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The Indian Nation and its Others

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EDITORIAL

Until recently, mainstream scholarship would often turn a "blind eye" to minoritarian and marginalised subjects of all kinds: territorial marginality, linguistic, sexual, gender, caste and disability related marginality. Far from being sensitive towards subjects of diverse kinds of otherness, everyday life appeared to be supportive of oppressive and discriminatory regimes. Academic disciplines continued to be indifferent towards such discrimination and exploitation. Whereas matters related to social justice were considered as belonging to practical politics, writers and artists continued the age-old practice of representing the subjects in conformity with the everyday practices. Literary studies were accordingly unconcerned with these matters. Of course, a writer with a liberal humanist orientation would offer "sympathetic" portrayals of many an "other." But these latter would be "marginal" to their principal concerns: the heteronormative, upper caste, patriarchy, the healthily heroic, or—in the context of the West—WASP. Otherwise, the order of the day was to portray the black, blind, one-eyed people, *hijra*s, bisexuals, flat-nosed races either in demonized form, as subjects of ridicule or as source of humour as the case may be. Also, there was a time when one could freely use such idioms as "turning a blind eye to" or metaphors such as the "limping hero," "Tribe," "lower caste," "negro" with impunity. In contrast, thanks to the frequent claims for rights among the marginalized groups and their identarian politics, we are nowadays more likely to question ourselves before deploying such terms, as indeed I have done above while punning on the idiom by putting it within quotation marks.

"Minorities" do not pre-exist; but are created through law: be it *Manusmriti* or be it the Indian Constitution or simply the new and ever-growing number of ancillary laws. Whereas the Constitution is a stable document with clear guidelines (even though judges are sometimes called upon to interpret words and clauses in it), the ancient Sanskrut text is unstable as it has numerous versions. Many readers of it trust the English version after the European scholars tried to fix it in terms of textuality. The text that Amdedkar set fire to may not have been the text that Gandhi had read and supported in part.[1] Scholars who read the original version/s suggest that

different versions are contradictory. Manusmriti offers an internally inconsistent and conflicting perspective on women's rights.[2] It is a fact that the text has been mis/used in phases of Indian history to redefine and exploit as well as discriminate against certain castes. It is only when the colonial law makers fixed the text and made it the source of their Hindu law that the text was treated as the villain of the piece. Thus, when independent India decided to form its constitution and Ambedkar was entrusted with the scripting that justice and equality became his key points of reference. The constitution guarantees equality for all irrespective of caste, creed, religion etc. But in a nation state known for its cultural, ethnic and topographical diversity, otherness keeps proliferating. As a conceptual category, "minority" is of recent origin, a product of modernity. After all, it was only when modern democracy was institutionalized in the early 19th century that majoritarian government came into being and then the question of numerical minority arose. Our concern and sensitivity towards various minorities and their exploitation and suffering has also been mediated by colonial modernity. Attention to disability and the more recent discipline of disability studies is also of Western provenance.

The term "minority" is mostly deployed in its common sense, no doubt. But as a piece of postmodern academic jargon it is used as a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In these texts, they criticize the concept of "majority". For Deleuze and Guattari the "minor" does not refer to minority groups as described in ordinary language. For them, minority groups are defined by identities that are "molar configurations" belonging to the majoritarian State Machine. Deleuze and Guattari argued that the concept of a "people," when invoked by subordinate groups or those aligned with them, always refers to a minority, whatever its numerical power might be. There is a connection between "minorities" and the conception of the minor as per Deleuze and Guattari's formulations. The past practice of apartheid in South Africa or the caste system in India provides an illustration of how the concept of "minority" is used by Deleuze-Guattari. While, numerically, there may be more blacks or Dalits than whites or upper caste people, white men and upper caste men still constitute the majority whereas Black men or Dalits formed a minority. It is possible that the State and its apparatuses need to address the needs of these minorities to start making them believe that they are treated as equals and equal stake holders in the national enterprise.

This special issue of *SHSS* explores the question of minorities from different disciplinary perspectives by engaging with different

minority identities in India. It focuses on such minorities as the Thankul Nagas, people with disability, Dalits, and migrants. How are minorities identified, defined, and categorized by legal and institutional processes? It is not unusual for a group to which more than one category can be applied. So, such categorizations become the basis for the struggle for rights. The essays here question the relationship of minority and majority. As editor, I am proud to say that almost all the contributors to the issue belong to the groups and identities they write about. Three are actively involved in issues of transgender rights and the use of effective pedagogy among learners with cognitive disability. Anil Aneja's essay is about Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwDA) which advocates inclusive education. His analysis addresses the salient provisions under the RPwDA (2016) which can directly or indirectly impact development and practices of inclusive education in India. In three specific sections he outlines the philosophical basis, the historical perspectives to policy formation and the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act with reference to inclusive education. He concludes by arguing that in order to realize desirable outcomes of the present provisions concerning inclusion, it becomes mandatory to negotiate through many of the concerns he raises. Provisions under the Act should have considered the possible challenges and complications and subsequently the guidelines for a feasible mechanism would have added strength to the RPwDA. R. Lalitha Raja's essay "Implications of cognition on language learning in children with dyslexia," highlights the language problems of Tamil children with dyslexia both in learning Tamil and English in all aspects of language relating it to their cognitive processes. Researchers estimate that dyslexia is the most common reading problem that affects nearly 10 to 30 per cent of the population.

Akhilesh Kumar's study is also about disability; but his concerns are more about their literary representations. Going back in time he analyzes works by two Bangla writers: Bankim and Tagore. In a patriarchal set-up, he argues, being female is in itself a disability. Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) in his novel *Rajani* (1877) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) in his short story "Subha" (1918) seem to be thinking along these lines. Akhilesh Kumar tries to explore the struggle of the visually impaired protagonist of *Rajani* in a male-dominated society, and shows similarities and contrasts between Rajani and other characters in the novel. By juxtaposing the characters in Bankim and Tagore he looks at the literary representations of disability by focusing on the individual formulations of the disabled subject in their works.

Kuhu Chanana moves to the domain of popular culture and her primary focus is on the consumption of the trans-cinema by the non-static spectator who participates and reorients the meaning of the trans-identity. She argues that the mobile and fluid meaning of the term 'trans' needs to be understood in that light as well. Secondly, she argues that to catalogue trans not as a monolithic and linear term but as a circular and protean in nature is all the more desirable. Though *hijras* at one level are quite different from the global trans identities (due to the very distant cultural codes) there are multiple overlaps because of the ever dynamic and multi-layered interpretation of certain others. Ahona Roy, similarly, writes about gay life in Mumbai.

Yuimirin Kapai's paper tries to problematize the socio-political changes from the colonial to the postcolonial transition by bringing in other factors such as the beginning of print culture, introduction of money and the tension between tradition and modernity. The thrust of the paper is, however, not so much an attempt to analyse the changes as to set down the contextual and conceptual frameworks. He identifies the contact with the outside world as an important catalyst in the process of "disembedding." Till as late as the end of nineteenth century, each village constituted the centre of the world. By the middle of the twentieth century, groups of villages had started to identify themselves as a tribe and later on groups of tribes as Nagas. Besides, disembedding also implies disengagement of individuals from community. The paper also looks at the production of spaces, and concludes by drawing our attention to the movement from "darkness to light" or "head-hunting to soul-hunting." These terms were not merely metaphors but a reality. This shift was "a necessity to attain the life of eternity in the heaven."

Three essays in this issue are pertaining to Tribal and Dalit identities. First, Raj Kumar begins with the general proposition that the Indian society has for centuries been one of the most hierarchical among known civilizations with a clear gradation in the exercise of power and privilege. But, he says, the literatures of this country, until very recently, have never focused on this problem of inequality as "the pen has by and large been in the hands of those who wielded power, and those outside the grid of authority and agency have generally been rendered invisible in the canonized literary texts of India." Raj Kumar offers a cogent analysis of the term, "Tribe." Then he proceeds to study the literary representation of ethnic oppression through a close reading of Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*. He alludes to the controversy in sociological and anthropological thinking on tribal people about the degree to which their cultural autonomy

can remain intact in today's world. He concludes by saying that the "unspoken message of Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja* is that the intrusion of outside forces can only bring in ruin and devastation to these children of nature." But he says such a position is scientifically untenable. It is emotive rather than rational. Narender Kumar takes up the work of the Panjabi Dalit writer Gurdial Singh. He complicates the caste and women question and says, "In a caste society like India, the question of gender equality becomes more complicated because caste determines one's socio-economic position in the society. And a woman's position determines her subjection in the male dominant society." He asks how do in Gurdial's works women of both categories (landlord and peasant) get exploited by men? How do Dalit women get exploited by the upper caste landlords as well as by Dalit men? How does patriarchy work among the Dalits? He argues "The nexus between the upper caste landlords, government and police reveals that the whole state is under the control of landlords. The landholding castes determine which political party will make the government. Being economically sound, the landholding caste, directly or indirectly, controls government and government machinery to some extent. So, the nexus of landholding caste, government and government machinery always suppress the voice of the marginalized groups. Such use of the government machinery by the dominant caste raises the question about the function of democracy." In her fascinating and comprehensive account of indentured labour in the late 19th century, Judith Misrahi-Barak delves deep into the migrations in the context of indentureship, caste and crossing of the *Kala Pani*, focusing on the communication that took place then, across lands and oceans. In the second half of her paper, she offers a hypothesis about the epistolary exchanges that happened at the time of indentureship from India to the Caribbean. Finally, she points out how, "just like the addresser, we are confronted by the ghostly text of the addressee who does not respond, who cannot respond, or chooses not to respond. Through the disengagement one can also see a form of agency and empowerment." She concludes by saying that crossing the *Kala Pani* and "shedding one's caste meant suffering. But it was also, for many, an act of emancipation, of social equalizing, looking forward to the annihilation of caste."

I am sorry that the issue could not carry articles on certain other marginal categories such as the nomads. This lacuna could have been addressed if only we had enough time at our disposal. Before signing off, however, I wish to thank the former Director, Professor Chetan Singh who entrusted me with the responsibility of editing three issues of SHSS which were part of a huge backlog. I am happy

to have cleared these. I am especially grateful to the IIAS that I was entrusted with the editorial responsibility of this special issue. I am also grateful to the current Chairman, Professor Kapil Kapoor and the Director Makarand Paranjape for allowing me to carry out the responsibility given me by the preceding team.

Notes

1. Gandhi had said, "I hold Manusmriti as part of Shastras. But that does not mean that I swear by every verse that is printed in the book described as Manusmriti. There are so many contradictions in the printed volume that, if you accept one part, you are bound to reject those parts that are wholly inconsistent with it. (...) Nobody is in possession of the original text."
2. Patrick Olivelle (2005), Manu's Code of Law, Oxford University Press.

GOPINATH MOHANTY'S *PARAJA*: A STUDY OF ETHNIC OPPRESSION

Raj Kumar

Although the Indian society has for centuries been one of the most hierarchical among the known civilizations with a clear gradation in the exercise of power and privilege, the literatures of this country, until very recently, have never focused on this problem of inequality. The pen has by and large been in the hands of those who wielded power, and those outside the grid of authority and agency have generally been rendered invisible in the canonized literary texts of India. It is only towards the end of the nineteenth century that a few unusual novels take up the theme of social oppression as their major concern, and in the twentieth century there is a gradually growing awareness in literature of those who have so far remained outside the threshold of mainstream Indian society: the outcastes, the landless, the dispossessed and the tribals.

My attempt in this paper will be to study the literary representation of ethnic oppression through a close reading of Gopinath Monanty's *Paraja* (Odia: 1945, English translation: 1987). As an Odia reader, I have an advantage of reading the novel written in Odia. But for the analysis I will use the English translation of the text. The limitations of a translation, as we all know, are many, and have to be acknowledged. But my objective in this paper is to look at the representation of oppression — hence, the focus will be thematic rather than stylistic, and I would prefer not to take up issues regarding the quality or adequacy of translation in this limited space.

Paraja highlights the predicament of a tribal community today and the varieties of exploitation that the people belonging to it have to suffer. Gopinath Mohanty has firsthand experience of the tribes of Koraput region where he has lived, and he writes his two famous novels, *Paraja* and *Amrutara Santana* (Odia: 1947, English translation: 2015). They are moving accounts of the clash between two worldviews—tribal and non–tribal, the indigenous people confronting the commercial and the bureaucratic forces with

bafflement and in comprehension. Before I take up the novel for critical analysis it will be necessary to give a proper background to the term 'tribe' and also the ways tribal worlds are interpreted by the academics.

Defining the Term 'Tribe'

Defining the English word 'tribe' is not an easy task as it has been changing its connotations over the centuries. The word originates from Latin 'tribuz' referring to the three divisions into which the early Romans were grouped. *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines the contemporary meaning of the word thus: "a race of people; now applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarous condition, under a headman or chief".[1] Romila Thapar has pointed out the word 'tribe' in its "precise meaning refers to a community of people claiming descent from a common ancestor", but has been "used to cover a variety of social and economic forms not to mention claims to biological and racial identities; and this tends to confuse the original meaning".[2] Andre Beiteille defines the 'tribes' as "people who were considered primitive, lived in backward areas and did not know the use of writing".[3] Barun De and Nripen Bandhyopadhyay define tribes as 'groups of people who use a common dialect and also observe certain common taboos but whose principal characteristic is that they have not been absorbed into the dominant culture of India, but which remains as social enclaves of under-privilege with the national fabric".[4] Last but not the least, Surjit Saha defines the "tribes" which can be appropriately applied to the tribals in Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja*: "The tribals are population groups which were able to resist effectively the pressures of unequal incorporation into Hindu society and thus remain outside the parameters of social control by the Brahmin elite. Societies which grew in these zones of exclusion from Hinduism created their own separate ethnic and cultural identities, subject to differentiations partly imposed by natural environment and ecology. These zones of exclusion were not only socio–cultural but also territorial".[5]

Today many anthropologists, administrators and scholars prefer the word 'aboriginal' to 'tribal'. Despite divergent definitions and different views of experts there are some common features possessed by all the tribal groups which have been resisting acculturation or absorption. A. R. Desai makes a list of these:

> (1) They live away from the civilized world in the most inaccessible parts of both forests and hills; (2) they belong either to one of the three

> stocks — Negritos, Austoloids or Mongoloids; (3) they speak (same) tribal dialect; (4) they profess a primitive religion known as 'Animism' in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element; (5) they follow primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest produce; (6) they are largely carnivorous or flesh or meat eaters; (7) they live either naked or semi–naked using tree barks and leaves for clothing; and (8) they have nomadic habits and a love for drink and dance.[6]

Thus conceived, tribals are a self-contained community: they have a common history, common culture and common government. Since the members of a tribe consider each other to be related by ties of kinship the relationships of production are also homogenous. As a corollary to this, it follows that tribal societies are unstratified. Tribal economy by nature is non–monetized. For a society based on a domestic economy, where producers are themselves the consumers, the role of money is peripheral. One must remember that not all societies labelled as tribal are in the same stage of development within their boundaries, nor do they have the same relationship with the larger society in which they are situated. The Santals in West Bengal, the Thodas in Nilagiri hills and Ooty, the Jenukurubas in Biligiriranga hills in Karnataka, the different hill tribes of the North-East and the Kondh and Paraja tribes of Odisha have very different internal organizations and their interaction with the so-called 'mainstream' life is not uniform or similar.

At present, due to developmental activities, there are very few tribal communities which are in total isolation. New roads and communication facilities have opened up the remote areas and people have developed contact with the modern world. Most of the tribes, at least in Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telengana, Chhatishgarh and Madhya Pradesh or even in Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura have adopted technology or modern agriculture, though not on a very large scale. But this contact may lead to the rapid disintegration of tribal society and the absorption of the aboriginals within the surrounding population, or it may result in conscious and self-chosen seclusion. These two possible alternatives lead one to ask: should the aboriginals be free to follow their inclination in accepting or rejecting the cultural and social patterns of the majority groups around them or should they be compelled or coaxed to abandon their own cultural traditional and values for the sake of a uniform ideal of economic development?

Most of these communities had their own traditional systems of education that socialized the member of the tribe into its own

mode of living. The standardized form of education that is now being imposed from above disturbs some of its ethical, moral and cultural norms of the community but is in some ways inevitable if these people want to get out of their isolation and aspire to a better standard of living.

This tension may be articulated in many scholarly debates in abstract terms, but only literature can give us the nuances of the predicament in a way that our sympathies get directly involved. Whether the autonomy of the tribal society be protected or not is a very troubled issue.

That the Hindu culture, otherwise known as 'Great Tradition', tries to incorporate the tribal cultures or the various 'Little Traditions' is generally known. On the other hand, the tribal people have been in various ways resisting the dominance of high caste culture. History offers evidence of these indigenous people fighting against the 'outsiders' and the new developments in historiography have succeeded in bringing out into the open more such struggles that had not been highlighted earlier. It is this conflict, the tribals against the non–tribals, the slow strangulation of the tribals by the bureaucrats, moneylenders and the destruction of the aboriginal way of life that sets the ground for Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja*. What makes Mohanty to write on the tribals? Being an outsider to the tribal world what does he write about them? Let us address these questions to understand Mohanty's views on the tribals.

Gopinath Mohanty's Literary World

It may be mentioned here that among the major novelists in Odia, Gopinath Mohanty is remarkable for his epic representation of the changing rhythm of tribal life in his novels *Paraja*, *Amrutara Santana*, *Dadi Budha*, *Sibu Bhai*, *Apahancha*, etc. As a government officer, he was posted in different parts of Odisha including the tribal district of Koraput. He spent the most energetic years of his life among the tribes especially Parajas and Kondhs trying to understand their ways of life and their worldview. His total absorption in the landscape and customs of these people gave him a perspective that people outside the tribe seldom acquire. Bikram K. Das in the translator's introduction to *Paraja* emphasizes Mohanty's first-hand knowledge of the people he is writing about and his involvement with and participation in the lives of the people of the Paraja tribe:

> The characters he creates are very real people set in a three dimensional landscape. He has known the sounds and smells of jungle he so lovingly

> evokes; what is more, he has obviously suffered and exulted with Sukru Jani and his tribe, drunk rice-bear with them, sung their songs, danced at their harvest festivals and starved with them when the rains failed. The author's intense personal involvement is unmistakable even if one were ignorant of this background of lived and shared experience, and it lends *Paraja* surging power that very few Indian novels have.[7]

Mohanty's concern for the tribals may be further testified from the following extract which was a petition sent against him to the Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in January 1951, by the landowners and moneylenders of Koraput where he was posted as a Special Assistant Agent combining the powers of S.D.O. and Sub-Judge under agency rule: "To our great calamity and disaster Sri Gopinath Mohanty is posted here as the Special Assistant Agent at Rayagada. He is always fond of hill-men and behaves like hill-men himself. He very little respects other classes of people before them. He behaves as if only born for Adivasis".[8]

As a writer, Gopinath Mohanty's literary career is quite impressive. Apart from writing on tribals, he has also written about other subjects. *Managahirara Chasa* (1940) was Mohanty's first novel. Subsequently he wrote 22 novels out of which 20 have been published, and in addition his short stories have been collected in eight volumes. He also has a two-part autobiography. His fictional work, particularly novels, can be divided into three main groups. The first group corresponds to his early service period when he was posted in the tribal district of Koraput. The novels are *Dadi Budha* (1944), *Paraja* (1945), *Amrutara Santana* (1947), *Sibu Bhai* (1955), *Apahancha* (1961) all of them dealing with tribal life. In the second group of novels, he focuses on the people living in towns and brings out the social nuances that differentiate the different castes and classes and highlights the predicaments of both individuals and communities. These novels are: *Harijan* (1948), *Sarata Babunka Gali* (1950), *Rahura Chhaya* (1952), *Sapana Mati* (1954), *Danapani* (1955), *Laya Bilaya* (1961), etc. In the last phase he wrote only one novel *Matimatala* (1964), which is a saga of rural life in Odisha.

The novel *Paraja* deals with the tribal people and begins at a point where their world is still whole, unstratified by the forces from the outside world. They are depicted as simple people, with modest aspirations and carefree lives. The details about the tribe emerge through an account of a small family in a Paraja village at some distance away from Koraput town. It is the saga of how this family, unable to confront the devious forces of the so-called 'civilized' world – bureaucracy and greed – gradually faces ruin and devastation.

Amrutara Santana depicts the lives of the Kondhs, a more ancient and more populous group having a philosophy of their own. The simple and lineal features of Paraja are now replaced by a complex organization and shifting relationship which give a deeper and more intense experience of life. The novel basically talks about Puyu, the heroine, who sacrifices herself for the sake of the family and for the hope of a new life to come.

Harijan deals with Dalits who stay in dirty hovels in derelict part of Cuttack town. Dalits in *Harijan* are contrasted with the rich upper castes, who exploit them and finally drive them out of the limits of the town. In the novel, Puni, a Dalit girl, is seduced by Aghor, the son of a rich contractor who occupies the land of Dalits driving them away.

Danapani narrates the story of a man's rise to a high position and in the process, he employs all means including the use of his wife's beauty and youth. In both the above-mentioned novels, the novelist exposes the so-called "civilized" veneer of the urban man to reveal his selfishness and greed.

Laya Bilaya is also set in an urban locale. A family from Calcutta comes to Puri for a short visit. The contact with the sea rejuvenates them and they feel nourished as they have never felt before. They have to go back finally into the drab lifelessness of the metropolis. While the dominant tone in the tribal novels was compassion, the urban characters are handled with sharp and biting irony.

Matimatala traces the life story of a committed young man Rabi, who decides to dedicate his life to serve his fellow villagers instead of taking up a salaried job. His father, a local zamindar, does not approve of this. But Rabi sticks to his decision and the rest of the novel deals with his continuous attempts at organizing the village life and the resistances he has to face. In the process, the changing structure of rural Odia life, its strength and weaknesses are laid bare in unique totality.

Though Mohanty's literary world can be interpreted in many ways and although apparently he seems to be dealing with many different worlds, he is really concerned with a single theme in almost all his novels — the conflict of cultures and impact of new civilization on the old. That is why his fictional world is full of tensions. This epochal experience that almost the whole of our country has gone through during the twentieth century with regional and class community variations is captured by Gopinath Mohanty with reference to Odisha, specially highlighting the collision of agrarian and technological world views.

Reading the Text

"Paraja", the name of a tribe (pronounced 'Paroja' or 'Poroja' in Odia), is derived from the Sanskrit word 'praja' which literally means the subjects or the common people, as distinguished from the rajas or the zamindars of the pre–Independence time. In Odia language, the word "paraja" denotes 'tenants' or 'royats'.[9] Befitting the meaning of the term the tribesmen in the novel are thrifty, hard-working cultivators in comparison to their relatively primitive counterparts inhabiting adjoining territory. Sukru Jani and his elder son Mandia, strong and hard working, are eager to improve their lot with whatever means of betterment of living that the depths of Koraput jungle can offer. The author in the beginning presents a pre-lapsarian world untouched by the acquisitive tendencies of a complex urban life and its people. The Parajas practice barter system, a relatively self-sufficient village economy and are on the whole tuned to a harmonious rhythm of life. The agents of change, who enter this world of innocence to cause devastation, come from the outside. They are the forest guards, the foresters, the excise officials, the magistrates and the other representative of the administrative and bureaucratic machinery.

In most of Thomas Hardy's novels, as in *Paraja*, we find strangers entering into the unspoiled and unadulterated world of innocence. For example, Farfrae in *Mayor of Casterbridge* (English: 1886) is an alien who brings about a tragic end to the life of Henchard. In *The Woodlanders* (English: 1887) Edgar Fitzpiers and Mrs. Felice Charmond are outsiders who carry with them an urban value system. When they enter, the static world constituted mainly of Mr. Melbury, Giles Winterborne and Grace disintegrates.

There are two causes which bring about the disintegration of society that we find in both *Paraja* and *The Woodlanders*. First, it is due to the arrival of urban values in an innocent world and secondly, it is the desire for the social upliftment from within the Woodlanders and the Paraja people. Mr. Melbury in *The Woodlanders* is an established businessman. But he continually wants to raise his status and sends Grace to town for higher education. He wants to marry Grace above status so that people will respect him. In *Paraja*, Sukru has his own plot of land but he wants more to make real his dreams for comfortable position. He wants to get his sons and daughters married and hopes to see his grandchildren. He sees even further:

> His grandsons are already fathers and the chubby urchins crowding around him are his great–grand children. His line has multiplied. He

> has a big herd of cattle too; there they are–he counts sixty fine animals. And there in front of long row of houses which are all his, is a large cattle–shed, and this too is his. And there is… etc.[10]

In *Paraja*, Sukru Jani's travail begins with the brush with the forest guard, a lecher who covets Sukru's elder daughter Jili. Selling a daughter for money means violation of the essential values of that tribe, its integrity and honour. Sukru Jani's angry response to the forest guard's proposal has unfortunate repercussions. The message of refusal, sent through Kau Paraja, triggers off a course of ruthless vindictiveness on the part of the forest guard who brazenly reneges on the permission earlier given to Sukru to cut the trees. Some revenue officers also come down on him with notices of a fine, the non-payment of which would land him in jail.

There is no choice left for Sukru. At last he chooses paying the fine by borrowing money. And that choice yokes him inexorably to slavery. He becomes the Sahukar's *goti* or bonded labourer. His agony of being reduced to serfdom is brought out in the aging father's cry as he puts his arm around his son: "Gotis, Tikra! From today we are gotis, slaves!"[11] Slavery for the self–respecting Paraja is virtually death, yet he will not go to prison which is the only other alternative. Gotihood is horrible but imprisonment is an inconceivable ignominy. In their calculation, a jail sentence is eternal disgrace, eternal damnation. Mohanty describes that prison is the greatest terror in the lives of tribals:

> For the ignorant tribemen, there is no terror greater than the terror of the prison. It is altogether beyond his comprehension for it belongs to a system in which he has no part, though he lives in its fringes. Labour he understands, even unpaid labour under a tyrannical moneylender, for this he is born into, but anyone who goes to jail is forever stamped a criminal and ostracized. It cripples him socially and economically, the law never relents once it has you in its toils.[12]

The terror arises out of a total incomprehension of the judicial and penal system under which the tribal officially lives, but which remains as mysterious and malevolent to him as an evil fate.

The emergence of the money-lending class can be traced back to the British rule in India. The new British Revenue system of eighteenth century turned land into private property and in the process a new type of society evolved in our country. With the coming of the British to India there came industry and it partly replaced the agricultural set up. In the agricultural set up land was a matter of life and death to the peasants. But the introduction of

commerce changed the relationship between man and man to that of tenant and the landlord. Again the introduction of money as the only medium of exchange led the peasants to abject poverty. The British Government would no more take five bags of rice as was the practice with the kings and local zamindars, but demand cash. The natural calamities and especially the famine of 1866, which broke the backbones of most of the Odia farmers, gave rise to the moneylenders who ultimately started grabbing the land of poor peasants. As a result, the farmer became either a landless labourer or a migrant worker in the town. Several Indian writers, including Premchand, have dealt with this theme.

The oppression of the moneylender follows the same pattern in the tribal village as it does in any other village in India including the village Belari in Uttar Pradesh which Premchand had introduced to us in *Godan* (Hindi: 1936). In *Paraja*, Ramachandra Bishoi initially started a liquor business and the tribal people sold their land to buy liquor. Later he became a moneylender, giving money for the mortgage of land. He charged such a high interest on the loan taken that there was no possibility for a poor tribal to ever pay up the capital as well as the interest which was computed in a strange complicated manner. As a result, he became his *goti*, a bonded labourer for his whole life. Mohanty graphically describes the process in the following:

> A tribesman comes to the Sahukar for a loan of mandia, and the Sahukar agreed to let him have it. The deal is closed and as the man is about to go, the Sahumar asks him:
> 'Have you taken your grain'?
> 'Yes, Sahukar', the man says.
> 'How much are you taking'?
> 'One putti'.
> 'All right. Now go and tell my clerk that you are taking a putti of mandia. He will write it down in his books'.
> The loan is entered in the clerk's ledger.
> 'Have you informed by clerk?' the Suhukar asks again.
> 'Yes, Sahukar'. The man prepares to leave.
> 'Wait, the Sahukar says. You haven't informed my wife. She is inside the house.
> Go and tell her. And tell my servant also.'
> The poor Kondh or Paraja has to inform three other persons, besides Sahukar himself, that he is borrowing a putti of mandia, at fifty per cent interest. And each time one entry is made.
> Next year, the borrower returns with a putti and half of mandia which should clear him of the debt.

> 'Is that all?' the Sahukar asks, looking at the pile of the grain.
> 'Why, yes, Sahukar. I took one putti, and the interest is half a putti.'
> 'One putti! Are you mad? You took one putti from me, one putti from my clerk, one putti from my wife, and one putti from my servant. How many *puttis* is that? There, count: one and one and one and one makes four. And the interest of four puttis? Two puttis. So you should have brought six puttis in all; instead of which you have brought one and a half. Why, even the interest is more than that! Do you understand?'
> 'No, Sahukar,' the bewildered tribesman says. 'But, you must be right.'
> And the poor man is hooked. A goti is born….[13]

The chronic indebtedness of the tribals is certainly due to rampant poverty and subsistence economy. Reliable ethnographic evidences prove that tribal people were not that much handicapped in their struggle for living a carefree life when their places of habitation were isolated and devoid of middlemen and contractors. They were living in self-sufficient economic conditions. They had forest wealth at their disposal to sustain themselves. But unfortunately when their abodes were thrown open as a result of economic development all around, they found themselves completely ill-equipped to enjoy the fruits of development. Outsiders, the so-called 'civilized' people, exploited their vulnerability in the absence of any concerted efforts on the part of administration. With the passage of time, their plight continued to worsen and they have been reduced to the position we find them in today.

The modus operandi of the traditional moneylender is very simple and convenient to the tribal debtors. Whenever a tribal needs money for whatever reason he has to walk a few furlongs or less to reach the moneylender's house where he is always welcome — day in and day out. The moneylender provides him money without any condition, sureties, guarantees and guarantors since an average tribal has very little to offer in the way of movable or immovable property. All that he has is his honest desire to fulfill his loan obligations out of his earnings and some land that he may possess. The moneylender recognizes these as good security, and demands mortgaging the tribal's land against the loan. By way of any formality the only thing a debtor has to do is to affix his thumb impression on a blank piece of paper or under a draft which he cannot read.

Since most of the tribal people are illiterate they have no idea of what is being entered in the account books of the moneylender. They put their thumb impression very submissively wherever desired by the moneylender and that seals their fate forever. In many cases these transactions are oral and they cannot afford to approach a

court of law for seeking redress. But even those transactions, which are recorded in the account books, are nothing but legal fictions because of the wrong entries of inflated amounts and the most the poor can do is to call the village panchayat which usually serves the interest of the moneylender. The indebtedness leads to bondedness and land alienation which is exactly happened in Mohanty's *Paraja*.

Thus, the size of the problem of indebtedness is enormous. Indebtedness among tribals does not only have economic dimensions but social and psychological ones too. The term 'goti' defined by Bikram Nanda as follows:

> Whatever may be the nature of bondedness, every goti is attached to a particular household that exercises direct control over his labour or products of labour… The indebtedness always multiplies in some kind of geometrical progression. Bondedness is like an autograph in arrear so that once signed it can rarely be erased… Children of goti are in debt before they are born. A goti is, of course, assured of the bare minimum of diet and a roof. He is forbidden to possess means of production (land, plough, cattle, etc.). The Sahukar may decide to pay the goti a small amount of cash to buy luxuries as a token of his goodwill and allow an off day or so on a festive occasion.[14]

The oppression of the moneylender in Mohanty's *Paraja* is not a new phenomenon in Odia literature. The historicity of this can be traced back to the colonial rule in Odisha during the nineteenth century when the traditional Odia society was undergoing structural changes through the incorporation of many new professions. Ramachandra Bishoi's appearance in the Paraja community is not sudden. In literature, it is a gradual process continuing from Fakirmohan Senapati's *Chhamana Athaguntha* (Odia: 1898). Ramachandra Mangaraj who grabs the land of innocent Bhagia and Saria in Senapati's novel appears in a different garb in Kalindi Charan Panigrahi's *Matira Manisha* (Odia: 1931) as Hari Mishra, a shrewd Brahmin who becomes the chairman of the village panchayat. Hari Mishra tries to divide a happy and prosperous joint family and to destroy the integrity of the village life for his selfish end but finds that people are becoming conscious of their rights. Their revolutionary protest eventually endangers his safety. It is as if Hari Mishra escapes from the world of *Matira Manisha* into the safer and more profitable world of tribal Odisha as depicted in *Paraja*. And then appears Ramchandra Bishoi in Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*. Here, he serves as the middleman, establishing a link between the tribal people and the revenue inspectors appointed by the government. Thus, the

predatory mediator between the market economy of the capitalist world and the pre-monetary values of the self-sufficient tribal village turns out to be a recurring presence in Odia fiction.

Colonialism, Commerce and Corruption

As we have seen earlier, the advance of the commercial frontier into a relatively simple, self-sufficient tribal economy was inaugurated by British colonialism. As a result tribals had to depend on the non-tribals who are basically exploitative by nature. In this connection Bikram Nanda writes:

> The steady decline of the self-sufficiency of tribal produces increased he dependence of the tribals on the non-tribals. These non-tribal men and women who were peddlers in the highlands considered themselves "higher" in social status than the highland dwellers. This group of higher status Hindu men and women found an intermediary place between the product and consumption in the highlands. In years of bad harvest and during months of scarcity, the prices of grain were extraordinarily high and the tribals faced hardships in meeting their requirements of subsistence. This resulted in wide spread tribal indebtness in the highlands … [15]

In *Paraja*, market value is penetrating into a world where no markets existed. In the very beginning of the novel, we find the *adhikari*, an outsider as well as a government agent, imposing a fine of 80 rupees on Sukru Jani for whom the amount is exorbitant. Sukru then runs to Ramachandra Bishoi, the moneylender who eventually succeeds in keeping Sukru as his goti. Later Sukru's two sons, Mandia and Tikra also remain as gotis under the same moneylender. Sukru also mortgages his land which is never returned by the Sahukar. Thus, the intrusion of money into a non-monetary society slowly destroyed a peaceful and happy family. There are some characters in the novel who in the beginning resist the market value system. Jili and Bili, daughters of Sukru Jani resisted tooth and nail the proposals of the forest guard, a bureaucrat, and the first ever representative of the outside world to enter into the tribal world in the novel. But they are so helpless in the face of a value system that was engulfing their society that they had to play the roles of concubines to the road contractor and later Jili had to elope with the moneylender Ramachandra Bishoi.

We also see there is a progressive loss of individual liberty due to the market value system. Bishoi is purely a moneylender and not a zamindar like Mangaraj in *Chhamana Athaguntha*. He lends money to

the needy people and turns them to bonded labourers, a process of which Sukru and his two sons Mandia and Tikra are victims. Freedom becomes a commodity and only money can give them freedom. The situation is something different in Hardy's *The Woodlanders*. In *The Woodlanders*, Giles loses his piece of land but becomes an independent labourer. In England, the landless people were free to sell their labour because the Industrial Revolution had opened up other opportunities of employment. But in a predominantly agrarian Indian society, land is often the only source of living and that is why it is imbued with so much emotion in our culture. The tribals in the novel try to get back their piece of land and in the end out of frustration and disappointment they killed the moneylender.

The killing of the moneylender in *Paraja* is a clear instance of tribal resistance. It shows that Mohanty's description of tribal world is not purely romantic, nor is it mainly a nostalgic evocation of pristine innocence. A comparison of the world of *Paraja* with Bhhe agabat Panigrahi's Odia short story "Shikara" (1936) will bring this point out clearly. In *Shikara*, Ghinua, a Santal hunter, is so innocent that after killing Govinda Sardar, an oppressor very much like Ramachandra Bishoi, he waits for the reward which he thinks he will receive from court for a brave and socially useful act. Instead of a reward, he receives a death sentence. In *Paraja*, on the other hand, the tribal people know that the killing of Ramachandra Bishoi, although morally right is nevertheless a criminal act. They are aware of the legal norms and they go to the police station to surrender themselves and await punishment.

