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Lokaratna is the e-journal of the Folklore Foundation, Bhubaneswar. *Lokaratna*; a peer-reviewed International journal with ISSN: 2347-6427. ***Lokaratna* is approved by UGC.** (UGC Journal Number: 47781). The purpose of the journal is to explore the rich cultural tradition of India for a wider readership. Any scholar across the globe interested to contribute on any aspect of folklore is welcome. This volume represents the articles on culture, folklore, education, and language pedagogy.

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Lokaratna is the official journal of the Folklore Foundation, located in Bhubaneswar, Orissa. Lokaratna is a peer-reviewed academic journal in English.

The objectives of the journal are:

- To invite scholars to contribute research papers on any aspect of folklore, literature, socio-political issues, linguistics and language teaching in English. They should be based on the theory and research methodologies widely adopted in the areas concerned, and on empirical studies with substantial field work.
- To publish seminal articles written by senior scholars on Folklores, making them available from the original sources. It would help present lives of folklorists, outlining their substantial contribution to existing resources.
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- To present interviews with eminent folklorists and scholars from India and abroad.
- Book Review is made by Folklore Foundation. So new books may be sent to the following address:

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**FROM THE DESK OF THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF**

It is a matter of great satisfaction that Folklore Foundation has been able to publish the annual e- journal Lokaratna to promote the diverse cultural knowledge of India and abroad.

I am thankful to the editorial board of this journal, especially Prof. Anand Mahanand, Executive Editor and Associate Editor Shubasis Nanda, for their endless labour to make this volume successful one. The articles capture the multifaceted aspects of culture, language and literature in the light of folklore.

Till now about 500 scholars across the globe have contributed their articles in the journal. This journal has also got an academic recognition in the global folklore scholarship. This journal has been accepted and placed in more than 70 digital libraries across the globe in addition to many folklore institutes.

I am thankful to Prof Mark Turin, Anthropologist and a Himalayan Scholar from Department of Anthropology, British Columbia University, Canada who has always been kind enough to provide support to Folklore Foundation in publishing the journal online.

I thank all the contributors of this volume to make this publication a successful one.

*Mahendra Kumar Mishra*

Editor in Chief

Lokaratna

## FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE EDITOR

*Towards an Interdisciplinary Dialogue*

*From the beginnings of literature, poets and writers have based their narratives on crossing borders, on wandering, on exile, on encounters beyond the familiar. The stranger is an archetype in epic poetry, in novels. The tension between alienation and assimilation has always been a basic theme. Jhumpa Lahiri, Writer*

In today's academic scenario, there has been emphasis on inter-disciplinary study. Researchers are encouraged to cross disciplinary boundaries and integrate ideas, insights and methodology from several disciplines, connecting different schools of thoughts. Disciplines are required to gain from one another. If a discipline does not do that and tries to maintain isolation, its survival is uncertain. However, if a discipline invites inputs from other disciplines and enriches itself, it will thrive and prosper. We have examples such integration in the fields of Psychology, Philosophy, and Education and so on. The journal Lokaratna beautifully blends folklore, literature, language and pedagogy. Articles that find place here usually integrate ideas and insights from anthropology, sociology, philosophy, psychology, education and so on. All these disciplines are related to human society. So they revolve around human issues. Some times some people ask: "Why are ELT papers put together with folklore papers? The response is whether it is folklore, literature, or pedagogy; all deal with human society. All contribute for exchange of ideas and interaction concerning different aspects of human life. So no subject is superior and no subject is inferior. We believe in multidisciplinary approach and hold that all disciplines can contribute to a particular theme. For instance, let us consider Environment as a theme. All disciplines including philosophy, literature, sociology, folklore, life sciences, economics can share ideas on the subject and enrich it.

We are happy to share that most articles in this volume are of interdisciplinary nature. One can note the integration of politics with literature, culture with language, history with folklore, aesthetics with culture, gender with cultural anthropology, caste, politics, sociology with culture, psychology with education : all are connected on different themes and topics.

Mark Turin in his article "Thangmi Cosmogony and Ethnogenesis" explores the cosmogony of the Thangmi community of Nepal who speak Thangmi; a Tibeto-Burman language. Amrita Banerjee's article "It's a new country! Folklore and nationalism in early children's literature in Bengal" is an attempt to study response of writers of children's literature to the colonial strategy of the British who tried to create a hierarchy among the natives. Avijit Kumar Dutta in his article "Fishermen's Origin Narratives in Assam" studies folktales that trace the history of the fisher folks. In her article "Voices from the Mountain : Folklore of the Dongruia Kondh", Dr. Priyadarshini Mishra gives an emic perspective on the various aspects of culture and life of Donguria Kondh tribe of Odisha. Balram Uprety's article "How You Dare Defy Me, I Shall See: the Contours of Hierarchical Conjuality in Nepali Teej Songs" explores the role of folklore in reclaiming the past through folk songs particularly through Teej songs. Pradip Kumar Panda in his article "Cultural Alienation: A House for Mr. Biswas" foregrounds how the protagonist is haunted by a sense of cultural alienation. Gouri Mandapaka's article "Transition in the Narrative Techniques of Chindu Bhagavatam: An Oral Folklore Technique" studies how the narrative technique has changed over the time to suit the contemporary taste. Abhijit Das in his article titled "Play and Games Among the Baigas of Madhya Pradesh: A Plea for Tribal Development" presents the folk forms such as play and game and emphasizes on inclusion and interpretation of indigenous cultural practices in tribal contexts. Shyam Babu's article "Experiment with Folktales: A Critical perspective in Karnad's *Naga- Mandala*" deals with Karnad's attempt to re-make a folktale and situate it in contemporary context. Jaya Pal's article "Things Fall Apart the Paraja Cannot Hold: A Comparative Study of the Selected Fiction of Chinua Achebe and Gopinath Mohanty" compares Mohanty's *Paraja* with Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and demonstrate how the indigenous cultures in both the novels are disturbed by outside invasion and the manner in which indigenous people respond aggressively to such cultural and economic invasions. Ann Mathew's article "The Vocal Memoir of Black Girlhood" deals with African women's intersectionalities of race, class and gender. V. Ranjani's article "Reclamation of Memory: A Study of Michael Ondaatje's *Running the Family* and Romesh Gunashekhar's *Reef*" highlights the role of memory that helps in connecting the diasporic people to their homeland. Bidyut Bhushan Jena's article "After the Rain: A Evening With Poet Ramakant Rath" narrates the creative endeavour of the prominent modernist poet Sri Ramakant Rath. Sikha Das's article "Construction of Gender and



Patriarchy: A Critical Reading of the film *Kothanodi*” is an attempt to understand gender, marginalization and possession in an Assamese film called *Kothanodi* produced in 2015 which is based on folktales. Kanki Hazarika’s article “ Reinforcing Gendered Subjects: Analysing the Folk Songs of the Bodos of Assam” analyses the gender perspectives in Bodo folksongs and highlights how the gender plays an important role in rituals and social practices of the Bodos of Assam. The article “Social Inclusion of Tribal Women” by Jharana Mishra and Saswat C.Pujari discusses how women take part in all aspects of social life unlike the upper-caste women. The researchers have collected data from Juang community in Odisha and have drawn their conclusion by analysing the data. Pooja Chetry’s article “The Socio-Cultural Practices during Menstruation Among Nepali Women in North-Eastern India” deals with the beliefs and customs that are followed during the menstruation period. Priya Soman’s article “A Socio-economic Analysis of Malai Pantarams of Attathodu” deals with socio-economic aspects of a tribe called Malai Pantarams. Surya Pratap Bharati in his article “Bandit Queen: A Testimony of Dalit Women” foregrounds issues of dalit woman as depicted in the film the *Bandit Queen*. Anupama Priyadarshi’s article “Performance in the Time of Displacement” looks into the issue of displacement in relation to rituals and cultural practices of the Santhal tribes of Jharkhand. Padmini Rangarajan in her article “Significance of Rural Folk Deities: Rituals, Culture, Belief System and Celebrations in Tamilnadu” studies the collective beliefs of people on female folk deities and rituals associated to them.

As mentioned above, almost all disciplines are concerned with different aspects of human society. Pedagogy is an important aspect of it. The next section has a number of articles dealing with pedagogy particularly with English language education. In their article Nilam Singh and hemanga Dutta “Pronouns of Power and Solidarity in Nepali: A Socio-linguistic Study” explore the pronominal system in Nepali Language in relation to the discourse of power and solidarity. Nittala Noel Anurag Prashanth’s article “Impact of Teachers Academic Experience and Training on Classroom Dynamics: An Exploration”; discusses what kind of impact teachers’ academic experience and training has on classroom transaction. P. Sunama Patro’s article “Reading and Accidental Vocabulary Acquisition” explores how these two are related and how they can enrich each other. Rukulu Kejo and Barkha Chhetri’s article “Linking Writing Development with Emotions: Towards a Person Centred Framework of Teaching Writing” shows ways of instilling

emotional confidence among learners and making writing an interactive classroom activity. The article “Children Learning the Ways of life in the Juang Community: A Case Study of Two Juang Dominated Villages of Keonjhar, Odisha” by S.C.Pujari and J. Mishra studies the games played by Juanga children and highlights their educational values. Suraj Nandkumar Dhumal’s article “Exploring ESL Learners Language Speaking Anxiety: An Exploratory Study” studies the reasons behind learners’ anxiety in speaking in a second language classroom and possible remedies to overcome them. B. Sudha Sai and K. Aruna Kumari’s article “Importance of English language Proficiency among Professionals in Andhra Pradesh: A Statistical Approach” discusses measures to enable professional skills by developing proficiency. Subhashini Rajasekharan and Rajesh Kumar in their article “Challenges and Strategies for Multilingual Education in India” reflect on the practical hindrances in imparting language education in rural and multilingual classrooms in Indian context. They also discuss the possible strategies that could be used to overcome such issues.

In this issue we have an interview with the prominent ELT expert Professor Alan Maley, who has made significant contribution in integrating language and literature in many creative ways setting examples for all teachers and researchers. Sharoon Sunny has done a commendable job in making us available the ideas and insights of Professor Maley through the interview. In book review section Dr. Mahendra Kumar Mishra reviews the book “*Parijata Harana*” by Basavaraj Naikar.

Here we take the opportunity to thank all our contributors, reviewers of articles and Editorial Board members for their help and support. We hope that our readers will enjoy reading the articles.

Anand Mahanand

Executive Editor, Lokaratna



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## Call for Papers

### Lokaratna Vol. XII, 2019

We invite original and un-published research articles in the fields of Folklore, Literature, Culture, Pedagogy and English Language Teaching for the second issue of XII<sup>th</sup> volume of *Lokaratna*; a peer-reviewed International journal with ISSN: 2347-6427. ***Lokaratna* is approved by UGC.** (UGC Journal Number: 47781). The next issue will be out in June, 2019.

It is **mandatory for all contributors** to adopt the following guidelines to write their papers:

- **Font - Times New Roman with 12 font size**
- **Line spacing - 1.5**
- **The paper must have an abstract of 150 -200 words.**
- **The abstract should be followed by about 5 key words.**
- **For citation and references please follow the APA style (6th Edition).**

Deadline for the submission of the manuscript is **31.06.2019** and could be sent to the following mail ID: [lokaratnaindia@gmail.com](mailto:lokaratnaindia@gmail.com)

**Note-** if any paper doesn't comply with the aforementioned guidelines, it would be sent back to the contributor(s). The corrected version of the manuscript is to be submitted within 10 days of receiving the paper back.

## THANGMI COSMOGONY &amp; ETHNOGENESIS

Dr. Mark Turin

*Abstract*

This paper re-examines the cosmogony of the Thangmi community, an ethnic group in current-day Nepal who speak a Tibeto-Burman language of the same name. The Thangmi (Nepali *Thāmī*) number around 30,000 and inhabit the central eastern hills of Nepal. The Thangmi are autochthonous to the upper reaches of Dolakhā district as well as to the eastern valleys of Sindhupālcok district, and their hitherto undocumented Tibeto-Burman language has two distinctly recognisable and mutually unintelligible dialects. While the Thangmi have been described by anthropologists and folklorists—both Nepali and foreign—as having no recognisable folklore or ethnohistory, the existence of a specifically Thangmi cosmogony and ethnic origin story suggests otherwise.

*Keywords*

Thami, Thangmi, Cosmogony, Origin, Oral Literature, Folklore

*1. The Thangmi Mythological World*

Although the Thangmi account of the world's origin includes identifiably Hindu deities such as Viṣṇu and Mahādev, and pan-Asian themes such as the lotus flower, these are mixed in with uniquely Thangmi elements. The following account is a distillation of the various stories that I have heard in the villages where Thangmi are either autochthonous or dominant, and where their language is still spoken. The stories were narrated to me in the Thangmi language with some reliance on Nepali. Each telling was different, even by the same narrator, and it is extremely difficult to determine which details are central to the story and which should remain peripheral. What I present here is a careful reconstruction that includes as many of the salient details as possible but few of the personal embellishments of the narrators. In brief, then, with the episodes clearly borrowed wholesale from Hindu mythology removed, the story is as follows.

*2. Genesis*

In the beginning, there was only water, and the gods held a meeting to decide how to develop this vast expanse of ocean. They first created a species of small insect, known in Thangmi as *korsani* (Nepali *kumālkoṭi*), but these insects could find no solid land on which to live on account of the water everywhere. Consequently, the gods created a species of fish, known in ritual Thangmi as *koṇorsa*, which could live in water. The *korsani* took to living on the fins of the fish, which protruded far enough out of the water to allow the insects to breathe. The *korsani* collected a species of river grass, *Saccharum spontaneum* (Nepali *kās*) which they mixed with mud in order to build dwellings on the

fins of the fish. The insects then built houses in each of the four directions: south, west, north and east.

One day, a lotus flower arose spontaneously out of the water with the god Viṣṇu seated in the middle. From the four corners of the lotus flower came armies of ants, known in Thangmi as *ṭiku* (Nepali *kamilā*). From the south came blue ants, from the west red ants, from the north black ants, and from the east white ants. These ants then killed all the *korsani* and destroyed their houses. The ants left, taking all the mud that the *korsani* had used for their dwellings, and collecting another species of grass, *Cynodon dactylon* (Nepali *dubo*), as they went. The ants then mixed this grass with the stolen mud to construct new houses.

Eventually the gods came together and decided to create people. Mahādev first tried to make a man out of gold, then one out of silver, then iron, and finally out of copper. However, none of these metal men could speak. Viṣṇu then joined Mahādev in the endeavour, and tried his hand at making humans. After constructing 108 piles of wood, he burnt each pile down to ash. He subsequently proceeded to mix each pile of ash together with chicken shit, and Mahādev and Viṣṇu used this mixture to make a new person. Viṣṇu built the person from the head down to the waist, while Mahādev built the human from the feet up. The two halves were thus made separately and joined together at the navel on completion. The human was now ready. The gods called out to him, and he responded, unlike the earlier men who had been made of metal and consequently had been unable to speak. On hearing his voice, the gods commanded the man to go and die. This he promptly did.

A thousand years passed. During this time, the man's spirit roamed the earth alone and in vain, and no other people were created. Eventually, the man's spirit ended up near Mount Kailāś, where it entered the womb of a giant sacred cow (Nepali *gauri gāi*) in the hope of being reborn. Having been inseminated by the man's wandering spirit, the sacred cow gave birth to three sons. These three men are the forefathers of all human beings.

### 3. *Thangmi Ethnogenesis: Narrative*

At this point in the story, the protagonists shift from amorphous pre-social beings to more human, ethnically defined members of a nascent society. The three brothers born to the giant sacred cow come to represent three identifiable segments of contemporary Nepali, and perhaps even South Asian, society. The first group are practitioners of religious traditions based on texts, i.e. both high-caste Hindus and Tibetan Buddhists. The second group are low caste Hindus and the occupational castes, who provide the foundational labour of their society, such as the *Damāi* and *Kāmī*. The third and final group represented by the three brothers are the hill peoples who speak Tibeto-Burman languages (including the Thangmi), who belong to neither of the former groups. The following sections of the narrative document the splintering of the hill ethnic groups, and I have chosen not to include the



details here. Instead, I fast-forward to the moment at which the Thangmi break off from their ethnic brethren and begin to order their own social world.

The forefather of the Thangmi, known as *Yaḷapa* or *Yaḷapati Chuku*, was the eldest of five brothers. These five brothers were sons of the proto-human deity *Narosetu*, the third son of the giant sacred cow and the progenitor of all ethnic groups speaking Tibeto-Burman languages in the hills of Nepal. Each of the five brothers is identified as the forefather of a different Himalayan subgroup. After residing for some years in the town of Ṭhimī, known as *Thebe* in Thangmi, *Yaḷapa* and his four brothers were forced to leave the town due to a conflict with local rulers. *Yaḷapa* went east with his youngest brother, *Kancapa*, while the other three brothers went west. After many days of wandering, *Yaḷapa* and *Kancapa* met two sisters who were the daughters of a snake spirit (Nepali *nāg*). The four travellers continued together, by way of Simraungadh or Simaṅghāt, until they reached the confluence of the Sunkośī and Indravatī rivers. There they met a boatman (Nepali *mājhī*) who ferried them across the river. They then continued to the confluence of the Tāmākośī, but only the two brothers and the younger of the two sisters could fit in the boat to cross the river, and the eldest sister, known variously as *Sunari Ama* ‘golden mother’ or *Sunari Aji* ‘golden mother-in-law’, was left on the other side by herself. They all continued up the Tāmākośī, with *Sunari Ama* walking alone on the near side of the river.

