (553). Further, Julier elucidates, "The cornerstone of weight bias is the belief that it is a self-induced state from which a self-disciplined individual can escape by hard work or, that, the purchase of right diet book, foods, exercise equipment or medical intervention" (553). Considering Julier's notion of the obese as deviants and indisciplined individuals, it can be observed how Reshma now feels othered and distanced from her husband. However, Reshma subscribes to what Julier posits by buying the book on weight loss. There is no dearth of efforts that Reshma puts in to lose weight. Her days are filled with instructions to her servants Amah and Raha on how to give her food with measured calories that would help her lose weight- Juice, only fruit, no breakfast, slice of toast with no butter, and the toast being absolutely dry are some of the food on Reshma's menu. In spite of such committed efforts, Reshma is fat.

While Reshma is obsessed with losing her fat looks, Amah, her servant wonders, "Why doesn't Sahib like her?" (138). Reshma constantly checks with Amah if she has lost weight. Amah, who belongs to a different class, reads beauty in different terms. For her, beauty is not slenderness. Awestruck, she asks Reshma, "Why do you try to become thin all the time? So healthy you are. Mother of two handsome sons. You should be fat and healthy like a queen"(138). Belonging to an economically weaker class in society, Amah understands beauty as being fat and healthy. Raha, another servant, too fails to understand the importance of Reshma's 'circus' to become thin. He wonders why the rich prefer to look like scarecrows

and he is of the opinion that, it is on the stomach that it should show, when one makes money. The fat around the stomach, according to him accumulates, when one becomes rich. So he wonders why rich people should do a 'circus' to lose that fat. Amah remarks about the pujari's wife in her village, who weighs as much as three sacks of grain and can, drink a full glass of ghee in one gulp. She expresses her desire that people of her village want to be like the pujari's wife. Thus, one can observe how the perception of beauty varies as per class distinctions. The ideal of slim body as beautiful seems to be the upper class marker for a woman.

In Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupé*, Margaret suffers a similar distraught like Reshma, losing her husband's attention because of her appearance. Married to Ebenezer Paulraj, the Principal of a prestigious school, Margaret is offered to head the Department of Chemistry and teach the senior class in the same school where her husband works. Eighteen months after marriage, Margaret discovers that she is pregnant. She is so excited after their visit to the maternity clinic that she wants to call her parents and tell them the news. She wants to stand on the roof top and scream to the world that she is going to have a baby. In her excitement, she fails to notice Ebenezer, who is quiet and withdrawn as he has different plans. Ebenezer calls her 'Maragatham'. He feels Margaret Shanti is what everyone calls her, and Maragatham is his special name for her which means Emerald in Tamil. Not wanting to be a parent yet, Ebe tries to propitiate Margaret, by calling her Maragatham in a voice that is softer than usual, and breaks his silence, by announcing that he is not sure, if they should have a baby yet. "What's the point in working for a Doctorate? Do your B.Ed. so you can become a teacher and then we will always be together. Long hair doesn't suit you. Cut it off. You'll look nicer with your hair in a blunt bob. Let's wait till we are both settled in our careers before we have our baby. We have each other. What more do we want?" (105). Ebenezer tries to pacify Margaret, trying to infuse in her mind, the little girl's image, that he expects her to possess, so that he can dominate her. He opines that blunt bob will make her look young like a little girl once again. With his crafty words to Margaret, he successfully convinces her for an abortion. Margaret, who is immensely in love with Ebe, does not want to go against his wishes and so agrees for an abortion with remorse. It is also interesting to note, how he prevents Margaret from doing her doctorate and pursues her to do B.Ed., so that even in education, she does not outshine him.

Ebenezer perceives Margaret's beauty, in terms of a little girl's image. Margaret's evolution into a woman by becoming a mother is seen as a threat by Ebenezer, who wants to control her, by establishing his power over her girlish body. After her abortion, Ebenezer once tells Margaret, "I love it when you call me Ebe, Ebe, just like you did now. I like you like this my lovely girl. With no big woman's breasts and horrible woman's bush. I never want you to change. I want you to remain like this all your life" (111). Ebenezer dislikes Margaret's womanly body that seems to him, both strong and powerful. Margaret knows that Ebe sees anyone who is contemporary and successful as a threat. He does not want her to become a woman through motherhood. He wants her to retain her little girl's image, so that he can rule over her. He tries to recreate the girl in her and kill the woman in her. In other words, he wants to erase her identity as a woman. He wants her to go against the norms of nature and become unbeautiful, as against the desire of Margaret.

While he wants Margaret to stick to her little girl's image, Ebenezer himself is a fitness freak. He likes to run; running, he claims, helps him to concentrate and focus. However,

Margaret knows that if Ebe has a weakness, it is food. He loves eating; the richer the food, the better he likes it fatty bacons, roe-filled sardines, chicken liver, the globs of fat that butchers throw in to make up for the bones, when selling mutton, eggs, mangoes and many more fat rich foods. Margaret is aware of his fondness for food but knows Ebe loves his body even more. So he controls his natural fondness for eating, avoids a second helping and fasts for a whole day once in a week, to maintain his fit body. He also forbids Margaret to cook anything that would test his will, and make him to succumb. Ebenezer's endearment towards his physique is more than his liking for food, as a fit body denotes his confidence, self-esteem and his superiority over his wife's fat body.

After her abortion, Margaret is emotionally upset; she allows herself all that she should not, food being the only thing that comforts her. She buys a big bar of chocolate and hides it from Ebe in different places, as he would get angry if he sees her snack. Just knowing that the chocolate is somewhere in the house, gives her a secret pleasure. Through food, Margaret tries to forget her disappointments in life. She binges on chocolates and chips to fulfil her cravings; food becomes a source of solace in her life. However, lack of control over food leads to loss of her slim body. Margaret abhors her looks after the abortion, as she now has double chin, rolls of fat around her waist; thick calves and puffy wrists. She hates to look at herself in the mirror, but, she is happy that she is no longer her husband's little girl. Destroying the body that Ebenezer liked gives Margaret happiness; however, her new-found satisfaction is short-lived when Margaret learns that her husband is infatuated with the 'lithium girl' (as Margaret has named her) Daphne. She resorts to find emotional security in food. Margaret, who does not possess the ideal beautiful body, envies Ebenezer. She detests his looks which had once attracted her. She fears losing her husband's attention as Ebe is attracted to a slim girl. Thus, marital happiness is presented as closely linked to a woman possessing a slim body through proper dietary habits. A woman who fails to do so is in a precarious position to lose her marriage. In Indian cultural context, a woman who cannot hold on to her marriage is seen as a useless, failed woman. Margaret is aware of the societal rejection if anything happens to her marriage. As she reflects, "she, with all her numerous faults, overweight and barren, and given to long morose silences and melancholic disposition, ought go down on her knees everyday and thank the heavens that he, her husband has still stuck by her" (112). As Margaret becomes aware of the uncertainty in her marriage and the social rejection, she tries to look for new strategies of survival.

Food can be observed to be the leitmotif in both the stories. Food, eating habits, and body are closely linked to the female identity. As Swagata Ray and Rajani Singh agree, slenderization affects the social presence of women, as patriarchy makes the physical beauty of women, the parameter for social recognition. So, to get social recognition, women not only use beauty products but also adopt dieting, starve to an optimum level without realizing the adverse effects of such eating-habits on their bodies. Both Reshma and Margaret are aware of their husbands' infidelity towards them. Though Ajay tries to pamper Reshma through his baby talks to her, she is well aware that Ajay is attracted to the other Reshma, who is thin as a boy. In Margaret's case too, she knows that Ebe is infatuated towards Daphne and fears that Daphne may now play her husband's little girl's role. Both Reshma and Margaret, see the other woman with slim body as a threat to their existence and their identities as wives. As Julier rightly points out, "People stigmatized by body size lack the level of political and social power to correct the stereotypes that the other people hold of them and thus continue to be thought of as willing victims engaged in bad personal decisions" (554). Between the two

women, Reshma can be seen as traumatized by the stereotypical expectation of a slim body and gradually succumbs to the pressure of subscribing to such expectations.

Throughout the day, Reshma is pre-occupied with her book, *The Complete Calorie Counter*, counting on every calorie that she consumes, in order to reduce the distance that Ajay has created between them. She wants to distance herself from food; Yet, when Diwali approaches, saliva pours into her mouth, as she recollects the taste of each and every sweet on display. She takes refuge in her superstitious beliefs and uses them as pretexts to eat. She thinks that the Goddess will be displeased and that it will be inauspicious if she does not eat sweets on Diwali. She thinks, “Who knows what evil might befall her if she did not follow the pattern of Diwali celebrations? Ajay may run off with the skinny one or, worse still, her boys might come to some harm. Fail their exams or something. The diet can wait. Who diets on Diwali? Only atheists she thinks” (142). Tempted by food, Reshma breaks free from her will and goes against what Joan Jacobs Brumberg posits in his essay that careful, abstemious eating is an insurance against ugliness and loss of love. Reshma who worked towards obtaining such an insurance for her marriage, becomes weak due to her temptation towards food. Haunted and troubled by her shaky position in her marriage, Reshma seeks recourse to food to forget that she is fat and wishes that Ajay, her husband, comes back to her. She wishes perhaps the other woman leaves him, runs away with a younger, richer, thinner, unmarried man. Her husband's rejection has scarred her mind to such an extent that she wishes that perhaps he has a mild heart attack at the office, and that he dies of guilt as a sinner. Food, from which she tries to distance herself, is what she gets back to at the end when she has no hopes left in life. “Let us eat, Amah, eat... eat...eat! We can never become fat. It is Diwali. Let us eat...eat... eat” (149-50) she cries aloud. The hysterical cry denotes how food becomes a source of her frustration as well as a channel to release the tension. Ironically, she gets nothing, neither her husband's love nor the ideal beauty in the form of a slender body, and therefore the writer aptly calls the story “Sweet Nothings”.

Margaret, on the other hand, uses food as a weapon to avenge the insult meted out at her. As she declares early in the story, “God did not make Ebenezer Paulraj a fat man. I did” (96). She happily proclaims to have made her husband a fat man through her expertise in cooking. Margaret candidly expresses that she is a good cook when she wishes. She is also a sensitive cook and the ingredients heed her commands. In order to lower Ebenezer's pride and self-esteem, she changes the menu: she cooks Ebenezer's favourite, rich dishes which will add more calories. She serves breakfasts like Puris fried in ghee with potato, peas and cauliflower korma, two fried eggs, a tall glass of cold, creamy milk with two spoons of sugar. When Ebe is surprised by the array of dishes served before him, Margaret smiles coyly, and flatters him saying that, he is a big man and that he needs a big meal to give him strength. Slowly, a year later, Margaret achieves her goal. She vengefully declares, “What was mine became his” (133). Ebenezer is no more fit, as he used to be and has now become a fat man. His sleek lines have begun to blur, his breath has shortened and the pace has slowed. There are folds around his neck; a second chin and a belly that jiggles. When he climbs a staircase, he gasps. Ebe slowly has become a fat, quiet man. His fondness for eating blunts his sharpness. Since she appeases his appetite, he seeks after Margaret, more and more. Margaret, being an educated woman, wittily uses Ebe's weakness for food as a weapon to regain her lost identity. Food here becomes a weapon to avenge her anger towards her husband and also to lay a foundation for her peaceful, married life in future. Margaret is happy that Ebe has become a man she can live with once again. For the second time, she becomes pregnant and has a baby girl. While

Ebe remains fat, there are no power struggles and they lead a calm and happy life.

The two stories discussed above point to a significant aspect of Indian social set up. A slender body, which is also an indication of proper eating habits, befitting the norms of patriarchal ideal of beauty, boosts the confidence in women. Thus the woman's body becomes a combat field, where she fights against her own needs and desires to attain an ideal beauty through her body. A body maintained as such is closely linked to marital happiness. Striving to achieve success against their bodies by relinquishing food, it can be observed how Reshma and Margaret fall prey to the beauty myth prescribed by patriarchy in India. However, food plays a predominant role in these women's lives as they grapple with their fat bodies. While Reshma gulps on sweets and is entrapped in her sorrows, Margaret uses the same food to vindicate her anger towards her husband. Marriage, which is a strong social institution in India, is often understood as sustainable through the physical beauty of women's body. Thus slender body of a woman, understood as beauty attained through proper adherence to food habits, becomes a prime nutrient to nurture marital relationships in India.

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Museum as 'Heterotopic' space in Orhan Pamuk's *The Museum of Innocence*

Abstract

Orhan Pamuk, the celebrated Turkish writer of international acclaim and the Nobel Prize winner of 2006, in his novel The Museum of Innocence, has presented the heterotopic world through the architectural space of the museum. The novel seems to be a literary expression of Foucault's concept of heterotopia of museum where time is constant. Here the spatial representation of literature is most evident where emotions get arrested in objects exhibited in the museum. The novel itself is presented as a catalogue for the museum of objects collected from life to recollect the memories associated with each of them. These objects are heterotopic in themselves when viewed within the space of museum as they are separated from their own respective time and space.

Key words : Heterotopia, Foucault, museum, obsessive love, reality versus fantasy.

Orhan Pamuk, the celebrated Turkish writer of international acclaim, as a postmodern writer who revelled in experimenting newer techniques in narration and novel writing seems to be equally preoccupied with architecture as a novel artistic technique to be involved in the process of novelistic production.

Architectural reading of literature involves the concept of space. Both literature and architecture are concerned with spatial reproduction; the former with literary space and the latter with actual concrete space with its tangible reality. Michel Foucault has regarded 'space' as a major concern of the twentieth century.

I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space. (Foucault 3)

'Heterotopia' is a term that Michel Foucault envisaged to study different spaces within the realistic space. 'Museum' is one of the spaces that Foucault identifies as heterotopic. Pamuk's eighth novel and the seventh one to be translated into English, *The Museum of Innocence* seems to illustrate the literary scope of Foucault's notion of museum as a heterotopic space.

Michel Foucault expressed his notion of heterotopia for the first time in a radio lecture that he delivered for the radio conference on French culture in December 1966 which was later published under the title 'Les Heterotopias'. Foucault presented a reworked version of this lecture at a meeting of the circle of Architectural studies in Paris in 1967 under the title 'Des Escapes Autres'. The manuscript was published in 1984 just before his death. In 1986 the text was published in English as 'Of Other Spaces' in *Diacritics* (Canter and Dehaene 13).

Foucault describes 'heterotopia as a counter space to 'utopia'. 'Utopia' can be defined as

an unreal place which stands for perfection. contrary to that, heterotopias' are real places where other places are represented in a given culture. Foucault uses the metaphor of mirror to explain the concept of heterotopia. One sees oneself in the mirror where he is not present but the mirror is real. Hence heterotopias are spaces of otherness that one encounters in real places through illusory images.

Foucault explains heterotopia through six principles. These principles describe the various types of heterotopia like heterotopia of deviation, crisis and relate the nature of heterotopia like its universal character and its embedded nature. It is the embedding nature of heterotopia that relates it to museum. The embedding nature of heterotopic space can be explained where a single place can represent different spaces simultaneously. Theaters, gardens and so on come under this category. Heterotopic spaces can also bring time to a standstill as in the case of libraries and museums where objects are bereft of their temporal significance and are presented spatially for all time.

Space that deals with art and artistic production can be regarded as heterotopic space is revealed by Fiona Ackerman in "Heterotopia – A Paper Trial to Foucault". She regards the physical studio of a painter as the place or 'counter space' where 'absurd' ideas are elevated and practical concerns are marginalized. "In studio spaces, we create a place outside the everyday, a counter site to use Foucault's terms, in which we can reflect our experience of being, and turn it upside down. After all, it is with the mind that we see rather than with the eye" (Ackerman 1). Architectural space when encountered in the space of literature can lead to novel perspectives in both literature and architecture.

Though Foucault never developed this notion of heterotopia into a full-fledged theory, his brief and vague description of this concept has led to a wide variety of interpretations in the critical scenario. These interpretations are interdisciplinary and hence 'heterotopia' has come to reside not only in philosophy but in a wide variety of disciplines like geography, popular culture, psychology, feminism, gay culture and architecture.

Museums as architectural space too have a major role as the space for cultural exchange. They are places where the cultural heritage get exhibited and are storehouses of memory. "Museums are warehouses of memories or intellectual graveyards in which there can't be too much" (Harbison 190). This view of Harbison shows that time is frozen in museums. Hence it leads to Foucault's view of museums.

Museums, according to Foucault represent, 'heterotopia of time' which "enclose in one place objects from all times and styles. They exist in time but also exist outside of time because they are built and preserved, to be physically unsusceptible to times ravages" (Foucault 333).

The Museum of Innocence, the English translation of which came up in 2009 blurs the boundaries between literature and architecture as Pamuk built an actual museum in Istanbul based on the novel thereby spatializing the text and textualizing the space. The novel relates the tragic love story of Kemal and Fusun where ephemeral love is arrested in objects that reminded him of his lost love.

Kemal, part of Istanbul's upper class, spends his time managing a portion of his family's business. In the beginning of the novel, he is engaged to Sibel, the daughter of another wealthy family in the city. Kemal meets the eighteen years old Fusun – a distant cousin of his – who will become the obsession of his life. Fusun gives up her virginity to Kemal. She hopes

that the power of their love will make Kemal to stop his upcoming engagement. But the engagement happens that crushes Fusun. But Kemal selfishly hopes for a life with a beautiful wife and a mistress. Fusun quits leaving Kemal totally devastated and he ends up in breaking off his engagement to Sibel.

After many months of despair, Kemal does run into Fusun in one of Istanbul's poorer neighbourhoods. She is then married to Feridun, a struggling screen writer. Kemal offers to finance one of Feridun's scripts and make Fusun a star which is an excuse for him to stay close to Fusun. For seven years from then onwards he spends his evenings with Fusun's family with the faintest hope that someday Fusun will be his.

Feridun's affair with Papatya, a film actress estranges Fusun from him. Kemal finds then Fusun favoring him and finally she gets divorced from Feridun and decides to marry Kemal. But before marriage they travel together to Paris and her abstinence to drive his 56' Chevrolet leads to her death when the car crashes against a tree.

Kemal after Fusun's death decides to turn her house into a museum to exhibit the objects he has collected. Hence 'The Museum of Innocence' is opened for visitors to look at the objects as mementoes of their love. "When the chance of happiness is torn away, Kemal buys the house to devise a museum with the aim of transforming time into a space" (TMI 524). He bestows upon Orhan Pamuk, who too lives in Nisantasi and has become a renowned novelist, with the task of narrating the story which will act as the catalog for the museum.

The novel has made use of a novel narrative device for expressing the protagonist's longing for his lover through a collection of mundane objects that vibrate with resonance. These objects are various but have one element in common that they all are touched by Fusun or are related to Fusun's memory. Abstract emotion is here objectified to occupy the spatial reality.

Fact and fiction get an unorthodox blend in the novel. Like his other novels, the authorial presence as the narrator of the novel occurs in *The Museum of Innocence* too. But here Pamuk seems to be not satisfied with just that realistic link. He after the publication of the novel opens a museum at Cukurcuma in Istanbul by the name, "The Museum of Innocence", where he exhibits the objects described in the novel to narrate their story. In the novel he has included a map that shows the route to the museum and towards the end of the novel he presents the ticket of free entry to the museum for people who visit there with the book. In fact the novel is supposed to be a catalog for the museum. Here, where fiction ends and reality begins is difficult to discern.

The novel itself gets spatialized into a museum thereby turning it into a heterotopic world. Kemal, after the death of Fusun, visits various museums of the world before he opens his museum at Cukurcuma. Like Kemal, Pamuk too has visited a number of museums while writing the novel. He like an ardent collector has collected a number of objects described in the novel and puts them in the museum for exhibition.

I share his [Kemal's] sentiments of going to small museums, where you can explore your passions, most preferably in a sleepy museum garden. The whole world and the present are left behind. We are in a different atmosphere, a difficult time. We are almost wrapped in a radically different aura of almost being outside of time. (Pamuk 1)

The title of the novel 'The Museum of Innocence' is the name of the museum built by Kemal in the novel and the one that Pamuk built in Cukurcuma after the publication of the novel. It shows a world bereft of guilt and crime where love can reside in its purity and innocence. In the museum Kemal exhibits the objects he collected from Fusun's house and whatever related to her. These objects like ear rings, trinkets, cigarette stubs, which are part of everyday life, get an aura of sacredness when exhibited in the museum as their utilitarian function is replaced by symbolic significance; hence gain an aesthetic value. They lose their value as objects of utility. So in the world of reality they cease to be meaningful but their performance as symbols of love transport them to the heterotopic world of aesthetics and art where they mirror the obsessive passion of the protagonist. It is the space of the museum that enables such a transformation.

Objects that are exhibited in Kemal's museum though exist in the present reality of time and space, their significance in Kemal's life and love elevates them to a world beyond time and space. Their very existence in the space of museum make them bereft of all realistic attributes and place them in a pedestral that is artistic and hence heterotopic. By presenting everyday objects like cigarette butts, cologne bottles, cups and so on as mementoes of love, Pamuk seems to suggest that love as an emotion can sublimate the mundane to the artistic.

The Museum of Innocence is filled with objects from the innocent everyday life which seems to stand for the love that Kemal cannot fulfil in his life. When he fails to possess the love in life he sought solace in objects that can be possessed. Hence possession in love is materialized through objects that themselves occupy the realistic space but attain their meaningfulness only when they are distanced from their mundane state to represent the sublime love that Kemal felt for his beloved.

In order to compensate for the loss of Fusun, Kemal starts collecting all sorts of objects that perpetuate her memory. Filling his house with these items, he relives the moments that gave him joy, sadness or shames. (Ertuna 108)

Kevin Hetherington studies, the museum as a heterotopic space in his article, "Foucault, the museum and the diagram". He analyses Foucault's essay on Menet's painting to look at the museum as revealing the space of otherness in Painting. Menet unlike other painters surfaced the technicalities of painting thereby opened up the world of materiality in painting rather than covering it up with illusory space.

The heterotopia that Manet establishes is one where we are mirrored in nothingness, we see ourselves and our belief in our creative imaginations as such, left only to contemplate the materiality of the painting, itself, outside of ourselves. (Hetherington 67)

Kemal, by establishing the museum, can distance himself from his obsessive self by objectifying his subjective emotion. As Hetherington has viewed here Pamuk has revealed the materiality of his artistic writing by the construction of the museum where various objects materializing the story are exhibited.

Museum as an institution promoting enlightenment values is negated in Beth Lord's essay, "Foucault's museum: difference, representation and genealogy". According to Beth museums for Foucault were spaces of difference and resistance thereby contributing to the progress. Beth regards museums as heterotopias not because they house different objects belonging to different temporal and historical moments together in one space but because of

the gap that arises between object and its meanings.

Because the museum is a space of representation, because it puts on display the problem of relating words and things, the museum undermines language and performs a kind of discursive analysis. [...] it loosens the embrace between words and things and shows the rules binding them to be contingent and reversible. (Lord 10-11)

In this sense Kemal's museum of tiny miscellaneous things from Fusun's house reveals the otherness or heterotopia where the objects and their performance are problematized as they function as mementoes of love when placed in the space of the museum.

Merhmet Apartment where Kemal initially places objects that he pockets from Fusun's house before the setting up of the museum at Cukurcuma, in fact can be considered as a museum of ardent love. The novel itself carries a museum within as it contains a graphic description of the objects exhibited in the museum. The museum that Pamuk constructs at Cukurcuma is the heterotopia of the museum/museums in the novel as it mirrors them. After reading the novel, the readers would have a mental picture of the museum which is materialized by the actual museum. Hence the heterotopic space of the museum ruptures the distance and distinction among fact, fiction and fantasy.

In *Secular Blasphemies: Orhan Pamuk and the Turkish Novel*, Erdag Goknar tries to read Pamuk's novel in line with sufi mysticism. In his reading of the novel *The Museum of Innocence*, Goknar relates the museum to absent lover. Here he seems to suggest the heterotopic world opened up by the museum where the objects transcend in both time and space. Hence it seems worthwhile to conclude with Goknar's words:

This actual reproduction of a literary reproduction of a museum – an erstwhile store house of national – cultural memory – is an inversion of the relationship between object and text used by Pamuk in earlier novels. While the museum offers a surrogate for obsessive (because unrequited) love, it also evokes the ghostly beloved as an absent object of desire. Thus Pamuk's silent house of memory and imagined community has, over the course of five novels, transformed into a museum that speaks through a repository of mystified objects signifying both pathos and pathology. (Goknar 301)

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Search for Alternate Aesthetic Space: A Critique of Badrul Munir and Husnul Jamal

Representation of beauty has been an artistic pursuit from time immemorial. The distinctive trajectories of perspectives about art for art's sake and for life's sake continued as an unending enigma. Universalism and much exaggerated enlightenment paradigm along with the imperialist designs of 'masks of conquest Gauri Viswhanathan, 1989) have caused for the eclipse of lots of illuminating aesthetic constructs produced in the erstwhile colonies. From Indian aesthetic viewpoint the very concept of beauty is akin truth coherent with Creation – Lord Shiva –through the trio –*sathyam, shivam , sundaram*. Besides, the theories of *rasa* and *vakroti* – point towards the possibilities of going beyond western derivative aestheticism.¹ Among the multilingual literati of Malabar also there were oasis of creative engagement with acclaimed works, otherwise obscure due to hybridity and obscurity. Arabi-Malayalam², was the outcome of their search for finding out an alternative form and also as an immediacy for creating counter narrative as an alternative means of self-expression. This task had two dimensions; on the one hand there was a necessary to go beyond the high pitched Sanskritized tradition prevalent in the elite class and also to dismantle the false notions emerged out of the 'cultural imperialism'(Edward Said,1993) .The genre of *Mappilappattu*³ has to be contextualized in this socio-cultural poetics.

This paper examines *Badrul Munir- Husnul Jamal* (1872) of Moyin Kutty Vaidyar (1852-1892)⁴. This popular text of Mappilappattu is considered due to the unprecedented acceptance among literary enthusiasts and common mass, though writer had to face some stiff opposition from his contemporaries for deviating from the conventional orthodox practice of delimiting the genre within eulogies of holy figures and devotional hymns. The reason for taking this work is also owing to its subversion from the normal literary practice of as it deconstructed the existing notions of representation of romance and exploration of beauty.

The work having its multilingual experiments and cultural diversity deserves a sympathetic study as it articulates unexplored romantic notions and also poses a form of resistance literature when British colonialism was at its peak. The selection of the central characters – Badrul Munir and Husnul Jamal -informs invariably the writer's engagement with enchanting prettiness. '*Badr*' refers to the full moon and '*munir*' denotes lustrous. Likewise '*husn*' indicates the best and '*jamal*' refers to beauty. The introduction of the pair of love captures the tickling spirit of platonic love and pure romance⁵. In continuance to this, there are more verses by attributing the fascinating world of Jinns and sprites.

From the Islamic perspective the attribute of beauty is applied to anything that is very gorgeous and orderly. It also denotes for harmony, symphony, or symmetry. It transcends beyond exterior outer shape as it can be attributed to odour, sound or colour or even rhythmic structure of words or sentences as well. Moreover, the whole natural phenomenon including sky, mountains, earth, etc. The good word, deed, advice, counseling are to be done beautifully as hinted by the holy Qur'an indicate that aesthetic response is a holistic approach

, not limited to representation of external beauty ; rather it is applied to all nice and exquisite things in and around the entire universe. It transcends the peripheral surface of the outward beauty; rather, it looks into the metaphysical principles that involve cosmology and psychology. Besides, the prophetic version of beauty may be underlined: Certainly, Allah is beautiful and likes the beauty and this illustrates that Islamic aestheticism does not disregard representation of loveliness in creative works⁶.

While searching for alternative to western derivative aestheticism, it is obvious to look at the perspectives of classical scholars like al Farabi and Ibn Sina(Avicenna). For the latter, *thakhyil*⁷ is one mode of representation of art. For instance, so and so is moon, for he is handsome and this metaphor of moon can be elliptically stated that that he stands for moon like beauty. If both premises are apt and correct the third one –conclusion seems to be convincing as per logical notion. This distraction or deviation from the vice things towards nobler deeds is the very purpose of art seems to be articulated by Vaidyar. He portrays the situation would bring transgression while involving in external beauty and in the subsequent consummation of sensual love. Badrul Munir gets reminded of Husnul Jamal on sporadic moment to have incest with Qmarban :

Thadaki manathe samayathil udanavanethi manassullil

Sarasijamokke madhurathen Husnul Jamalaaa avlude

*Tharam ahdoocke marannidum enaduude haalaal*⁸

Moreover, the poet is so pungent in the subtle use of satire while describing the loss of presence of mind and one's own attire after seeing the charismatic physique and cuteness of Badarul Munir . The servant maids of Ubais forget themselves to dress properly and compete crazily to have a look on him while he was sighted in her palatial garden :

Kuthith bandh Ubaisennolum

Kuthukulmaayqsar yerumbol

*Muthirth begam Enkenikk.ethrikkamennum Mathinthu qubba Mukalilethi marintheyaaqal madathil nalum*⁹

This satire seems to suggest the very approach of Vaidyar on indulging in the licentious move with eccentric behavior. . Badrul Munir asks these half-naked maidens that whether women out here do not wear clothes properly?

While searching for the mystical interpretations of aestheticism, Al-Ghazali's name comes before any.¹⁰ He used the word *sama'a* - for congregations where Sufi hymns or psalms are heard or enjoyed. His meticulous analysis has immensely helped in categorizing the healthy or unhealthy tendencies with regard to musical art. He logically argues in favouring or otherwise within the framework of Islamic jurisprudence. The annual pilgrimage to Makkah and the subject matter akin to this kind of pilgrimage constitutes the first one. The enjoyment coming out of this spiritual quest can be associated true representation of truth. Such lyrical compositions reaffirm the imaginary recollections of the spiritual sites of sacrificial life of Ibrahim, Ismail and Hajara and it reinforces the faith. Secondly, those creative productions that instill the spirit of resistance and liberation from clutches of dominance. Such portraits do exhort the spirit of fight against exploitations and injustice. It is equal to that of worship remaining in Mosques and monasteries. The struggle for liberation that can be inspired by songs and poems that comes under the third category. When Husnul Jamal was assaulted by the men of the King Bahjar, she strives for preserving

his chastity.