The tribal world has now been sucked into the administrative network of bureaucracy, jurisprudence and penal system. But the court and the police station in *Paraja* are crucial sites of corruption and exploitation. That is why tribal people shudder at the very mention of words such as law courts. Mohanty describes the tribals attitude to courts in the following words:

> They had seen from a distance the world of law courts, packed with buzzing crowds of clerks, peons, policemen, and lawyers carrying thick books under their arms, and it was a nightmare world for them. In the court there was always someone growling at you: what are you doing there; who asked you to come in? Who is that smoking? Stop that noise! And people ask you not only your name but also your father's name and the name of his father and his father, back to the fourteen generations, and everything that was spoken was written down in the books. The tribesmen lived in terror of the court, and the stories they heard only added to their fear.[16]

The alienation of the people from the system that administers them justice arises out of the superimposed nature of the judicial system. It has not evolved indigenously, it is a graft from above, and it is meant to intimidate and mystify rather than help and redress genuine grievances. The court is a terror not only to the tribals but also to the non–tribals, especially to the common men of the villages who are also uneducated like the tribals and are terrified of the magic potency of the written word on which the legal system rests.[17] Another novel by Mohanty, *Matimatala*, which is an epic of Odisha village life, tells us how the common people perceive the law court and its complexities:

> So many incidents occur in the village, it is not possible to go to the court for each and every thing. The experienced villager feels odd and afraid at the very mention of the word. It is said that entering the court is like the outbreak of cholera ….[18]

The tribal's fear of the court, the prison or any government official comes out of incomprehension. Anything unknown is mysterious and terrifying for a tribesman. Sukru implicitly attributes magic power to these administrative agencies. He addresses the court in the same way he addresses the sky and Dharmu, his God, the Just One. The literate people represented by the revenue and also the Sahukar in the novel as a class exploits the innocent and unlettered tribesmen. Sukru is intimidated and threatened by this literate world:

> Sukru Jani stood like a criminal in the dock and when he saw the officials writing, he felt as if the point of knife was being dragged across his heart; for he had the tribesmen's instinctive dread of writings made on paper. He also heard them speak to each other in some dialect which no tribesmen could understand and this added to his terror.[19]

The tribals' culture is based on orality. They never maintain any records or any written document. Whatever deal they finalize, it is only through a verbal agreement. That is why the cunning Sahukar could swindle them very easily since there is no written evidence available to them.

Mohanty presents a tribal world as an uncorrupted paradise before the outside forces began to enter it and subvert its values. In one way this is an over-simplification, a kind of stereotyping that is not unknown in literature, that constructs a binary opposition between good and evil or the natural and artificial to polarize two communities and two cultures. Bengali literature (for example, *Aranyara Din Ratri*: 1960 by Sunil Gangopadhyay) is replete with texts where Santal tribe is imbued with qualities of simplicity, honesty, robust health and enjoyment of life to provide a counterpoint to the

decadent urban Bengali. Even in Premchand's *Godan* a tribal woman is introduced into the text merely to highlight her vigour, vitality and spontaneity in opposition to the fragile debility of Miss Malti, the urban woman. The tribals, thus, have had a tradition of being represented as "the other" in Indian literature.

Gopinath Mohanty cannot, however, be accused of total romanticization because he knows the tribal world far too well to realize that not everyone in a tribe is the repository of positive values. There are pimps like Kau Paraja and Madhu Ghasi who emotionally and sentimentally exploit their victims. Even the lumpen characters in the text: Barik, Dhepu Chalan, Faul Domb, Chambru Domb, Shama Paraja, Rami are portrayed realistically and their petty corrupt ways are exposed. Thus, we see that within the tribal community also a man is being exploited by his fellow man.

Conclusion

There is a controversy in the sociological and anthropological thinking on tribals about the degree to which their cultural autonomy can remain intact in today's world. Whether the changes brought in through development are undesirable because they upset the ecological balance of their lives is an issue on which endless debate is possible. The unspoken message of Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja* is that the intrusion of outside forces can only bring in ruin and devastation to these children of nature. This is not a theoretical or scientific position, but an emotional view based on the author's compassion for the tribes. This romantic notion ignores the dimension of change that is inevitable in any living society. Instead of thinking of an evolving society where the tribals can be accommodated along with the non–tribals, Mohanty dreams of a world where a Paraja's life can be presented in a museum-like stasis. While the reader is touched by the author's empathy for the predicament of the tribes when confronted with alien values, there remains a doubt whether the implied vision of an unchanging continuity of tribal culture is at all a desirable or possible in our complex and competitive world today.

Notes

1. N. R. Ray, 1972. "Introductory Address". In K. S. Singh (Ed.), *Tribal Situation in India*, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, p. 8.
2. Romila Thapar, President's Address, Historical Congress, 44th Session, Burdwan, 1983, p. 3.

3. Andre Beiteille. 1977. "The Definition of Tribe". In R. Thapar (Ed.), *Tribe, Caste and Religion in India* Delhi: Macmillan, p. 13.
4. Barun De and Nripen Bandhyopadhyopadhyay. 1982. "An Approach to the Study of Tribal Economy in India". In K. S. Singh (Ed.), *Economies of The Tribes and Their Transformation*, New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company, p. 10.
5. Surjit Saha, 1988. "The Territorial Dimension of India's Tribal Problem". In Mike Shepperdson and Colin Summons (Eds), *The Indian National Congress and The Political Economy of India*, Aldershot: Golden Press, p. 255.
6. A.R. Desai. 1977. "Tribes in Transition". In R. Thapar (Ed.), *Tribe, Caste and Religion in India* Delhi: Macmillan, p. 18.
7. Bikram K. Das. 1987 (1945). Translator's Introduction to Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, p. vi.
8. J.M. Mohanty. 1989. *Into Another Intensity*, Bhubaneswar: Shovana, p. 142.
9. K.S. Padhy and P.C. Satapathy (Eds). 1989. *Tribal India* Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi, p. 57.
10. Gopinath Mohanty, *Paraja*, op. cit. p. 5.
11. Ibid., p. 54.
12. Ibid., p. 104.
13. Ibid., pp. 121-2.
14. B. N. Nanda. 1989. "The Demise of Domestic Community in Highland in Orissa", Occasional Paper presented in Teen Murti Library, New Delhi, pp. 21-22.
15. B. N. Nanda. 1989. "Towards a Social History of Highland Orissa", Occasional Paper presented in Teen Murti Library, New Delhi, pp. 35-6.
16. Gopinath Mohanty, *Paraja*, op. cit. p. 339.
17. It is interesting to note here the point made by Jasper Griffin about Virgil's impact on written culture: "Grammar was learned out of Virgil's text, and the poet became the many minds more or less identified with grammar itself… For a barely literate age it was natural to connect literacy with uncanny power. 'Grammar' shaded into "grammarge", a word for magic ('glamour', another word derived from 'grammar', had originally the same meaning). See Jasper Griffien, *Virgil* (Past Masters), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, p. 108.
18. Gopinath Mohanty, *Matimatala* (1969). Translatedin English by Prajna Paramita, *Indian Literature*, No. 146, Sahitya Akademi, Nov-Dec. 1991, p. 149.
19. Gopinath Mohanty, *Paraja*, op. cit. p. 35.

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INDENTURESHIP, CASTE AND THE CROSSING OF THE *KALA PANI*

Judith Misrahi-Barak

Setting the Stage

In the context of the British Empire, *Kala Pani* is often associated with the 'Cellular Jail' the British had established in Port Blair, on the Andaman Islands. To be sent there implied the loss of caste/*varna* because of the voyage across the sea, and hence, social exclusion and tremendous psychological distress.[1] The risk of being sent across the sea was enough for the Hindu soldiers of the British Raj to launch revolts and mutinies. Yet, in contrast to this association with punishment, exile and sin, the *Kala Pani* must also be connected with the crossing of the 'dark waters' that took almost one and a half million Indian people across the Indian and the Atlantic oceans, to Fiji, Mauritius and the Caribbean.

Large scale migration out of India began in the 1830s when hundreds of thousands of Indians, both willingly and unwillingly, left the subcontinent and crossed the *Kala Pani* (the 'black waters,' the 'forbidden' sea between India and the Americas) to work in the sugar colonies as indentured labourers, or *bound coolies*, not only in the British Empire but also in the French and Dutch colonies. These emigrants were responding to the need for labour on the plantations after African enslavement was legally abolished in 1834 and fully terminated in 1838. Some 1.250.000 emigrants were taken to Fiji and Mauritius, as well as the British, French and Dutch Caribbean (Suriname, Guadeloupe and Martinique).[2] Indians were also recruited later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to work in South and East Africa on the railways and in other industries, going mainly to Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, but this is better known because of Gandhi's involvement with indentured labourers in Natal in the late 1890s.

It is difficult to imagine the scope of these migrations, and how they were organized. However, the archives in Kolkata, in Port of

Spain and London do provide material that allows us to imagine what these migrations must have been like, dispensing a host of direct and indirect details about each stage of the journey. Starvation, chronic debt, domestic violence, caste oppression and other such factors pushed the hopeful emigrants away from their villages. They were recruited by the *arkatis*, the recruiting agents working for the British, eventually reaching Calcutta by train from remote places in Bihar, Bengal, Uttar Pradesh. They were sometimes kidnapped or lured onto the ships heading to the Caribbean, Mauritius, or Fiji.[3] They had to communicate through interpreters and translators, and submit to the selection tests to see if they were fit to work in the sugar colonies. Their emigration passes stated their name, sex, approximate age, marks of identification, village of origin, next of kin if any, their caste, and the ship they were boarding as well as the exact date of departure. Whether they all knew if they were boarding for Mauritius, Fiji, or the West Indies is not entirely certain. However, looking at the river Hoogly, picturing in one's mind's eye the Garden Reach depots, and seeing what is left of the dockyards in Kidderpore [Khidirpur] certainly feeds one's the imagination.[4]

Some three months were required to cross the *Kala Pani*, the black waters of the Indian Ocean and the Atlantic. It was long enough for all castes to mix and mingle on the ship, upper caste and lower caste, from Brahmins to Shudras to Untouchables. This intermingling was so pervasive that one of the scholars doing extensive work on indentureship and the crossing of the *Kala Pani*, Brinsley Samaroo, has coined the phrases 'Brahmin by birth,' or 'Brahmin by boat':

> Men and women from the villages of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, looking around in the receiving depot and seeing no one who could attest to their true origins, gave themselves new names which indicated the upward direction which they now wished to pursue. They were now *Singh* (lion), *Sher* (tiger), *Raj Kumari* (princess), *Maha Raj* (Great King) or *Maha Bir* (Great Warrior). There were now many new Brahmins by boat rather than by birth[5] (20).

Borders and boundaries were crossed, identities reshuffled and reinvented. Only a minority made the crossing back to India at the end of their five-year contracts. Multiple reasons can be mentioned. At the end of the nineteenth century, indentured labourers often had to pay for their passage back to India but they could not afford it.[6] Five years is a long enough period to settle down and start raising a family. Once they had become acclimatized to a society where caste did not exist, or at least not with the same implications, it

was difficult to adjust to India again, and the returnees were often rejected by their communities, precisely because they had crossed the *Kala Pani*. In Metiabruz, not far from Garden Reach, there was even an area where returned emigrants were stationed, waiting for the ships from the Caribbean and looking into re-indenturing themselves. Repatriation occurred until the mid-1950s, a time when India was already finding it extremely difficult to manage the flows of post-Partition migrants.[7] As Samaroo notes, "this loss of caste meant rejection and social ostracism upon return causing many to opt for *tapuha* (island) status rather than *Maha Bharat* (Great India) ascription" (20).

The descendants of these early migrants now constitute a substantial and fascinatingly diverse diaspora that takes its roots in the social equalization that took place on the ships, making the emigrants into *jahaji bhai* and *jahaji bhahins* (brothers and sisters of the boat). Many writers and scholars have explored the perception of the ancestral space, the manifold representations of 'Mother India', its place in the imagination of the descendants of indentured labourers, and its impact on the way contemporary identities have been shaped. Stories have become deliberately constructed narratives of a homeland one hardly remembers and sometimes has no first-hand knowledge of. New sovereign identities that have developed horizontally and not vertically are now accommodated in fluid and multiple ways.[8]

Indo-Caribbean literature *per se* did not emerge in Trinidad and Guyana before the 1960s and 1970s in the Independence period even if one can trace pioneers as early as the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century and then again in the 1940s.[9] But unlike the African-Caribbean novels that in the 1990s emulated the original slave narratives from the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries and the African-American neo-slave narratives from the 1960s, there was no such process with the Indo-Caribbean narratives.[10] No original first-hand, full-fledged accounts were written between the 1830s and 1917 at the time of indentureship. There were letters written to journals and local newspapers, but they did not have the same scope as the original eighteenth century Atlantic slave narratives.[11] Oral testimonies given by the indentured servants themselves or by their descendants were, only much later, transcribed and archived.[12] Indo-Caribbean writers in the latter part of the twentieth century took up fiction to try and give their voices back to the voiceless descendants of indentured labourers, sometimes getting their inspiration directly from the memories of the people who had been indentured servants one or two generations before. A few fiction writers are particularly

representative of this early period: for Trinidad, V. S. Naipaul (*A House for Mr Biswas*, 1961), Ismith Khan (*The Jumbie Bird*, 1961) and Harold Sonny Ladoo (*No Pain Like This Body*, 1972). For Guyana, one should mention Peter Kempadoo (*Guyana Boy*, 1960) and Raj Kumari Singh ('I Am a Coolie', 1973).

It is only fairly recently, in the past generation, that Indo-Caribbean literature began to catch up with African-Caribbean literature that had tended to be in the foreground and contributed to having the Caribbean defined through its Black Atlantic connection rather than its Indoceanic one. Among the next generation of Indo-Caribbean writers, many names are now well known, such as Cyril Dabydeen, David Dabydeen, Mahadai Das, Ramabai Espinet, Arnold Itwaru, Shani Mootoo, Sam Selvon, Jan Shinebourne and Ryhaan Shah, among others. Four novels are particularly representative of the late twentieth century production: Jan Shinebourne's *The Last English Plantation* (1988), David Dabydeen's *The Counting House* (1996), Shani Mootoo's *Cereus Blooms at Night* (1996) and Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003). In all four novels, the detour through history is what enables self-awareness in the present day. All four writers continue to be prolific. Gaiutra Bahadur recently entered the stage as a journalist and a non-fiction writer, publishing *Coolie Woman: the Odyssey of Indenture* (2015).[13]

Indentureship, Caste and Crossing of *Kala Pani*

I seek to develop the thread I started with, that is the migrations in the context of indentureship, caste and crossing of *Kala Pani*, with a focus on the communication that took place then, across lands and oceans. We all know that on top of the Atlantic triangular slave trade that started at the end of the sixteenth century, and on top of the wars of conquest, the nineteenth century saw a massive development of the world as a global place because of those exchanges between continents: raw and manufactured products, and people. We also know that the construction of European nations and of the so-called New World at the time was inseparable from imperial conquest, forced transportation and enslavement, indentured labour and migration. It was also inseparable from global telecommunications, relying on the railway and postal services — invented in 1477 in France, in 1635 in England and in 1775 in America. In France, it was Louis XIth who created 'Les Relais de Poste' in 1477. In England, Charles Icreated the 'Royal Mail' in 1635, and it was an essential tool of development of the British Empire, just like the railways in the

early years of the nineteenth century in Australia, Canada, India and South Africa, that was used to carry weapons and organize control and armed repression.[14] Postal services can also be implemented to counter the imperial attempts at domination: in America, the 'Postal Service' was created in 1775 to support the move towards freedom from the British. Benjamin Franklin was the first Postmaster General until 1776. [15] There, it was the first transcolonial move, granting oneself the means to communicate without having to go through the British centre. The nineteenth century was the century of the worldwide development of telecommunications.[16] The device that is used to unite and engage the community can also be used to disengage from the community.

The construction of the British Empire was of course a collective endeavour but it was also the story of families and individuals who migrated to flee famine, domestic violence, wars and caste oppression, to make a better life for themselves and their people. Migrating did not necessarily mean severing all contacts: after having been the privilege of the men and women of letters and of the powerful during the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe, exchanging letters often became for ordinary families the only means to remain in contact. Families who had stayed at home wanted to hear from those who had left, possibly join them. The ones who had left wanted to write back. But the families perhaps could only guess about the persons they had become, or could have become.

Epistolary writing has become the object of a whole field of academic studies, particularly among French scholars as regards the epistolary novel of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, whether the letters were 'real' or 'fictionalized'.[17] Ovid, Petrarch, Seneca, but also Heloise and Abelard, Madame de la Fayette, La Marquise de Sévigné, Montesquieu, Voltaire and Rousseau are not the names I would have expected to use in a paper entitled "Indentureship, Caste and Crossing of the *Kala Pani*". Nor would I have expected to mention Richardson, Goethe, Virginia Woolf or Jane Austen. These names immediately bring in associations with the Antiquity, the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and its unavoidable connections with European Enlightenment and the privileged life of social, philosophical and intellectual exchanges. They do not bring associations with colonial, postcolonial, diasporic writing. Beyond their many differences, all these writers and thinkers have in common the practice of the epistolary genre and through the letters they wrote, received and responded to, fictionalized or

'real', they elaborated their own thought and the way they wanted to construct their relations to society, to themselves and to their own literary and philosophical work. Letters have empowered a genesis of the invention of the self and of the inter-personal relation in a global world, be it through the exchange of real letters or the use of the letter as a literary device and an aesthetic mode. It became a laboratory, and the best possible translation of the self on the global stage, at least for the powerful, and for the men and women of letters, in all meanings of the term.

Over the past 30 years, scholars have also been using letters exchanged between migrants and their families, interpreting them from a historical and sociological point of view and gaining insights into the conditions of the migration, of integration, of work and pay, of social relations, of political engagement or disengagement, of the preservation of the bond with the mother country, or the destruction of that bond. These letters are also fascinating to read from the point of view of the aspirations and emotions that are expressed, always from the angle of a very specific context. Private epistolary collections have been archived and made public, sometimes digitalized.[18]

What is so interesting is that letters take place in an asynchronous yet generally reciprocal relationship, and function as a presence beyond the absence, aiming at abolishing the distance in space and the separation in time, and remaining that quintessential diasporic artefact, sent across land and water when bodies cannot meet in the same time and space.

Transcolonial Epistolary Exchanges: The Case of India and the Caribbean

Yet, the context of colonial domination and transnational migration is radically different, and not enough attention has been granted to the *transcolonial* epistolary exchanges between colonies. Addressees and addressers may well have been in a situation in which they would never see each other again. In many ways, whether it was sent, and received, and read, and responded to, which was far from always being the case, the letter paradigm gives to understand something of the complexities of *transcolonial* migration. The bond, yes; memory, most probably; the reaffirmed commitment, maybe, but not always. Migration has always meant physical severance. It has sometimes also meant complete disengagement, the reasons being diverse and never straightforward. The exchange of letters, or lack thereof, shows the complexity of the relationship. I have written elsewhere about the use

of letters in contemporary Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean fiction.[19] I want here to have a look at the preceding stage, at the pre-conditions at the time of the colonial migrations because it seems that the writers' desire to include letters in their fiction has been feeding on the historical letters exchanged or not between the Indian and the Atlantic oceans, playing with and *signifying* on them.[20]

In the second half of this paper, I want to articulate a hypothesis about the epistolary exchanges that happened at the time of indentureship from India to the Caribbean. One may have to revise some of the general ideas about epistolary exchanges that are most often interpreted as reaffirming a personal commitment and a collective bond. It may have been true in the European context of the 'Republic of Letters' mentioned earlier, or of the emigration towards the New World, but as regards the million plus emigrants who boarded the ships that took them from Calcutta mostly, and from Madras sometimes, across the Indian and Atlantic oceans as indentured labourers between 1838 and 1917, my hypothesis is that the epistolary device of engagement becomes in certain cases a device of disengagement. The history of the bond is also the history of the breaking of the bond, and the same device is used in both cases. The reciprocal conversations one finds so fascinating between the home country and the host country may also happen to be asymmetrical and non-reciprocal. Sometimes it is the lack of reciprocity that proves to be empowering.

In the case of the emigrants who boarded ships in Calcutta and disembarked in Georgetown, Guyana, or Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, which is my focus here, one is struck by the paucity of archived letters, be it in Calcutta of course or even in Port-of-Spain. Yet, even if it is fascinating to focus on the gaps and the lacunae in the archives, it is just as interesting to focus on the archives for what they are, for what they do contain and how they have been conceived and organized. The letters to be found are generally not written by the emigrants themselves, and are not in the original languages. Historians and anthropologists most often resist the idea of working on anything but the original documents, in the original language. We have to be ready to deal with the gaps and the blanks, with the ghosts that haunt those letters, and to interrogate the issues faced by the addressers and the addressees in the new place that was cleared by the improbable epistolary exchanges across the *Kala Pani*.

At both ends of the *Kala Pani*, the Protectors of Emigrants complained about the lack of letters exchanged between Indian emigrants and their families back in India. The Protectors of

Emigrants/Immigrants in Calcutta and Port-of-Spain referred to the reports on the conditions of emigration written by Major D. G. Pitcher in 1882 and by Sir George A. Grierson in 1883. There are obvious reasons why there were so few letters exchanged, for instance, the lack of education of addressers and addressees combined to the deficiencies of the postal services:

> [t]he immigrants when writing give their address imperfectly, and their friends in India direct the replies with even greater imperfection; hence the letters sent through the post seldom reach their destination in the colonies. The construction of the Hindustani language is in great measure answerable for the confusion in the addresses, all English words having to be spelt phonetically. The coolies pronounce and spell the names of places in Jamaica, of the ships, and of the Managers of Estates in an extraordinary manner; for example, *pashuha* for Fort Stewart, *natabe* for Annollo Bay, *jukegail* for Duke of Argyll, *lall lambar* for Loch Lomond, *ulbari* for Lincelles. Sometimes the combination of bad writing and bad spelling makes it impossible to decipher the addresses. […]
>
> I fully endorse [the] opinion that facilities should be afforded to the immigrants for transmitting letters and money. […][21]

Both reports by Pitcher and Grierson were sent to the colonial administration and suggestions were made to try and change the situation, hoping favourable reports on the conditions of emigration would encourage more emigrants to indenture themselves. Suggestions were also made by the Protectors of Emigrants/Immigrants to implement schemes that would make the collection and transmission of letters and remittances easier:

> I would suggest […] that notice be given by the Inspectors of Immigrants, through the headman on the estate, that on a stated day when they shall visit the estates they will take the letters for transmission to India. In each letter they should enclose an envelope on which the name of the immigrant, the name of the ship that has arrived, and the ship's number should be written. […] I am persuaded that we should soon hear no more of the relations of those who have sailed for the colonies being kept in ignorance of what has happened to them; remittances would probably be more frequently made by those in the colonies to their friends in India, and I have no doubt that it would have a powerful stimulus to emigration.[22]

The result was probably not satisfactory since before the end of the nineteenth century (c. 1897) the free passage back to India was cancelled from the indentureship contract in a move to encourage labourers not to apply for repatriation.

Another element that made it difficult to write back and forth between colonies is of course the language component. Again, this may be obvious yet it is near impossible to picture the complications of the situation. Even if it was not only low castes that emigrated, the high rate of illiteracy among the emigrants and their relatives made it compulsory to resort to interpreters and translators before the emigration passes could be issued and, eventually, any letters written. The importance of the interpreters surfaces obliquely in all the documents and sometimes quite directly in the contracts they signed:

> You will, on the morning of embarkation of the Emigrants, go on board the Ship *Canning* and report yourself to the Surgeon Superintendent, and assist him in receiving and arranging the Emigrants below. You are specially under the orders of the Surgeon Superintendent, and will attend to such instructions as you may receive from him during the voyage. You will also, in your capacity as [Interpreter / Topaz / Compounder], make yourself useful to the Captain and Officers of the Ship, and exert yourself in promoting cleanliness, discipline, and cheerfulness amongst the Emigrants.[23]

Frequent mentions are made of the difficult situations they found themselves in sometimes when it was not clear under which administration they were placed, or when they were stranded, unable to come back to India once their employment period on board was over:

> Much inconvenience has arisen from Compounders, Interpreters, and Topazes engaged in Coolie Emigrants Ships from India to the West Indies, finding their way to this country, and demanding a back passage to India, either on the ground, in some cases, of an alleged promise to that effect on the part of the Emigration Agent in India, or on the ground of destitution, appeals are made not only to this Board, but to the Secretaries of State for the Colonies and for India, and the result usually is, that we are directed to send the applicants back to India at the expense of the Colony in whose service they were originally engaged. This, it is obvious, is a state of things that ought not to continue.[24]
>
> I forward herewith a copy of the letter from Lieutenant-Colonel Hughes, Honorary Secretary to the Strangers' Home for Asiatics, regarding the case of two natives of Calcutta, by the names Shaik Noor Mahomed and Francis Cretelle, who state that they were engaged to accompany Emigrants to Demerara in the Coolie Ship *Atlanta* in Jannary [sic] last; and whilst residing in that place their Agreements were stolen and were left destitute. They came to England in the *Atlanta*, and are now maintained in the Strangers' Home for Asiatics.[25]

It was then up to the Protectors of Emigrants/Immigrants to write the letters on behalf of the emigrants or of their families trying to renew contact. It was up to them to try and translate some of the emotions expressed, or indicate there was something else than the purported emotions. Official language can sometimes be heavily destructive, it can sometimes come in handy. Once the emigrants had arrived in the Caribbean (it was also true for the ones who went to Fiji or Mauritius of course) it may have been even more difficult to find interpreters and translators to write back to their relatives. But in any case, on both sides, the translations had to be multiple and layers of interpretation inserted themselves between the families and the emigrants, the result being very far from the original emotion the addressers tried to put into words.

Yet, it was not only because postal services did not function properly, or because emigrants and their families were illiterate, or because the words on paper did not match the emotions in the heart, that there was a shortage of letters exchanged. A majority of the letters may have escaped the containment of archives, having been exchanged directly, or smuggled on to the ships and then lost. One may also have thought that there was no need for the letters to be translated into English, that they could have been written in the local Indian languages and 'posted' on the ships. But because of the illiteracy of most emigrants, the scribes were still needed. Allowing letters written in Indian languages to be transported on the ships cannot be imagined: how could the colonial authorities allow communication that had not been read, verified and approved? It was after all the British Raj and, as is obvious from the archives, the Empire did control all the details of the emigrants' lives.

There are also other reasons for the fact that 'the Colonial Emigrant is notoriously out of touch with his people at home in India', [26] which was such a problem for the colonial administration. Some of these reasons can be understood through the letters that were sent from India, received, or not, in the Caribbean, read, or not, responded to, or not. Indeed, it is the families back in India who seemed desperate not to lose contact with their relatives who had chosen to leave of their own accord, or who had been lured into migrating by the notorious *arkatis*. The migration, be it the result of free will, of fraudulence or abduction, was not always known to the families, especially if the emigrant had fled a forced marriage, domestic violence, chronic debt, a family feud, etc. Most of the letters that can be found in the archives were written by the families back in India, trying to reclaim the link with the ones who had left.

Such attempts at reclaiming can have multiple goals: activate or reactivate memory, request to hear back a few months or a few years after migration, inquire whether the emigrant is still alive, plead for their repatriation. I want to highlight just a few examples. Sometimes the Protector of Emigrants translates such simple requests as the family's request for a photograph so that the emigrant can be recognized when he repatriates: "Please ask Ramadhin to have himself photographed so as to be recognized by his acquaintances in India and to hand you the photograph for transmission to the Maharaja of Rewa through our Agent at Calcutta."[27]

Most often the requests came from India, a father looking for his son, a mother for her son, a wife for her husband — very few, by the way, were looking for a daughter, a sister or a wife. In a few cases one can recompose the whole story:

> My dear father, This is to inform you that I have received 5 letters in all from you and wrote to you twice. I am working now on the above estate as a field labourer earning from 12/- to 20/- a fortnight. I am anxious to return to India, I have no means to pay for my passage — I was robbed of £12 which I had saved. About 18 months ago I got married to a young woman (Musulman) but unfortunately we have separated. I have nothing more to say — Please give my salaams to my mother, brothers, sister and all friends.
>
> I remain,
>
> Your affectionate son,
> (His sig: in Urdu)
> Ashaq Husain his own signature.[28]

The Protector of Emigrants becomes the interpreter, the scribe and the messenger for Tasaduq Husain looking for his son, Ashaq Husain. Tasaduq complains in 1918 that he hasn't received any responses to the letters he wrote to his son after his departure in 1911. The response arrives from Trinidad three months later. Ashaq did receive five letters and sent two, he gives some news that will be of interest to his father: he is independent financially (works as an indentured labourer on Picton Plantation), has made efforts towards the constitution of a family (got married even if he separated), has been keeping his religious faith (his wife was Moslem and he gives his *salaams*). Most important, he manifests his desire to repatriate although he says he cannot afford it, and requests money to be sent for his passage. The bond is, therefore, reasserted but one cannot forget that Ashaq is not a Hindu and no element pertaining to caste is brought forward.

Through Ashaq's case, one discerns some of the other, more

pragmatic and specific, reasons behind these searches. Many letters are written in the hope the passage back to India will be paid by the family, or that inheritance will be granted. The families had to know if they were entitled to any inheritance, and how it could be claimed, when they had heard the emigrant had disappeared, or was dead, maybe had even become 'mad':

> I have the honour to request that you will be so good as to cause enquiries to be made as to whether Ashraf, son of Lal Mohamed, of village Damri, Thana Pachperwa, District Gonda, India, who emigrated to Trinidad and entered into the service of Sheikh Miah Dymally, merchant, Cedros, in Trinidad, has become mad, and if so whether he left any property to be handed over to his relatives.[29]

Verification by the colonial authorities, thus, had to be done, the administrative conversation intersecting with the private one, the administrative and colonial language superimposing itself on the private tongue that was reduced to a ghostly presence-absence between the lines of the document. In all cases, it was up to the colonial authorities to check who was telling the truth among the different members of the family across the oceans. There were family feuds to be investigated:

> In reference to your N° 581 dated 24th ultimo, I beg to state that you will be good enough to let me know whether the piece of land of my late brother Herakh Singh, situated at Trinidad, has been sold or not: a money order for Rs. 120/- was received nearly a fortnight ago but my youngest brother Sahadeo Narain Singh intended to take the full amount of the order and not to give my half share, hence, the amount has been returned and hope you will kindly separate the amount from your office and to issue the same by means of money order under the following care for which I shall ever pray to God for your long life and prosperity.[30]

And many stories were spun. Khoda Baksh's father wanted to have his son repatriated because he could not work after having had both his hands cut off in a work accident. The colonial global web operating its control on both sides of the oceans, the yarn was revealed:

> I visited Brechin Castle and found that the indentured immigrant Khoda Baksh is not only in full enjoyment of both his hands but is also in the best of health. Khoda Baksh admits that he gave a false story; because he wished to go back to India and did not think that enquiries would be made before the necessary permission would be granted.[31]

When the emigrant did not answer for several years, postponed his voyage back to India several times, explained that he needed more time to settle his affairs, etc, one can understand the difficulties attached to repatriation: repatriation was sometimes desired by the families but not by the indentured labourer. The Protector of Emigrants was even sometimes summoned to contribute to the search, even if it meant using force. "Lock him up!" is what an exasperated mother asks the Protector of Emigrants to do with his son:

> [O]n hearing that you are the only Gentleman to help the poors I appeal to your honour's clemency [sic], similarly, if your honour also, arrange to lock him up 2 days before the Steamer is to leave and return him to Madras and redress us from our suffering for a long time in 15 years.[32]

Other cases have to do with the name changes, so very crucial in the Indian context:

> I beg to submit that one Bishun Dayal, alleged to be the son of Wazir Mahto of village Tilaiya, Thana Silau, District Patna, who had been registered at Patna on the 3rd January, 1912, embarked for Trinidad as N°116 in the S.S. "Chenao" on the 27th January, 1912. I am sure that he is my son, and that he gave out the name of Wazir Mahto as his father, simply to evade enquiry and detection. He is a minor of about 15 years of age, and I am his lawful guardian and entitled to get him back into my custody as he was taken away without my permission and knowledge. I therefore pray that your Honour may be pleased to take the necessary steps to bring him back as soon as possible and to send me the estimate of costs for the above purpose at your earliest convenience.[33]

Fleeing the family, changing names in order to shed for good the caste that had already been lost after crossing the *Kala Pani*, wanting to start a new life away from Indian social frames and traditions, all these elements compose the painful and complex story of indentureship as it surfaces in the letters exchanged, or not exchanged between the Indian ocean and the Atlantic ocean but sent only one way. One Bansi Dhar is searched for by his family in India. One of his co-labourers, having repatriated to India, mentions seeing him on the plantation they were working on together, except that he had come to be known as Lala instead of Bansi Dhar:

> With reference to the correspondence resting with your letter N°450A/1914 of the 9th June last, I have the honour to say that Bansi Dhar is also known as Lala and that one Bhagat Kumar, who returned from the Colony in February last, asserts that he saw him working at the place mentioned in my letter N°1141/129 of the 23rd March last. I shall

> be obliged if you kindly cause fresh enquiries to be made for Bansi Dhar and inform me of the result.[34]

As letter unfolds upon letter, one is left with interpreting the official language, possibly translated several times. One has to read between the lines and understand the desperation of the family that is expressed behind the sentences. It is only matched by the desperation of the indentured labourers who did not always want to repatriate even when they had the opportunity of doing so, to the point of, possibly, committing suicide. Such is the story of Rampher that can be imagined through one of the official letters written about him. It is believed he committed suicide during the repatriation voyage:

> Athough his mental condition may have appeared dull at times owing to his general Debility, at no time he show any symptom or sign of a suicidal tendency. On the 28th. August he was permitted to sit on the main deck outside the Hospital Cabin and appeared bright and cheerful at the prospect of arriving at Calcutta at an early date. […] After this, the Hospital Attendant was engaged cleaning utensils in the female ward for about half an hour and Sirdar Shibashai went between-decks. Veerappah the Hospital Attendant, on his return to the Male ward did not find Rampher so he reported the matter to the Chief Sirdar Puran N° 580. After five sirdars had made an unsuccessful search for the missing man among the other emigrants, the compounders were informed of it just before day-break. A general search of the ship was then made with the same result. At 6.30 A.M. I visited the Hospital and was informed that Rampher could not be found. […] With the assistance of the Captain of the ship an enquiry was held at which the above facts were obtained and the conclusion drawn was that Rampher had jumped overboard.[35]

Many stories point to how badly the returnees wanted to go back to the Caribbean (see previous mention of Metiabruz). Very few scholars have focused on the complexities of such return migration, debunking the myth of the indentured labourers only wanting to go back to India.[36]

From Loss and Separation to Renewed Agency and Emancipation

The majority of these documents were not written by the addressers themselves but on their behalf. They have been interpreted, translated and transcribed. The letters are often monophonic discourses, going one way, pleading one way, not getting any response. These exchanges that are not reciprocal exchanges force us to revisit the traditional

categories of the epistolary genre. The materiality of the graphic space cannot exist in the same way since the handwritten letters cannot be, in most cases, handled physically. Most of the original documents have been lost. Only a few have been archived. The letters are still a presence in the absence but it has created a new imaginary place, for the addressers, the addressees, and for us today. The chain of communication is also radically different because in a traditional epistolary exchange the letter is rarely meant to be conceived by the addresser, interpreted or translated by the interpreter or translator, transcribed by the Protector of Emigrants, archived by the colonial services and read by the contemporary reader who is none of the entities mentioned above, and is yet again another interpreter and translator. In so many ways, the epistolary exchanges in the *Kala Pani* context have become a collective enterprise, one that is polyphonic in spite of appearances to the contrary. Many interventions have been needed to reach the final stage of the letter sent across the oceans. It is a whole chorus of voices, diasporic and transcolonial, that can be heard.