At the next confluence, the brothers split up. *Kancapa* and the younger sister walked up the tributary, while *Yaḷapa* and *Sunari Ama* continued along the Tāmākośī. From this point on, *Kancapa* is identified as the forefather of the Rai peoples living to the east of the Thangmi. Finally, after walking on opposite sides of the river for many days, *Sunari Ama* and *Yaḷapa* came to a place called Nāgdaha. While walking, *Sunari Ama* had been spinning a thread of the Himalayan nettle *Girardinia diversifolia* (Thangmi *naṇāi*, Nepali *allo sisnu*) on her spindle, and by the time they reached Nāgdaha it was long enough to plait into a coarse rope. She threw one end of the rope across the river to *Yaḷapa*, and he threw a length back to double it up and make a secure, if simple, bridge. In this manner, *Sunari Ama* finally succeeded in crossing the river to join *Yaḷapa*. So relieved were they to be reunited, that they decided to settle nearby in an area known to this day as Raṇṭhali or Raṇ Raṇ Thali. Having made a home, they then cleared parts of the jungle to make fields.<sup>1</sup>

From this point in the narrative, there are two slightly different versions. The first version suggests that *Sunari Ama* gave birth to seven sons and seven daughters, while the second account tells of seven sons and eight daughters, of which the youngest daughter does not marry, choosing rather to become a

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<sup>1</sup> In Thangmi, *raṇ* means ‘dry or unirrigated field, land’, and Raṇ Raṇ Thali would indicate a place with many fields..

nun.<sup>2</sup> Both stories concur that when the children were of marriageable age, the Thangmi parents had little choice but to marry their children off to one another because there were no other suitable partners. The children were paired off by age, the eldest son marrying the eldest daughter, the second-eldest son marrying the second-eldest daughter, and so on. Having witnessed and orchestrated the marriages, the Thangmi couple then assigned all of their children separate clans, both sons and daughters, thus making their shameful incestuous marriages more socially acceptable. The parents organised an archery contest to determine their sons' clan names, and assigned clan names to their daughters according to the kind of domestic work in which they were engaged. After naming the clans, the Thangmi parents pronounced a strict injunction against any further incestuous marriages. When they came of age, the next generation of Thangmi children were obliged to find potential spouses from one of the other clans rather than from their own parents' clans.

Nearby lived a wealthy and powerful king of what is the present-day Dolakhā region. He had a court fisherman in his service who was responsible for catching fresh fish for the palace every day. One morning, the fisherman returned to court with disturbing news: He had found small pieces of bamboo and wood chippings in his nets, obviously chopped by a human hand. No humans were known to live in the jungle surrounding the palace, and the king, being the *de facto* owner of all the land, immediately ordered a reconnaissance mission of his best guards to follow the source of the river and find the man or beast who had been using his wood without royal permission.

After returning empty-handed from many exploratory trips, the king's guards finally came across a small hut deep in the forest inhabited by a wild-looking man and woman: *Yaḍapa* and *Sunari Ama*. The guards surrounded the couple, apprehended *Yaḍapa* and escorted him to the king's palace. Fearing for his life, *Yaḍapa* brought with him a wild pheasant he had killed as an offering to appease the angry king. Once in court, the king interrogated *Yaḍapa* and charged him with living on royal land and killing royal game without permission. The king was angry, and sent the offender away under heavy supervision, fixing a date for him to return and receive punishment. On that day, *Yaḍapa* dutifully returned, but this time with a deer in tow as a present for the angry king. The king was now furious at what he saw as the wanton destruction of his regal fauna, and sent *Yaḍapa* away again, having fixed a date for their next meeting. Keeping his word, *Yaḍapa* arrived on the appointed day, this time with a mountain goat as a present for the king. The king could now hold back his rage no longer and informed *Yaḍapa* that he would be executed the following day. Understandably dejected, *Yaḍapa* returned home to *Sunari Ama* for the last time, and told her of the king's pronouncement.

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<sup>2</sup> More information on quite what kind of 'nun' this youngest daughter became has not been forthcoming. For most narrators of this tale, she is out of sight and out of mind. It should be noted that in Thangmi society, women who choose not to marry are often jokingly referred to as 'nuns' even though there is little expectation that they remain celibate, and they do not resemble the celibate Buddhist religious practitioners which spring to mind when one speaks of a 'nun' in a Himalayan cultural context.

While she had not travelled with him to the king's court on his previous visits, preferring to remain at home in the forest, she promised to accompany him the following day, and do what she could to prevent his execution.

Arriving at the palace the next morning, *Yaḍapa* was immediately incarcerated and it became clear that preparations for his execution were well underway. The couple were granted their final audience with the king, and *Sunari Ama* pleaded for the release of her husband, but nothing that she offered the king would change his mind. After much weeping, howling and bargaining, she offered to present the king with something that he couldn't already have in his palace: a golden deer. This she miraculously did, and also produced a beautiful golden plate from within the long, tangled braids of her hair. The king was greatly impressed and immediately released *Yaḍapa* from captivity and granted the couple leave to settle on his land. As a token of his gratitude for the exotic presents, he asked them how much land they wanted, to which the couple replied, 'no more than the size of a buffalo skin'. The king urged them to accept more, but they refused, requesting only that a buffalo skin be brought so that they could show the king exactly how much they desired. This was duly done, and *Yaḍapa* proceeded to cut the dried skin into extremely long, thin strips, which he then laid out in the shape of a huge square, encircling much of the kingdom, and promptly demanded that the ruler honour his offer and let them have a piece of land that size.<sup>3</sup> So impressed was the king with the wit and ingenuity of the Thangmi couple that he honoured his pledge and granted them their request. Confident in the king's promise, *Yaḍapa* and *Sunari Ama* returned to their previous habitation as the rightful owners of land stretching from the Thangmi village of Ālampu in the north to the Sunkośī river in the west.<sup>4</sup>

Delighted by this unexpected resolution to their predicament, *Yaḍapa* and *Sunari Ama* returned to their family. *Yaḍapa* instructed his seven sons, married to the seven daughters, to migrate to and settle in far-lying parts of the area that they had been given by the king. In order to determine where each son would settle, a second archery contest was organised. Together the seven brothers climbed to the top of Kālincoḥ ridge and shot their arrows as far as they could in diverse directions. Each brother then tracked his arrow and settled where it had landed. The contemporary names of these original seven settlements, most of which still have Thangmi inhabitants, organised by descending order of the age of the sons who settled there are: Surkhe, Suspā, Dumkoṭ, Lāpilāñ, Kusāti, Ālampu and Kuthisyāñ.

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<sup>3</sup> Readers familiar with the Tibetan origin story of Bodhnāth Stūpa will note a striking resemblance in these details. The story of Bodhnāth tells of a female Tibetan trader who petitioned the local ruler to grant her a piece of land the size of a buffaloskin to build a stupa for Buddhist merit. The ruler agreed and she proceeded to cut the hide into thin strips which she laid out in what is the present-day arrangement of the Bodhnāth Stūpa. The use of buffalo hide to demarcate the limits of land is clearly a common motif.

<sup>4</sup> The southern and eastern borders of their land are not defined in this version of the story.

In all of these places, the Thangmi were granted exclusive hereditary rights to the land and maintained them until comparatively recently through the *kipat* system.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4. *Thangmi Ethnogenesis: Analysis*

The account of the provenance of the Thangmi ethnic group narrated above is interesting for a number of reasons, but in this short section I shall concentrate on only one of the many issues it raises: incest.

Incest involves sexual relations with people who are close relatives, or perhaps more correctly, with individuals who are believed to be close relatives. While the incest taboo is as close as one can get to a human universal, since all known cultures have some form of prohibition against it, quite who qualifies for inclusion in the taboo and how the taboo is constructed is specific to each cultural grouping. Even within Nepal there are significant variations. Some members of the Thakali community, for example, still practise preferential cross cousin marriage by which a young man will be encouraged to marry his mother's brother's daughter, and a young woman may be foresworn to her father's sister's son. In Thakali society, however, the relationship between parallel cousins is akin to that of siblings and thus fundamentally contravenes the incest taboo. By Thakali reckoning then, sex between cross cousins is not incest because they are not considered to be relatives of the same order as parallel cousins.

According to the rules of Thangmi descent, both cross cousin and parallel cousin marriage fall within the domain of incest. The union of the seven brothers with their seven sisters described above is still taken quite literally by many in the community, and the incestuous nature of the origin story continues to cause many Thangmi consternation and shame. Being beef-eaters in a Hindu nation which prohibits cow slaughter, and further being situated towards the lower end of the socio-economic hierarchy, not to mention being largely unknown in the context of Nepal's many ethnic groups, the Thangmi community as a whole has particularly low self-esteem. This situation is exacerbated by what is seen to be a shameful origin story. There are, of course, plenty of young Thangmi men and women who do not interpret the origin story literally, whether it be the incestuous section or the account of the golden deer, and prefer to view the whole narrative as allegory.

However exotic and distasteful these incestuous unions may be to contemporary Thangmi sensibilities, the group is not alone in having an oral history which talks of sibling unions whence lineages or clans derive. In fact, the very prevalence of such stories all over the world led the French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss to posit that the practice of incest, and then a subsequent taboo on it, were fundamental patterns or 'structural' parts of what he called 'mythologies'.<sup>6</sup> One of the best

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<sup>5</sup> See Caplan (1970) and Regmi (1976) for detailed discussions of different forms of land ownership in Nepal.

<sup>6</sup> The classic publication on this topic is Lévi-Strauss (1958).

explanations of the incest taboo is that it may have arisen to ensure clan exogamy by forcing people to marry outside of their direct family and close kin, thereby extending their network of social relations.

To conclude, since there were no other suitable mates for the children of the original Thangmi couple, the incestuous unions, the subsequent dispersal of the married children and finally their fragmentation into different clans, provide an archetypal explanation for the provenance of a small ethnic group. One can imagine how, from the highly symbolic and symmetrical unions of the paired children, a Thangmi incest taboo might have emerged.

The Thangmi are a distinct ethno-linguistic group indigenous to eastern Nepal but with important migrant communities in southern Tibet and in India's Darjeeling district. They speak an endangered Tibeto-Burman language known as Thangmi or Thami, and are known for their elaborate oral traditions and intricate oral literature. When performed, such orature resembles what we in the West would call poetry which is why it is included in this collection.

The existence of a specifically Thangmi cosmogony and ethnic origin story narrated by shamans, locally known as *guru*, is a defining marker of cultural identity for the group as a whole. Although the Thangmi account of the world's origin includes identifiably Hindu deities such as Vishnu and Mahadev, and pan-Asian themes such as the lotus flower, these are mixed in with uniquely Thangmi elements.

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## IT'S A NEW COUNTRY! FOLKLORE AND NATIONALISM IN EARLY CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN BENGAL

Amrita Banerjee

### *Abstract*

Children's literature in Bengal was introduced along colonial lines that attempted to inculcate colonial hierarchies between their native subjects and the colonial masters. However a growing nationalist politics addressed this fertile sphere of influence by legitimizing the forgotten and marginalized native imaginative literature. Anti-colonial politics of the Swadeshi era, in its oppositional stance to colonial modernity, gave further push to a cultural revival of indigenous literature and folklores. By the end of nineteenth century literature for children in Bengali had moved from its initial simplistic didactic roots to contentious zone of identity politics. In their search for authenticity the folk culture revisited as a site for cultural reinvigoration. My paper attempts to read Abanindranath Tagore's *Khurer Putul* (1986) as crucial tract of the growing national consciousness and its strategic positioning of the 'child' within it.

*Key Words:* Children's Literature, Nationalism, Folklore, Colonial education, identity.

The Anglicist phase of educational reforms riding on Macaulay's famous minutes attempted to instill a colonial supremacy and belligerent subject-hood with the clever introduction of English literary productions in the colony. Marked as culturally superior English Literature, and by extension English education, was introduced as a touchstone of cultural ascendancy. Gauri Viswanathan in her essay "Beginnings of English Education in India" (1987) contends that as an ideological tool English literature almost substituted a 'surrogate Englishman' in all his glory and perfection (p.23). The first bunch of children's books circulated in the native markets was the translated versions of popular children's classics from the west. Although these translations were quiet popular the thrust in these early years of children's literature in Bengal were in producing proper textbooks for the newly established colonial schools across the region. Instilled in the Macaulian virtues the early children's literature introduced in India by the missionary sahibs aimed at spreading the 'wise teachableness' to her colonial subjects. In Bengal, print culture brought with it the early School Book society Age of children's literature that attempted through its simplistic

publications like *Digdarshan* (1818) to flood the native market with textbooks, “the perusal of which may be the means of advance in the scale of civilization of all the inhabitants of the British territories in India” (Gopal, p.118).

When concerned native scholars like Madanmohan Tarkalankar and Ischwarchandra Vidyasagar joined the campaign in reclaiming this fertile territory; their texts nevertheless betrayed what Sibaji Bandyopadhy termed as the “Gopal-Rakhal dialectic”, a veiled follow-up on the incomplete mission of colonial modernity in its utilitarian and empiricist pedagogy. First conceived by Vidyasagar in his educational primer *Barna Parichay*, ‘Gopal’ in his abiding servility becomes the emblematic image of the ‘good’ child and disciplined subjecthood, while the abrasive child, “Rakhal’s” riotous individuality warned of rebellion and chaos. This dyadic narrative of ideal childhood marks the early literary productions and premiers on childhood in Bengal. As Bandhopadhyay points out, according to Vidyasagar, the essential relation that the adult shared with the child is that of a provider and provided and therefore demanded a level of servility from the child. However these mutually exclusive boundaries, so well entrenched by colonial education, had constantly been flouted in the realm of alternative literary production particularly in realm of the indigenous folklores and other non-canonical art forms.<sup>1</sup> It is in the unfettered domain of indigenous mass culture, away from the formal *bhadralok* educational pedagogy, that our early nationalist crusaders located any possibility of cultural revival. Thus by the second half of the nineteenth century a formidable range of native literary productions had come up that stressed the importance of these ‘lost’ lores and captivated its young audience with an alternative romance of cultural resurgence.<sup>2</sup>

By the late century oppressive political maneuvers, like Lord Curzon’s diplomatic decision to partition Bengal in 1905, further fuelled an outburst of rebellion both in the material and cultural productions of the era. The Swadeshi movement in its oppositional stance to the colonial modernity located possibility in a cultural revival of indigenous literature and folklores. By the end of nineteenth century literature for children in Bengali had moved from its initial didactic roots to more patriotic productions that aimed at addressing the idea of ‘desh’ or country. Children’s magazines and other leisure-reads no longer bracketed their productions in classic mixing of instruction and delight but tried to politically awaken its young audience by publishing a variety of snippets on science, geography and world politics (Goswami, 2012, p. 140). Stalwarts of Bengali literary nationalism like Pramacharan Sen, Trailakyanath Mukhopadhyay, Upendrakishore Raychaudhury,

Rabindranath Tagore and Abanindranath Tagore veered their attention to etching out a pleasurable and original literature for children as an alternative to the existing pedantic textbook compilations. The revival of Bengali folklore in the children's literature of the time became a potent force to hail native traditions that unlocked an imaginative domain of the enchanted and extraordinary. In his preface to Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumdar's *Thakumar Jhuli* (1907) Rabindranath equipped that the folk narratives are "extremely feminine", replete with the "maternal love of entire Bengal". Therefore

when the youth of Bengal hears the tales he is not only happy to listen to the stories related – the melody of Bengal's eternal love for the young enters his imagination, enriching him with appropriate emotion. That original and pristine emotion of eternal Bengal is now hard to find. *Even the girls* have forgotten their natural language, thanks to so-called education. (qtd in Bandhyopadhyay, p.71)

As a counter-point to the institutionalized colonial education that bound the child in its pedantry and clock time, Tagore calls for a return to interactive *pathshalas* of our 'modern grandmas' – to loosen the imaginative wealth of our native culture. As Supriya Goswami writes a common cultural antiquity is located in the untainted rusticity of Bengali countryside for both the adult reader and child listener based on common folk culture. She writes "Rabindranath Tagore's validation of folklore – echoing the romantic nationalism of the British Romantic Poets who glorified children and common folk as embodiments of purity and innocence – ignited an interest in compiling Bengali folk tales and rhymes (p.141).

In the wake of this revivalist tendencies Abanindranath Tagore, nephew of Rabindranath Tagore wrote *Khiner Putul* (1896) based on a compilation of local folklores by Rabindranath's wife, Mrinalini Devi. It is interesting that it is the 'urbane' western educated Rabindranath's 'country' wife, Mrinalini Devi, who took up his challenge to record these untainted folklores of Bengal countryside in her dairy. This incomplete tract later found by Abanindranath becomes the *Khiner Putul* as we know.<sup>3</sup>

*Khiner Putul*<sup>4</sup> replays the essentialist nationalist narrative of regeneration and reinvigoration of the fallen nation. The Raja who has displaced his devoted first wife for the fancies of the younger one is the quintessential nation blinded by the onslaught of colonial modernity. Within this dynamics the narrative reinforces the nationalist myth of the 'ideal woman' by deliberately codifying her space in opposition to what is denounced as her inauthentic self. So the neglected Duo Rani fades away in obscurity stressed by her repetitive

“lone” privileges in opposition to the fabled “seven” glories of the other. Soon into the story the blinded Raja takes a momentous pleasure trip that brings in the pivotal crisis in the drama.