Ghazali refers to the elegiac poems as the fourth category. If some one's loss is lamented for self-purification of minds it sounds nice to be heard but if God's decree is questioned in such elegies, then it is objectionable. Ahmed Shouqui's poem lamenting on Palestine is renown in the first category. The sad song in Vaidyar's poem after the loss of Husnul Jamal also goes like this:

Mankumbol Shajar komb murinth thane

*Manam njetti iruperum puthiyil veene*¹¹

Even the joyous songs and merriment are allowed on certain occasions of wedding, child birth, and Eid, etc. are such circumstances where people exchange joy and pleasure. The other way of depiction of artistic forms is possible through those poems that narrativize love and infatuation subject to the conditions that should not multiply the excess of emotions that deviate from thought of God, Ghazali points out. While introducing Jameelath, Viadyar paints such a portrait in which she laments on the loss of her childhood lover :

Oyye enikkund payyal piraayathil

Othorumithu kalichum kond oruvan

*Ottoru vaakkum njan theittdaathe*¹²

Love and devotion toward the creator of the universe, Almighty God is portrayed though Ghazals portrayed through the symbols of lover and beloved. Ghalib and later Iqbal have written such eternal and eloquent lyrics undermining the pomp and show of worldly life and yearning for simplicity in life and sublimity of thought.¹³ These compositions enhance the faith and fortitude. Besides, a believer becomes more to Him in the process of listening such songs or poems. Ghazali describes art as that of fire distances iron. The metal cannot be eroded if it is kept in the fire; likewise, art and artifacts protect the believers from going astray or deviated from spirituality. According to classical phenomenology, the individual human mind is the basis of understating a work of art and the reader's consciousness has major say in deriving meaning of works (Seldon 1988,et all,) *through* particular concepts, thoughts, ideas, images, etc. The spiritual manifestation of any aesthetic artifact renders it fullness and holistic shape. Eternity or universality of any work depends upon its acceptance to every community in all ages. Sense perception is an inevitable ingredient and it is possible thorough imagination. Emotions aroused through a creative work play a dominant role in character formation of individual and an integrated personality is has to be aimed at while art and its actual purpose is to be fulfilled. Therefore, mystic recuperation as a byproduct of reading a work of art or listening beautiful song creates an overwhelming effect on the formation of person as an integrated whole . Ghalib and Iqbal emphasize this through his Urdu poetry. The mystic poets and scholars focused on profundity of sensory experience. Besides, the popular *Qavvali* and *naa't* lyrics¹⁴ popular in the north India and Urdu speaking people elsewhere also are performed with or without musical instruments

To sum up, the readers' experience has to primacy of an aesthetic construct. This is possible by employing a bunch of formula that includes blending the elements of psychological and along with the linguistic / rhetorical dynamics of audience. Thus, by considering readers as cultural and historical cryptographs through which an artist is able to unveil the nuance of beauty and truth imbedded in the cultural artifacts. The wide popularity

of Vaidyar's master piece deserves to be explicated beyond its illuminations of enchanting beauty underpinned in the textual form; on the other, it needs to be encoded in its fusion of linguistic and cultural borrowings. That also helps to accelerate the pace of subverting the Anglophonic designs of aestheticism and its other offshoots.

Notes :

1. Rasa refers to relishable mood and described as *sthayi bhava* . Vakroti denotes analysis of imaginative texts at different levels of phonetics, lexicography and grammar. See G.N.Devi's Indian Literary Criticism: Theory and Interpretation , Orient Blackswan Delhi, 2002.
2. This language still is used in madrasas and schools among the Muslims of Kerala. Malayalam laced in Arabic script with additional sounds and morphemes from in hybrid form. It is prevalent from the first available text Muhiyudheen *Mala* (1607), an Ode written by Qazi Muhammed of Kozhikod. It is a devotional song eulogizing the great saint Sheikh Muhiyudheen Jeelani(1077-1166) lived in Baghdad. The Qadiriyya Sufi cult is based on his name and teachings.
4. A popular song in Kerala in general and amongst Malabar Muslim in particular. Earlier written in the Arabi-Malayalam script.
5. Born as a son of Alungal Kandi Ahmed Kutty Vaidyar in 1852 at Kondoty, his early acquaintances were with Arabic and Islamic studies by Musliayrakath Valiya Ahmed Kutty Musliyar. He was given Sanskrit classes , Arya Vaidyam and some indigenous medicinal studies. He was tutored Arabic and other traditional teachings of Islam. He was also given Tamil and visited Thenga Patnama, and Kayalpattanam for getting more exposed to Tamil meters and poetic traditions. He learnt *Thullal*, studied *Adhyatmik Ramayan*, *Mahabharatha*, *Kilippaattu*, *Kilippattu* etc. This work is a readapted version Persian writer Muinudheen Sheerazi as narrated through Sheikh Nizamudheen of Kondoty.

The nutshell of this tale of love and adventure goes like this: The King Mahazin's daughter Husnul Jamal loves Badrul Munir, the son of the minister Mazamir,.But this star-crossed lovers are forced elope. But the plot of Abu Sayyad a fisherman misguides them and are separated. They search for each other continues till the reunited and undergo lots of ordeal and tribulations and test of love, infatuations from different segments of men , women form human and supernatural beings. He also wrote poems such as *Badrul Kubra* (1876) and *Malappuram Padappattu* (1883), etc.

6. The enthralling songs in this master piece point out towards the illuminating beauty of different characters. A few are given below :

Poomakalaane Husnul Jamal

Punnara thaalam mikanthe beevi

Hemnagal Pani chithiram

Aabharanakkova aninthe beevi

Kaaman kazhchakkathruppamenthal

Kathum tahkhthil mayangum Beevi.I

It is not confined to the feminine beauty and the author showers praises the handsome

physique and attributes of Badarul Munir in the following line.

Naamakkaruthan Badrul Munir

Naalakam othe purushar illey

Thamara pookkum mukhathe kandaal

Thenarchirakkum payakkam keettaal

Kaamini jin-manu poomadarkal

Kandaal mathi marannu inzaal eythum.

A few more lines are added how does he describe the growing heroine with her glittering beauty and attractive physique with capacity to create arousal in any one:

Pole nadapu sheelamil poovi kavinthe Beeviyaal

Baala vayas pathathil baalighavum chinanthe naal

Maala aninth paaruvaan Maaril mulakunthinhathaay

Qaala mikantha raavithaanKanniye kaaranangalaal.

The meaning and interpretations by K.K.Muhammed Abdul Kareem and K.Aboobacker in the complete works of Moyin Kutty Viadyar published by Mahakavi Moyin Kutty Vaidyar Smarakam, Kondotty, 2005. Ajeer Kutty's Husn al Jamal, and F.Fawcet's article in Indian Antiquary can be referred for details in English.

6. He has decorated the lower heaven with the decorations of stars (37:6) .Likewise, he has made stars for you so that you may find direction in the darkness of land and sea.(6:97-99). Similarly, while describing animals for travelling it is seen: In them there is pride and beauty as drive from home in the evening, and as you lead them to fields in the morning .(16: 7-8). In nutshell, beauty is an all-encompassing phenomenon in Islamic aestheticism. A.R.Kidwai's English translation of the holy Qur'an –What is in the Quran? : Message of the Quran in Simple English, Viva Books, New Delhi, 2014 edition, can be referred .Prophet Muhammed's words are recorded in the Hadith as reported in the work of Imam Muslim (Vol.1, 39: 91)
7. The word *thakhyil* refers to imaginative construct that renders portrayal based on pure imagination. It can be attributed to dramatic performance as we an imaginative rendering of characters, that is used by writers in order to inspire for nice and virtuous action II. Umar Mukhar like films are very popular .The purpose of such artistic creations is to delight with some instruction, moral value and ethical principle .Al- Farabi(870-950), Avicenna (980-1037). Refer Miachale H.Morgan's The Lost History:
8. He prays all of a sudden by distracting himself from the emergent kisses he showers on Qamarban stimulating body .He prays to God for saving him from the true love committed to Husnul Jamal .
9. Vaidyar here uses a tactful approach in describing the naked and half naked glamorous women. .He shows his indebtedness to the narrator Sheikh Nizamudheen . Due to the inspiration from the holy Qur'an he seems to nullify body based beauty as narrated in the chapter of Yousuf in the holy work. Some women in the town began saying, “Aziz's wife is trying to seduce her slave. She is in passionate love with him. We think she has gone far into error”. When she heard of their gossip, she invited them to party. She gave each of them a knife .(While they were cutting and eating fruits), she asked Yousuf : “ come out before them”.When he saw him, they were so much carried away that they cut their hands .They exclaimed : “ how perfect is God!. This Yousuf is not a human being .He is one but a

noble angel”(12: 30 :31) Kidwai , op, cit.

10. Al- Ghazali(1058-1111). Born at Thuz in Damascus . a great mystic and scholar par excellence .His observation in his liminal texts such as *Keemiya Saadah*:(The Chemistry of Success) and *Ihya Ulumudheen*-The Religious Knowledge is Enliven , throw light on different aspects of human life. Listening to music is one of his contentious issues he has taken up and he seems to us more convincing of all with regard to aesthetic productions and music.
11. In this song, Husnul Jamal longs to get back her separated love and one day she would meet and fulfill her love. The intensity of melancholy and pain is reflected in these lines.
12. She tells her worries after missing her childhood fiancé Zainathunnajjar as her father was forced to surrender her for the king of Egypt. She runs away and gets captivated by Mushtaq , the prince of Jins. She narrates about her star-crossed lover.
13. Mirza Asadullah Baig Khan alias Ghalib(1797-1869). Highly philosophic and satiric in lyrics in Urdu .His comparison of life as the play house of child is very famous.

Just like child's play ground this world appears to me

Every Single night and day this spectacle I see .

Allama Iqbal (1877-1938) whose famous works include *Baang e Dara*(1924)*Baal e Jibrael* (1935) , and lots of other philosophic poems are widely ready by the Urdu loving people in the world.

14. *Qavvalis* are in choric songs sequences accompanied by musical instruments based on eulogies on prophets and saints. More popular among the followers of Chsithy ,Nizami, and Sabri Sufi cults. They are performed in the premises of tombs of Sufis in the north and a few places of South India.

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Beauty and Deformity in Literature and Art: Physiognomy as Metaphor for Mental Traits and Aberrations

Beauty as a linguistic sign constitutes itself variably through certain structural binaries like beauty-power, beauty-wisdom, beauty-deformity/ugliness, beauty – courage/boldness, body – mind, and so on. Literatures, of the ancient and the modern times, of both the West and of the East, have reinforced this dichotomy through historically encountered as well as metaphorically conceived characters that hint at a direct correspondence between mental traits and physiognomic features. Right from the times of mythological literature, passing through the times of Romances and later of Realism, and even in the modern times, one can come across in literature a tendency to associate beauty and deformity with intellectual and emotional factors that determine the inner life of the character. Under the impact of the literature and arts serving this epistemology, beauty has come to be inseparably associated with virtue, and deformity with wickedness, cruelty and other such untenable qualities of character, even in real life. As a consequence, in literature as well as in life, beauty has been aligned in a syntagmatic relation with 'love' which preempts anything that is ugly or physically unappealing, from its territory. In contrast, aspects like hatred, violence and villainy are invariably accompanied by expressions of facial contortion, gestural distress and physical deformity.

The foremost literary texts that make a dichotomous association of virtue with beauty and vice with physiognomic aberrations, are the mythological texts and epics of the diverse religious traditions of the world. All cultures of the world have contributed to a universal repository of images and figures that evoke the subconscious sense of evil in the human psyche. The *Asuras* and *Rakshasas* of the Hindu epics, the Cyclops, the Chimaera, the Gorgons and the Centaurs of the Greek mythology, the figure of the *Kouei* in the Chinese mythology, Grendel and his mother from the Anglo-Saxon epic, *Beowulf*, Beelzebub of the Christian tradition, all are morphologically conceptualised as repulsive monsters personifying evil and vice inimical to humanity. Irrespective of their civilizational moorings, they have invariably been depicted as hideous, cannibalistic monsters with grotesque physical aspects including horns, long protruding teeth and nails, parts of animal physiognomy, and fire-spitting countenance. The philosophical thought inherent in the scriptures of the ancient religions especially tended to pit beauty as antithetical to wisdom, as is evident from the parallelism inherent in the stories of the *Medusa* in Greek mythology and *Soorpanakha* in the *Ramayana*. *Medusa* was a beautiful maiden whose chief glory was her luxuriant locks of hair. But, as she dared to vie in beauty with Athene/Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, she was turned into a terrible monster, with hissing serpents coming to replace her charming ringlets. In her new guise *Medusa* was so frightening that anyone who looked directly into her eyes was turned to stone. The ethical precept to be inferred from the story is that beauty is far inferior to wisdom in the cosmic order of life, and has the potential to act as a trigger for vanity, and hence altogether undesirable. In addition to *Medusa* who represents

the human flaw of vanity, Greek mythology also depicts *Euryale* and *Stheno* as terrifying female figures with serpentine locks, tusks of boars and arms of bronze, to represent the evils of sexual excess and social perversion. In the oriental world too, as is palpable from the encounter between *Soorpanakha* and the siblings *Rama* and *Laxmana*, in the *Ramayana*, feminine beauty is depicted as an enticement that swerves man from his karma, which involves a journey in search of the real meaning of life. The name *Soorpanakha* itself conveys the poet's aesthetic acumen in keeping characterization subservient to an ethical scheme that denounces beauty as a coordinate of sexuality. Derogatorily nomenclatured after the physiognomic feature of nails (*nakha*) that are flat like a bamboo platter (*soorpa*), the lovelorn *Soorpanakha* is derisively and atrociously disfigured by the Aryan duo, in order to spurn the entrapping charm of the female monster in disguise as a beautiful woman. The name *Soorpanakha*, contiguous with her physiognomic features of broad fingers and flat nails, betrays her true identity as a woman of inferior birth and evil disposition, despite her artificially augmented beauty. It is interesting to note that the *Skanda Purana*, one of the seminal texts of the Hindu mythology, depicts without much discriminatory pungency two distinct aspects of female beauty in the personae of *Kaali* (one who is dark) and *Gowri* (one who is fair) as the differential guises of *Shiva's* consort, *Parvathy*. Born as *Kaali*, the dark skinned daughter of mount *Himavan*, the purpose of her life on earth was to be a female receptacle for the procreative power of *Shiva*, in order to give birth to a son who would annihilate *Tharakasura*, a demon who was tormenting men and gods alike with all kinds of dastardly acts. Thus *Kali* with her dark complexion symbolizes sexuality and other similarly wild energies that remain latent in the female. The inferior status assigned to these natural aspects of female existence becomes evident later when *Parvathy* herself feels offended as *Shiva*, in a mood of intense desire, whispers the name *Kaali* twice into her ears. She feels belittled by his address, albeit affectionate, as her identity was about to be consolidated through the association of dark skin exclusively with sexuality. *Kaali* leaves *Shiva* to engage in meditation for a long period stretched over a hundred years. Thereafter *Brahma* appears before her and grants her wish to become fair, and she returns triumphantly to her Lord who would thenceforth reckon her as *Gowri*, embodying the benign power of the divine spirit. (Maani 752-754) The story seems to have engendered the deeply entrenched notion of sexuality as an inferior aspect of female beauty and of darkness as a metaphor for the presumed destructiveness of sexuality.

The notion of ugliness as conducive of evil deeds is extended to the animal world in the *Ramayana* in the episode where *Jayanthan*, the son of *Indra* assumes the form of a crow and attacks *Sita* while her husband, *Rama*, is sleeping with his head placed on her lap. The dark and ugly figure of the crow must have yielded a more facile vehicle than a peacock or a parrot for conveying the message that evil is ugliness. However, in the most sublime of the cantos in the *Ramayana*, that is the *Sundaraka ndam* which is centered on the life of *Hanuman*, the monkey god is addressed as the most beautiful – *sundara* – by his mother. And *Hanuman* indubitably comes to represent a different kind of beauty that needs be cherished – the beauty of the soul. Through the *Sundaraka ndam* the poet seems to propound the view that the only mode of appreciation of beauty that is appropriate for humanity is the one that is inherent in the maternal affection for the infant, as the infant comes to represent an ethereal notion of beauty that is rooted not in physical attributes, but in the innocence of the soul.

Fairy Tales rooted in the folkloric or oral tradition seem to make a more adept use of the beauty-deformity dichotomy to consolidate the overt moral intent of the narrative. Invariably

structured as stories that proclaim the victory of virtue over evil, the fairy tales deploy characters that fall on either side of the morphological association of goodness with beauty and wickedness with ugliness. The forlorn girl or woman who suffers misfortunes, persecution and hardships, irrespective of whether she is a princess or a common individual, is beautiful, and her tormentor(s) who is wicked, cruel and selfish is depicted to have a repulsive appearance. Little Red Riding Hood is tormented by the wolf, a far from agreeable animal in appearance; Cinderella, the young maiden is so infinitely prettier than her heartless step-sisters that a little bit of embellishment by her fairy godmother is enough for her to charm the prince, and the princess who befriends the frog prince is an optimal combination of beauty and virtue. The story of the ugly duckling has a greater role in reinforcing the association between beauty and love. The duckling, as long as it remains ugly, is not welcome to any family or group, even its own. Its mother is embarrassed to own it, the wild ducks chase it away, the geese tolerate it, but always ridicule it for its appearance, and finally its presence among them bring them misfortune in the form of the hunter and his hound, and the farmer and his wife let him in, but shoo it away when it does not lay any eggs. Finally it comes to social recognition and a valid sense of self-esteem only when its passive endurance has turned it into a beautiful swan. The ugly duckling also serves to silently reinforce the view that, for the ugly and the deformed, patient suffering rather than strenuous assertion of rights, including those of life and dignity, is the sole means for self-redemption from the abyss to which they have been condemned by fate. All these stories pathologically point to a social discourse where external appearance is more intricately connected to notions of social acceptance and self-esteem; and as a corollary, it is to be taken for granted that the ugly and the deformed are not entitled to any social worth or self-contentment.

The congenial note on which the story of the Ugly Duckling ends is not, however, transposed into the narrative of the Victorian novel *Frankenstein*, where deformity is synonymous with doom. Her female sensibility has consciously or unintentionally led Mary Shelley into a deconstruction of the prejudicial clubbing of deformity with evil and vice. That none is born devilish, but driven to evil by a combination of life-denying conditions including denial of love and affection, compulsive loneliness and the resultant craving for acceptance into social and familial ties, all engendered by individual apathy and social ostracism proceeding from a psychologically entrenched association of deformity with evil. *Frankenstein* is the tale of the tragedy of a heart thirsting for love, longing for companionship and brimming with benign intent, but is misunderstood, alienated and transformed due to the gross apathy and hatred heaped on it from all corners, right from the moment of its conscious existence in the world. The second volume of the novel where the creature narrates his agony to his creator Victor Frankenstein in such a way as to move everyone but the accursed scientist to sympathy, has a revolutionary character in trying to bring to the attention of the world its own flaw in gauging people on the basis of their appearance. The novel thus possesses more poignant overtones in the form of a silent reproach on the colonial barbarity of Europe in its treatment of the rest of the world, especially of the black people from Africa, as subhuman. The moment of its inception, as indirectly portrayed through the words of Frankenstein, is one of pricking contact with the intense pain of rejection for the 'monster': "I beheld the wretch ... miserable monster ... His eyes ... were fixed on me ... a grin wrinkled his cheeks ... He might have spoken, but I did not hear; ... I escaped and rushed downstairs." (*Frankenstein* 37) The monster seems absolutely justified in its remonstrance of Frankenstein whose original reason for shunning the creature was solely his form: "Oh

Frankenstein, be not equitable to every other and trample upon me alone, to whom thy justice, and even thy clemency and affection is most due.... I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous ... [but] you, my creator abhor me; what hope can I gather from your fellow-creatures, who owe me nothing/they spurn and hate me.” (*Frankenstein* 73) The tale of woe for the monster continues into his association with other human beings too. In the household of De Lacey, the French man in impoverished exile, absolute contrast is what comes to the fore between Felix and Agatha's attitude to Safie's father, a Turkish merchant who had actually been the cause for the family's ruin, and that towards the monster who has helped the family in such ways as possible within his limited capacity. Safie's beautiful visage enables Felix to condone her father's repeated deceptions and to sustain the intensity of his desire for her. But, one glance at the malformed human shape before them, even without any reasonable perception of threat or danger, “Felix darted forward, and with supernatural force tore me from his father, to whose knees I clung, in a transport of fury, he dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick.” (*Frankenstein* 104) The blind and old De Lacey's willingness to lend a patient ear to the monster obviously hints at the converse fact that falling prior to the realms of rational consciousness, is a habitual indisposition of the senses, especially the eyes, to deformity and ugliness. The tragedy inherent in this indisposition is that the standard of 'beauty' as it is inculcated in the mind has been too arbitrarily conceived and rendered non-negotiable by those who instituted it.

Coming to the Renaissance, and the advent of Modernity and later colonial imperialism, it is easier to perceive the key coordinates of beauty or aesthetics as essentially proceeding from the principle of 'order' upon which the notion of Enlightenment Rationality was constituted. Everything, natural as well as human, from the atom to the cosmos, from the family to the army, was compulsively made to pass through a process of 'narrative aestheticisation' whereof the wild, the protrusive, and the nonlinear were curtailed and pruned to depict them in conformity with a discursively determined normative shape and character. Chaucer's conception of the Wife of Bath is uncharitable in ample proof for the association of morphological deformity with the breach of the set notions of order. As she flouts the patriarchal order in her disobedience to her husband(s), she is deaf in one ear, and has one or two of her teeth missing, rendering her a picture of facial deformity in correlation with her moral depravity. Othello is a moor despite his valour and honourable disposition because he is racially far beneath in culture and status to the European 'gentleman', and hence unable to appreciate the virtue of the fair (read “European”) Desdemona which is implicit in her chaste beauty. Heathcliff is a “dark skinned gypsy in aspect” (*Wuthering Heights* 4) because he is a foundling who has barged unjustifiably and menacingly into the aristocratic order. The arbitrary association of beauty with the idea of order is found unwittingly extended even to Nature by none other than William Wordsworth, the Romantic poet celebrated for his liberal spirit and pantheistic faith. In the poem, “Lines Composed A Few Miles above Tintern Abbey...” as the poet surveys the vista of nature that stretches out before him, his rationally practical mind first registers the 'plots' of cottage ground which signify human habitat, and then the orchard tufts and the pastoral farms signifying the human occupation of agriculture. Only after these can he invoke the inaccessible wilderness which constituted a picture of divinity on earth and functioned as the deepest springs of his poetic inspiration. The constraint placed on Wordsworth's poetic spirit and aesthetic sensibility by the prevalent notion of order as conducive to beauty, is rationally tenable in the context of

Wordsworth's nationality; but the colonial discourse had had its sway beyond Europe.

A servile affinity to the European dictates on beauty is what distinguishes O. Chanthu Menon's *Indulekha* which is generally perceived to be the first specimen of the Novel proper in Malayalam. The characterization of the eponymous heroine of the novel involves a compulsive adherence to the European standards of feminine charm. Indulekha's golden complexion, rosy lips, breasts in full bloom, and bright eyes and dark hair (admitted by the author to be inferior in comparison to the blue eyes and golden hair of European women) have the cumulative effect of kindling a spark of sexual desire in the young men of the time. These aspects of physical beauty and their irresistible charm on the young men are described in minute details sprawling over three pages in the novel, essentially subscribing to the patriarchal view of women as sexual objects. (*Indulekha* 33-35) Though Indulekha is invested with intellectual attainments that are uncommon for a woman of her age in those times, she has no prospects of life outside the household other than as the prized possession of Madhavan, who is the most accomplished and handsome youth around. Chanthu Menon who extensively describes the beauty of Indulekha using the choicest superlatives, does not expend more than three sentences to depict Kalyanikkutty, another niece of the patriarch Panchu Menon, who, instead of Indulekha, is ultimately destined to become the wife of the idiotic womanizer, Soori Namboothirippadu. In Chanthu Menon's own words, she is a girl who has been brought up in the "pure Malayalee tradition" (*Suddha Malayala sampradayam* in Malayalam) and hence nothing more than a "simpleton", (Saadhu kutti) who does not possess even a hundredth of the beauty of Indulekha. (*Indulekha* 168) Kalyanikkutty has no specific virtue worth mentioning from the English point of view, and hence no specific aspect of beauty to be accorded; she is a plain girl who has been spared by the author's magnanimity from more detrimental deformity. It is not merely in the case of Chanthu Menon, but the world over that colonial discourse has trained natives to view themselves as ugly Calibans inferior to the European Ariels, both in beauty and in virtue. Self-deprecation and self-negation under the impact of Eurocentric norms of physical beauty attain tragic proportions in the Afro-American female characters in the novels of Toni Morrison. The characterisation of Pecola in *The Bluest Eye* is a demonstration of girls growing up with an absolute lack of self-worth because of an extremely negative self-perception in a society that proffers fairytale whiteness of complexion and blue eyes as the only valid criteria of beauty. The Shirley Temple doll that represents these features is her ideal to pine for, to feel guilty in not being one, and to hate herself for being the other.

With the advent of modernism and postmodernism as trends redefining the essence of literature and its relation to real life, there has been a conscious attempt to dislodge 'beauty' and 'deformity' from their set denotations and connotations. The classical conception and the Renaissance reformulations of the aesthetic essence of the natural, the human and the literary worlds have been subjected to a deliberate deconstruction in the times of postmodernity in order to release all entities from the clutch of the beauty – deformity binary. Modernism as a reactionary artistic movement flourished on an antithetical stance and purposely gross distortion of every aesthetic principle instituted by Humanism and Enlightenment Modernity. Across various avant-garde movements, from Hippyism and Dadaism to Absurd Theatre, a counter-aesthetic thrust on challenging the concepts of order and reason as preconditions to beauty is seen to inform modernism. The inaugural moment of the modernist counter-cultural conceptualization of beauty is perhaps encountered in the poem,

“Pied Beauty” by the Victorian poet, Gerard Manley Hopkins. Through the deft deployment of words with camouflaged double entendre, the poet, with his Jesuit religious background, suggests that the human tendency to synonymise beauty with homogeneity and conformity, is antithetical to the Creator's own idea of heterogeneity and disorder as natural aspects of beauty. Words like 'pied' (invoking the story of the Pied Piper who enchanted the children into danger through his music), 'mole' (with its veiled reference to a spy who deceptively earns the trust of his victims), and 'stipple' (as a means of roughening a surface), have been used by the poet in such a way as to effect a revision of the negative sense attached to these with respect to the concept of beauty in the English linguistic and literary tradition. Without these – the elements that give life its peculiar texture of rough and tumble – the world would be one vast expansive stretch of monotony and listless conformity. Modernist literature familiarizes the readers with expressions like “Brute beauty” (Hopkins, “The Windhover”) and “terrible beauty” (Yeats, “Easter 1916”) which oxymoronically synthesise new perceptive stances through the collocation of hitherto exclusive categories of meaning. Under the sway of Postmodernism which is anti-foundationalist in both ethics and praxis, all arenas of human life and creativity – literature, art, architecture, landscaping, sartorial fashion, even automobile designing – which were previously governed by arbitrarily conceived and mechanically deployed norms of aesthetic propriety, have been subject to a kind of delimitation where anything is beautiful from a contingent point of view. Postmodernism could be said to have struck a subtly lethal blow on established aesthetic notions through its metafictional projection of ‘performance’ and ‘simulacrum’ as two aspects that divest beauty of its assumed transcendental reality. The former involves a realization that life is not inherently beautiful but appears so when it is ‘performed’ in an aesthetically appealing way. The latter, ‘simulacrum’, meaning “copy without original”, hints at the reality that most often the visuals projected by the media as beautiful, are nothing more than technically fabricated images that cannot be encountered in real life.

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Elegance of the Eyesore: Subverting the Ideals of Beauty in *Life of Pi*, *Room* and *Robinson Crusoe*

“Beauty presents an indeterminate concept of Understanding,
the sublime an indeterminate concept of Reason”

- Immanuel Kant

We may confuse whether beauty exists or not. It is better to understand beauty as a construct which may vary with various elements. I don't think there are many arguments against the thought that we value the quality of a person, thing, place or an idea than its beauty. Scruton argues that beauty could be an enemy of truth (2). He continues, “Goodness and truth never compete, we assume, and the pursuit of the one is always compatible with a proper respect for the other (2).

The pursuit of beauty, however, is far more questionable. But the 'quality' again becomes problematic when that also comes under the parameters of subjectivity and individual perception.

Nature generates order through following what we call “natural laws” such as the laws of science –of physics, chemistry, and mathematics. Beauty arises in nature out of the simple, universal laws of science, just as the laws of science arise out of beauty in nature. Our perception and recognition of the laws of science are merely expressions of our ability to perceive beauty. This then, is the seminal relationship between beauty and science. (Bhargava and Chakrabarti 25)

Aesthetics of Fibonacci Series and Golden Ratio

The Golden Ratio is widely acclaimed as the final criterion to determine the 'ideal beauty'. Renowned Mathematicians namely Euclid and Pythagoras have developed the idea of Fibonacci Series and found that many beautiful things in nature have the same alignment that makes it beautiful. The alignment of sunflower, Nautilus Shell and spiral galaxies are examples of Fibonacci series. The ratio of two adjacent numbers in this series is equal to the Golden Ratio, i.e., 1.618 approximately. That is, the next number is always the sum of the preceding two numbers. Well received paintings of Michelangelo, Leonardo Da Vinci and the wonders in architecture; the Great Pyramid in Egypt and the Taj Mahal possess this Golden Proportion (28).

On the other hand many consider it as a myth. While drawing a glance to Literature the Golden Ratio has less to do in defining 'beauty' as it has different dimensions based on contexts, place, time, and mood and so on. Here I propose how some hitherto 'turn-offs' who can't claim a Divine Proportion, transform into 'beautifuls' in various contexts in Literature

and make the subject happy and alive. Such happiness may/may not satisfy the rules of aesthetic pleasure.

I am not going to define beauty or reconstruct the criteria of beauty rather I would analyse three instances from my primary texts include *Life of Pi* by Ian Martel, *Room*, a film by Lenny Abrahamson (an adaptation of Emma Donoghue's novel) and *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, and the focus would be on the following:

1. Richard Parker: In *Life of Pi*, Richard Parker retains the beauty of Pi's life.
2. Room: Room portrays how the single room becomes the world of Jack and how he finds beauty there. The outside world and so called beauties make fear in him.
3. Friday: For others Friday ugly but for Robinson Crusoe he becomes beautiful.

Fierce Beauty

Here it will be difficult to prove how Richard Parker can be the element of beauty in Pi's life. For that first I have to say that beauty has some connections with happiness. Normally the beautiful things make happiness in us. For example a beautiful flower, a beautiful song, a beautiful scenery etc. can be the cause of happiness or they help to generate happiness in our mind. Cody C. Delistraty says "looking at lovely things and people can improve quality of life" (*The Beauty-Happiness*). Let's listen to Pi's words: "It was Richard Parker who calmed me down. It is the irony of his story that the one who scared me witless to start with was the very same who brought me peace, purpose, I dare say even wholeness" (Martel 162). The fierce Bengal Tiger, not supposed to be tamed without being caged, becomes a cause of his very existence, often brings happiness in him and makes his life easier and beautiful. The term 'beautiful' can be cruel here, but the boy has learned to enjoy his 'Pacific time' with Richard Parker and the circumstances have made it possible.

But there's more to it. I will come clean. I will tell you a secret: a part of me was glad about Richard Parker. A part of me did not want Richard Parker to die at all, because if he died I would be left alone with despair, a foe even more formidable than a tiger. If I still had the will to live, it was thanks to Richard Parker. He kept me from thinking too much about my family and my tragic circumstances. He pushed me to go on living. I hated him for it, yet at the same time I was grateful. I am grateful. It's the plane truth: without Richard Parker, I wouldn't be alive today to tell you my story. (164)

Pi tries to find the beauty in Richard Parker and that makes him happy. "The position [of Richard Parker] looked silly but was no doubt very pleasant" (171). He adds, "What if I had ended up with a creature that looked silly or ugly, a tapir or an ostrich or a flock of turkeys? That would have been a more trying companionship in some ways" (175).

For Pi, first it was not just a necessity to stay away from Richard Parker in order to save his life. "But there was more to my dealings with him than strict necessity. I also spent hours observing him because it was a distraction. A tiger is a fascinating animal at any time, and all the more so when it is your sole companion" (191). He gets involved with the Tiger as his 'sole companion'. Later he realises that there is a bond has developed between both of them and he gives examples for that. At the end it is hard to be separated from Richard Parker: Pi explains, "I wept like a child. It was not because I was overcome at having survived my ordeal, though I was. Nor was it the presence of my brothers and sisters, though that too was

very moving. I was weeping because Richard Parker had left me so unceremoniously” (285).