Finally, I would like to point out that, just like the addresser, we are confronted to the ghostly text of the addressee who does not respond, who cannot respond, or chooses not to respond. Through the disengagement one can also see a form of agency and empowerment. The epistolary device that traditionally highlights a bond of affection or love, a high degree of commitment or engagement, becomes a strategy of disengagement. In the same way, pointing to the multiple reconfigurations of the migrating self, the indentured labourers often chose to re-indenture themselves to another colony. By not writing back, they also wrote their own story of the breaking of the bond with the mother country, and of the creation of a new form of agency. It is always fascinating to examine what holds people close to their native land and people. In the present day, examining what drives them away and keeps them away is even more fascinating, especially at a time when caste is splitting India apart, with caste lines having become much more rigid than it used to be in the nineteenth century. Today is the moment when it is most difficult to go back to the days when Mother India was pushing its children away from its fold, but it is the moment when such scrutiny may be most needed.[37] Crossing the *Kala Pani* and shedding one's caste meant suffering but it was also, for many, an act of emancipation, of social equalizing, looking forward to the annihilation of caste.

Notes

1. Such crossings were forbidden to Hindus because it created a rupture from the sacred Ganges river.
2. See Clem Seecharan, *'Tiger in the Stars': The Anatomy of Indian Achievement in British Guiana 1919-1929* (London: MacMillan Education Ltd., 1997): 2.
   See also Steven Vertovec, 'Indo-Caribbean Experience in Britain: Overlooked, Miscategorized, Misunderstood', in *Inside Babylon: The Caribbean Diaspora in Britain*, Winston James and Clive Harris, eds. (London & New York: Verso, 1993): 165-178. Vertovec recapitulates on different sources and offers a very useful cumulative table that gives the detailed numbers of Indian immigrants per country, over the different periods of indentureship (167).
   Scholars generally agree on just under 240.000 Indians going to British Guyana, about 144.000 to Trinidad, 36.000 to Jamaica, 67.000 to Martinique and Guadeloupe, a little more than 60.000 to Fiji, 26.000 to Reunion island and 454.000 to Mauritius. For more precise figures and analyses one can refer to the first chapter of *Tiger in the Stars* (Seecharan 1997) and *Girmitiyas* (Lal 1983) as well as *Indo-Caribbean Indenture* (Roopnarine 2007).
3. Calcutta was the main port of emigration for indentureship candidates. It remained the British capital of India until 1911, when it was considered that Delhi would be less vulnerable. Six years later, in 1917, indentureship was declared illegal, at least officially.
4. I want to express my sincere thanks to Gautam Chakraborty, Port Security Adviser at Kidderpore, Kolkata, who took time on his busy schedule to show me around the dockyards and the Memorial to the Indian indentured labourers, erected in 2011. The book to which he contributed contains a couple of enlightening chapters dedicated to the nineteenth century Indo-Caribbean migrations: *Calcutta Port—Ageless Annals*, Anindo Majumdar I. A. S. and Gautam Chakraborti, eds. (Kolkata: Kolkata Port Trust, 2010).
5. 'Chinese and Indian Coolie Voyages to the Caribbean', *Journal of Caribbean Studies*, Vol. 14, 1 & 2 (2000): 3-24; 20.
6. The Introduction to *The First Crossing, being the Diary of Theophilus Richmond, ship's surgeon aboard the Hesperus, 1837-8*, edited by David Dabydeen, Jonathan Morley, Brinsley Samaroo, Amar Wahab and Brigid Wells, reminds us of all the differences in the repatriation schemes. As soon as the 1870s the planters tried to devise ways to convince indentured labourers at the end of their contract period to commute their right to a return passage into money or land (XLIX). After 1895 they simply had to contribute to their own fare if they wished to repatriate.
7. The Introduction to *The First Crossing, being the Diary of Theophilus Richmond* devotes several well-documented and moving pages to the repatriation schemes of the 1950s (XLVII-LXI). As indicated in this Introduction, the *M. V. Resurgent* sailed from Georgetown harbour on September 4, 1955. It was carrying the last 235 repatriates to Calcutta (XLVII).
8. See the work done by Crispin Bates, Marina Carter, David Dabydeen and Brinsley Samaroo, Vijay Mishra, Jeremy Poynting, Rajesh Rai, Peter Reeves, Hugh Tinker, Peter Van der Veer, among other scholars. See also *India and the Diasporic Imagination*, Rita Christian & Judith Misrahi–Barak, eds. (Series *PoCoPages*, Collection 'Horizons anglophones' (Montpellier: Presses Universitaires de la Méditerranée, 2011).

9. See *Lutchmee and Dilloo*, by Edward Jenkins (1877); *Those That Be in Bondage: A Tale of Indian Indenture and Sunlit Western Waters*, by A. R. F. Webber (1917); *Gurudeva and Other Indian Tales* by Seepersad Naipaul (1943).
10. See for instance such slavery novels as *The Longest Memory* or *Feeding the Ghosts* by Fred D'Aguiar, *The Harlot's Progress* by David Dabydeen, *The Book of Negroes* by Lawrence Hill, *Cambridge* or *Crossing the River* by Caryl Phillips. In the francophone sphere one can think of *L'esclave vieil homme et le molosse* by Patrick Chamoiseau, *Moi, Tituba, sorcière noire de Salem* by Maryse Condé. All these novels, published between the late 1980s and the 2010s, respond to the dual tradition of the original slave narratives in the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries and to that of the neo-slave narratives written by African-American writers from the 1960s-1980s. For more details about this revisiting, see J. Misrahi-Barak, « Post-*Beloved* Writing: Review, Revitalize, Recalculate ». *Black Studies Papers* 1.1 (2014): *Slavery Revisited*; 37-55.
http://elib.suub.uni-bremen.de/edocs/00103775-1.pdf
11. See Clem Seecharan, *Bechu: "Bound Coolie" Radical in British Guiana, 1890s-1920s*, Kingston, Jamaïque, University of the West Indies Press, 1999.
12. See the anthropological work that has been done by Kumar Mahabir, Patricia Mohammed or Peggy Mohan in transcribing some of the interviews they conducted in Bhojpuri, the language the indentured labourers had brought with them from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
See also Peggy Mohan's novel *Jahajin* (Delhi: HarperCollins, 2007).
13. See Judith Misrahi-Barak, 'Ramabai and Gainder, Gaiutra and Sujaria are Turning Tides: Great-grandmothers' and Great-granddaughters' Odysseys and Narratives of the *Kala Pani*' (forthcoming 2018, in *Turning Tides*, Ian Randle Publisher).
14. The early Penny Post system was created in 1733 and authorized by Parliament in 1765. The Uniform Penny Post was implemented throughout the UK in 1840, introducing the first postage stamp and making epistolary exchanges more easily accessible to all.
15. https://about.usps.com/publications/pub100/pub100_003.htm Accessed December 2, 2017.
16. It is also worth noting the development in parallel of such telecommunications as the semaphore and the telegraph. The former was invented by the French inventor Claude Chappe in 1792, at a time when France needed a reliable and swift communication system to thwart its enemies' efforts to undo the Revolution. Contrary to the semaphore, which only transmitted messages, the telegraph transmitted and recorded messages at a distance. The first electrical telegraph was invented by the English inventor Francis Ronalds in 1816 while the early pioneer of electromagnetic telegraphy was the Russian Pavel Schilling in 1832. The English William Fothergill Cooke and Charles Wheatstone, a scientist and an entrepreneur, provided the British Empire with the 'needle telegraph' and had the foresight to approach the Railway companies to run their lines alongside the railway tracks. In 1837 the first telegraph line was started, then crossing the Atlantic ocean and covering the whole of the British Empire by the end of the 19th century. The American Samuel Morse also saw the logic in following the railroad lines and telegraph poles.
http://www.britishempire.co.uk/science/communications/telegraph.htm Accessed Dec 20, 2017.

17. See *De Rerum Natura* by Lucrece, or *Letters to Lucillius* by Seneca the Young; *Processos de cartas de amores que entre dos amantes pasaron*, Juan de Segura (1548, then 1563), which is considered as the first European epistolary novel. See also *Lettres persanes* by Montesquieu; *L'Astrée* by Honoré d'Urfé (1607-27); *La Princesse de Clèves*, by Mme de La Fayette (1678); *Letters from a Portuguese Nun* by Claude Barbin (1669); *A Post with a Packet of Mad Letters*, Nicolas Breton (1669); the letters from La Marquise de Sévigné to her daughter (1725); *The New Héloise* by Rousseau (1761); *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady* by Samuel Richardson (1748); *The Sufferings of the Young Werther* by Goethe (1774, 1787); *Dangerous Liaisons* by Choderlos de Laclos (1782).
    One could also refer to the first novel by Dostoevsky, *Poor Folk* (1844), or the only epistolary novel by Balzac, *Mémoires de deux jeunes mariées* (1841).
18. See the Digitizing Immigrant Letters Project under the impulsion of Sonia Cancian and Donna R. Gabaccia in 2009 within the frame of the Immigration History Research Center of the University of Minnesota.
19. I have written elsewhere about the use of letters in contemporary Caribbean and Indo-Caribbean fiction, in works by Jamaica Kincaid, Myriam Chancy, Gisèle Pineau, Patricia Powell, Ramabai Espinet, Alicia McKenzie for instance. See "Diasporic Agency and the Power of Literary Form in Caribbean Literature", *Atlantic Studies*, 9. 4 (2012): 431-446; as well as "Ruptures and Junctures: Reinventing and Repossessing the Diasporic Self in Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*", in *Repenser la diversité: le sujet diasporique*, Corinne Duboin, ed. (St Denis de la Réunion: Océans Editions, 2013): 127-139.
20. Within the Atlantic context, one can also think of Caryl Phillips's *Crossing the River* (1993) where the sections 'The Pagan Coast' and 'Crossing the River' contain letters written by Nash Williams, the former enslaved African who was emancipated and turned missionary, as well as letters written by James Hamilton, Captain of the slave ship *The Duke of York* that left Liverpool in August 1752 to the Windward coast of Africa. In the first instance, Phillips used letters he found in the archives of the American Colonization Society. In the second instance, he used eighteenth century John Newton's *Journal of a Slave Trader*.
21. General Department, Emigration Branch, B Department, Proceedings for November 1884, File n°39, Serial n° 3/4, July 7, 1884, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata.
22. General Department, Emigration Branch, B Department, Proceedings for November 1884, File n°39, Serial n° 3/4, July 7, 1884, West Bengal State Archives, Kolkata.
23. State Archives of Bengal, General Emigration, Proceedings N°56, November 10, 1862.
24. State Archives of Bengal, General Emigration, Proceedings N°56, September 4, 1862.
25. State Archives of Bengal, General Emigration, Proceedings N°3, August 7, 1862.
26. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N° 521/497, June 13, 1908.
27. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N° 6027/1916, 1150/1916, December 21, 1916.
28. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°149/22; 268/1918, February 21, 1918 / May 27, 1918.
29. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°446/435, March 12, 1912.

30. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°133, 15 mars 1910.
31. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°589/156, 1179/1916, June 18, 1917.
32. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N° 244/1926, February 25, 1926.
33. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°649/637, May 20, 1912.
34. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°2966/359 - 1491/1914, August 23, 1914.
35. National Archives of Trinidad and Tobago, N°72, 29 août 1927.
36. See the work done by Nalini Mahabir.
37. Dilip Menon has just written about the necessity to 'revisit its pre-1947 history of migration'. https://scroll.in/article/856271/not-just-indentured-labourers-why-we-should-revisit-the-history-of-migration-from-pre-1947-india Accessed February 15, 2018.

FRAMING SOCIAL TRANSITION OF THE TANGKHUL NAGAS: DISEMBEDDING MECHANISMS AND ORAL CULTURE

Yuimirin Kapai

In a Tangkhul myth, which explains why the earth is not flooded despite all the rains, Manipur valley is located adjacent to the edge of the world. All the rain water, the myth says, flowed into the valley and then to the rim of the earth, which is bordered by two mountains; sometimes the mountains shift away from each other to create an opening for water to flow out and the wind to blow in (Luikham 28). A common proverb suggests that having seen the valley is a source of pride, an experience worthy of boast: "Like the claim of a quail that perched on a vegetable plant said that he had seen the Meitei valley."[1] And a folksong, which sings praises of a rich man named Shongphung, posits Meitei kings in a faraway land:

> Shongphung is rich, so rich
> He erects stones on every road.
> Shongphung is rich, so rich
> The world all over knows him
> Even Meitei kings have heard of his riches.

The myth, the folksong and the proverb represent Manipur valley (called *Meitei chihui* in Tangkhul) as a distant land. In their imagination, so it appears, the valley marks the limit of the world or the boundary of their "conceived space" to use Henri Lefebvre's term.

From this notion of self-contained world, colonial encounter opened the eyes of the hill peoples, as it were, to the existence of other human races and of the outside world in which hitherto the fabulous land, the Meitei kingdom, paled in comparison to the immense European empires. The experiences like expansion of administration to the hills in 1919, and the journey to France, as part of Manipur Labour Corps[2], forced them to reassess their position in the world. By signalling the need to adopt a new conception of the

world in which they lived, the discovery or rather the revelation led to a major shift of worldview (albeit gradually). The changes in the first half of the twentieth century were so dramatic that they imparted an appearance of easy transition. Primarily seen through the religious prism, the discourse of transformation is overloaded with religious meanings. Christianity is pegged as the instrument that guided the society from "tradition to modernity" and the transition is colourfully expressed in such terms as "from headhunting to soul hunting", and "from darkness to light".

The paper intends to problematize the socio-political changes by bringing in other factors such as the beginning of print culture, introduction of money and the tension between tradition and changes. The thrust of the paper is, however, not so much an attempt to analyse the changes as to set down the contextual and conceptual frameworks. I identify the contact with the outside world as an important catalyst in the process of "disembedding." Till as late as the end of nineteenth century, each village constituted the centre of the world, by the middle of the twentieth century, groups of villages had started to identify themselves as a tribe and later on groups of tribes as Nagas. Besides, disembedding also implies disengagement of individuals from community. Therefore, the paper also looks at the production of spaces.

Village Space and Connectedness to Place

It is generally accepted that Nagas inhabited hilltops in consideration of their strategic location. This seems more like an ontological explanation than an account of lived experience. If security is uppermost in their minds, it hardly makes sense insofar as they had to spend almost half of their lives traversing between the fields (farmstead) and the village (habitation area). If ambuscade was a common technique of warfare, nothing can be more dangerous than negotiating narrow paths from the fields in the evening. Another explanation commonly found in folklore is that mosquitoes made low-lying areas inhabitable (see Hodson 8, 10; Luikham 44; Ngakang 9; Peter 9). In any case, once they had settled on watersheds and made the ridges their home, they were tied to the area of habitation, the woods, the paths and the fields down the streams. In an effort to understand the process of humans' attachment to place, "humanistic geographers" like Edward Relph insisted on adopting a research method called "a phenomenology of place", which preserves an intimate engagement between space, place and

experience as theoretical framework; and Yi-fu Tuan maintained that geographers must take upon themselves the "burden of awareness", that is, the awareness of the ways in which humans experience the world as it is known in the everyday life. Tuan's assertion captures Tangkhuls' relation to land, a feeling that Relph called "insidedness": "Rootedness in the soil and the growth of pious feeling toward it seem natural to sedentary agricultural peoples" (156).

Rootedness was an ideal among the Tangkhuls. As a saying goes, "Home is where one's umbilical cord is buried, one cannot move away from it" (Luikham 41). The belief that one had to be buried in one's birthplace is drawn from a "habit" of an animal: a porcupine is believed to crawl back to its burrow no matter how fatally it is wounded (Luikham 40). If a person died in a faraway land, his head had to be brought back to his birthplace. In an article on Thisham festival, William Pettigrew colourfully described the way in which a head was brought home. It was believed that a person who was not buried in his birthplace journeyed alone to *Kazeiram* (Land of Death). The connectedness with land is closely tied to their belief system. The natural world is believed to be alive with spirits. A house, a field, or a river has a soul. One cannot simply own a land or dispose it. What Bourdieu said of the Algerians may well be applied to the Tangkhuls: "The bond which unites the fellah to his land is mystical rather than utilitarian. He belongs to his fields much more than his fields belong to him" (103). One has to perform certain rituals in order to propitiate the spirit of the land, so that the soul of the owner may become one with the spirit of the land. It was inauspicious for a person to reclaim the land he had abandoned, for the unity of soul once severed cannot be bonded again. In a poem called "Land of the Tangkhul", which became the school anthem, Y. K. Shimray celebrates the landscape and the site of settlement:

> With tall buildings on the hill tops
> And flowers its splendid garments
> With refreshing air, wholesome springs
> How privileged are your offspring (73).

Just as they inhabit the hilltops, their children would occupy high stations in life: "Your hills are always the highest/ …Your children always the tallest" (73).

A village is often assumed as strictly referring to an area of settlement.[3] Far from it, it includes, besides "estate" (the habitation area), "range" (hunting and foraging ground), "farmstead" (agricultural land) and unused land called *ngalei khamor*.[4] Hodson

also noted that "each village possesses a well-defined area which is sometimes demarcated with regular boundary stones and within which the villages possess paramount rights of hunting, of fishing … and of development of cultivation either my making new terraces or jhuming" (105). The territory of a village is concretely identifiable as it is marked with perceptual "imageability" like monuments, paths, and tracts. In fact, any distinguishable part of the surface of land within the territory and any distinctive landmark bear local names. An elderly person would be able to identify all the places by names; a hunter could remember every nook and corner of the land like the back of his hand.

The Tangkhul word for village is *kha*. Sometimes, *ram* is used interchangeably. Whereas Pettigrew translated both *kha* and *ram* as village, Luikham differentiated between the two terms: *kha* as village and *ram* as "country, a village in the country". Although Luikham did not clearly bring out the differences, the etymology of the word "country" may help clarify the terms. Country, according to the Online Etymology Dictionary, refers to "native land" from the old French *contree*. Likewise, *ram* is used in the sense of one's native land or village. Therefore, to say "my village", the Tangkhul use "*iram*" ("*i*" meaning "my" and "*ram*" signifying "village"). My point is that whereas *kha* refers to a village as a political entity with its citizens and territory, *ram* connotes an abstract sense of a village —its "perceived space."

The way in which spatial practices structure everyday life may be illustrated by looking at production of space between village and fields. It may be noted that a good part of a villager's life was engaged with agricultural activities. Put differently, almost half of their lives were occupied with travelling between the village by the ridges and the fields down the drainage area or hillsides in the case of *jhum* cultivation. Obviously, the paths that connect the two spaces were important. Therefore, they bear the marks of commemoration and of testimony to honour. One would find erected monoliths by the sides of paths; these are "stones of Maran or *maranlung*."[5] At a viewpoint, a resting place, one would find a stonework structure called *Wonra*; it was built in honour of a dead person by his family for the dead to rest in their journeys. *Maranlung* are signs of honour and *Wonra* is a signpost to stroll down a memory lane. (A resting place is a fitting space to engage in moments of reminiscence.) Both require constant reminding; they were, therefore, built on the paths that link village and workplace. The paths were scripted with memories. They were spaces where people indulged in gossip, where various

issues were deliberated, and where lovers stole rare moments for themselves.

Residing near the fields would have made their lives much more easy and convenient. Tangkhuls seemed to have deliberately chosen a life of hardship by doggedly maintaining the two spaces. In ancient China, according to Tuan, people moved from city to villages during working seasons. He did not mention if it was existential demands that alone determined the seasonal movement or it had something to do with social aspect. To the self-contained, geographically isolated villages, both village and field provided exclusive spatiality of associations and spaces with different boundaries. Whereas *tang* (*khel*)[6] was the most important structural unit in estate, in fields it was *luikai* (group of fields); whereas *longshim* (*morung*) was a significant institution in village, in fields *yarnao* (age-set) became the most important social group. For the locals, the entire territory of a village constitutes what Lefebvre called "representational spaces": "[Space that is] directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of 'inhabitants' and 'users', but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe" (39). That is to say, the space of a village is an inhabited one. Besides rice cultivation, they were engaged in other activities such as cultivating crops (like arum, sesame, millet, corn, chilly, and tobacco), seeking for food and fruits, laying traps, and hunting. Obviously, all these activities intimately linked them to the land. Put differently, time and space were essentially linked to their immediate location.

Disembedding and its Mechanisms

The idea of their world as a self-contained whole was to change dramatically. Concreteness of experience in familiar village space began to dissipate as traditional social relations and practices lost their grounding. Slowly removed from the immediacies of local context, relations were now being stretched over time and space. Central to the changing worldview is the idea of "gradual movement from the concrete and tangible to the abstract," which Anthony Giddens called "disembedding". He defined it as "the 'lifting' out of social relations from local contexts of interaction and their restructuring across indefinite spans of time-space" (21). Dissatisfied with the conventional sociological approach towards the analysis of "the transition from the traditional to the modern world" in terms of such concept as "differentiation," he pointed out the need to address

" the boundary problem" and "the issue of time-space distanciation" (21).

The contention for the need of rooting the study of changes on cultural-spatial context may be substantiated by the shifting relations of the Tangkhuls and the "Khongjai."[7] When Chassads raided Chingsui village killing 52 in 1880, they were assisted by a neighbouring Tangkhul village called Chattric (Johnstone 185). Similarly, Chassads were again helped by neighbouring Tangkhul villages in their bloodiest attack on Chingjaroi village in which, according to Robert Reid, 286 were slaughtered (78). Local source put it at 297 (*CBC Thotchan* iv). If local accounts were taken as true, about 100 Tangkhuls took part in the raids. A. Porteus, who investigated the event, fined the three implicated villages – Panwi (Paoyi now called Peh), Phungam (Phungcham) and Huining (Halang). Peh headman was reported to have helped the Chassads in reconnaissance four days prior to the attack (Porteus's *Tour Diary*). Similarly, never had Tangkhul villages joined forces in their defense against the Meiteis. On the contrary, they conspired with the Meitei kings in the attempt to subjugate each other. According to S. Kanrei, Humphum manoeuvered the Meiteis to attack Hunphun (45). A letter written by Governor's Secretary expressed regret over "a simple, if barbarous" policy which had been guiding the administration of the Hill Tribes of Manipur, which was, "If any village failed to pay the taxes demanded, other villages were armed with guns by the State and allowed to go in and decapitate as many of the inhabitants as they could" (Reid 88). My point is that Kukis were simply regarded as *khami* (strangers) as though they were from another village and not as the "other". In short, each village was the centre of their world, not merely in a metaphorical sense, but it constituted the self-contained whole of their world.

The transitional process (from the concrete village space to an abstract "imagined community", from their everyday dealings with primary group to secondary social groups in their new conceptualization of identity) was wrought with tensions and the struggles for power were largely enacted in the evolving public sphere. Before taking up the forces of change, I want to discuss "the disembedding mechanisms" intrinsically involved in the development of "modern" institutions – the Church and Naga Nationalist Movement. Giddens specified two types of mechanisms, "symbolic token" and "expert system", to which I want to supplement with another important contributory factor toward the creation of abstract world and molding of a new mode of thought and expression — the beginning of writing and print culture.

Giddens focused on money as a symbolic token which enables transactions abstract and imposition of "standardized grid onto a large area" possible (Ericson 21), because it brackets time and lifts "transactions out of particular milieux of exchange" (Giddens 24). Such mode of deferral would have been unthinkable if it were not for the intervention of the British government as the guarantor of value. For the tribes of Manipur state, it all began with the Political Agent Maxwell's announcement of Rs. 3 as house tax in the hills on the day of the investiture of Churachand Singh as the Raja in 1892 (Reid 73). Eastern and northern Tangkhuls used to trade at Homalin, in Myanmar, which was a day's journey from a village in eastern Tangkhul region called Chatric on foot. Tangkhuls would carry maize covers, cotton, and forest products to exchange particularly for iron.[8] The imposition of tax in money altered the direction of trade and trade partners. Giddens also specified what he called "expert systems" as a disembedding mechanism. "By expert systems", he means, "systems of technical accomplishment or professional expertise that organize large areas of the material and social environments in which we live today" (27). Professionals like lawyers, and doctors are obvious examples. Like symbolic tokens, Giddens maintained, expert systems "remove relations from the immediacies of context" and thus foster the distanciation of time and space (28). Likewise, colonialism introduced mediators between the people and the state like *lambus*[9] and clerks and professionals like *dobashis*,[10] petition writers, educationists, and evangelists. They were soon to become the principle agents of the newly evolving public sphere and form the elite class of the society.

Both the standardization of a medium of exchange and the establishment of expert systems introduced a notion into their relationships strange to them – trust towards stranger, which Giddens called "faceless trust". Life of isolation and lack of contact with the outside world cold have impressed upon a simple attitude in their dealings with people — trust towards people they know (*shimkhur* or kinsmen and *āmā* or friends) and distrust towards strangers (*shingnai* or people who were not related to them and *khami* or people from other villages). This is not to say that they did not have capacity for trust. To be sure, ethnographers noted their naively trusting nature. However, in the purview of their ethical sense and hospitality, one was either a *shimkhur/āmā* or *shingnai/khami* and s/he was treated accordingly. They soon had to learn to break away from this "limited" mindset when colonialism ushered in print culture, perhaps, the most crucial factor in disintegrating the traditional social practices and relations and in shaping the "modern" mind.

Psychodynamics of Oral Cultures

In one of his provocative contentions, Scott argued that hill peoples' "dis-acquisition of literacy" was a logical consequence of a retreat from the state and of adopting the life of fragmentation and mobility. Writing is an indispensable "technology of administration and statecraft" so as to keep records of contracts and agreements, decrees and legal codes, and map out taxable land, and keep the registration of labour and receipts. In the hills, all of these became pointless: "Leaving behind the lowland centers meant stripping down the complexity of social structure in the interest of mobility. In this context, literacy and texts were of no further use and died out as a practice, though not as a memory" (Scott 226).

The myth of lost script commonly found among hill peoples seems to suggest retention of the "primeval" memory for the loss of literacy. Whether or not it was a "loss by design" is another argument. What pertains is Scott's insight that "the practice of literacy is superfluous in the hills." A simple explanation as to why it becomes a superfluous practice could be: writing and print are forms of abstracting from "the situated immediacy of speech". Writing separates utterances from the "utterer" and owing to their relative permanence, they can "travel independently of a given person" (Erikson 17). The quality of permanence, according to Scott, has a disadvantage of reifying certain written text into a standard account and thus paved a way for establishment of orthodoxy (227). Written religion, for instance, has "a clearly delineated set of dogma and principles, and with authorized, 'correct' versions of myths and narratives"; besides, morality became "embedded in written legislation" (Erikson 18).

On the contrary, in what Walter J. Ong called a "primary oral culture", the question of an authentic or a standard account does not arise. Edmund Leach said of the Kachins, "Where there are rival versions of the same story, no one version is 'more correct' than any other" (265; see also Scott 230). Indeed, there is no original version that could serve as a point of reference to ascertain veracity of other versions. When there are griots with rival versions, as Leach said, there cannot be a version which serves as a yardstick. Instead of the content, therefore, status of the story-teller reflects on the authority or credibility of stories (Leach 266). Scott also draws attention to non-diegetic aspects of oral traditions:

> Oral culture exists and is sustained only through each unique performance at a particular time and place for an interested audience. These performances are, of course, far more than the transcript of the

> words spoken; each includes the setting, the gestures, and the expression of the performer(s), the audience reaction, and the nature of the occasion itself. (230)

Hannah Arendt underlined theatrical dimensions of speech and action by analysing dramatic motifs in public action of the ancient Athenian politics. Political action, she said, is embodied in the concept of "virtuosity", which is an excellence attributed to the performing arts "where the accomplishment lies in the performance itself and not in an end product" (153). Tangkhul's traditions have stories of men who performed speech in public discourse. Besides, some rituals showed how an act had to be reenacted so that a private deed might become an honourable one. In such practices, it was not the content of speech but the performance that was prioritized. Performance was not restricted to public sphere. In the days when intelligibility of languages created a barrier to interactions, performance of folksong was used as a means of communication. Even business, as Ong said, is not a simple economic transaction, but "a series of verbal (and somatic) maneuvers, a polite duel, a contest of wits, an operation in oral agonistic" (68) as though one is enacting a scene.

Arts of performance, according to Ong, impart originality to oral narrative. To be original is not to make up a new story, but to manage "a particular interaction with this audience at this time – at every telling the story has to be introduced uniquely into a unique situation" (41). Creative retelling requires deployment of various techniques of performance and reshuffling of formulas and themes. Many ethnologists and anthropologists, however, noted how oral genealogies altered to adjust to new situations or changed social relations (Ong 46-48). Recognition of performance in speech and action opened rooms for play-acting. Owing to the possibility of generating variations, adaptability and deniability, there were many *shārra* (taboos) meant to preempt fabrications and give false witnesses. A common maxim says, "The word is song and the song is word." Commenting on the precept, P. R. Yangkahao noted, "From the traditions of forbearers, one might distinguish the good from the bad and the truth from falsehood." Stephen Angkang saw it as a caveat to refrain from distorting history of a clan and a nation. Without written contract, in the traditional Tangkhul society, words of mouth were the only proof of legal deeds and transactions. And it was only through words that people could be reminded of debts and obligations. Therefore, oath-taking was a serious affair usually conducted by invoking the name of "Heaven and Earth". Taboos reinforced the gravity of oath-taking: "the name of Heaven and

Earth shall not be invoked"; "If a big promise is deceived, a big man dies; if a small promise is deceived, a small man dies"; "Those who saw something and said they did not see would become blind; those who heard something and said they did not hear would become deaf"; and "Those who bear false witness are struck by lightning." When asked why an oath cannot be breached, they would simply say, "The word is the power."[11] Ritualistic words were transmitted by word of mouth since time immemorial. In a way, therefore, they were residue of "the lost words". According to the "myth of lost words", humans and all other living things used to speak the same language. It was the time when humans lived in harmony with nature. One day, a man drowned his wife while helping her ford a river in spate. Her brothers held him responsible and sought for vengeance. So he took refuge among the trees. When the trees refused to give up, they started to fell trees despite protest. Brothers avenged their sister's death but from that day onward, all living things refused to talk to humans and gradually humans forgot the words.[12] My interviewees were not sure if ritualistic words were the residue of the mythical primordial language, but they believed that taking an oath was an act performed before humans and nature.

In "primary oral cultures", sound was singularly important not only because of the belief in animated nature, but words were nothing less than sounds without visual representation. He who sees the blue sky might say that he sees "nothing", but to him who hears a sound in a pitch dark night, the space has "become alive" (Zuckerkandl 283). "May we not assume," Victor Zuckerkandl asked, "that it was the sounds in nature – the sound of wind, of water in all its forms, of electric discharges, the rustling of leaves rather than the sight of their growth and fall – which aroused in sensitive minds the idea of a nature alive in all its parts?" (2). Animistic form of belief system is characteristic of a culture that privileges sound over sight. The invisible was not something abstract, but something that they encountered and responded to in their everyday lives and the intangible was not opposed to the tangible; they were part of the whole of their world. It was natural that god communicated with humans and prophesied things to come not only through signs but also through sounds (not voice because such type of religion does not conceptualize god as an Entity). Therefore, the important type of divination, if not the most common, was "the sound of nature" in which different acoustic expressions of certain birds, animals and insects were believed to indicate future events. Tellingly, "to take vengeance" in Tangkhul is *athut hāngkasang*, which literally means "to speak into vengeance". Taking vengeance was a form of

communicating to the dead. In other words, the act of vengeance is expressed in synaesthetic metaphor of sound. As Malinowski said, among the "primitive society", language was "a mode of action", because meaning of words was believed to be "rooted in the pragmatic efficiency" (297). From this sense of word as necessarily effective, he suggested, began the belief in "magical potency" of words. To sum up in Ong's words: "oral peoples commonly, and probably universally, consider words to have great power" (32).

The condition of orality seems to naturally explain the "primitive" association of words with power. While absence of writing remains an important factor, their experience within the confine of actual spatial field needs to be considered. That is, whether or not spatial experience and conceptualization of the world have a substantive bearing on the condition of orality? With respect to perception of space, Zuckerkandl drew attention to two important differences of visual and auditory modalities. First, whereas sight discloses space by excluding the perceiver from the object, sound discloses space by positioning the hearer at the centre in which the space, as it were, streams into him (291). Ong called this characteristic "the interiority of sound" (70). Second, sight orients an observer towards the object; in the case of tone (unless the sound in consideration is noise) spatial position of its source is inessential.[13] The experiential differences foster specific mode of connection between the self and the world: "The space experience of the eye is a disjunctive experience; the space experience of the ear is a participative experience" (Zuckerkandl 291). Plato's Cave Allegory may illustrate the points. As revealed by the faculty of sight, for the prisoners of the cave, reality was "nothing other than the shadows of artificial things" (515c). In connection with the cave inmates, to the degree that their perception is regulated by sight, their spatial experience is essentially limited to the wall on which images of the artifacts are projected. The Cave Allegory is meant to be read symbolically without advertence to verisimilitude. However, if we could imagine that the prisoners' knowledge of reality is founded on the faculty of sound and not on that of sight, their idea of reality could be markedly different insofar as humans' knowledge of the world is dependent upon perceptual experiences (O'Callagan v; Bregman 1).

Situated on hill tops, each Tangkhul village is walled in, as it were, by the hills on all sides. Before the British occupation of the hilly terrains, each village used to live like a self-contained entity more or less isolated from the outside world. As said, an average person knew the physical features of the village territory like the back of his hand. Every year, they would hunt in the forests, scour the woods for

fruits and foods, till the lands to grow vegetables and crops, cultivate the fields, and fish in the streams and the rivers. As revealed by the eyes, the visible world, say the landscape, held little fascination to the people, perhaps except the month of April when the hills and forests turned green. Therefore, the month between March and April was called *mayo kachāng*, which means a pleasant month. Sound, on the contrary, was a source of fascination and mystery. The sounds of wind would give away its direction and if accompanied by rain the direction of the rain and thereby their intensity. The localization of the sound of thunders towards the beginning of a year would foretell whether the year would be dry or rainy. It is amazing how sound can help elderly Tangkhuls not only identify birds and animals but also determine the state in which they are. In short, their perception of the world was not "visuocentric". As a source of knowledge, auditory system was an equally important modality. To a remarkable extent, they represented the world through the sensitivity to sound. Perception of seasonal changes in terms of sound is a case in point.[14] In a sense, they had a naturally trained sense of hearing. It is not surprising that they learnt hymnal songs with ease much to the surprise of missionaries.[15]

In addition to mnemonic, formulaic and patterned forms of expression, Ong elaborates on the relationship between orality and thought and expression. A primary oral culture, he says, tends to cultivate additive and aggregative modes of expression and thereby rendering redundancy a marked feature of oral expression. Such characteristics enable continuous transmission of body of religious, political, legal, familial regulations (Havelock 370). Copiousness in thought and expression promotes agonistic milieu both in the sense of argumentativeness and exaggerated verbal performance. For instance, proverbs and riddles are forms of "intellectual combat". In order that knowledge might be conserved in memory, conceptualized knowledge needs to be retold. On the one hand, repetition imparts homeostasis and, on the other hand, inhibits "intellectual experimentation." Coupled with the hardship of existence and inherent deficiency of oral literature to handle elaborate and abstract categories, a primary oral culture has a deficit of critical and analytic thinking. For them philosophers are eccentric pariahs. Therefore, an oral culture is often a self-congratulatory culture: towards it own society it reserves uncritical admiration sometimes accompanied by fulsome praise and towards others, it reserves suspicion sometimes accompanied by inflated condemnation. The culture, so to speak, is conditioned by the mode of existence. Orality

cannot efficiently cope with a diverse society spread out on a vast geographical area. Similarly, in a "closed society" enclosed within a limited space, writing is almost redundant and orality plays primary roles in the everyday context of such culture. Despite the existence of writing (chirography) and print (typography) for about a century, it is not surprising that Tangkhul society largely remains an oral culture. Practice of book publication, for instance, is wedded to oral performance in some ways. Tangkhul literatures, in general, and literature on customs and traditions, in particular, abound in plagiarism. Many publications did not mention date of publication as though the contents speak of timeless truth and therefore need not be grounded into the socio-historical contexts.