Before embarking on his journey across the ‘seven seas’, the Raja had asked his wives for their wishes. The materialistic Suo Rani catalogs an array of worldly ornaments – pearls, stones and dresses. The childless duo Rani wants nothing but a domesticated monkey, drawing attention to her miserable lot. The raja returns with the choicest jewels yet nothing seems to fit/satisfy the worldly queen. The Duo rani however showers the anthropomorphic monkey with instant love and devotion of an ideal mother. It is this monkey “son” that becomes the purveyor of change. He first concocts a tale of false pregnancy and manages to restore some of the lost glory of his ousted mother. The gullible raja enthusiastically falls for the bait. The tension builds up in the story when the Raja demands his to see his child- the future of his kingdom. Tagore ventures into folksy fertility myths of the Shashthi to miraculously reinvent this fictional child. The story ends in scene of celebration culminating in marriage, bliss and restoration of a more just order.

My paper attempts to read this iconic children’s fiction as a crucial document of the growing nationalist paradigm that shifted its attention from the public sphere to the inner domain to counter the onslaughts of a colonial modernity. Partha Chatterjee’s (1993) “Whose imagined community?” makes the crucial claim that Third World nationalism was not necessarily a mimetic consumption of a European model. The career of nationalism in India proceeded in creating an autonomous cultural ‘inner’ domain in opposition to the material ‘outer’ domain. The outer domain remained a world of deprivations and compromises that the native was at a loss to encounter. Without the possibility of political autonomy the nationalists jealously strived to carve out an area of limited private autonomy in its spiritual sphere. According to Chatterjee is in this inner domain that nationalism refashions itself as “modern” national culture that is original and creative yet distinctly non-Western.

It is in this vein that the domain of the ‘family’ emerged as a private sphere of intervention in forging the nationalist aspirations. The family unit has always served as a brilliant model for the nation because of its conceived protective and governing nature. The family as a constitutive unit, like the nation, could be seen as “naturally given” and imagined along primordial lines. As Pradip Kumar Bose writes:

Thus central to the creation of the new private life was the idea of the nation conceived as an ideological force, where the male child was to play a crucial role in

the construction of the future national culture and identity. The family was conceived as the repository of civilizational values and the spiritual essence of the national culture, and the child became part of what was desired or asserted (Bose, p.124).

Recovery of the nation was directly linked to regeneration in the private premises of the home and family. The family as a proto-nation required increased supervision and regulation in order to deliver modern and advanced future denizens of the conceived nation. By the middle of the nineteenth century this understanding had already produced an array of advisory and cautionary tracts on questions of home management, child education, dietary regulations, health and hygiene. The role the women / mother is harped upon as the key interventionist in this model. Critics bemoaned the growing fatality of the sick and malnourished childhood plaguing the Bengal. By its complicated logic a negligent mother ruins the child and by implication the family which in turns pollutes the society or the nation. Therefore training and care is required in building the national character. As a tract on domestic science emphasized “Well-trained children are the pride of the country” with bad training and corrupt morals, they only bring disgrace to the family and become the scum of the nation”. (Bose, p.123). A direct link is forged between national regeneration and restructuring childhood.

As Bose asserts it meets Anderson’s conception of “a halo of disinterestedness” which calls for sacrifices. However the burden of sacrifices now falls upon the parents – as supervisors of national character building to nurture future generations along the principals of austerity and self-deprivation. It is important that the governing principals of childrearing operate as a constant reminder of the subjugated and improvised state of the colonized nation. Cautionary notes are made regarding overindulgence and luxurious lifestyle as being inimical to national character formation. In conceiving the ideal along ascetic renunciation over a European styled self-directed personality childhood is re-imagined along “modern” nationalist principals.

It is curious that the nationalists conceived ‘childhood’ as important zone of intervention because as Ashis Nandy writes in *Reconstructing Childhood*(1984-85) the idea of childhood had acted as important narrative of colonial and disciplinary control. Childhood as a particular stage in maturation is a particularly modern concept that saw adulthood as synonymous with maturity, rationality and completeness while childhood was seen as “an inferior version of an adult- as a lovable, spontaneous, delicate being who is simultaneously

dependent, unreliable, willful and succourant and, therefore, someone who needs to be guided, protected and educated as a ward (Nandy, p.159). Colluding with of idea of progresses and modernity, this binary and transitional conception of adulthood/ childhood acted in reinstating the colonial narrative of “white man’s burden” that necessitates the adult European intervention.

Much of the contemporary readings on nationalist phase have researched on the glorification of the mother image as the ‘ultimate identity’ of the women in its equation with the nation. As Jasodhara Bagchi points out in *Representing Nationalism* (1990) by conceiving the nation in the dual image of the “unselfish, all-suffering, ever forgiving mother” that provides refuge to her “neglected son” and also the powerful Shakti who avenges all wrong, the nationalists fraught the mother image with revolutionary potential. Abanindranath Tagore’s Swadeshi iconography conceived a Bharat Mata endowed with the familiarity of the everyday Bengali mother mythicized by a spiritual halo that provoked both awe and adoration<sup>4</sup>. However this glorification of motherhood acted as a consolatory and constrictive instrument in the hands of the nationalist patriarchy:

The internalisation of this so-called ideal that nationalism put up for women simply reinforced the traditional notion that fruition of women’s lives lay in producing heroic sons....Numerous women died, trying to produce yet another son. Numerous women were deserted for their failure to produce a male child (Bagchi, p. WS 70)

*Khiner Putul* positions itself crucially within this nationalist narrative where Duo rani becomes the quintessential image of nationalist motherhood - haloed and deified as all-giving mother, yet exiled and dethroned not only by the colonial regime but by the lack of legitimacy of her claim as the bearer of the future “Sons of the nation”. From the onset the author sharply etches this narrative of entitlement and privilege that is validated by women’s reproductive function. Duo Rani’s sad plight then becomes a metaphor of national humiliation in the hands of the materialistic West (here the new queen or Suo Rani) sanctioned by the patriarchal Raja whose desire for an heir initiates the process. This theme of fall from former glory because of the colonial machinery is reinstated in various nationalist narratives of the era – from Bamkinchandra’s three images of the mother to Aurobindo’s mythical mother in his early nationalist text. Yet what is curious about *Khiner Putul* is how overtly it comes to play in an apparently children’s book. By sharply redrawing the boundaries between privilege and lack based on the fruition of the womb the text betrays



some of the patriarchal anxieties and biases of the emerging nationalism. Thus initially we come to know that the villainous second rani is responsible for Duo Rani's fallen state.

That demoness used black magic on my Raja and took away my seven storied palace, seven hundred maids, and seven locks of treasure. Now she resides in abundance on her flowery bed in her golden temple. She took away my Raja who was everything to me and made a pauper. (Tagore, my trans, p. 22)

It is interesting to note that what is lamented includes an array of material loss that accompanies this displacement from power. However a little further in the narration the relationship between fertility and privilege becomes apparent:

I had everything, but by some ill omen *I could not deliver a son* to the Raja. Alas! I wonder how I must have sinned in my previous birth...that I must lose my family, my womb, my husband to another....(Tagore, my trans, p. 22).

It is interesting that this lopsided situation is overhauled not by any change in the governing principals of validation but by the privileged positioning of the child- albeit not a natural one. It is Duo rani surrogate son – the anthropomorphic monkey who pledges to avenge the wrong that his mother witnesses. As Sumit Sarcar writes about the Swadeshi uprising a change could be seen in the national imagination at the wake of the political turmoil. “The old habits of slightly effeminate weeping over the present and casting nostalgic glances back towards a very largely imaginary past were gradually giving place to this new mood of confidence and optimism”(295) In almost a mimetic reinstatement of revolutionary patriotism we hear him pledge:

I shall avenge your sorrow, my mother. I shall return to you, your golden palace, your princely abode, and your seven hundred attendants. I shall reinstate you and your golden child in your rightful place, in the golden temple, beside the Raja. Only then shall I be true to my name. (p.22)

Tagore delves into the realm fancy and romance, suspending disbelief to aid this transformation. As the monkey cooks a tall tale of potential pregnancy the Raja is jubilant at the possibility: “What say you monkey? Is it true? The eldest queen will have a child?”(p.26) But close to this triumphant exaltation always lurks the threat of death penalty: “Know that if this news is proved false I will kill both you and your mother!” Duo rani is skeptical being once dispossessed for failing to meet this key criterion; but the Raja already dreams of a

glorious future. “If it’s a son I shall make him the king. If a daughter, then I shall give my kingdom to my son-in law. I was deeply troubled about the future; now all my troubles are gone.” (p.28)

The gendered bifurcation of this conceived future betrays the differential expectations at revolutionary dawn of new nation. In her new found status, Dou Rani’s plight undergoes an amazing transformation – dietary, sartorial and material. But Sou Rani like the colonial west doesn’t accept this switch ungrudgingly. She challenges the new order by attacking the source of disarrangement – sabotaging the possibility of a better future but poisoning the womb. Yet once again the Duo rani’s pet monkey like mythical Hanuman of Ramayana brings the magic potion that can rescue the situation. Duo Rani survives and the monkey spreads the word that a son is born. The raja is elated and wants to see his heir, but the monkey prevents catastrophe with yet another lie – see thy son before he marries and you fall dead. The raja agrees to wait till the marriageable age arrives. Ten years pass the date for marriage arrives. Duo rani knows she is now in a tight spot. But her monkey son confidently asks her to mould a condensed milk doll, dresses him like a prince and carries him in his marital palanquin to the bride’s village. On the way he deliberately devises it to be left unattended and provokes Shashti, the folk goddess of fertility, to seek her daily offering in the milk made doll.

It is interesting that Shashthi is almost duped and blackmailed to replace the doll with a real child. With Shashthi’s help the monkey steps into the realm of the fairyland to choose a child. Tagore draws on the folk narratives of everyday Bengali mothers - of the fabled sleep inducing sisters, Shashthi myths and popular lullabies to recreate an alternative world. It is crucial that this alternative universe is drawn in sharp contrast to the anxieties and lack of the colonial present. As the monkey describes it, “This is a new country, a dreamland. Here there are no schools, no schoolmasters, no canes. Here children run around and play...” (p.51)

Sanjay Sircar in *Shashthi’s Land* (1998) points out that there is a deliberate removal of landscape from the urban commercial space of the “bazaar-lands” or the domestic disputes of the two queens in the first part of the story, to a more rural setting in the later half:

So Dignagar, outside Shashthi’s Land, and Shashthi Land itself, at a time when ethnic cultural nationalism was a strong reaction to British colonialism, constitute a celebration of the Bengal countryside, and their customs of bathing, making sweetmeats, celebrating marriages, and fishing. Both are also a celebration of the

Bengal countryside with its fields, groves, river-banks, trees, and animals. (Sircar, pp. 33-34).

The monkey abducts one of these happy children from the fairyland and brings him to the king. The story ends like most fairy tales with a happy ever after - marriage and celebration. The king leaves his kingdom in the care of his newfound son, makes the brilliant monkey his mister while Suo Rani dies of heartbreak. In the end the unnamed territory is retrieved and peace and bounty befalls the land/ desh. Thus by giving the child/ monkey the pivotal role in the story Tagore implicitly puts the burden of action and change on his young and juvenile readers.

Seeped in indigenous folklore and myths, Khirer Putul, published at the turn of the twentieth century, remains a crucial document of the growing anxiety with the colonial situation and campaign for national rejuvenation. The colonial school based curriculum with its implicit didacticism finds its adversary in the uncharted domain of these native imaginative cultural productions. Written for the future 'sons of the nation' it marks the moment when the extraordinary complicates the prosaic binaries of colonial justifications and paves the way for an alternative identity.

#### Notes:

1. Rimi B. Chatterjee and Nilanjana Gupta New Delhi (2009) *Reading Children: Essays On Children's Literature* draws discusses the western influences on early children's writings in Bengal "Perhaps it was because the interaction of Bengalis with Britishers and Britishness was particularly close and personal that the idea of children's literature took root very early in Bengal." But goes on to elaborate how the "Bengali version, as with much else that was successfully naturalized, soon departed strongly from its European models" (Chatterjee and Gupta, Intro, p. 10-11)

2. Gargi Gangopadhyay's (2013) essay "'Our Motherland" Mapping an Identity in Bengali Children's Literature that appeared in Kit Kelen and Björn Sundmark eds. *The nation in Children's Literature: Nations of Childhood* provides detailed analysis of the rise of folklore and imaginative writings of this era. While discussing the growing nationalist trend in childhood writing she says: "Determined efforts to construct a deshbodh [a sense of nationhood] can be seen in the persistent ways through which the late-nineteenth-century

children's writers sought to recover the popular oral literature of their forgotten childhoods. Not only did they repeatedly relive and recollect the nostalgia of those "ideal" childhoods in their memoirs, autobiographies, and other non-fictional writings, they also consciously absorbed folk motifs and plot variants in their original writings for children" (p. 143).

3. Monideepa Sahu (2013) in *Rabindranath Tagore: Puffin Lives* discusses how Mrinalini Devi was inducted to the "ingabanga" (Bengalis exposed to English culture) after being married to the Tagore family. She not only goes through a name change but was formally schooled in the Loreto convent to accustom herself to the urbane and progressive Tagores.

4. For this paper I have translated a later day publication of Abanindrantha Tagore's Bengali text of Khirer Putul that appeared in 1986. The original was published in 1896. Gargi Gangopadhyay is her digital archive of Bengali children's literature notes: *Ksheerer Putul* was written as part of the *Balyagranthabali* or a children's books series. Conceived by Rabindranath Tagore around 1895, *Balyagranthabali* was at that time a novel venture. Aiming to produce a set of entertaining books for children the idea of such a series as well as the titles under its banner like *Nadi* and *Shankuntala*, signal an important turning point in the history of Bengali children's books. ([http://bengalichildrensbooks.in/Ksheerer\\_Putul.php](http://bengalichildrensbooks.in/Ksheerer_Putul.php))

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## FISHERMEN'S ORIGIN NARRATIVES IN ASSAM: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

**Dr. Avijit Kumar Dutta**

### *Abstract*

This research paper intends to discuss some origin narratives of fishing communities in order to observe how these narratives explore their beliefs in divinity and legends. Fishing communities in Assam nourish and cherish these narratives which reveal their faith in divine and legendary figures. Moreover, origin narratives of this occupational community also express their submission to divine powers. This research paper is an attempt to describe some of these narratives that represent belief patterns of fishing communities, living in Assam.

( **Key Words:** *Fishing Communities, Origin Narratives, Divinity, Legends* )

### **Introduction**

Origin myths may be defined as the accounts of the ways in which the supernatural agents formed the earth, the creatures and such other original elements by a series of creative acts. Human beings are always inquisitive of the origins of everything. They raise questions about the appearance of human species, the creation of the earth, the twinkling of the stars and so on and so forth. The answers to these questions deal with their fancy and imagination and from time immemorial, they believe that human beings, the world and all the natural and celestial objects were brought into being by a series of creative activities. This process of creation or the series of such creative activities are accepted as the work of some supernatural forces or supernatural agents. On the basis of these interpretations, there are numerous accounts of how these supernatural agents formed the earth and its people. These interpretations are generally considered as origin myths, which deal with the concept of originality, associated with the creation of the things and events.

Fishing communities in Assam enrich and practice various narratives that reflect their beliefs about their creation and the origin of them. These narratives express their faith and

beliefs about some divine and supernatural powers in the form of deities. Fishing, being a caste based occupation, is considered by them as a sacred practice and the acceptance of this occupation is also identified with some divine and legendary characters, glorifying their occupation and reflecting their beliefs in mythical characters.

### **Objectives of the Study:**

This study tries to focus on:

- Fishermen's Origin Narratives, defining and glorifying Occupation
- Fishermen's Origin Narratives, associated with Divinity
- Fishermen's Origin Narratives, associated with Legends

### **Review of Related Studies:**

Authors and scholars have already discussed belief patterns of the fishing communities. While some of them have narrated their narratives, myths and legends, some others have narrated their society and culture, based on their folk life. Some of such books are as follows:

In *Japanese Religions*, edited by Martin Repp, Johannes H. Wilhelm narrates some folk beliefs of the fishermen of Japan in 'Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the Beliefs of Japanese Fishing Villages: With Special Reference to Yoriiso (Miyagi) and the Sanriku Region'. In it, Wilhelm discusses the concept of *yama* (an empirical observable feature of topography and specific knowledge about the environment) which, he finds present in beliefs and customs of the Japanese fishermen.

In *Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy*, Raymond Firth makes numerous references to Malay Customs and beliefs which prevail in the occupational society of the Malyan fishermen. Apart from the social and economic conditions of this fishing peasantry, beliefs in spirits like the spirit of the sea (hantu laut), the rice spirit etc. are also narrated in this book.

Craig T. Palmer explains ritual taboos of fishermen in his work, titled *The Ritual Taboos of Fishermen*. In it, the author narrates the 'anxiety-ritual theory' with reference to the ideas, developed by Bronislaw Malinowski. Based on his questionnaire survey of lobstermen



in a port in Southern Maine, the author also discusses the apparent correlation between amount of ritual behavior and extended trip fishing.

Devendra Kumar Bezbaruah narrates some folk beliefs and traditions and culture of the fishermen of the Brahmaputra valley of Assam in his book *Brohmoputro Uppotyokar Koivarta Jatir Ruprekha*. The author narrates some common beliefs, prevalent among fishermen and analyses these beliefs in the context of Assamese society.

### **Methodology:**

This study relies on primary and secondary sources and brings out a descriptive analysis of collected resources.

#### **A. Primary Sources:**

In order to collect data systematically and scientifically, certain research methodology has been adopted during the field work in the villages of Assam, inhabited by fishing communities. During field survey, data have been collected systematically which have been processed and analysed in due course in order to achieve the scope and the objectives of this research work.