Once the intensity of Pi's love towards Richard Parker comes out where he expresses it with heartfelt emotion, ““I love you!” The words burst out pure and unfettered, infinite. The fleeing flooded my chest. “Truly I do. I love you, Richard Parker. If I didn't have you now, I don't know what I would do. I don't think I would make it. No I wouldn't. I would die of hopelessness. Don't give up, Richard Parker, don't give up. I'll get you to land, I promise, I promise!””(236).

At the time of separation once again he sees him and still finds him beautiful.

I looked ahead to see how far I had to go. The glance gave me one of my last images of Richard Parker, for at that precise moment he jumped over me. I saw his body, so immeasurably vital, stretched in the air above me, a fleeting, furred rainbow. He landed in the water, his back legs splayed, his tail high, and from there, in a few hopes, he reached the beach. He went to the left, his paws gouging the wet sand, but changed his mind and spun around. He passed directly in front of me on his way to the right. He didn't look at me. He ran a hundred yards or so along the shore before turning in. his gait was clumsy and uncoordinated. He fell several times. At the edge of the single, he stopped. I was certain he would turn my way. He would look at me. He would flatten his ears. He would growl. In some such a way, he would conclude our relationship. He did nothing of the sort. He only looked fixedly into the jungle. Then Richard Parker, companion of my torment, awful, fierce thing that kept me alive, moved forward and disappeared forever from my life. (284-285)

Spatial beauty

Room portrays how the single room becomes the world of Jack and how he finds beauty there. The outside world and so called beauties make fear in him. We may not think that how a space becomes beautiful. But in the movie *Room* Jack is born and brought up in that small room (actually it is a shed). As soon as Jack and his mom have escaped from room, he starts to miss it. The very moment when he meets his ma outside, with the help of police, he asks her to go back to room to sleep in his bed. That's the only place he gets comfort. When Jack starts to live outside in his mom's house he tries to connect everything with his room and belongings there. He misses the bath in room. He enquires about it when they were taken to hospital just after the rescue operations. He helps his grandma in kitchen and says “I did before in room”, while smashing eggs and he adds “sometimes I miss it”. In another occasion Jack tells his mother that whether they can go back home. Mom feels it as a ridicule statement. Jack adds, “Just for a visit”, though he didn't mean it.

Likewise how the space where one inhabits for a long time becomes cosy and beautiful in *Room* the uneasy space in the ocean gradually becomes enjoyable in *Life of Pi* as well. An occasion where Pi exclaims about the Pacific and the space he has got as his own to understand it. His vision is extremely different from a normal human being who sees Pacific as a ferocious ocean. He tames not only the Royal Bengal Tiger but the Pacific too. “If you want to see wildlife, it is on foot, and quietly, that you must explore a forest. It is the same with sea. You must stroll through the Pacific at a walking pace, so to speak, to see the wealth and abundance that it holds” (176).

Along with Pi, Richard Parker also gets acquainted with the space he has got. “It occurred to me that with every passing day the lifeboat was resembling a zoo enclosure more and more: Richard Parker had his sheltered area for sleeping and resting, his food stash, his lookout and now his water hole” (188-189). Though Richard Parker is brought up caged in a zoo, he is not supposed to be calm and kind towards Pi. These qualities add beauty to Richard Parker and Pi is attracted to that aspect of Richard Parker and that makes him grateful to the tiger.

Elegance of the Eyesore

In Robinson Crusoe the terms used to refer the natives of the nearby islands as 'savages' or 'monsters'(Friday was one among them) and the definitions of these terms are not so pleasing. Friday doesn't possess a so called beauty. But Robinson Crusoe after twenty-five years of exile meets a human being and finds him beautiful when he becomes his slave.

He was a comely, handsome fellow, perfectly well made, with straight, strong limbs, not too large; tall, and well-shaped; and, as I reckon, about twenty-six years of age. He had a very good countenance, not a fierce and surly aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of a European in his countenance, too, especially when he smiled. His hair was long and black, not curled like wool; his forehead very high and large; and a great vivacity and sparkling sharpness in his eyes. The colour of his skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the Brazilians and Virginians, and other natives of America are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive-colour, that had in it something very agreeable, though not very easy to describe. His face was round and plump; his nose small, not flat, like the negroes; a very good mouth, thin lips, and his fine teeth well set, and as white as ivory (Defoe 327-328).

Though Friday is not beautiful Crusoe attributes beauty in him making comparisons with the physical appearance of Europeans. The post-colonial studies imply the master-slave relationship of Crusoe and Friday and Crusoe arrives at the conclusion that Friday is not ugly because he doesn't have all the characteristics of a Black.

Masaru Emoto's experiments with water crystals proves like any other 'quality', beauty also generates some positive waves in the surroundings. He has noticed the formation of beautiful crystals when water is kept against beautiful objects and fine music; when those are replaced with arrogant sounds and disloyal words written in a paper, the crystals become shapeless (Emoto 41). It's not the perfect combination of organs or the Golden Ratio defines beauty: on the other hand what feel it creates in one who experiences it. The fierce Richard Parker, The narrow room and the 'savage' Friday generates such beauty and pleasure in Pi's Jack's and Crusoe's lives respectively.

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The “Fairest” in *Fairy Tales* : Decoding the Feminine Beauty Ideals

Despite the increasing emphasis on female rights and women empowerment, there still exist certain obvious factors impacting women directly or indirectly. One such factor is the association of the word beauty with a woman. While this word association can be flattering most of the times, the pressure women face to give it a priority can be traumatic at some point in their lives. This thought forms the central element of this paper. To inquire into this issue the best possible means is the one that explore the mind of children- *Fairy Tales*. Every culture enriched with a fund of popular tales encompasses the core values and morals which are part of its indigenous background. From the very moment of birth a child is attached to a label either a 'boy or girl', which determines the roles that the child will be expected to fulfill. Every instant of that child's life is bombarded with numerous agents- parents, siblings, peers, school, T.V, books - to guide him/her in fulfilling her/his 'appropriate' gender roles. However, much of what is coined as 'appropriate' gender role behavior is confounded with sexist stereotypes. These stereotypes blur the perception between what is real and what some would like reality to be.

Children learn the values and beliefs of their culture through the transmission of stories and tales. Children's literature, more specifically fairytales, is tagged with messages that assemble together to shape their future life. Popular messages in children's literature include: emphasis on physical beauty; reinforcement of traditional gender roles; and, gender strain on the ability to engage in a variety of activities. The messages portrayed in children's literature are inter-connected and simultaneously may hinder their self-esteem, and may limit their perception of their own abilities in life- “their identity and self-esteem could be affected by negative portrayals of their gender” (Gooden and Gooden 89). With all this in perspective, the paper has as its focal point how fairy tales are embedded with prominence on the physical beauty- stressing upon the fair complexion as part of good female characters, in a way bonding itself to the expected stereotypical female role. Children's self-image is affected by the ways in which they see themselves in texts both verbal and visual, and that fairy tales play an important role in shaping self image and the belief-system of children. The images found in fairy tales, therefore, have particular importance for children of color in relation to the internalization of White privileging. The discussions on the emphasis of physical feminine beauty infiltrates to the concept of fair colour and its significance in fairy tales.

From the beginning stage of their life itself children are inculcated with the importance of physical beauty as part of building up the feminine beauty ideals. A quote from one of the oldest ever feminist philosophy works, Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, published in the year 1792, states: “*Taught from infancy that beauty is woman's scepter, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison*” asserts the scope of the topic.

The focus on sexist stereotypes towards females in children's literature has increased since the 1970's (Code191). There is a growing field of research focusing on examining and

challenging the 'traditional' roles, characteristics, and idealistic physical appearance that females have portrayed in literature. Fairy tales, for example, have been revised by authors such as Jack Zipes (1986) in his book, "Don't Bet on The Prince" and more recently Barbara G. Walker (1996) in her book "Feminist Fairy Tales". The long traditional concept of a beautiful princess and a handsome prince in these tales is still in vogue, the twist may come when the princess saves the prince or simply decides to leave him behind and actively fulfill her own dreams of becoming a warrior. The paper centers on the hypothesis that *Fairy Tales* have been best seen to be transporters of culture and are epitomizers of feminine beauty manifested as the markers of physical attractiveness. Emphasizing on woman's passivity and beauty, these tales are nothing but gendered narratives that legitimize and support the dominant gender system. The feminine beauty ideal- the socially constructed notion that physical attractiveness is one of women's most important assets that all women strive to achieve and maintain- is of particular interest to feminist scholars. The oppressive interest imposed by the patriarchal system objectifies values and subordinates women. *The Grimm's Fairy Tales* in its translated version served as material for this study. It contains 209 stories of which few have been selected to limit the focus of this paper. The *Fairy Tales* titled after the female protagonists such as *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, *The Beauty and the Beast* and *Sleeping Beauty* are chosen for study to limit the focus but the finding is found to be applicable fairytales as a whole. These tales are perceived in this paper as nothing, but relevant paradoxes of feminine beauty ideal which are superficial indicators of women empowerment evenwhile the patriarchal system embodies them as mostly dependent on men's resources. Each of these fairy tales, under discussion, will be deeply inquired to provide evidence to this. *Fairy Tales* are pin pointers to the insightful vision and the dynamic relationship between gender, power and culture. Asserting the cultural and social significance of beauty in the life of a woman has become part of one's identity itself and this assumes greater importance when literature for children is chosen as a means to induce this thought into young minds.

A slight review of literature associated to this topic is seen to help this venture. Through the lens of children's literature, history has shown itself to be predominantly male orientated. Although there has been an increase in the frequency of female characters there are still discrepancies in the way these female characters are being portrayed. Personality characteristics and the activities engaged by such females in children's literature is still predominantly stereotyped. Carol Adams and Rae Laurikietis (1976) explain the distinction between male and female sex roles through examples taken from children's books used widely in the classrooms. The adult roles for females include: mother, aunt, and grandmother, whereas the adult roles for males include: father, uncle, grandfather, postman, farmer, fisherman, shop or business owner, policeman, builder, bus driver, train driver, and railway porter (41). A clear difference can be seen with this example in the limited variety of roles played by women in these books compared to the vast majority of roles played by men. David A. Anderson and Mykol Hamilton (2005) revealed that fathers appeared in only about (47%) half as many scenes as mothers, of the 200 children's picture books (145). This may suggest that the degree to which females appear in children's literature varies with the role that they possess. Sexist stereotypes are also apparent when looking at personality characteristics exhibited by the characters in children's literature. Studies show that male characters were portrayed as predominantly masculine and exhibited few feminine traits and no male characters were classified as androgynous, whereas female characters were

portrayed as androgynous and as traditionally feminine (Witt 51). Female beauty is also an important factor in fairy tales, and seems to be a dominant theme. Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholtz suggest that "feminine beauty is a dominant theme and that tales with heavy emphases on feminine beauty are much more likely to have survived"(711). Gender stereotyping is also seen in books about mothers and fathers, and their attitudes towards children. Studies show that fathers were portrayed as unaffectionate and indolent when it came to feeding, carrying the babies, and talking with the children, whereas mothers made the most contact with the babies, did most of the feeding and expressed more emotion with their children (Anderson and Hamilton 145).

Fairy tales are important pieces of children's literature that have had a lasting impact on our society. The classic tales have been retold through many generations and nowadays have been transformed into major film productions treasured by not only children but by all ages. Fairy tales and folklore have captured women in "classical" female roles, such as the industrious housewife. Fairy tales can be taken to have strong underlying messages including; only good industrious girls will be beautiful, whereas those who are not industrious are ugly and lazy and, beauty is rewarded and lack of beauty is punishable (Lori Baker-Sperry and Liz Grauerholz, 2003). Fairy tales portray a female's beauty as the most important aspect of a woman and sends the message that all women should strive to achieve and maintain physical beauty. Feminine beauty is not the only 'hidden message' contained in the pages of fairy tales, Adams & Laurikietis (1976) reveal other possible underlying messages including: lovely maidens and princesses usually must wait passively for a prince to save them and change their lives, none of the females do anything worthwhile, happy endings are those where marriage was the outcome, men are independent and brave and do all the brainwork, and, the most important decision a woman can make is who her future husband will be. The trivialization of the gender roles females present in children's literature has been shown to increase sexist beliefs and behaviors (Diekman & Murmen 373).

The title of some of these tales centered around the chief female protagonists itself serves as embodiments of embedded beauty. It is equally amazing that beauty is associated with the heroines of these tales, left behind the fact that the heroes though handsome stand only in second position to the heroines. The physical appearance of the heroine is bestowed within the concept of beauty. Analysis of the above cited fairy tales reveals that the readers have a beautiful visual imagery of beautiful princess and do not take efforts even to think of Cinderella in her tattered clothes. Beauty or the pursuit of beauty, occupies a central role in many women's lives, especially relatively affluent Euro-American women who have the resources, time, and energy to expend on acquired beauty. Bordo argued that the beauty regimes of diet, makeup, and dress are "central organizing principles of time and space in the day of many women"(14). It remains one of the major means by which adolescent girls and women gain social status and self-esteem. As noted by Freedman (1986), "women are aware that beauty counts heavily with men and they therefore work hard to achieve it."

The social importance of the feminine beauty ideal lies in its ability to sustain and to reproduce gender inequality. The feminine beauty ideal can be seen as a normative means of social control whereby social control is accomplished through the internalization of values and norms that serve to restrict women's lives (Fox 1977). In this way, women internalize norms and adopt behaviors that reflect and reinforce their relative powerlessness, making external forces less necessary. Value constructs such as "nice girl" or "feminine beauty"

operates as normative restrictions by limiting women's personal freedom and laying the ground for the circumscription of women's potential for power and control in the world. Affirming this, Anne Theriault has noted:

Fairy tales are women's tales. They're bent-backed crones' tales, sly gossips' tales, work-worn mothers' tales and old wives' tales. They're stories shared, repeated and elaborated on over mindless women's work like spinning or mending or shucking corn. These stories are the voices of those who were, within a social and cultural context, so often voiceless; they're women's whispered desires and fears, neatly wrapped up in fantastical narratives filled with sex, violence and humour. Fairy tales speak of the things that women most hoped for – a prince, a castle, a happy ending – and those that they were most afraid of – that their children would be taken from them, that men would hurt them or take advantage of them, that their family wouldn't be provided for. (*The Toast* 26 May 2014)

Atkins (2004) states that fairy tale heroines like Snow White, Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty are "schooled through their gender constructions, must participate in patriarchal society" because their "happiness depends on conformity to [its] rule" (Zipes 70). Atkins further asserts that these fairy tale heroines are left with no choice as they have "no right to challenge their roles as idealized women". There are fairy tale females who do not fit into the passive, obedient category and as these female characters fail to conform (Zipes 70), they are typecast as wicked women. These are the wicked female antagonists that we see in fairy tales—mothers, step-mothers, stepsiblings, and evil witches. These women are punished at the end of the tales for their contravention against the "good-girl heroines" (Atkins, 2004), usually during, immediately after or before the wedding of the heroine princess. This, according to Atkins (2004) makes it clear to readers of fairy tales that the choice is simple—conform to the norms of patriarchal society or suffer the consequences. Atkins (2004) further states that "conformity is the key to the kingdom" where women must submit themselves to the patriarchal rule, because they are compelled to do so (Rowe, 1979; Atkins 2004). According to Rowe (1979), fairy tales "perpetuate the patriarchal status quo by making female subordination seem a romantically desirable, indeed an inescapable fate" (254).

It is interesting to analyze the beginnings of each of these stories. All of them bear a resemblance as to how the physical beauty is casted important and the concerns of beauty as a priority among women. In *Snow White* the story begins like:

Once upon a time, long, long ago a king and queen ruled over a distant land. The queen was kind and lovely and all the people of the realm adored her. The only sadness in the queen's life was that she wished for a child but did not have one.

Coming to *Cindrella*, the heroine's pitiful plight is depicted but here to concern over physical beauty is given vent to as the stepmother of Cinderella appears with her two daughters:

Now began a bad time for the poor step-child. Is the stupid goose to sit in the parlor with us, they said. He who wants to eat bread must earn it. Out with the kitchen-wench. They took her pretty clothes away from her, put an old grey bed gown on her, and gave her wooden shoes.

The concern of woman over her physical attractiveness as well as how enhances and destroys the capable woman finds its illustration in *Snow White*:

Soon after, the king married a new woman who was beautiful, but as well proud and cruel. She had studied dark magic and owned a magic mirror, of which she would daily ask,

Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?

The routine question addressed by the queen to the magical mirror and its answer sounds deep concerns of feminist perspective. In no time we come across a queen who is said to be kind and well liked by people transformed into a cruel one and it is notable that this cruelty diminishes her beauty. Every woman's pride over her beauty and the happiness exercised over this fact gets pictured in this story and the queen acts as a symbolic representative of it.

One morning when the queen asked, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?" she was shocked when it answered: You, my queen, are fair; it is true. But Snow White is even fairer than you.

It is equally an enlightening fact that the dwarfs did not harm snow white and left her sleeping as they realized how beautiful she was:

They fetched their seven candles and shone the light on Snow White. "Oh good heaven!" they cried. "This child is beautiful!" They were so happy that they did not wake her up, but let her continue to sleep in the bed. The next morning Snow White woke up, and when she saw the seven dwarves she was frightened. But they were friendly and asked, "What is your name?" "My name is Snow White," she answered.

Rapunzel grew into the most beautiful child under the sun. When she was twelve years old, the enchantress shut her into a tower, which lay in a forest, and had neither stairs nor door, but quite at the top was a little window.

This is the introductory remark given to Rapunzel's beauty. The reason why she was imprisoned at the age of twelve also inspires the thought of her beauty and the growing womanhood as chief concern. The anxiety exercised by the enchantress is explicit from the thought that her growing beauty can attract men towards her. Thus beauty is personified as both strength and weakness of a woman. The long hair also becomes symbol of physical attractiveness the prince feels for Rapunzel.

Rapunzel had magnificent long hair, fine as spun gold, and when she heard the voice of the enchantress she unfastened her braided tresses, wound them round one of the hooks of the window above, and then the hair fell twenty ells down, and the enchantress climbed up by it.

The traditional concept of woman as one to look after the household is well brought in the stories of *Cinderella* and *Snow White*. One lesson fairy tale femininity teaches us about gender roles, is that women "exist for others" (Kohlenschlag, 1981). The fairy tale heroine waits in "self-redemptive silence" (Bottigheimer, 1986) for the arrival of the one "who will make her life meaningful and fulfilled" (Kohlenschlage, 1981). It is through this course that an "idealized perfect woman" forms (Stone, 1985) with "classic qualities—beauty, patience, submissiveness, charm, repose, productivity and reproductive potential" (Atkins, 2004). In *Cinderella*, the very introduction of the heroine provides evidence to this fact:

Just look at the proud princess, how decked out she is, they cried, and laughed, and led her into the kitchen. There she had to do hard work from morning till night, get up before daybreak, carry water, light fires, cook and wash.

In *Snow White*, the context is slightly altered as she seeks shelter in the house of the Dwarfs and in return for which she commits herself to taking care of their household:

The dwarves spoke with each other for awhile and then said, "If you will keep house for us, and cook, make beds, wash, sew, and knit, and keep everything clean and orderly, then you can stay with us, and you shall have everything that you want."

"Yes," said Snow White, "with all my heart." For Snow White greatly enjoyed keeping a tidy home.

The stereotyping of women in this story comes when Rapunzel is deserted by the enchantress in the state of her pregnancy and the idea of woman as a child rearer is brought out.

At length came to the desert where Rapunzel, with the twins to which she had given birth, a boy and a girl, lived in wretchedness. He heard a voice, and it seemed so familiar to him that he went towards it, and when he approached, Rapunzel knew him and fell on his neck and wept. Two of her tears wetted his eyes and they grew clear again, and he could see with them as before. He led her to his kingdom where he was joyfully received, and they lived for a long time afterwards, happy and contented.

Citing few instances from these stories bring out how beauty marks the central component of fairy tales. It is around them that the lives of all the other characters are based. According to Atkins (2004), numerous scholars have "written widely on the ways in which fairy tales reinforce traditional notions of femininity". The heroine princesses in fairy tales almost always exhibit traits of passivity and extreme patience; and for good reason. When heroines in fairy tales adhere to their passivity, and roles as pretty faces, they are rewarded (Gauntlet, 2002; Stone 1985), usually by their marriage to a prince. The sacrifice, solemnity, and dependence (Rowe, 1979; Zipes, 1983) of these fairy tale princesses "signify their virtue and make them attractive upon the appearance of Prince Charming" (Atkins, 2004) and the moral message embedded in fairy tales for young females is clear: be a good girl, and thou shall live happily ever after.

Notable fairy tale heroines like *Cinderella*, *Snow White*, and *Sleeping Beauty* are well aware of this life lesson as they had also patiently waited for their handsome prince to come along to set their lives in motion after marriage (Tatar, 1986; Atkins, 2004; Bottigheimer, 1986). In *Sleeping Beauty*, a passage which reinforces this fact is: "Each of us the child may bless with a single gift. No more, no less. Little princess, my gift shall be the gift of beauty." Flora (*Sleeping Beauty*, 1959). The very first gift bestowed upon *Sleeping Beauty* in the titular tale, is the gift of beauty, above all else. The role of beauty is implicitly crucial in this study; as it is one of the most noticeable of the stereotypes found in fairy tales. It is therefore important to further explore the feminine beauty ideal in fairy tales, to determine if men also place as much significance on it as women do.

Beauty in fairy tale is often used as a means to upgrade the social status of women and brought forward as "shock effect", whereby the prince, upon encountering the beauty princess is "rendered mute or paralyzed by her loveliness", which according to Luthi (1984) spellbinds and captivates sans eroticism and sensuality. The element of beauty in fairy tales also serves as a catalyst for the progression of the story. Beauty is often "the driving force in fairy tale plots" (Comtois, 1995), as it is often the astounding beauty of the heroines that set the plot in motion. For example, it was the radiant beauty of Cinderella that advances the story as she captures the attention of the prince who eventually marries her and upgrades her social status. It is almost unheard of to find a princess or heroine who is not of amazing physical beauty, who attracts the love and attention of her saviour prince, which leads Luthi (1984) to conclude that the object of magnificence is the heroine princess and it is her beauty and radiance that is usually the catalyst for the prince to pursue her. The heroine's extraordinary beauty has also been noted to be the main cause of conflict (Christians, 2009), often caused by the older female character who deems the young, radiant heroine as a threat.

Fairy tales can be seen as an involuntary means of creating sexist stereotypes evolved out through the world of physical attractiveness and the implications of this literature involving female gender role expectations. The thought has been evolved out through the theoretical lens of feminist perspective- socialist feminism, which focuses on traditional gender roles in the family structure and the capitalistic and patriarchy system in which we live, as key to women's inferior positions (Van Der Veen, 2001; Ritzer and Goodman, 2004). Although the focus of this paper concentrates on female characters in specific fairytales chosen for the convenience of study, it is equally applicable to all fairytales at large and to the stereotypes produced by images and stories in children's literature. Thus, it is in the structuring of society that has caused the 'traditional' stereotypes that have trapped women (and men) to remain central themes in children's literature for so many generations, and it is within the structuring of society where the solutions will reside. Socialist feminism "sees oppression as having psychological and sociological roots where the female is seen as a victim of the corruption of a society, accompanies class distinctions" (Bromberg 1997).

Concluding, it can be stated that fairy tales depicts a stereotypical heroine - a woman with good domestic skills, passivity, and a pretty face. It therefore conveys the moral that the duty of every woman in the real world is to strive to achieve such virtuous traits, physical beauty being the foremost as portrayed by the female role models of fairy tale land in order to snag a mate as their fairy tale counterparts have done. As Kay Stone (1985) in 'The Misuse of Enchantment' says: "Thus the message of the *Cinderella* that seems most relevant for modern girls and women concerns the rewards one is supposed to receive for being pretty, polite, and passive; the primary reward, of course, is marriage, and marriage not just to anyone but to a 'prince'." Often in these tales, beautiful and pretty are adjectives used to refer to young woman whereas such words are not of common usage in connection with middle aged or old woman wherein 'handsome' is seen linked to men of all age groups. Also fair is a word associated with beautiful, thereby associating it with the white or a more privileged class of women. All these tales makes it evident that physical attractiveness marks a woman's world helping her upgrade her status through marriage and unknowingly ingrained in it is the thought that woman is ever dependent on man. These fairy tales fine tune a child's mind to the traditional stereotyped woman irrespective of the advancement woman claims to have achieved in the present scenario.

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The Beauty of Self-Annihilation A Literary Study of Suicide

Abstract

“Dying is an art, Like everything else

I do it Exceptionally well” – Sylvia Plath

Never underestimate the power of Human mind. It can make you go towards any extreme conditions. The ultimate beauty of the mind is it can opt for its self-annihilation and even finds pleasure in it, as it happens in the cases of Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf. The recent one is Hannah Baker, the protagonist of James Asher's novel '13 Reasons Why'. When creativity and emotivity goes very wild, most of us fail to manage the imbalance and maintain the phase of coordination. Suicide or Self-destruction demands much determination and courage than all the world can do for facing the problems and harsh realities of the life. This paper throws light upon the beauty of self-annihilation or suicide in relation with the aforementioned contexts, texts and how beautifully it was portrayed as an art form in literature.

Keywords : Self-annihilation, Human rights, Beauty of Mind, Wilderness etc.

'A thing of beauty is joy forever' says John Keats. He adds 'beauty is truth, truth beauty that is all ye need to know'. Beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. We can cull out beauty from anything in this world. But beauty lies naturally in certain aspects of life. Like a mother's love, fragrance of a flower and a child's smile, we can find a similarity in the aforementioned things, all are natural and are not induced and are fake and artificial, likewise the emotions, likes and dislikes, instincts are also natural for a human.

When a man or woman who wants to destroy one's self, does it come naturally from within, or they decide so because, they are forced by the outer and external factors of the world is a million-dollar question. Why people attempt to end their life? Because of problems in life, lack of friendship, love, merriment, attention, freedom, money or recognition in life, most of the answers belong to the category 'lack of...' Why is it so? If you are lacking something then why can't you gain it? If it can't be gained, then why worry so? This 'lack of...' kind of thinking is prone among the youngsters. Life is not a bed of roses as well as a path full of thorns. We all have to walk the path of life till the end, but just think when you get too bored even after changing the paths, don't you give it a thought, to quit walking? Is that all people who commit suicide think?

“From that pale mist, Ghost swore to priest; There sits no higher court, Than man's red heart”, says Sylvia Plath in her poem 'Dialogue Between Ghost and Priest'. There may be many reasons for suicide, and many ways to commit suicide. I have conducted a questionnaire with my classmates. The questions are:

1. If you think of suicide, when (at what age) will you go for it?
2. What will be the reason for it?

3. Whether it is because of a single reason or multiple reasons?
4. Does it belong to one of the following categories: Relationships (Love, Friendship, LGBT) Money (Finance, debt) etc.
5. If you are going to change your motive of committing suicide, who/what will be the reason for it?
6. What is your perception about suicide?
7. Do you think suicide will put end to your problems?
8. Whether the external factors like society or friendship force you to suicide or the intention of suicide comes from you, i.e. you want to exclude all other external factors from you.
9. If you decide so, what means will you choose:
(Using a Weapon/Knife/Hanging/Drowning/Sleeping Pills/Poison etc)

The beauty of self-annihilation comes from the decision of the suiciders. Based on what stands they have decided to commit suicide is that we have to understand, after going through much struggles & rough times, they might have decided to do so. A compilation of the answers obtained from the questionnaire gives us an insight about understanding the topic.

| Q.no | Male A | Female B | Male C | Female D | Female E | Male F |
|------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 1 | Above 60 | N/A | N/A | Above 40 | N/A | N/A |
| 2 | Illness | People | Life | Selflessness | Escapism | Depression |
| 3 | Multiple | Multiple | Single | Multiple | Multiple | Multiple |
| 4 | No | No | Few | Yes | Yes | Both |
| 5 | Family | No one | Self | Mother | Parents | Children |
| 6 | Fulfillment of Life | Spineless Coward act | Not a crime | Ultimate achievement | Bravest deed | Reasonable decision |
| 7 | No | No | Yes | No | No | No |
| 8 | Inside | Both | Society | Inside | Both | External |
| 9 | Sleeping Pills | Sleeping Pills | Sleeping Pills | Sleeping Pills | Sleeping Pills | Sleeping Pills |

This gives us the inferences such as No Person is ready to die at an early age, and reason for suicide differs from person to person. There are multiple factors affecting a suicider. Money and Relationships are the reason for most of the problems. While some disdain it, most of the people regard suicide in high esteem. The stimuli come from both the internal self and external factors like society. Irrespective of age and gender all chose Sleeping Pills, because nobody wants to face death courageously. There are a few exceptions that one wants to close the eyes and walk in a highway to check the possibility or cut the wrist to experience the slow pace of death with pain and pleasure in swings.

It is a belief in Tamil Nadu that the persons who commit by drowning into wells and those

who are not given proper funeral and burial after committing suicide will turn into ghosts known as 'Kaalvaaripei' which are known for their mischievous activities and causing the death of the people who pass by the place of their death. This superstitious belief too possesses some insight that people are left uncared after their death. This reminds us the famous line of Shakespeare from 'Julius Caesar', “The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones”

It is an unestablished fact that creativity and tendency to commit suicide is directly proportional. Most of the people who commit suicide are those who couldn't maintain off the balance between their critical faculty and creative faculty. It is a popular misbelief that the persons who convert the pain within them into writings will drain them out, thus becomes normal. But the truth is, the writings aggravates the pain and negativity in them. For instance, we can take the case of Sylvia Plath. Her huge amount of investment in creative writing may have contributed specifically to her sensitivity and thus she ended up in depression. This notion of investment, and several other psycho-economic principles, have been used in the creativity literature to understand how and why creative persons fulfill their potentials. Suicide is not just temperamental but at least partly the result of development and experience which is the investments themselves.

Many creative persons have committed suicide, particularly poets. Marindale (1972) examined many English and French poets, and he found that approximately one out of seven had psychopathologies, attempted suicide as one of the indicators. In many ways Plath's background was full of creativity and creative persons.

“She experienced the early loss of one parent, which is again a common factor among creative persons. She had many extra-curricular activities such as summer camps, violin lessons, basketball, sailing, scouting, dancing and painting. She was apparently open minded, with interests in hypnosis and parapsychological phenomena. Like other creative persons, there was an immersion and devotion to writing from an early age” (SACTSP ; p.5)

She wrote 'Edge' Poem, which paints the image of a woman and two children in death. The poem is filled with many events of her final days. She made it ready for publication, then tightly closed and bolted the room where her children are sleeping, filling the gaps with clothes and tapes, and turned on the microwave oven and placed her head in it and when she ended her life herself, the time is 4 am. This happened in February 11, 1963 (54 years ago) Her life experience was battling simultaneously between the turmoil of mental depression, agony as well as the scorching fire of depravity that lies deep inside her soul. Her poetry is words that busted out as sparks, roasted flesh pieces from that inner fire. The interchangeability of her self between existence and death is the outcome of her poetry.

“The woman is perfected. Her dead

Body wears the smile of accomplishment

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent

She has folded

Them back into her body as petals” – Edge; Sylvia Plath

Her poetry deals with the oxymoronic relationship between her and her 'self', in

multifaceted perspectives. This kind of poetry served as a kind of consolation for her. Thus, these poets don't take readers into consideration and reflect their experiences and their results, complex imageries. Instead, here the readers have to fix themselves into that complex positions and try to decipher the screams of the poets. Mental disorderliness and its scent of hospitalisation and treatment, the aftermath of these experiences and its dependence like too personal emotions are laid down in these poetry by Plath without any hesitation.