Oral cultures conceptualize and verbalize knowledge with "close reference to the human lifeworld, assimilating the alien, objective world to the more immediate, familiar interaction of human beings" (Ong 42). Trades were learned through apprenticeship and specialized knowledge transmitted through family lines. On the one hand, the practice perpetuates concentration of knowledge and, on the other hand, it inspires closer communitarian ties. In such cultures, the mode of thought was operational rather than categorical or situational rather than abstract. "That is to say, oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium or homeostasis by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance" (Ong 46). Ong gives numerous cases of "structural amnesia" in which the present demands dictates the past remembrances through oral traditions, or as a chapter title of Edmund Leach's *Political System of Highland Burma* says "myth [is] a justification for faction and social change."

Both Ong and Leach raised the question of whether or not the instrumentality of myth is an inherent feature or a response to social change. If oral cultures tend to maintain homeostasis, how do they account for change? By definition, in a perfectly homeostatic culture, there is no change and without perceptible changes, historical time does not exist. In his characteristic style, Scott suggested, "If an oral history and genealogy provide more room for maneuver than a written history and genealogy, then perhaps the most radical step of all is to claim virtually no history or genealogy at all" (234).

Conclusion

The analysis of the principles of a primary oral culture raises some questions: Was the traditional Tangkhul society characterized by

denial of history and genealogy? How did the coming of writing change the perception of time and space? What effects did writing and other disembedding forces had on individual and village-community? What are the socio-political contexts within which the forces of change like Christianity and modern education operated? My argument is that these questions need to be situated within the contextual and conceptual frameworks of the primary oral culture.

Rather than critically engaging with the theories of diverse thinkers, I have employed them to understand the traditional Tangkhul community. It is, therefore, pertinent to ask how applicable are the theoretical tools to the specific case study. Following Giddens, for instance, I have drawn attention to the social implications of changes in spatial practices and the "stretching" of social relations over time and space. Since Giddens coined the notion of disembedding in the context of globalization, it may be asked if it is applicable to a small-scale society. I think the principles remain equally pertinent. Having dealt with "abstract mechanisms", I want to draw attention to another closely related concept called distanciation through an example. The establishment of sub-divisional headquarter at Ukhrul in 1919 led to a process of system integration in which various "parts" (villages) are combined and coordinated thereby removing the local practices from the "immediacies of context" to an "abstract system". Lawsuit in the sub-divisional court is a case in point. In 1923, 34 offenses were brought to the sub-divisional court.[16] In 1938, that is 15 years later, the number of cases in the court jumped to 753 (471 civil suits, 26 criminal cases and 256 misc. cases).[17] Needless to say, the court increasingly "emptied out" the significance of village courts, the local practices, which were "specific to particular time and space".

Besides the undermining effect on the edifice of traditional moral system, the process of system integration and the introduction of writing facilitated the reconceptualization time and space. As John Thomas has pointed out, Christianity also contributed to the reorientation of time and space:

> The missionary religion was also one that insisted on prioritising spatiality over temporality. The existing moral and spiritual universe of the Nagas was very much centred on land and how a balance was to be maintained among all those who shared that land through principles of reciprocity and respect. (35-36)

The movement from "darkness to light" or "head-hunting to soul-hunting" was not merely a metaphor but a reality, in fact, a necessity to attain the life of eternity in the heaven. In the traditional

eschatological belief, human life continues after death in the underworld and when they die in the underworld, they again go to another underworld, and so on. The future, as they saw it, is a repetition of past; so the eternity is a repetition of life in many worlds. The New Year festival was markedly non-existent in many tribal societies, for the end of a year did not make way for a new beginning, but a repetition of the past.[18] If time is used as a reference point to measure distance (by the time taken to cover a distance or by counting the number of occurrence of a certain action) or area (by the time taken to complete a task), it is not a continuous flow of time that is taken into account, but a period or a particular point of time in which socio-cultural life of the people are intimately woven into. So, the distance between two villages may be put at five cigarette rolls or between a village and field at five rests. Likewise, a year was elaborately structured with festivals, rituals and seasons, because time (like space) was reckoned "for a concrete and specific purpose" in relation to events and routines.

It is from this immediacy of experience tied to the land, emphasis on specific period or point of time, and certainty of their ways of life that the inexorable forces of change began to dislodge individuals and communities as the Tangkhuls moved from their erstwhile isolated existence to an increasingly interconnected world.

Notes

1. In Tangkhul the proverb reads, "*Zaimukna maja tungli ngashan laga Meitei chihui theiya kaji katha.*" Quails, being terrestrial birds, generally live on the ground and *maja* is a vegetable plant. What the proverb says is that a quail perching on a vegetable plant cannot get a view of Meitei valley. It is applied to someone who claims to have seen many things, like Meitei valley, although he spends his life in a village.
2. In 1917, 1200 Tangkhuls were conscripted as labourers and sent to France. Young educated Christians were employed as interpreters, headmen, and mate (leader of a unit of 30 labourers). Upon their arrival, many of them initiated socio-religious movement like the abolition of celebration of Thisham festival, renunciation of many rituals and objects of traditional material culture, and the launching of what is locally called as the great revival of 1923.
3. Manipur State Darbar, for instance, defined "Hill Village Reserves" as "area within ¼ mile radius of any Hill Village" within which they were allowed to cut fuel and wood. "State Forest Reserves" consisted of "a few large forest areas in which there are few or no villages" (D. R. No. 10 (A) 0f 20.7.32). The law remained only in name during the British rule. When Manipur Government passed Pine Forests Control Order which prohibited the use of pine trees without permit and use with payment of fees, there was an agitation in Ukhrul in 1954. Other tribes like Anal took up the issue by demanding withdrawal of the "order for reservation of forest in Anal Naga areas."

4. According to T. Luikham, it is a piece of land which is not included in the jurisdiction of *Luiyan*, which is a body formed by neighbouring villages (131-132). Literally, *ngalei* means "land" and *khamor* means "mold, rotten, or useable" (Luikham, *Transformed Headhunters* 21). The concept and its implications on the notion of territory and boundary disputes are dealt with in detail in the next chapter.
5. Maran is an honour-attaining ceremony in which a rich man lavishly feasts the villagers and friends for many days. Hosting of the ceremony entitled a person to wear certain attire and tattoo pattern in some Naga tribes. Among the Tangkhuls, the host acquired the right to build a certain type of house called *Lengchengshim*, and his wife got a certain pattern of tattoo. The celebration was symbolized by erection of stones mostly practiced by the western Naga tribes like Mao, Poumei, and Angami, whereas the eastern Naga tribes erected post like Khiamniunga, Yimchunger, Konyak, etc. Tangkhuls practiced both the customs.
6. A village is divided into localities called *tang*, also called *khel* in Assamese. Among such Naga tribes as Angami and Mao, each *tang* used to be walled inhabited by a single clan. Among the Tangkhuls, there was no rigid division. In fact, small localities came together to form a *longshim*, which is a dormitory system in which boys and girls from the age of about 7 lived till their marriage. Unlike many Naga tribes, among the Tangkhuls even marriage men can become a member. There were separate houses for boys and girls: *mayarlong* housed boys and *ngalalong* housed girls.
7. Following Meiteis, Tangkhuls also call the Kukis as "Khongjai". According to Thadous, they were so called because the first Thadou village with which the Meiteis came into contact was called Khongsai (Shaw, William 47). Shaw divided the waves of Thadous movement in Manipur into three categories: those who moved along the Barak (who were employed to check the Angamis); those who moved along the hills between the Barak and the valley (who were settled among the "Kacha Nagas") and those who moved along the eastern range (who were used as buffer against the Burmese) (46). The clan head of Haokips called Chassads mostly constituted third category and they were the ones that attacked the Tangkhuls particularly the villages situated along the eastern and northeastern hills of Manipur state.
8. Interview with Ningthar Kashak of Chatric village. Personal Interview. 20 April 2016.
9. *Lambus* were intermediary agents of the government. In Manipur state, they carried out "both the duties of police and of messengers of the State" (Crawford 8). They were paid about Rs. 8 per month, an equivalent salary of a sweeper, yet the hills men perceived them as powerful government agents.
10. *Dobashi* means one who knows two languages. They were the interpreters between the colonial masters and the natives.
11. Arim Shimrah, Thingring Kashung and Nalui Kashung. Personal interview. 1 Nov 2014. To ethnographers' question of "Why is this ritual effective?" the usual reply, according to S. J. Tambiah, is "The power is in the 'words'" (116). The three elders from Peh village echoed the idea.
12. As narrated by Ngahanshai Kapai. Personal Interview. 20 Oct 2014.
13. Wordsworth's poem "The Solitary Reaper" may illustrate the point. As long as the song of the "Highland Lass" is localized, the sound that the poet hears remains a song. The song becomes musical only when "it was heard no more."

14. As Maiya Gachui maintained, Tangkhuls observed seasonal changes in a year in terms of the sounds of birds and animals. In the month of *Tharao* (January) "comes" the seasonal bird called *sampheirok* that heralded the beginning of the year: the month of *Marun* (February) "brings" cuckoo's songs; in the month of *Mayo* (March) "comes" the bird called *hurshung phakhok*; in the month of *Kharam* (May), the cry of an animal called *kharamva* was heard; in the month of *Makha* (June), the woods and forests resounded with the sound of cicadas (2-3). The sounds of nature (birds, animals, and insects) used to be a marker of calendar.
15. A report of William Pettigrew's speech at Minister's Conference reads: "These people [Tangkhuls] are head hunters and dog eaters; very superstitious, degraded and filthy … The faithful labors of Rev. and Mrs. Pettigrew are reaping the reward of remarkable transformation in the character of this people, in purity of speech, and of cleanliness, in development of mind by the power of the gospel. It is also of interest to know that they have capacity for music …" (*Mission Reports*, 18).
16. Administration Report of the Manipur State, 1922-23.
17. Administration Report of the Manipur State, 1937-38.
18. Luira is now considered as the "Tangkhul New Year Festival". It is celebrated in the beginning of a year. However, instead of thanking God before stepping into a new year, it is a time of invoking God before sowing. Therefore, the festival is commonly, and more accurately, described as "Seed-Sowing Festival".

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READING GURDIAL SINGH: A REFLECTION ON CASTE AND GENDER IN PUNJAB

Narender Kumar

Introduction

The Indian Constitution has emphasized the equality of men and women. But the Constitutional equality does not have much space in the house where traditions have more importance than rationality. The very origin of family is based on gender inequalities. Woman is always expected to perform all household chores while man enjoys freedom from such household responsibilities. The division of work, which women do and men do not do, is legitimized by the religion and culture which discriminate between men and women. The problem of gender inequality lies in the religion and culture which propagate one's superiority over the other.[1] Right from the beginning, children naturalize the idea of superior and inferior gender by observing their parents performing their duties. In a caste society like India, the question of gender equality becomes more complicated because caste determines one's socio-economic position in the society. And a woman's position determines her subjection in the male dominant society.

In the Hindu social order, women and Dalits are the most marginalized groups. Their marginalization is propagated and legitimized in the name of religion. Undoubtedly during the medieval period Bhakti poets such as Kabir, Ravi Das and many more contested the legitimized marginalization of Dalits and women in Hindu social order.[2] But it was only during the colonial rule that the issues of Dalit and women began to be addressed. The educated Indians like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Jotiba Phule, M. G. Ranade, Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and many more, who got benefit from colonial education policy, realized a need for social reform. It was the result of social reform movement that the British Raj introduced certain laws like the prohibition of Sati (1829), and Widow Remarriage Act (1856).[3] The social reformers also emphasized on

women's education and towards the end of the nineteenth century women began to speak against the patriarchal social system. Tara Bai Shinde's *Stri-PurushTulna* (1882) is a critique of patriarchy and caste hierarchy. The tract "serves to mark Shinde's polemic as one of the first *feminist* critiques of caste."[4]

In the beginning of the twentieth century, a group of educated women had emerged on the Indian political horizon. "The formation of the All India Women's Conference in 1927 was a crucial event in women's march towards equality."[5] Such educated women, who were aware of their economic position in the family, pressurized the British Raj for certain rights in the family property. The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937 was the result of women's struggle for economic right in the family property. According to this Act "the widow of the deceased, the widow of the predeceased son and of his grandson and great-grandson – they were all made simultaneous heirs along with the son."[6] The Hindu Women's Right to Property Act of 1937 had certain ambiguities regarding the share of daughters in the family property. To sort out such ambiguities the government appointed Rau Committee in 1941. This Committee recommended that "the Hindu personal law should be reformed and codified . . ."[7] Due to problem of clarity on the matter "a second Rau Committee was appointed in 1944, they reiterated their recommendation . . . and presented the government with a draft Hindu Code."[8]

After Independence Ambedkar, the first law minister, presented the Hindu Code Bill (1951). The Bill was proposed to protect the interests of girls in the family property as Ambedkar writes: "The only innovation that we are making is that her [daughter's] share is increased and that we bring her in the line with the son or the widow."[9] But the Bill could not get passed because of the lack of support. Later on, under Hindu Succession Act 1956 (HSA) equal property rights were given to daughter, mother and widow. Since then, "The states of Punjab and Haryana made several attempts to abolish or amend the 1956 Act."[10] It is interesting to observe that Punjab and Haryana always wanted not to implement the HSA because in these states the structure of patriarchy exists more strongly than any other Indian states.

Contextualizing Literature: Emergence of Caste and Gender Issues

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, religious identity became an issue of concern between the Sikhs and the Hindus. Emergence

of Singh Sabha (1872) and Arya Samaj (1877) represents the construction of religious boundaries between the Hindus and the Sikhs.[11] Such issue began to be reflected in literature as Bhai Veer Singh who wrote the first Punjabi novel *Sundri* (1898) raised the issue of separate Sikh identity. Later on Charan Singh Shahid in his novels *Daler Kaur* (1910) and *Ranjit Kaur* (1913) and Mohan Singh Vaid in his novels *Ik Sikh Gharana* (*One Sikh Family* 1913), *Shushil Vidva (Cultured Widow*, 1917), and *Shreshth Kulan Di Chaal* (*Good Family's Tradition*, 1911) represented the issues of identity and women's exploitation.

Before the emergence of Gurdial Singh on Punjabi literary horizon Nanak Singh (his novels *Chitta Lahoo*, 1932, *Tuti Vina*, 1946, and *Gangajali Vich Sharab*, 1946), Amrita Pritam (*Doctor Dev,* 1948, and *Pinjar*, 1952), Jaswant Singh Kanwal (*Civil Lines*, 1952 and *Hani*, 1997), Sant Singh Sekhon (*Lahoo-Mitti*, 1949) and Surinder Singh Narula (*Pio-Puttar*, 1946) have raised the issue of caste discrimination and women's exploitation in Punjabi society. Gurdial Singh, right from his first novel *Madi Da Diva* (1964), attracts our attention to marginalized subjects like Dalits and women. His other novels like *Unhoye* (1966), *Aathan-Uggan* (1974), and *Anhe Ghode Da Daan* (1976) also sensitize the exploitation of women. The specificity of Gurdial Singh's novels is that they bring into light the socio-economic difference that exists among the women of various castes and classes. For example, there is economic difference between the peasants and landlords. His fictional world raises questions such as: how do women of both categories (landlord and peasant) get exploited by men? How do Dalit women get exploited by the upper caste landlords as well as by Dalit men? How does patriarchy work among the Dalits?

Earlier, the problems of Dalit women and upper caste women were addressed with the same perspective but by the 1990s the scholars realized that there is a difference between the subjectivity of Dalit women and upper caste women and because of difference between subjectivity and socio-economic position; the issues of Dalit women and upper caste women cannot be addressed with the same perspective. Understanding the position of women in various socio-economic categories P. G. Jogdand writes: "…it would not be realistic to presume that the women in any society are a homogeneous lot—culturally, socially and economically. The problems of women vary from one social stratum to another, one cultural group to another and also from one economic stratum to another."[12] Later on scholars like Gopal Guru raised the issue of Dalit women's separate subjectivity

and specificity. Guru argues that Dalit women have specific social situation and subjectivity; their issues cannot be addressed as "common" with the issues of the upper caste women.[13] By the 1990s, a group of educated Dalit women has emerged and because of their 'lived experience' this group has recognized the specificity of Dalit women in Indian society and "an independent and autonomous assertion of Dalit women's identity found its first expression in the formation of National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) at Delhi on August 11 [1995]."[14]

Before the emergence of NFDW, Dalit women's issues had been addressed by the upper caste women. In other words, the upper caste women used to speak on the behalf of Dalit women. In this regard Sharmila Rege writes: "Social location determines the perception of reality and therefore the representation of dalit women's issues by non-dalit women was less valid and less authentic."[15] It was only after the foundation of NFDW that Dalit women began to raise the issue of patriarchy and inter-caste marriage among the Dalits. Earlier such issues of caste and gender among the Dalits have not been paid much attention by the scholars.

Gurdial Singh's novels *Madi Da Diva*, *Unhoye*, *Aathan-Uggan*, and *Anhe Ghode Da Daan* are located in the 1960s and 1970s. These novels represent the situational difference between the upper caste and the lower caste women. The victimization of Dalit women sensitizes the caste and gender issue in Punjab.

Arranged Marriage: An Imposed Decision

Gurdial Singh's novel *Madi Da Diva* represents a rebellious woman Bhani, who even after being married, falls in love with a lower caste Jagseer. In arranged marriage, a girl does not have any right to choose her husband; rather her husband is selected by her family members, either by father or brother. Arranged marriage is a system in which the girl/woman hardly has any say. The system of arranged marriage is an imposed decision upon girls. Under social obligation girls accept the boys 'selected' by their families. But the desire for a husband of their own choice always remains repressed in their unconscious mind. And even after marriage, if they find a man of their choice, openly or secretly they develop a relationship with such a person of their choice.

The social normative, tradition, culture and popular image of woman in a society do not allow them to cross the threshold of patriarchy. But exceptions are always there. The character of Bhani

in *Madi Da Diva* represents such an exception, for she does not accept any imposed decision. As soon as Bhani comes in contact with Jagseer, she finds it difficult to repress the desire for a man of her choice. Her relationship with Jagseer touches its peak when she provokes Jagseer for physical satisfaction: "If you have some desire speak directly, a coward cannot be a lover…" [16]

But unfortunately her mother-in-law listens to Bhani's conversation with Jagseer and informs Nika, Bhani's husband. Her extra-marital affair does not suit to the popular image of a married woman. A married woman is expected to be faithful to her husband. As per the instructions of scriptures even the thought of a man, other than her husband, is considered a sin for her. And an affair with an untouchable is considered worse than a sin.[17] Bhani has to face the consequences of her inter-caste extramarital affair. She is beaten up by her husband and mother-in-law. Nika's mother says: "Kill this Chandri. Beat, beat and cut her into pieces."[18] The word '*chandri*', which Nika's mother uses for Bhani, has cultural significance. The word *chandri* is used for prostitutes or the women who used to do *mujra*. Chandri, therefore, signifies prostitute. Bhani has not only crossed the boundaries fixed for a married woman but also the limitation of caste hierarchy. Bhani belongs to the Nai community but she has an affair with Jagseer, a man who belongs to the Chuhra community. The Chuhra is considered to be at the bottom of caste hierarchy. Her affair with Jagseer is against both the norms of marriage and caste hierarchy. One of Nika's relatives, who notices Jagseer at Nika's house, raises the question: "This is very bad Nikiya! An untouchable comes to your house, this is not right. It is okay if someone is from our own caste, if he is from the neighbour. How can a camel have a relationship with a buffalo-calf?" [19]

His statement indicates two points: first, caste hierarchy; second, control over woman's sexuality. Since Jagseer is an untouchable, he is not supposed to visit the house of a Nai. Jagseer's presence, especially in the absence of Nika, is a threat to Bhani's chastity. His statement indirectly suggests that a woman can have relationship only within her caste. That is the reason he metaphorically said: "How can a camel have a relation with a buffalo-calf?" These words camel and buffalo signify two different castes, which Jagseer and Bhani belong to. As these two animals (camel and buffalo) have nothing to do with each other, likewise, Nai and Chuhra can have no association. Such a statement reflects social hierarchy according to which an untouchable cannot have access to the house of an upper caste. Especially, an untouchable is not expected to have a dialogue with

an upper caste woman. Covertly it is a question of caste hierarchy but it is more concerned with the issue of woman's chastity. So it is woman's chastity in the guise of caste hierarchy that Nika's relative wants to protect by prohibiting the entry of a lower caste.

Lower Caste Women as Commodities

Control over the means of production generates multiple modes of exploitation. The upper castes' control over land, which is the major source of income in rural Punjab, enslaves the lower castes. There was a time when social relation of production between the landholding and landless castes was known as *jajmani* system under which the lower castes used to work for the landholding castes.[20] Gurdial Singh's novels are located in the 1960s and 1970s Punjab. During this period, because of mechanization of farming, the *jajmani* system had already begun to decline. The landholding castes had realized that hiring labourers on a daily wage was better than the *jajmani* system which proved more expensive. The specificity of the system was that the male members of the lower caste families used to work in the fields of the upper caste and female used to do odd jobs in the house of the upper castes. Under such social relation of production, women from the landless castes used to be more vulnerable to sexual violence. Because of economic insecurity, the lower castes women had to do a favour to the upper caste men. The feudal tradition such as *muhdikhai* (showing the face of a newly married lower caste woman) was the result of hegemonic control of the upper castes over lower castes. Gurdial Singh makes a reference to this tradition of *muhdikhai* in his novel *Madi Da Diva*. The upper caste (Jatt) Ghela and Gheba with Jagseer go to the house of a common friend, Nika, who belongs to the Nai community. Nika is newly married and Ghela, Gheba and Jagseer want to see the face of Nika's newly married wife.

Seeing the face of a newly married woman was a common practice in Punjab as it happens, two upper caste boys (Gheba and Ghela) pressurize Nika to show the face of his wife. The language which they use for Nika's wife and their attitude to Nika reflect their upper caste psyche:

> "How are you, oye! Looking like a spinning post. Just escape to show your wife, you do not talk to us. Is she a *Pari* (fairy) of Indra's court? Marrying a Barber woman of two and a half anna, you consider yourself Alexander the Great! Look at brother-in-law's monkey face." Ghela said by making a face.[21]

This joke is not an ordinary joke; rather it reflects the collective

consciousness of the upper castes. Since Nika belongs to the Nai community which used to work as subordinate of the upper caste landlords under *jajmani* system in north India; not only Nai but almost all the castes used to do be assigned job for the landlords. Jajmani was a system under which the lower castes were completely dependent on the landlords. For example, if a male Nai would do the job of a messenger, his wife would do domestic work at the house of the landlord. Ghela's comment that "marrying a Barber woman of two and half anna, you consider yourself Alexander the Great" suggests caste subordination. Caste rule is the ultimate determiner of Nai's occupation in the Indian society. Bhani is a Nai woman and being a Nai woman she is obliged to serve at landlord's house. Ghela's words "a barber woman of two and a half anna" indicate the caste superiority complex. It also points out Bhani's economic status. For survival the Barber women used to do menial work in the house of upper castes:

> [A] barber woman renders personal services to the women of the jajman's family—or a family which engages the barber woman on cash payment—which include the cutting of nails, the decoration of feet (with special colored solutions), a special oil massage and a bath for a new born baby and its mother, the supplying of leaf cups and leaf plates for feasts and the role of companion to the bride during the wedding ceremony.[22]

Being the domestic helper they were easily available to the upper caste men. Ghela's statement about Nika's wife has sexual connotation. Because of economic vulnerability of the lower caste women, it is a common perception among the upper caste men that the lower caste women can be easily won for a sexual favour. This perception is almost common among the upper caste men without regional disparity.

Ghela and Gheba are not satisfied with a momentum look of Nika's wife. Ghela reflects his dissatisfaction in the following words: "This is just a glimpse; we could not have a proper look. It was a worthless exercise."[23] Ghela was dissatisfied because he could not enjoy the beauty of Nika's wife for a long time. His dissatisfaction reflects his desire for a lower caste woman. Nika'a mother understands Ghela's dissatisfaction and tries to console him by saying: "My son, how long she will stay like that! Only for two or four months she will stay in the house. After that she has to work in your house at the occasion of marriage and other ceremonies."[24] Nika's mother understands the power imbedded in the personalities of Ghela and Gheba, as they are the sons of landlords. She, being a Barber woman, also recognizes her family's economic vulnerability as well as the unspoken agreement

under which a lower caste woman is expected to offer her services to the upper caste men. That is the reason she consoles them with a hope that after few months Nika's wife would work in their houses.

Here in the context of Ghela and Gheba, the tradition of '*muhdikhai'* is an exercise of power. There would hardly be any lower caste man who could dare to pressurize any upper caste friend to show the face of his newly married wife. Only the upper caste men have this privilege. Caste hierarchy does not permit a lower caste man to have a look at the upper caste women. This is not because Ghela and Gheba are young and at this growing age men generally have desire for women. Rather having a desire for lower caste women is part of the upper caste feudal culture. The similar desire for a lower caste woman's body can be noticed in an old man Buta, who looking at a Barber woman, recalls his past:

> "This Nain [Nai woman] was so beautiful in those days. Perhaps, you did not see Dasondiya."
>
> "Now she has lost her beauty; in those days she had so sharp nose like sword. Whichever side she looked, men used to run after her. Four hands long height. When she walked, she walked like an elephant. . . ."[25]

Ghela and Gheba's desire for a look of Nika's wife and Buta's lusty narrative of a Nai woman focus on the sexuality of Nai women. Buta's narrative exposes how the Nai women would have been treated by the upper castes, especially by the Jatts. Buta's "gaze" is not a normal "gaze" with which men generally look at women. Rather Buta's "gaze" represents the upper caste men's "desire" for the lower caste women. In the context of 'gaze', Laura Mulvey writes:

> [S]copophilia arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. . . . In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly.[26]

While recalling the beauty of Santi, Buta enjoys the sexual pleasure. Looking at her body, Buta not only narrates the beauty of different parts but also turns her into a sexual object. This is not a common practice in Punjab that the elder and younger brothers discuss a woman's sexuality as openly as Buta does with his younger brother Dasonda Singh. Especially an old man would never talk in such a derogatory manner about women of his own caste. But here in this context, Buta and Dasonda Singh discuss the sexuality of a lower caste woman without bothering about the existing moral code. So the "gaze", with which Buta looks at Santi, is determined by caste,

class and gender. In case of Bhani and Santi (both are Nai women), caste is the ultimate determiner. It is the caste rules which make them a resourceless class. Being a resourceless class they survive on the castes which have control over the means of production. Lower caste women's economic dependency determines their subjection. They find it difficult to resist against the advances of the upper caste men. Lower caste women's silence strengthens the 'desire' of the upper caste men for the lower caste women's body. Under such hegemonic relationship men from the landholding castes always expect a sexual favour from the lower caste women and such traditions exist in the society in the form of an unspoken compromise between the so-called upper castes and lower castes.

Ghela and Gheba's desire to have a look at Nika's wife and Buta's erotic narrative of Santi's beauty are also part of the upper caste feudal culture. Both narratives represent the subjection of the Nai women in two different times and in two different relations of production. Under *jajmani* system Ghela and Gheba pressurize Nika to show the face of his wife. Nika's mother herself accepts the fact that after a few months Bhani (Nika's wife) would work in Ghela and Gheba's house during the marriage ceremony and other auspicious occasions. In such social relation of production between the landholding caste (Jatt) and landless caste, a Nai woman is not completely engaged with the domestic work of the landlord. Rather she would work in the house of the landlord only during the marriage and other auspicious occasions. Such engagement of the lower caste woman with the work in the house of the upper caste points out to the presence of the *jajmani* system.

Madi Da Diva was published in 1964 and 1960s was the time when Green Revolution had already begun in Punjab. With the mechanization of farming, such social relations of production had already begun to decline. The landholding caste, Jatt had realized that *jajmani* system was expensive while the lower castes had realized that it was an exploitative system. But to some extent *jajmani* system was still in practice. Therefore, Ghela and Gheba exercise the unspoken agreement to pressurize Nika to show the face of his newly married wife.

Buta's statement about Santi is taken from *Aathan-Uggan* which was published in the 1974. There is a gap of 10 years between the publications of these novels. During this period the mode of agricultural production got changed along with social relations. The lower castes are no more engaged with the upper castes under *jajmani* system. For instance, Santi is hired by landlord Dasonda Singh on

a monthly salary. This new mode of work such as salary system or daily wage did not liberate the lower castes and rather generated new modes of exploitation.

Both novels *Madi Da Diva* and *Aathan-Uggan* expose the sexual exploitation of the lower caste women. Though caste hierarchy does not permit sexual liaison between the upper caste men and Dalit women but such norms are limited only to the Hindu scriptures. In everyday life the upper castes do not follow such rules. The sexual liaison between Rati, a young Dalit widow from the Chamar community and Bachchna, an influential Jatt in the novel *Aathan-Uggan*, is not an imaginary account. Such sexual liaison points out to social reality. Rati lives an independent life and does not have any connection with anyone from her community. Being an influential landlord, Bachchna has easy access to Rati.

Undoubtedly, Rati willingly has sexual relationship with Bachchna. But sometimes "will" is not "will"; it is rather a socio-economic compulsion. This is what happens to Rati who being a landless Dalit widow does not have any other option but to oblige landlord Bachchna with a sexual favour. Rati's sexual favour is a means to survival rather than an act of her will. Bachchna not only keeps a sexual liaison with Rati but also invites another landlord Jarnail to share Rati. Bachchna through his invitation wants to make Jarnail realize that he has access to Dalit women. His access to Dalit women is a way of power projection. Here a Dalit woman's body signifies a site on which the landlords exercise power. Keeping Dalit women as concubines is a symbol of power practice.

For survival sometimes Dalit women have sexual relationship with the upper caste landlords. Such economic vulnerability can be noticed from Rati's words: "Welcome! Welcome! Today, how does the God put His feet into the house of an ant? Come, come and have a seat! It is a fortunate for me, an unlucky woman!"[27] The popular image of God is as the protector of everybody. God is one on whose mercy everybody survives. Jokingly Rati addresses Bachchna as God but her joke reflects her unconscious mind. For a landless Dalit widow like Rati the image of a landlord, on whose resources Dalits survive, cannot be less than God. The socio-economic power, which Bachchna carries in his personality, turns him into a God for Rati. By addressing Bachchna as God, Rati accepts Bachchna's power and surrenders herself to him. Her humility, which she shows to Bachchna and Jarnail when they come to her house, is the reflection of her socio-economic compulsion.

The socio-economic vulnerability of Dalits generates exploitative

social relation of production. It is under such social relation of production that the exploitation of Dalit women continues till date. Bachchna is familiar with Rati but the way he looks at Rati's body raises the question of male gaze: "He begins to look at each and every part of her peanut like round body. Her sound shoulders, full breast, heavy hips, and strong thighs like wrestler. He feels a sense of heat coming out of her body."[28] Bachchna's excitement can be noticed from the way he takes pleasure in looking at Rati's body. In the context of visual pleasure Freud writes:

> Visual impression remain the most frequent pathway along which libidinal excitation is aroused; indeed, natural selection counts upon the accessibility of this pathway—if such teleological form of statement permissible—when it encourages the development of beauty in the sexual object. The progressive concealment of the body which goes along with the civilization keeps sexual curiosity awake. This sexual curiosity seeks to complete the sexual object by revealing its hidden parts.[29]

Being the influential landlords both Bachchna and Jarnail sexually exploit Rati. In the day, social norms and practice of untouchability do not allow the upper caste men to enter into Dalit localities. Night is the safest time for the upper caste men like Bachchna and Jarnail to visit to the house of Dalit. At night there is darkness everywhere and in dark, human beings feel free from all social norms and rituals. Taking advantage of the night, human beings perform all such acts which they cannot perform in the day. This is what Bahchna and Jarnail do. And this is how observing such sexual relationship we realize that whole discourse of caste is hypocrisy.

Furthermore, there is no scope of resistance against such sexual liaison which happens with the consent of Dalit women. In the context of Rati, the sexual liaison happens with her consent and the landlords Bachchna and Jarnail take her to the farmhouse. But as soon as Dalits come to know about the incidence, it becomes a question of prestige for them. They try to bring the issue to the notice of the village chief. Their efforts do not bring any positive result. Rather, Bachchna and Jarnail, with the help of police and government, implicate them in false cases.

The nexus between the upper caste landlords, government and police reveals that the whole state is under the control of landlords. The landholding castes determine which political party will make the government. Being economically sound, the landholding caste, directly or indirectly, controls government and government machinery to some extent. So, the nexus of landholding caste, government and government machinery always suppress the voice

of the marginalized groups. Such use of the government machinery by the dominant caste raises the question about the function of democracy. Democracy is considered the government of the people, by the people and for the people. In the context of Indian democracy Vivek Kumar writes:

> Indian democracy is the maintenance of monopoly of certain '*jatis*' over the institutions of governance, production and education. For the real analysis of the role of '*jati*' in Indian democracy, therefore, we will have to analyse the social composition of the aforesaid institutions. . . . These institutions are polity, judiciary, bureaucracy, industry, university, civil society and media. . . . the present data of the composition of these institutions does not indicate that these institutions are democratizing.[30]

In the Indian context, democracy, if we analyse on the basis of the above mentioned paragraph and increasing atrocities against Dalits, can be categorized as caste democracy. The Dalit novels such as Joseph Macwan's *The Step Child* (1988), which is located in colonial Gujarat, exposes how the landholding community before India's Independence had established its control over bureaucracy in Gujarat. Such dominance of the upper castes in politics and bureaucracy is nicely represented in the novel: "Dehlavala is now the member of the regional assembly. [Dehlavala is a landlord and he has played a major role in atrocities against Dalits] These are all signs of the so-called swaraj for us. Look at it. Even I do not want foreign rule to last, for us it will be like the thugs have gone, and left the robbers behind"[31] Similarly, P. Sivakami's *The Grip of Change* (2006) narrates the collaboration of the landlords, bureaucracy and politicians. Basically it is the landholding community which determines the action of both the politicians and the bureaucracy. With their political influence and capital, the landlords never get punished whatever injustice they have done to the Dalits. As in the novel Paranjothi Udayar an upper caste landlord, even after raping and badly beating a Dalit woman, manages a deal with the police:

> 'Money is not a problem,' Paranjothi quickly assured them. 'I'm willing to spend. Please solve this problem for me.' ….As the two policemen rose to leave, Paranjothi disappeared into a room. They could hear the sound of a safe being opened. He soon returned with two 10-rupee bundles. He handed one bundle to each policeman.[32]

Undoubtedly, the Indian Constitution provides certain provisions for the protection of Dalits. But the political power and government machinery always remains in the hands of the upper castes. "An unofficially established trend exists today of police collaborating

with dominant caste perpetrators to file false cases against the Dalit women or their families in order to pressurize them to withdraw cases or make out-of-court settlements."[33] This is what happens in the case of Rati. Instead of investigating the case the police inspector implicates those Dalits into false cases who raise voice against the landlords. For this favour Bachchna and Jarnail not only bribes the police inspector but they also plan to make Rati sleep with him (inspector). However, they could not succeed in their plan:

> Bachchna had already sent one person to ask Rati to come to the farmhouse. But she has not come; they keep on waiting till the dawn. Again they send one person but he returned with a message that she is not feeling well. Then Bachchna and Jarnail went themselves but they were surprised to see that Rati was not there in her house. When they enquired, they came to know she was sleeping in the house of Sadhu Baba.[34]

Bachchna eagerly looks for Rati as he considers her as a commodity that can be shared with anyone: either with Jarnail or with police inspector. The caste hierarchy privileges the upper castes in such a way that they assume a right over Dalit women. The search for Rati by landlord Bachchna and Jarnail is a reflection of such an assumption. Rati is not the only Dalit woman who has been subjected to sexual exploitation by the landlords. The novel *Aathan-Uggan* further underscores the prevalence of Dalit women's exploitation. Munder, the protagonist in the novel, narrates how his mother was abducted by Nehru Fauji:

> This happened 20 or 22 years earlier. There was law and order situation in the state. Nehru Fauji took advantage of such a volatile situation and took his mother somewhere. They did not get any news of her till five months. Leaving him alone at home for 10 days, his father visited to police station, tehsil, unknown villages and cities but he could not trace her.[35]

This narrative points out to the volatile situation after Independence. Lal Singh Dil, a Punjabi Dalit poet, in his autobiography *Dastaan* (1998) also narrates the kidnapping of the lower caste women by the upper castes.[36] In fact the novel *Aathan-Uggan* exposes the subjection of Dalit women in two generations. In the previous generation, when Munder's mother was abducted, his father, as narrated in the passage above, went to police but police did not trace his mother. Now in the case of Rati, instead of investigating the case in a fair manner, the police collaborate with the landlords. There is a gap of almost 22 years in these two incidents. But during this span of more than 20

years, there is no change in the police's role. Earlier, police did not help Dalits, as it cooperated with the landlords.