During the field work, observation methods and interview methods have been adopted to collect the relevant information. Directive and non-directive interview methods have also been adopted during the field study along with the survey method. Moreover, questionnaire method has been applied to get the relevant data. Similarly, the audio-visual techniques have been applied while recording the interviews of the informants.

#### **B. Secondary Sources:**

Library work has been undertaken in some libraries like Krishnakanta Handique Library, Gauhati University, State Library, Assam, District Library, Guwahati, Assam, Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute, Guwahati, Assam and Sivasagar District Library, Sivasagar, Assam. Some local libraries, situated at the villages, inhabited by fishing communities have also been visited while going to the villages for collecting information.

## Analysis

### A. Fishermen's Origin Narratives, defining and glorifying Occupation:

Fishing communities in Assam have some narratives to express their originality in the earth. The tendency behind these origin narratives refer to their incessant effort to equalize themselves with other castes and to uplift their identity in a society in which they are humiliated and become the victims of some barbarous customs that bring their position to the lower orders. While some of these original narratives deal with some folk deities, narrating their miraculous activities and association with fishing, some other narratives refer to the heroic deeds of some legendary figures like noble sages and kings who directly or indirectly had some impact on the folk life of fishing communities. Two of such narratives are as follows:

*Soubiri* was a sage. He gave up everything for the sake of a noble and virtuous life. He was in meditation to realize the power of the soul. One day, he felt the urge for sexual gratification. With the help of meditation, he sent his sperm to his wife through air. The sperm, on its way fell into the sea. A fish swallowed the sperm. After some days, the fish gave birth to a girl child. Her name was *Satyabati*, who later married and gave birth to thousand sons who became fishermen and the forefathers of fishing communities.

Different classes and castes may be compared to the limbs of Lord *Brahma*, as described in the scripture, the *Adi Jamal*. This scripture narrates that the *Brahmin* appears from the forehead of Lord *Brahma*. The *Kshatriyas* appear from the shoulders of *Brahma*. The *Koivartas*, commonly known as fishermen, appear from the feet of Lord *Brahma*. This analysis of the limbs of Lord *Brahma* is accepted by the fishermen that reveal their beliefs in the power of this divine spirit.

### B. Fishermen's Origin Narratives, associated with Divinity:

The Hindus believe in and worship *Vishnu*, *Shiva*, *Brahma* and some other folk deities. These folk gods and goddesses are depicted in our epics with their divine power and valour. These folk gods and goddesses have different names and manifestations at the folk level. Fishing communities in Assam accept these folk deities as the creator of their community. Beliefs in the divinity of these folk deities can be noticed in their folk society. Some of these origin myths of fishing communities, collected from field studies, undertaken in various parts of Assam are discussed in the following lines to see how these origin narratives explore the beliefs of the fishermen in divinity. Hence, their sense of imagining

deities as their kith and kin are also noticed in these narratives wherein rests the concept of some interesting stories.

Fish is the incarnation of lord *Vishnu*. Fishermen believe that Lord *Vishnu* helped them by becoming fish. Fishermen are the kith and kin of this folk god. Since fishing communities catch fish, they are associated with the fish incarnation of *Vishnu*.

*Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Maheswar* are the three brothers. *Brahma* created the heaven, the earth and water. Being the eldest brother, he ordered *Vishnu* to rule over *Devalok* (dwelling place of gods and goddesses) and asked *Maheswar* to become the chief of *Koilash* (dwelling place of Lord Shiva). *Brahma* started living in water and created fish in it. He also created fishermen to catch fishes from the waterbeds, his dwelling place.

### C. Origin Narratives, associated with Legends:

Fishermen often identify themselves with some legends, associated with the mysterious lives of some ancient kings and sages. As legends are set in a period, considered less remote, when the world was much as it is today, fishermen believe in the narratives, associated with these legendary figures with whom they find the association of their lives. These legendary characters and the narratives, based on their activities, commonly known as legends support their origin in this world from time immemorial. The following are some original narratives of fishing communities, associated with some noble kings and sages which reflect their beliefs in legends, associated with these ancient and historic figures.

King *Sagar* was the king of the world. During his reign, the world was full of water. *Sagar* was accustomed to fishing in the water beds. One day, he found ornaments, jewellery and many valuable metals in his net while fishing. Being a man free from instincts, he threw all those into deep water. *Narayana*, the Almighty was impressed with what the king did and appeared before him. The Almighty declared that the king must be an honest person as he did not have any greed for valuables. *Narayana* blessed him saying that the valuable metals would feed him and his future generation. Those ornaments and jewellery became the fishes and the king and his kith and kin took to catching fishes for earning money.

*Dhivar* was an ancient king. His tribe was engaged in fishing. The king was the forefather of fishing communities and the people of his country gave birth to all the fishermen and fisherwomen of the world.

## Conclusion

Fishermen's narratives and beliefs in Assam reflect their tendency to assimilate themselves with various deities, commonly worshipped by the people of Assam. Their occupation of catching fish is linked with these narratives as these narratives somehow refer to the habit of catching fish. Moreover, they are generally considered to be the outcastes and they are deprived of opportunities enjoyed by others. Under such circumstances, they incessantly try to equalize their position in society and to react against some barbarous customs that lower their social position. By sharing these narratives, fishing communities in Assam try to glorify their occupational identity by relating themselves with divinity and legends. By doing so, they try to prove that they are by no means inferior to other upper castes and social classes and have the same root and origin like any other folk people.

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### Appendix I

#### Names and addresses of the informants:

1. Bholanath Das	82 years	Azra, Kamrup, Assam
2. Harobala Das	65 years	Azra, Kamrup, Assam
3. Mano Das	58 years	Rangia, Kamrup, Assam
4. Shyama Das	65 years	Rajabari, Kamrup, Assam
5. Probhat Das	65 years	Solmara, Nalbari, Assam
6. Protap Keot	70 years	Solmara, Nalbari, Assam
7. Bishu Das	48 years	Tukrapara, Barpeta, Assam
8. Pachananda Das	70 years	Tukrapara, Barpeta, Assam
9. Saran Das	57 years	Alamgonjo, Dhuburi, Assam
10. Manik Das	85 years	Kakripara, Dhuburi, Assam
11. Subho Keot	33 years	Ajar Guri, Sivasagar, Assam
12. Arun Ch. Das	93 years	Boka Bill, Sivasagar, Assam

### Appendix II

#### Questionnaire- Pattern of the investigation:

1. Name of the Informant
2. Origin Narratives, defining Occupation of catching fish
3. Origin Narratives related to Divinity
4. Origin Narratives related to Legends
5. Origin Narratives and Folk Life

## “HOW YOU DARE DEFY ME, I SHALL SEE”: THE CONTOURS OF HIERARCHICAL CONJUGALITY IN NEPALI TEEJ SONGS

Balram Uprety

### *Abstract*

If present cannot be constructed and understood without past, the oral corpus remains invaluable for understanding our history as well as our present: who/what we are is intimately related to what and how we have been. One of the most important archives of our past is preserved in the corpus of folk literature.<sup>7</sup> However, in the study of gender in Southeast Asia, the use of oral literature remains curiously peripheral. It would be fairly safe to assume that the construction of the historiography of gender would remain incomplete without oral literature. Using the corpus of Nepali Teej songs, this paper seeks to show how the folk corpus can be used to understand the articulation of gender power politics in the conjugal domain of domesticity. Foucault says that the discourse of desire is also the discourse of power.<sup>8</sup> In other words, power is the matrix of all relations, including the conjugal one. Through a careful investigation of the Nepali Teej songs, this paper seeks to show the essential phallocentricity of the upper-caste conjugality. It would be wrong to assume that such phallocentricity has gone uncontested. The chauvinistic silencing and the attempted patriarchal erasure of Nepali women's resistance and protest underline the essential patriarchal violence that defines Brahminical Nepali conjugality.

Keywords: oral literature, gender, alternative historiography, hierarchical conjugality.

### **Understanding *Tij*: Contexts and Concepts**

Before analyzing the conjugal power politics in the upper-caste Nepali conjugality, it is important to define and contextualize *Tij*. *Tij* is considered one of the most significant folk festivals of Nepal.<sup>9</sup> The *Tij* in Nepal celebrates female agency as well as more quotidian

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<sup>7</sup> Birendranath Datta, *Affinities between Folkloristics and Historiography: Some Theoretical Implications in the Context of Medieval and Modern History of North-East India*. (Chennai: National Folklore Support Centre, 2002), 23-24.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, vol. 2, *The Use of Pleasure*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 20-32.

<sup>9</sup> The Indian festival that most closely approximates the nuances and gender paradigm of *Tij* is *karuva chouth*. The patriarchal metaphor of fasting—fasting for the long life of one's husband—underlines the similarity between these two festivals. What separates, however, the Nepali *Tij* from *karuva chouth* is the presence of songs. *Tij* songs cannot be separated from the ritual complex of *Tij*. More importantly, *karuva chouth* as well as the Indian avatar of *Tij* in Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand has remained largely archetypal and patriarchal. In the Nepali context, *Tij* songs have become, especially in the early 1980s and 1990s, the most



aspects of women's lives. Most importantly, *Tīj* is associated with songs, dancing and singing. In the eastern part of Nepal, the song that accompanies the celebration of *Tīj* is known as *Sangini*; in other parts of Nepal, it is simply called *Tījé gīt*.

Ajayabhadra Khanal states that in the social history of Nepal, especially in the hilly region, *Tīj* has played the most central role in the emancipation of women.<sup>10</sup> In the politically charged writing of leading Nepali editorial columns, *Tīj* becomes Nepali women and vice versa. It becomes an event that spans the lives of all Nepali women, not only the Hindu ones, thus linking the festival with the nation-building project. In the *Gorkhapatra Daily*, the editor writes that:

The ambience of the entire country has been carnivalized by the festivity ushered in by the *Haritālikā Tīj*. Unforgettable is the ever-swelling confluence of literature, music and art collectively created by women participating in *Tīj*. It must be the uniqueness of *Tīj* that it is not confined amongst Hindu women alone. Today, *Tīj* has become intimate and indispensable for non-Hindu as well as for the Hindu women who would not celebrate it traditionally. Therefore, to describe this festival of pan-Nepali women as a festival of Hindu women would be a distortion.<sup>11</sup>

The metonymic identification of *Tīj* with Nepali women underscores the way in which women-centric events are made out to have become the 'face' of the modern-yet-traditional nation. On the festival of *Tīj*, women expect to be taken to their *māita*<sup>12</sup> for celebration no matter how far away their *māita* is. If women are denied this, their anguish and agony leads to poignant lamentation reflected in the songs. Amongst Hindu women *Tīj* is almost an affirmation of certain aspects of what patriarchy has conditioned them into thinking of as 'essential' aspects of their selfhood, such as their role as daughter, wife and mother. Celebrated annually from *bhādra*, *śukla dwitīyā* (mid-August to mid-September) to *panchami*, the celebration of *Tīj* is associated with many mythological stories. On *dwitīyā*, women feast on milk, curd, butter, sweets, fruits and numerous delicacies; it is an indulgent

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powerful instrument of feminist protest and gender sensitization. It is therefore not surprising that Nepali women today look at *Tīj* as a metaphor of female and feminist liberation and carnival. This feminist transformation of *Tīj* from archetypal patriarchal to the feminist carnival is not the focus of this paper. This paper focuses more on the patriarchal violence rather than its contestations in the songs produced during and after the politically charged decades of the 1980s and 1990s.

<sup>10</sup>Ajayabhadra Khanal, "Miss Nepal, *Tīj* Ani Saśaktikaraṇ: Pūjibādle Mahilā Unmukti Andolanlāi Bandhak Banāuncha?" (Miss Nepal *Tīj* and empowerment: has the movement for women's emancipation become a pawn of capitalism?), Open Ed, *Annapurna Post*, September 1, 2011. My translation.

<sup>11</sup>Editorial, *Gorkhapatra Daily*, September 12, 2010. My translation.

<sup>12</sup>Their parental home.

preparation for the rigorous fasting to be undertaken on the next day. The gastronomical indulgence is known as *dar khāne* that is, ‘to feast on *dar*’. Thus the festival oscillates between the sacred and the secular. On *tritiyā*, married women and unmarried girls who have started menstruating go through rigorous fasting, mostly without water. From the early morning, the fasting women go to a river or any water body to bathe and worship Shiva-Parvati and sing *bhajans*. On *panchami*, women worship *saptarṣi*, the seven mythological *ṛṣis*. The seven *ṛṣis* are considered in Brahminical culture to be the sources of male spiritual pedigree. The *ṛṣi pujā* is, according to traditional accounts, supposed to ‘rescue’ women from the sin of touching men when they become ‘untouchable’ during menstruation.

The folk festival of Teej has two components: the ritual and the lyrical. The ritual of Teej—fasting for the longevity of the life of one’s husband and the purificatory ritual bathing on Panchami constitute the patriarchal ritual complex of Teej. The genre of Teej is, however, incomplete without Teej Geet or Sangini songs. In Teej songs are a living testimony to patriarchal script of gender in Nepali Parbatiya Brahminical society. It would, however, be wrong to say that women have not contested and resisted their patriarchal oppression. The Teej songs show the simultaneous unfolding of oppression and resistance, hegemony and counter-hegemony, the official and the subversive carnival.

### Contextualising Brahminical Conjugalinity

The dread of female sexuality haunts the Brahminical scriptural corpus, from the *Bhagavadgītā* to the *Manusmṛti*, from Chanakya to Shankaracharya. According to Michel Foucault, the Grecian anxiety about the destructive potential of sexuality was predicated upon an aesthetics of self that valorized moderation, self-mastery and self-control.<sup>13</sup> The Brahminical conceptualization of sexuality, especially female sexuality, was predicated upon the numenal ethics of transcendence and *mukti*. In the Brahminical ‘spiritual’ telos, female sexuality became an obstacle that needed constant surveillance and subordination.<sup>14</sup> The

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>The *Bhagavadgītā* grapples with the vision of dystopia: the dystopian *Kaliyuga* occurs when women get wicked, breed indiscriminately leading to *varṇaśankara* - the mixing of *varṇas*. For details, see *Bhagavadgītā*, 1:41; The *Caṇakyanīti*, always an unproblematic source of aphorisms and wisdom for the patriarchal Parbatiya imagination, consistently emphasizes the need to regulate, domesticate and police the wanton wildness and the insatiable diabolical appetite of female sexuality. See *Caṇakyanīti*, 1: 4,5,11,15,17; 2:1,2,3,15,20; 3: 9; 4: 13,16,17; 5: 1,15; 6: 3,12; 7: 1,11; 8: 8,9; 9: 13; 16:13. The characteristic suspicion of female sexuality in *Manusmṛti* is only too well known. Oscillating between two extreme poles of

maintenance of ‘purity’ in all its diverse and complex forms was, for a householder, a poor ‘spiritual’ substitute for the ascetic’s renunciation. The divine economy of *mukti* as well as the secular economy of succession was, to a large extent, predicated upon the regulation achieved through the systematic control of potentially transgressive female sexuality.<sup>15</sup>

Simone de Beauvoir’s analysis of the Hegelian master-slave dialectic helps us better appreciate the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife in the upper caste Nepali household. The relationship has been documented widely by anthropologists such as Cameron.<sup>16</sup> The anxiety of patriarchy about an essentially transgressive female sexuality<sup>17</sup> seems to have set the cultural agenda documented in the following song, where the woman is forbidden from going too far away from her husband’s home in the fear that control over the woman will diminish:<sup>18</sup>

Wife: On the other side of the globe,  
They say, lives my *bābā*.  
O to meet my *bābā*, shall I go *swāmi rājai*?  
Husband: Your heartless father loves you not,  
Do not go, O *Grihalaksmi*, to meet your *bābā*.

Wife: Even though he loves me not,  
My love for him is intact.  
O to meet my *bābā*, shall I go *swāmi rājai*?

Husband: I shall not allow this at any cost,

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deification and vilification, the *Manusmṛti* - a canonical rule book for Parbatia patriarchy - seeks to regulate female sexuality. See *Manusmṛti* 3:56, 57; 5: 147-151.

<sup>15</sup>See Lynn Bennett, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 40-51; Michael Allen and S.N.Mukherjee, eds. *Women in India and Nepal*, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1990), 1-18; Uma Chakravarti, *Gendering Caste Through a Feminist Lens* (Calcutta: Stree, 2006), 66-80.

<sup>16</sup>Cameron, *On the Edge of the Auspicious*, 144-50.

<sup>17</sup>Women’s limitless libidinal appetite is one of the central stereotypes in the canonical Sanskrit texts. ‘Women eat twice as much as men; they are four times as intelligent as men; they are six times as daring as men; and they are eight times as lustful as men’: *Caṇakyanīti* 1:17. The Sanskrit canonical texts acted as the ideological bedrock of Parbatia patriarchy. Allusions to the canonical historical texts are given to emphasize the ideological continuity between the classical and the folk. The Sanskrit canonical text, many a times, seen by the cultural elite as ‘scriptures’ or rule book, generally acted as the ideological bedrock of Parbatia patriarchy. This does not, however, mean that the folk is always a reflection of the canonical ideology. It would be equally wrong to disregard the spatio-temporal and historical chasm between the canonical and the folk.

<sup>18</sup>Sharma and Luitel, *Lokvārtāvigyan ra loksāhitya*, 121. My translation.