S. Anitha was a 17-year-old student from Tamil Nadu. She secured 1176/1200 in the 12th standard exams in the Tamil Nadu State Board. This would have secured her a medical college seat, if the state board marks have been considered for admission. On September 1, 2017 she committed suicide by hanging, nine days after the supreme court verdict. Her death created a major controversy and she has become a cause celebre as a victim of the system. What made that young teenage girl to take a bold step? When you are denied of your rights, there the suffering is fatal. When she couldn't follow her dream of becoming a doctor, she thought what is in life if one cannot achieve one's dream? In her point of view her decision is right. We are living in the 21st century, yet there are people who only dream of education. Among such people, anitha tried to become a model for others by achieving, but politics of the state and the centre has made a play in her life and made her to opt for a course, which no one can deter joining from. The large-scale protests after her suicide #justiceforanitha led to the Supreme Court of India to ask the Tamil Nadu Government to control the protests. Actor Rajinikanth said, "My heart goes out to her for all the pain and agony she would have undergone before taking this drastic step"

Rohith Chakravarti Vemula was an Indian PhD student at the university of Hyderabad and author of the book 'Caste is not a Rumour'. He was a student activist of the Ambedkar Students' Association who committed suicide by hanging on 17 January 2016. His fellowship was stopped after he started raising issue over the death penalty of Yakub Menon, a convicted terrorist involved in the Bombay Bombings. His Suicide note said, "The value of a man was reduced to his immediate identity and nearest possibility. To a vote, a number, a thing. Never was a man treated as a mind. As a glorious thing made up of stardust". But his suicide was not like anitha's because he was matured and influenced by many philosophies and concepts, whereas anitha was stimulated by mere emotional trauma.

The Blue Whale Game is a 21st century social network phenomenon exists in several countries in 2016. The game reportedly consists of a series of tasks assigned to players by admins over a 50-day-period, with the final challenge requiring the player to commit suicide. It came into limelight due to a magazine article about 'F57' VKontatke Russian Group. The name origin is uncertain, yet people say it is believed to be a reference to an act carried out by blue whales, who appear to beach themselves on purpose causing them to die. The beauty of the game is it raises the self-confidence of the participant in unnatural ways and in unmeasurable amounts which heights that even to attempt suicide. The tasks range from watch a horror movie alone at 2 pm, cut your hand, write F57 with blood and the end is to kill oneself. Indian Internet watchdog Centre for Internet and Society accused the government for creating a moral panic. The Supreme Court asked the Indian Central Government to ban the game, following which the government responded that since Blue Whale wasn't an application, it couldn't be banned.

The Government of India classifies a death as suicide if it meets the criteria. It is an unnatural death, intent to die, originated within the person. There is a reason for the person to

end one's life, which may have been specified in a suicide note or unspecified. If these criteria are not met, the death may be classified as death because of illness, murder or in another statistical. In India and America, suicide is a crime, punishable offence. In some western parts of the world, suicide has been decriminalized, yet it is stigmatized and discouraged.

Indian Government has decided to decriminalize 'attempt to suicide' by deleting section 309 of the Indian Penal Code from the statute book, with an open trial, a fine or imprisonment extending to one year. This is a welcomeable act. Actually, what people do is adding fuel to the fire, because the suicider is already hurt and why to stir up and torment the accused in the name of justice. It is his/her life. Doesn't he/she have the right to end it? In one way or the other this is an indirect hindrance of human rights. Every human has the right to do anything with his life, without disturbing others.

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Animal Beauty, Indian Perspectives : An Analysis

Today, beauty is a concept that encompasses a multitude of meanings. From the rainbow to the colourful neon lamps; from the sight of the vast oceanic waters and marine life, to the architectural splendour of cities; from the serenity of the wild to an amalgam of people and festivities; from beauty products to plastic surgeries and photo editing software; everything coalesces into the idea of beauty. Being so vast and diverse in meaning, the term has generated considerable interest in the academia across a number of disciplines over the years. It has also been the topic of discussion in a number of works. Naomi Wolfe, in her *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are Used Against Women*, challenged the 'myth of beauty' down the ages and how it was used to oppress women. She also attacked the beauty industry and its advertisements that caused a destructive obsession with beauty in women. Umberto Eco, the Italian writer and critic in his *History of Beauty* explored the nature, the meaning, and the very history of the idea of beauty in Western culture with examples of sublime paintings, sculpture and quotations from writers and philosophers. Alice Walker, by introducing the concept of 'colorism' in her essay, "If the present looks like the past, what does the future look like?" addressed the issue of racism and colour discrimination that prevailed in Afro-American societies for the first time. Today, a number of works address and challenge the myriad representations of beauty. However, very few deal with the influence of beauty in our day-to-day interactions with other species and how it drastically alters lives for them.

In India, animals have often occupied a unique position in epics, myths, folklores and legends. Indian cultural history is replete with an elephant God, Ganesh and numerous animal avatars pertaining to specific Gods and Goddesses. The epic Mahabharata even depicts Yamraj, the God of death as a faithful dog that follows Yudhistir in his final earthly journey in order to test his sense of righteousness. Animals have also been part of legends, where their loyalty has even saved the lives of kings. The legend of Chetak, the horse of Rana Pratap, the king of Mewar, is still reiterated today. However, despite a rich cultural history, captive and domestic animals continue to suffer in India, mostly to satiate the human ideals of beauty.

Dogs have always been referred to as 'man's best friend' and were the first to be tamed by man, even before cows, goats or even cats. According to Theodore Bhaskaran, many paintings of ancient India reveal that dogs were used for hunting by humans in the past. According to him, dogs were mostly used as working animals; the use of dogs as companion animals was a relatively recent concept in India. In his book, *The Book of Indian Dogs*, Bhaskaran identifies more than 20 breeds of dogs, which are native to India. He classifies them into 'working dogs', 'companion dogs' and 'hounds'. Among the working dogs, Bakharwal, Himalayan Mastiff, Jonangi, Kombai and Sindhi are mentioned, while Lhasa Apso, Tibetan Spaniel and Tibetan Terrier are classified under the category of 'companion dogs'. The 'hounds' identified by Bhaskaran include the Rajapalayam, Chippiparai, Kanni, Rampur Hound and others. These dogs were also exported to Rome and Egypt and were

much prized around the world. However, today Indian dog breeds are seldom seen as an option by potential dog owners. With the arrival and rise in the number of purebred dogs in the market, the Indian dogs were forced to switch places with them and were removed to the streets. However, most pet owners are seldom aware of the fact that the unlike their foreign counterparts, the Indian dog breeds are more disease resistant and thrive well in the Indian climate.

The major reason attributed to this change is a shift in the beauty perspective among many Indians. Most pet owners argue that the Indian breeds do not carry the beauty or gait of a foreign dog such as a Pug, or Labrador or a German shepherd. The skinny, less furry appearance of the Indian dog puts off most buyers. Instead, they are more attracted to the furrer and hence seemingly 'energetic' foreign dog breeds. Even in animal shelters, people are quick to buy foreign breed dogs, while the Indian dogs are left behind.

Movies and advertisements also have played significant roles in establishing and normalising this trend. A look into most films today would confirm that the dogs in the movies are all foreign breeds, The Indian dogs that in case find a place in the movie, are mostly represented as stray dogs, true to their present condition. A typical example of this can be found in the old Hutch advertisement which premiered a Pug, leading to a rise in the number of pug buyers. Similarly, many Bollywood and Malayalam films have portrayed German shepherds frequently. In fact most ads today feature breeds such as the Labrador and the Golden Retriever. Also, with the increasing viewership of English films, especially Hollywood films the import of expensive breeds such as the Siberian husky, Beagles, Saint Bernard and Poodle have increased. These dogs which mostly thrive in cold climates are bought at exorbitant rates and later forced to adapt to the tropical climate of India. This causes them to suffer from numerous health problems, due to which they are later abandoned by the very owners who bought them. They end up in shelter homes, where even though they are cared for, they continue to suffer owing to the climatic condition and lack of immunity to diseases. Even in homes where the owners can afford to keep the dogs in Air conditioned rooms, they are exposed to the elementals during their regular morning and evening walks. Thus, the rise in demand for foreign dog breeds has caused misery to both Indian and foreign dogs.

Sadly, dogs aren't the only species who suffer due to this skewed perception of beauty; the elephant, the largest of land mammals is also a silent victim. Elephants have long been tamed and used in India for numerous purposes. It is often seen as a symbol of beauty and auspiciousness to have elephants in temple festivals. Specifically in southern India, elephants are used in Temple gatherings where they carry idols, dressed in all finery and in chains. They are part of every temple procession where their arrival is marked by traditional drums and beats. Elephants are decked up in finery in order to please the human eye. More than the custom, it is the spectacle of seeing an elephant decorated in this manner that arouses the curiosity and interest of the crowd. Apart from this, our flawed sense of beauty compels us to view the male elephant as more beautiful than the female elephant. Female elephants mostly wile away their time in temple grounds in chains and are only used when male tuckers are unavailable. Elephants are silent beings that are sensitive to loud noises, yet are made to stand amid drums and the cheering of the crowd. They are also subject to inhuman torture by mahouts and remain chained forever, causing them to frequently have skin problems and wounds. They also lack sufficient exercise and are kept in small congested spaces. They live

the life of zoo animals, with no freedom to move about. According to Chitra Iyer, the Founder and Trustee of Society for Elephant Welfare (SEW) an NGO organization that looks into the welfare of Elephants,

“People are so used to seeing elephants walking around on hobbled feet in heavy chains, that it doesn't seem odd or out of the ordinary to them! They accept it as the norm. Most people are not aware of the elephant's suffering. They just enjoy the spectacle of a bejewelled elephant paraded in the temple grounds and marvel at its beauty and majesty and are in fact so proud of this part of their "tradition" and "culture"! For the owners, the contractors (middlemen) and the temple administration, it is purely business - a means to an end. The taller and more handsome the elephant, the better for their pockets. The mahouts and the veterinarians fit in somewhere in all this cultural camaraderie. The poor elephant suffers for the entire duration of its captive life.”

She also adds that,

“The practice of parading elephants in temples or of using elephants in temple rituals is not a part of Hindu tradition or Indian culture as they claim. None of the Hindu religious texts of Tantra (concerning religious rituals) talk about elephants being a part of the Hindu rituals in temples. There really is no middle path. If we really care and if the elephants must be saved from this terrible life, we must stop using elephants in temples, circuses, timber logging, etc.”

Her organization is one that strives to raise awareness among people concerning the problems of elephants through talks, classes and film viewing in educational institutions.

The use of elephants in festivities is not restricted to South India. Elephants are also used in northern India, especially in Rajasthan. Rajasthan's famous Elephant festival was a major event that attracted crowds, including foreigners. It was often held in the month of March, on the eve of Holi. The festival included large processions of elephants that were paraded in colourful dresses. The female elephants were made to wear anklets and other jewellery. All of the elephants were painted with bright colours and designs on their bodies. Most of these chemicals later affected their health. The elephants were also made to play Polo and tug-of-war with humans. The festival clearly exhibited an anthropomorphic misconception pertaining to the beauty of elephants. Forcing female elephants to wear jewellery such as anklets and headdresses is indicative of the way human stereotypical concepts of beauty in women are even extended to the female pachyderms. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and the Animal Welfare Board jointly initiated the decision to ban the event in 2011 and the event has not been conducted ever since. The timely interventions of these organizations saved many elephants from further torture.

Apart from elephants, camels are also used as part of festivities. The Bikaner Camel Fair is more about the visual spectacle than the trade. Camels are decorated with coats and colourful ornaments to gain the attention of prospective buyers. Another event is the Pushkar mela, where Camels are also painted with colours akin to the elephants in the banned Elephant festival.

A major reason for the aforementioned problems is clearly a lack of awareness. People are so accustomed to cruelty that they fail to realise its cruelty at all. It all starts with school; we love an era where we are taught that humans come first followed by animals. Once everyone understands that there are no animals but only species including us, then there will be an equal share of concern.

In the light of this situation, Lori Gruen's concept of “entangled empathy” is highly relevant. In her book, *Entangled Empathy: An Alternative Ethic for Our Relationships with Animals*, she argues for a shift from a 'sympathetic' approach towards animals to an 'empathetic' one. According to her, sympathy is rendered to someone or something that has experienced an unpleasant situation. It is a temporary solution and mostly creates the dichotomy of a hero and victim, where the sympathizer acts as a saviour to the victim. In such a situation, the fact that the same 'hero' is indirectly responsible for the plight of the victim often goes unnoticed. She also claims that the sympathizer feels little or no emotion towards the condition of the sympathized. It is in the light of this that she argues for a more empathetic approach towards animals. According to her an attitude of 'entangled empathy' can be useful in this regard. She defines entangled empathy as a situation where “we are not just in relationships as selves with other, but our very selves are constituted by these relations.” She points out that what one needs to do when one is trying to empathise with “very different others is to understand as best as we can what the world sees, feels, smells, and looks like from their situated position.” (60)

Thus, developing an approach of 'entangled empathy' can be beneficial with regard to the present plight of animals in India. From seeing an elephant or a camel dressed in flashy ornaments as 'beautiful' to viewing the same from the possible perspective of the animal can foster an understanding of its plight. This can also encourage humankind to radically rethink their relationships with these animals. With a change in approach can come further positive developments such as reporting the ill treatment of animals to concerned authorities and boycotting existing events involving the misuse of animals.

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Beauty as a Trap and an Instrument of Racism in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison

Abstract

The connoisseurs of aesthetics hail beauty as a purely positive and pristine concept. But beauty can work as a trap by establishing a system of binaries that distinguishes the beautiful from the ugly ones. In such a system everything that moves away from the pre-conceived notions of beauty are judged to be ugly. Beauty can also act as an instrument of racism demarcating the coloured from the white and therefore acting as one's perennial source of sorrows and joys in a society that imbibes the evil notions of racism. The life of Pecola Breed Love seen through the eyes of young and then adult Claudia MacTeer unleashes the myriad ways through which beauty entraps an African-American girl who was conditioned by the society to pray for a pair of blue eyes to make her beautiful and therefore help her in gaining acceptability within her family and society.

*This paper explores the destructive capacity of beauty and the misuse of it by the dominant groups in a racist society. A close textual analysis of *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison is followed to bring out the subtle nuances of this perspective. Victimized by the fake notions of beauty, the narrator ends up as a lunatic losing her sanity along with her virginity. The result proves that the hidden traps laid down by beauty are a common theme that can be traced in literature in general and *The Bluest Eye* in particular. Literature as usual can be seen as echoing or reflecting real life in its delineation of the institutionalization of beauty which is often exploited and transformed into instruments of oppression.*

Key Words: Aesthetics, binaries, socialization, exploitation, insanity, vicious grip.

Key Areas: Politics of Aesthetics, Beauty as a Trap, Beauty and Racism.

Introduction

Beauty is considered to be an aesthetic quality. Widely admired and praised by poets and common folk alike, beauty is said to be elevating the worth of a person or an object. Keats, in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn" sang "Beauty is truth, truth beauty that is all/ Ye know on earth and all ye need to know" (Keats 59-60). According to him, the beauty and permanence of the relic of Greek civilization compensates the transience of life whereas life compensates the incompleteness of art. These lines can also be interpreted as a subjective rendering about beauty which states that like truth, beauty too is a relative concept.

The connoisseurs of aesthetics hail beauty as a purely pristine and positive concept. But beauty is as much political as an aesthetic concept. It creates even issues in the psyche of a common man by establishing a system of binaries that distinguishes the beautiful from the ugly ones. In such a system everything that moves away from the pre-conceived notions are judged to be ugly. They, concentrating on external attributes pay scant heed to internal beauty which is indeed an essential and admirable quality eclipsed by external beauty. The racism in America is one such devious product of obsession on beauty. When a person is judged on the

basis of a set of prejudices that emanates merely from a person's colour complexion, beauty can turn out to be a trap, an instrument of oppression and cultural hindrance that forestalls the interaction between the coloured and the whites.

Toni Morrison once remarked, “the concept of physical beauty as a virtue is one of the dumbest, most pernicious and destructive ideas of the western world” (Bhattacharya 99). Equating beauty to virtue and judging and discriminating people on its basis is a recipe for tragedy. Pecola Breedlove in *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison was judged as an ugly, filthy and useless creature even by the members of African-American community. She went through triple marginalization as an African-American, a woman and more particularly, an extremely ugly girl. She thus longed for a pair of blue eyes –the normative standard of white beauty that will enable her to see goodness everywhere, aid her in ending the quarrel between her father and mother and above all, she will be loved by others like Shirley Temple and Maureen Peel.

The Bluest Eye reveals the conniving nature of beauty, which is indeed a product of a Euro-centric and andro-centric world. The traps are laid down by beauty in the form of prejudices and it turns out to be an instrument of oppression when people act according to those pre-conceived notions. This paper is an exploration of the politics of aesthetics, the destructive capacity of beauty and the misuse of it by the dominant groups through a close textual analysis of *The Bluest Eye* by Toni Morrison.

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison is the story of Pecola Breedlove recounted through the perspective of Claudia MacTeer, a coloured, yet fortunate and strong black girl. It shows the eventual disaster that may befall “blacks when they measure themselves through the eyes of white” (Tanveen 370). Beauty, which is an admirable quality in Maureen Peel and Shirley Temple turns out to be a source of contempt for Pecola. As Edward Guerro points out, “black characters internalize dominant values related to race, class and gender and construct themselves accordingly, almost always with disastrous results” (Middleton xi). The protagonist, Pecola Breedlove too tries to adapt the ideals of white beauty- a pair of blue eyes. Victimized by the fake notions of beauty, Pecola ends up as a lunatic losing her sanity along with her virginity.

The opening chapters of *The Bluest Eye* are interspersed with references to the traps laid down by beauty in the form of prejudices that are ingrained by the society as they equate beauty to merit and virtue. On one hand, beautiful girls are portrayed as being noticed by everyone around them whereas on the other hand, Pecola is unnoticed by others that her blackness becomes synonymous to disappearance.

Pecola is introduced to the narrator Claudia MacTeer by her mother as a “girl who has no place to go” (Morrison 11). In yet another instance when Pecola tries to buy Mary Jane candy, Mr.Yabowski cannot acknowledge her presence as a subject and refuses to look at her. Claudia remarks, “At some fixed point in time and space he senses that he need not waste the effort of a glance. He does not see her because for him there was nothing to see” (Morrison 36). This negation of self of Pecola should be juxtaposed with the boys' admiration for Maureen Peel. “Maureen appeared at my elbow, and the boys seemed reluctant to continue under her springtime eyes so wide with interest .They buckled in confusion ,not willing to beat up three girls under her watchful gaze”.(Morrison 51). These two instances clearly show the virtuous and vice nature of beauty. Beauty which is indeed a boon for Maureen Peel is a

perennial source of grief for Pecola. The intensity of beauty's oppressive nature is accentuated as the coloured people view Pecola through the eyes of whites. The description of Breedlove family is informed by the popular conception about them. Claudia notes,

“The Breedloves did not live in a storefront because they were having temporary difficulty in adjusting to the cutbacks at the plant. They lived there because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly. Although their poverty was traditional and stultifying, it was not unique. But their ugliness was unique. No one could have convinced them that they were not relentlessly and aggressively ugly” (Morrison 28).

Many characters are seen as falling a prey to the traps laid down by white aesthetics. They adopt the aesthetics of a white woman in the name of socialization, shedding their real black self. “Geraldine represses her black characteristics which are not fitted to white femininity as she strives to get rid of funkiness. She rejects Pecola as she seems to embody all the negative aspects of her views of black girls” (Gurleen n.p). Pauline, Pecola's own mother is a slave to the deceitful notions of white beauty. She prefers her master's child to Pecola, her own daughter. On Pecola's birth she realised the ugliness of her child. They accentuated the segregation based on beauty besides them being a victim of 'whiteness'. They considered beauty as the primary virtue of a woman.

The oppressive nature of beauty is revealed by Morrison in *The Bluest Eye* not only through naïve victims of the politics of aesthetics but also through iconoclastic figures like Claudia MacTeer, the narrator. “*The Bluest Eye* is not only a novel about the horror at the heart of a little black girl's longing for blue eyes. It is also the story of another little black girl who dissects white baby dolls to discover the charm they hold for others and who for a long time feels a 'pristine sadism' for the 'Shirley Temples' of the world” (Middleton 15-16). The young Claudia represents an automatic rejection of external standards which were impossible for her to meet. Many saw these standards as objective facts. Claudia and her sister did not. Even as a child, Claudia seemed aware that not everything that is external to the individual is objective. Unlike Pecola who earnestly prayed for blue eyes, Claudia detested all the notions of white beauty bestowed upon her. She remarkably notes,

“Adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs- all the world had agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured. 'Here', they said 'this is beautiful and you may have it.' But I could examine it to see what it was that all the world said was lovable” (Morrison 13-14).

Beauty is physically and psychologically oppressive. Its physical oppression is evident in the way in which Louis Junior, Geraldine's son treats Pecola. When he saw Pecola sitting alone in the park, “nobody ever played with her. Probably, he thought because she was ugly”(Morrison 69).

The influence of mainstream i.e., elite culture creates a fascination for fair-skinned, blue-eyes and slim body. They results in self-degradation of black with an intense urge to imitate the popular high-culture. Paul.C.Taylor argues, “A white-dominated culture has defined beauty per se in terms of white beauty, in terms of the physical features that people we consider white are more likely to have” (Taylor 139). The influence of Hollywood heroines

like Greeta Garbo and Ginger Rogers are hints about the established white culture.

In Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, one can observe that both beauty and racism, not synonymous perhaps running parallel create anger in the mind of Claudia, shame in the mind of Cholly and self-loathing in the mind of Pecola. Above all, the added effect of beauty and racism limits the physical and mental freedom of the characters. They are caught in the vicious grip of beauty. Claudia on observing Maureen Peel's charming influence aptly notes "The Thing to fear was the Thing that made her beautiful and not us" (Morrison 58).

The politics of aesthetics works by creating a psychological fissure in the minds of people through binaries. In usual terms this division can be derogatory for the African-Americans. But in extreme terms this can lead to the loss of self and sanity of innocent girls like Pecola. Taylor comprehends this as, "the most prominent type of racialised ranking represents blackness as a condition to be despised and most tokens of this type extended this attitude to cover the physical features that are central to the description of black identity" (Taylor 16). Moses sums up the malignant impact of beauty on society by stating "beauty is a deeply problematic concept in Morrison's work...the omniscient narrator of *The Bluest Eye* asserts that physical beauty and romantic love are the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought" (Moses 633).

Conclusion

The Bluest Eye by Toni Morrison is a powerful and heart-touching rendering of the myriad ways in which the dominant, hegemonic ideology exploits the psychological power of beauty as an instrument of racism and lay down traps by upholding fair-skinned, blue-eyed pretty girls as the embodiment of perfect beauty. Beauty, though widely acclaimed as positive quality is presented as misleading and vicious. The destructive capacity of the traps laid down by beauty goes to the extent of shattering the self and sanity of Pecola Breedlove. Pauline lost her family due to her obsession and extreme loyalty towards her beautiful master's wife. Cholly, a heap of coal abandoned in a pit by his mother identified his ugliness as the chord of intimacy with his daughter. "What could a burned out black man say to the hunched back of his eleven-year-old daughter? If he would see those haunted, loving eyes. The hauntedness would irritate him-the love would move him to fury?" (Morrison 127). Cholly's rape of Pecola is his own way of expressing love for his unattractive daughter. Only the narrator Claudia was able to detest all the standards of beauty imposed upon her in the form of pretty white-dolls. It is this rational approach towards beauty that enables her to tell Pecola's story to the readers with all its depth.

Beauty in *The Bluest Eye* not only connotes physical beauty but also many other values. Beauty in this novel is an analogue to racism It is the combined force of beauty and racism that brings about the tragic end of Pecola's life. Unlike other black girls segregated on the basis of skin colour, Pecola is further marginalised as she is ugly and no one wishes to love her.

Beauty is often seen as synonymous to virtue and cleanliness. This metaphorical assessment done on the basis of beauty neglects the internal beauty of innocent Pecola. Timothy B Powells in her essay "The Struggle to Depict the Black Figure on the White Page. Literary tradition in Western culture, particularly the symbol system of light and dark, with all the negative archetypes associated with dark, presents the African American writer with an enormously difficult challenge to create positive, whole, affirmative characters. She

creates a 'wholly black text'" (n.p). The book can be thought as a rebellion against idealisation of beauty.

Beauty is a product of an andro-centric and Euro-centric world. Despised by both men and the whites, Pecola loses her vitality and disappear into a world of lunacy. Literature as usual can be seen as echoing or reflecting real life in its delineation of the institutionalization of beauty which is often exploited and transformed into instruments of oppression.

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Aesthetic of Violence : A Study of Semiotic Transference of Violence in the Interface of Graphic Novel and Film in A History of Violence

A History of Violence is a 1997 graphic novel written by John Wagner and illustrated by Vince Locke. It was adapted into a feature film of the same title by David Cronenberg in 2005. The plot of the narrative revolves around Tom, the owner of a small town diner, who becomes the local hero after confronting two vandals in act of self defence. According to Cronenberg, the title of the narrative has three connotations. First, it refers to a suspect with a long history of violence. Second, it represents the historical use of violence as a means of settling disputes. Lastly, it connotes to the innate violence in nature as explained in Darwinian evolution.

Representation of human behavior in art and literature will not be complete without the representation of violence. Since violence is an inevitable part of human behaviour, it is an inevitable part of art and literature (Symonds 1). The Greeks used tragedy with violence for catharsis. Ultra violence or graphic violence in texts is used to create a visceral authenticity and response in the readers or the audience. It is a form of psychological assault on the consumers of texts. Aestheticization of violence has a didactic purpose. It can also have a cathartic effect on the people. The concept of ultra violence or graphic violence is often exploited by the entertainment industry to enhance viewership and profit. But its representation is more complex and problematic than it appears(Symonds 4).

By the close of the twentieth century, imagery of violence has become a common place phenomenon in all genres of art. Violence has become a thematic concern which contemporary artists use to convey the inescapable reality of an apocalyptic gloom in terms of historical, psychological and artistic landscapes. The imagery of destruction reflects the artist's essential inability to accept a deeply flawed world order. Many writers and artists attempt to discern the sources and effects of violence which often culminate in anger, frustration, despair and suicide. For many artists, violence has provided an ironic source of creativity that predicts a new world order. They find fear, pain and suffering as the results of unchecked totalitarianism in an absurd, emotionally sterile and essentially meaningless world. The sweeping violence that pervades twentieth century art confronts human feelings of impotence in response to the radical destruction brought out by World Wars, subsequent threat of nuclear annihilation, the Cold War and bipolar world order, the end of Cold War, disintegration of Soviet Union and a unipolar world order, globalization and its unconscientious profiteering.

In her study *On Violence*, Hannah Arendt explores the relation between institutional power structures and the nature and quantum of violence. She thinks that institutions are at once inherently violent and are threatened by external violence. The equilibrium of institutional power structure is often confronted with external power structures that try to upset the balanced functioning of institutions. She argues that in contemporary world violent means are adopted to cleanse and reorder the world through fascism, imperialism and colonialism. As a consequence of this disturbing trend, the existential perception of human

bonds seems to be broken under the ontological perception of power. Therefore late twentieth century art becomes a paradigm of human beings enveloped by cultural brutality. Thus, contemporary art represents violence and suffering as essential elements of a world characterized by loss of faith and hope. Man's inhumanity to man and animals finds top priority for artists and writers. For instance, Edward Bond's *Saved* draws the immanent attention of viewers to the callous brutality committed to a hapless child stoned to death by two men just for fun. In this context, art becomes a tool to shock the audience and to move their consciousness. Tragedy is most appropriate in circumstances like this when it is worthwhile to recall Kafka's definition of tragedy as "an axe to grind the frozen sea of consciousness." Bond argues that in a world which internalizes violence, a social order that incorporates violence and chaos as functional structures, violence itself is a cathartic tool capable of expurgating violence and disorder embedded in the human psyche. George Bernard Shaw also points to man's indifference to pervasive brutality in his tragedy *Back to Methuselah* where cruel sports are invented and enacted to activate the aesthetic sensibility of people. Therefore violence provides a new aesthetic, a new sensibility and a new perspective to art and literature on the one hand and a new paradigm of representation of human life in a world confronted by chaos, disorder, loss of faith, depression and uncertainty on the other.

Violence is a behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill someone or something. World Health Organization defines violence as: "The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual against oneself, another person, against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation" (Krug et al 5). This definition underlines the physicality or materiality of violence. But psychology equates violence with aggression. Violence in all forms is considered aggression whereas many forms of aggression are not considered violent. Violence is a "... behaviour performed by one person (the aggressor) with the intent of harming another person (the victim) who is believed by the aggressor to be motivated to avoid that harm. 'Harm' includes direct physical harm . . . , direct psychological harm . . . , and indirect harm . . ." (Kazdin 163). This definition emphasizes that violence is intentional and harmful. An act without the intent to inflict pain on another is not considered violent. For example, an accident may appear violent, but cannot be called an act of violence. Violence is also an act directed by will directly inflicting discomfort and suffering on another. Therefore an act intended to reduce discomfort and suffering cannot be called violent. For instance, medical surgery may appear violent and painful, but is directed towards the greater good of the sufferer with no harm intended. This is a negative view of violence. Violence need not always be wrong. Violence is often used to right a wrong in contemporary societies. Violence is also characterized by consciousness of both the aggressor and the victim. The aggressor indulges in an act of violence for the pleasure of an advantage otherwise unavailable to him or her by encroaching on the rights of the victim. The victim is deprived of the legitimate comfort guaranteed by the laws of natural justice. Thus, the awareness of harm is a significant factor in the perspective of violence. Violence is characterized by breaking of the laws, transgression of the rights, the pleasure or benefits of the aggressor and loss and suffering of the victim. Thus, a violent act is characterized by intent, harm and consciousness.

Hannah Arendt has elaborately discussed the concept of violence and warfare in the twentieth century industrial society. In her work *On Violence*, she apologetically states that

it is a “rather sad reflection on the present state of political science that our terminology does not distinguish among such keywords as power, strength, force, authority, and finally, violence – all of which refer to distinct, different phenomena and would hardly exist unless they did” (44). She meticulously explains the distinctions of these terms in *On Violence*:

Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power is never the property of individual; it belongs to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together . . .

Strength unequivocally designates something in the singular and individual entity; it is the property inherent in an object or a person and which belongs to its character, which may prove itself in relation to other things or persons, but is essentially independent of them . . .

Force, which we often use in daily speech as a synonym for violence, especially if violence serves as a means of coercion, should be reserved, in terminological language for the “forces of nature” or the “forces of circumstances” . . . to indicate the energy released by physical or social movements . . .

Authority, . . ., as a term, most frequently abused can be vested in persons – there is such a thing as personal authority, as for instance, in the relation between parent and child, between teacher and pupil – or it can be vested in offices, as for instance, in the Roman Senate or in the hierarchical offices of the Church . . . Its hallmark is unquestioning recognition by those who are asked to obey; neither coercion nor persuasion is needed . . .