Conclusion

Dalit women's rape, exploitation, murder and atrocities were the common practices in the pre-Independence India. In post-Independence India, the situation could not change even after the Constitutional provisions, Protection of Civil Right Act 1976 and The Scheduled Castes and The Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989. Undoubtedly, change takes place at a very slow pace, especially in terms of traditions and mentality. But the Supreme Court's recent order regarding the SC, ST Prevention of Atrocities Act said that the Act is misused and there must be a preliminary inquiry before registering a case under the Act.[37] Though National Crime Record Bureau's latest report shows that the crime against SCs increased by 5.5 per cent in 2016 while crime against STs has increased by 4.7 per cent. The highest numbers of cases recorded were against women, including cases of sexual assault and rape.[38] Such contradiction between the Supreme Court order and ground reality will hamper the change which is taking place in the upper caste mentality.

Notes and References

(Note: All translations from Punjabi to English are mine.)

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REPRESENTATION OF DISABLED WOMEN IN THE WORKS OF BANKIMCHANDRA CHATTERJEE AND RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Akhilesh Kumar

An argument often presented in literary works is that in a traditional society any type of disability, be it physical, mental or visual, would make it difficult for the disabled person to survive in the world. In a patriarchal set-up, for example, being female is in itself a disability. This has been shown by Bankimchandra Chatterjee (1838-1894) in his novel *Rajani* (1877) and by Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) in his short story *Subha* (1918). In this essay, I shall try to explore the struggle of the visually impaired protagonist of *Rajani* in a male-dominated society. I will attempt to draw parallels and show contrasts between Rajani and other characters in the novel. In this process I will also discuss Chatterjee's view about disabled people. By juxtaposing their (Chatterjee's and Tagore's) representations of disability in *Rajani* and *Subha*, it is interesting to focus on the individual formulations of the disabled subject in their works.

Chatterjee's novel was published in book form in 1877, although it had been serialized in *Bangadarshan* four years previously (1873-74). The protagonist of *Rajani* narrates her visually challenged life in the first person. Hence, the text directly explores the subjectivity of an impaired woman, in addition to and as opposed to the construction of the same in narrations of other characters like Sachindrababu, Amarnath and Lavangalata. Sisir Kumar Das in his book *The Artist in Chains: The Life of Bankimchandra Chatterjee* observes, "The character of Rajani was suggested by the blind girl Nidia of the *Last Days of Pompeii* by Lord Lytton" (Das 92). Chatterjee gives voice to the disabled characters from the very beginning, when in the opening chapter Rajani asks the reader whether she or he can understand her misery. Thus, she raises the voice of disabled people. In this way, it could be argued, that 'normal' people can only sympathize, they cannot really 'empathize' with the sufferings of the disabled. Chatterjee makes it a universally acknowledged fact that no person

can experience the pain of another in its entirety when his central protagonist Rajani says, "Our happiness and misery cannot be compared to your happiness and misery. We and you belong to a different order of reality. You cannot understand our happiness or our miseries." (Chatterjee, 119)[1]

Like other female protagonists of Chatterjee's novels, Rajani is portrayed as being very beautiful but her visual impairment undermines her beauty, as conventionally, it is the eyes that are praised by poets and writers to describe the beauty of a woman. Similarly, emotions (love among them) are also believed to be expressed and communicated primarily through the eyes. The logical conclusion of such thinking would be that visually challenged people are therefore 'handicapped' when it comes to expressing and feeling emotions. The idea is that disabled people are passive receivers rather than givers in emotional exchanges. However, as Bhabatosh Datta in his essay "Rajani: A Novel by Bankimchandra" argues:

> The awakening of a young girl blind from birth and the transformation of her feelings into love and gratitude may naturally suggest that Bankim wanted to examine to what extent love was dependent on a sense of beauty . . . To what extent was Rajani's attraction towards Sachindra shaped by beauty? Bankim was certain of one thing; Desire for love is a natural human inclination. But does that love germinate from what eyes see? Rajani's feelings for Sachindra were not shaped by what she saw, but from her touch. Attraction could take shape through physical beauty but equally it could be born of touch. Love is sensual. Rajani's young heart, eager to love came alive at Sachindra's touch. (Datta 7-8)[2]

In this novel, the writer portrays a blind girl's feelings of love and beauty in a vivid manner. This portrayal, to some extent, subverts social conceptions about blind people. We witness Rajani trying to conceptualize and define beauty according to her own notions. She tries to understand the world at her own terms, by comparing for instance, the senses of hearing and sight. She says, "You feel happiness by looking at faces while I experience pleasure by hearing words" (Chatterjee, 119). In the same essay, Datta discusses Rajani's perception to judge beauty in this way:

> The girl who was blind from birth created a world of her own. As she couldn't see herself, the world of her creation was not of visual perception. Her happiness, her sorrow, her love were articulated through her sense of touch and sound. She loved the child Bamacharan as she loved the monument in her imagination. Her love for these could not be compared with an intellectual attraction. But she made a religion of her desire to love. The English poet had said, 'love is their whole existence'

> and Bankim begins Rajani's story with a description of this unusual love. (Datta, 7-8)

In the essay, Datta informs about what Chattarjee says in the Preface to the novel, "Rajani's character has been based upon those intellectual and moral theories that the novel purports, to represent, as it was felt that the character of a visually challenged young girl would help enhance them. Chattarjee did not make clear those intellectual and moral theories" (Datta 7), In the Preface to the novel, Chatterjee seems to challenge the social norms as we see that Rajani, instead of being dependent on others is self-dependent and it is her family which is dependent on her economically. She makes flower garlands that her father sells them door to door.

Rajani demonstrates that visually challenged people have a different way of experiencing reality. She describes that she feels pleasure by touching and smelling the flowers. When she falls in love with Sachindra, she longs to hear his voice each day. She longs for just a word from him, lovelorn and unable to understand the nature of her blossoming love, her sense of hearing is integral to a sensuous experience of the world for her. Detailed descriptions by other characters are the other means of experiencing the world for her which ignite her imagination. After listening to her father's description of the Victoria Monument, Rajani says, "I got married to the monument in my imagination" (Chatterjee, 120). One can see in her imagination of the Monument the qualities that she desires in her husband. She describes the Monument as "high, determined and stable" (Chatterjee, 119). Rajani further exclaims, "Who is stronger than my husband?" (Chatterjee, 120) After her first meeting with Sachindra, she desires the experience of sight. This reflects Rajani's desire to compare and judge her sense of hearing against her sense of sight. From Nature she demands her right to see. She addresses Mother Earth and says, "What do you look like? The infinite power you have beyond our thought, strange, unique living beings, what does all this look like? That which people describe as beautiful, what does it look like? Countless natural beings roam on you, tell me mother, what are they like? Show me, mother!" (Chatterjee 123)

The nineteenth-century Indian society bears a close resemblance to the Victorian society. As was in nineteenth-century England, marriage was the ultimate destiny of an Indian woman too. Beauty and property were necessary qualifications for women to establish themselves in the matrimonial market. Rajani possesses no property and her beauty is rendered useless owing to her blindness. In the initial part of the novel, Lavanglata's and Rajani's relationship is

determined by the former's charity towards the latter. When Rajani sells her flower-garland to Lavanglata, Rajani is over-paid for her labour. Though Rajani dissuades Lavanglata repeatedly from doing this, her protestations are playfully dismissed time and again.

> Lavanglata often ordered flowers from me. She always gave me two rupees for flowers worth twenty-five paise because I was blind. Taking the garland, Lavang would abusively say, 'Why do you give me such a bad garland?' But while paying she would give me a rupee instead of a pice. When I would return the rupee to her, she would say 'This is not mine!' When I would insist she would curse and shoo me away. If I would mention charity she would try to hit me (Chatterjee, 121).

In this novel, the visually challenged protagonist-narrator uses a sensory metaphor in the sense of touch. For instance, when Sachindra touches Rajani's chin to examine her eyes, she compares the touch of his hand to that of the flowers. "This touch was like that of a flower….It seemed as if flowers were all around me, flowers on my forehead, flowers on my feet, flowers in my soul..." (Chatterjee, 123). This metaphor is also significant due to the erotic desire it connotatively awakens in Rajani. It points out that such desire is not only a pertinent state for those with eyesight but also one which animates the differently abled.[3]

Lavanglata and Sachindra initially try to arrange Rajani's marriage as a social necessity and out of a moral compulsion to bring stability to her life. However, by the very fact that this is revealed to be the case by the writer, it is necessarily brought in ironic view of the reader. This irony is further enhanced by the narrative's revelation that the real owner of the house, Ram Sadaiv, inhabits with his family. Not only is it accentuated, but it is given a murky twist by the end. When Sadaiv learns that Rajani is the rightful owner of the house, Lavanglata plots a matrimonial alliance between Rajani and Sachindra. Not only as a lower class woman but also as a visually disabled one, Rajani is dehumanized and objectified, viewed either as a victim or as a means to acquire property. Not once do others view her as an assertive, independent woman who works to make ends meet. Her disability is noted as akin to poverty and vulnerability even requiring poetic intervention to aid her towards self-realization.

Amarnath, another narrative voice in *Rajani*, constructs himself as a victim of society. His parents are no more and he has been unlucky in love. To fill the vacuum in his life, he resorts to charity work. In Kashi, he hears of Rajani and her family. He begins to search for the girl, in order to rescue her from a cruel fate. Rajani eventually

inherits the property she is entitled to, because of Amarnath's efforts. Amarnath also wishes to marry Rajani, although this compulsion arises from compassion rather than love. Rajani reciprocates his feeling insofar as she wishes to repay his kindness by accepting his offer of marriage. It is Lavanglata who severs this relationship and its possibilities, for her own selfish interests. Lavanglata accuses Amarnath of being compassionate to Rajani only because of Rajani's property. Lavanglata also reminds Amarnath of his efforts to gain her love against her wish. Lavanglata also manages to arrange a matrimonial alliance between Rajani and Sachindra. Rajani is seen as incapable of taking her own decisions. Her decisions have been influenced by Lavanglata's advice.

Sachindra's attitude towards Rajani is based on compassion. In the novel, he tries to arrange a bridegroom for Rajani. But it is obvious that he wants to keep himself away from Rajani. For Sachindra, trying to bring stability to Rajani's life is an act born out of charity but when circumstances compel him to marry Rajani, he hesitates because of her blindness. On the other hand, Rajani is deeply in love with Sachindra. She tries to recreate him in her imagination but she cannot express her feelings to Sachindra for two reasons – first, because she is a woman and it is presumed that a woman can hardly express her feelings in front of a man; second, because her visual disability becomes an obstacle for her to express her feelings. It is the psychology of disabled people that they always hesitate to express their feelings in front of those whom they like. They always think about the result of this expression. Throughout the novel, Rajani is in a psychological dilemma – she wonders why Sachindra should marry a poor and disabled girl like her. If the hermit had not cured Rajani's eyesight, Sachindra would not have married her. In reality, although people help each other, their reasons or motives may be different. It is not necessary that someone helps a person because he or she loves him or her. For Lavanglata, property is a very important and therefore she ignores Rajani's blindness. Towards the end of the novel, Lavanglata shows her concern for Rajani's eyesight because Rajani is about to become a member of Lavanglata's family. In the initial chapters of the novel, only Sachindra tries to explore whether Rajani's blindness is curable or not, but does not show any outward concern.

In nineteenth-century India, women's dependence on their male counter parts was in itself a disability. Therefore, it can be argued that Rajani's victimization is threefold. Meenu Bhambani, in her essay "Societal Responses to Women with Disabilities in India" in the

book *Disability and Society: A Reader* (2009), edited by Renu Addlakha,[4] reflects on the condition of those women who are triply inferior:

> It would be a cliché to state that women form the 'marginal component' of society. We suggest that, within this component, there is a subgroup of disabled women which is even more marginalized. What is ironical in the case of this group is that it is virtually ignored, not only by their able-bodied gender but also by disabled men. Despite their significant numbers, women and girls with disabilities, especially in the developed countries of the ESCAP region, remain hidden and silent, their concerns unknown and their rights overlooked. Throughout the region, in urban and rural communities alike, they have to face triple discrimination because of their disability, gender and economic status. Prejudice prevails even within each of the three categories. Among women, disabled women are seen as inferior, resulting in isolation and marginalization. They become the poorest of the poor. (Addlakha et al, 233)

In other words, Rajani is 'disabled' in terms of womanhood, blindness and poverty. Men in a patriarchal society try to seduce women and succeed too. And blind women are more vulnerable. The story of Rajani and Hiralal is an acute example for this argument. At the advice of his sister Champa, Hiralal tries to seduce Rajani. Rajani is against the matrimonial alliance arranged for her by Sachindra and Lavanglata. In order to avoid this alliance, her only option is to run away with Hiralal. On the boat, Hiralal tries to compel Rajani to marry him, a proposal which she firmly rejects. Hiralal abandons her in an unknown place where a stranger from a lower caste tries to rape her but Amarnath rescues her. From this incident, it can be said that it is very difficult for women to find security in unknown places. And this task becomes far more difficult for a visually challenged woman like Rajani as she cannot even walk a few steps without asking for directions. Rajani feels helpless and tries to commit suicide.

Chatterjee's novel featuring a blind protagonist is comparable to Rabindranath Tagore's representation of a speech-impaired girl in *Subha*. Chatterjee's Rajani's condition is parallel to Tagore's Subhashini. But a close reading of the short story enables the readers to realize that Subhashini's condition is more precarious than Rajani's. Subha is mute and it is ironical that her situation is exactly the opposite of her name's meaning. "When the girl was named Subhashini, 'she who speaks sweetly,' who could have known that she would be dumb?" (Tagore, 104)[5] It could be argued that mute people face many more problems compared to the visually challenged. Visually challenged people can express their feelings unlike the mute. This statement is applicable in the context of Subha,

"Many people do not realize that one who does not speak might nevertheless feel, and so they would express their anxiety regarding the girl's future to her face" (Tagore, 104). However, Subha expresses her feelings through facial gestures. "The language of her eyes who has had no other language since birth than the expression of her face, is limitless, generous, of unplumbed depths" (Tagore, 105). Tagore's ideology is critical of the society which he inhabits. The writer appreciates the depth of Subha's gestures by allotting her gestures a place superior to language. "What we express in language has largely to be constructed by our own efforts, somewhat like a translation; it is not always adequate, and though lack of skill may often be wrong. But dark eyes do not have to translate anything" (Tagore, 104). Here, it is worth mentioning that literary representations of the differently abled often champion the sensory experience of one disability at the expense of another — as the emphasis on the eloquence of Subha's dark eyes here suggests.

Disability impacts Subha's psyche by depleting her sense of her worth and thus, discouraging her from social interaction. Her peers too, are largely afraid of attempting to communicate with her. Despite her parents' regard for Subha, even they see her as a dead weight on their minds and hearts. She comes to understand, "from childhood that she had been born in her father's house as a curse sent by God" (Tagore, 104). Subha's mother comes to view this disability as some personal shortcoming on her own part. Here, Tagore gives a vivid picture of the modern Bengali society. Although they appear to be modern but certainly they are conservative. In my view, not only disabled people but the society in which they live, also thinks that they are a curse on the society.

As everyone knows, social status and beauty are the qualifications required of a woman in the matrimonial market. However, even beauty and good social standing are not enough in the case of Subha. As the initial part of this short story informs, Subha's elder sisters are married but she remains single because of her disability of speechlessness. Tagore notes, "The youngest now remained like a silent weight on her parents' hearts" (Tagore, 104). After much tribulation, when her parents are finally able to find a match for her, they must do so by deceiving the prospective groom. Once Subha's muteness is found out about in her marital home, the beauty for which she was earlier recognized is no longer valued. This physical disability then goes on to disqualify her in every arena of social life.

The trouble as Tagore tries to suggest is not with Subha but with the societal modes of understanding her condition. While this is merely

suggested at the outset of the story, it is made increasingly blatant as *Subha* progresses. Of the rest, her parents represent the kindest members in the society for Subha. Somehow, they manage to find a groom for Subha but it is only possible by duping him about Subha's condition. As a daughter, Subha is a burden on her parents, and as a mute daughter, especially so. The manner in which her wedding takes place, where even Subha is not told about the upcoming nuptials by her parents, suggests that they wish to fulfill their duty sooner rather than later. She is not treated with respect nor does the story suggest any sadness that the parents feel at the prospect of her marriage. Rather, "Her mother scolded her repeatedly lest the girl's weeping leave her eyes swollen and spoils her looks" (Tagore, 109).

Subha's closeness to nature is similar to that of Rajani's. Her situation is likened to that of the mute cows that are her closest friends. The relationships she forges with nature are selflessly generous when compared to the exploitative and demanding relations she has with her family. She is unable to share a satisfying relationship with anyone else, especially in her marriage. The story suggests that after her wedding, she is overlooked much more than she has been so far in her parental home. While the nature and society in which she grew up could understand her mute language, after marriage she is alienated from any source of communicative comfort. This is not only suggested by the narrative voice, but it is also revealed by the actual closure of Subha's communication with people around her in her husband's home. This becomes clear when the narrator comments, "In the young girl's ever-silent heart, an endless inexpressible weeping reverberated, but no one except God could hear it" (Tagore, 109).

After a close study of both Chatterjee's and Tagore's texts, it could be argued that compared to the former, Tagore's portrayal of Subha is closer to reality. In Chatterjee's novel, the female protagonist acquires a place in society only when her eyesight is miraculously restored. Chattarjee also portrays societal reality in the context of disabled people but this portrayal to some extent is dominated by its near 'happily ever after' fairy-tale ending. Most probably, unlike Tagore, Chatterjee would have explored the probability that unlike western countries, in India, many disabilities are curable through the use of indigenous herbal remedies. However, in present-day India there are many visually disabled people whose eyesight is irrevocably lost. In the context of Rajani, this probability is rendered problematic by Chatterjee's own sense of poetic justice. Such a strategy on the part of the author, in addition, blunts social critique—reconciling

the readers to the status quo. In my opinion, Chatterjee would not have given space to the issue of disability. According to him, marriage, property and the woman's role in marriage are the major issues which he has portrayed in most of his works. Therefore, the disability of Rajani is not the only issue that has been discussed in detail. Tagore, however, by concluding his story in a realistic manner, authenticates the edge of his critical apparatus. The readers of Tagore's short story are made to confront their prejudices head-on instead of being reconciled to unpleasant social realities by the use of improbable turns of the plot.

However, on the other hand, Rajani as a character is stronger than Subha who is more vulnerable. Unlike Subha, in the initial chapters of the novel, Rajani is poor and blind. Her status is very close to the social norms. In present times, society assumes that any disability—either mental or physical—is a part of poverty. According to society, only money is the source which can overcome a disability. But this stereotypical conception is arbitrary. In this world, there are many disabled people who belong to rich families and still have to face discrimination in society. Therefore, it would be unfair to judge or to draw a connection between disability and poverty. But many authors have described disabled characters from poor families. In addition to Chatterjee and Tagore, one can see these examples in Munsi Premchand's *Rangbhoomi* (1924), Srilal Shukla's *Raag Darbari* (1968) and Phanishwar Nath Renu's *Maila Anchal* (1954). But in my view, there are many visually challenged people whose economic status is high. For instance, Ved Mehta was the first visually challenged Indian who went to USA with the support of Pt. Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Mehta has described his journey in his autobiography, *Face to Face* (1957). Dharmvir Bharati's character Dhritrashtra from *Andha Yug* (1954) also belongs to a high social status.

Through a close study of *Rajani* and *Subha* one can deduce that, although, Rajani is the protagonist of Chattarjee's novel and through her the novelist brings to light the difficulties faced by women with visual disabilities. It is obvious that Chattarjee's main concern in the novel was to address the gender inequality that was prevalent in nineteenth-century India. Tagore's *Subha* possesses many a poetic quality but at the same time it runs closer to reality. Subha gets married with her disability and she continues to suffer even after her marriage.

Notes

1. All the textual quotations of *Rajani* have been translated by me from the Hindi translation of the novel done by S. N. Mukherjee originally written in Bengali.
2. All the quotations from this essay have been translated by Saswati Sengupta from Bengali to English. This translation remains unpublished.
3. I have used the terms 'visually challenged or disabled' in order to highlight the specific nature of individual characters' disability. In addition, the term also connotes the disability these characters face in social relations due to their physical impairment.
4. *Disability and Society: A Reader,* edited by Renu Addlakha, Stuart Blume, Patrick Devlieger, Osamu Nagase and Myriam Winance, Orient BlackSwan, 2009.
5. All the textual quotes from *Subha* have been translated by Supriya Chaudhuri.

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THE OVERLAPPING OF SPATIAL DYNAMICS, GAME OF CRICKET AND NECROPOLITICS IN *BOL*

Kuhu Sharma Chanana

Before delving into any detailed discussion on Transgender Cinema, it is imperative to understand the context in which we aim to locate the prefix 'trans'. Drawing upon the noted transgender cinema critic, Wibke Straube, here in this article the trans is used not as a noun but as a verb which means transing. To quote his words: "Using trans as a verb also introduces Donna Haraway's critique of fixed, bounded categories…through her investment in 'getting at the world as a verb which throws us into worlds in the making' (Haraway 2004: 330). Transing is a worlding, it makes new meaning, opens up the reading to multiple meanings (Dyer 2013: 2) and ultimately generates possibilities to imagine alternate worlds. Following Haraway's intervention on 'worlding', transing as a reading strategy for Trans Cinema becomes a term that allows processuality, the constant becoming and changing in the practices of embodiment" (41).

Since the primary focus of this article is on the consumption of the trans-cinema by the non-static spectator (who in term participates and reorients the meaning of the trans-identity), therefore the mobile and fluid meaning of the term 'trans' needs to be understood in that light as well. Secondly, since transgender studies largely draw upon queer theories, cultural studies, sexuality and gender studies and also to some extent trans-feminism, therefore to catalogue trans not as a monolithic and linear term but as a circular and proteus in nature is all the more imperative. Though *hijras* at one level due to the very distant cultural codes are quite different from the global trans identities yet there are multiple overlaps and because of the ever dynamic and multi-layered interpretation of transgender existence, they definitely have lot of common intersecting zones and shared concerns with transgenders. Indeed, there is a risk that *hijras* can be subsumed by the Eurocentric transgender entities if their issues are addressed synonymously with transgenders. But

despite the differences, there is also a lot of overlapping between trans lives and *hijras* and that cannot be ignored. Talking about this sort of risk, Susan Stryker and Aren Z. Aizura state: "It concerns, and it would acknowledge, that the relationship between highly mobile medicalized categories such as 'transsexual' and culturally specific terms that tend to travel shorter distances, is not a monolithic one in which the purity of an ethnic practice is polluted and diminished by the introduction of a standardized modern import; culture makes their own uses of those things that find their way to them. We also think it must concern itself with how various local phenomena imagine their own relationship to those things that 'transgender' accomplishes locally and globally—whether ' transgender' is experienced as a form of colonization, as an avenue for alliance building or resource development, as a way of resisting local pressures, as an empowering new frame of reference, as an erasure of cultural specificity, as a counter modernity, as an alternative to tradition, or as a mode of survival and translation for traditional cultural forms that are unintelligible within the conceptual double binary of man/woman and homo/hetero associated with the modern west" (9-10). Thus, an ingenious method of mixing of trans lives and *hijra* entities is required to create that third space where the unique cultural dispositions of *hijras* are not compromised and yet useful linkages are built between *hijras* and transgenders. That is why I have used the cross reference of *The Crying Game*, a cult trans movie, while cataloguing cricket as a metaphor to negotiate gender and sexual deviancy.

In the West, the trans movies have wide range of variety in terms of having elements of melodrama, romantic comedy and tragicomedy. There are also instances of Western trans movies falling into the realm of road movies, martial art, coming-of-age movies, thrillers and musicals but most of the *hijra* movies borders on the melodrama genre. Surprisingly *Tammana*, *Daayraa* and *Bol* are about male *hijra* protagonists which is a remarkable variety considering the fact that in the West where Trans Cinema was revamped as early as in 1990s, we have just a few examples of male transgenders, like *Boys Don't Cry* (1991), *Romeos* (2011), *Orlando* (1992), *Hook or by* Crook (2001), *Open* (2010) and *52 Tuesdays* (2013). Apropos of this, Straube states that "even though trans masculinity has been more present in cinematic representations during the last 20 years, it remains small as compared to the larger range of trans feminine representations…The comparably smaller number of films featuring trans male characters is also accompanied by different forms of plot

construction and narrative tension in these films. In films in which the trans male character is grown up, the character(s) are most often exposed to sexualised violence enacted by cis male characters and contextualised through the passing and the failing to pass of this character (*Romeos*, *Boys Don't Cry*, *Tomboy*), featuring a child character, closely links its character to a continuous fear of being discovered as passing and for the "knowing entrants" this directly links to the fear that the character will become a victim of (sexualised) violence" (38).

Yet another significant aspect of the Trans Cinema is that it works on the framework of fear and impending dangers. In fact, Jonathan Williams, in his interview-based study *Trans Cinema, Trans Viewers* (2012), has emphatically talked about the impending feeling of risk and danger that surrounds the absorption of Trans Cinema by the spectators. He talks about as how it gives impetus to the "collective risk management strategies" (115). Quoting Williams, Wibke Straube states that "in this context, the respondents' risk management strategies include the altering of behaviour, the avoidance of particular spaces and areas, attempting to pass as cis, trying to become unnoticeable, and avoiding flirting with strangers. In addition to this, the queer film scholar Julianne Pidduck argues on violence in trans films, particularly in relation to *Boys Don't Cry*, that "[a]ctual attacks, threats and near misses, a familiarity with the continuum of hatred and violence, can intensify the disturbing recognition ('that could have been me') of watching such an event" (45). And it refers to both sexualized and non-sexualized violence. Little wonder that the *hijra* movies, *Bol*, *Darmiyaan* and *Shabnam Mousi* are saturated with these sexualized and non-sexualized violence and the consequent risk management strategies which include a specific strategy of being a male *hijra* instead of a female one. The *hijra* protagonists like Tikku, Immi, and Saffi are primarily shown as males and the scenes in which they are dressed as females, they are subjected to violence and consequently they go back to the male attire. The *hijra* movies of India in this context are specific as unlike their western counterpart, these cinematic spaces are saturated with trans-masculinities. This lack of trans masculinities have been succinctly charted out by both Jan Wickman and Wibke Straube. They also talk about the complete absence of the trans embodiments that are neither male nor female. Wibke states: "Interestingly, trans embodiments that are explicitly neither female nor male-identified (stated through dialogue or direct positioning) are fully absent in feature-length fiction films. This area of trans male/female/gender disidentifying representation in

cinema, the imbalance of representational frequency and the forms of representation of these differently gendered positions have so far not been addressed within queer and trans studies" (39). In this light the cinematic representation of *hijras* is quite progressive and fills this gap beautifully. *Hijras*, by dint of their very identity position, are neither men nor women and bridge this fissure of trans person who is neither man nor woman, and solve the issue of gender disidentifying representations in cinema as raised by the noted western critics like Jan Wickman and Wibke Straube.

Spatial Dynamics and Trans-identity

Before delving into a detailed discussion on *Bol*, let me briefly sketch the outline of the plot of this movie. The story of *Bol* revolves around a male patriarch who in his desire of having a male child makes his wife pregnant again even after having 14 daughters and this time a *hijra* is born. The father wants to kill him/her but the mother rejects the idea vehemently and then a *hijra* known in a Muslim community as *khusro* comes and wants that child. On being spurned for being a *hijra*, he uses the tool of inversion and asserts that s/he will come with five hundred naked *khusros* in front of the patriarch's home and then they will curse him which can be really ominous. Thus, by using the same naked body that is a means of subjugation, they are able to revert power and justify what Foucault states that power elicits its own origin. The father beats his wife and compels her to keep on producing children and confines the women of the home inside the four walls. No education has been given to them. Due to the large family they suffer from penury and finally they are forced to send Saffi (the trans-boy) to work where he gets raped. In order to find work, Saffi tries to get associated with *hijras* that enraged his/her father so much that he kills the trans boy. Though the father goes to a prostitute and produces a daughter from her but kills the poor *hijra* child in the name of honour killing. Finally, the eldest daughter annihilates patriarchy by killing the father and is sent to jail. She narrates her plight just before she is about to be hanged. This scene is indicative of the deep-rooted patriarchy of the society. In this scene, a woman who has been convicted of a murder narrates her side of the story inside the confines of a jail. It is symbolic of the fact that any kind of narration against the patriarchy is possible only within the bounds of the spatial confinement. However the film ends on a happy note as she gets acquitted and opens a restaurant and the family lives in a much empowered state without the patriarch though the poor trans-boy has been sacrificed in the process.

The seclusion of Saffi (the hijra boy) starts early on. When it comes to the naming of the child, the father states that "he is not going to be educated in a school, so why to give him any name"? It, thus, points towards the emergence of a nameless trans-identity who is neither recognized by the family nor by the state. Saffi used to stay at a secluded room on the roof. In older cities, roof specially presents a very interesting intersection of private and public space because roof is a part of the home yet it is outside the home and in old *mohallas* the roofs are inter-connected. In this movie also, the roof of Saffi's home is connected with the roofs of the other homes too and thus presents an interesting liminal space between the public and the private. And non-normative desires, entities and things that cannot find space in normative household are generally discarded at roof as like roof they are part of the home and yet not part of it. Generally as Griselda Pollock contends that the heterosexualized public spaces are encoded as masculine while the domestic domains are conceptualized as feminine. Thus, in this sense also the roof becomes an ideal space for the exploration of the liminal identity of Saffi and it throws an interesting light on the gendered organization of the urban spaces. However, it does not pose any challenge to the stereotypical spatial relations.

Safi's initial oppression comes in the form of sexual subjugation inside the home by the very trusted teacher who is supposed to evolve him. This whole metaphor of fear and consequently the safety issues are negotiated through keeping gender minorities in the safe confines of the private spaces, specially at a particular time. Saffi's sexual exploitation takes place within the safe confines of the home and he even gets severe thrashing by his own father because of it, despite being a victim of sexual violence. This bursts the myth that private spaces are safe and one gets victimized only by an outsider. Moreover, there is sufficient data available to indicate otherwise. This 'constraining scene' is immediately followed by 'exit scapes' (term used by Wibke Straube in *Trans Cinema and its Exit Scapes: A Transfeminist Reading of Utopian Sensibility and Gender Dissidence in Contemporary Film*) in the form of song and dance sequence which once again shows Saffi's mobility in the courtyard and *aangan* only. Courtyard is once again an interesting intersection between the public and the private sphere as it is inside the home where a lot of collective activities like washing, at times cooking, grinding spices and even playing and chatting among the family members of the household take place but it can be viewed by the people of the other households as well because it is an uncovered open space.

The liberal neighbours of these girls are shown asking them: "*chat*

per jaakar mauj mela kar (go and have fun at roof)". Throughout the movie, there are scenes where the female bonding takes place at roof especially through the exchange of food. But roof has not been shown as a gender excluded space only, as evolved and non-patriarchal men also occupy it. In one of the scenes, another man from the next household shouts: "*ye mauz mela khatam kar do police aa rahi hai*" (stop this enjoyment as the police is about to come) as soon as the patriarch of the household enters the home. All the non-normative relations like the two love-birds singing together also take place on the roof only. The negotiation of non-normative sexual leanings on *chat* or roof is indicative of the homoerotic spaces hidden within the heterosexual matrix. It also postulates the idea that there is a possibility of a third space where homo and hetero desires can co-exist without any antagonism. There is a scene where Murataza, Saffi's sister (who is Murataza's love interest), and Saffi are there on the roof. The romantic rendezvous between Murataza and Saffi's sister takes place and Saffi looks at Murataza with the passionate intensity of a lover and this whole scene gets unfolded within the confines of the roof.

This movie is also remarkable for its delineation of the poignant situation of gender minorities and how significant linkages can be built between feminism and trans identities, and I am documenting few scenes in this regard. In the scene where the eldest daughter deliberately takes mother to get operated so that no more children should be there in an already poor household, the father's treatment of wife as a children-producing machine is conspicuous. The daughter remarks: "I wish, I become God and ask every man to give birth to at least one child so that they know what it takes". Thus, the myth of the glorified notion of motherhood (which at times results in the consequent valorization of motherhood without taking into account the burden and the hazardous effects of it on health) bursts here. When the father tries to strangle the daughter, she finds a solace in brother Saffi's arms on roof (again the spatial dynamism of roof is quite conspicuous here) and this scene beautifully illustrates the idea of coalition politics between *hijra* Saffi and his sister against the oppression of a patriarch father.

Art as a means of liberation also finds manifestation on the roof. In this connection the song that is being sung by the two lovers on a roof and Saffi's painting that has been drawn once again on roof further establish it as a site of liberation. *Bol* bears a close semblance with global trans cinema like Ma vie en Rose. Also the dance scene bears a close parallel with the scene where Ludo and his grandmother

dance together in Ma vie en Rose. Saffi, along with his sisters and neighbours, claps, watches them, moves rhythmically and forms a flow through shared looks, clap and rhythmic movements. This provides 'exit scape' and evokes a sense of liberation in otherwise gloomy Saffi.

However the use of the roof as a site to transgress the heteronorm is not new and one can find the inter-textual references in many literary texts that depict same-sex love ceaselessly such as in the works of the writers like Mridula Khosy ("Such a Big Girl"), Geetanjali Shree (*Tirohit*) and Suroopa Mukherjee (*Across the Mystic Shore*) and a detailed discussion of it can be found in my book, *LGBTQ Identities in Modern Indian Literature*.

In this way, the spatial dynamics of roof in reimagining and reinvesting the gender and sexual identities has been effectively used by the creators of the movie *Bol*. Little wonder that in *Bol* all affirmative transgressive actions and desires, be it singing, playing cricket, love glances of Saffi, food exchange between the neighbours, discussion of secret marriage between the two lovers, murder of a patriarch and the escape of women, take place on the roof only. Saffi's non-acceptance at a public place is visible from the fact that the moment he steps out of his home for work, he has been mutilated at that space and the only safe refuge for him remains (that is too only temporarily as he has been ultimately killed there) the liminal space of the roof. In this connection, Anne Enke asserts that "social spaces that depend on identity categories—as most do—are constituted through the constant surveillance and policing of those within. The presence of 'difference' from the operative identity category is simultaneously invoked and erased: social spaces suggest that all people within them *pass* as *really being* members of the social category that the space thereby helps to produce Thus, normative social spaces are structured around the presumed absence of the disabled, queer, trans, and other marginalized subjects, which is to say that such spaces inscribe exclusion" (243).