How you dare defy me, I shall see!<sup>19</sup>

The song describes a relationship between the master who commands and the slave who is commanded. It is the language of authority and power: the wife uses the language of entreaty and prayer, the language of the subordinate. The language does not give any hint of equal companionship between the speakers. The language is the language of Manu's second ruler, as it were.<sup>20</sup>

The same hierarchy is seen in another song:

Wife: *Bhaiyā*, you go and wait for me in the *cautāri*<sup>21</sup> there,

After convincing my *swāmi* I shall come to the *māita*.

Husband: A little drizzle cannot drench the *topi*<sup>22</sup> on the head,

Woman, never shall you convince me.

Wife: The *sirphūl* of my head, I long to wear,

How would I wear it without your order!

Husband: When will you go and when will you come?

And when will you do *devatā*'s *dhyān*<sup>23</sup>?

Wife: I shall go at the sunrise and return at sunset,

*Devatā*'s *dhyān* shall I do at noon.<sup>24</sup>

The songs indicate a hierarchy with a strong divine sanction, invested with a strong sense of *dharma*. To quote Mary Cameron, "The husband is believed to be and is ideally treated as equivalent of a god by the wife."<sup>25</sup>

In such a hierarchical relationship, the economically dependent woman is subject to her husband's notions of beauty and thrift. Even as the woman tries to reason with her

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Manu wants a woman to be ruled by her father before marriage and by her husband after marriage: 'In childhood a woman should be under her father's control, in her youth in her husband's, and when her husband is dead, under her son's.' : *Manusmṛti* 5: 148.

<sup>21</sup>A small shed made by the roadside for travellers to rest.

<sup>22</sup>Cap.

<sup>23</sup>Pray.

<sup>24</sup>Sharma and Luitel, *Lokvārtāvīgyān ra loksāhitya*, 120. My translation.

<sup>25</sup>Amongst the Parbatiya Nepali, women's subordination is seen in the ritual in which a wife washes her husband's feet and drinks that water by splashing some of it into her mouth. The drinking of *caraṇāmṛt*, the elixir of feet ritually and symbolically enacts a woman's position in Parbatiya society. See Bennett, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters*, 175; Cameron, *On the Edge of the Auspicious*, 144-145.

husband, she is reprimanded for displaying the very rationality that is considered to be the province of the male. Instead of discussing logically with his wife, the husband threatens to marry again - since the 'dark-skinned' woman has lesser social capital in a colour-biased society, she would be virtually socially abandoned if this were to happen:

Wife: People say that *Tīj* has brought happiness.

Please earn a *sirphūl* for me.

Husband: Woman you are too dark,

A *sirphūl* would not suit you.

Wife: The Veda script is black,

So don't read the book (since it too is black).

Husband: Woman, have you spoken such thing?

I will have a second marriage.<sup>26</sup>

Skinner, Holland and Adhikari's translation of this song, quoted above, is an example of how translation can influence one's interpretation of the song. They read this song merely as an example of polygamy and miss many nuances. Their translation of *jhhama jhhama Teej āyo bhanchan/ kamāi deu rājai sirphūla* as "people say that *Tīj* has brought happiness/Give me a *sirphūl* (golden hairpiece)," fails on two accounts. The first line of their translation fails to capture the carnivalesque ambience that *Tīj* brings to the life of this woman. The translation of second line *kamāi deu rājai sirphūl* - misses the nuances of the word *rājai*. A more accurate translation - "Beloved, earn a *sirphūl* for me" - underlines how the control of patriarchy over the economic domain (for it is the husband who can earn money for the *sirphūl*) translates into its control over the cultural domain: it determines what suits or does not suit the 'dark' woman. The writers again chose to omit the word *rājai* from the next two lines. The insertion of the word *rājai* would alter the meaning greatly. *Rājai* comes from the word *rājā* which means a king, a lord or a master. However, the 'Nepalization' of the *rājā* as *rājai* is loaded with the connotations of lord, master, as well as beloved. In Nepali folksongs, it is always used by women to address men. With its multivocal resonance of love embedded in power and the vice versa, it also shows that women can access the domain of conjugality only through the acknowledgement of power and domination.

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<sup>26</sup>Skinner, Holland and Adhikari, "The Songs of Teej," 276.

In a Parbatiya Nepali culture that normalizes silence as the ‘proper’ feminine stance, the ‘loud’ woman or the woman ‘speaking back’ becomes a cultural anomaly and a threat. The culture idealizes and romanticizes women who speak melodiously, sweetly, haltingly, and musically. The collective condemnation of a *mukhāle* woman - ‘one who answers back’ - as the bad woman - shows that women are expected to be ‘naturally’ silent. The female speaker’s contestation of the patriarchal space of rationality is doubly subversive for the Vedas are the forbidden fruit for women, and entering into this forbidden territory of the Vedas and rationality makes her a threat that must be neutralized through re-marriage. Indeed, the repeated threat of bringing home a co-wife is used by men to put vocal and resisting women ‘in their place’.<sup>27</sup>

A remarkable contemporary *Tij* song underscores women’s awareness of this patriarchal strategy<sup>28</sup>:

High schools have opened near the village,  
 Why doesn’t my husband care to study?  
 We don’t want to wear terrylen saris anymore,  
 We won’t eat the drunkard husband’s leftovers.  
 What money he has, he takes to the *bazār*  
 He searches for a place to drink alcohol.  
 If he has five or ten rupees, he goes to the *bazār*.

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<sup>27</sup>In the world of Nepali proverbs, “*pothi bāseko suhāūdaina*” means, “the crowing of a hen is rather unbecoming.” Crowing, therefore, becomes an act of linguistic transgression. It de-feminizes and finally de-womanizes. For detailed analysis of the proverbs, see Balram Uprety, “Ideological Underpinnings of Pervasive Patriarchy in the Construction of Gender in Nepali Proverbs,” in *Politics of Culture, Identity and Protest in North-east India*, (Vol.1) eds. Padam Nepal and Anup Shekhar Chakraborty (Authors Press: New Delhi, 2012), 129.

<sup>28</sup>In a patrilocal and patrilineal culture, where the institution of marriage is predominantly polygamous, there is a collective tendency to devalue women and such devaluation accounts for the manifest ritual superiority of the bride takers over the bride givers. The relationship between the bride-givers and the bride-takers points to a few, rare moments of profound disquiet and irony as well as internal fault lines fissures and ruptures of an otherwise well organized patriarchy. Unlike the North Indian culture in which the *jamāi* shows deference to the *sasur* by touching the latter’s feet, the Parbatiya Nepali culture dramatizes the reversal of this North Indian practice. The extreme deference shown to a *jwāi* almost borders on sacralization. On the one hand, such deference can be seen as a political masterstroke of patriarchy, on the other, the very need to be politically deferential and obsequiously respectful shows the profound anxiety and insecurity experienced by the bride giver’s family. Even when a married daughter is genuinely unhappy, such a hierarchical relationship between the two families makes the intervention by the daughter’s *māiti* exceptionally difficult.

He forgets his family and home and drinks alcohol.  
 Waiting in the kitchen, the rice becomes cold,  
 Waiting for the husband, the night is almost gone.  
 How much rotten alcohol is there in Thakali's hotel!  
 The husband came with a stick at midnight.  
 If I say, "Don't drink," he threatens to bring a co-wife.  
 The new wife who will give [him liquor],  
 And who will give him pleasure, instead of me.  
 And she'll give orders and bring water to wash his feet.<sup>29</sup>

Skinner, Holland and Adhikari translate and read this as an example of a song on the theme of anti-alcoholism. However, the speaker seems also to think that education would perhaps bring some sense and manners to her husband, thus falling into the logic of modernity as progress. She mistakes his lack of education as the cause of his alcoholism, unaware that modern education often only helps the oppressor reinvent himself in order to perpetuate his hegemony. Interestingly, the woman does not seek education for herself, only for a husband who might be cured of his boorishness through schooling.

The speaker's ambivalent relationship with patriarchy merits some close analysis. She says, "Eat shall I not from the drunkard husband's leftover." This line demands some ethnographic background. The religio-cultural tendency of Brahminical patriarchy is to associate women with impurity: the '*śudra*fication' of women is a long historical tradition.<sup>30</sup> The linchpin of the entire structure of Hindu binarism was the divide between purity and impurity. This binary is used by the Parbatiya patriarchy to create a hierarchical relationship between the husband and wife in two cultural contexts.

In the upper caste marriage, there is the custom of *juṭho khāne* in which the bride is made to eat the sweets already tasted by the groom. *Juṭho khāne* means the eating of polluted food i.e. food already eaten by someone else. Bennett reads this custom as an expression of

<sup>29</sup>Skinner, Holland and Adhikari, "Songs of Teej", 276.

<sup>30</sup>Hinduism seems anxiously ambivalent towards women: on the one hand, women's sacralization dates back to Manu. He says, 'The deities delight in places where women are revered but where women are not revered all rites are fruitless' *Manusmṛiti* 3:56. On the other hand, women are indirectly equated with Śudras as they are excluded from the Vedic education. According to *Manusmṛiti*- 'The ritual of marriage is traditionally known as the Vedic transformative ritual for women; serving her husband is (the equivalent of) living with a guru, and household chores are the rites of the fire.' 2:66. The *Bhagavad Gītā* also equates women with Śudra - 'O son of Prtha, those who take shelter in Me, though they be of lower birth - women, Vaiśyas and Śudras - can attain the supreme destination.' 9:32. Women in the Parbatiya patriarchy occupied the liminal and ambivalent space between the goddess and the Śudra.



“the bride’s subservient status and respect for her husband,”<sup>31</sup> the *pati paramēśvara*.<sup>32</sup> In another custom, women eat off the unwashed plate from which their husband has eaten and the husband leaves some leftover food in the plate for his wife. The relationship parallels the relationship between *guru* or god and devotee. The offering of *bhog*, i.e. food to a god becomes *prasād* for devotees.<sup>33</sup> Patriarchy enacts and enforces its own divinity through such rituals and practices. What makes the speaker’s protest intriguing is that she will not eat his leftovers as long as he is a drunkard and unworthy of respect. The divine has fallen off the pedestal by indulging in alcoholism and the speaker seems to be more preoccupied with the restoration of his divinity than negating the legitimacy of the practice itself. The threat of polygamy operates even in this song as a weapon to silence the woman.

Caught within such complex layers of hierarchies, the voice of the wife in the following song is submerged in the cacophony of other dominant voices.

Mother: Lo! The sound of cane-stick there,  
 Who has comenāni? Who has come out there?  
 Sister-in-law: ...A straw-mat does not befit his person,  
 Spread *arāḍi*<sup>34</sup> for him, o little one.  
 He has come to take *kānchi nāni*<sup>35</sup> home,  
 And has come at an auspicious moment,  
 O we must send her. ...

Son-in-law: It is my brother’s wedding this year,  
 Send the *maitālu*,<sup>36</sup> o mother, send the *maitālu*.  
 Mother: In front, the inauspicious planet *śukra*<sup>37</sup>  
 She should not be sent this year.

<sup>31</sup>Bennett, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters*, 91.

<sup>32</sup>Husband-as-god receives its prescriptive ideological sustenance from ‘scriptures’. ‘A virtuous wife should constantly serve her husband like a god, even if he behaves badly, freely indulges his lust, and is devoid of any good qualities.’ *Manusmṛti* 5:154, *Caṇakyanīti* 17:10.

<sup>33</sup>To unpack how the hierarchical relationship between husband and wife is ritually and ‘religiously’ sanctioned, see Gray’s notion of *pujā-prasād* paradigm in *The Householder’s World: Purity Power and Dominance in a Nepali Village*, 62-69.

<sup>34</sup>A black and white thick woolen mat that would be spread for revered guests.

<sup>35</sup>Literally the youngest female. Here, it refers to the bride that the son-in-law has come to take away with him for the occasion of his brother’s marriage. In old Parbatiya society, a girl would be married before she started menstruating. After marriage, however, she would be kept at her father’s home till she attained puberty. Then her husband would come to claim her. The idea behind marrying girls mostly at the age of six was to earn the merit of gifting a virgin daughter in marriage in the marital ritual of *kanyādān*.

<sup>36</sup>A woman who resides mostly at her *māita*.

<sup>37</sup>A planetary position.

...This letter from *samdhiṇī*,<sup>38</sup> place it on the ceiling,  
 This *solidoli*<sup>39</sup> from *samdhinī*,<sup>40</sup> place it in the box.  
 With this *sāmuśukra*<sup>41</sup> and this *jwālā varṣā*,<sup>42</sup> we should not send her.  
 Son-in-law: If she is not sent this time,  
 Never shall I come again.  
 Mother: Can't I resist the persistence of this  
 Young man? This time go *celi*<sup>43</sup>!  
 ...Why do you feel bad *celi*?  
 I shall send for you.  
*Celi*: No need to send for me, *āmā*,  
 I shall return no more.  
 Mother: Can't I resist the persistence of this young man?  
 Go for but four days....  
*Celi*: As I was going, my mother,  
 At Shitalpāti did we halt.  
 ...The *pati* crushed me, my mother.  
 The *ciuri*<sup>44</sup> *khājā*<sup>45</sup> sent by you,  
 I could not eat, mother.  
 What ill-luck! What fate!  
 O my mother, the resting housecrushed me,  
 "Where is *buhāri*?"<sup>46</sup> they will say at home;  
 Give them this message from Shitalpāti...<sup>47</sup>

Astrology plays a central role in the Parbatiya Nepali culture: no work of any significance is done without consulting almanacs or the interpreter Bahuns.<sup>48</sup> In the song

<sup>38</sup> Sons'/daughter's father-in-law.

<sup>39</sup> *Soli* is a container made by knitting thin strips of bamboo together. Here *solidoli* is a way of referring to the gifts that had probably been sent in a *solī*.

<sup>40</sup> Son's/daughter's mother-in-law.

<sup>41</sup> In the Hindu astrological system, a time when the planet Venus is not in auspicious position.

<sup>42</sup> The inauspicious position of the planet *Śukra/Venus*.

<sup>43</sup> See note 11.

<sup>44</sup> Pressed rice.

<sup>45</sup> Snacks sent by her mother to be eaten on the way.

<sup>46</sup> See note 34.

<sup>47</sup> Krishna Prasad Parajuli, *Nepali lokgītiko āloka*, 323-327. My translation.

<sup>48</sup> Cameron, *On the Edge of the Auspicious*, 207.

under analysis, both the son-in-law as well as the girl's mother claim to have consulted the astrologer to validate their different positions: the husband or *jwāī*, in order to take his wife home for his brother's marriage, and the mother of the girl, his *sāsu*, in order to deny him on the grounds of astrology. The *sāsu* is filled with a strong sense of foreboding: it would be fatal if the daughter is sent away with the *jwāī*. The *jwāī* says that the letter sent by his father to his *sāsu* must be respected at any cost. The *jwāī*, as the product of the culture that always legitimizes his higher status and his sense of ownership over his wife finally takes the radical stand, "If she is not sent this time, / Never shall I come again." Though the wife too has an ominous foreknowledge of her impending death, she must go with her husband. What the *Tīj* song shows is that the daughter's family has no legitimate claim on her once she is married: marriage is the ritual and legal transferring of ownership.<sup>49</sup>

The celebration of conjugal love is rare in *Tīj* songs. The genre has become synonymous with lamentation, anger, and protest. In the many songs that I have collected, there is only one song about an intensely felt conjugal love.

To go to *māita* on the yearly *Tīj*...  
 The feet of my *swāmi* I touch with my head.  
 Yet I will not stay away too long.  
 Bhairavi looks majestic with a golden crown,  
 Bid me goodbye with a smile, I shall soon return.  
 Leave your handkerchief on the bed, O my Rādhā!  
 In your pocket shall I keep,  
 A thread from my hairband.  
 Feed me with your own hands  
 Give me too the *tikā*<sup>50</sup> of *simrik*<sup>51</sup>  
 The barley and sesame seed offered at the Pashupati *mandir*<sup>52</sup> are ever pure,  
 Bruise shall my heart remain till you return.  
 Your tears shall I wipe, O Krishna,  
 I shall return by the seventh day.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup>In Parbatiya system, a woman is transferred from her father's patriline to her husband's patriline. Once the transfer is ritualized in marriage through the ritual of *kanyādān*, she is ritually and symbolically dead for her original family.

<sup>50</sup>The vermilion, sandalwood, etc. dot worn on the forehead as a symbol of the third eye and also as a mark of auspiciousness.

<sup>51</sup>A red powder used by women as *tikā*.

<sup>52</sup>Temple.

The sub-text of hierarchical power is endorsed even in such a song. The woman has promised to return soon - she is not, like the girl in the earlier song, one who remains for long periods of time in her mother's home. The site of intense lyricism is also the site of gender power politics. The wife touches with her "head" "the feet of my *swāmi*." Patriarchy's fantasy of archetypal wifedom is embodied by the perpetually "teary-eyed" and eternally suppliant wife's body. There is an invocation of the trope of purity through the image of consecrated food again, thus celebrating the chastity of the woman, even as she is seen as an object of love. A contradictory tendency to sexualize and asexualize women is discernible in many such songs. Here, the hierarchization of the conjugal relationship helps patriarchy to banish, at least from the public domain, the erotic and the affective in the conjugal relationship.<sup>54</sup>

### Some Concluding Observations

In conclusion, I try to answer an important question: what is the role these songs in the existing knowledge system? Can these songs that exist in the periphery of the margin play any role in the production and dissemination of knowledge in today's world? Teej songs, to begin with, provide us with alternative archive for understanding the issues of gender in Parbatiya patriarchal Nepali society. A close critical examination of these songs helps us map an alternative 'her-story' of gender. For example, the songs discussed in this paper give us a picture of hierarchical conjugality that defined and continue to define the conjugal relationship within the institution of marriage in Nepali society. Secondly, the institution of conjugal relation in Nepali society, as in the most Southeast Asian society, continues to remain hierarchical and unequal in spite of the encounter with colonial modernity and the forces of globalisation. Herein lies another significance of such folk archive. At present exists in a symbiotic and dialogic relationship with past, a contemporary his/herstoriography of gender cannot be constructed without a meaningful dialogue with the past. To elucidate this argument from this paper, if we are to understand the contemporary manifestation of the unequal conjugality in Nepali society, the folk archive can play undeniably important role. The folk archive does not merely preserve the historical articulation of hierarchical conjugality; it also helps us map out our distance from the past. Though the Brahminical patriarchy continues to remain the bedrock of our contemporary conjugality, it would be wrong to say that the forces of modernity, spread of mass education and forces of

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<sup>53</sup>Thapa, *Mero Nepal bhraman*, 242. My translation.