Violence . . . is distinguished by its instrumental character. Phenomenologically it is close to strength, since the implements of violence, like all other tools, are designed and used for the purpose of multiplying natural strength until, in the last stage of the development, they can substitute for it. (44-46)

Arendt argues that traditionally violence has been an instrument of power. But contemporary tendencies like terrorist attacks or guerrilla war show that individuals or groups excluded from power are capable of violence. Technological advances like robot soldiers or nuclear or biological weapons make even small groups more powerful than sovereign states. Arendt deals with only the physical and visible forms of violence. These are in fact manifestations of violence rather than violence itself. Violence as a manifestation of pain and agony is a wrong view of violence. Slavoj Žižek is the first to argue that there is something more serious beyond the palpable presence of violence manifest in everyday life.

Violence becomes a problematic and complex term with Slavoj Žižek's extensive study on the different aspects of violence. According to him, there are two major forms of violence: subjective and objective. Subjective violence is immediately palpable or perceptible. For example, we see a perpetrator, an angry mob, a fierce criminal or a terrorist act. Objective violence exists in two forms: symbolic and systemic. Symbolic violence is related to the use of language or discourse. For instance, we use certain peculiar registers or symbols or images to represent broad concepts like terrorism or justice. Symbolic violence is manifest in cultural productions like media, literature, television, films and several other discourses. Systemic violence is most pervasive like the super ego or the ideology or the implicit rules

which control a society. The systemic violence is subjectively invisible but is very real. In *Violence: Six Sideways Reflections*, Zizek argues: “. . . when one draws attention to the millions who died as the result of capitalist globalization, from the tragedy of Mexico in the sixteenth century through to the Belgian-Congo holocaust a century ago, responsibility is largely denied. All this seems just to have happened as the result of an 'objective' process, which nobody planned and executed and for which there was no 'Capitalist Manifesto'” (22). Discourses which are indirect or oblique and which work unconsciously come under objective violence. Thus, patriarchy, nationalism, war and so on, are objective forms of violence. Objective violence is invisible yet palpable and is the dominant form of violence.

Zizek explains the subtle relations among the different forms of violence and their separate and combined functioning. He observes in *Violence*:

. . . subjective violence is just the most visible portion of a triumvirate that also includes two objective kinds of violence. First, there is “symbolic” violence embodied in language and its forms . . . this violence is not only at work in the obvious – and extensively studied – cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms; there is a more fundamental form of violence that still pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning. Second, there is . . . “systemic” violence, or the often catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political systems . . . the complex interaction of the three modes of violence: subjective, objective and symbolic . . . one should resist the fascination of subjective violence, of violence enacted by social agents, evil individuals, disciplined repressive apparatuses, fanatical crowds: subjective violence is just the most visible of the three. (11)

Zizek thinks that subjective violence is perpetrated by an agent who is accountable for the act whereas objective violence is inherent in the system. It follows therefore that their relation is not casual but problematic and complex. The explosion of violence we often view in the media is the consequence of the oppression perpetuated by dominator systems.

Zizek refers to the method of parallax to analyze the relation between subjective and objective forms of violence. He argues that any alteration of the subject position results in a shift in the position of the object. The object shifts epistemically in relation to the background. This is because the gaze of the subject ontologically constitutes the object. The part of the object constituted by the gaze is precisely the part that returns the gaze of the subject. Therefore it is impossible to grasp reality in its totality. This means the impossibility of grasping the object from the perspective of the subject or vice versa. Zizek's parallax method explores both the subjective and objective aspects of violence. To treat the subjective element of violence as the central argument of analysis makes the analysis of objective violence impossible. This is because subjective violence appears against the background of a non-violent objective order. Therefore the only way to analyze violence begins with an understanding of the problematic nature of the subject's relationship with objectivity and the object's problematic relation with subjectivity.

Zizek analyzes the two forms of violence inherent in the capitalist ideology. The first is the systemic violence engendered by the economic activity of the capital. The violence inherent in the capitalist system is related to the ceaseless economic expansion of the capital

with its endless drive to utilize itself in self-replication. He observes in Violence:

The notion of objective violence need to be thoroughly historicized: it took on a new shape with capitalism . . . It is far too simplistic to claim that the spectre of this self engendering-monster that pursues its path disregarding any human or environmental concern is an ideological abstraction and that behind this abstraction there are real people and natural objects on whose productive capacities and resources capital's circulation is based and on which it feeds like gigantic parasite. The problem is that this “abstraction” is not only in our financial speculators' misperception of social reality, but that it is “real” in the precise sense of determining the structure of the material, social processes: the fate of whole strata of the population and sometimes of whole countries can be decided by the “solipsistic” speculative dance of capital, which pursues its goal of profitability in blessed indifference to how its movement will affect social reality. (12)

Zizek means that objective violence is not simply obvious in the effects of capitalist process like the widening divide between the rich and the poor or the creation of monopolies or the undermining of traditional life. Objective violence is manifest in the retexturing of social reality itself. Zizek argues that economic and social reality can no longer be understood as relations of power, material and human resources. He thinks that social reality can be comprehended in the speculative underpinning of capital. The relation of production to social needs is no longer regulated by economic forces but by the circulation of capital itself. Therefore the objective violence in the capitalist process removes the relations of production from the needs of society and commodifies the needs by conferring them material value.

Zizek also explores symbolic violence as the objective violence inherent in hegemonic discourses including language. Zizek argues that certain violence is inherent in discourse itself: “. . . the very process of naming an object is to shift the object into a domain of meaning external to it” (Violence 32). The universe of discourse can be sustained by the violence embedded in the Master Signifier, the basis of social order. In this regard, Zizek observes in Violence:

A basic feature of our postmodern world is that it tries to dispense with this agency of the ordering Master Signifier: the complexity of the world needs to be asserted conditionally. Every Master Signifier meant to impose some order on it must be deconstructed, dispersed: “the modern apology for the 'complexity' of the world . . . is really nothing but a generalized desire for atony.” Badiou's excellent example of such an “atonal” world is the politically correct vision of sexuality as promoted by gender studies with its obsessive rejection of binary logic. (35)

The imposition of a new field of meaning by the Master Signifier means the imposition of an inherent inequality through language. The Master Signifier functioning as a terminus for the space of reasons is ultimately grounded in an arbitrary, irrational act which renders the persons who engage in the discourse inherently unequal. The domain of discourse appears to involve the possibility of transgression by an outside agency. But the ultimate threat of transgression is inherent in the discourse itself. Zizek also argues that an individual's highest goal in life is the satisfaction of his pleasures. For the sake of real communication with each

other, two people need to sacrifice their pleasures. This sacrifice results in a form of violence since one cannot be happy without making another unhappy. Zizek argues that the acts of contemporary man are guided by utilitarian grounds. The doctrine of utility implies the possibility of violence against the subject. In contemporary contexts, the use of violence is in the disguised ways of protecting the larger interests of the people. For example, war on terror is viewed in this light.

According to Zizek, language as a symbolic field of signs is a space of violence. Language has been considered a reconciliatory means. But Zizek argues that language is a greater divider and a source of violence than a leveller and a peacemaker. He explains in *Violence*:

Language simplifies the designated thing reducing it to a single feature. It dismembers the thing, destroying its organic unity, treating its parts and properties as autonomous. It inserts the thing into a field of meaning which is ultimately external to it. When we name gold “gold,” we violently extract a metal from its natural texture, investing into it our dreams of wealth, power, spiritual purity, and so on, which have nothing whatsoever to do with the immediate reality of gold . . . Though it may appear that there is a contradiction between the way discourse constitutes the very core of the subject's identity and the notion of this core as an unfathomable abyss beyond the “wall of language,” there is a simple solution to this apparent paradox. The “wall of language” which forever separates me from the abyss of another subject is simultaneously that which opens up and sustains this abyss – the very obstacle that separates me from the Beyond is what creates its mirage. (61)

Zizek argues that language has other functions than its apparently redeeming role. It serves as a wall that separates the Self and the Other and this separation is a form of symbolic violence. Narcissism and other forms of self destructiveness can be viewed in this perspective.

Margaret Bruder, in her work *Aestheticizing Violence, or how to do things with Style*, defines aestheticization of violence in art and literature as the depiction of violence in a stylistically excessive, significant and sustained manner. Zizek refers to this kind of representation as symbolic violence which is part is objective violence. Violence represented through images, registers and styles constitutes the aestheticization of violence. In fact, any kind of poetry is aestheticized violence superimposed on natural language. The chaos and disorder of contemporary society is aesthetically rendered as the discursive construction of violence in cultural productions.

Violence is also a part of popular culture artifacts. Violence is a tool and a commodity in popular film and fiction. It is commodified for sake of spectacle (Prince 9). Commodification of violence affects the aesthetic value of the text. Such commodification aims at a majority response rather than individual response from the audience. The emotional response or aesthetic pleasure of the spectator depends on the treatment of violence (Prince 23).

A History of Violence, the graphic novel, examines the life of a protagonist who has a hidden violent past. It displays almost all tropes essential for an artistic depiction of violence. Images and signs associated with violence can be seen in the text. The opening sequence has psychopathic villains who are synonymous with the glamour of violence. The gun, as a 'tool'

of violence, is introduced in the opening sequence where the hooligans brutally murder two hitchhikers. The ferocity with which Billy, one of the hooligans, riddles the dead bodies with bullets to vent his frustration is surrealistically disturbing. The 'gun' as a cultural icon of violence is celebrated in the opening panels of the graphic novel. By graphically depicting the violence on the panels, rather than resorting to merely narrating it, Vince Locke heightens the disturbing beauty of violence.

The heightened tension of a hold-up is depicted in the 'diner episode.' Tom's confrontation of the hooligans is swift and brutal. Panels depict Tom smashing a coffee pot on Billy's head and Billy getting shot and falling on the pavement outside after smashing through the glass partition of the diner are action oriented and vivid. One can almost discern the slow-motion effect of a movie in these panels which heighten the violent beauty of the spectacle. Tom gets referred to as the 'Rambo' of the town after this episode; 'Rambo' being another cultural icon associated with stylized violence. The quiet terror of stalking is depicted with the presence of a black sedan which follows Tom and his family around. It is revealed that Anthony Palestrina, Charles Aldo Rossi and John Torrino, notorious mobsters with "a long history of violence" are stalking Tom (45). The presence of the 'mafia' who are the cultural equivalents of stylized, brutal violence adds to the narrative tension.

Tom's confrontation with Torrino reveals more tropes associated with violence in artistic narration. The possibility of 'old scores to settle' can be read from the horrific 'scars' of past violence seen on Torrino's disfigured face. The severed finger in a glass phial around Torrino's neck juxtaposed with panels showing Tom with a missing finger enhances mystery and terror. The telephone as an instrument of forceful encroachment into private space is presented with threats made by the mafia to Tom. The emotional depiction of a close-knit family having to face unexpected horrors with the possibility of impending tragedy adds to the aesthetic depiction of violence. The shootout at the end of the first chapter has a 'hostage' situation, with explosions, violent deaths and brutality. The effectiveness of these is aestheticized by graphically rendering them on the panels with blood spurting out of wounds, shrapnel piercing bodies and bones cracking on impact.

Tom's criminal past as a youngster in the suburbs of Brooklyn is revealed in a flashback sequence in the second chapter. It toys with all tropes of violence including the mafia, smuggling, extortion, shootouts and brutal murders. The chapter opens with a graphic depiction of an execution by the mafia. Steve, Tom's close friend Richie's brother, has his brains blown out by the mafia. Panels depicting splattering of blood and gore at the moment of execution adds gravity to the violence being depicted. The effect is elevated to a surreal level by juxtaposing the falling of blood with the falling of snow while the crime is being committed (99). Lou Manzi the dreaded 'don' is introduced as the chief antagonist of the flashback sequence. The Manzi gang's involvement in Steve's murder drives Richie to seek revenge. Teaming up with Tom who is desperate for money to treat his grandmother, Richie metes out a swift and brutal retribution.

The careful planning and execution is depicted as something inspired by 'military strike operations.' The shootout at Manzi's safe house is graphically portrayed with panels depicting Richie riddling Lou Manzi with bullets using an 'Uzi' gun. Tom's confrontation with Torrino at the end of the flashback sequence reveals the horrifying truth behind Torrino's disfigurement and Tom's missing finger. Torrino chops off Tom's finger using an axe and while he is about to deal the killer blow, Tom uses a coil of barbed wire to defend himself.

Torrino loses one eye in the confrontation and is horribly disfigured. The violence of the confrontation is elevated to a surreal level in panels where Torrino is seen pulling out the barbed wire from his injured eye.

The concluding chapter has Tom coming to terms with his past life of crime. The final showdown has him facing Lou Manzi Jr. – a psychopath popular as 'little Lou' and son of Manzi Sr. The shocking revelation of Richie being kept alive and brutally tortured by Manzi Jr. for nearly twenty years elevates the level of violence narrated. Richie is depicted as a lump of flesh tortured to the extreme. Horribly disfigured with his arms and legs sawn off, lacking an eye and a body full of scars and wounds – his figure sums up the horrors of violence 'beautifully.' It is further revealed that Lou Manzi Jr. has his array of 'toys' including flame torches, hack saws, hammers, knives, and 'baseball bats' to torture and kill people. These along with 'guns' have become indispensable in the narration of violence in the text. Tom is tortured using a 'hand drill' while Manzi Jr. calmly chatters on – “I like ta get close ta things. Y' know what I'm sayin', Joey? I'm a hands-on kinda guy” (272). His mad brutality is compared to another iconic figure associated with violence – 'Caligula' (239). The ultimate showdown with Manzi Jr. wielding a 'chainsaw' – another 'instrument' of violence – ends with his graphic decapitation by tripping and falling on the chainsaw.

The film adaptation of *A History of Violence* by David Cronenberg expands on the narrative on violence as presented in the graphic novel by Wagner and Locke. What strikes us on comparing both the forms is the effort taken by the filmmaker to give more depth to the characters. The film has well fleshed-out characters which make the violence depicted more authentic and hence more disturbing. The film has a relatively shorter running time and the acts of violence are not excessively stylized with special effects. They are swift, visceral and brutal. The sense of authenticity generated by the actors performing action sequences without cinematic gimmicks elevates the impact of the violence. There are four confrontation sequences in the film which rely on violent actions. These sequences do not take much of the screen time yet prove indispensable to the effective narration of the plot. The spectator is made to confront the disturbing beauty of violence in these sequences where punches are thrown, guns blaze away, bones crack, faces shatter and blood splatters at the blink of an eye. Cronenberg's penchant for creeping menace and the slow building up of tension in scenes prior to violent action augments its effectiveness.

A History of Violence (2005) has Tom, a local diner owner, having to come to terms with his criminal past. The opening sequence introduces two psychopaths who do not hesitate to engage in casual acts of violence. They are seen casually disposing off a family of three, including a small child, to rob them of money. There is slow dread in this first violent sequence which 'suggests' rather than 'show' the barbaric act. But the dead bodies of the husband and wife lying in a pool of blood and the small kid getting shot (off-screen) disturbs with its casual violence. Desperate with the need for money and gratified with the sadistic pleasure they derive from murdering people, the two psychopaths arrive at Tom's diner paving the way for the second violent sequence. Introduced earlier as a quiet, loving, family man, Tom transforms into the 'gun wielding' 'American hero' in this chilling sequence. The violence depicted here is brutal and swift. There is a heightening of tension in this holdup sequence with one hooligan pointing his gun at Tom and the other getting ready to rape the waitress. Tom's response is quick and precise. He smashes a coffee pot on the hooligan's face to disarm him and uses the gun to shoot and kill the other. Tom gets stabbed in the foot by the

hooligan who in turn has his brains blown out with a head shot at point blank. The whole violent action in the diner sequence is over within a matter of seconds but leaves behind blood, gore and dead bodies.

The event is widely reported and Tom unwillingly attracts the attention of old foes. Mafia men, led by Carl Fogarty, start stalking Tom and his family. Fogarty with a disfigured face and missing eye embodies the menace of the mafia. His claim that Tom is actually a criminal called Joey Cusack paves the way for violence erupting in Tom's domestic life. This is beautifully presented in the film version while the graphic novel avoids tackling this issue. The third violent sequence is brutal. Tom is forced to acknowledge his past as Joey when Fogarty and his men hold Tom's teenage son Jack as hostage. The sequence has Tom transforming into a vicious killer disposing off Fogarty's men with precision. He uses his brute strength to crack ribs, break the arm and smash the face of one man while promptly shooting down the other. Fogarty shoots Tom in the shoulder and just as he is about to execute him Jack kills him with a shot-gun. The violence in this sequence is enhanced with blood and gore spilling out on Tom's face from Fogarty's wounds.

Severely estranged from his wife, Edie, and son after the revelation of his brutal past as Joey Cusack, Tom decides to obliterate his old criminal ties with a final showdown. He accepts his brother, Richie's (a Philadelphia mobster) invitation for a visit to his mansion in Philadelphia. The final confrontation sequence has a slow, casual build-up. But the violent action which follows is excessively swift and ruthless. Richie orders one of his men to strangle Tom. Tom disposes off these men with precision. Bones are broken, faces smashed, and more shots fired. The sequence ends with a graphic scene where Richie gets shot in the head by Tom. The beauty of the scene again lies in it being swift. Tom eschews small-talk and promptly blows Richie's brains out. The splattering of blood and gore is followed by the camera converging on Richie's dead body lying in a pool of blood with a bullet through the head.

The authentic representation of violence on the screen requires its aestheticization. But there is a risk of the film being subjected to censorship as well as desensitization. The viewers are made to confront the effects of violence in a relatively safe environment as the movie theatre or the silver screen. The effect of screen violence is psychological rather than physical. Stylization is part of aestheticization. Violence, in film, is stylized mainly for entertainment purposes. It enhances the quality and aesthetic of a film text. But it can also disturb and offend the audience. Extremely stylized forms of violence generate a kind of aesthetic pleasure in the audience. Violence is always a controversial and taboo subject. Aestheticization of violence challenges the normative or acceptable definitions and conventions of the concept of violence. It encourages the discursive construction of violence. It also manipulates the sensibility of the spectator and challenges him. Each aesthetic or stylized representation of violence challenges and reinterprets current definitions and ideas regarding violence. Violence is used a tool to represent reality or to portray events metaphorically. The effectiveness of such representations relies on the extent to which it alters or transforms the narrative. Ultimately, it is the spectator who determines whether the violence depicted is aesthetically significant or mere spectacle.

Any piece of art can be evaluated at two levels: aesthetic and ethical. Conventionally, art is expected to conform to the aesthetic and ethical practices of society. But in postmodern conditions, the ethical dimension of art is subordinated to the aesthetic of the text. It is in this

context that several repressed subjects have been discursively constructed in the cultural productions. Thus, violence has become recurrent object of discursive construction in contemporary art.

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Backlash Against the Misutilization of Beauty and Body in R.K. Narayan's 'The Guide'

Abstract

This paper proposed to explore R.K Narayan's effort to redefine the status of women in the society. In the novel 'The Guide', Rosie, the heroine, made sensations through her quest for identity. I would like to apply the theories of Radical cultural feminism to demonstrate Rosie's emersion from a degenerated 'public woman' to a respected classical dancer. Her conviction to strength, her economic stability prompted her to break marital bondage. Rosie's decision to fight against sexism is the impact of her thought 'Consciousness Raising' which is the key concept of Radical Feminism.

Keywords: Misuse, Backlash, Emersion, Feminism, Femininity, Consciousness Raising.

This paper proposed to analyze R.K Narayan's effort to redefine the status of women in the society, in which opportunities are always restricted for women. His feminist sensibility demonstrated through Rosie, the heroine who explore her talent rather than reducing her an ideological image prescribed by the society. Feminism in Indian literature is a byproduct of western feminist movement. With the advent of freedom struggle women become conscious of their rights to education, employment, identity in the patriarchal society. They raise their voice against exploitation and oppression. This is quite evident in the writings of Indian writers in English. The same fact is observed in *The common wealth Review*:

Feminism being an important movement in the modern world, women's place, position and especially the question of her identity are the major issues in India also. In India, since ages, a women's role in life was strictly compartmentalized: she was a daughter, a wife or a mother. In all these roles she had to adhere to certain appointed norms; she had no separate identity as a human being... Things are changing nowadays, especially among the sections where education and material prosperity have ushered in a degree of enlightenment in common with women all over the world. Indian women are also voicing their desire to be emancipated, to get rid of the unjust restrictions imposed on her and the pervasive discrimination against her. She is seeking the right to be regarded as a whole human being not simply as an adjunct to her make relations.

In this paper, I want to foreground the emersion of Rosie as an assertive individual in the light of radical feminist theories. Radical feminist are attempted to change the patriarchal System in the existing society. Sue-Ellen has rightly remarked in this connection: "...The patriarchy is the primary cause of women's oppression." In the patriarchal system, male dominates female and it becomes the root cause of so many problems.

In the novel "The Guide" Rosie, the heroine made sensations in the patriarchal society. I

felt some similarities in between the revolutionary views of Radical cultural feminist and Narayan's attempt to take a twist in the emersion of Rosie, in which she neither succumb to Marco nor to Raju, but she embarrassed her profession of dance, which she consider as a boon.

Rosie is the finest creation of R.K Narayan, with her naïve beauty, firm determination making her way to achieve goal. Rosie comes from the family of temple dancers. She has given to receive formal education and post graduate in Economics. In her adolescent age, she expressed rebel attitude towards the restrictions and taboos imposed upon Devadasi women, from the very beginning she is confident and clear in her vision. Rosie's beauty and education gave way to married off to Marco, a rich bachelor of high social background and academic excellent. Here, the fact is that a woman's worth is measured in terms of her beauty. Rosie is a commodity or object to Marco to do everything for him at the right time without any objection. Later she become an object for sexual gratification and money generation machine for Raju. Here R.K Narayan successfully portrayed Rosie's saga of predicament as she is maltreated by her husband and her lover and consciously break the constraints by her own transmutation to an assertive woman.

The marriage between Marco and Rosie is a union of two different outlook individuals. Marco, who is much dedicated to his scholastic profession, make him indifferent to his wife and her talents. He never tries to consider her dance nor her requirement for innocent and sensuous pleasures in her marital life. The polarity in their marital life prompted Rosie to illegal relationship with Raju.

Rosie's transformation into 'Nalini' is in a way her spiritual transformation through her dance. Her dance decides and defines her fate. In her marital life, she got frustrated to think about dance, the substance of her soul later through the dance she got seduced by Raju who began to exploit her talent as a channel for money and fame. RK Narayan has used Raju to demonstrate the sexuality. Raju seduced by the beauty of Rosie "I watched her critically, but what I watched were the curves that tempted me to hug her on the spot.....whenever I watched her sway her figure, if there was no one about. I constantly interrupted her performance, although I was supposed to watch her from an art critic's point of views". (TG ,163)

When Marco got hints of her adultery with Raju, he fires questions to her andrecklessly abandoned her. Here R.K Narayan depicted the instinct of a faithful wife in her. Quickly realizing her mistake, Repentant Rosie begs for pardon:

"I realized I had committed an enormous sin.....my mind was greatly troubled. I didn't want anything more in life than to make my peace with him. I didn't want to dance. I felt lost....."(TG,133)

She sincerely apologizes to him, but in vain Marco ignored her totally. She begs:

"I have come to apologize. I want to say I will do anything you want to do. I committed a blunder"(TG,150)

but Marco reacted in a cold way.

"You are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone that flatters your antics...(TG, 152)

Radical feminist perceived themselves as revolutionaries rather than reformers. These

feminist thought of “consciousness raising”. When Rosie realized the forgery committed by Raju, he wondered at the response of Rosie.

“I thought she would breakdown, she often broke down on small issues”.
But Rosie responds in unagitated manner.

Radical feminist agreed in principle that sexism is the most widespread or deepest form of woman oppression. Radical feminist split into two groups – Radical libertarian feminist and radical cultural feminist. These feminists voiced different views about how to fight sexism. Radical cultural feminist claimed that sexuality is the primary locus of male power in which women–harming gender relations are constructed .On the contrary to the views of Radical libertarian feminist. They proposed that it is better for woman to be strictly female/feminine. They should try to be more like woman emphasizing the value and virtues culturally associated with woman and try to deemphasize the values and virtues culturally associated with men.

When Rosie realized forgery committed by Raju and he gets arrested. The innocent nature of Rosie is revealed here, she does her best to reduce his punishment and shown her caliber in decision making, dignity, pride and self-esteem. In the critical moment in her life, she proves her managing power to redefine her own individuality by denying the constraints of social mores and assumptions. Rosie defiantly break the clutches imposed on her and decides to lead her profession of dance. Here Rosie empowered by the realization that men's control over her life aversively effect on her self-identity, self-respect and self-esteem.

Rosie tells Raju about her decision:

“If I have pawn my last possessions I'll do it to save you from jail. But once its over leave me once and for all, that's all I ask forget me. Leave me to live or die, as I choose; thats all” (TG 221-222)

In “sexual politics” Kate Millet, the radical feminist advocates for sexual revolution, which demands an end to sexual inhibitions and taboos. It ensure sexual freedom. Primarily sexual revolution attempted to abolish both the ideology of male supremacy and traditional socialization of patriarchy. This would help to reexamine the traits of categories as 'masculine' and 'feminine' with reassessment of their human desirability.

In this novel 'The Guide' Rosie is a practical minded woman later she observed sexism is the root cause of woman oppression. Her firm determinates to follow her profession is highlighted her rebel nature to oppose the pernicious sexism and prefer the best way to eliminate.

Marilyn French, the radical cultural feminist attributes male-female differences more to biology (nature) than to socialization (nurture) and she seems to think traditional feminine traits are somehow better than traditional masculine traits. R.K Narayan's characterization of Rosie is a fine inspiration to subdued woman in our society that she proved her tactfulness to secure her own life at any circumstances that she faced.

Response of Rosie is dump like a bombshell to Raju, as he murmured:

“It hurt me to see her go through her work, practice and engagement unconcernedly”

Mary Daly, the radical- cultured feminist denigrated traditional masculine traits in Gyn/Ecology, Daly decided to reject several of “androgyny”. The more she reflected on the

traditional concept of femininity. Daly was convinced there is nothing good in to pursue the notions of femininity completely. Women should dare to reject the seemingly “good” aspects of femininity as well as “man-made constraints” shaped for the purposes of trapping women deep in the prison of patriarchy. Daly insisted that, women would be revealed in their original female power and beauty. Daly used Jerzy Kosinski's image of painted bird to detail the differences between “false femininity” and “true femaleness”.

Raju realized Rosie's emersion as a liberated individual and admit neither he nor Marco is no longer indispensable to her. Raju observes:

“She would never stop dancing, she would not be able to stop. She would go from strength to strength. I know, looking at the way she was going about business, that she would manage whether I was inside the bars or outside, whether her husband approved of it or not. Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along”. (TG- 222-223)

Rosie is the finest creation of R.K Narayan with her naïve beauty, firm determination making her way towards the goal. She is more cautious and practical that she used Raju to strengthen her economic stability. Her emersion from a degenerated 'public woman' to a respected classical dancer helps her to rediscover her own individuality. Her firm determination to ensure her economic stability promotes a sensuous courage to break marital bondage. Although her struggle to ensure identity and existence through a backlash to the concept of patriarchy.

It would be wrong to consider R.K Narayan as a feminist. In terms of western feminism R.K Narayan's rebellion is strongly supported to the views of radical cultural feminism. He launches to bring a change in the status of Indian women. It is absolutely right that R.K Narayan admits the notions of radical cultural feminism to liberate woman in his novel.

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Gendered Mirrors : The Magic Mirror and the Myth of Female Beauty

This paper aims to analyse the role of mirrors in the construction of a gendered female-self. The study primarily focuses on Grimm Brothers', "Snow White" (1812) fairy tale where the notion of a female beauty ideal is located and narrated through a mirror and the filmic retelling of the tale, *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012), where the gendered functionality of the mirror is depicted by visualizing the mirror as a male figure. By delineating the experiences of the gendered-selves in front of their mirrors, the paper argues that femininity, as defined and internalized in contemporary popular culture, is aimed to achieve through physical/external self-beautification and enactment of that beauty in front of mirrors. Furthermore, since beauty is equated with power, the paper also aims to examine the dynamics of power that operates within that equation.

According to Naomi Wolf, "Beauty' is not universal or changeless.... Nor is it a function of evolution: Its ideals change far more rapid than that of evolution of species" (Wolf, 12). The beauty myth as positioned in the 19th century fairy tale, "Snow White", may therefore be regarded as one of the many female beauty ideals prevalent in Western popular culture; nevertheless, it is also observed as the most pervasive one. Snow White is born mimicking the features according to her mother's wish: "with skin as white as snow, lips and cheeks as red as rose, and hair as black as ebony." When her mother dies, the King remarries another woman who is defined as "a beautiful woman, but proud and overbearing who could not bear to have a rival to her beauty." This narcissistic characteristic of the stepmother—the queen—causes her to hate Snow White—whose beauty she could not surpass. The queen possessed a magic mirror that 'spoke' the truth and as part of her daily ritual, she would ask her magic mirror: "Who is the fairest of us all?" and once, the magic mirror digressing from its usual answer, says: "Thou art fair, my Queen, 'tis true. But Snow White is fairer far than you." The queen, thereafter, devices methods to murder Snow White so that her magic mirror would return to its earlier answer: "Thou, Queen, art the fairest of all."

By characterizing Snow White as white-skinned, the tale construes beauty in terms of whiteness or white as beauty. In addition, the queen who is regarded as the most beautiful until Snow White comes to age suggests the implicit correlation between youth and beauty. The tale regards both Snow White and the queen as beautiful; however, Snow White is regarded as the good (innocent) one and the queen as evil. Much before the queen devises methods to murder Snow White, the tale clearly mentions her obsession with physical appearance and identifies it as an 'evil' trait in her. That is, the tale while forwarding a beauty ideal for women also attaches a behavioural trait wherein self-indulgence and vanity are rebuked as 'evil' traits in women. But to read the queen's routine check-ups on her beauty in front of the mirror as vanity may be problematic; it rather suggests her anxiousness over aging and losing her beauty, and thereby her position as the Queen. When Snow White is seven years old, the mirror proclaims the young Snow white as the most beautiful over her 'old' stepmother. This validation by the mirror about Snow White's youthful beauty poses a

threat to the stepmother's economic status as a Queen and to her social status as the most beautiful woman. Here, the tale's emphasis on the latter point instead of the former and the queen's relentless efforts to retrieve her position as the most beautiful woman is indicative of the ways in which feminine identity is constructed around the notion of a beauty ideal. Sandra Gillbert and Susan Gubar were one of the foremost feminist critics to analyse the magic mirror as a symbol of the male patriarch and the queen as a victim of the male-gaze. (*The Madwoman in the Attic*, 1979) Although many scholarly works have emerged over a time on the Snow White tale which have criticized the gendered and racist elements prevalent in the tale the popularity of the tale through its vibrant retellings, with our without subversions, necessitates the scope for a further probe.