Cricket as a Metaphor to Blur the Gender and Sexual Boundaries

In an interesting scene, the grown up Saffi is shown playing cricket with sisters though in the bounded confines of the roof. Cricket is considered a highly masculine game and bears a metaphor of various significances. In the cultural psyche, it has been crystalised as a panacea for lot of problems. Quoting Robert Foster, Boria Majumdar,

in "Opiate of the Masses or One in a Billion: Trying to Unravel the Indian Sporting Mystery", highlights the metonymic significance of cricket as a vehicle for transcending identity crisis. He talks about it primarily in terms of diasporic global Indian who wishes to have a sense of rooted identity but it can be true of other identitarian crisis as well. To quote his words: "Cricket in India is no longer a vehicle for merely imagining the nation, but has become one by which to transcend the nation—to escape the troubled country, even through a form of 'imagined cosmopolitan'. Foster says that such imagining conjures a utopian vision for the future, one where… an Indian, can engage with the world on a level playing field. In India, however, cricket provides far more than an opportunity for imagination. The sport allows post-colonial India to assert itself on the world stage. For a short while, India's craze for cricket succeeded in hiding the grim realities confronting many of the region's countries, particularly with regards to poverty" (246). Thus, the scene where the camera focuses on a caged bird and then shifts to Saffi playing with his sisters is of great significance as cricket is not only used as fantasy laden tool to transcend the miseries related to identities but also as a sign of highly masculine world. Apropos of this quoting Deborah L. Brake and Connell, Radhika Gupta states, "Sports plays a key role in creating and maintaining conceptions of hegemonic masculinity. Boys and men have long used sports as a way to achieve a hetero masculine identity. An important aspect of hegemonic masculinity is defining masculinity as 'not feminine'" (105). Thus, this highly masculine game played by the two gender minorities, women and *hijra* Saffi, works as a subversive tool against patriarchy. Similarly, later the narrator tells as how most of the women of the household seem to be interested in cricket. When the patriarch of the house was listening to a radio commentary, in the middle of the conversation, the two girls accused each other of having a crush on Tendulkar and Afridi respectively, the father yelled "*in ladikoyn ne cricket mein bhi bahayai dhoond li*". It confirms the transcending nature of cricket in the sub-continent. This scene is immediately followed by the elder sister's bitter reaction that in a home like this, where even breathing is regulated by the father, the only way to escape is to pray that his favourite team wins. When his team loses, hell breaks loose at home and he states that since these wicked women had not prayed properly, his team had lost the game. This is followed by an argument on the team's performance, which further escalates the crisis finally resulting into cricketing discussion being a means to counter masculine subjugation. In the Asian subcontinent, the game of cricket is hugely associated with a gendered nationalism, and patriotism is primarily

considered a man's domain. This collective masculine kind of sports patriotism as reflected through cricket is deeply entrenched in both Indian and Pakistani citizens. The sports writers like Sharda Ugra has constantly talked about cricket being a barometer of national pride and self-worth to the extent that it assumes the role of fantasy laden means to mitigate and divert attention from other pressing concerns like dismal economy. Prashant Kidambi in *Hero, Celebrity and Icon*: *Sachin Tendulkar and Indian Public Culture* talks about the fact that cricket is seen as a symbol of nation itself to the extent that a victory in a cricket match is seen as a national triumph and defeat as a national calamity.

Thus, the overlapping of masculine patriotism with cricket evokes the issue of legitimate citizenship rights too, though in a symbolic fashion. This provides a legitimate kind of citizenship rights to men primarily through sports patriotism. Thus, it is not a monolithic unidimensional issue of simple marginalization of women and trans identities in sports but has a more sinister agenda of forging a profound claim on nation through masculine sports patriotism. Hence, relegating the role of women and trans identities to mere spectators, cheer-leaders and presenters just to add the glamour quotient is just tokens. It further assigns the role of mere 'helpers' to every gender other than the male one. This kind of inclusion is indubitably counter-productive, especially in the wake of the fact that cricket is indeed seen as one of the sites where nationalism is shaped. Another important factor is that the miniscule roles women play in cricket are also policed whether they are presenters, spectators or cheer-leaders. Quoting Mudgal, Shamik Bag, Kanishk Tharoor and Rohini Iyer, Radhika Gupta argues (though written in the context of Indian women but it is equally true of Pakistani women too) that:

> While many women in cricket retain agency, female only cheerleading objectifies women, detracts from women players, and reinforces gender stereotypes. Further hiring predominantly white and foreign women reinforces Indian perceptions both of the sanctity of Indian womanhood and promiscuousness of foreign women. At the same time, the largest opposition to cheer-leading has been based on its foreignness to cricketing culture being vulgar and indecent and contrary to the Indian culture. These objections …reflect a denial of women's agency by not taking into account views of either cheer-leaders or women spectators (102).

The above-mentioned scene of *Bol*, where the two sisters talk about their crushes on the male cricketers, the father objects to it vehemently and yells that they have found a means to be shameless even in cricket. It is indicative of the policing of the female spectator

by a patriarch. Using cricket as space of cultural imperialism and patriarchal subjugation is quite evident here. Thus, even the spectatorship is not gender blind forget about the playing. Not only the active participation in terms of playing but also the passive participation in terms of spectatorship and ways of consuming it will be negotiated via a male spectator and a player as it is considered to be a male only domain primarily. Mariah Burton Nelson effectively postulates in this connection that "{s}ports is a women's issue because female participation empowers women thereby inexorably changing everything" (9). In this light, *hijra* Saffi's playing of cricket along with his sisters where the hero is a male spectator clearly reverses the paradigm.

The game of cricket as a tool to negotiate the convoluted trans-identities has been effectively portrayed in yet another movie entitled *The Crying Game* and just like *Bol*, it also uses cricket as a metaphor to destabilize the binaries of class, race and gender. In fact the symbiotic relationship between the game of cricket and identity has been catalogued in the editorial of *The Guardian*. The constructed notions of masculinity (hence a kind of a gender construct), identity and nationalism all brought together through the metonymic signifier of the cricket have been described effectively in the editorial of *The Guardian* through these words:

> Imperial cricket metaphors have a long history, even before Henry Newbolt cemented the association with his call to play up and play the game whether on the school cricket field or in the sands of the desert sodden red. But the connection has endured. 'They played the game,' says the inscription at the Oval below the names of the Surrey players who fell in the first world war, while in 1942, General Montgomery urged his soldiers in North America to 'hit Rammel to six'. Politics, like war, sometimes reaches for a handy cricket metaphor. Sir Geoffrey Howe's resignation speech in 1990 complained that Margret Thatcher's anti Europe views left ministers feeling 'their bats have been broken before the game.
>
> (http://www.theguardian.com/commensfree/2013/jun/28/unthinkable-cricket-metaphors-editorial).

The gender and sexual politics also bear the oppression caused by the imperial metaphor of cricket as till very late it has come to signify a game by the powerful and for the powerful. In this connection, another trans movie, *The Crying Game,* also lays bare the intricate web of gender, nationalism and cricket. This movie is about an IRA (Irish Revolutionary Army) fighter Fergus who believes in the cause of Ireland's fight for freedom from England and captures a

black soldier, Jody who has played for his native country as a bowler but ever since he has joined the British army, he can no longer be associated with the national team of his country. Since in an oblique fashion national games and patriotism have a potent overlap and the game of cricket has been seen as a universal marker of Englishness, therefore it works as a powerful signifier for postcolonial and colonial undecidablity as has been effectively used by various film-makers and writers. In this regard, it is pertinent to quote Eila Rantonen's words:

> National sports have traditionally been powerful symbols of patriotic sentiments and national identity. They can even be seen as 'tamed' versions of national struggles. Fergus and Jody also talk in the IRA's hideout about the British and Irish national sports, cricket and hurling… Cricket is an international marker of Englishness. On the other hand, hurling is a traditional marker of Irishness. For instance, British or Protestant players have not been accepted in hurling teams in Northern Ireland. In *The Crying Game* cricket becomes a central symbol in the film when we are shown montages of Jody bowling a ball on a cricket pitch in his white clothing. In fact, the status of cricket reflects postcolonial irony. Today cricket can also be described, as Jody does, 'as the black man's game', since cricket is very popular in the Commonwealth. England, for instance has often beaten by the West Indies team.
>
> (https://www15.uta.fi/kirjasto/nelli/verkkoaineistot/yht/rantonen.pdf).

The choice of games by these two characters works as an emblem of national identity in a very interesting way, especially when it intersects with the gender fluidity of Dil and Saffi. Sports is a world saturated with masculine bonding and no wonder the two arch enemies, Jody and Fergus, bond over their national games and create fissures in their racial identities that further escalate into creating ruptures into the queer identity of Dil. Aspasia Kotsopoulos and Josephine Mills in "The Crying Game: Gender, Genre and 'Postfeminism'" contend that "the choice of these games is significant because each is representative of a national identity and reinforces other differences between the two men that distracts from their differences in race. Jody's black masculinity would be too threatening if that were all that attracted Fergus. Cricket, as a sign works like Dil's ambiguous gender to provide distractions from blackness and still allow race to function as a 'spice'." (http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC39folder/CryingGameK-M.html.).

However, *Bol*, the *hijra* movie, makes a radical shift when the game of cricket is used to negotiate the trans identity. In *Bol*, Saffi is shown actively playing cricket and dismantling the exclusive

masculine identity associated with this game. However, in *The Crying Game*, the transsexual Dil is not shown actively playing the game and appropriating the masculine territory by redefining the game through playing and measuring it up to her trans identity. In fact, she has been just used as a tool to ward off attention from the latent homoerotic desire that seems to grow between the two men bonded over the game of cricket. Dil is shown in loose-fitted cricket attire only as a reminder of Jody. Every time when Fergus makes love to Dil, Jody is being shown in the background wearing white cricketing gear and throwing a ball of cricket. Thus, the trans-identity and the masculine game of cricket do have a connection but primarily it is being treated as a symbol for the homoerotic bonding between the two male protagonists Fegus and Jody. Contrary to this in *Bol*, the appropriation of the game of cricket through trans identity takes place without any male intervention. It is significant to quote Kotsopoulos and Josephine Mills:

> Dil plays the woman's role in this boyhood world of games. She is not one of the active men, one of the guys on team. For added emphasis, her unnaturalness in Jody's cricket clothes proves this because they are too big and obviously do not suit her. Instead, she is one of the girls who facilitate male bonding. As in traditional war movies, Jody shows his new buddy Fergus a photo of his one true gal waiting back home. Dil serves as the buffer between male homoerotic desire: Jody and Fergus can talk about sex and love without having to talk about themselves, and Fergus can sublimate his impossible desire for Jody by pursuing Dil (http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC39folder/CryingGameK-M.html).

Moreover, it is also linked with gender undecidability as catalogued in the movies, *Bol* and *The Crying Game*. This is evident from the two scenes; first, *hijra* Saffi's playing of the masculine game of cricket with his *burka* wearing Muslim sisters and secondly in *The Crying Game* every time Fergus makes love to Jody's transgender girlfriend, Dil, he has been hallucinating of Jody throwing a ball at him in white gears. In fact, when Fergus accidently falls madly in love with Dil and wants to hide her from IRA soldiers, he dresses her in a cricket dress. Thus, cricket as a layered and convoluted symbol which is capable of creating fissures in the stringent boundaries of race and gender has been used conclusively in these cinematic texts.

Trans-Citizenship and Necropolitics

The sexual violence and the issues of safety of a trans person outside and within the household find manifestation in a quite concrete

fashion in this movie. Saffi's efforts to find work outside home result in his horrible rape which ultimately ends in his murder by his father in the name of family honour. Also, this scene is specially important from the perspective of the trans body's contribution to the domestic economy and nation-building by being a viable economic subject and productive body. Hence, the projection of gender variants as 'working body' is imperative. According to Dan Irving:

> Constructions of transsexuals as viable social subjects by medical experts, transsexual individuals, researchers and allies were, and continue to be, shaped significantly by discourses of productivity emerging from and reinforcing regimes of capitalist accumulation. To move towards achieving social recognition, the transsexual body must constitute a productive working body, that is, it must be capable of participating in capitalist production process. This legacy impacts the trajectories of political organizing to achieve social justice for trans communities (16-17).

This entire scene is saturated with Saffi's efforts to do his work with utmost sincerity amid constant sexual harassment by his co-workers but ultimately he ends up being raped and not being paid for his artistic endeavours. This scene clearly builds linkages among the idea of legitimate productive body, transphobia, issues pertaining to citizenship and discourses veering around the economic welfare of the nation. Quoting Jo Hirschmann, Dan Irving argues:

> …the binary system of sex/gender naturalized the devaluation of women, as well as of non-normative masculinities (i.e. effeminate gay men or FTM transsexuals who do not pass as men). This sex/gender based degradation, which resulted in systematic oppression was not practiced only by governmental and institutional bureaucracies. It was also appropriated within spheres of capitalist production, and it is within sites of commodity production where we can witness the amalgamation of exploitation with relations of domination. Oppressed sex/gender and sexual minorities such as women, trans people, gays and lesbians have always been overrepresented within low-wage, part time, nonunionized, and precarious sectors of the labor market (20-21).

Little wonder that at the end of the day Saffi is shown not being paid but raped and brutally mutilated. All the efforts to establish Saffi as a legitimate citizen by making him enter into the category of well-catalogued labouring body get thwarted here. Regarding asserting the rights on nation as a trans citizen by being so-called productive bodies (and it is used in an inverted sense here) Aren Aizura writes: "Citizenship here means fading into the population …But also the imperative to be 'proper' in the eyes of the state: to reproduce, to

find proper employment; to reorient one's 'different' body into the flow of the nationalized aspiration for possessions, property, [and] wealth" (295). From this point of view Saffi's failed efforts at work cannot be understood from the unidimensional point of view of sexual subjugation of gender variants only, but have a deeper significance of holding back a trans body from asserting citizenship rights on the nation. Thus, the claims to rights and equality get subsumed within the hyper-exploitative aspects of economically productive bodies. Dan Irving talks about as how the notion of deserving citizen has gone through a sea change under neoliberalism because there is a major shift from the idea of 'social citizenship'. Social citizenship caters to the idea of state providing economic reliefs to its citizens in the times of economic hardships but the neoliberal ideas of citizenship do not cater to the same expectations; rather the idea of 'deserving citizens' gains momentum, and it defines the legitimate citizens as those who can incessantly contribute to their nation's progress in terms of global political economy. Irving argues:

> "….media, state, and community institutions continuously construct socioeconomic and political discourses that represent segments of middle and working class populations as innocent victims and upstanding citizens while simultaneously (re)constructing others as enemies, threats, and drains on the system. It is through the predominance of these discourses among the majority of middle-and working-class society that transsexuality is rendered suspect. Therefore many commentators and LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender) organizations deliberately emphasize the transsexual individual as a contributing member of society when appealing for recognition of trans subjects and for access to employment. The understanding of transsexual body as productive provides the subtexts for differing representations of transsexuality (25-26).

Further in this particular scene Saffi's efforts to work and earn money like other fellow painters are being thwarted and his integration as a productive trans-body who has legitimate claims of a citizen as a nation-building entity (specially in the context of neoliberal economies) gets negated. Later after his rape he has been rescued by a *hijra* and there is a suggestive indication that now the means of earning will be through dancing which is seen as an extremely humiliating modes of earning by his father. However, ironically enough it tends to locate Saffi as a so-called parasitic entity (to quote Dan Irving who has used it in a sarcastic sense claiming that no work is unproductive and should not be viewed from the lens of middle-class respectability) who drains the system by unproductive

works like dancing, begging or may be even prostitution and thus he needs to be annihilated.

The issue of interrelatedness of biopower and necropolitics (a term used by Ahille Mbembe) comes to fore through the death scene of Saffi, whose unruly body must meet death in the service of sanitization of the state. Mbembe invented this term to evoke the political potential of the death of the marginalized communities. Apropos of this Snorton and Haritaworn state in *Trans Necropolitics*: *A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife* that "necropolitics enables us to understand how biopower—the craving out of subjects and populations (Foucault 1978)—can profess itself at the service of life and yet generate death, in both quotidian and spectacular forms" (66). Saffi's failure to contribute effectively must end in his death in the era of neo-liberalism where the death of the 'other' is imperative for the so-called healthy maintenance of the privileged productive citizens. According to Snorton and Haritaworn, Henry Giroux calls it "'biopolitics of disposability', a new kind of politics in which entire population is now considered disposable, an unnecessary burden on state coffers, and cosigned to fend for themselves'. Thus neoliberal ideologies provide biopower with new ammunition in the creation of life-enhancing and death-making worlds, and offer an insidious addendum to rationales for population control. The consequences of this logic effaces the way power and life are maintained and reproduced through the deaths of certain others" (69).

Thus, from the perspective of creating significant slippages, by exploring the issues of spatial identities of *hijras*, necropolitics and employment of cricket as a metaphor to negotiate trans identity, *Bol* is indeed a significant specimen of trans cinema. Its affirmative and progressive stance can be seen from the fact that as opposed to the sparse representations of FTMs (female to male trans-persons) in the Western cinema, we have a full grown male transgender in this movie. Gayatri Gopinath, Shohini Ghosh and Ruth Vanita suggested that the representation of the gender and sexual variants as *hijras* in mainstream Hindi cinema has always provided that elusive space for the negotiations of not only gender minorities but also for sexual deviants. So in one way, *hijras* were the flag bearers for queers in more than many ways and bore the negative and comic representations for queers at their own expanse. Also because the gender segregated spaces are rampant in the Indian society, the invasion of the homosocial places are possible only through cross dressing and in that sense the numerous such scenes in the Hindi cinema work as, to quote Chris Straayer's term, "temporary transvestite film" which

"offers spectators a momentary vicarious trespassing of society's accepted boundaries for gender and sexual behavior" (Strayyer 44). Thus, in these respects *Bol* is indeed a highly progressive movie as it helps in changing the contours of the popular imagination vis-a-vis both the sexual and gender minorities and this article is an humble attempt to excavate those progressive leakages.

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MUMBAI FABLES: COSMOPOLITANISM AND THE SEXUAL ETHOS

Ahonaa Roy

The paper identifies and describes the qualities and characteristics of cosmopolitanism in broad with the discursive and the material process of consumption, city and city-spaces, culture, identity, citizenship and politics. The paper, in a way, attempts to identify the geographies of the transnational locality with the new configuration and relationships within a specific subculture. The new form of cultural articulation and the public life that Bombay generates, resembles a strong impetus to what Binnie et al., (2006:8) calls 'cosmopolitan urbanism' – reflecting to a sense of neoliberal cultural trait and a form of urban life with a specific form of consumption, lifestyle and cultural sensibilities (see also, Burns and Davies, 2009).

To start with the organizing principles of Ulrich Beck's (2002:17) understanding of cosmopolitanism that reflects the radical constellation of the flows of capital, people, image, identities, ideologies and structures, that fundamentally develops a new form of consciousness –Beck reveals that cosmopolitanism brings into the evidence of a new situation of the world that fundamentally sets to identify a new form of modernity that triggers the conflation of varied projects of the capitalist framework, to corporate reorganization, new transfer of labour and people, free trade, leading to a situation of cultural progress that transcends political boundaries to a domain of interlocking institutional framework of people, region, space and context (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Rantanen, 2005; Leahy, 2013; Mythen, 2013).

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai's (1996, 2001) anthropological study of transnationality with special reference to Bombay, provides an interesting trope to the logic of 'disjuncture'. In his essay, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy' (1996), Appadurai emphasizes the analytics to 'disjuncture', as relating to the constant flow and movement of people to new global cultural economy (32-33). It further adds to the idea of a radical shift to a larger transnational

imagery that materially shapes the meaning of human action (pp. 44-45). Further, Appadurai's specificities to his analysis on 'flows' and mobility in shaping relations, profoundly conceptualize the importance of the concept of 'deterritorialization', that holds the meaning to break with the past, with a critical anthropological notion to his analysis of 'new order', which is formed with the convergence of cultural styles, thus forming a global cultural uniformity (Pp. 47). Further, the homogenization of the western practices, yet develops certain ethics of transnational politics to the locality, where the rubric of modern life is significantly driven to market consumer choices (Xavierinda and Rosalando, 2002: 22).

The growing cosmopolitanism of the city of Bombay is bounded with the analysis of the postcolonial analysis of the city to that of its emergent economy; characterizing a city with a sign of modernity that appeals to a nativist contours of its own image of the land, religion, politics, migration, business, trade in one hand, to that of the growing presence of the multinational space that emphasizes the capitalist production and the cultural representation of the city (Hansen, 2001; Dossal, 2009; Vicziany and Bapat, 2009; Ashcroft, 2011). As Swapna Banerjee-Guha's (2002, 2009) important articulation of the metropolises in the global South in the time of 'neoliberal urbanism' –emphasizing to the notion of 'market ethic' and the emergence of the enterprise culture that notably figures the neoliberal characters as 'sovereign consumers' (see also, Gooptu, 2009).

The cosmopolitan ethos of the city in relation to sexuality, Svati Shah (2015) argues to the evidences of locating the sexual politics in India in the 21st century from the lens of neoliberal economy. Her analysis of the economic liberalization that occupies the fundamental organizing rubric in determining and shaping these identities and subjectivities. To her understanding, the sexual politics to neoliberalism in the 'Global South' marks an era of emphasizing the intersection of identity and wealth, thus constituting a notion of 'privacy', as transmitting cultural dynamics from the West to non-West. What she means by saying here, is the newness in the formation of sexual identity that reifies the class-based sexual politics to the analytical formation of urban non-heteronormative representations. Hence, the rich and the wealthy gay subjects in the global south follows certain normative social forms, that conditions their 'aestheticization' of identity –forming a brand new form of cosmopolitan connoisseurs, as reflecting the neoliberal agendas of hyper-consumerized material geographies and spaces.

The gay clubs, bars and other gay entertainment spaces frames the emotional geographies of gay-space that charts the boundary

and fixity to the apparent consumption ritual of these identity-categories (Bakunina, 2012; Boyce, 2007). The space becomes sociable with the complex performances of fun, dance, intimacy, pleasure –as displaying a network of individuals who interacts with a gendered class with realization of affluent, savvy, gay consumers who fundamentally constructs a 'gay habitus' and are openly and comfortably gay. Furthermore, the gay solidarity-movement and activism brings into the evidence as how David Harvey (2005) calls it as 'cosmopolitan citizenship' as adding to the evidence of the performative representation of certain political practices, either by means of street activism like gay parades, or collective association of gay-groups, like community-based politics.

The importance of space and its negotiations as leading to the claiming of 'sexual citizenship'occupies a particular space that conditions the expression of the gay individuals and to transgress the hegemonic heteronormative space. These movements, further represents the politics of spectacle and visualization: a space that dominantly represent the heteronormative arena; the gay parade temporarily crosses the boundaries and destabilizes the 'normative' locale of the public arena (Leachy, 2013; Mythen, 2013). At the same time, community-based discussions add to the understanding of new participation in the decision-making, a new ideology of equality that underscores the formal membership of the individuals as adding to a form of collective sentiments (Bakunina, 2012; Fadaee, 2011). The dialogues in participation, becomes a form of collective movement, a type of political participation that mobilizes the gay individuals. Its further, deeply conditions the new movement-politics, that aids a deeper understanding of citizenship –projecting a meaning to the transnational solidarity of the gay populace where there is overlapping imperative to the movements' ideology to gay citizenship rights.

Cosmopolitan Ethos and the Making of Bombay

The recent theorization of cosmopolitanism aims to build ideas as responding to neoliberal globalization that proposes a framework of the market-driven regulation on a global level. Cosmopolitan theory (Appaduai 2002[a][b]; Beck, 2005, Leachy, 2013) by anthropologists and sociologists reminds us to reimagine a political community which is not bound by borders but to adopt discrete democratic ideals globally as articulating a 'cosmopolitan order'. Immanuel Kant acknowledges a 'cosmopolitan community' that supports to a form of 'law' and 'order' that states to a legitimate participation of

human beings across societies that erases to the cultural differences and create liberal democratic ideals. Kant's 'cosmopolitan order' adheres to the elements of state sovereignty as a basic moral principle of universal human dignity that would allow again a 'cosmopolitan order' that rise above the particularities to a framework constructed to the logic of the complex multidimensional relationship between global and local forces. This implies further to a unique condition of understanding territoriality in which, different locales are interconnected with the intensification of interaction. Further to this, the idea of 'territoriality' in a cosmopolitan cultural climate that conflates to the various projects of global interconnectedness, with varied globalized perspectives in the understanding of ethnicity, technology, finance, media, ideology and so on and so forth. This kind of imaginative landscapes relates to Arjun Appadurai's (1996) framework of 'disjuncture', shaping to a condition of modernity that transcends the very spatiality of the 'local' with the interplay of the varied globalized perspectives.

Renegotiating Appadurai (2002[a]) characterization of 'disjuncture' to his understanding of Bombay – that strongly provides the city's images of the globalising modernity coupled with the elusive histories and its evolving finance: crafting the shifting economies to a global scale of rising financial capital (Pp. 55). Further linking to his argument as relating it to 'hypermodernization' with the cosmopolitan ethos that Bombay installs from the post-World War II. Appadurai recalls 1970s as the period of 'sudden' economic regulation and new mobility of labour with the growing migration bringing in white and blue collar workers that eventually builds the commercial and political core of the city, with its employability in the Fort area of South Bombay (pp. 50). This slowly creates to the notion of 'circulation of cash and work' with the growing impetus of 'business', further addressing to the 'new markets' as operating to the entrepreneurial energy to the city. Appadurai relates the 'new market' syndrome to a complex capitalist niches of the transnational space, wherein in other contexts Appadurai evokes to his theorization of multiple 'scapes' (Appadurai, 1996), conflating to the incorporation of the disjunction with its economic and cultural specificities, as situating to the newness of the global epoch that moves out of the local situations to the new attention to the new attention to global circulation (see also, Anna Tsing, 2002: 455-456 'The global situation').

Again, Appadurai's analytical trope of 'disjuncture' (1996:32) constantly tells us the 'new global cultural economy' with special

emphasis to his concept of 'deterritorialization' (Pp.37) –as thinking to the interplay of the semblance and difference of new visions of culture that challenges the bounded imaginaries. This further says to the formation of new geographical spaces and the erasure of fixed nation-state units, but a new form of political project which is highly contingent with new forms of political participation and new ways of creating citizenship.

James Holston and Arjun Appadurai (1996) has sought to mark the core meaning of modern citizenship that expands to their political meaning of modern public life, and to erode the understanding of it which is historically situated with the primacy of the nation and its national boundaries. As they suggest, citizenship repudiates the constitution of many distinguished representations with a culture of difference appropriates an urban space that profoundly provokes a new notion of membership and solidarity. This erupts a new social condition that deeply contributes to new conditions of work, living and sustenance as concerning to the new claims of civic components. Thus, it is possible to observe the complexities of governance and law that builds the context of new relations to urban governmentality. In saying so, the modern citizenship entails the intensification of the city's space as rendering to the politics of democracy –further articulating the political economy of mass migration, globalization of economy, rights-based discourses, and many more –evoking an ideology of universal equality.

Social History of Bombay since 1970s

Arjun Appadurai characterizes the city of Bombay to those other cities like Bangkok, Hong Kong, Sao Paulo, Mexico City –to those efforts as particularly saying is 'seduced' to the global capital. Conceptualizing the city's character as 'disjuncture' provides shifting economies of manufacture and industry to economies of trade, tourism and finance –yet retaining to its histories and temporalities. Bombay as the city with its interesting history of fisherman's village, and named after the local goddess; eventually turned into a set of colonial government that eventually oriented with a bourgeois' ethos as to calling it a 'Fordist city' that is dominated by trade, commerce and manufacturing -1950s marked the mergence of the cosmopolitan spirit of the city's economic proliferation. Appadurai states here, the city's significance to port that has a long site for commerce, imperial trade and colonial power as enabling to shape the industrial capitalism –the communities, like Parsi, Muslim, Hindu, Bagdadi Jew,

Syrian Cristian, Armenian, and many more. As eventually, Bombay after World War II and the importance of commerce enabto the led to create the manufacturing sector with automobiles, textiles and chemicals, in one hand, and the powerful trade, and quintessentially the complex web of economic relations and the 'business' in Bombay installs to the entrepreneurial energy operating in the city to the increasing factors of capitalist production (Appadurai, 2001:62). Appadurai adds to the idea of 'cash' that implies to the circulation of various kinds of capital, relating to the new and its contradictory manner. In one hand, it registers to the 'post-Fordist Bombay' (Pp. 69), as characterizing a broad megacity project of multinational consumptions and its materiality, consumption and modern domesticity –creating a 'global' new middle class. On the other hand, 'cash' also solicits the 'parallel' or the 'black' economy (Pp. 60), as Appadurai further suggests the Bombay's ratio is probably higher that also finances the Bollywood film industry. These money is invested on the entire cultural economy producing a serious business that steadfastly channels an arbitrary character in 'business' via means of smuggling goods, racket-payments, illegitimate state protection, and many more. The 'business' here, revolves around large cash transactions within the economy of the black money, so as to mean otherwise, the deep circulation of the currency that goes hand in hand with the materiality, that Appadurai states strongly as 'the commodification of flesh'. Knitting together the complex edifice of cash that circulates in the hugely disorganized sectors, that he calls 'house-related hysteria' and its brokers and dealers whose subculture and networking constitutes the fibre of 'black economy' and the underworld (pp. 68). These fluid dealings manufacture grossly a notorious space of violence, risk in which the key players are the mafias as the solicitors and financers in a discreet pattern of market-making.

Further to the traits of violence, stages the local ethno-politics and Hindu nationalism of the *shiv sena* from the 1960s- Maharashtra's ethno-history and the Maharashtrian self-consciousness, portraying an indigenized strategy to domesticate the local vernacular consciousness in the region (Hansen, 2002: 14) [wages of violence: Naming and Identity in the Postcolonial Bombay]. Shiv Sena and its vernacular rendition holds a counter-Bombay imagery, or a niche to its cosmopolitan fervour that translates a 'Hinduized' city –its ideologies as much as politicized with neo-religious strategies of India, that is intensely market-driven. The indigenizing strategy, further gains its impetus with the erasure of the Anglophone

name; Bombay to adopt Mumbai to the 'metonymic' interplay as envisioning regional and vernacular geography of Maharashtra and ethnonationalism, and and conversely, multicultural niches to build a specific form of urbanism (Pp. 79).

Cosmopolitanism thus, becomes a water career for neoliberalism. The corporations' visions for united, borderless world ruled by commodity in which geographical differences are conveniently erased by the magic of what David Harvey (2005) calls, 'free market'. This vision is found for instance, in steady, unabated march of deregulatory policies and privatization across the planet, welding the world-people as consumers and wreaking devastation on cultures and ecosystem everywhere.

As Harvey puts it: *''neoliberalization has created a flat world for the multinational corporations and for the billionaire entrepreneur and investor class, but a rough jagged, and uneven world for everyone else''* (Harvey, 2009:52).

Harvey proposes a reformulated cosmopolitanism, one that takes seriously location, place, space, and the biological realm –in short, one that foregrounds the spatial politics of difference and engages conscientiously with 'the banality of geographical evils'. He thus seeks to 'remove the mask that so conveniently and effectively conceals and protects the particularities of the class or ethnic nationalist power hiding behind the noble universal principles' (pp. 107).

Cosmopolitan Sexuality: Bombay and beyond

The Indian scene of the 'transnationalization' of non-normative sexualities is related to the economic liberalization of the economy. 1980s onwards, the city and the city's space reifies the conceptual representation of identities and sexualities that mediates the understanding of that space (Cronin and Oakley- Brown, 2010). While, much indebted to the scholarship of Elizabeth Grosz's *Bodies-Cities* (1995:104) that says that the body has a direct nexus with the city and is mutually interrelated; their interrelations involve a series of disparate system of entities as bringing together the linkages of the spatial niches to the complex intersection between desire, representations and self-consciousness. The 1990s shows a multiple ways of India and its gender transgressive political representations and movements (Cohen, 2005; Reddy, 2005; Bhattacharya and Bose, 2006) –imagining, Indian urbanism that potentially cultivates that imbrication of sexuality with capital (Shah, 2014; Patel, 2007) –accounting to the critical stance of the economic liberalization,

structural adjustment policy and the formation of new economic order that centres the articulation of new ideology (Simin Fadaee, 2011; Alina Bakunina, 2012). Adding to this, the market reform calls for an aspirational consumption of a culturally marked self and the formation of 'new India' as reflecting a world of enterprise, technology, consumption and market-based opportunities (Burns and Davies, 2009; Jackson, 2009; see also, Bakurina, 2012).

The urban gay elites in the neoliberal context fundamentally showcases a rubric of self-representations as suggesting the economies and sexual geography of the symbolic ability to emerge as a specific form of 'class'. The 'new middle class' in India as stated by the scholars focus on its emergence since the economic liberalization, and the rise of cultural consumerism; adding to the distinct lifestyles that promises a new 'national mode' yet with a global outlook (Fernandes, 2000, 2006).

Svati Shah (2014) in her essay, *Queering Critiques of Neoliberalism in India,* states that, Indian urbanism locates the non-normative identities and representations in a broad range of spaces that produce a subjective relation to the way it represents. In other words, as sated earlier, the tacit relationship of the city and the body broadly thrives in locating the production and contestation of a presumed 'normative' sexuality, but the manifestations of the varied shifts and framework of the analytical representations of bodies and sexualities. It is important to note that, 1990s and the aftermath, galvanized organizational and political ties, in terms of the 'globalization of law' and movements' solidarities in the non-heteronormative sexual space (Patel, 2006). This transnational organizing remains the dominant frame that interprets the homogeneity of the activism. In addition, the political and the institutional exchange liaised with print media and advertising –as articulating a very meaningful way about the political and the cultural representation of these non-normativity (Vanita, 2002).

On the other hand, the transnationalization of campaigns, cites the 'LGBTQI' collective as a movement-driven discourse that sets back to the support networks like telephone helplines, informal milieu, and its gradual attempt to the governmental and non-governmental agencies, as linking it to the 'language of risk' and (trans)national establishment of health paradigms, parameters in the name of 'project intervention', 'empowerment', 'development', and so on and so forth (Patel, 2006, see also: Bacchetta, 2002: 950; Shah, 2014).

As the analyses encodes significantly to the vast structural

differences that segregates city's space in one hand, and the social and economic position on the other –largely points to the (non) conformity of the (non)normative sexual representations based on social class. So as to say, the fact remains on the particular 'LGBTQI communities' and the middle and upper-middle class English-speaking individuals that instantiates a geography of segregation with their embodied western lifestyles (Cohen, 2005; Boyce, 2006, 2007).

Therefore, the city figures a site of consumption as a transnational space that claims a newly formed sexual universe as contouring the homoerotic possibilities of seduction and eroticism. The transgression once, becomes a sexual decorum to a particular subculture and their expressions of desire that remains 'semi-secretive' (Parker, 1999:10). Dennis Altman (2001) points out that, however seductive the phrase, 'the pleasures of the body' cannot be separated from the world outside. He continues to remark that 'only when political and economic conditions allow can engage pleasures…indeed, bodily pleasures are often shaped by political and economic conditions' (pp 2). Feminist and gay scholars have long pointed to the ways sexuality is structured by the economic system (See, D'Emilio, 1992; see also, Cohen, 2005; Benedicto, 2008) adds to commodified sexuality (Bollestorff, 2005: 21-25, 2007). Sociologists of sexuality have taken up the political economy of sexuality more recently because political transformations have shaped sexual experiences, identities, politics, and desires. In addition to those, who look at how transnational processes rely on and affect sexualities, some focus on the specificities of the transformation of gay and lesbian movements into markets which others look at sexuality to study intersections between market transformation and sexual morality.