<sup>54</sup>See Bennett, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters*.

globalisation have not changed the contours of conjugality in our time. Since the ‘presentness’ of the present cannot be constructed without accessing the archive of past, the folk archive such as this becomes one of the most reliable sources. This argument naturally leads us to the fundamentally significant dimension of the orature. Going beyond the point already discussed about the importance of orality, one can meaningfully ask: why should we preserve past? Why should we the archive of the past? We should also preserve the past as an historical testimony. We need the oral source to bear witness—a witness to the sanctified and sanctioned tradition of phallocentric violence and incarceration. Britain today seems nearly silent about its colonial brutality and horrendous exploitation in India. The same could happen to patriarchy in Nepali society tomorrow. The Brahminical Parbatiya patriarchy could easily be on the denial of its oppressive history as most colonial powers around the world are on the denial of their colonial brutality. The hierarchical conjugality, the politics of violence, the politics of subjugation and silencing, the examples of occlusion and erasure that we have witnessed in the songs in this paper act are our irrefutable historical witness.

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## VOICES FROM THE MOUNTAIN- ORAL TRADITION AMONG THE DONGARIA KONDH OF RAYAGADA, ODISHA

**Dr Priyadarshini Mishra**

### **Brief Description of Dongria Kondh in the Context of Tribes of Odisha**

Scheduled tribes in India constitute about 10.38 % of the total country population constituting 461 scheduled tribes, which include 13 primitive tribal groups (PTG). In Odisha to the country's tribal population. The ST population in Odisha is 22.13% of the total state population (Census 2001).

The districts largely dominated by ST are Malkangiri (58.51%), Mayurbhanj (57.87%), Nawarangpur (55.26%), Rayagada (54.99%), Sundargarh (50.74%), Koraput (50.67%), Phulbani (50.13%), Keonjhar (44.62%), Gajapati (47.88%) and Jharsuguda (33.31%).

The tribes of Odisha are divided into three language family. These are :

1. Austro- Asiatic language family, Dravidian Language family
2. Indo Aryan language family.
3. The Dravidian language family constitute of nine ethnic languages viz., Pengo, Gondi, Kisan, Konda, Koya, Parji, Kui, Kuvi and Kurukh or Oraon. Each group has its distinct language, culture, religion and social custom. They are grouped into hunter-gatherer-nomads, hunter-gatherer and shifting cultivators, artisans, settled agriculturists, industrial and urban unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

Dongrias Kondh is one of the sections of the South Odisha Kondh tribe. Since they stay in Dongar, they are known as Dongria Kondh. They are the original inhabitants of Niyamgiri mountain range which stretches away between Rayagada, Koraput and Kalahandi districts constituting a cultural and linguistic zone. The Dongria population is confined to three community development blocks namely Bisam Cuttack and Munuguda of Gunpur sub-division and Kalyansinghpur Block of Rayagada District. The total population of the Dongria Kondhs is about 10500 settled in 120 villages at an altitude of up to 5,000 feet above the sea-level.

Dongria Kondh has belonged to Dravidian Language Family. Other than these, the Kutia Kondh lives in Kotgarh and Tumudibahdh Block in Kondhmal district and Lanjigarh Block of Kalahandi district. The language of the Kondhs of Rayagada is known as Kuvi, variations of Kui of Kandhamāl. The Desia kondh of Kalahandi and Bolangir have assimilated to local Odia language, and accordingly, they are known as Desia Kondh. The Dongria Kondh also speaks local corrupt Odia after exposed to a market economy and other developmental activities.

### **The Dongria Kondhs**

The Dongria Kondh is one of the most ancient tribes mentioned in Hindu myths and classics, notably the Puranas. The name signifies that a primitive community of hill-dwelling (dongar means high hill land) people. The Dongria Kondh call themselves Jharnia meaning those who live by the Jharana (streams) confined to Niyamgiri hill tracts covering the blocks of Kalyansighpur, Bissamcuttack and Muniguda in Rayagada district. Besides Orissa, they found distributed in Andhra Pradesh. The immediate two neighbours of Dongria Kondh are Kutia and Desia Kondhs. Kutia Kondhs are hill dwellers live of Phulbani and Kalahandi districts while Desia Kondh is plain dwellers.

According to the 2001 census, the sex ratio found low for the district of Rayagada (1028) and the state (972). The sex ratio of DK stands significantly higher at 1318 and 1352 females per 1000 male population respectively for DKDA areas of *Parsali* and *Chattikona*.

My field work is based on two aspects:

#### **1. Understanding the ethnography of Dongaria Kondh: Secondary Sources**

Collection of Secondary Sources on Dongaria Kondh from the Academy of Tribal Language and Culture, Tribal Dept., Bhubaneswar and Tribal Research Institute, Bhubaneswar

#### **11. Field Visit and Identification of Resource persons from Dongaria Kondh Community**

Location Bisama Kataka Block of Rayagada District:

Gram Panchayat Chattikona: Village: Kurli, Khambesi, Khajuri and Mundbali

I visited the district of Rayagada. The Bisamkatak Block is the central point of the Dongaria Kondh. There are two Gram Panchayat, One is Chattikona, and another is Parsali in which the Dongaria Kondh has settled from time immemorial. Their biological foundation with their

religion-cultural construction is the outcome of their economic world they live in their homeland. Land, language and life are interconnected in their everyday life as well as their traditional life. The concept of time is closely connected to their walks of life. Every act of their everyday life is connected to a particular time and work that is expressed in their oral tradition.

My first visit was on to Chattikona, Kurli, Mundabali, and Khajuri - four villages in Chattikona Gram Panchayat and met the Dongria Kondh resource persons. They are Sinda Wadaka, a resourceful woman of Kurli, Sri Laxman Hikaka, an educated teacher, and Siba Kadrka from Mundabali village who were selflessly helped me to visit the villages and conduct my preliminary research on their oral tradition.

My second visit was on December 5-14, 2018 I visited Kurli village on their annual festival kedu parab when they worship the Earth mother goddess and sacrifice buffalo taking place was during December.

#### **Resources of Dongria Kondh Oral Tradition:**

The preliminary discussion about their oral tradition is classified based on their availability of folklore. The old women of the village are the authority of oral tradition. The song is called *Paada* in Dongria Kondh, and male singer is called *Padambutaya*, and female singer is called *Padambutaw*. These singers are the mentors of their younger generation, irrespective of their age and sex. The Dangdibasa- youth dormitory of the boys and girls. I found three *Dangdibasa* where the youths stay there after they have and sing songs and tales about their nature, and human conditions.

Besides the singers, the priests of the Dongria Kondh are the resources of exploring the secrets of nature with the human religion. Dharni mata as the supreme goddess worshipped in the central place of the village called *Sadargudi*-. Besides other demigods are also worshipped. The mantra and the prayers are in Dongria Kondh language which is esoteric and difficult to get meaning out of it. The priests and the singers have shown their cooperation to provide me with their songs and tales and myths to document, and also to translate them in Odia and English language with interpretation.

Based on the singer's information the songs of Dongria Kondh may be divided into the following categories.

A. The songs of entertainment:

B Customary songs base on 'Rites de passage': birth, marriage, death ritual,

C Ritual songs: Mantra on the worship of Dharni mata, mountain eulogy, songs of nature

D .Creation Myth:

E Songs nominated upon musical instrument: DHAPU geet

F.Oral Tales related to birds and animals, stars and sky, trees and creepers

#### **HABITAT:**

The Dongria Kondh inhabit exclusively in the forest-clad of Niyamgiri hill ranges stretches from Theruvali of Rayagada district to Lanjigarh of Kalahandi district located over a high plateau ranging 2000-4970 feet above the sea level. Each Dongria Kondh village is situated in the center chain of hills of Niamgiri, which are inaccessible, hidden in the folds of mountains majority devoid road and transport facilities (DKDA, 2001; 2004). Their settlements are sparsely distributed on the hilltops and valleys situated in isolation often cut off from the general mass of civilisation (Das, 1977). Their settlements are arranged as a cluster of houses in two rows. In each row, the houses are contiguous in a linear fashion, and the street is located between rows. Dongria settlements often lack permanency as the entire settlements are abandoned if some deaths take place in the same neighborhood.

#### **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS:**

The Kondh sub-groups once infamous for their pernicious practice of human sacrifice and female Infanticide (*Tokri Parbo*), which replaced by Meriah buffalo sacrifice (*Kondru Parbo*) to appease their God/goddess to bring good luck, prosperity and land fertility (Boal 1982). The Dongria have a religion very close to animism. The gods and goddesses are always attributed to various natural phenomena, objects, trees, animals, etc. They have a god or deity for everything and anything. Their life is full of rituals, sacrifices and magico-religious observances throughout the year to their benevolent and malevolent ancestors, aimed at ensuring personal security and happiness, community well-being and group solidarity.

The theological pantheon is the earth goddess (*Dharani Penu*) at the apex, and Niyam penu (Niyamgiri Hill) is believed to be the creator of Dongrias. Also, a large number of village deities, ancestral cults, household deities and spirits, for instance, in a house, there is a deity for back and front street, kitchen, living room, implements and so forth (Pfeffer, 2005).

Breach of any religious conduct by any member of the society invites the wrath of spirits in the form of lack of rainfall, soaking of streams, destruction of forest produce, and other natural calamities. Hence, the customary law, norms, taboos, and values are significantly adhered and enforced with high to heavy punishments, depending upon the seriousness of the crimes committed. For social control in the village and at Muttha level (regional), there are hereditary religious leaders like Jani (religious head), Mondal (secular head), Bejuni (sorcerer), Barik (messenger) who coordinate to hold meetings, where the punishment is awarded along with appeasement procedure, is followed with animal sacrifice. The punishment may be in cash or kind and may lead to strict restrictions from the community if not obeyed.

### **FAMILY AND MARRIAGE:**

Dongria Kondh is an endogamous group, and within them, the clans are exogamous divided into several patrilineal clans (kunda) forming socio-cultural regional organisations (mutha). The Dongria family is often nuclear, although extended families exist. Female members are considered assets because of their contribution inside and outside the household and women are equated with the male members in constructing a house to cultivation. Women do all the work for household ranging from fetching water from the distant streams, cooking, serving food to each member of the household to cultivating, harvesting and marketing of produce in the market. Due to this, the bride price is paid to her parents when a girl gets married which is a striking feature of the Dongrias. However, the family is patrilineal and patrilocal. Extended families are either mono- or polygynous (a group consisting of a man and two or more wives and their children or group formed by remarriage of a widow or widower having children by a former marriage), claimed to be social and economic prestige. By custom, marriage must cross clan boundaries (a form of incest taboo). The clan is exogamous, which means marriages are made outside the clan (yet still within the greater Dongoria population). The Census data shows 23.54% of families are polygynous. The woman is treated as an economic asset to the family, and for a reason, the girl child is preferred over boy child (Routray, 1987).

Further, the prevailing marriage practices go in favour of girls. The parents earn money through bride price that is given by the groom's parent as part of the marriage deal. Girls fetch high bride price to their parents whereas boy's parents have to pay bride price to get them married.

## PATTERN OF ECONOMIC LIFE

Dongria Kondh practice podu cultivation in their hill range, known as field forest rotation or slash and burn agriculture. In Odisha, about 5298 km<sup>2</sup> area is under podu cultivation and depend on 1.5 lakh families of PTG annually (Dongaria Kondha, Kutia Kind, Lanjia Sara, Paraja, Gadabā, Koya, Didayi, Bonda, and Paudi Bhuyan). They are called Dongria or dweller of "donger" (a hill in Oriya) and settle in higher altitudes...Their economies center round the dongar hill slopes for shifting cultivation, the abode of their Niyam Raja god. Shifting cultivation is the most ancient agriculture system they cultivate jackfruits, orange and mango trees which is suitable to grow in their environment. In the hill slope, they cultivate pineapple, banana, sago-pam (salap), citrus fruits, guava, papaya etc.

Rice, maize, ganja and ragi are the main crop, besides various types of pulses (red gram and black gram), and oilseeds (kandul, masur, mung, chana, alsi (naizer), castor, mustard). The fruits of jamu, harida, bahada, amla, mahua, kusuma, kendu are of economic importance. Gathering of forest produce like siali creepers, kendu leaf, sal leaf, seeds of karanja (*Pongamia glatera*) and mahua (*Madhuaka latifolia*) is made for daily domestic requirements (Dash et al., 2008). They raise livestock like goats, pigs and hens for meeting the demands of prostrations and for their use on ritual occasions.

## DORMITORY AS THE SOURCE OF LOCAL ORAL KNOWLEDGE

The girl's dormitory (*adasbeta*) is common practice for village exogamy. The girls sleep at night in the dormitory (Daa Sala) and learn social taboos, myths, legends, stories, riddles, proverbs amidst singing and dancing the whole night, thus learning everything that is expected from a potential wife and mother. As regards the acquisition of brides for marriage is the most widely prevalent practice through capture, in addition to other practices such as negotiations, elopement, purchase and services. With the passage of time negotiated type of marriage, which is considered prestigious, is being preferred more and payment of bride price is an inseparable part of marriage.

## THE REALM OF ORAL TRADITION

Based on the fieldwork observation it is found that the Dongria Kondh have a rich oral tradition in their Kuvi language. They sing their life in all most all the occasion of their life world. Their songs and tales are closely connected to their socio-religious life, as a part of



handing down tradition and customs in rituals and also in orality. The supernatural belief regulates their whole lifeworld.

Th Dongria Kondh considers the Mountain NiyamGiri as their Supreme God. The myth connected to their origin is attributed to the mountain as their father and Dharni mata as their mother.

### **RESOURCES OF DONGRIA KONDH ORAL TRADITION:**

The preliminary discussion about their oral tradition is classified based on their availability of folklore. The old women of the village are the authority of oral tradition. The song is called *Paada* in Dongria Kondh, and male singer is called *Padambutaya*, and female singer is called *Padambutawa*. These singers are the mentors of their younger generation, irrespective of their age and sex. The Dangdibasa- youth dormitory of the boys and girls. I found three *Dangdibasa* where the youths stay there after they have and sing songs and tales about their nature, and human conditions.

Besides the singers, the priests of the Dongria Kondh are the resources of exploring the secrets of nature with the culture and human religion. Dharni mata as the supreme goddess is worshipped in the central place of the village called *Sadargudi*- besides other demigods are also worshipped. The mantra and the prayers are in Dongria Kondh language which is esoteric and difficult to get meaning out of it. The priests and the singers have shown their cooperation to provide me with their songs and tales and myths to document, and also to translate them in Odia and English language with interpretation ased on the singer's information the songs of Dongria Kondh may be divided into the following categories'

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F.Oral Tales related to birds and animals, stars and sky, trees and creepers

### **The Creation Myth of Dongria Kondh**

Jani - the priests of the Dongria Kondh have the following oral tradition



1. **Kondh Creation Myth:***Raniadu*- the first supernatural goddess who created the universe. Sapangada is the first origin place of the Kondhs. Women created man and all the creatures. The human was like mixed seeds. Goddess came out of the earth (between patala and sky) whole and created the universe.
2. **Creation of the Earth: Deluge** on earth, Origin of the Kondhs from brother -sister incest. Kondh as the first progenitor and origin of other castes and tribes, distribution of clan-based territories.
3. **Bhima as Culture hero**, A divine hero, descended from the heaven through the golden string and silver string, despite his divine mother's interdiction, and became a bride service (Gharjia) in the house of the

Kondh village headman to marry his daughter Dumerrani (Udumbara). His heroic deeds like getting water, leveling the land by cutting the forest, invention of liquor etc. are narrated in this epic.

The Kondhs origin myth chanted by the priests represents their worldview and epistemology. This myth is not like a Hindu myth having a storyline, but it is a blend of thoughts arranged to understand the knowledge of their origin and existence across time, space and activity. The creation myth goes like this.

Long long ago, there was only Great Bura, the Supreme Being.

The Jani of the little village Khambesi started to tell the age-old story of how the world and the Kandha people were created. It was now the second day of the Ritual for Harmful Insects, and the Jani was telling and singing stories over and over again. For already one day and one night he was not eating, nor sleeping, only drinking the liquor distilled from the Mahua-flower. His audience was sometimes listening, sometimes repeating every single word he was telling.

First Bura God decided to create a consort for him, Tari Penu, the Earth Goddess.

Afterwards, Bura God created the earth.

Bura God found Tari wanting in wifely attention and affection compliance, so

Bura God created man from the earth's substance, to give him a devoted service.

Bura God had intended first to create every variety of animals and vegetable life necessary for man's existence, but Tari was so jealous that she tried to prevent him. However, she only succeeded in changing the order of creation. So

Bura took the first handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it aside, and it became the trees, herbs, flowers and vegetables of all kinds.