The recent filmic retelling of the tale, *Snow White and the Huntsman*, directed by Rupert Sanders, retains the plot of the Source Text. However, the film has attempted to portray the implicit gendered aspects of the tale by rendering a backstory to the queen and by visualising the magic mirror as a male-figure. In the film, the stepmother—Queen Ravenna—as a young girl was abducted by a lustful king. Thereupon, Ravenna's mother casts a spell on her using which she could consume the beauty of young women and through that remain young and beautiful forever. Ravenna, thus, using her magical powers, sets to lure kings with her youthful beauty and later conquers their kingdom. The film, essentially, conjoins youth with beauty and subverts the source tale narrative by depicting the urge for youthful beauty in females as a male-desire rather than as an entirely female-driven enterprise. Further, the queen, by conforming to this male-initiated beauty ideal, emerges powerful and through that the film text explicitly equates beauty with power. But, in the end, the queen, even after successfully achieving this beauty ideal, is overpowered by Snow White's beauty. Leah Persaud, in her analysis of the Snow White tale, states that the queen's final downfall is, “an attempt by the Grimm brothers to encourage beauty in young women, but to punish it heavily in older women who seek to maintain a youthful appearance.” (Persaud, 41) The punishment or rejection of the youthful appearance in older women may also be because of the artificiality that is part of it. In the film, the aging queen regains her youthful appearance through magical powers whereas Snow White is still genuinely and naturally young. The youthful appearance that is correlated with beauty is thus further divided into two kinds: the naturally young Snow White and her unnaturally young stepmother, the queen—because the latter maintains her beauty through unnatural means. The subsequent triumph of the “naturally beautiful” Snow White over her “unnaturally beautiful” stepmother points at another significant trait present in the beauty ideal. It shows how the beauty norm mandates “naturalness” as an essential feature in identifying the ideal feminine body. Nevertheless, in reality, the process of aging is far more natural than being young forever; hence, as Sandra Lee Bartky remarks, “every woman who gives herself to the disciplinary project of femininity is destined in some degree to fail.” (Bartky, 34)

As elucidated above, the film regards the female beauty ideal as a male constructed idea and this point is further elaborated by depicting the queen's magic mirror as a male-figure. This male-figured magic mirror or the mirror-man is an overt depiction of the victimization of females in front of a domineering male gaze that identifies and rewards women in terms of its identification of the female standard of beauty. Unlike the tale—wherein the magic mirror appears as a gender-neutral object—the film subverts source meanings through its reimagined gendered magic mirror and through that attempts to showcase the new functionality of the mirror. The only magical function ascribed to the mirror, both in the tale

and in the film, is to speak the truth about the queen's beauty. In so doing, the mirror pits the queen against Snow White, a rival to the queen's beauty; hence the mirror emerges as the antagonist of the narrative. The antagonism that the mirror inflicts on the relationship between the queen and Snow White could have been avoided, "if the queen had disregarded the mirror instead of gazing into it and becoming absorbed by it." (Zipes, 116) However, in the film, the queen's preoccupation with her mirror is not viewed as merely a self-obsession but as a fundamental need for survival. According to the spell cast on the queen by her mother, the queen must remain young in order to retain her magical powers and through that sustain her position as the queen. In a scene, we see the queen examining herself in the magic mirror and becoming anxious as she notices wrinkles on her face. Her brother, Fin, attempts to comfort her but the queen remains perturbed about her aging face and looking into the mirror she says, "My power fades". This scene establishes the anxiety and compulsion of the queen to maintain her youthful appearance, and it removes the magical element from the magic mirror as we see the queen assessing herself and remarking on her appearance in the mirror. Umberto Eco, in his analysis of the semiotic function of mirrors argues that, "a mirror does not translate, it records what is stuck, it tells the truth to an inhuman extent... Our brain interprets the retinal data; a mirror does not interpret an object." (Eco, 208) Accordingly, the above scene, by introducing this factual functionality of the mirror, has attempted to showcase the conscious awareness of the queen about her appearance as she seeks the truth about it in her mirror-image and not through the mirror as a speaking-object. At that level, the magic mirror or the mirror-man emerges as an imaginary construction of the queen derived from her conscious knowledge. This point is clearly indicated in another scene in which the queen's interaction with her mirror-man is shot from two different angles: the first angle is a point-of-view shot of the queen where we see and hear the mirror-man responding to the queen; but in the second angle, which is a point-of-view shot of Fin, who is secretly watching the queen, we do not see the mirror-man; it is just the queen standing and speaking in front of her (magic) mirror. That is, the mirror-man, as established in this scene, is a manifestation of the queen's inner-voice or in Eco's terms—"the interpretation of the retinal data"—that reinforces the anxiousness of the beauty norm in the queen. And, since the queen's reflected-self manifests into a male-figure, the narrative indicates the ways in which mirrors can function as a presiding patriarchal force that controls the female-self. Bartky applies Foucault's Panopticism to analyse the disciplinary mechanisms imposed on females for the construction of a feminine body in a contemporary patriarchal culture. She argues that, "the disciplinary power that inscribes femininity on the female body is everywhere and it is nowhere; the disciplinarian is everyone and yet no one in particular." (Bartky, 36) This anonymity and omnipresence of the disciplinarian accounts for the "internalization" of the notion of femininity in females and consequently self-disciplines the female-self to achieve, "a socially constructed feminine body". Here, the process of self-disciplining unambiguously involves self-assessing or self-examining the body, and mirrors or mirror-like surfaces are used as primary tools in that process; hence, the mirror emerges as a vital self-disciplining tool for the female-self. And as seen in the above narrative, the queen's internalized notion of an ideal feminine self is further enhanced by the mirror—the disciplinarian—that constantly rewards the queen for achieving the beauty standard or reminds her of a 'lack' in her appearance. The magic mirror, neither in the tale nor in the film, 'speaks' the truth about the inner-self of the queen or Snow White, that is, the mirror identifies only the physical-self of the two women. This singular functionality ascribed to the mirror

indicates the prominence attached to physical appearance on the female-self and the decisive way in which female subjectivity is constructed around the idealised notion of female appearance. The beauty ideal, as Wolf observes, is, “the contemporary backlash on females and the last one remaining of the old feminine ideologies that still has the power to control those women whom second wave feminism would have otherwise made relatively uncontrollable: It has grown stronger to take over the work of social coercion that myths about motherhood, domesticity, chastity, and passivity, no longer can manage. It is seeking right now to undo psychologically and covertly all the good things that feminism did for women materially and overtly.” (Wolf, 10) The contemporary film version of the tale overtly exemplifies Wolf’s point as it re-constructs Snow White’s identity from being a passive girl in the tale to a warrior princess in the film and it also rationalizes the queen’s narcissism. However, the film retains the beauty myth and through that reflects on the anxieties of women about the same old beauty myth that still persists in contemporary culture. Thus, the film can be read as a fictional representation of most women in the contemporary world and their experiences with mirrors which in turn composes and confines female identity within a beauty frame.

In conclusion, the film thus captures the contemporary notion of femininity wherein the artifice of femininity is defined in terms of physical beauty. Since physical beauty is further construed in strict terminologies by the still prevalent male dominated world, the female self is forced to perceive itself in such homogenised terms. Mirrors continue to reflect this notion to the female self, both physically and psychologically; as a result, they emerge as a site for the construction of an oppressed female-self. As Wolf states, “The beauty myth of the present is more insidious than any mystique of femininity yet: A century ago, Nora slammed the door of the doll’s house; a generation ago, women turned their backs on the consumer heaven of the isolated multiapplianced home; but where women are trapped today, there is no door to slam”. (19) However, there are certainly mirrors to shatter in order to identify a much plural and unbiased feminine identity.

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Breast Politics and Ceaseless Quest for Power in Contemporary Society

From ancient times, in discussion on perspective literature, films, and popular culture, the creation and perpetuation of the feminine ideal is that of a “Sweeter Girl”.- a busty, curvaceous figure more sexual that would provide an instigation for men's gaze.

As the historian Kathy Peiss notes, “Beauty signifies difference....making distinctions between high and low, normal and abnormal, virtue and vice”. In so doing, beauty defines morality, social status, class, gender, race and ethnicity. Women's bodies are constantly under surveillance. Borrowing Foucaultian language, media can be referred to as a “cosmopolitan panopticon” that dictates women's clothing, hairstyle, body size and shape. By “violating these expectations”, women are subjected to discrimination. Despite the advancement in science, technology and education system, the notion of women's body as an object has remained the same. The images and messages thrown by media today would exemplify the same.

Because women's bodies mirror cultural values, the treatment of fashion, body types, and beauty ideals offer a key lens for interpretations of culture. Historians' writings about beauty and cosmetic culture in the post - war era focus on the beauty industry rather than women bodies. The feminist author Naomi Wolf in her work “The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty are used Against Women” argues that the perception of beauty is imposed by a patriarchal society to keep women in their place. Drawing on extensive research, Wolf discusses anorexia bulimia and the increasing number of plastic surgeries within the contemporary context. She argues that the beauty myth not only works against women, but also encourages them to sabotage themselves by trying to achieve impossible standards. Moreover, she ascribes all of modern women's social ills to the beauty myth, including mental illness and the rise in rape since 1980s.

It is ingrained in human nature to mystify, mythify and after an extent demystify women. In order to achieve this progress, the weapon that patriarchy uses against women is her own body. The critical work of Germaine Greer and other theorists who ascribe to body politics try to equibalance between the role of breasts and freedom. The Female Eunuch states the sad plight of women by stating “Freedom from the duty of sexual stimulation of jaded male appetite, for which no breast ever bulges hard enough”. It is important to contextualise these lines in terms of 'power' and 'insecurity'. The celebrities who perform breast augmentation advertise that looking 'sexy' gives an extra sense of confidence. This paper instead of falling into the pros and cons of Breast Augmentation and other corrective surgeries, would like to focus on the psyche behind the women who perform surgeries and the society's role in instigating the same.

The biological aspects of the role of breasts are necessary to understand the beginning of the so called “objectification of breast”. The breast, the seat of mammary gland and its bosoming is always connected with men's gaze in terms of progeny. A man is attracted, stimulated by a woman who could produce enough food for his children. And in terms of

evolution, the breast is used as storehouse of fats and lipids in case of starvation. While biology and evolution theory backs upon women's breast and its size, the constant remainder of men's gaze is directly proportioned with that of the size of a women's breast. The paintings of Renaissance or any appealing portrait of women always fall back on the size of breast. The paintings, *'After the Bath'* or *'Reclining Nude'* or even *'The Birth of Venus'* constantly are remainders for women to negate the fact that disproportioned breasts cannot survive. The women are infantilised till the bosom takes its growth peak and then protected cautiously after her growth of breasts. In the book, *On Female Body Experience*, Iris Maron Young tries to debunk the canonical thought and the canonical thought processes involved with women's body, with regard to breast or hip or clitoris. She explores the process behind clothing industry and their creation of various fetishisms, be it breast or shape or navel. She states, "Frequently the cuts also direct attention to the fetishized neck, breasts, stomach, genitals, thighs, calves and ankles. The slit aesthetic creates the image of sexy clothed body, an image of phallic female power." For a woman and other around her, a woman's breasts are daily visible and tangible signifier of her femininity. The consumer industry makes women's body a marketing playground creating numerous stereotypes, from bow like eyebrows, red wine lips, candle 8 structure, long hair, fair skin to prominent bosom. The bra or breasts -covering cloth that which has to hide and hold women's breasts have forgone their role long ago and transgressed to 'sex quotient' and inviting nature. The concept of underwear has shifted their paradigm from being invisible to necessity of making them extra visible. This is the marketing trick employed by society that caters to the patriarchal instincts to produce women's clothing. As long as they stay invisible, the rate of purchase is never going to hike up until a seducing notch is added to it.

The 'beauty' or 'concept of beauty' when looked through microscopic lenses are representation of certain ideologies, preferences and proportions. The 'concept of beauty' is dynamic and the fabrication of beauty notions changes from time to time. The breast in itself as a beauty quotient has changed from voluptuous, firm, perky to small and "politically correct breasts". These changes in notions are hints to understand the changing necessity in the field of marketing. Advertising for one particular aspect could create less revenue than numerous aspects and the market understands the consumer's psyche.

A celebratory of cosmetic culture, Lois Banner in "American Beauty" believes that the pursuit of beauty, more than any other factor, is responsible for connecting women of different classes, regions and ethnic groups. Although the "choice" to look one way or not does appear egalitarian, the parameters of preferability still exist and are generally caucasian, 1950s and 1960s witnessed a beauty revolution which can be termed as "mammary madness". "Are you there God? It's me Margaret" is a famous novel by the American author Judy Blume in which you see a group of adolescent girls fixated on three things: getting it (periods), boys and breasts. Shapely, ample breasts remain a constant desire for centuries. Although the fashion and ideal figures have come and gone, perhaps no singular female body part has experienced more shifting and unnatural shaping than breasts. As one Esquire columnist observed this phenomenon, "confronted by such a bulge of blouse or sweater, the American male snorts like a caribou in the spring thaws. When an actress with cantaloupe contours appear on the screen," he continues, "Marines stomp their feet, husbands tug at their leashes and college boys roll their eyes like Tristains. The American admiration for large-breasted women was globally recognized. Reports surfaced about prostitutes in Asian countries receiving silicone injections into their breasts for better appeal to American

soldiers stationed abroad, and Japan became a forerunner in breast augmentation procedures. In short, popular culture declared to women that to find and keep the attention of men, one needed large breasts. In addition, one's employment could also be predicted on breast size. This may be a sad commentary upon our civilization and upon the efficacy of higher education but in certain employment circles, a well-filled sweater is as great as a phi beta kappa key.

The digitally enhanced advertising creates unrealistic and unhealthy models for women of all the ages. Celebrating good health and longevity should become our priorities rather than mimicking the too thin-woman on the cover of the magazine to fit a socially constructed aesthetic. The women are subjugated to become constant prey in this phallo - euro centric world. The breast augmented women, small breasted women or perfectly shaped women and even saggy breasted women are mere creations for men's gaze. The 'constructed' beauty is unattainable and yet patriarchy drives women towards that goal. The beauty notion in terms of breasts are constantly going to alter and that creates the understanding that irrespective of size of breasts, there is a soul inside and it has to be acknowledged.

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Beauty as a Perception : A Critique of *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas*

Abstract

This paper attempts to delve deeply in understanding the theory of beauty as a perception in the post colonial context. The beauty as aesthetics is an integral part of any liberal art. The word beauty is a very broad and elusive term and it can be varying from geographically, sociologically, culturally and also perceptual. Since beauty is a central theme of any piece of literature. This paper will explore the concept of beauty through Arun Joshi's second novel The Strange Case of the Billy Biswas.

Objective

To explore beauty from the Post colonial literature point view.

To Analyse Beauty as a perception

The Beauty is strange and mysterious in the post colonial novel The Strange Case of Billy Biswas. This novel is a severe condemnation of the spiritual up rootedness of the post independence westernized Indian society. Billy Biswas the central character of the novel is from very illustrious and aristocratic family. He could have become so called successful modern man with all material comforts. But his inner call is searching for the true beauty of life. Billy Biswas goes to America to study Engineering but later studies Anthropology, and returns to India and after sometimes disappears for ten years in the Saal forest of Maikala Hills in Madhya Pradesh. Billy sees real beauty of life and love in an adivasi girl Bilasia.

Conclusion

This deep metaphysical search has led Billy into the wild and strange beauty which is really perplexed thing to the other characters but Billy finds fulfillment in the wild beauty and he even sacrifices his life for the cause.

Keywords: Myth, Strange Love, Wild and Beauty

This paper attempts to delve deep in understanding the theory of beauty as a perception in Arun Joshi's Second novel *The Strange case of Billy Biswas* (1971). Arun Joshi is an outstanding writer in Indian Writing in English. His novels are absorbing and delved into existentialism while integrating the Indian tradition of introspection. His fiction blended with beauty and beast ideas. It is very interesting to look at his creative work from the post-colonial point of view because this novel was written in 1970s though it falls in the post-colonial context the novel foretells more about modern day problems like: rich and poor, mainstream society and tribal world, unitary (Indian) and monolithic (West-American) world. As if serendipity experience Joshi's novel traces all the modern day problems like economic marginality, subversiveness and regional disparity and others, In addition to it Joshi has written about shortcomings about his own country. These are all a great insights about his work and it proves in every sense Arun Joshi is not just a writer-critic but also a great observer. Arun Joshi, a writer by choice and a management consultant by training and

profession, has published four novels: *The Foreigner* (1971), *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* (1971), *The Apprentice* (1974) and *The Last Labyrinth* (1981). His novels have an existential flavor, as he has been influenced by Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre and others.

This research looks into some of the nuances of beauty. In fact, it is a very broad term and it can vary from one context to another context. The term has been used in arts and aesthetics very liberally and it is difficult to confine 'beauty' to the one perceptive or one sided view. The quest of beauty is eternal and universal. The application of 'beauty' as a theory or to define as even as a general term is an uphill task because again it further opens up to infinite philosophical or hypothetical questions like: 'Truth' 'Morality' 'Wisdom' 'Perfection' and others. In fact, this paper tries to trace 'beauty' and its associated aspects from the post-colonial perspective than mere aesthetic and philosophical point of view. To put forth this argument in a peripheral way, further this research shall look into the famous Greek and philosophers like Plato and Aristotle to understand what is 'beauty' from philosophical point of view. Aristotle says the essential constituents of 'beauty' are symmetry order and proportion, but in post-colonial studies binaries becomes the moot point. The word 'beauty' is widely used adjective from day today common parlance to exalted world like: music, literature and especially in aesthetics. In his theory of mimesis Plato says that all art is mimetic by nature; art is an imitation of life. Arun Joshi's *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is true to it in every sense.

The novel breaks the traditionally accepted norms in the post-colonial context. Aristotle defined beauty in his famous work *Metaphysics*, “As a concept of beauty occurs when all parts work together in harmony so that no part draws unjust attention to itself” (P.28) Whereas in Arun Joshi's concept of 'Beauty' breaks these harmony, oneness and also his writing shows beastliness in beauty and other binaries like good and bad, accept and unaccepted, modern and traditional, mundane and spiritual. In *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* the accepted form of cultural assertions is explicitly presented through fragmentation, otherness, and through subalterns voice.

The “beauty” is normally perceived as all accepted form which is ideal but Arun Joshi has non-idealized the 'beauty'. Joshi mainly poses these concepts of beauty as a perception than any set of readymade definitions. So according to the writer 'beauty' is in the eye of the beholder. Joshi has portrayed his central character Billy Biswas as a true beauty seeker and his persuasion of beauty is spiritual and his love is platonic. The novel begins with Billy's transgression of all accepted norms like; going to America to study Engineering but studies Anthropology and returns to India and instead of taking up Indian elite government services like IAS he takes up teaching in Delhi University or marriage with a woman who is angel at home but Billy's character is contrast to these things he is not happy with any of these things he takes pleasure in the wilderness.

On the whole, Arun Joshi is a mature craftsman endowed with remarkable command over style and techniques. *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is a more experimented novel. Joshi has used flash back techniques, character as a narrator and metaphysical narration brings more literary merit to it. Romesh Sahai known as Romi narrates the entire story. Romi meets Bimal Biswas, known as Billy Biswas while searching for accommodation in New York. Romi asserts in the beginning that he has not understood Billy:

“As I grow old, I realize that the most futile cry of man is his impossible wish to be understood. The attempt to understand is probably even more futile. If in spite of this I

propose to relate Billy's story it is not so much because I claim to have understood him as it is on account of a deep and unrelieved sense of wonder that in the middle of the twentieth century, in the heart of Delhi's smart society, there should have lived a man of such extraordinary obsessions..." (P.7)

Billy offers to share with him his apartment in Harlem, the black ghetto in America. The novel demonstrates from the beginning Billy's strange approach to life and which is not acceptable to others it is acceptable to him; like Black ghetto there he finds that "the most human" (P. 9). Romi and Billy live together and develop an unusual friendship which lasts till the death of Billy.

The Strange Case of Billy Biswas has five discernable phases: Billy's life in America, his fondness for Anthropology, Marriage, Primitive world and his death. Billy is a man of brilliant intellect, profound sensibility and extraordinary obsessions and goes to America for a degree in Engineering, as his father, a judge in Supreme Court of India, wanted it but quite contrary to his father's wishes he earns his Ph.D in Anthropology because it is his first love. Joshi draws readers' attention towards the central character Billy who has a lot of picaresque nature and sees beauty in strange things at least for others it is strange like: studying Anthropology instead of Engineering, thinking about primitive world and black ghetto and others. Billy is a true beauty seeker there is individuality and novelty in his approach even when his father mocked at him for studying Anthropology but he is firm in his decision. His father says:

"Anthropology he screamed in amazement when I told him. Anthropology! Of all things you had to go and do Anthropology. He thinks man is governed by only Engineering and law and nothing else, rather a disgraceful point of view for a justice, don't you think?" He laughed again, and so did we. And what does your mother think? She thinks I can do nothing wrong so long as I agree to get marriage right away." (P.44)

However, Billy pursues his loved subjects and completes his Ph.D. He studies deeply the primitive world and customs. In fact, Billy's whole life is organized around his interest in the primitive world than so called modern civilized world.

The story proceeds with Romi's single point of narration sometimes very interactive and engaging with past and present and it makes the reader or observer to look into inward beauty of many phases of life than external artificial world. Joshi simultaneously projects an awareness of the changing context in which his characters live and move and Billy has been conscious of a great force a primitive force within himself right from his adolescence. Billy starts teaching Anthropology at Delhi University. He marries Meena, a sophisticated and beautiful Bengali girl, who tries to her best to understand him but his interest in the wild disturbs her. Billy himself says: "the more I tried to tell her what was corroding me bringing me to the edge of despair so to speak the more resentful she became". (P. 16). Billy is restless and sick of his culture out of which he sprang. He argues:

"I know what got me was the superficiality, the sense of values. I don't think all city societies are as shallow as ours. I am, of course talking mainly of the so-called upper classes. I didn't get to know the others. I don't think I have ever met a more pompous, a more mixed up lot of people. Artistically, they were dry as dust. Intellectually, they were could not better than

mechanically mouth ideas the west abandoned a generation ago. Their idea of romance was to go and see an American movie or go to one of those wretched restaurants and dance with their wives to a thirty year old tune. Nobody remembered the old songs, or the meaning of the festivals. All the sensuality has gone. So was the poetry. All that was left was loudmouthed women and men in three piece suits dreaming their little adulteries.” (P.98)

Billy hates artificiality of the modern world. This has influenced him directly or indirectly to prepare for one long anthropological trip which is his long cherished dream. Billy feels choked in the hollow, artificial, sophisticated and fancy atmosphere of the civilized society. So he opts out of the modern world of the post- colonial pseudo-western values. Though story is much about individual introspection, the oriental and occidental conflicts are persuasive in the entire story.

Billy on one of his anthropological excursions to the Saal forests of Maikala hills in Madhya Pradesh, like real spiritual seeker he mysteriously vanishes. He abandons his wife (very beautiful), his only son (very handsome) and his parents (very caring). Billy never aspires to achieve materialistic perfection and his detachment from modern life proves that his real conviction in true beauty

While in the creation of art Joshi is not just a mere observer of beauty, the concept of beauty has given greater scope for multidimensional point of view in his work. When a writer views certain forms of beauty he/she can see certain weaknesses certain elements of ugliness, as Arun Joshi does in his work. Joshi has not just found aesthetics standards in the realm of the 'beauty' alone but also in the realms of the 'Truth and of the Morally Good. As Marshall in his famous work *The Beautiful* he opines that: “The creative artist should also aim to become a good critic...for clearly the artist, if he is to accomplish worthy results, must in any event be a critic of his own work at certain times during the relatively long intervals between the brief movements of his creative endeavor.” (P.125)

Arun Joshi's selection of subject, choice of words, place and space are much diversified. Joshi is not just a writer he is also a critic and observer of his socio-political world. Billy totally alienates himself from the civilization he could never identify himself with. He is thoroughly searched in the entire tribal area but no trace of him. Romi and Billy's family uses full power to the extent to search him but all the efforts are vain. Billy is smart enough to manage to escape and it is presumed that he has been killed by a tiger prowling in the area. The self imposed alienation from the sophisticated civilization enables him to live with adivasis. He madly falls in love with Bilasia, an adivasi girl; he sees true beauty in her, who he feels is “the essence of that primitive force that had called me night after night, year after year”. (P.172)

Billy Biswas story is mirror to the aversion to the modern life and it further draws him close to the tribal world. They are believed as the king and queen of that tribal world. The down to earth primitive tribales believe that Billy is endowed with mysterious supernatural powers. Dhunia, tribal leader claims that he has seen Billy send away a tiger who had been ravaging the forest for a week killing their cattle and bringing back his grandson to life who had been dead for two hours. These superstitious believe have not gone to Billy's head he never claimed he is a godman and in fact, he confesses with Romi that he does not do any magic whatever the things he has predicted it has come true by sheer coincident. This research has mainly concentrated on Billy's character not much about other characters except

Romi. He is the narrator and very important character in the story. He returns to India and joins Indian elite service IAS and when he is the DC on his official tour of the Maikala Range is startled to see Billy wearing loincloth and nothing else. Romi is shocked to see his friend who is disappeared ten years ago and now completely tribalised himself but retains impeccable English accent. Romi after much persuasion Billy agrees to talk to him while explaining his mysterious disappearance he says: "I had two clear choices: I could either follow this call, this vision whatever the cost, or be condemned to total decay." (P.162).

Billy's identification with the tribal world is inseparable. Billy again meets Romi after a few days and cures his wife Situ's chronic migraine with some herbs. Romi promises not to disclose his whereabouts to anyone but Romi is helpless person, his wife, Situ tells Billy's wife. On his father's influence a thorough search is made to comb to get back Billy to the so called mainstream world but by mistakenly Billy is killed by a policeman. Billy's death is very symbolic. The novel is much acclaimed literary work for its blend of reality with imaginary incidents. Arun Joshi's thought provoking novel has attracted many readers and critics.

The sense of beauty is mysterious in its nature and beauty cannot be restricted to any one of the fields of sensation, perception or imagination. As Henry Rutgers Marshall opines "Beautiful imaginative literature is largely coupled with recognition of unrealness we construct what we recognize as "Make believe" tales. In fact, the employment of unrealness in the arts is so general that the production of illusion-the making the unreal appear-real has been often spoken of by writers of importance as one of the aims of the artist." (P.48). The important point which has been ironically conveyed in *The Strange Case of Billy Biswas* is that "Beauty" is perceptive and Billy's death is very symbolic to the so called modern civilized world. On the whole, in dealing with the truth Joshi's concept of beauty is very akin to Keatsian kind of beauty-truth. Joshi does not demonstrate only those things are beautiful according to the contemporary world. He has deep insight to see beauty even in those things that are not thought beautiful by others.

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Stories Mediatized : A Study on Recently Emerged Narrative Spaces

Abstract

There has been a revolutionary change in the field of narrative spaces recently. The most important factor behind is the media itself. The intrusion of media in everyday life has made life impossible without it. It has also created very many new platforms for voicing one's thoughts about various matters. In today's mediatized lifestyle, it is not necessary for anyone to follow age old methods of printing and publishing to voice out their opinions. We have the liberty to publicize our opinions through different media of our choice. If one is creative enough, propagating that idea is not a matter of concern. Such is the reach of media in our daily life. Everything that surrounds us becomes a narrative space, which has the potential to facilitate our ideas.

This paper focuses on making a study on recent emerging trends which aids in narrating one's own story. Various such new genres can be identified which includes trolls, Emojis, short films, videos, Whatsapp chat-stories, and other social medias. Even though it has got its own drawbacks, it should be noted that it has made a great impact upon the knowledge-base worldwide. Also it has helped even the layman to recognise his own creativity as it ensures everyone's participation in contributing ideas to widen the general perspective upon a matter. These newly emerged mediatized narrative spaces liberate art from its constraints, as it gives opportunity for everyone to speak out their thoughts. This paper attempts to introduce certain recently emerged narrative platforms of this sort, where art and creativity is propagated in full swing where everyone becomes an author.

Key Words: Media, self- centred narratives, destruction of centre, popular culture, colourism

“Even as human beings were born, stories too were born...

From the time the River of life began to flow,
stories have been sailing on it.” (Joseph 16)

As long as there is life, stories are sure to sprout. Narrative space thus becomes an unlimited canvas which is identifiable anywhere by anybody for narrating their stories. Anything and everything turns out to be a good platform for laying down our thoughts on various matters. If one has a story to narrate, the way in which that story is moulded, shaped and presented to the audience is what is called the narrative space. It can be a verbal or a visual narrative.

Narrative is a spoken or written account of connected events in the form of or concerned with narration. **Narrative** or otherwise called a **story** is a report of connected events , real or imaginary, presented in a sequence of written or spoken words, or still or moving images or both. The word derives from the Latin verb *narrare* which means to tell. Narrative is found

in all forms of human creativity, art and entertainment which includes speech, literature, theatre, music, comics, journalism, film, television, video games, radio, and performance in general, as well as painting, sculpture, drawing, photography, and other visual arts, as long as a sequence of events is presented. (“Narrative”)

“Oral storytelling is the earliest method for sharing narratives. It is a common practice that, during childhood days narratives are used to guide children on proper behaviour, cultural history, formation of a communal identity, and values” (“Narrative”). In the much earlier times, it is also able to identify certain stories carved or marked on rocks in the form of pictures or signs as visual representations. Epics, poetry, drama, novels, short stories, articles, films, sculptures, paintings etc became the then popular narrative spaces widely used by great artists, which are dated even till now.

As eighteenth century marked the popularity of novels among common masses due to the emergence of working class, twenty first century stands for the burgeoning of mediatized forms of narration due to the popularity of technological gadgets among people worldwide. During eighteenth century, novels were much popular than short stories because of its detailed narration, where the reader would just transform themselves to one of the characters and indulges in it so much, because they wanted an escape from their dreary routine life, which resulted in purgation of emotions. But twenty first century is noted for its 'life-easing' technological inventions and its popularity worldwide. In this busy world, nobody cares for longer and time-consuming narratives, but goes for much lighter and faster options which are readily available. Most of these narratives are mediatized ones and each day new genres are developed in this area. Unlike earlier times, today nobody limits themselves to any specific forms of narrative, but changes their positions from the reader, writer and sometimes inventors of new genres. We can sense a destruction of the so called 'centre' or mainstream works which dominated once, as anybody becomes the author, reader and propagator. To become an author or a narrator, it doesn't take much effort, and due to the wide reach of media, publicising one's opinion is not a matter of concern too.

The intrusion of media and technology in daily life became so deep-rooted, that there is no escape from it for anyone. From entertainment to life necessities, anything and everything is served by internet. Every moment of human life is intrinsically woven and blended with these gadgets facilitated by World Wide Web. The major reasons behind this popularity and indulgence of technology in daily life are many. The cheaper rates at which internet facilities and gadgets are available in the market make even the poorest of the poor afford it. The rates have gone so cheaper that the mobile gadgets are even owned by people who are in the lower strata of the society. Another important factor is that, everyday new applications are emerging to make life one-step more comfortable, and continuous usage of these applications makes one addicted even more towards their gadgets. Utter freedom of expression through social media persuades people towards it, because it is a good platform for masses to converse and opine about topics of their choice. Sometimes even a revolution can take shape from a tiny spark in social media, as it gathers people together, who tends to be passive otherwise. Also as it facilitates people to hide their identities if necessary, and this is an ultimate freedom for those who do not wish to reveal themselves due to several reasons. Even though it has got its own demerits, these are more than necessary reasons for people to

follow media and its by-products. Since people are more into media nowadays, it is automatic that everything that revolves around a human being becomes mediatised. Even art of narration has also taken several shape of its kind in a mediatised world. The narrative techniques and presentations of stories got affected by technology, thus creating various new 'mediatised' genres, which are in popular use today.

Current scenario is a fertile land for any kind of narrative approach to grow and spread with no control issued upon it. This has resulted in a splurge of new narrative genres which involves media in it. The most recent ones are Whatsapp chat stories, trolls, Emojis, short-films, videos, and narration that occur in various social media. All these genres promise lesser time-consumption, lesser production and publication charge, and greater propagation of creativity. Also these narrative spaces call everyone to be a part of the narration.