As Altman (2001) further argues, sexuality is affected by the global political-economic phenomena such as commercialization, AIDS, women's groups, International trade, tourism and information technology. Altman traces the global flow of sexual identities-for example, gay and lesbian identities has supplanted other sexual categories (Pp. 86). Correa and Jolly (2006) traces the transformation of the gay and lesbian movement into a niche market of greater visibility for gay men and lesbian women with money is a sort of unintended disenfranchisement (on the basis of race, class and gender), which in turn, is an effect of conceiving political rights as a market-based rights. She elaborates this critique by pointing to the market's articulation of identity that gives primacy to sexuality, thereby ignoring 'differences among gay men and lesbian women'

(see also, Chandiramani, 1998).

This leads to another dimension of the sexuality studies in the non-West, that influences the non-West with the mobilization, intervention and researches generated by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. This introduces a new dimension to the debates about sexuality –possibly, with the epidemiological analysis of the virus and the epidemic. Dennis Altman (2001) further states about the programmatic intervention around HIV/AIDS that has made use of identities such as 'sex workers' or 'gay/bisexual men', or 'men-who-have-sex-with-men', and thus plays a role in the formulation of the globalization of identity-categories (see also, Parker, 1999). In the South Asian context, Lawrence Cohen (2005) charts the AIDS prevention interventions since the early half of the 1990s, that builds to the cultural appropriateness among male to male sexualities; mapping to the 'local' categories of 'desire', 'comportment', 'practice', that further leads to empowerment and the reduction of risks to HIV infections. Cohen adds to the analysis of how intervention strategies are shaped in lines of 'mapping' desires, gendering relationships and sexual acts within a particular male same sex model – 'the *kothi* and the *panthi*'. The gendering of the identity-category develops a model –*'kothis'*, the receptive partners, the effeminate homosexual men, and the *'panthis'*, who are the boyfriends or clients; the male, masculine counterparts in sex (Khan, 2001). The model thus demonstrates a pan South Asian cultural frame being central to the contextualization of AIDS prevention practice. Cohen (2005), further adds to the evidence as how Dennis Altman's view on the 'globalization of the cosmopolitan category of the gay' through trans-local circuits of 'signs', 'space', 'bodies', 'capital', 'virus' and 'governance', becomes a programmatic gaze of the AIDS enterprise in the late 20th century. Further to this analysis, the AIDS cosmopolitanism in South Asia witnesses the new articulation and effects of the bilateral development agencies, like the WHO, UNAIDS and others, who cultivated 'new leaders' as activists to build 'local' foundation on research on AIDS. Thus AIDS builds in to the vehicle that generates the global flow of the 'developmental capital' in the purview of re-negotiating marginality, space and nationalism, in the context of which local and global morality were re-configured to attenuate on the rationale of epidemiological and sexual sovereignty.

This further allows to understand the non-Western homoerotic desires, as relating to Peter A. Jackson's (2004) idea about the significance of 'local' male same-sex sexuality by further emphasising the importance of cultural and social interplay in the specific locality

that shapes these identities within a specific cultural context. In his own ethnographic study of the *Kathoey* ('lady boys') in Thailand, Jackson asserts the historical pedigree of Thai identities and the intrinsic ways in which these non-normative sexual representations are entangled within the cultural characteristics of the West, and also to their own –thus highlighting the politics of appropriation and embodiment, based on the two cultural traits.

Plurality of Sexual expressions: The Bombay Metaphor

In the case of India, Gayatri Reddy has stated that 'a new class of 'gay individuals' has appeared with regard to global identification of gay identities in India (Reddy: 2005: 216-217). This representation is linked to the global solidarity of the cultural and sexual expressions, enabling a social environment of self-reflexive representation. In other words, the idea of social class is entangled with community sentiments that further initiated the same-sex expression in India. Community-based organisations like *Humsafar Trust* in Mumbai and the *Bombay Dost* magazine – relates to the advent of the early gay discourses in India since the 1990s with (open) gay discernibility. This significantly asserts the urban gay scene in Bombay in the early 1990s –an idea of a class-based gay identification of upper middle class sensibilities with English-speaking capabilities, serving the purpose of building solidarity among the educated urban gay population –signifying 'class' that builds their space for negotiation, consumption, and their subjective formation.

At the same time, the 'cultural liberalisation' of Bollywood films and the introduction of 'parallel cinema' have introduced the themes of homosexuality, homo-eroticism and homo-sociality. For example, the Hindi film director, Kalpana Lajmi, and her film *Darmiyan*, talks about 'the inter-gendered, auspicious and playful thirdness', whereas, Deepa Mehta's film, *Fire*, portrays female same-sex love and relationships; the increasing cinematic representation of non-heteronormative love and affection (Vanita: 2002: 218; Ghanta: 2012). Ruth Vanita also charts as how the advertisements of undergarments and jeans creates the increasing inclusivity of same-sex emotions, that adds to mark non-heteronormative space (Vanita, *2002*).

Locating body to the city's space adds an understanding to the interrelationships of aesthetic value of the body and the political meaning that it renders (Reddy, 2006). Anthropologists and gender theorists has theorized body in relation to appearances, as stating that gender transgressors or 'transgender' individuals render a political

goal as a site of its dynamic embodying practices (Wilson, 2004). The feminine embodiment of the 'trans' identification, produces an intersubjective meaning of the body and its appearance –the body becomes the agency to feature the 'presentation of her self' via means of face, dress body parts, behaviour, mannerisms, and so on –further rendering the stylization of the body as the primary mode of its beauty and consumerism. To understand the political economy of desire and its corporeality –varied ways of gender transgressiveness that is rooted in the principle of embodiment, I have argued elsewhere that how the *hijras* (the traditional transvestite population of South Asia translates the cultural form of body, beauty and its aesthetic representations in the city of Bombay (Roy, 2017). Moreover, the 'bio-political strategy' of the body, its spatial politics that is linked to the ideological representation of the consumer capitalism, provides a site of the socially constituting feature of the modern erotic world – 'the body' and the body parts provides the logic of the two political meanings of the feminine (gendered) transgressiveness. Firstly, the symbolic representation of mapping the body and its physical marker that reinforces the sexing of the body. This further adds to the meaning of gender(ed) ambivalence (un)acquiring the 'female body' as opposed to 'the feminine body' –the particular grotesque sphere and the physical mark, or the boundary as dividing multiple 'trans' identification.

The complex relationship of the bodily symbols thus becomes the ritualized discourses as mediating the political constellation to re-interpret the 'trans' representation in India. And secondly, situating this contemporary sexual politics as how market economy and sexual culture provides a bourgeois way of representation –the body and its politics of trans(cending), installs 'market' analysis of the desires and desirability; the way in which gender transgressions are institutionally repudiated via law, medicine, surgery –those particular strategies that translates technological rationality to build body and gender ideals.

Quite significantly, the self-representations of femaleness frequently called attention to the existing texts and to particular scholarship on the care of their body. This further concerns female dresses, ornaments, western clothing, to the irreversible move to the processes of beauty, body and its consumption practices –like injecting and use of industrial hormones into the body (see also, Kulick 1998; Pieur 1998). Further, that to marks the gendered bodily meanings that earn more physical capital (Bourdieu, 1986,1990) as becoming the culturally acceptable (feminine) body, as attempting to approximate feminine semiotic signs to re-claim gender through various processes

of sexed embodiment.

My thoughts to gender transgressiveness, their lived experiences, the fluidity of the gender and the plurality of their gender(ed) expressions, moves away from the essentialist and the social constructionist idea of gender –transgresses the society's naturalization of sexual differences. The transgression is a political stance, as quite radically democratic to understand sex and gender that constitutes the dominant binary of its force. The transgression further conceptualizes the role of self-construction as a narrative process with its interaction with the social and the environment. Evelyn Blackwood's essay on '*Gender Transgression in Colonial and Postcolonial Indonesia'* (2005), wherein she employs the concept of 'gender transgression' rather than 'transgender'. According to her, historical accounts do not portray the 'desires' of gender-transgressiveness; rather what they do is to enclose those practices of behaviour and embodiment to a box. What I mean here, is to non-essentialize transgressiveness –subvert the already-given historical model of subjective constructions. Blackwood adds by saying that, 'gender transgression as read by the Western audience is a violation of gender'. But what is important to explore here is to look at the gender(ed) practices that exceeds beyond the boundaries of 'normativity'. This sort of transgressiveness entails the individual stake as linked to all fantasies and desires, as how an individual constructs their perception of self. To 'transgress', is an embodied practice of 'becoming' the self that does not corroborate to an external imposition of self but those interpersonal relationships and inter-subjective roles as constituted by the everyday lived experiences, bodies and materiality, cultural and political positions.

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A LIGHT OF HOPE OR DARKNESS REINFORCED? DIMENSIONS OF INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE RPD ACT, 2016

Anil K. Aneja

The educational strategies concerning persons with disabilities and the challenges confronting this critical area of intervention have been the subject of interrogation for nearly two centuries. Noteworthy distance has been covered from a position when such persons were hardly considered capable of receiving education to a scenario when many persons with disabilities are performing equal to and at times better than their non-disabled counterparts. Evolutions in socio-cultural values together with globalization have, along with other aspects, impacted the manner and mode of educating persons with disabilities. The Rights-based approach governing the empowerment of such persons has helped to bring about significant shifts in this sphere.

This change has been particularly visible with respect to the education of children with disabilities where the prevalent trends have shown significant shifts from special education to integrated education and further, culminating into the current trends, of inclusive education. Despite there being continuous debates about the effectiveness of such different paradigms related to the education of students with disabilities, international as well as national discourses on education have recently been more in favour of inclusive systems. These shifts can be clearly witnessed in various Indian educational policies and in disability related documents as well. Most recent in this regard has been the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwDA), 2016 which advocates inclusive education. Along with the justified call for required changes in the education system, it is essential to study this latest Act concerning disability from the perspective of inclusive education with a view to examine whether this legislation has opened up fresh opportunities for this significant segment of society or is yet one more attempt to reinforce stereotypes concerning the education of disabled persons?

The following analysis hopes to address the salient provisions under the RPwDA (2016) which can directly or indirectly impact development and practices of inclusive education in India. Towards this end, this study contains three specific sections outlining the philosophical basis, the historical perspectives to policy formation and the provisions of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 particularly with reference to inclusive education.

I. Inclusive Education: Underlying Philosophy and Conceptualization

The inclusive education system provides a need-based education to students with disabilities, whereby they can learn together with other students in regular schools instead of getting segregated into special schools (Sanjeev and Kumar). In comparison to the integrated education system, which demands students with disabilities to adapt and accommodate according to the school structure, inclusive education calls for the restructuring of the school system to best suit the requirements of students with various disabilities. Successful practice of inclusive education entails a radical restructuring of educational institutions and their functioning at the micro and macro levels (Chimhenga). To be more specific, it demands changes in several aspects of the education system such as the removal of infrastructural obstacles, shifts in the perspectives of learning, the curriculum modifications, and instructional and assessment approaches. The fundamental principles of inclusive education are primarily based on human rights and the rights of equality from a sociological perspective. Although these are quite well-accepted, yet there are other paradigms —such as psychological and socio-psychological which attempt to analyse the concept of inclusion from different angles and sometimes raise rather critical questions regarding the practice and effectiveness of the current trends of inclusive education.

II. Historical Roots of Inclusive Education

It was the Salamanca Conference on Special Needs Education, which was held in Spain from 7-10 June in 1994, by the United Nations and the Government of Spain that marked a milestone in the history of inclusive education internationally. The conference highlighted that regular schools with an inclusive orientation were the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming

communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all. Moreover, such a system has the potential of providing effective education to majority of children and to improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost-effectiveness of the entire education system. It further states that:

> …schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups (para 3).

India is a signatory to this Declaration. Further, the World Education Forum (2000) at Dakar in Senegal also reiterated the concept of inclusive education.

At the national level, the Directive Principles of the Indian Constitution direct the state to provide education for all children up to the age of 14 years but there was no explicit mention of individuals with disabilities; however, it can be assumed that the term includes all those with disabilities. Similarly, the first Education Commission (1964–66) known as Kothari Commission, even though, stressed the need for common school system; the category 'individuals with disabilities' was not mentioned explicitly, but one can argue that the concept of common school system embraces all children including those with disabilities. Incorporating the recommendations of Kothari commission, the National Education Policy (1968) specified educational provisions for students who are physically and mentally handicapped (the term handicapped indicates the prominent nomenclature of that time), following which a scheme for Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IEDC) was launched in 1974.

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 can also be considered as significant for its focus on the removal of inequalities in education and also for focusing on the needs of students with disabilities (Singh). In comparison to previous provisions, the NPE (1986) was loud in advocating the feasible integration of students with disabilities into regular schools, making provisions for accommodation facilities for severely challenged students; vocational training for students with disabilities and reorientation of teacher's training programmes. Following the NPE (1986), the Programme of Action (POA) in 1992 accounted the various challenges for integrating students with disabilities in regular schools and on that basis offered a significant range of provisions which covered in-

service teacher training programmes and orientation programmes for different stakeholders, empowerment of resource institutions at different levels and several incentive provisions. The POA (1992) also suggested the placement principles for students with disabilities with a preference of integration in regular schools and transfer to regular schools after acquiring the requisite basic skills if initially placed in special schools. The provisions under POA were strengthened through Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act, 1992. Taking a serious note of the issue of lack of mechanism related to training of professionals in the field of special education, several training programs were developed under RCI Act, 1992 for strengthening the professionals working with students with disabilities.

In 1994, the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) was launched which added to the ongoing efforts for inclusion of students with disabilities. In 1995, the Indian disability Act popularly known as the Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Act (1995) provided legislative support to the framework of inclusive education and provision of free education until the age of 18 years to children with disabilities came into force. Seven disabilities namely blindness, low vision, hearing impaired, loco motor impairment, mental retardation, leprosy cured and mental illness were covered under this Act. This Act prominently focused on promoting integration of students with disabilities in regular schools. Section 26 of Chapter V of this Act deals with education and mandates the appropriate government and local authorities to plan schemes for improving educational support facilities for students with disabilities, overcoming infrastructural barriers, provisions for free educational materials and transport facilities, curriculum restructuring and evaluation modifications to cater to the needs of students with disabilities. In 1999, the National Trust for Welfare of Persons with Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Mental Retardation and Multiple Disabilities Act, a landmark legislation, was passed by the government (it is popularly known as National Trust Act). Although this Act does not deal directly with the educational aspect of students with disabilities but it specifically focuses on the economic rehabilitation of individuals with disabilities through various means.

Operational since 2000-01, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has attempted to achieve universalization of elementary education (UEE) by year 2010 and it was another milestone which supported the efforts towards inclusive education. Focused on all children from 6 to14 years of age, the SSA aspires to achieve three objectives: access, enrollment and retention. Following a zero rejection policy in

schools, the SSA offers a significant range of provisions for education of children with disabilities which also covers early detection and identification, the educational placement, the provisions of aids and appliances, the support services at different levels, teacher training and resource supports, guidelines for individual educational plans, parental training and community mobilization, removal of architectural barriers, research, monitoring and evaluations (Mohanty).

Under Article 21A of the Indian Constitution, The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act known as Right to Education Act (RTE), 2009 provides the provision of free and compulsory education for all children in the age range of 6-14 years. Enactment of this legislation made education a fundamental right for every child in the specified age range. It further specifies several norms and standards for schools. In reference to inclusive education, it mandates the reservation of 25 per cent seats in all private schools for children belonging to different disadvantaged groups—a provision which has significantly benefited, among others, children with disabilities.

II. i. Shift in Perceptions

Over the years, there has been a significant paradigm shift in the way disability has been perceived and it is also reflected in policies and Acts. Narayan and John regard this shift from a social welfare view towards a human rights perspective. Also, how disability has been defined and what constitutes the conditions of disability has undergone significant changes over the period. For example, the number of categories of disability has increased from seven in PwD, 1995 to 21 categories in RPwDA (2016). Narayan and John consider the shift of principles in RPwDA (2016) from the PwD Act (1995) as "a paradigm shift in thinking about disability from a social welfare concern to a human rights issue" (17).

II. ii. Status of Inclusive Education in India

No doubt, inclusive education has been perhaps one of the most conferred contemporary themes in the Indian Education system. Unfortunately, despite so much discussion revolving around it, its implementation still has not taken place completely. Bakhshi, Babulal and Trani (2017) point out that the entailment of inclusive education in an Indian context is exigent due to several factors,

which range from unjust social structures, census irregularities, the lack of material and human resources and faulty conceptualizations around learning in inclusive set-ups. They further posit that unusual social structures and other contextual factors lead to a very different context of inclusive education in India than in the western world and thus call for an urgent need for comprehensive policies to overcome the barriers in this sphere.

III. Inclusive Education in Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwDA), 2016

The Preamble of the RPwDA (2016) defines inclusive education as a "system of education wherein students with and without disabilities learn together and the system of teaching and learning is suitably adapted to meet the learning needs of different types of students with disabilities" (3).

Along with this clearly stated definition of inclusive education, the RPwDA (2016) also states unambiguously the responsibility of the appropriate and respective government authorities to take actions and implement inclusive education. Section 16 of chapter 3 of the RPwDA (2016) states that the "Appropriate Government and Local authorities shall endeavor that all educational institutions funded or recognized by them provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities…" (8).

It also mandates the provision of imparting inclusive education by all the educational institutions which are recognized or funded by the government. Section 16 under Chapter III of the Act sets out the provisions on inclusive education ranging from admission without discrimination, equality of opportunities at educational sites, accessible infrastructure and facilities, necessary individualized support, appropriate modes of communication, early detection and requisite measures, monitoring the educational progress and provision for transport facilities. Further, in order to realize the provisions specified above, various sub-sections of section 17 denote several measures which includes required surveys, training of different professionals involved in education domain, establishment of resource centers and availability of necessary resources, provisions of scholarships, modifications in the education system to cater to the needs of students with disabilities and research to enhance learning.

In comparison to earlier documents, the RPwDA (2016) positions the provisions and measures to achieve those provisions more comprehensively, yet the lessons from past caution us to be mindful

of the fact that the provisions of the Act might well remain more of a rhetoric than reality because the Act lacks any kind of transition plans to attain the requisite needs for achieving the goal of an inclusive education system such as having adequate trained professionals and appropriate infrastructure. Section 17 (g) mentions the provision of free books, learning materials and assistive aids only till the age of 18 years and section 31 provides the right to free education to every child with a benchmark disability in a neighborhood school or a special school of his/her preference. However, in contrast to the earlier policies and Acts, this Act gains added significance for laying down the redressal mechanisms for ensuring the mentioned provisions related to education.

When it comes to higher education however, the RPWD Act does precious little. It mandates the reservation of 5 per cent seats in higher education institutions under Section 32, but does not lay down any procedures for distributing this reservation among 21 categories of persons with benchmark disabilities. Further, there is no mention of support systems for such persons directly under the Section concerning higher education. The strong emphasis on school-education in this Act will be unable to yield the desired outcomes unless our colleges and universities receive the much-needed focus for providing support systems for students with disabilities.

A positive aspect of this Act is the mandatory provision for the universities to open Centres for Disability Studies—a relatively recent academic and research area. A number of universities have already commenced initiatives towards this end.

The RPwDA (2016) has received mixed responses. It received applauses from different sections for including a vast number of disability categories and being vocal on specifying the responsibilities of different stakeholders and agencies. While the Act clearly advocates inclusion and outlines the responsibilities, it neither reaches beyond the provisions of structural changes nor pays any attention to several other important aspects related to the prevalent socio-cultural contexts, unfavorable structures of education, insufficient associations among different stakeholders and others. Inadequate attention to these crucial aspects points towards a lack of a comprehensive understanding of the philosophy of inclusive education (Bhattacharya).

The present Act has also been criticized on several other more explicit domains. Choudhary and Thomas (2017) criticized the Act from the perspective of mentally ill persons and posit that it does not address the needs of persons with mental illnesses. Ignorance of family support, threat of mistreatment by authorities and assumptions

of capability to seek much needed support by individuals with mental illness are some of the cited loopholes. Bhattacharya (2017) posits that inclusion has never been an important agenda in any of the Indian Acts or policies including various educational policies as well as the most recent Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. This holds true at all levels of education and truer in the case of higher education as most of the clauses pertain only to school education and domains of higher education, adult education and continuing education have received meager mentions and lack appropriate attention in the Act.

Bhattacharya (2017) asserts that even the so-called significant educational policies and documents such as the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights, and Full Participation) Act of 1995, the National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (NP), 2006 and the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (RPwDA), 2016, fall short on the parameters related to inclusive education and sadly, none of them can be considered significant in relation to the provisions of inclusive education in the Indian education system.

In reference to inclusive education, the RPwDA (2016) can be further accused of heavy drawbacks because of its insufficiency in mapping the mechanisms to attain the desirable targets which require significant improvement of resources, changes in mindsets and modifications in many aspects of the education system.

III. i. Creating Favourable Environment for Change

Lessons learnt from the outcomes of various previous policies and Acts loudly speak about the need for creating an environment for change along with related provisions. In the context of inclusive education, it seems pertinent to set the grounds in terms of the accessibility to educational institutions, consideration of prevalent socio-cultural contexts, favourable understanding of learning and compatible structures of education, need for collaboration among different stakeholders, et cetera. Building upon these points, this section reflects upon some of the components which are crucial to the implementation of inclusive education.

III. ii. Perception and Understanding of the Learning Process

Most of the documents and policies consider that children with disabilities have incapacities and an empowering education system can help them overcome their drawbacks. Even the recent draft of

the National Policy of Education uses such language which talks about overcoming incapacities of learning (Draft NPE, 2016, 6.11.8). Such expressions seem to ignore the perspective of multiple modes for learning and appear to be guided only by the conventional and dominant modes of learning. None of the documents envisages that inclusive settings can add to better learning opportunities for all; rather learning at sites of inclusive settings in these documents has been envisaged very conservatively i.e. only children with disabilities can learn from others and others do not have any scope of learning from children with disabilities (Bhattacharya).

Further, the sources of educational difficulties are often located in individual, environmental and contextual situations which are often not taken into consideration. Such practices put individuals with disabilities in more complicated situations. None of these issues have been addressed in RPwDA (2016) which has direct implications for the success of inclusive education.

III. iii. Curriculum Restructuring

Bhattacharya (2017) posits that an inaccessible curriculum is one of the main barriers towards inclusion of children with disabilities, yet unfortunately none of the policy documents or Acts has paid much attention to this significant part of the education system without which inclusion will remain rhetoric and would not be able to become a reality. Bhattacharya (2010) draws attention to several curriculum issues which cause hindrance to the inclusion of individuals with disabilities and suggests the urgent need for curriculum restructuring which includes activities related to positive portrayal of individuals with disabilities in non-stereotypical and non-patronizing ways. Unfortunately the RPwDA (2016) does not make the grade to include significant provisions on this obvious aspect and the curriculum remains the most ignored domain in this Act.

III. iv. Accessibility

In comparison to other domains, accessibility has received enhanced focus in several policies and Acts. This is true in the case of RPwDA (2016) as well. However, accessibility is mostly focused in the context of the physical environment and accessibility of the learning environment is not taken cognizance of to the desired extent.

III. v. Prevailing Socio-Cultural Contexts

A. Kumari and K. Sharma (2017) posit that the school environment for inclusive education is significantly affected by the prevailing socio-cultural contexts, perceptions and attitudes of society and values for inclusion which are influenced by prevalent beliefs and taboos. Their study suggests that over a period of time there has been some positive changes in the attitude and the mindset of the society towards inclusion of students with disabilities, however there are other finer issues that need to be addressed to realize inclusion in its true sense. The RPwD Act (2016) maintains silence on any kind of social mobilization and falls short on envisaging plans for bringing positive changes in the mentioned aspects.

III. vi. Collaboration among Different Stakeholders

Inclusive education necessitates different stakeholders to come together and work towards a common cause. Academicians, teachers, researchers, practitioners from different fields, legal fraternity and authorities need to work together to structure a concord understanding of the philosophical and practical aspects of inclusive education. Several experiences of unsuccessful educational interventions communicate that the lack of shared understanding, gaps in mediating the underlying philosophy to all stakeholders and faulty practices are some of the primary causes of such failures. Ignoring the lessons from past experiences which are clear enough, the present Act like the previous ones does not provide the much needed guidance on measures regarding required collaborations.

IV. Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that in order to realize desirable outcomes of the present provisions concerning inclusion, it becomes mandatory to negotiate through such concerns. Provisions under the Act should have considered the possible challenges and complications and subsequently the guidelines for a feasible mechanism would have added strength to the RPwDA, 2016. Provisions stipulated under the Act can also get impacted by the provisions under other concurrent educational policies. It would be interesting to reflect upon the synchronization of such provisions under the RPwDA, 2016 with concurrent and upcoming educational policies and provisions. For example, how the ongoing deliberations

for reversal of no detention policies and thrusts on national level achievement tests can impact inclusive education.

It appears then that there is still a long journey before the light at the end of the tunnel becomes visible. Though an arduous path has been traversed, the present scenario clearly indicates that the hope of real inclusion with respect to education is by no means close enough to be achieved soon.

The current status of the Indian education system is facing several challenges in catering to the needs of students and is very far behind in realizing the expectations of inclusion. Several studies have noted the challenges of inclusive education in India which range from social and attitudinal barriers, lack of trained professionals, lack of resources and restricted standardized educational practices. Ironically, the RPwDA (2016) doesn't address any of these challenges in a comprehensive manner. Successful inclusion calls for an elaborated long-term planning in this regard. Owing to paucity of well-planned mechanisms, the present provisions may cause superficial inclusion of students with disabilities in ill-equipped regular educational institutions where their experiences may not be as happy or as desirable as we would like these to be.

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IMPLICATIONS OF COGNITION ON LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CHILDREN WITH DYSLEXIA

R. Lalitha Raja

Introduction

Cognition is nothing but the conscious mental activities or processes which are involved in gaining knowledge and comprehension. These processes include thinking, knowing, learning, remembering, understanding, judging and problem-solving. These processes are high-level functions of the brain and cover up language, imagination, perception, and planning. So we can say that the features of the language are covered under cognitive functions. Moreover, when we say that the functions of language are covered under cognitive functions then we have a fundamental question,

- If a person has cognitive delay or impairment, will he also have at the same time language impairment too?
- Do the problems in cognitive processes have an impact on language learning and lead to language impairment?
- If the answers to previous two questions are yes, then what aspects of language are affected?

Yes, of course, this has been a hot debate for decades, and in line, researchers have investigated the relationship between language and cognition. Their research mostly lied on language development of infants and children. Contemporary observations hypothesize that specific mechanisms control language development. According to the perspectives of constructivist and biologist, the emphasis was on the gradual, experience-dependent emergence of complex skills, including language.

These theories postulate that domain-general cognitive capacities and processes are recruited to develop language. Approaches of constructivist and neuro-constructivist anticipate language-learning processes and products to show broad commonalities with non-linguistic learning. So, language and communication skills

are related to skills in other areas of development. According to Gedeon O. Deák (2014), "These theories postulate that domain-general cognitive capacities and processes are recruited to develop language. Approaches of constructivist and neuro-constructivist anticipate language-learning processes and products to show broad commonalities with non-linguistic learning. So, language and communication skills are related to skills in other areas of development".

Speech and language skills develop in childhood according to relatively well-defined milestones. If a child seems noticeably behind same-aged peers, then it might be a language delay or disorder. A language disorder is a delay in the use and understanding of spoken or written language. It is important to realize that a language delay is not the same thing as a speech or language impairment. Language delay is a prevalent developmental problem in fact; most commonly, affects 5-10% of children in pre-school. Due to language delay, children's language will be developing in the expected sequence, but at a slower rate. In contrast, children with dyslexia, hearing impairment, autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and developmental delay with good intellectual capacity, also have language disorders.

The children with dyslexia, hearing impairment, autism, intellectual disabilities, ADHD and developmental delay have had more chances for this language delay or disorder. According to American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (1993), the disorder may involve in all the forms of language (phonology, syntax, and morphology), and also in its content or meaning (semantics), or its use (pragmatics), in any combination. All above-said aspects or some aspects were found disordered in these children. This problem hinders them in language learning. Children with dyslexia, hearing impairment, autism, ADHD and developmental delay those who do have the good intellectual capacity, yet had the history of language disorders. Their normal life skills are affected because of the language problem. Mainly children with dyslexia, who were in the regular stream of schooling, faced lot of challenges in their academic life, as language is a base for any learning. Contrary to popular misconception, dyslexia is not characterized by letter or word reversal. In fact, dyslexia is a language-processing difficulty caused by the inability to break words into phonemes and morphemes and semantic processing.

Researchers estimate that dyslexia the most common reading problem affects nearly 10 to 30 per cent of the population.

This study highlights the language problems of Tamil children with dyslexia both in learning Tamil and English in all aspects of language relating it to their cognitive processes.

Dyslexia – A Reading Disorder

Dyslexia is a particular type of learning disabilities (LD) (one of the learning disabilities) involving impairment in reading ability that ranges from mild to severe affecting and disrupting person's language development and functioning. It is a neuro-processing deficit that is specifically related to the reading and spelling process. Dyslexia is generally defined as a reading and spelling difficulty discrepant with intelligence and educational opportunities. It has been characterized as a language based disorder, where 'language' is a term theoretical linguists would tend to call 'a setoff grammatical rules'. In addition to their relatively poor reading and written language skills, children with developmental dyslexia have been found to exhibit difficulties on a variety of language tasks, including speech perception, production, and syntactic sensitivity. This raises the question whether these language difficulties are secondary to a reading deficit or whether they partly cause dyslexia.

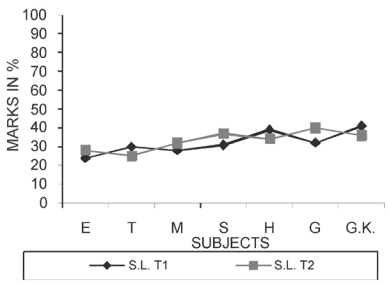
According to Critchley (1970), dyslexia as a disorder is evidenced by difficulty in learning to read irrespective of conventional instruction, adequate intelligence, and sociocultural opportunity; it is dependent upon fundamental cognitive disabilities which are frequently of constitutional origin. As the central problem of dyslexics is reading, it is also otherwise called *Reading Disability*. The children have reading problems in all the stages of language development, i.e., phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics. One way to sort out literacy and language factors are by looking at the language development of children who are at-risk of dyslexia; or children with a dyslexic parent or sibling. Such a starting point allows investigation of linguistic skills to assess the potential of dyslexia as a language-based deficit. Furthermore, this type of investigation might find linguistic precursors and lead to early identification of dyslexia.

Children with dyslexia have only reading problem with some extent of writing problem despite normal or high intelligence, and sufficient exposure to the language. Typically, children who fall under the category of dyslexia are bright and capable in other intellectual domain. Often children with LD are confused with slow learners due to their poor academic performance and behavioural

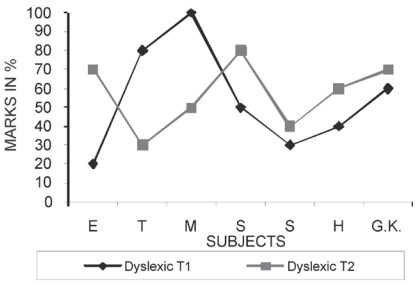
problems. This may mislead the educators in giving proper guidance for LD children.

Difference between SL (Slow Learner), and LD

The following graphs show a discrepancy between SL and LD children.



Graph 1



Graph 2

Graph 1 shows the score of a Slow Learner (whose intellectual capacity has sub-average IQ [from 80 -90]) in two consecutive tests for same questions. Graph 2 shows the score of a child with LD (whose intellectual capacity is average/above the average of IQ [from 90 and above]) in two consecutive tests for same questions. Children with subaverage intellectual capacity (slow learners) in both the tests perform more or less equally, and the scores are also between 20 and 40. However, the child with LD in the Graph 2 shows large variation which depicts the inconsistency in their processing skills. So, cognitive processing is much associated with their learning process.

Common Cognitive Deficits in Dyslexic Students

1. auditory processing (correctly processing the sounds of our language, including phonological awareness)
2. visual processing, short-term memory and working memory (including executive attentional skills)
3. long-term memory (placing information in and retrieving it from long-term memory)
4. processing speed (speed of thinking ability on simple visual or auditory tasks)
5. acculturation knowledge (knowledge of the language, concepts, and information of our culture)

6. fluid reasoning (problem solving and reasoning with unfamiliar information)

Strengths and weaknesses in these above said cognitive abilities affect the quality and rate of an individual's learning. As reading is much associated with the visual processing, short-term memory, working memory, long-term memory, processing speed, acculturation knowledge and fluid reasoning children with dyslexia who have issues in the above skills have reading difficulties. So reading difficulties as mentioned above are neurodevelopmental in nature as it's associated with processing skills. Neurodevelopmental problems do not go away, but they do not mean that a student (or an adult) cannot learn or progress in school and life. Neuroscientists have identified that their hemisphere function for reading differs from that of Normal Reading Age Children (NRAC). The figures 1 and 2 show how the activation of neural impulses in brain differs between children with and without dyslexia. Research has also proved that 90 per cent of children with LD has right brain dominance.

Figures 1 and 2 show the variation in brain activation. A reduction or absence of activity in the left hemisphere is seen in the occipitotemporal (OT) region which is important for *visual and orthographic encoding (whole word recognition)* and includes the visual word-form area and *temporoparietal region* (crucial for *phonological processing and phoneme-grapheme conversion*). So there is a deficiency in the processing pathways.

Also from a neurological perspective, different types of the writing system, for example, alphabetic as compared to logographic writing systems, require different neurological pathways to read, write and spell. As different writing systems need a different part of the brain to process the visual details of speech, children with reading issues in one language might not have that severity of reading difficulty in a language with a different orthography. The neurological skills required in performing the tasks of reading, writing and spelling can vary between different writing systems, and because of that, different neurological deficits can cause dyslexia problems concerning different orthographies.

Reading problems arise among children with dyslexia according to the complexity of language the child learns. The complexity of orthography/spelling system and morphology of a language make them struggle with decoding words correctly. The orthographic depth of a language has a direct impact on how difficult it is to learn to read that language. English has a deep orthography with

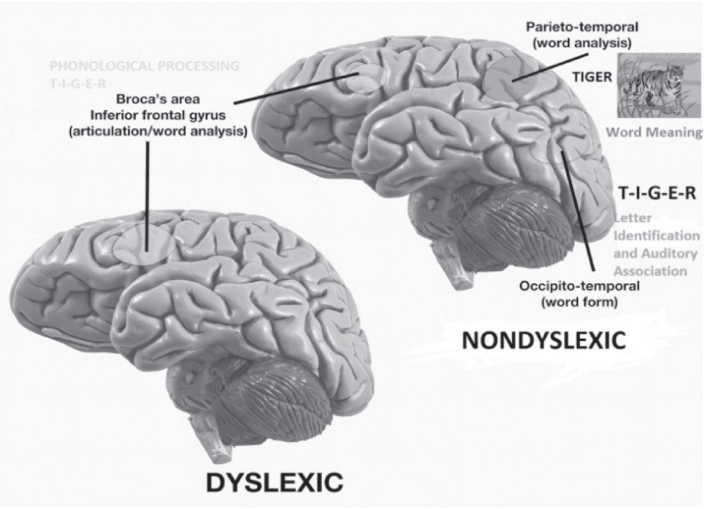


Figure 1

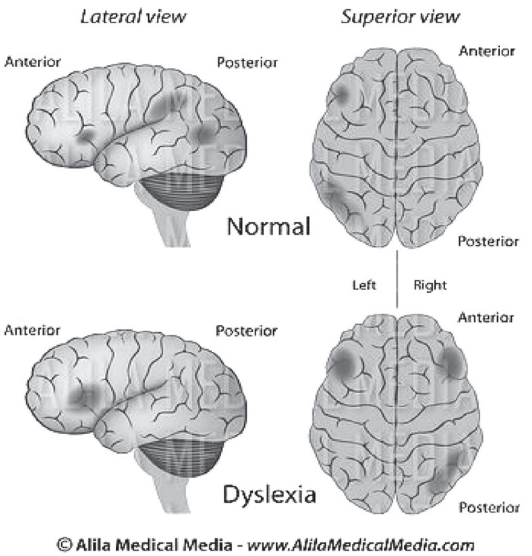


Figure 2

a complex orthographic structure that employs spelling patterns at several levels: principally, letter-sound correspondences, syllables, and morphemes. However, Tamil has syllabic orthography that uses only letter-sound correspondences, so one can say that Tamil has shallow orthography. It is comparatively easy to learn to read the Tamil language when compared to English. Though it is easy to read the Tamil orthography, its complexity in alphasyllabary of secondary

symbols and the morphological system makes the children struggle in reading. They are slow in reading and make additions, deletions, and substitutions while reading morphologically complex words. Many children with reading difficulties can be taught reading strategies for success in school. When children's reading problems are identified early, they are more likely to learn strategies that will raise their reading to grade level.