Bura took a second handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it into the water, and it became fish and all water creatures.

Bura took the third handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it, cast it aside, and it became all the animals, wild and tame.

Bura took the fourth handful of earth and threw it behind himself without looking. Tari caught it and cast it up in the air, where it became all creatures that fly.

Bura looked behind him and saw.

Bura laid a firm hand on Tari's head to prevent further interference.

Bura took the fifth handful of earth and placed it on the ground behind, where it became the human race.

Tari said: Let these exist, but create no more!

However, Bura created sweat from his own body, collected it in his hand and threw it around: To all that I have created!

Hence arose love, sex, and the continuation of the species.

This created world was free from all evil:

Men and the Creator were in free communication,

Men enjoyed everything in common,

Men lived in harmony and peace,

Men went unclothed,

Men could move freely on earth and in the air and water,

Moreover, all the animals were harmless.

Tari's jealousy then led her to open rebellion against Bura.

Therefore she introduced every form of moral and physical evil.

Into Man she introduced moral evil, sowing seeds of sin into humanity as into a ploughed field. Into the material creation, she introduced diseases, deadly poisons, every kind of disorder...

A few individuals rejected evil and remained sinless.

Bura made them tutelary gods: Become gods and live forever, having power over man, who is no longer my immediate care!

The others all yielded and fell into a state of disobedience to the deity and fierce strive against each other. Moreover, Bura entirely withdrew his face and his guardianship from humanity. Also because through Tari's interference, everyone was now sinning, they all became subject to death. Moreover, throughout the natural world, some animals became savage, the seasons could no longer be counted on with absolute regularity, and the earth became a wilderness of jungle, rocks and unstable mud. At the same time, man lost his power of moving through air and water, he knew suffering and degradation, and he went clothed.

The songs sung by Kirpi Melaka are recorded in Audio recorder which will be transliterated and translated in my subsequent visit. (Lokaratna )

### **DUMA SONG: THE SONG OF THE ANCESTOR SPIRIT**

It is a common belief of the people of this locality that, the soul of the man after his death never dies. It retakes rebirth. In some tribes, the soul or 'Duma' of the deceased person is invited to the house through a ritual, which is popularly known as Duma Utara—literally meaning the invitation of the spirit from the unseen world. The relatives of the dead man arrange this ritual by inviting the Duma into an earthen pot on the bank of a river or a water source. At that time the whole clan and the kin of the dead man are invited, and the worship of Old souls (Juna Duma) begins. Then the worship and invitation of new Duma (Soul) Is carried through an invocation. The new soul is summoned with the old souls to the Kitchen of the descendant of the dead man. The new soul (Nua-duma) is worshipped as a God or ancestor spirit. It is a common belief that the ancestor spirits save their respective families from diseases, unseen dangers and watch their fields. Even they predict the future occurrences to them and save them from those difficulties. The people count their last five ancestors as living spirit always watching over them. In all the rituals related to "rites de passage" and "rites de intensification" the invitation and worship of the ancestor spirit are inevitable. When one is blessed with a male child, then it is believed that some ancestor 'Duma' has taken rebirth into his family. Through a divination process, they try to know the particular ancestor who has taken rebirth as that male child. In all the agricultural festivals the Duma is worshipped with due importance.

The two visits and the secondary data that I have encouraging to explore the oral tradition of Dongria Kondh. I found that there is hardly or article on the folklore of Dongria Kondh. Therefore the necessity of documentation of such intangible heritage is necessary for language revitalisation and language maintenance.

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**Revisiting the legend of Niyamgiri**

4. The sacred mountain: Confronting global capital at Niyamgiri

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**CULTURAL ALIENATION: A HOUSE FOR MR. BISWAS****Dr. Pradip Kumar Panda***Abstract*

A man with an Indian origin is placed in a far – off land, Trinidad where he deliberately attempts to get hold of a straw and construct a home fetching himself and his hostages to fortune, his children and his wife, Shama a four – square home. The struggle of Biswas is worthy enough as an experience building up tenacity of sustenance in other migrants of the world. A House for Mr. Biswas draws the attention of all towards the plight of cultural alienation, in a perverse state of isolation in Trinidadian islands. The Indian migrant, Biswas endures displacement in the face of injustices and exploitation, his society being vulnerable to be imbalanced, suppressed and marginalized. A stranger seeks a place that is often denied to him. Despite all odds, Biswas quenches his thirst for settlement.

Key words - 1.Alienation 2.Sustenance 3.Migrants, 4.Dispossession 5. Diaspora

The theoretical framework goes as such that the personal life of Biswas is intertwined with the historical and cultural factors of Trinidad; the novelist, Naipaul tries to achieve an order through portrayal of Biswas in course of the socio-cultural change. Nandini Bhattacharya, in her “Gendered Identities: A Reading of A House for Mr. Biswas” points at emasculation of the protagonists who are purged of manliness while they strive to put up with slavery, Poverty and dispossession. Vijay Mishra in his “Indo-Fijian Fiction and the Girit ideology” points out the precarious existence of the Indian diaspora disentangled from India and he observes Naipaul’s attempts to place and integrate the migrants with the schemes of politics, history and culture. The Indian migrants’ involvement is with the external world of Trinidad with a western appropriation of socio-economic strangles as the superstructure to keep at the centre the myth of the native embedded in historical universalism. Ashish Nandy in “The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of self under colonialism” puts forth self-effacement, that is, the deepest social consciousness remains submerged and the protagonists under topsy-turvy situations in a far-off place defy their own shelves. Naipaul presents his protagonist as an empty self who loses his own identity to exist like a hanging straw enduring a sway of storm. Naipaul’s method is to portray the struggle of Biswas that is rough and tumble meeting the grudge of socio-economic impediments.

The novel presents an account of a process of hybridization and change. The Hindu migrants adapt to new practices of Christianity in Trinidad. Besides, the protagonists tend to become new transformed beings of a capitalist order, undoing hegemonic imprints of a feudal set up. The new order replaces rural attachment with urban newness. Mr. Biswas, an exile searches roots of Indian origin and falls flat before the socio-economic constraints with merely a pyrrhic victory. A search for authentic selfhood and strive for a social identity come to tussle with socio-ethnic history of the Trinidadian community. Further, it is a Dickensian world full of labour, work and wages; Biswas remains engulfed in bondage and slavery. In a picaroon society, the wage-earner fails to make a tie with the affluent and is often put to confinements and limitations. Sustainability is indispensable and counted higher to social esteem. Thus we observe a difference between fragmented society and organic community, relegated individual placed in exploitative machination, and notion of sub-alternate, a migrant Indian placed in the context of Eurocentric history. History appropriates a struggle as subject position and memory though the protagonist possesses an anti-historical consciousness to offer him emancipation from his plight.

The structure of the novel opens a scope for multiple historical discourses. The novel is dialogical and contains histories being dependent at one time and antagonistic at the other. The capitalist historiography makes explicit capitalistic suppression; Biswas being a dispossessed labourer before the bigs and the rich, involving furthermore, another run of history, though not specific, the personal life of Biswas. The critics call it a “fragmented psyche” as the past and the present of the migrants remain not connected.

The house of Mr. Biswas is not merely an accommodation but a secured institution revered socially, offering a cultural assimilation of oneself in to one's society.

It is the pathetic account of Mohun Biswas, delineated by Naipaul so as to shed tears by empathizing with his struggle each day, battered and shattered. Mohun Biswas, the tragic protagonist, is alienated from his native background of the orient and is in search of a permanent home in a far-off land in Trinidad. The novel is, thus, a legend on the plight of a migrant worker persevering to accommodate himself in a settled home and is tussled hither and thither in course of his struggle. The Tulsi-house, an abode of Hindu dwellers and an epitome of Indian version of life in the foreign land keeps him at halt before his final settlement. He is betrothed to the youngest of the daughters, Shama, as life-partner. Thus, Shama, is bewitched to him so as to put him (Biswas) in trap for the Tulsi household. The Tulsis have a tradition to keep their sons in law under their control to derive benefit from

them. Biswas struggles hard to out do the stringent hold in order to pay respect to his Brahmin status and enjoys a freedom of accommodation undoing the subjugation of the Tulsis. Mohun Biswas is apprehended to bring misfortune by having the sixth finger since his birth. He has to face the sarcastic glances of the orthodox pundits of his society. He begins his life as a pundit but not as successful as his grandfather, he works with Bhandat in business such as selling of liquor, works as a sign painter and in port of Spain as a journalist. He gains expected results, yet not till heart's content in fulfilling his desire to establish in a well-made home made by himself.

The novel indicates a transformation of culture, religion and social accessibility of the migrant characters. The Hindus form a community and share relationship having Hanumana house as the centre of social interaction and togetherness. The Tulsis' way of life is typically Hindu in its disposition. However, a process of hybridization creeps in. The younger son, Ovad, though entangled in the rituals of Hinduism, yet wears a cross. Thus the repercussions of Hinduism in the migrant Indians are intermingled with the Christian practices in Trinidad. Thus they adapt to a religion that is possibly partly out of origin and partly out of the prevailing religion in Trinidad, other than Hinduism. Hinduism, with its traditional rituals is made to sing in consonance with the Trinidadian harmony. The image of "Hanuman" is, at times, oblivious of them and is on the verge to be replaced by Christ. The foreign religion encroaches into the migrants' original religion. The absurdities of retention and the economic backwardness make them leave their own and adapt more of others to access to a reliable life with the inhabitants of Trinidad. The ritualistic trends coagulate with the modern western culture that ruled the roost in Trinidad. The tradition of the Tulsis to keep their sons-in-law in home always is to decry the sacred ceremony of marriage reducing it to an entity of profit and gain for personal purposes. The long wide separation, i.e. the distances of Trinidad from India creates a hiatus that differs their origin from their present religious approaches. Besides, the modern tinge in Biswas makes him undo the subjugation of the Tulsis. His liberal outlook resists against the Tulsis' dominance as the colonial masters. Unfortunately, Biswas' efforts end in vain because of his destitution. Yet, he puts forth a voice unlike others under the roof to choose an independent profession by himself. Thus, the originality of culture and religion give in to a process of hybridization and change.

A capitalist order pervades the society gradually undoing the repercussions of the feudalist set-up. The personal change in the individual and the social change in the

environment run parallel to each other putting forth the protagonists as the transformed beings of the new capitalist order. Mr. Biswas, the newly emerging rebel of the new world is blossoming out while the remains of the feudal society are drooping down. Mr. Biswas struggles to emancipate himself from the outdated credos still prevalent in the then social phenomenon. The feudal order is projected by the manners of the Tulsis, their hold over others by virtue of their social upkeep. They have their say and subordinate a lot of the community in the hierarchy created by the socio-economic gradations. They seem to preserve the solidity that persisted in favour of the East Indian Community in Trinidad. Seth acts as “the big boss” to subordinate the Tulsis. (Biswas-212) Biswas, the rebel, reacts actively against the psychic emasculation by the Tulsis. Mr. Biswas does not succumb to his fate as the other brothers-in-law, but undoes the sense of suppression imposed by them. It is exhibited in his arrogant behaviour from moment to moment. He refuses to submit to the two gods though he had uttered critical sentences against them. The bitter remarks against Hanuman House express his wrath against the feudalistic set up symbolized by Hanuman house. However, Mr. Biswas is a tiny creature to sustain the Himalayan burden gripping over him. Biswas is susceptible to the inevitable moments of humiliations and repressions. The economic set-back lacking both money and position hinders him back. Despite being tenacious and ready to counter attack the assaults, he has to pick up the job of a sign-painter. His independence is not under his own volition. His manhood is vitiated when he attempts to disrespect his lovable belongingness to the Tulsi household.

The capitalist order gives vent to itself when the commitments of Biswas are disenchanted about the rigours of the social set up. The feelings of revulsion are prominent within him aspiring for a change and newness to fetch him the integrity of his own individual and person. All attempts turn into a fiasco and he experiences the futility of his struggle. He becomes a proselytizer on behalf of the tyrants. He helps the Hindu missionaries from India and is a sincere worker advocating abortion of the institution of child brides, education of girls and freedom in marrying one to the other. He partakes with the Aryans’ method of converting people to Hinduism. Mr. Biswas emerges as a rebel forthcoming, prominent and outstanding, about to smash the feudal world of the Tulsis. His reactions are direct and challenging. Seth recognizes the efficacy of Biswas, apprehends the danger it poses to the Tulsis’ world and exclaims, “This house is like a republic already”. (Biswas-123) He adds... “The Black Age has come at last. Sister we have taken in a serpent.” (Biswas – 124) The Contemplation about an independent existence is expressed in action when he shifts the



abode of his family to the chase. Mr. Biswas' rebellion is not a blessing rather a curse upon him. The new capitalist order opens new avenues but not without the pain and difficulty of struggle. He experiences nervous breakdown at Greenvale and he works for the Trinidad sentinel in port of Spain just to do away with his anguish and depression. He is the cursed being to tolerate uncertainty and gloom till the end.

The new order is fetched with a transition from the country to the town. The countryside is the background for the feudal society giving way to the capitalist set up, the urban upgrowth. Leaving Hanuman house to settle at the new estate at shorthills is a manifestation of the shifting social order. The feudal setting is featured by the idyllic landscape, the old colonial past, and the traditional world of the Tulsis household. The capitalist culture is the colonisers' culture imposed with imperialist values. The parasitic activities feature the capitalist trend replacing hard work and honesty of the feudal days.

The East Indian world undergoes a transition. The loss of faith in the Tulsis is the gradual dwindling down of the feudal aristocracy expressed by Mrs. Tulsi "The old days have become old fashioned so quickly, Mohun." (Biswas-527) Owad enters the capitalist world by being betrothed to Dorothy's cousin, a handsome young woman graduate from McGill University. Biswas is a tragic protagonist – a product of the mythical world of Ramayana knocking at the doors of the contemporary western world, asking for a place. Mrs. Tulsi is seeking shelter in Roman Catholicism observing disintegration in her native religion of Hinduism. Biswas is a frozen being vacillating between the tussling points of existence. His alienation is created by his traumatic situation not letting a unity of the feudal aspect of the past with the present capitalist order. The irreconciliation of Biswas' personal history with the past alienated heritage is the cause of the cultural alienation.

Mohun Biswas represents an exile helplessly seeking to strike roots and establish his identity. Mr Biswas is to overcome a path where he is obsessed with both desires and obligations. His desires come in conflict with the obligations imposed by the society. His inner instincts to settle down in a self-made home are toppled down in course of facing the topsy-turvy circumstances entangled around. His perpetual struggle is to acquiesce a social identity. He is to gain an authentic selfhood. The novel portrays the socio-ethnic history that partakes the community while on its march of getting unified with an alien society of Trinidad. To establish oneself amidst one's transition from rural to an urban and

industrialized society is nothing but a search for order in course of the socio-cultural change. The recurrent slavery and the psychic encounter hinder him from finding oneself planted in a foreign culture. It is a centreless society that makes the individual sustain a persistent state of chaos and instability. Consequently, Biswas, the individual, experiences rootlessness. Mr. Biswas is treated as a “no-where man,” (SP Swain) cursed with joblessness and landlessness.

There is a split in the personality of the protagonist – his own account of himself and others’ account upon him. What he contemplates about himself is far-fetched. The personal account of his own being is sublime and ideal. Further, it is not yet realized remaining similar to a mirrage moving farther and farther. Though he is solemn about his dignity, yet he is looked upon as an outsider, a destitute and a labourer. There outgrows a situation of incompatibility of the expectations contained within and the manifestations of his actions as appear to the outside. Thus a battered and scattered individual is trying to catch the mainway of existence. The dreams of a being a dignified person are counted high but fall flat the moment when they are yet to set on. His real-life accomplishments are miles ahead. He is merely a day-dreamer to put up with the big lots. The moody rebel does not pay heed to what others might opine upon him. The Tulsis are amazed at the way Biswas refuses to work either in their store or in the sugar wine estate. Biswas embodies abhorrence to the Tulsis because of the Tulsis’ caring three hooks to his Brahmin status and not counting him within the category of the civilized and the refined persons.

He is considered a relegated individual marginalized from the mainstream of the rich and the affluent. Biswas has a greed for respect and positions but is often thwarted by the society of ranks and positions inhabited by the wealthy. On the one hand, Biswas is crazy enough to be regarded as a Brahmin but on the other hand, he is a rebel against the class and the caste system. Thus the conflict between the desires and the necessities within Biswas is worth noting; it is a cog in the wheel that retards his progress. A wide hiatus runs parallel between what he is and what he would like to be. Illusion and reality do not match for a symbiotic existence but for a conflicting awkwardness. Biswas, the protagonist experiences estrangement and alienation after leaving the Tulsis. Besides, the work of an agricultural labourer as his ancestors no more interests him. The dreams of class and caste designations and a house of his own purge him of the sauce of his life.

The Indianness of the Trinidad Hindus and the migrants’ construction of a psyche, a mood and an ambience of superstitions, rituals and religious credos interplay to form the

background of *A House for Mr. Biswas*. The tinge of the misfortune or evil shadows Mr. Biswas taking chance of his economic inability. The curses on him are called down, the irksome occurrences of the events synchronise with the dictations of his fragile fate. The post-birth rituals of Mr. Biswas such as almanac, horoscope and prophecy etc. present an ominous account of the child-Biswas in the traditional Hindu society. Biswas is believed to be born with the evil cursed upon him because he possesses the sixth finger. According to Hindu beliefs, it is inauspicious and believed to bring misfortune to the family and the parents. The series of ill-luck is unfurled with the death of his father, dismissal from priesthood caused by the orthodox Pt. Jairam, and defiling of the flower tree and hesitations to work in the rum-shop of Ajodha due to cheating by Bhandat from time to time. He is compelled to take to painting losing the confidence of his rum-shop master. He in order to escape waywardness accompanies the Tulsis. He is not free from subjugation and relieves him from them to settle at Greenvale. The skeleton of his house at Greenvale is burnt by the annoyed workers to his further destitution. He ends his career as a journalist for *Trinidad Sentinel* moving from rural India to the urban port of Spain.