Trolls:

A recent trend seen in narrative space is the emergence of what is now popularly known as 'trolls' in social media, which is a form of visual text. If anyone has any form of disapproval with the things happening in and around our society, be it politics, films or moral values; it is expressed through these trolls with a tinge of sarcasm hidden. Initially it started off as an argument or a sarcastic disapproval. But recently the marketing experts have identified the scope and reach of these so called 'trolls', and now they have started using it as an advertising tool which is cost effective too. They circulate largely among the social media and its effects are immense. The popularity of a film, political issue or a marketing product suddenly increases once these topics enter into the social media as trolls. This is a passive strategy, where coding and decoding of meanings becomes an integral part. So, trolls are used by many to narrate their own stories and opinions about various subjects. Its own perspective to narrate a situation and its popularity in social media is immense.

Whatsapp chat stories:

Whatsapp is an application which is used for socialising through instant messaging, through which a person is able to send pictures, sound clips, videos, documents etc, within a matter of seconds. The conversation that happens between people through this application is called chat. There has been a new trend in creating and narrating stories through these chats. A story can be narrated completely through this chat method, where the characters of the story seem to be texting each other, and they render their dialogues as texts in a chat conversation in Whatsapp. If there are more than two characters, a group chat is possible. Sound clips and video clips are also included for further effects. This method is now used as a learning strategy as a new way of teaching dramas as well as short stories, which ensures active participation and involvement of students. The students are divided into different characters in the story and they are asked to convert textual plays into a Whatsapp chat stories. Here students use their own mobile phones and send the dialogues of their characters accordingly, to the other character's phone. Gradually it evolves into a complete Whatsapp chat story. This is a very interesting recent narrative strategy which erases monotonous reading.

Emoji:

Emojis are standardised ideogrammatic icons used in text messages over the internet.

These symbols were initially seen in Japanese text messages, where it represented the idea of something without indicating the sequence of sounds to pronounce it. “Originally meaning pictograph, the word Emoji comes from Japanese 'e' (picture) and 'moji' (character). The resemblance to English words emotion and emoticon is purely coincidental. Ideogrammatic symbols generally include numerals, traffic signs, graphic symbols such as @, #, \$, %, ^, & etc. Emojis generally shows various human emotions through pictures. They are ideograms and smileys used in electronic messages and web pages. Emojis exist in various genres, including facial expressions, common objects, places, types of weather, and animals” ('Emoji’). They are much like emoticons, but Emojis are actual pictures instead of typographics, where punctuation marks are used. Many Whatsapp chat stories are created using just these set of Emojis. It reminds us of the earliest language patterns where men drew pictures and icons on rocks and other surfaces to render messages. Whole story narration is possible using Emojis alone, which is a very interesting and popular kind of narrative strategy.

Recently there has been a great change in the presentation of human characters and human body parts through Emojis, regarding their skin colour. Earlier there was only one skin colour offered for human characters and that was of course the lighter one. Now there is a provision to select our skin tone while sending human characters in chats. That is definitely a revolutionary change, since it helps in eradicating the stigma around lighter skin tone. It gives importance to all skin tones and is a token of respect provided to each one of it. Everyone sees their own skin tones being accepted as a normal one, and feels confident of it. This erases the wrong notion that- white is superior, accepted and normal. Here all the skin tones are given equal importance, which definitely shows the world the right direction.

Short films and videos:

As the name suggests, short films are those with lesser time duration which can lasts for less than even one minute. For making a short film, one does not have to be an established director and writer. Anybody with basic technical assistance can make a short film. Concerned with production, it is comparatively much cheaper and it takes very short time period to complete the whole work. It is popular among the audience because it is less time consuming, and very sharp in its portrayal of message and narration of incidents. Its focus is very clear and precise, and it is one of the most celebrated genres among the current mediatized narrative techniques. Just like short films, many videos are also circulated in social media such as Whatsapp, Facebook, YouTube etc, in which diverse levels of narration takes place. It can be even taken by a regular phone camera by anyone. There are a wide range of phone applications that are available which aids the user to create customised videos of their choice. Narratives are also found in web pages as well as social media like twitter, Facebook, blogs etc. Rather than relying on magazines or books for sharing opinions, stories and thoughts these social media pages are widely used, because of its vast reach within a matter of seconds.

When analysed the pattern behind these mediatized narration, most of these are amateur narratives that largely focuses on 'me'. These self-centred narratives are widely celebrated now a day among the popular masses. Even though technology has made our life easy, they have also made our worlds smaller to fit into a mobile phone screens. The obsession of the masses upon technological gadgets as well as its applications has made the reach of

mediatised stories wider and stronger. It sets no limits to the author's imagination, as it is beyond the boundaries of class, caste, creed, gender, community, religion, and nation. Media now functions as an integral part of human life. Since these stories' reach is worldwide, its production, propagation and its reviewing is celebrated and accepted by the people all over the world.

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Delineating the Association Between Beauty and Racial Self in Nella Larsen's *Passing*

Identity has always been a key concept in the contemporary world. It gives you a sense of belonging to a particular group or location and all the more, it defines yourself. Chris Weedon in his work *Identity and Culture* has quoted the famous sociologist Jeffrey Weeks as follows: “Each of us live with a variety of potentially contradictory identities, which battle within us for allegiance: as men or women, black or white, straight or gay, able-bodied or disabled” . . . (1). Construction of an individual's self depends upon various factors such as racial, cultural, social, environmental, etc. A complete autonomy over one's self is rarely achievable and many a times it gets all the more confusing and contradictory.

American culture is a platform that ensembles the multitude of aspects, which defines an individual and his/her individuality. Racial lineage has been one of the deciding factors for an individual to survive and gain acceptance in this “melting pot” culture. “Being white” has been the general norm and anything “other” is viewed with a total disgrace and disappointment altogether. Each aspect of an individual — race, class, gender, phenotype — is defined by the stereotypical standards set by the dominant thereby heightening the insecurities and pangs in his/her mind. Mixed race individuals are those who have always struggled in this regard, as they remain in between every standard set by the society.

Identity construction as far as a mixed race individual is concerned, is ever contested upon as they are visibly characterised by the mixing up of various physical traits like their skin colour: dark or light; hair structure: curly or straight; eye colour etc., unlike the people belonging to a single race. It is all the more challenging for a mixed race woman to have an identity as tremendous value is placed on physical appearance as a determinant of social worth for women in the United States.

1920s in the United States was an era marked by the establishment and regulations of social and racial boundaries between blacks and whites. There have been complexities and anxieties as well regarding the crossing of the so called “colour-line,” as the dominant class named the racial segregation lines. The act of “racial passing” can be defined as the deed of crossing the colour line by individuals, and attempting to claim recognition in another racial group different from one they were believed to belong to. This action has been aggravated with the Great Migration in which thousands of black people left the rural south area for the northern and western cities, where they tried to change the entire social set up with their new identities of being immigrants. Race gets assessed mainly on the basis of skin colour of the individuals and hence, their appearance and performance matter for their existence. Talent and character don't seem to provide a person an existence in the American society on the first hand as physical appearance has been the ruling strategy of the whole identity scenario.

Nella Larsen, born Nellie Walker, is an American novelist of the Harlem Renaissance. She has published two novels, *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929), and a few short stories.

An avant-garde approach in her writing has occurred since the late 20th century, when she started dealing with the issues of racial and sexual identity of 1920s segregated America. Larsen's novel *Passing* has been published in 1929 and is set primarily in the Harlem neighbourhood of New York City in the 1920s. The title and central theme of the novel refer to “racial passing,” a social phenomenon that has been in vogue during the 1920s. The novel explores the subject of racial identity through the lives of two modern light-skinned African American women and childhood friends, Irene Redfield and Clare Kendry.

“Race is constructed by the society and the social construction of race arranges people into distinct groups,” according to Critical Race Theory (Tyson 369-73). While Clare Kendry permanently passes for white along with making attempts to find her way back to the black community, Irene Redfield lives as a black woman but maintains a white lifestyle. Irene occasionally masks her black identity and passes for white for her own comfort and convenience. Both Irene and Clare try hard to be on both sides of the two polar opposite races but they fail to be on both the sides at a time as the race is constructed by the society and the society allows them to be only on any one side of the two antagonistic identities of black and white.

Beauty is very significant to the characters in *Passing*, whom Larsen portrays as constantly weighing up other people's physical appearances, attending to their own, and worrying about how they look comparatively. Irene is very much pre occupied with beauty and the same is made very evident by Larsen from earlier in the novel itself with an incident that happens during the trip that Irene makes to Chicago. She, after seeing a man either faint or die of heatstroke, and after nearly fainting from heatstroke herself, tries to “repair” her appearance as soon as she is out of the heat:

There was that little grating sound of the clutch being slipped in as the man put the car in gear and slid deftly out into the boiling traffic. Reviving under the warm breeze stirred up by the moving cab, Irene made some small attempts to repair the damage that the heat had done to her appearance. (12)

This shows, to some extent ironically, how high a priority is looking good for Irene — she worries about her looks, not the fate of the man she saw faint— and thinks of how when she is not at her peak appearance, she feels “broken.”

Being white has been considered lucky in America, for it offered a dominant status. In spite of belonging to the mixed race category, Clare enjoys high status, privileges, and advantages due to her looks as a white woman as white stands as the dominant category. Richard Dyer in his *White* observes that the whites stand as the dominant race; consequently, they obtain the central role as they are placed as the norm, the standard, and as the superior race (12). Even Irene makes use of her light skinned appearance to pass off as white to enjoy the societal privileges offered to the whites. Catherine Rottenburg is of the opinion that people are assigned to a race based on their looks and performance (492). If they look white, they will be categorised under the whites and if they look black, then they will be categorised to be black. When Irene almost faints in public, the cab driver offers to take her for a brief respite to the Drayton, an exclusive restaurant for the whites judging her completely on the basis of her looks: “The Drayton, ma'am?” he suggested. “They do say as how it's always a breeze up there” (12).

African Americans generally encounter the dilemmas of racial passing and

achievement of an integrated identity in America, where they are judged in every sphere of life. These dilemmas have encouraged various cosmetic companies of the times to target their insecurities and fears in the minds with the introduction of wide ranging skin lightening cosmetics. These products have been introduced with the claims to enhance the appearance of blacks to seem white thereby enabling them to earn the privileges offered to the whites by the society. Those privileges can generally include a good social and economic status, equal job and marriage prospects as the whites etc. Though these claims aimed at wide range marketing and reaping of huge profit, the clear cut propaganda of the racial ideology of being at the least off white than to be completely white is very much evident. These may also become catalysts to reinforce skin whitening to strengthen the tactics of white superiority.

Discussion regarding the physical concept of beauty can be seen in the novel as the characters comment on what they think makes someone physically beautiful. They try very often to associate their yardsticks of beauty to racialized physical attributes. These kinds of evaluations of physical attractiveness are deeply socially and politically charged. Certain characters explicitly profess to favour traits that they see as “white”: light skin, hair, and eyes. The conversation between Gertrude, Clare, and Irene over tea, when Gertrude and Clare state that they both are happy that their children have light skin is a proof for the same. Gertrude states: “I nearly died of terror the whole nine months before Margery was born for fear that she might be dark. Thank goodness, she turned out all right. But I’ll never risk it again” (59). Gertrude even goes as far as to say that “nobody wants a dark child” (60). Though the preference of skin colour by the characters is certainly linked to the privilege that black people can access when they pass as white, it also clearly uses aesthetics to devalue blackness. At the same time, Irene explicitly mentions in a proud tone that her husband and one of her boys are black and she finds black skin aesthetically beautiful while she has been struggling hard to control her anger and contempt.

Beauty as exoticism is an idea that recurs in the novel. In spite of Irene's professed preference for “black” traits, she glorifies Clare's “whiter” beauty to a great extent. Irene returns again and again to Clare's beauty, admiring her light skin and blond hair. Larsen shows Irene's obsession with Clare's beauty not just through her active comments about her attractiveness, but also in how the narration describes her. The narration is told in a very close third person and also from Irene's perspective. The narrator's mentions of Clare's “ivory” skin and blond hair are part of Irene's inner monologue. Irene also focuses on Clare's dark eyes, which she thinks of as “negro eyes.”

“She herself had always had it. Just as she'd always had that pale gold hair, which unshaved still, was drawn loosely back from a broad brow, partly hidden by the small close hat. Her lips, painted a brilliant geranium-red, were sweet and sensitive and a little obstinate. A tempting mouth. The face across the forehead and cheeks was a trifle too wide, but the ivory skin had a peculiar soft lustre. And the eyes were magnificent! Dark, sometimes absolutely black, always luminous, and set in long, black lashes. Arresting eyes, slow and mesmeric, and width, for all their warmth, something withdrawn and secret about them. (45)

Irene often remarks on the effect of Clare's dark eyes with her light skin, saying that the juxtaposition is the crux of Clare's beauty. For example, even without Irene recognising Clare at the Drayton, she keenly observes Clare's features: “An attractive-looking woman,

was Irene's opinion, with those dark, almost black eyes and that wide mouth like a scarlet flower against the ivory of her skin. Nice clothes too, just right for the weather, thin and cool without being mussy, as summer things were so apt to be" (16). As Irene and Clare later talk in the Drayton, she says of her eyes, paired with the rest of her light colouring, that, "there was about them something exotic" (20). Irene, however, both knowingly and unknowingly turns Clare's beauty into an exotic object and she has felt that Clare's looks and appearance have been stunning always and not just in one or two occasions alone.

Presentation of Clare as an exotic beauty continues in the later part of the novel as well when Irene talks with Hugh Wentworth at the Negro Welfare League dance. Irene and Hugh have only been talking about Clare's beauty when Hugh changes the subject to dark-skinned black men, asking Irene whether she thinks they are especially attractive. There can be a suspicion that Irene has Clare on her mind when she says that she thinks what women feel around dark-skinned black men is "emotional excitement... in the presence of something strange... something so different it's really at the opposite end of the pole from all your accustomed beauty" (180). This kind of exoticism is somewhat problematic, as it objectifies and tokenizes difference from normative standards.

While Clare's courage helps her achieve an integrated identity that she wishes for by maintaining a white life style along with trying to revive her black identity right from maintaining a cordial relationship with black servants till participating in the Negro Welfare League dance, Irene is never able to achieve the same. All the more, Irene gets greatly intimidated by Clare's ability to do the same and starts to see Clare, especially her presence and beauty as a threat to her life, especially her married life. Clare's vivaciousness, beauty and liveliness liken her to a spark. Irene thinks as Clare suddenly falls out of the window during the Negro Welfare League Dance, "One moment Clare had been there, a vital glowing thing, like a flame of red and gold. The next she was gone" (211). Just like Larsen uses adjectives like "golden," "exquisite," "fragrant," "graceful," and "glistening" to describe Clare's gorgeousness, the symbol of exotic beauty in the novel is described in a hyperbolized manner with equally exotic adjectives in her death as well:

Gone! The soft white face, the bright hair, the disturbing scarlet mouth, the dreaming eyes, the caressing smile, the whole torturing loveliness that had been Clare Kendry. That beauty that had torn at Irene's placid life. Gone! The mocking daring, the gallantry of her pose, the ringing bells of her laughter. (210)

Thus, beauty as a concept has been absolutely racialised and politicised in the novel by Larsen through her characters thereby mirroring the reality of the twentieth century America. An individual getting assessed on the basis of racial standards, especially the phenotypical features is a harsh truth that characterised the American society. Mixed race individuals who exist in between the colour line face the pressure even more and become the target of the ideology of racial stratification. This has been very well portrayed by Nella Larsen in the novel. Beauty as an exotic concept rather than an aesthetic one is also traced through her characters and strategies of third person narration and interior monologue with absolute keenness.

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The Everyday Pursuit of Beauty : *Memoirs of a Geisha*

Memoirs of a Geisha (2005), directed by Rob Marshall, is an American film based on the novel of the same name which describes the unique story of the geisha culture of Japan. A geisha is popularly defined as a skilled woman entertainer who acts as a hostess to male customers. However, within the Japanese culture, geishas are known to have a distinct identity as artists. They were perceived as the epitomes of beauty and aesthetics during the pre-World War II Japan. Lived within their okiyas, the traditional geisha houses, young girls who aspired to be geishas underwent recurrent beautification process and rigorous training in fine-arts. *Memoirs of a Geisha* depicts a similar journey of an impoverished girl, Chio Sakamoto, who despite being born into a fisherman's village went onto become a famous geisha of her time. This paper explores the meaning of the everyday pursuit of beauty in a geisha's life through the analysis of Chio's experience.

The process of self-beautification women indulge in is often perceived with scepticism by feminist discourses. It is observed as confirming to the social expectations of physical beauty placed on gender hence as increasingly regressive and restricting. (Beauvoir, 1949) Naomi Wolf has pointed out that the beautification process which women are forced to adhere to always aimed at the accomplishment of a socially constructed, unrealistic beauty ideal. This concept of a “beauty myth” which women are expected to follow is observed as weighing heavy upon them despite the progress they make on other fronts of life. (Wolf, 1990) Several feminist studies have reiterated such perspectives on the practice of beautification. Even while acknowledging these perspectives, Rita Felski, the cultural theorist, suggests that “an irreducible aspect of aesthetic experience” is involved in women's pursuit of beauty. According to her, “women's association of beauty also extends to a long history of decorating and beautifying their surroundings. Women have created beauty not just in themselves but in the world.”(280) She cites Alice walker's “In Search of Our Mother's Gardens” as an example illustrating how women's yearning for beauty results in the creation of extraordinary expressions of creativity and aesthetics within their everyday world. Walker's mother's garden and the quilts made by her and other black women of the time, which were essentially their expressions of creativity and beauty, got later identified as representing the Afro-American aesthetics of the time. Felski thus demonstrates that women's act of beautification can transcend their physical body and have larger meanings. This paper proposes to take cues from these remarks. Geishas through their constant practice of beautification, created a world of beauty around them. They were the touchstones of aesthetics and etiquette within the Japanese culture once. The paper explores how geishas' pursuit of beauty was instrumental in defining the aesthetics of pre-war Japan. It also examines the significances latent in the recurrent beautification process geishas followed as an everyday practice. Certeau has pointed out that through the practice of a routinized action individuals can appropriate and negotiate with the products of the dominant order like tradition, values and culture. He observes that people individualize and appropriate the given everyday in the practice of the same. These attempts of individualizing, according to him,

enable people to change the meanings of their everyday practices which in turn permits them to not to be the passive receivers of the dominant notions attached to these practices.(Cetreau, 1984) Sarah Pink has also illustrated how women's continuous enactments of everyday practices such as cooking and cleaning, which are usually perceived as mundane and regressive, endow the doer with an agency.(Pink 2012) These critical observations illustrate how the meaning of a process changes as it gets enacted on an everyday basis. This paper makes use of these theoretical inputs to explore how the repeated performance of the beautification process which geishas underwent endowed them with an agency. It argues that despite having to confirm to the patriarchal notions of an ideal beauty existed within the Japanese culture of the time, the geishas could triumph over the dominant ideals through their recurrent pursuit of beauty. They even could influence the notion of beauty existed within prewar Japan. The paper, however, focuses on the effects of World War II over all these. It argues that the movie posits World War II as changing the notions of beauty within the culture; as the notion of beauty within the culture changes, the meaning of the everyday pursuit of beauty in a geisha's life also changes.

Memoirs of a Geisha begins by showing Chio and her sister being brought from their home at a fishermen's village and being sold to an okiya at the Gion geisha district of Kyoto. Her sister is taken to a prostitution house since the 'mother' of the okiya finds only Chio as worthy to take in. Through the petrified and alienated eyes of Chio, the audience are introduced the colorful world of geishas. We learn that the geisha community strictly distinguishes themselves from prostitutes and have distinct rules and power hierarchies within their world. The 'mother', who is an ex-geisha is the head of an okiya which is inhabited only by women. 'Mother' has an assistant known as 'aunt' to execute her orders. However the financial source of the house is the young geisha who is attended with much reverence by the other inhabitants and whose earnings belong to the house. Under all these women, there are girls like Chio who serve the purpose of a maid unless they are chosen to be geishas. The chosen girls, who are designated as maikos during their training, maybe sent for classes where they will be taught to play the music instrument shamisen, the traditional dance with fans, calligraphy, and painting. Along with such trainings, the young geisha of the house grooms them to procure a refined etiquette and teahouse manners. Hatsumomo, the geisha of the Okiya where Chio is brought into, develops an instant dislike for Chio and puts her through several wearisome ordeals. The hostility of Hatsumomo and Chio's failed attempt to escape the okia together persuade the mother to demote Chio to be a maid. However, Chio's desire to be a geisha is rekindled by a kind gentleman who is referred to as 'the chairman' in the film; he becomes Chio's love interest as she grows up. The film goes onto portray Chio's journey to be a geisha under the guidance of Mameha, the geisha of another okiya who adopts chio as her soul sister. The intensive training Chio undergoes and the repeated practice of beautification occupy the time-frame of the film thereafter. As she becomes a geisha, Chio's name gets changed to Sayuri who gets hailed as the most beautiful geisha of her time after a dance performance she delivers. Her mizuage ceremony, the traditional practice of selling the virginity of a geisha to the highest bidder, fetches a record-breaking sum. As she gets adopted as the heiress of her old Okia, Sayuri's triumph becomes complete. However, the breakout of World War II destroys the dynamics of the geishas' everyday life constructed around beauty, admiration, and patronage. In the war stricken Japan, Sayuri is forced to work as a kimono maker at a rural place, far away from the glamorous geisha world. The film later shows the changes happened to the American occupied okiyas and the everyday life of the geishas.

To access how World War II changes the concept of beauty within Japanese culture and subsequently the everyday world of a geisha, the meanings of beauty existed within the geisha world in the prewar Japan have to be identified. The film portrays that the geisha world has a constant preoccupation to beauty and splendor through the effective use of symbols and various cinematic elements like light, colour, and mise-en-scene. While coaching Sayuri, Mameha tells: “we (geishas) create another secret world, a place only of beauty”. The film translates this idea of the beautiful geisha-world through its use of warm lights, bright hues, extravagant costumes, and the rich and detailed set design. In the prewar Japan, geishas are shown as floating in their ornate kimonos with perfectly painted faces and carefully groomed movements while being the cynosure of their surroundings. Even the little girls around geisha house seem to understand the geisha lifestyle as intrinsically associated with self-beautification. This is portrayed through little Chio who with a childish giggle declares herself as a geisha, when her lips get stained with the pink sweet ice the chairman buys her. Her understanding of the geisha world as a world of colour and beauty is further emphasized when the tone of the movie changes to warm and colorful palettes after Chio is chosen to be a geisha by Mameha. This shift in the colour palette and lighting of the movie is significant as it uses dark and bleak tone while portraying Chiyo's impoverished abode at Fisherman's Village and a less dark, yet monochromatic tone for her initial days as a maid in the okiya. Thus along with suggesting that the geisha life is radiant and colorful, the movie hints a possible elevation in status such a life can bring to a person.

Another important symbol of beauty that dominates the narrative is the Kimono. The first insight little Chiyo gets about geisha lifestyle is from the words of the aunt who identifies dressing up as a prerequisite to become a geisha: “if she is not properly dressed, then she is not a geisha”. During her training with Mameha, Chio is taught to wrap herself in multiple layers of kimonos with an extravagant one on the outside. These extravagant kimonos are portrayed as art pieces in themselves which are stored and maintained with much reverence. Having to maintain a strict propriety, the geishas are expected to maintain and safeguard their beauty with the same reverence under that kimono. Thus a kimono becomes symbolic of the beauty of the geisha who wears it. This is further emphasized when Hatsumomo chooses to disfigure the kimono of Mameha out of her envy towards the latter. Disfiguring the kimono is seen equal to disfiguring the geisha who owned it.

However, the movie also hails the other aspects of a geisha's beauty beyond the physical. Senior geishas always remind Chio that geishas do not sell their bodies but their skills. In the advice Mameha gives to Chio she defines geisha primarily as an artist. “To be a geisha is to be judged as a moving work of art”, she remarks with an air of finality. Consequently, Chio receives etiquette training from Mameha who teaches her even the most basic daily manners. The little girl is told to not to rise like a horse and not to bow like a pig farmer. Her walk is perfected to a sliding motion and all her movements are groomed to be refined. All these figure as part of the beautification process a geisha undergoes. The training Chio receives to master various fine-arts and the nuances of conversation and tea serving taught by Mameha enable her to be the celebrated geisha, Sayuri. One should note that it is her dance performance which is invariably an expression of her art and creativity that wins Sayuri the admiration of people and the title of the most desired geisha of her time. Therefore it can be argued that geishas made beauty synonymous with art and aesthetics. They could exude this kind of beauty to the lives of men around them. According to Mameha, geishas act as a gush of fresh wind to men who are “trapped in arranged marriages”. The scintillating

conversations with a geisha and her enticing presence are believed to make men understand the fine joys of life. The chairman confirms this as he hopes Sayuri's company would teach his friend Nobu, who has a dry and difficult demeanor owing to his rough past, to savor the beauty of life. As Felski pointed out these women were creating beauty not just in themselves but in the world around them. It should be noted that the men around them also partake notions of beauty and aesthetic as proposed by geishas. They approach these women with awe and admiration a connoisseur would do to a work of art, and never seek sexual favors from their company. Their engagements with these women happen mostly in public spheres and mainly include sharing tea or watching their expressions of creativity. Even the baron who undress an unwilling Sayuri almost forcefully, does not persuade her to have sex with him instead insists that he just wants to look at her beauty. Sayuri's interaction with Dr. Crab to whom she sells her mizuage (virginity) is not shown in the movie. The sequence begins with Dr. Crab setting the bed with a look of veneration on his face and ends with Sayuri returning to okiya with a head held high. Thus the movie also embraces the aesthetics of geisha life.

Nevertheless, the beautification process Sayuri undergoes on a daily basis is persistently painful. Mameha emphasizes that “agony and beauty live side by side” for a geisha. Hot wax is used to straighten Sayuri's hair and a burning stick is used to draw well defined eyebrows on the white painted face. She often falls while trying to walk on 'getas', the traditional Japanese footwear with extremely high wooden blocks as heels. If painting the face needs long hours to finish, maintaining the extensive hairstyle demands sleeping upright balancing the head on a stand with only a stick as its support. Sayuri even keeps her hands in an ice bucket since frozen fingers are perfect for playing shamisen. Mameha even warns her of the enduring effects of this everyday beautification: “your feet will suffer, your fingers will bleed. Even sitting and sleeping will be painful.” Hence one may be persuaded to perceive this beautification process with the same negative hermeneutics which various critical works approached women's beautification with. However it can be argued that the everyday pursuit of beauty adds an agency to geishas. In her book *Geisha*, one of the early authentic works on these women entertainers, Liza Dalby observes that geishas were “among the few Japanese women who had managed to attain economic self sufficiency and positions of authority and influence on their own merits” during the time. (14) This is evident in the movie as well. The Geishas are seen to possess a sense of independence and great deal of mobility around their surroundings with no rules of the outer society ruling over them. In fact these aspects of the geisha life stand attractive to the young girls. For Chio's friend Pumpkin, being a geisha is to be able to drink tea and sake at anytime and to sleep as much as she wants. Therefore, for her, the everyday practice of beautification means freedom. Sayuri becomes a geisha to be a part of the chairman's world since he is the only one who treats her with kindness and respect. Consequently, for her, the everyday pursuit of beauty signifies dignity. As Certeau notes, these women effectively individualize the given everyday and change the meanings of the everyday practices they follow simultaneously. Even while being the objects of fantasy of men, they are able to exercise a clear agency over them. It is one's ability “to stop a man in his tracks with a single look” which constitutes a true geisha according to Mameha. Sayuri wins this challenge by deflecting a cyclist from his trajectory with a single look. However it is not the only time she changes the trajectories of men. With her wit and ability for expression she alters Nobu's perception of geishas. Nobu declares that only three things matter in life- sumo, business, and war. With a tone of contempt he adds that a geisha will not understand these

since her everyday life is that of “plucking strings and dancing”. This perception can be read along with Felski's observation that heroic realms such as war, sports, philosophy and scientific endeavors are often relegated as masculine domains while women are associated with everyday life which is identified as the insignificant feminine realm. (The Invention, 17) Nevertheless, Sayuri successfully overthrows Nobu's contemptuous prejudices. She explains him that even the very masculine realms he considers as eluding the grasp of a geisha's everyday world can be interpreted through the bounding principle of their daily life - beauty. “What is sumo but a dance between two giants, what business but a dance between companies?”, she asks. By stating that she would like to know every kind of dance, Sayuri reminds him that a geisha can pursue any matter of the world as she has mastered the pursuit of beauty. It is the outer world of men like Nobu which fails to understand the everyday world of a geisha. Dalby testifies this as she writes “even those who patronize geishas usually have only the vaguest idea of the realistic of this professional community whose members are linked to one another by the idiom of kinship”. (42) Geishas define their relationships to one another on their own terms defying the common norms defining these such as birth and age. They become sisters to each other under a mother and aunt with no blood relation to claim. Dalby mentions of her elder sister in the geisha world who was three years younger to her (33) Geishas' mobility and morality are delineated and regulated by their own laws. This self sufficiency within their everyday world endows the geisha culture with the status of a subculture. Outer world and the mainstream culture have no access to this world of women. Its exclusivity grants the geisha world with a mystery and beauty, in other words, its very existence. Sayuri states this in her opening monologue “My world is as forbidden as it is fragile. Without its mysteries, it cannot survive”. However, in the movie, World War II invades this forbidden world wreaking havoc to its well preserved mysteries.

The World War breaks out almost abruptly in the film. A critical study of the film in an online magazine makes a note that the eruption of the war scene is “little more than a panic scene” and the film almost hastily jumps to the end of the war in a quick “flash forward”. (Bernard). But as the military trucks make their way to the geisha district, the colour tone instantaneously changes to the dark monochromatic palette and the low key lighting is adopted once again. Together, these effectively suggest the anticipated horror. When Sayuri is pushed into a riksha to be drawn away from the military trucks, she is clad in a plain black kimono. With no white paint, her face reflects only contours of fear. The rush and fright steal the grace and charm from her movements. As she sees more geishas are being tucked into trucks and rikshaws to be taken away in a similar fashion, the audience also get convinced of the inevitable rupture of a world which was balanced on beauty and aesthetics by a war that can inflict only ugliness and detestable horror. The director uses the image of a flowing river to indicate the passage of time during the war stricken years. Streaks of red colour are seen mixing with its waters suggesting the bloodshed and the perishing of lives. As the camera pans, we see that the colour is leaking out of a cloth washed by Sayuri. She is a kimono maker now, one among the working class, far removed from the colourful world where she was the possessor of invaluable kimonos. One may therefore assume that the colours flowing away with the river represent the withering of colours from sayuri's life too.

As Sayuri returns to the geisha district after years of exile, we realize that the whole of the geisha world has withered like her. She finds her “powder box empty and her charcoal as turned into dust” and Mameha and her house have lost something which makes them less than before. With all her exquisite kimonos sold, ornaments exchanged for rations and rooms

of the okiya given out for rent, Mameha has become a frail image of her glorious past. What Mameha and other geishas lost with the advent of war and the American rule is their mystery. Every inch of the geisha houses, to which no men had access during the prewar era, are now seen to be swarming with American soldiers. The elegant shamisen sounds are replaced by loud American music. An uncovering is seen to have happened to the whole geisha world. The okiyas look bare and open with the excessive amount of light and sound around them. Whereas, in the prewar times the warm lights of the lanterns and the traditional architectural features such as the intricate shades and sliding screens together wove a dense texture of light and shadows within those spaces. The cinematographer of the movie, Dione Beebe states that this change is affected intentionally as the director's intention was to create a dark veiled world that would gradually be revealed. (Feminine Mystique) The revealing caused by the war rips away the charm of the geisha world since its secrecy provided it with the mysterious beauty.