Dyslexia and Reading

As mentioned earlier contrary to popular misconception, dyslexia is not only characterized by letter or word reversal. In fact, dyslexia is a language-processing difficulty caused by the inability to break words into phonemes. It is essential to understand how the brain conceptualizes language, to understand the specific reading problems related with dyslexia. The brain recognizes language in a hierarchical order. The higher levels of the hierarchy transact with semantics, syntax, and discourse. The lowest levels of the hierarchy deal with breaking words into separate small units of sound called phonemes. Thus, before comprehending the words at higher levels in the hierarchy, they must be decoded at the phonological level.

Problems with Phonemes

Phonological processing takes place automatically at a preconscious level in spoken language. A genetically determined phonological module automatically constructs words from phonemes for the speaker and deconstructs the words into phonemes for the listener. Speech is instinctive and is the typical biological human characteristic. The alphabet, on the other hand, was created 5000 years ago to give a concrete representation to speech at phonological level. Thus, reading is an invented piece that must be educated on a conscious level. Reading is a tricky task because anyone who reads must learn to listen through his/her eyes. The reader must understand that the orthography which is in the form of letters on a page sequenced to represent the phonological structure of words.

The phonological module of dyslexia opines that dyslexics have a disability in reading because they have a problem in phonological processing. The most convincing proof for the importance of phonological processing in reading ability is intervention studies indicating that phonological awareness training improves reading ability, while other language training programs do not. Bradley and

Bryant (1980) studied two groups of children: one given training on grouping words according to their sounds (phonological training), while the other given training on grouping words according to their meaning (holistic training). The reading ability of children who had phonological training improved significantly, whereas the reading ability of children in the holistic training group only improved marginally.

Many studies from the early 1990s have confirmed that phonological deficits are the most major and constant indicator of dyslexia in children. In all these studies, children with dyslexia were asked to delete a specific phoneme and to say the words with rest of the phonemes. For example, a child must delete "s" sound from "stool" and say the word as "tool". Children with dyslexia, as compared to children without dyslexia, have greater difficulty in phoneme deletion task. The results from earlier studies indicate that the deficiency in phonological awareness demonstrated by dyslexics is connected to their lower reading ability.

Problems with Morphemes

A morpheme is the smallest meaningful element of a word that functionally can change a word's meaning. It can be of a single letter, for example in English the letter '-s' at the end of a noun such as "pen", can change the word from singular to plural which is a suffix as in 'pens.' It can be of two letters as 'un' at the beginning of a word such as 'untidy,' acts as a prefix conveying the meaning "not." Understanding the morphological structure of words is very important for developing the reading fluency. At around third grade/ fourth grade, during the second stage of reading, morphological awareness becomes more important to decoding than phonemic awareness.

Morphological awareness is the ability to identify the parts of words and word segments that express meaning. At the point of the second stage of reading, students need to increase their reading speed, and letter-by-letter decoding is inefficient. Students who are good readers will have naturally acquired an excellent basic sight vocabulary of familiar words and will easily be able to transfer what they know to decode new words using morphological analysis. Morphology is the key to decoding polysyllabic words — for example, the word "decode" is a combination of the prefix "de-" and the familiar root "code".

A child with dyslexia will probably need extra help to gain an

understanding of morphology. It is important to begin to introduce these concepts to the child at the age at which other children are gaining these skills, even if he/she is still struggling with phonetic decoding. Otherwise, the child will struggle to progress beyond a second- or third-grade reading level.

Problems with Syntax

The syntax is the study of sentence structure. It refers to the way words are arranged in sentences. When used to describe language development, the syntax is the collection of words that specify the speaker to arrange words to make a sentence in a meaningful way. Syntax governs the structure of sentences, i.e., rules of combining words to form sentences. By learning the rules which are used to connect words, learners learn to create an infinite number of sentences. Thus, it is possible to create many sentences that the speaker has never come across before. A finite number of rules facilitate creating an infinite number of sentences by both the speaker and the listener in communication on context.

The reader must know the structural aspects of language (rules) known as syntactic processing, for comprehending what is read. Syntactic processing involves the order and arrangement of words in a particular way to form phrases and sentences. One has to depend on syntactic processing to know the difference between the sentences— "The pen is on the table" and "The table is on the pen"— that have two very different meanings despite sharing all the same words. Children with dyslexia have issues in syntactic processing. Studies by Byrne, (1981), Stein et al. (1984), and Plaza et al. (2002) have shown deficiencies in children with dyslexia in syntactic processing.

Problems with Semantics

Semantics in a general sense deals with meaning or content of words and word combinations (Owens, 2008). In the early stages of learning especially vocabulary learning, neural circuits are activated in piecemeal, incompletely and weakly. It is like receiving a glimpse of a partially exposed and blurry photo. With more experience, practice and exposure, the picture becomes more precise and more detailed. As exposure is repeated, less input is needed to activate the entire network. With time, activation and recognition are relatively automatic, and the learner can direct her/his attention to other parts of the task. To establish new neural networks and connections

between networks of words time is needed. The process of learning and word networking suggest that the neural mechanism for learning is essentially the same as the products of learning. Learning is a process that establishes new connections among networks and the new skills or knowledge that are learned are neural circuits and networks. So students need time and experience (practice) to consolidate new skills and knowledge to become fluent and articulated. After these stages, why specific children have difficulties in learning words, and there are differences in them? This is due to the deviations in semantic processing of the readers.

Semantic processing involves the meaning of words and sentences that one reads. One might depend in part on semantic processing to know that when they read "ball", it means or refers to that round, made of rubber/plastic, bounces when thrown and used to play. The primary goal of reading a text is to comprehend the context of the text. Semantic processing plays a vital role in reading comprehension which means extraction of meaning from printed text. So if there is an issue in the extraction of the meaning of a word or utterance, then the reading will become insensible. This problem is very much seen in children with dyslexia. There are a lot of lexical substitutions and lexical expansions seen in dyslexics in their reading and writing. Lexical substitutions are the substitutions of synonyms, antonyms, and hypernyms of the word. The lexical expansion is expanding the lexical item by its meaning, either in the form of sentence or phrase. Also, as they read the text, the meaning extraction of the content is also distracted.

The problems seen in all the levels of language are associated with the processing issues. The learning of different levels of language is associated with the cognitive processing skills (as in table 1) and due to cognitive processing issues children with Dyslexia have issues in any of the language levels. So *reading deficit can be seen as a result of a cognitive process deficit.*

From a cognitive point of view, information-processing theories occupy an important position in the study of children's reading development. Research has clearly shown information-processing factors to constrain children's word reading and reading comprehension processing (Radach, Kennedy, & Rayner, 2004).

1. Attention can be seen as a requirement for successful reading
   Importance of top-down attentional control of visual information processing and saccadic eye-movements in reading is seen Schuett, Heywood, Kentridge, & Zihl, (2008). Also, limitations in

the attention may cause reading problems (Adams & Snowling, 2001; Purvis & Tannock, 2000).

2. Perception and processing may also have an impact on children's reading acquisition.
   Problems in both auditory perception (cf. Tallal, 2000) and visual perception (Ramus, 2001) may lead to reading problems.
3. Working memory is one of the aspects of information processing studied most frequently in conjunction with children's reading development (cf. Seigneuric & Ehrlich, 2005).
   The processing of phonological information and morphological information along with semantics is a part of working memory. Word decoding problems are highly associated with problems in phonological awareness. Studies of Nation, Adams, Bowyer-Crane, & Snowling, (1999), Gathercole, Willis, Baddeley, & Emslie, (1994), Siegel & Ryan, (1989), and Baddeley & Della Sala, (1998) prove how important the working memory is for reading skills.

Table 1

Language levels	*Processing Skills related to the Cognitive process*	*Cognitive Processes*
Phonological	Phonological Segmentation Phonological Blending Visual Discrimination Visual Figure-Ground Visual Sequencing Long or Short-Term Visual Memory Visual-Spatial Visual Closure	Auditory Processing Visual Processing Processing Speed Short-Term Memory Long-Term Memory Working Memory
Morphological	Word Discrimination Word Memory Visual Discrimination Visual Figure-Ground Visual Sequencing Long or Short-Term Visual Memory	Auditory Processing Visual Processing Processing Speed Short-Term Memory Long-Term Memory Working Memory
Syntactic	Sentence Memory Long- or short-term visual memory Visual-spatial Visual closure	Visual Processing Processing Speed Working memory Acculturation Knowledge Fluid reasoning

Semantic	Word Discrimination Word Memory Auditory Comprehension Long- or short-term visual memory	Visual Processing Processing Speed Working memory Acculturation Knowledge Fluid reasoning

The Objective of the Study

As many researchers in the Western parts of the world indicate that majority of children with dyslexia have processing problems at all levels of language learning and particularly significant delays in reading, poor performance weaknesses on discrimination and identification tasks of phoneme and morpheme. Also the study of developmental language disorders among dyslexics is a new area of research on Tamil children and also rarely done. The present study tries its best to see the implication of cognitive processing issues in language processing.

The present study aims to test the issues in processing skills and then concentrates on the phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic problems in the children with and without dyslexia at the level of reading Tamil and English.

Methodology

Sample Selection

For the present study, data has been drawn out from the study of the author's UGC Project —Identification and Remediation of Phonological Disorders among Children with Dyslexia and Samples from Centre for Speech and Language Disorder Studies, AU. Only Tamil mother tongue children were selected as the subjects for the study. Schools and remedial centres were selected on the criteria of best in education and service. The total sample size is 202. Of these, 101 were dyslexic children who were selected using the checklist for the identification of Learning Disability. The rest were 101 normal reading age control children selected for a comparative study. The distribution of samples according to the age, gender, and disability is represented in table 2.

Table 2

Age/Division	Boys		Girls	
	Dyslexia	NRAC	Dyslexia	NRAC
8 years – Class III	12	12	4	4
9 years – Class IV	15	15	3	3
10 years – Class V	16	16	2	2
11 years – Class VI	16	16	4	4
13 years – Class VIII	12	12	3	3
15 years – Class IX	10	10	2	2
17 years – Class XII	2	2	-	-
Total	83	83	18	18

A pilot survey was conducted in schools and remedial centres and subjects were selected by the following conditions:

1) The degree of co-operation extended by the schools and remedial centres for data collection.

2) Accessibility of schools and remedial centres and availability of a required number of students.

So the study has followed a Convenient Sampling Method.

Testing Procedure

The children were tested for verbal and non-verbal IQ, processing skills and reading skills. The children were selected on their IQ level ranges from average to above average when tested with Bhatia's Battery of Performance Test of Intelligence. Informal test was conducted to see the issues in cognitive processing skills (as listed in Table 3). Reading age for all children is measured by the reading evaluation materials both in English and Tamil.

Table 3

INFORMAL TESTS	
Auditory Processing Test	Visual Processing Test
• Word Discrimination • Word Memory • Phonological Segmentation • Sentence Memory • Phonological Blending • Auditory Comprehension • Numbers Forward • Auditory Reasoning	• Visual Discrimination • Visual Figure-Ground • Visual Sequencing • Long or Short-Term Visual Memory • Visual-Spatial • Visual Closure • Letter and Symbol Reversal

Materials for the Test of Reading Skill

- Materials were prepared for testing phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic skills (Tamil).
- The following materials were used for testing:
  - Dolch Word List (English)
  - Individual Evaluation Procedures in Reading (by Thomas A. Rakes, et. al.)
  - Comprehension passages in English
  - Tamil Graded Word List for Tamil
  - Phonological Skills Test in Tamil (I & II)
    - Phonics and phonological awareness test
  - Morphological Skills Test in Tamil
    - Morphological awareness test
  - Comprehension passages in Tamil
  - Their text books

Method of Analysis

The quantitative and qualitative types of analysis were applied to describe the test of language processing problems. Qualitative analysis was used to compare the data of children with dyslexia and normal reading age controls.

a) Quantitative analysis

The mean scores for normal reading age controls and dyslexic children were arrived at to analyze qualitatively for the following hypothesis.

1. There is a significant difference between phonological problems in normal reading age control children and dyslexic children.
2. There is a significant difference in phonological deviations in Tamil and English.
3. There is a significant difference between dyslexia and normal reading age controls in morphological processing.
4. There is a significant difference in inflectional and derivational processing.
5. There is a significant difference in morphological deviations in Tamil and English.
6. There is a significant difference between dyslexia and normal reading age controls in syntactic processing such as simple, compound and complex sentences.

7. There is a significant difference between syntactic processing in Tamil and English.
8. There is a significant difference between dyslexia and normal reading age controls in semantic processing like proposition extraction and lexical accessing.
9. There is a significant difference in proposition extraction in Tamil and English.
10. There is a significant difference in lexical accessing in Tamil and English.

b) Qualitative analysis

The data were analysed and classified into phonological processing problems, morphological processing problems, syntactic processing problems, and semantic processing problems.

Results and Discussions

The results of the analysis of phonological processing, morphological processing, syntactic processing, and semantic processing of Children with and without dyslexia were done and the results are discussed.

a. Phonological processing

Phonological processing problems were classified according to the pattern given below:

Figure 1 shows the method of classification of Phonological Processing Problems.

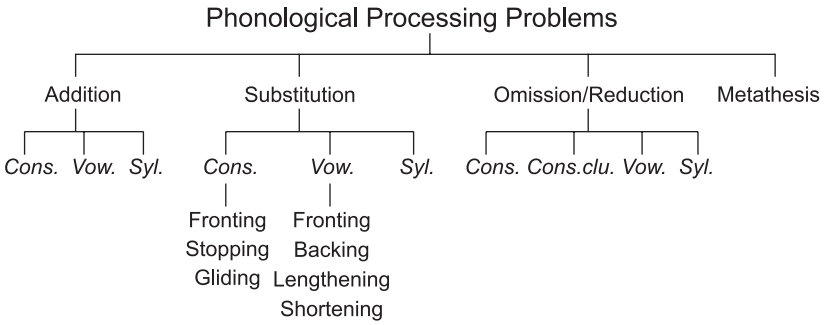


Figure 1

The analysis of qualitative data of phonological processing represents the following:

i. In addition:
   a. Vowel addition seems to be more in English.
   b. Syllable addition seems to be more in Tamil.
   c. Percentage of syllable addition seems to be more or less same in Tamil and English.

ii. In substitution:
   a. Syllable substitution seems to be more in English.
   b. Vowel lengthening and shortening seems to be more in Tamil than in English.
   c. Percentage of consonant fronting, vowel fronting and vowel backing seems to be more or less same in Tamil and English.
   d. Problems in gliding are more in English than in Tamil.

iii. In deletion:
   a. Consonant reduction seems to be more in English.
   b. Syllable reduction seems to be more in Tamil also.
   c. Vowel diagraphs seem to be more in English than in Tamil.
   d. Consonant diagraphs seem to be more in English than in Tamil.
   e. Consonant blends seem to be more in English than in Tamil.
   f. Percentage of vowel reduction seems to be more or less same in Tamil and English.

iv. Percentage of metathesis seems to be more or less same in Tamil and English.

The results stated above is represented in table 4:

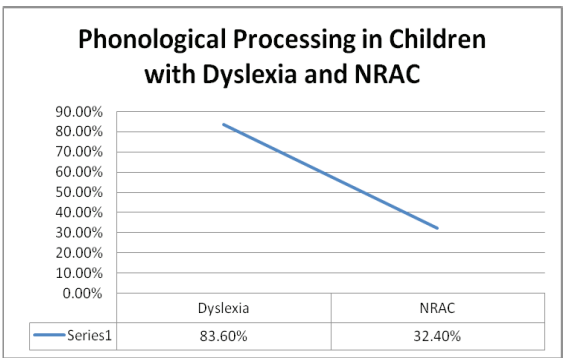
Table 4

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Addition</th><th>Substitution</th><th>Deletion</th><th>Metathesis</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Vowel</td><td rowspan="2">E > T</td><td>lengthening and shortening
T > E</td><td rowspan="2">T = E</td><td rowspan="3">T = E</td></tr>
<tr><td>vowel fronting and vowel backing
T = E</td></tr>
<tr><td>Consonant</td><td>-</td><td>gliding E > T</td><td>Diagraphs and blends
E > T</td></tr>
<tr><td>Syllable</td><td>T > E</td><td>E > T</td><td>T = E</td><td></td></tr>
</table>

b. The qualitative and quantitative data accepts the stated hypothesis 1 and rejects the hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 1: There is significant difference between phonological problems in normal reading age controls and children with dyslexia is accepted which is represented in Graph 3.

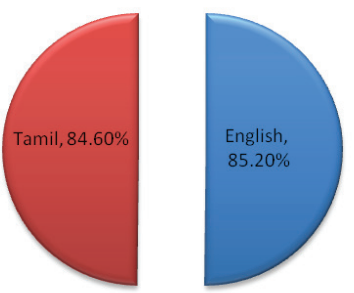
Graph 3 shows percentage of errors in Phonological Processing between the Children with Dyslexia and Normal Reading Age Controls.



Graph 3

Hypothesis 2: There is a significant difference in phonological deviations in Tamil and English is rejected which is represented in Graph 4.

Graph 4 shows the percentage of errors in Phonological Deviations in Tamil and English by children with dyslexia



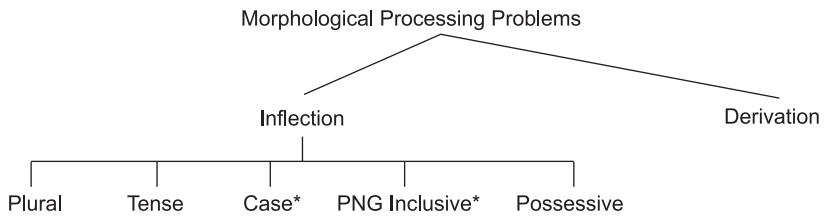
Graph 4

- In Tamil, the problem is more in vowel than in consonants. This might be because of the non-linearity of vowel diacritics in the Tamil language.
- Percentages of errors of normal reading age controls are comparatively very less than dyslexics. So it is proved that normal reading age control children are better in acquiring sound systems of language than dyslexics.

b. Morphological processing

Morphological processing problems found among dyslexics were analyzed and classified in the following way:

Figure 2 shows the method of classification of Morphological Processing Problems.



Addition, deletion and substitution are seen in all the above aspects.
*(not in the case of English)

Figure 2

a. The analysis of qualitative data represents the following:
   i. In additions:
      a. Additions are found in all case suffixes.
      b. Additions are mostly seen in accusative, dative and locative cases.
      c. Additions of the plural marker are found more in English than in Tamil.
      d. Present participle marker addition is found in English.
      e. Percentages of derivational marker additions are found to be more or less same in English and Tamil.
   ii. In deletions:
      a. The only deletion is found in inclusive marker.
      b. Deletions are found in all case suffixes.
      c. In English PNG deletions are found.
      d. Percentage of derivational marker deletions is found to be more or less same in English and Tamil.
      e. Deletions of the plural marker are found to be more in English than in Tamil.
      f. Deletions are found more in the ablative case.
      g. Deletions of the possessive marker are found only in English.
      h. Deletions of the inclusive marker are found only in Tamil.
      i. Present participle marker deletion is found in English.
   iii. In substitutions:
      a. Substitutions are found in all case suffixes except the

ablative case.

b. PNG substitutions are found more in Tamil than in English.
c. Substitutions are mostly found in locative, dative and instrumental; and both locative and dative substitutions are interchangeably found in more number.
d. Substitutions of the plural marker are found more in English than in Tamil.
e. Substitutions of the possessive marker are found only in Tamil.

The results stated above is represented in the table 5 below:

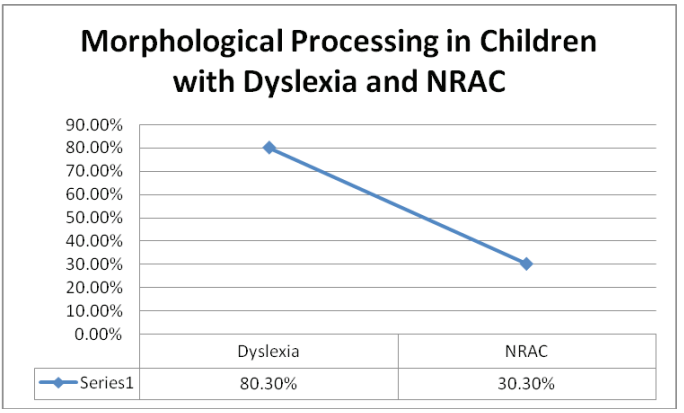
Table 5

		Addition	Deletion	Substitution
Inflection	Plural	E > T	E > T	E > T
	Tense	T > E Present participle	T > E Present participle	T > E
	Case* Only T	All Cases - More in accusative, dative and locative cases	All Cases - More in ablative cases	All Cases - Except in ablative cases
	PNG	T > E	E > T	T = E
	Inclusive*	Only T	Only T	Only T
	Possessive	T > E	E > T	
Derivation		T = E	T = E	E > T

b. The qualitative and quantitative data accepts the stated hypotheses 3, 4 and 5.

Hypothesis 3: There is a significant difference between children with dyslexia and normal reading age controls in morphological processing is accepted.

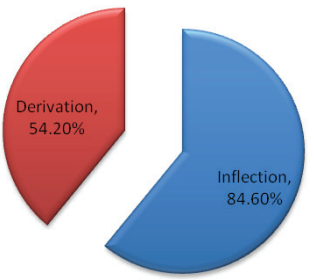
Graph 5 shows the percentage of errors in Morphological Processing in Children with Dyslexia and Normal Reading Age Controls



Graph 5

Hypothesis 4: There is a significant difference in inflection and derivational processing is accepted.

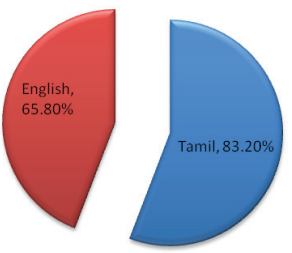
Graph 6 shows percentage of errors in Inflection and Derivation by Children with Dyslexia



Graph 6

Hypothesis: 5 There is a significant difference in morphological deviations in Tamil and English is accepted.

Graph 7 shows percentage of errors in Morphological Processing in Tamil and English by Children with Dyslexia



Graph 7

- A high percentage of errors is seen in the morphological processing in the reading process of dyslexic children when compared to normal reading age controls.
- Regarding derivation in Tamil all the three addition, deletions, and substitution are found but in English addition and deletion are found.
- All the three deviations, i.e., additions, deletions, and substitutions are found more in locative case.
- English tense marker all the three additions, deletions and substitutions more as in Tamil only substitutions are found.
- Plural deviations mostly occurred in English when compared with Tamil.
- Additions and deletions are found in English plural marker but additions, deletions, and substitutions are seen in Tamil plural marker.
- Morphological deviations seen in inflectional suffixes are more than those of derivational suffixes.
- Morphological deviations were mostly committed in Tamil when compared with English.

c. Syntactic processing problems

Syntactic processing problems found among dyslexics were analyzed and classified in the following way:

Figure 3 shows the method of classification of Syntactic Processing Problems.

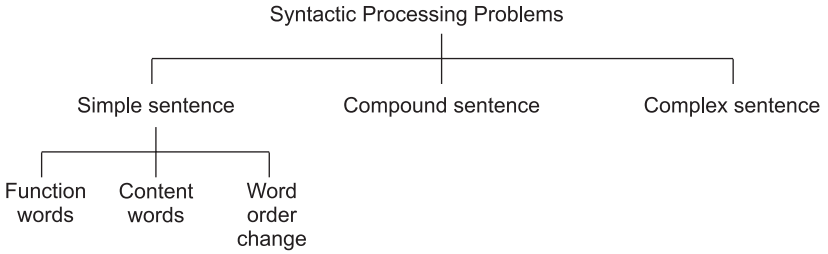


Figure 3

The analysis of qualitative data represents the following:

i. In addition:
   a. Content word additions are more in English than in Tamil.
   b. Function word additions are more in English than in Tamil.
   c. In Tamil, adverbs and adjectives are only added.

ii. In deletion:
    a. Regarding prepositions, only deletions are done.
    b. Content word deletions are more in English than in Tamil.
    c. Function word deletions are more in English than in Tamil.
    d. Functional words are more deleted than content words.
    e. Auxiliary verbs are like 'may', 'must', 'can', 'have' and 'has' in English and auxiliaries like */koɳṯiru/* 'present continuous marker,' '*viṯu*' in Tamil are most often deleted.
    f. Deletions are found in compound verb; here the second verbs are mostly deleted.
    g. Lexical items denoting negations are often deleted.
    h. Pronoun deletions are mostly found in English; in Tamil, it is very less.
    i. Adjectives and adverbs are mostly deleted with limited deletions regarding verb and noun.

Only additions and deletions are the processing problems focused in sentence level, and the substitutions in the lexical level are dealt with in semantics.

The results stated above is represented in the table 6 below:

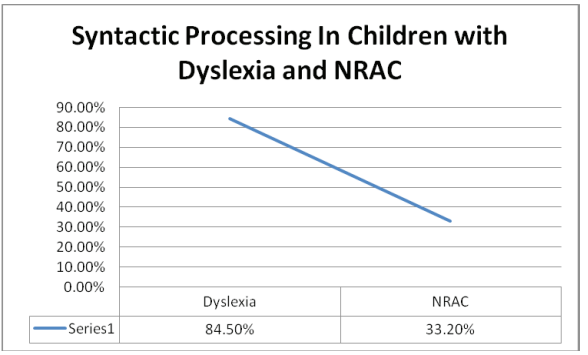
Table 6

		Addition	Deletion
Simple	Content Words	E > T In only adverbs and adjectives in Tamil	T > E
	Function Words	E > T	E > T
	Word Order Change	E > T	
Compound and Complex Content words, function words, word order change happens in clausal level		T = E	T > E

b. The qualitative and quantitative data accepts the stated hypothesis 6 and rejects hypothesis 7.

Hypothesis 6: There is a significant difference between dyslexia and normal reading age controls in syntactic processing such as simple, compound and complex sentences is accepted.

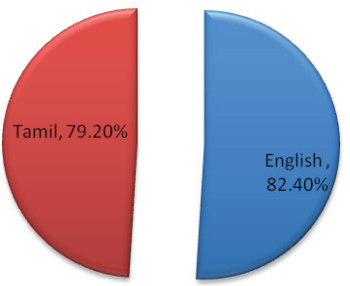
Graph 8 shows the percentage of errors in Syntactic Processing in Children with Dyslexia and NRAC



Graph 8

Hypothesis 7: There is a significant difference between sentence processing in Tamil and English is rejected.

Graph 9 shows the percentage of errors in Tamil and English by Children with Dyslexia



Graph 9

- Problems are found more in complex sentences than in compound and simple sentences.
- Additions and deletions are found while reading conjunctions.
- Both additions and deletions are mostly found in articles.
- Changing the word order is more in reading complex sentences when compared to simple and compound sentences.

d. Semantic processing problems

Semantic processing problems found among dyslexics were analyzed and classified in the following way:

Figure 4 shows the method of classification of Semantic Processing Problems.

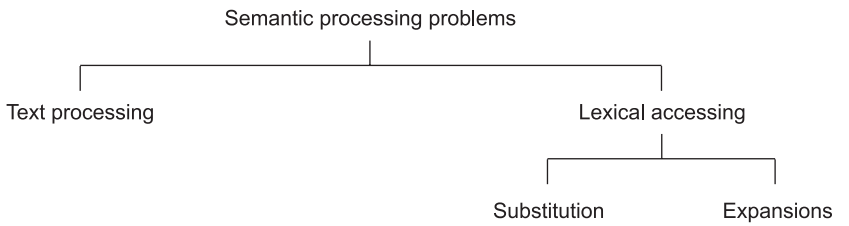


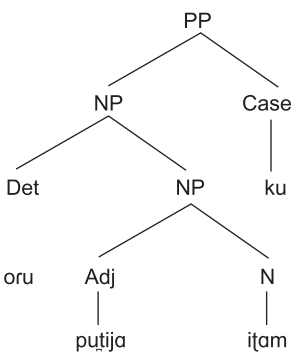
Figure 4

The analysis of qualitative data represents the following:

- Subject of the sentence is often deleted and substituted.
- Compound NP is changed into simple NP.
- Meaning distraction is found more in English than in Tamil.
- Object deletions and substitutions are found.
- Verb substitutions are found more.
- The reader focused on N in NP while extracting proposition in reading.

/o*vv*o*ɾ*u *va*:*ɾa*mum o*ɾ*u puṯṯj*a* i*ɻa*ṯṯirku celvo:m/
"every week we will go to a new place"
has been read as /*va*:*ɾa va*:*ɾa*m i*ɻa*ṯṯirku po:*v*o:m/
"every week we will go to place"

Here the noun phrase /o*ɾ*u puṯṯj*a* i*ɻa*ṯṯirku/ "to a new place" is substituted with /i*ɻa*ṯṯirku/ "to place" which is represented in the tree diagram below.



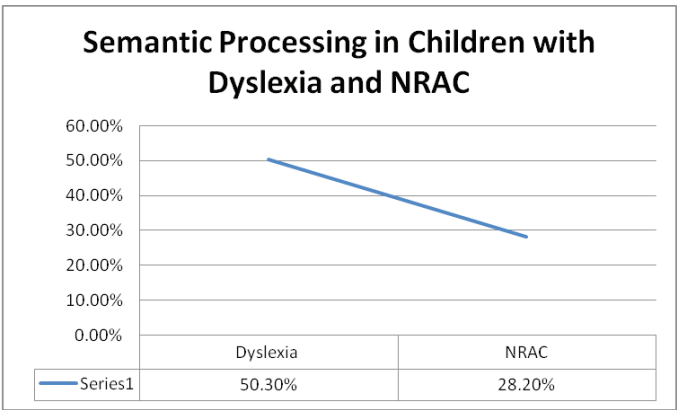
- Verb substitutions and deletions are found both English and Tamil.
- As the children's mother tongue is Tamil, they are able to get the context and are able to find out the related meanings though not the whole context.

- Regarding attending the comprehension exercises, children are
  - better in choosing the best and true or false than in fill in blanks and question answers.
  - very poor in question answer section.
  - able to comprehend better in Tamil than in English.

b. The qualitative and quantitative data given above accepts the stated hypothesis 8, 9, and 10.

Hypothesis 8: There is a significant difference between dyslexia and normal reading age controls in semantic processing like proposition extraction and lexical substitution and expansion is accepted.

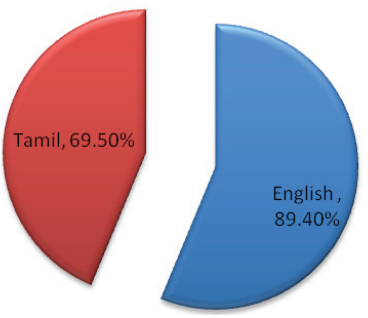
Graph 10 shows percentage of errors in Semantic Processing in Children with Dyslexia and Normal Reading Age Controls



Graph 10

Hypothesis 9: There is a significant difference in proposition extraction in Tamil and English is rejected.

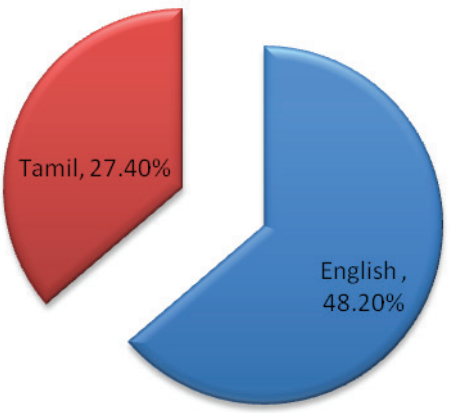
Graph 11 shows percentage of errors in Proposition Extraction in Tamil and English by Children with Dyslexia.



Graph 11

Hypothesis 10: There is a significant difference in lexical substitution and expansion in Tamil and English is accepted.

Graph 12 shows percentage of errors in Lexical Substitution and Expansion in Tamil and English by Children with Dyslexia.



Graph 12

- Lexical substitutions
  - While accessing the lexical item in reading, lexical substitutions are seen in prepositions, articles, Wh-words, and demonstratives also.
  - The lexical items are also substituted with their synonyms, and antonyms, its hypernyms, by words in the same domain and also very rarely unrelated words.
- Lexical expansion:
  These types of errors were very rarely seen, but made only when these children read known texts. The findings reveal that problems are more in complex and compound sentences than in simple sentences.
- Proposition extraction:
  Proposition extractions found in reading single sentences (simple, compound, complex, affirmative, negative, interrogative and exclamatory sentences) and graded comprehension passages.

Discussion

The deviations/errors identified above are discussed below:

- Problems are seen more in phonological and morphological levels.
- Many have avoided reading complex sentences.

- Most of the additions and substitutions show assimilations (either regressive or progressive) of phonemes, morphemes found in nearby words or sentences.
  e.g. / kaːʧil vaḷḷaiṉṯa koːŋalaːna *maram* iɾuṉṯaṯu/
  'in the forest, bent and twisted tree is there'
  has been read as
  /kaːʧil vaḷḷaiṉṯa koːŋalaːna *marattil* iɾuṉṯaṯu/
  'in the forest, bent and twisted in the tree is there'
- Redundancy is found in substitutions**.**
  e.g. /puːŋkaːvil vilaŋkukaɭum paravaikaɭoːʧu iɾuṉṯana/
  'in the park, along with birds, animals also were there'
  has been read as
  /puːŋkaːvil vilaŋkukaɭum paravaikaɭoːʧum iɾuṉṯana/
  'in the park, along with birds also, animals also were there'
- Deletions are the most systematic errors they make due to abnormal speed of eye-tracking.
- Emphasizing may be one of the reasons for adding suffixes as in the examples given below:
  /paŋŋaijaːɾ aṯai ṉanraːka vaɭarṯṯu *caṉṯaijil* virru viʧuvaːr/
  "Farmer breeds that properly and sells in the market."
  has been read as
  /paŋŋaijaːɾ aṯai ṉanraːka vaɭarṯṯu *caṉṯaikku* virru viʧuvaːr/
  "Farmer breeds that properly and sells to the market."

Concluding Remarks

This study followed a comparative study of two different groups of children (children with dyslexia and Normal Reading Age Controls) at the different stages of language processing, as due to the unavailability of standardized tests in the Tamil language. Earlier research evidence and the present study show that there is a relationship between attention, processing, perception and working memory with language learning. The children with dyslexia scored very low in processing skills test when compared to NRAC. Children of NRAC group who are good at processing skills have limited reading problems which are found to be significantly more in Children with Dyslexia who have processing problem. Problems are found both in Tamil and English learning. The methodology of language teaching for these children should adopt the techniques that involve the explicit teaching of the rules of the language with multisensory techniques that includes processing skills.

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