Along with ripping away the beauty of their secret world, the war is also portrayed as imposing a new sense of aesthetics upon the geishas, an aesthetics defined by the powerful. As World War II places Japan under American rule, the American soldiers become the new men to be pleased. Various studies unanimously assert that the Americans failed to understand the geisha culture. These foreign men could neither appreciate the aesthetics of having a paid female companion who extended no sexual favours nor enjoy the entertainment of witty words and elegantly choreographed etiquette. Consequently, geishas were forced to allow sexual favours to survive. In addition to this, prostitutes, whom the geishas strictly separated themselves from, started dressing up like geishas. Their pursuit of a geisha's beauty got limited with having a white face and cheap Kimonos. Sayuri makes a note of this in her monologue. As she makes this statement, the scene we see is that of an American soldier playing with a masque that looks like the white painted face of a geisha. Such shops with geisha merchandise can be spotted all over the place as Sayuri walks through the geisha district. The geisha's concept of beauty is reduced to masques and the mysteries of their world to postcards. As the concept of beauty changes within the culture of entertainment in the post war Japan, the entertainer's world becomes readily accessible to replicate and represent. Geishas like Pumpkin start singing Frank Sinatra, smoke Chesterfield cigars, speak in American accent, and participate in bawdy charades of the soldiers. The everyday pursuit of beauty means survival to them now. The artistic value attached to it is disappeared since geishas are treated no better than prostitutes. The teahouses where they served tea and staged their artistic talents have become pubs where American soldiers make out with these women to loud and coarse music. With their everyday spaces adjusts to the new aesthetics, the geishas' everyday life also adopts the new ways. Pumpkin and other geishas who now adorned in cheap kimonos like prostitutes are seen to be at peace with the changed sensibilities of their time. Even Mameha seems to have accepted her new life. It is interesting to note that their patrons too have imbibed the powerful notions of beauty and aesthetics. As their existence is now largely determined by the soldiers, the Japanese patrons persuade geishas to entertain the Americans in ways which please their western sensibilities. Even Nobu, who asserts that Sayuri needs to extend only her company to the American Colonel, introduces her to the colonel as "one of the mysteries of the orient". He defines her beauty befitting the American imagination of the exotic orient. Pumpkin and Sayuri are later seen with bare shoulders in a swimming pool in the company of men including Nobu, Chairman and the colonel. This illustrates the monstrous change happened to geishas' stature. In the

prewar times the physical engagements of a gentleman with geishas were restricted to catching a glimpse of geishas' bare wrists and feeling a momentary touch of their feet as and when they allowed him. During the training, Mameha reminds Sayuri to engage in these covert acts of seduction by making it look like mere accidents thus suggesting the short span of these encounters and the need to maintain their agency while doing so. Nonetheless the Colonel expects sexual favours from Sayuri and dismisses her intellectual remarks with a laugh. Almost sarcastically he notes that the Japanese makes even a bath into a ritual whereas in America it is “nothing more than a shower and a cold towel with a lotta soap.” Sayuri defends ritualizing everyday practices by stating that “it is the art of turning habit into pleasure”. But the American fails to comprehend the meanings involved in her statement. The film asserts that his foreign imagination lacks to accommodate the aesthetics of a land where the pursuit of beauty is an everyday practice. However the film is criticized for having this crippled western perspective which fails to understand the specificities of the orient cultures as it casted Chinese actors to play Japanese women.

The geisha culture was brought by the peace established in the Edo period of Japan after the medieval period of battle and bloodshed. Transforming the pursuit of beauty as an everyday practice, the geishas constructed a world of art and splendor around them. Their definition of beauty got translated into an aesthetical standard for the Japanese culture of the time. The film *Memoirs of a Geisha* effectively portrays how World War II changes the meanings of beauty within the Japanese culture and subsequently in the everyday life of geishas. If beauty stood for art, elegance, and aesthetics before war, the American invasion reduces it to fit their imagination of the exotic Japan. Consequently, geishas lose their status as artists and their agency gets undermined. Thus it can be concluded that despite being accused of its American perspective, the film renders the changes a foreign invasion affect upon the subtleties of a culture.

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The Aesthetics of Resistance : A Reading *The Ministry Of Utmost Happiness* by Arundhati Roy

Abstract

"... Nothing much had changed. The floor was red, the walls were red and the ceiling was red. Hazrat Sarmad's blood had not been washed away." (Ministry 415)

*Nothing has changed at all. The Ministry of Utmost Happiness by Roy unravels truth in an eerie way. The truth of contemporary Indian democracy and the resistances offered to it's 'demon-craziness' are wonderfully brought to light by Roy. Through this paper, I intend to bring out the beauty of the lives of the minorities all around our country. How the transgenders, tribals, dalits, women and all are exploited by not only the majority but the government also, are taken into account. There is an innate beauty in the way all these parts struggle to live in the so called democratic India. The novel brings all these parts under a single roof. Each part depicts their truth- the truth of their existence; of their survival. There is this special kind of beauty in their way of resistance- the hidden truths of life. The beauty of hope for a better future continues to exist amid the war they are facing. They are working for a radical change silently, yet cautiously. Many things are buried for the convenience of the majority. By institutionalizing everything including the law, the government has silenced the struggles. The minorities are fighting for their space back. Roy wonderfully gives us a sketch of the modern India, which claims itself as a developed one. But deep inside, the cracks are turning visible and nobody can mask it for long. In this context, I would like to explore the hidden face of power and the various paradigms of resistances offered by the minorities for a united India, in the light of *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* amid current political absurdities.*

Key Words: beauty-resistance-corporate-Maoists-power-politics

"Lalsalaam Aleikum' was Anjum's inadvertent instinctive response to the end of the letter. That could have been the beginning of a whole political movement" (Ministry426). This is how Roy, at the end of the novel lights the fire for a new ray of hope. A baby, born in the inlands of a forest, of a radical spirit, grows up in a graveyard which has become the 'Jannat' for all the radicals in the story.

Each of the listeners recognized, in their own separate ways, something of themselves and their own stories, their own Indo-Pak, in the story of this unknown, faraway woman who was no longer alive (Ministry426).

The letter was send by Comrade Revathy, a Maoist fighting in the inlands of the forest for their right to survive. Roy, in her essay collection *Walking with Comrades* describes them as 'A little Knot. People who live with their dreams while the rest of the world lives with their nightmares' (123). Everything becomes clear-cut when we look into the Indian government's

actions and policies which always destroys the livelihoods of millions and at the same time provide the corporates a huge sum of profit and capital.

Almost from the moment India became a sovereign nation it turned into a colonial power, annexing territory, waging war. It has never hesitated to use military interventions to address political problems-Kashmir, Hyderabad, Goa, Nagaland, Manipur, Telengana, Assam, Punjab, the Naxalite uprising in West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh and now across the tribal areas of central India. Tens of thousands have been killed with impunity, hundreds of thousands tortured. All of this behind the benign mask of democracy (Comrades95-96).

This is the truth behind the facade of India-the world's 'Largest Democracy'. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* is a fiction that represents the realities of contemporary India far better than any of the Medias or any other works. All her past experiences and the realities of 'our nation' are closely knit and brought together in this book. As Aditya Nigam says in his *Secularism, Modernity, and Nation: Epistemology of the Dalit Critique*,

It is true that a 'critique of the concrete Indian nation, however, need not be a critique of the category of the nation as such. A number of these assertions therefore continued to imagine themselves in the nation-form. Though the entity whose nation-form was now sought was no longer Indian in many cases- it was Assamese, Khalistani, Gorkha etc. Though, the very disposal of community often made such imaginings impossible and reflected itself in imagining India differently. The fact however, remains that deep inside, these diverse movements reflected a dissatisfaction with the larger homogenizing, concrete discourse of nationhood that had submerged their specific cultures (4259).

By focusing on the theme of the ideal democracy, India has destroyed a lot of cultures and individual identities. These individuals are the new form of resistances that arise now and fight for what is rightfully theirs. *Ministry* takes us through the psyche of some of the major minorities of our country and shows how they are brought together under a single roof- the beginning of a whole new political movement.

In Roy's journey with the Maoists of Dantewada in Chattisgarh, comrade Venu says that, "They want to crush us, not only because of the minerals, but because we are offering the world an alternative model" (Comrades105). The tribals are not greedy like the rest of the world. Today's world is polluted by the consumerist ideology of buying everything whether we want it or not. The advertisements and supermarkets draw us to the world of materials. This is not the case of the tribals who live in co with the nature. They know the pulse of it and they 'listen to the grasshoppers'. Since the area they live is the only remaining area for the corporate lobbies to extract the raw materials-minerals, water and others, the government has been trying to flush them out over and over. All those people could do is fight back with the available things and survive. "War doesn't seem to be uppermost in their minds. But if war is what they get, they will fight back"(Comrades24). This resistance to the capitalist feeding government is the beauty of their life. If they weren't resisting, they may have had been extinct long before. There is an innate beauty in the way they resist all these violence upon them. The *Ministry* gives us only a hint into the struggles of the tribals through the letter of Revathy. She says in the end that "outside there are you people to take up issues. But inside it

is only us"(Ministry426). She lived her short life by helping others to survive in this world of bloodsucking demons of power. In *Listening to Grasshoppers*, Roy says,

Maoists...are engaged in a deadly and often brutal armed struggle against displacement and against land acquisition by corporations waiting to setup steel factories and to begin mining ore, tin and all other wealth stashed below the forest floor (xxvi).

There are many things which should be resisted from the very birth of it. Resistance becomes more beautiful and successful if it is done at the right time. Too much brooding under the hands of the fascism has made us reluctant to go out and resist our lives. The protagonists of the Ministry proclaim that there are some lives that still 'live' a life of struggling not only to survive but to exist or get acknowledged.

Tilo or S. Thilottama, who 'lived in the country of her own skin' (Ministry217), is a major woman presence in the novel. She was a woman 'without a past'. She has been struggling and surviving in this alien world of normalcy, which for her is absurd. She doesn't have much of a company (except for her eccentric relationship with Musa Yeswi) but she has the whole universe burning inside her, urging for a big bang. Tilo was the one who lived alone but always left an impression in everyone she met. It is her uniqueness that makes her different from ordinary people. She dressed way too casually for her marriage with Naga. Their married life too was not like the usual families. She doesn't need to impress anyone. Living in the graveyard, she developed her own sense of the world. She could connect easily with the dead than the living people she faced before. The Jannat house provided her a world which had no rules and regulations, a world where everyone had a voice, a world of one's own.

Ministry wonderfully explores through the various contours of individuality and resistance method the minorities offer towards their 'othering'. Together they are a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts. That's what the graveyard is. All the characters are from outside the grand narratives of history. They show reluctance to domestication. There is a way in which they are all transitioning into something else. Anjum or Afthab lives in the border of gender. But she is also a shia Muslim who gets caught up in the Gujarat massacre but escapes as they let her go because she was a hijra. "They say killing a hijra brings bad luck! But the wound it left inside her never healed. It took years for the tide of grief and fear to subside" (Ministry66). When she realized her uniqueness from the duniya, she went to live with the transgenders in khwabgah (house of dreams). But she couldn't live her usual life after the encounter in Gujarat and goes out and lives in the graveyard where her parents are buried. She chose a different way of living; her own independent way of surviving in this world of binaries and definitions. Narrator says that "she wasn't living in the graveyard. She was dying in it" (Ministry67).

Roy says that it is a shattered story. Each and every one of the characters is broken in one way or other. The book itself is dedicated to the 'unconsoled'. In an interview with Democracy Now, she says that happiness is not an institution or building that stands forever, it is a fragile thing. The only way to tell a shattered story is to become not only everybody but also everything. There is a connection between the air we breathe, the economy and patriarchy, the government and corporations, the people and struggles, and even the movement of the grasshoppers. Roy says that the theme is the air we breathe, the politics that affect our lives; not the one in the news headlines. The politics of India has institutionalized the hierarchies. The *Ministry* tells the story of the people who do not fit into that grid. There

begins the resistance of these characters.

Saddam Hussein or Dayachand was a part of the mob which killed his father for the crime of carrying cow carcasses. He came to live with Anjum in the graveyard which provided him a comfort that he got from nowhere else. Maybe the resistance they offer to the majorities of the society gives them the common platform to sleep. This graveyard house, Jannat, becomes a hub of solace for all the 'outcasts' or broken pieces. The place of death has become the only place of hope. The order and chaos inside each and every one of them is different and variable. There is a beauty in the way all these broken pieces live in the so called 'democratic' India. This Jannat guesthouse built in the graveyard counter presents the valley of Kashmir, which was called jannat (paradise) but has become a graveyard because of the militarization by the Indian 'democracy'.

In an essay *How Deep Shall We Dig*, Roy describes an instant of her talk with one of her Kashmiri friend.

He spoke of having to live with the endless killing, the mounting 'disappearances', the whispering, the fear, the unresolved rumors, the insane disconnection between what is actually happening, what Kashmir know is happening, and what the rest of us are told is happening in Kashmir. He said, 'Kashmir used to be business. Now it's a mental asylum (Grasshoppers25).

All of these are wonderfully exposed in the novel. Kashmir is a Warfield always. Civilians are destroyed in the fight between the army and militants. Life has turned in such a way that death is a usual part of living there; a regular routine. The *Ministry* says “in this way the insurrection began. Death was everywhere. Death was everything...dying became just another way of living”(314). Amidst all these, they still fight. Even schoolchildren throw stones at the army. This fire of resistance is the beauty of their living which is absent in many of the mainstream lives. They follow Mark Twain's words, “Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear, not absence of fear” (Goodreads10131). For them, like all other fighters (tribals and all), freedom is not only a political demand, but an anthem, a hymn, a prayer, and much more. Musa, who has lost everything he loved, still fights for his homeland. The novel gives India a warning through Musa's words,

One day Kashmir will make you self destruct...you may have blinded us, every one of us, with your pellet guns. But you still have eyes to see what you have done to us. You are not destroying us. You are constructing us. It is yourselves that you are destroying (433-434).

This is the answer to India for its repressive measures which are always counterproductive. Even though it has been killing the rebels for a period of time, there are much more arising every second. In 'Weapons of the Weak:Everyday Forms of Resistance'(1985), James C Scott says that “Oppression and resistance are in constant flux, and that by focusing on visible historic 'events' such as organized rebellions or collective action we can easily miss subtle but powerful forms of 'everyday resistance’”. This proves the quote by Foucault that 'where there is power, there is resistance'. In *Walking with Comrades*, Roy looks for an alternate way for the rebels to get their life back.

But what should I suggest they do? Go to court? Do a dharna in Jantar Mantar, New Delhi? A rally? A relay hunger strike? It sounds ridiculous. The promoters of the New Economic Policy-who find it so easy to say 'there

is no alternative'- should be asked to suggest an Alternative Resistance Policy... Which door did Narmada Bachao andolan not knock on during the years and years it fought against big dams in Narmada (57).

Nobody has gained anything by following the peaceful way of fighting for their rights. The Kashmiris have been agitating for over a very long time. A news photographer Showkat Nanda, while covering a demonstration in Kashmir, put his camera aside and joined the mob in throwing stones. He said 'It's hard to be neutral when your kitchen turns into a battlefield'. So how could the media and people blame them for resisting the army which has been feeding on their blood since the time of their birth! The Ministry holds a mirror to us to see what is really happening and what is said to be happening there in Kashmir.

The Ministry gives us the story of all the fighters, who stood and is always standing for their rights. One of the main story is that of Hazrat Sarmat, who is the "Hasrat of Utmost Happiness, saint of the unconsolated and solace of the indeterminate, Blasphemer among Believers and Believer among Blasphemers" (Ministry416). He can be considered as the soul of the whole novel. It is to him that Anjum's mother goes to ask help to help her love her baby who broke gender binary by birth. He stands as the epitome of all the resistances and struggles. He was executed for believing in himself and his side of truth that he experienced. The graveyard is more like the darga of Hasrat Sarmat where all the broken hearts go in search for solace. It is the truth which took his life. Most people don't fight for the truth, and those who begins the fight continuous to fight always. This is an echo of the American author John Steinbeck's words, 'There is more beauty in truth, even if, it is a dreadful beauty'. Resistance is a way of staying with the truth and for the truth. That's what Roy has tried to bring out through her novel. The protagonists live in Frantz Fanon's quote:"when we revolt, it's not for a particular culture. We revolt simply because, for many reasons, we can no longer breathe". This is the beauty of resistance: The beauty of 'living'.

The novel ends with the baby's arrival at the Jannat Guesthouse. Named after Miss Jebeen (daughter of Musa), who was shot by the army in Kashmir; this baby becomes the centre of everything. She was found near the Kashmiri mothers who were protesting against the disappearance of their children. Nobody knew what to do with the child. The child was not even crying. The narrator says that, "perhaps, she had already learned that tears, her tears at least, was futile" (Ministry96). "It was the beginning of something...Miss Jebeen would turn the tide" (Minidtry215). She is like Hasrat Sarmat, who didn't shed a tear even while facing his death. The Hasrat of utmost happiness has at last blessed the whole. Hasrat Sarmad's darga is still visited by many to get solace to their minds and peace to their hearts. He is the epitome of every struggling mind, every broken hearts and every one who are denied their space in this world. Anyone who knows about Sarmad can feel the aesthetics of resistance wherever they go.

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Beauty from Within : A Critical Study of Animal in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*

From times immemorial the trade mark of beauty have been fairness and an attractive physique overthrowing even the less stigmatised words, 'dusky' and 'specially abled' out of the annals of fashion magazines. But this is actually a motley not only worn but internalised by the colonised which was imposed upon them by the colonisers. Franz Fanon's essay titled *Black Skin, White Mask* underlines the idea using a pun. The essay basically discusses about the sense of subaltern feeling woven into the inner psyche of the colonised by the wrongheaded trivialised, barbaric identity thrust upon them by the colonisers. As a result they attempt to wear the pretentious white mask of the so called 'civilised' to climb the social ladder. But the pun in the title suggests that even the white man is fastening a dark skin beneath their white physiognomy. So for one to hail 'dusky' or 'specially abled' as beautiful one should undergo a process of unlearning the concept of beauty to begin with. If only our eyes saw souls instead of bodies, our ideals of beauty would have been different. This is exactly what Indra Sinha attempts to prove through his artistic work *Animal's People*. He has harped up life with a strange air of simplicity. The novel transcribes the oral history of 'Animal' and his people affected by the poisonous gas tragedy that took place at the fictionalised city called Khaufpur, that echoes the plight of contemporary Bhopal.

The protagonist in Indra Sinha's novel explores the innate potential and beauty within his deformed outer shell and tries to bring it out to the forefront. But he learns how difficult it is to assert himself in the world that is prejudiced against anyone or everyone disabled. Therefore he realises the need for a mask to camouflage his deformity and at the same time to expose his inner strength and beauty. And for this the mask he puts on is that of an animal that is free from all notions of physical beauty but rather is judged by its own personal capabilities. This is how he fights against the big frozen glacier of injustice thrown against him and all the disabled population, as he acts as a mouthpiece for them.

Nomenclature or the act of naming plays a significant role in an individual's life as it pertains to the identity of the individual bearing the name. In Indra Sinha's novel, the protagonist, a four footed child, victim of a poisonous gas tragedy is assigned the name 'Animal' initially by the society to refer to or to mock at his deformity. To associate a human self to Animal is always considered derogatory. Even, in the less corrupted fairy tales, the trend is that, an individual under a spell will be transformed into an animal and would be revamped into a normal human being once he chalks up a virtue that distinguishes him from being an animal. In such narratologies human beings are considered as the epitome of creation and the lack of humanity in an individual leads to his transfiguration into an animal, which is considered as an incomplete being. Therefore to assert animal identity to humans is considered as a punishment for behaving in an amoral manner. An example of this could be culled out from stories as old as time including *The Beauty and the Beast*, *The Frog Prince* etc. In either of these stories the protagonist is transfigured into a monster and is eventually returned to humanity via the transformational power of love. The characters learn to garner love, a human virtue. Therefore dehumanisation works to further 'other' the subject and have

been an idea so skilfully propagated during the Big Brother's era in order to create a socio-economic disparity between the colonisers and the colonised. Yet recent scholarship, especially those emerging from the post colonial nations have troubled the traditional understanding of animalised human and has effectively tried to satirise it. They have boomeranged the weapon that was used by the powerful to subjugate them as a resistance armour. They have learned to break the shackles of false cannons and stereotypes and have begun to explore the unadulterated beauty within.

In the huge panorama of Indian Literature too one could trace out the applications of the savage imagery that is employed to resurrect the lost indigenous identity of the land. At times the characters in the fiction deliberately heave the image of a wild, primitive human being in order to assert himself and to carve his own niche in a world ruled by the empire on which the sun never set. Here savagery is used as a 'mask' to assert their individual selves. The word 'mask' is intentionally employed as the barbaric image associated with the marginalised community is not exactly what that they possess, instead it is an exaggeration of their identity which is highlighted so as to exercise their selfhood. It also creates a platform for the colonised through which they could ventilate their true feelings of anger and frustration against the colonisers, for their preconceived derogatory notions regarding the indigenous folk. So here the notion of savage coupled with the natives/ colonised becomes the 'noble savage' of the Romantic literature, symbolising the innate goodness of humanity when free from the corrupting influence of civilisation. And here the colonisers embody civilisation. In Indra Sinha's work *Animal's People*, the central character, often hailed as 'Animal' after the terrible night's venture on his body is an exemplar of the 'noble savage'. This 'noble savage' is a blend of the initial meaning of the term, which is wild and beastly, and the 18th century sentimentalist reference to the innate goodness in man. The protagonist's physiognomy urges the society to associate him with an animal, which is an identity that he automatically internalises to assert himself.

Jiddu Krishnamurti speaks about the phoenix kind of existence where one dies from within and is born again. This rebirth is a deliberate one and so its repercussions are also higher. The experience is similar to that of Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* who has gone through the big waves of ordeals of life and has reached the shore as a renewed, learned man. He is exceptionally educated in the knowledge of his capabilities and of his weaknesses, which he has learned to tackle with tactically. Like a great warrior he knows to armour his bruises or weaknesses and to be armed with his strengths which are the most powerful weapons to fight the battle of life. Here the character 'Animal' in Indra Sinha's novel *Animal's People* undergoes a similar rebirth and evolves as the powerful man with his animal identity. Animal could be compared to a pupa which has struggled its way out of its cocoon sharpening his wings of animality. For 'Animal' to accept himself as different and really special he himself has to seek the true beauty within. Only a man who knows and appreciates himself stays like a flame that does not flicker even in the strongest wind. Therefore the entire novel could be summed up as a journey of identification of self, of ruling out the paradoxes within and finally resolving the conflicts with the discovery of the true innate beauty. Once Animal achieves the enlightenment he becomes the wild fire that engulfs all that stands on his way.

The novel opens with a confessional line by Animal, which says "I used to be human once", and further establishes it on the same page with the assertive statement 'I no longer want to be human'. The very statement throws light into how he initially used to identify

himself with humans based on his physiognomy and how he transcends the identity that pulls him down into the lower strata of the society. He discloses the immense potential buried under the deformed outer covering. The beauty of his soul outgrows all other parameters of beauty. He also realises that being a human it is a herculean task to unleash his potential as he belongs to the disabled category who are looked upon with awe and pity. Being physically challenged he is seen as a liability by the society. But he considers himself to be the epitome of creation in the animal world. In the animal world he would be the only animal capable of being rational, having the capacity to think and communicate with people. There he would no longer be persecuted for his skin tone or physiognomy but would be revered by the other population based on his inner, personal strength or merit. The trend among anthropomorphs is to label certain category of people as weaklings or coward. The idea is as baseless as saying that the sunlight is white in colour just because it appears so to our naked eyes, though in reality it is a blend of seven colours. To see these seven shades of sunlight one has to look at it through a lens like material, be it prism, scale etc. Similarly to discover beauty within a crippled self one has to look through the lens of the inner eye. Here Animal looks at himself self through this inner eye and attains the epiphany. He decides to put on the camouflage of animality to surmount the stigmatised- sympathetic approach directed towards him. He says, "I learned that if you act powerless, you are powerless, the way to get what you want is to demand It" (19). A trace of his animalistic nature is revealed in the above lines. Animals do not have the capacity to subdue their needs instead they act upon their instincts. He also uses this veil to transcend the oppressive laws of the society that prevents him from even standing up for his own rights, "I'm an animal, I don't have to do like the rest of you, Laws of the society don't apply to me because I'm such a fucking animal" (87)

An actor is appreciated for his artistic skills when he is able to bring the character live on stage. Such animation could also possibly affect the character of the actor when enacted for a period of time. Similarly here the various traits one associates with an animal are gradually imbibed by the protagonist. Quite explicit among them is Animal's impulsive and ferocious nature. Animal's ferocious attitude is evident when he attacks Inspector Fatlu as a revenge for the several blows and insults showered on him long back. He does attack the Inspector inspite of Zafar's warning to stay away from violence.

I've come running up behind [Inspector Fatlu], he's missed me because I'm so low to the ground., I've grabbed the swine round the legs and hauled him down. With a shout, Fatlu falls. Struggling he's to get back on his feet, but I've got him pinned. . . . My hands fasten round his throat. With what horror his eyes bulge. . . . I shout in his ear then take the ear in my teeth, I bite until blood is running between my lips, he is screaming. I will not stop, let the ear come off. (312)

Here Animal uses his four footed, bent, and animal like physiognomy as a predation strategy. It disguises him to be a weakling before his enemies and instead uses his powerful shoulders and muscled arms like those of a wrestler's to assert his power. Similarly, the animality with which he identifies himself redeems him from getting tied to any religion. Animal makes the point clear to Farouq when he asks, "Since when did jungle creatures have to believe? . . . with us animals, our religion's eating, drinking, shitting, fucking, the basic stuff you do to survive" (88-89). The novel thereby brings into limelight the idea of religious tolerance which is the need of the hour.

Turning through the annals of historical narrative the animal imagery finds its resonance

in the representation of foul human characters. Those who are outwardly loud, illiterate and violent are often associated with animals. But what such narratives wilfully dismiss are the most appreciated characteristics in animals, like the dogs being faithful, the male bees sacrificing their lives for the protection of the queen etc. In *Animal* too one could delineate such virtues which are overtly suppressed to create the image of terror. Some of these are peppered as bits and pieces in the nook and corner of the text. The sacrificing nature of *Animal* is evident when he calls out to the unknown God and asks him to take his life instead of that of Aliya, ‘call off your angel from this child, spare her life and I, *Animal*, who’s servant to no one, will be your slave’ (326). His good nature is revealed at its epitome towards the end of the novel when he opts to make a greater sacrifice for love. The ten thousand rupees that he has saved from the remuneration paid by Zafar is thought of being used for bringing out Anjali from the brothel house and giving her a life rather than using it to go to America to get his operation done and to walk upright like a normal human. His faithful nature is also portrayed at various occasions throughout the novel. His pledge to Zafar to look out for Nisha at any cost is meted out with utmost significance. He is also found obedient when society accepts him as such. When Nisha calls him to come to her home, he finds himself obliging to it, he says “What was it about Nisha that made it impossible to say no? . . . She was the only person I knew who treated me as completely normal” (22).

The journey of redemption, inspiration and self identification also filters out the conflicts in one’s mind. Though *Animal* accepts his non-human self, the inherent human identity comes in conflict with the latter. This animal-human conflict within the depths of the psyche of *Animal* is so meticulously delineated in the course of the novel. *Animal* wishes to be a human only after meeting Nisha and it is his libidinal desires which urges a feeling to be understood, recognised and even appreciated by her. “This was the first time I caught myself thinking, if only things were different with me, if I could walk upright, it might be my praises she sang instead of Zafar’s” (36). All these feelings creep into his being from his desire to get laid. One cannot essentially argue that this trait of sexual gratification is sole to humanity because in the previous page we have read how *Animal* hails ‘fucking’ as one of the necessities for survival. From this very core impulse evokes his need to walk upright and to be a human, and so this could be seen as the joining line between the human and nonhuman self in *Animal*. “Eyes did I just say ‘Forget sex?’ What fucking hypocrisy! Sex was the one thing I could never forget, my second impossible wish. My first wish was to stand upright, but why did I want that if not because it led to the second?” (76).

As the story progresses *Animal* identifies himself to his name to the very core of his being. He approves of his animal identity and tries to imbibe and reciprocate it. For instance when Elli asks him to stop bragging about being an animal as he himself doesn’t believe in it, *Animal* retorts “Of course I believe it, because it’s true” (166). Once he accepts the self the next obstacle is how he tackles with the outside world that recurrently reminds him of being a human being who has falsely assumed the face of an animal as an excuse to behave badly. “‘You pretend to be an animal so you can escape the responsibility of being human’, Farouq carries on. ‘No joke, yaar. You run wild, do crazy things and get away with it because you’re always whining, I’m an animal, I’m an animal’” (209). The stigma associated with the animal imagery is also showcased in the novel when Nisha compares the immoral administrators of the society to animals. Nisha says “My father’s precious justice is of no use, courts are of no use, appeals to humanity are no use, because these people are not human, they’re animals” (332). This association urges the author to prove *Animal* as more human than any other

human being. For instance, towards the end of the novel when Animal is lost in the huge thick forest and he is starving to death, he gets sight of a lizard whom he initially manages to eat but later let go in spite of his wild mouth. This further reiterates the inbuilt humanity in him that cannot be filtered out. The lizard says “but your nature you can never change. You are human, if you were an animal you would have eaten me” (346). The above excerpt indicates how Animal has deliberately chosen his animal identity as a tool for asserting himself rather than as a means to escape responsibility or to rule away his humanity. He is a human using the tag imposed on him by the society, to fight against its unruliness. To add to this Zafar says in his last confession to Animal, “Animal, my brother, you are a human being. A full and true human being” (364).

In this world of the ‘survival of the fittest’, Animal opts to impersonate the wild species free from any dominating authority and who lives according to its instincts. He considers himself as the most unique and the one and only Animal who is fierce and free. He sees it as his responsibility to accept himself as he is yet to make the fullest out of it. The novel concludes with the most powerful verse lines uttered by Animal that are occasionally scattered throughout the text.

I am Animal fierce and free

In all the world is none like me. (366)

For a better understanding, it would be likely to make a far-fetched comparison on ‘the state of being’ of Animal with that of a transgender whose anatomy proves to belong to a particular gender while the psychology proves to be of the other. As a result a transgender’s nature would be in line with his psychic understanding of himself and so that particular behaviour would be radiated. So is the case of Animal, though he posses a human form he accepts himself to be an animal which explains his animalistic traits.

“Humanism is the only - I would go so far as saying the final- resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history” says one of the pioneers of Post-Colonial criticism, Edward Said. It is this humanism coated with the fearful symmetry of an animal that was resort to by Animal to find meaning and freedom in an oppressive and domineering society. As George Orwell puts it, “all animals are equal but some are more equal”. Though we consider mankind as a whole, being a single entity, time and again there are discrepancies in such utopian notions. As in the above quote from Animal Farm, the word “equal” is used as a relative term rather than as an absolute one, meaning that there can be different degrees of “equal”-ness, just as there can be different degrees of beauty. The novel Animal’s People is an incessant fight against these demarcations and differences in the society.

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