The world of *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a Dickensian world where child labour, work, wages, money, shelter and employment pour in to echo the predicament of the migrant labourers in Trinidad. The touch of decrepitude is against time for the child is without the hours of recreation, playfulness and mirth. He undergoes the iron-laws of life to eke out his living each day. He becomes old before enjoying his childhood. Malnutrition, bondage and slavery are the everyday facts of his life. A wage-earner is tussled hither and thither and knocked down despite possession of the original pride of his castes and abilities. The protagonist is bound to be struck by the absolute sense of fate. One is ordained before birth the destination of his life. The destitute worker is a rolling stone to endure through out with no significant outcome in his life. The social philosophy has a demonic force behind to crush and mutilate the poor immigrant workers, making them dance to the tune of the exploitative process of the society. They accept things of life without protest. Biswas' grandfather pronounces the inevitability of the dictation of fate. "Fate" he says..."there is nothing we can do about it." (Biswas-15) He utters much about fate through he is left to pass away in a crumbling thatched hut at the termination of the sway of events in his life. A favour from fate is a mere survival and not a playful existence with the gusto of living.

The psycho-social account of the novel is indicated in Biswas' behaviour with the changing socio-economic situations. Biswas is tenacious, purposeful and up keeping despite awkward situations on the verge to devour him with momentary frustrations. He endeavours by fits and starts to pick up something else as occupation the moment he loses something. He develops wings to put up with the awkwardness posed against the smooth passage of life. His down to earth feelings for others makes him despise the surroundings and be far from the near and dears, at the port city of Spain. Besides, he is quite personal and introspective. At the same time, he has a mark of sentimentality in him tinged by his upper class belongingness and a sentimental outlook poses the social situations as the Himalayan obstacles. His tenacity is not capable enough to face the situations permanently and he takes up the cudgel only for a short duration to vanish from there to engage himself at the other round of life-like situations. The availability of comforts and luxuries is meagre enough to evoke in him playfulness and gregarious participation with the neighbours. He loses the goody-goody moods in him to become tough and challenging in the work of journalism in port of Spain, developing a career and writing for the *Trinidad Sentinel*. The burning of the skeleton of the house at Green vale by the initiated workers is to thrust him down but he reawakens again to make another at the port city of Spain. Shama is made to traverse the path and attain consummation of life along with Biswas and the children, Savi and Anand. The fantasy within Biswas and the high esteem within himself are turned aside by the Tulsis in a facilitated status and with opulence. Biswas own eyes beguile him for further sustenance. The Tulsis do not share his high hopes. Thus the great expectations for himself end in painful humiliations. The dreams for a better future seem somehow shattered by his lowly jobs as a store keeper or a plantation driver. Thus the determination to keep going higher is vitiated by non-availability of income, jobs and accommodation till his contentment. The desires and the results, fantasy and actuality are at tug of war to image Biswas, a tottering individual sustaining despite odds, hoping for his expected destination. He is the wage-earner unable to make a tie with the haves.

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is a delineation of a picaroon society where the downtrodden stay within the limitation of social suppressions. Traditions and institutions mean insignificant for them for they are busy in making their way out. Sustainability is wanted prior to social esteem. Marginalisation puts them away from the sphere of power and development. The underdogs or the downtrodden feel nothingness of their lives and futility of their existence. It is a portrayal of an exile's construct, a historical memoir of the downtrodden in the migrant community in an urban atmosphere. The tragic story of the

struggle of the destitute is the pen-picture of the slavery of the population of the mixed communities and the colonized. The island reflects a scene of the picaroon world in Spain. The poor would not access to the rich and were never approved, to be permanently humiliated. It is a pathetic account of their march from indenture ship to the status of the free and independent society of the middle class professionals. The pain and torture forms an implacable picture of the intolerable struggle till they meet their doom. They keep calm with meagre achievement and reap no corns throughout.

Biswas falls short to accomplish all the necessities for the house. The romantic playfulness of his dreams ends in compromises. The disappointments in arranging materials mock his dreams. His enchantment as that in a poem of Wordsworth ends in a sober adjustment. The bitter actuality is quite painful and intolerable; the high-conceived hopes remain unfulfilled and thwarted by the demonic circumstances. He has to forsake his house and property after his father's drowning. Biswas strains every nerve to regain the lost security of his boyhood days. Biswas' struggle for accommodation delineates a chronicle of migrancy, torture and distance cursed by the then Trinidadian colonial society. His freedom is curbed by his material dependence and search for money and belongings. Biswas is a wonderer except for his periodical residencies at his self-constructed homes at Green vale, short-hills and Sikkim street. The houses reflect the boredom of veracity. In other words, the real is painful. The wooden pillars replace the concrete in his imagination settled calm only, a cedar floor instead of pitch-pine, the space between the ceiling and the roof is patched with pitch-far instead of boards. As a consequence, the black snakes fall from the ceiling like terrifying monsters. The floors and pillars are driven with nails by the estate workers' children to his sad plight. Finally, it is turned to ashes by the enraged workers. The difference is well indicated by discriminating his dreams and reality as the difference between the beauty and dullness; beautiful world, jasmine and the insipid vegetation.

Biswas through thick and thin takes a second attempt at short hills to fetch back contentment to his pastoral vision. But it is again purged of joy and elation; and the house is "as wild and out of the way as he could have wished." (Biswas-424) Its location is far from the hubbub of the city and spoils the very charms of residence. Shama, has to cover a great length in order to bring grocery items, vegetables and even at times to collect drinking water.

Biswas' ruptured house is symbolic of the fragmented society and a break in the structure of the organic community. The purposes of Biswas have got into hot water. It is indicative of the detachment cursed upon the cohesion and unity of the society, fetching forth spiritual void in existence. Mr. Biswas is hoping against hope to make another one. Thus it points to the dramas of a manufactured society in a colonial situation, remaking and renewing itself out of a broken structure.

The colonized and the indentured migrants form a split self-one side of the bifurcation arises out of individual in-authenticity and the other spitted side of the self is created out of his struggle for selfhood. In authenticity is caused out of the political and socio-cultural domination. The battle in life of the indentured protagonist is entangled within the realities of the exploitative process causing slavery, poverty, migration and colonial suppression. The conflicted self is created out when the individual is caught in the snares of colonial domination. The colonized are cursed with a personality constructed out of an inward experience mainly dogged by the colonial subordination and with that meekness of his personality, he interacts with the political and social surroundings. Homi Bhabha says about the colonial situation as "an apparatus of power which contains in both sense of the world 'an other knowledge – a knowledge that is arrested and fetishistic and circulated as through colonial discourse as that limited form of difference... called the stereotype.'" (Bhabha) The colonial temper disseminates a feeling of otherness and a distance. The exploiters are purged of any consideration of belongingness and oneness for them. Such awareness about the other community becomes useful and is deeply felt. There is no love lost between the two communities. The colonizers and the rich community throw cold water on every purpose and scheme of the indentured community.

Biswas is a victim of poverty and arbitrariness of power. He has no say in undoing the tyranny of power and mitigation of poverty. The relegated individual from the marginalized section of the society cannot access to tussle with the big men of the exploitative machination. He is a hack who is not capable to resist the advance of poverty and torture. The newspapers serve the capitalist's purpose and have no radical voice against the inherent system causing destitution of the migrants. The liberation of the migrant workers, emancipation from the subjugation of the rich and the facilitated, improvement of the labourers' community and downfall of the capitalists' ways receive a neglected concern by the hegemonic society. it is a portrayal of the broken social entity, the social structure fragmented; slavery and racial division gaining ground on the dismal scene. It breeds a

spiritual indecisiveness with break in the organic community typifying bourgeois notion of progress closely resembling philistinism. Biswas does not endeavour to normalize his relations with the society but desires to escape from the subjugating cultural and social disadvantages. His consciousness forsakes the credibility in the existing society to crown an alien existence. Biswas wins his laurels as the lone protagonist to triumph over a philistine society.

The concern of the indentured is explained by referring to the notion of subalternity, representing the migrant Indians in the context of history. The role of the migrants is delineated in terms of their subject positions in the course of history that is Eurocentric. Both the constructions of sociality-self and communality have reports of the struggle of the indentured at times challenged and humiliated. In other words, history is entailed as subject positions and memory. History, here, is a general reflection on an issue mainly appropriating a struggle with the other foot-prints of memory. But the narratives of Naipaul speak of an anti-historical consciousness urging for us a modern outlook, creating hopes for a better existence with democratic participation and share for the downtrodden. The struggle of the protagonist is ceaseless, picking up a rebelling awareness to uproot capitalist monopoly and attain individual emancipation towards accommodation, existence, power, position and socio-economic values. The recognition of the individual or self receives a western appropriation involving the ideas of socio-economic development, changes or transformations in society along with the myth of the natives integrated with historical universalism. Vijay Mishra hints at Girit ideology that establishes the relation of the members of the Indian diaspora disentangled from India and integrated with the existential experiences of Naipaul's texts taking in its scheme politics, history, culture and chronology.

Biswas' self is divided – the one public and the other private. The private one is repulsive within, adjusting to queries, desires and is rebelling, for instance, his hesitations are expressed against the imposition of constraints by the Tulsi order. The public one begs recognition of his individuality with the western ideals of liberation pointing to the values of dignity and freedom. The protagonist as the individual colonized subject is visualized on the screen permeated by history.

The individual, the microcosmic unit of the society comes in unity with the macrocosmic social body in Naipaul's texts. He is portrayed in a social situation that has a



historical context with significations and identifications. The individuals, Biswas and Ralph Singh are often located personalities in the meaningful contexts of history.

A foreign community of India needs to be integrated and legitimized with the Trinidadian ethos. Indians are a fragmented community represented with an imaginary belief systems or falsification in a foreign scene of communities with cultural distances and ways of life quite apart. A multiple system of beliefs projects the scene of acceptance and abhorrence at racial differences. The present realities are embedded in a nostalgic past. It is a constructed history as there was no specific history of the migrants and is made possible by reflection of the “false consciousness” (Marx) of the girit phantasgoma. The critics call it a ‘fragmented psyche’ as there is no continuity between their present and their past. Besides, improper communication between them and the other community makes them psychologically segregated. The dislocated Indian diaspora ensnares itself in the absurdities of disenfranchisement and deracination. Their struggle for identification in a foreign land is the curse of Naipaul’s texts. They need to bear the palm where they have no accounts of themselves.

The struggle of the poor migrants amidst a decaying culture is a dismal film of the life at a far-off place. The struggle for self-hood is delusive; related with the detached past are the present adverse and incongruous traditions. Thus the Girit ideology is appropriate in *A House of Mr. Biswas* to point at decay and disintegration. The traditional Tulsi order crumbles down. Modern values crop up as in Biswas’ march to Port of Spain undoing the subjugation of colonial restraints and social limitations. In other words, a modern tinge affects the psycho-social order of the day. His emancipation is conspicuous when the traditional social structure is getting off easy. Mr. Biswas is identified as the migrant prototype who strains his every nerve to liberate himself in a foreign hybrid culture.

The real in *A House for Mr. Biswas* is so bitter and realistic that the protagonist Biswas is out of spirits to conceive of the natural beauty or the romantic landscape. Neither does it evoke his aesthetic sensibilities. He remains dogged by the experiences that have painfully affected him. In short, suppressed are the softer ways of playful living. A jarring contrast is observed between the lively colours of objects and nature, and the sterile, the inactive and the deadening being of Biswas. His identification with the benevolent world of sweetness and romance seems illusory when the real occupies the reader’s mind with his pale



existence. “The imaginary scenes : snow-covered mountains and fir trees, red-buttled yachts in a blue sea below a clear sky, roads winding between well-kept forests to green mountains in the distance”(Biswas – 279) seem as a forced juxtaposition of the fanciful with the sordid. The household implements appear as the items of pain and torture. He is misrecognised and the very impression remains incorrigible. The vitiating experiences are disappointments, thwarts offered by the refusing socio-economic order and his capabilities remaining devalued. He is known to Seth and the labourers as an overseer. His mental deterioration occurs because he is never free, his identity remains undermined and the house of his dreams is a far-fetched metaphor. He dares not have a finger in the pie of the rich and the big.

Individual freedom is thwarted by a socio-economic order that denies him a place in the society; his capabilities are not marked and celebrated. Biswas, the marginalized, is not pointed out by the socialists in the higher pedestal of the society. He is relegated to a low-stratum. The house is a metaphor and the disappointments are real. The personal world of Biswas is not recognized only to offer him a distance and separation from the social set-up. The pregnant Shama is kicked and he expresses abhorrence to her sexual advances. He refuses investment of the body being entangled in the matrix of domination, psychologically detesting sex. Being innervated more about the society and less about his personal belongingness and care, he is hesitant to the joyfulness of life. The historical discourse is not healthy to the description of Biswas. The discourse is merely an exploitative account of Biswas. There is no detailed explanation of the completeness of his life. He is under a romantic quest and there is only redoubling of the incidents. A history is created when the incidents are not of similar order but they are organic and expressive of social factors both sound and unhealthy in alternation. But Biswas’ is a tragic story accountable to the mistreatment of the society throughout. It is on a whole, delineation of an exploitative order. The historical discourse is purged of the instances of Biswas bearing a charmed life.

The novel is dialogical and contains histories that are at times, antagonistic and at times, dependent on one another. The capitalist historiography shows the occurrences of the capitalist suppression including Biswas in the scene of the dispossessed labourers and the big men, Seth and the others. Simultaneously, the state of the personal life of Biswas as a colonized, a subjugated individual is another run of history. One discourse pre-conditions the other. There is scope for the readers to conceive of the multiple historical discourses. Some historical discourses are just cited but the narrative of the novel does not pick out those paths

of histories. Pankaj Rai's Hindu Reformist group exemplifies the progressive ideals of western communism in the Indian scene. Another paralleled recourse, the communist ideals of owad features serving to mitigate the plight of the inhabitants of the under-developed world. Another new history is marked in Biswas' adventure to short hills where the traditional values of the countryside are restored in the face of alternation of a socio-economic structure. Nature compensates the awkwardness of socio-economic distortion and a relief from the wrath, frustration and alienation. Biswas wants to rest on his oars.

"The land itself was a wonder. The Saman trees had lianas so strong and supple that one could swing on them. All day the immortelle trees dropped their red and yellow bird-shaped flowers through which one could whistle like a bird. Cocoa trees grew in the shade of the immortelles coffee in the shade of the cocoa and the hills were covered with tonka bean. Fruit trees, mango, orange, avocado pear etc was so plentiful as to seem wild.... The sisters spoke of the hills, the sweet springs and hidden waterfalls with all the excitement of people who had known only the hot, open plain, the flat acres of sugarcane and the muddy rice lands. Even if one did not have a way with land, as they did, even if one did nothing, life could be rich at short hills." (P. 391)

The characters' attempt to play back their past is never attained. Mrs. Tulsi, longing for the persistence of a civilization at short-hills is a kind of affiliation with her native community and the practice of her orthodox Hinduism drags her towards her own people. Mrs. Tulsi hopes to return to the same state of a domineering gregarious life at short-hills. Thus the characters return back to the same state of a nostalgic past; the history they want to return is never reached and it spoils the harmony, the tranquility and the serenity of their temper. History is not under control and their wish-fulfillment is never appeased. Such an instance leads Biswas towards disorganization of his mind. Social sanction does not add to the characters' positive impulses, rather it causes failure to the aspiring individuals within them.

The urge for recognition within Biswas causes Biswas to exchange words with the Tulsis. His witty attacks on the Tulsis are a kind of expression suggesting familiar attachment and undoing the isolation of his own person from the society in proximity with him. After his mental breakdown at Green-vale, he takes to writing to voice against the hindrances posing before him the circumstantial and personal limitations in his weeklies, and

his journals. The absurdities cause the characters to be in false colours and they are never genuine in their dispositions as they are the frustrated beings of the past.

In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, as in an epic, the theme is known before hand. The story is forecasted in advance and with the juxtaposition of occurrences both of past and future, the meaning always foregrounds on the cultural alienation of the protagonists.

The meaning is elaborated through condensations and expansions. Incidents are clutched together and narrated in length gradually, the meaning pervading our minds surreptitiously. At moments, meaning becomes over determined. The narrator, at such instances adapts to a metonymic strain, thereby overemphasizing the multiple effects of meanings; the concrete and the universal coalesce. The narrative achieves congruency in his communication by keeping eyes on the limitation of meanings conveyed by words, phrases and connotations. The words are in paradoxical relation to each other. A reliable meaning seems an impossibility, when the narrator refers to sensations that are obvious at the time of Raghu and Biswas is unable to catch through. Biswas is made to face an unapproachable gust of sensations that seem to strike the racial unconscious, the collective myth of his past hinted at from his fathers' senses. Naipaul says the words "come from a far" and "some immeasurable depth within." Biswas (P. 116) This universal expression becomes concrete touching both the deeper and the exterior universe as that in a metonymic expression.

Language, at times, can not reflect the reality desired. The usurpation of meaning occurs during the interplay of the signifiers and the signified. Biswas, while is made to write, "I AM AN ASS" does not understand the cynicism (*Biswas-47*) in the teaching-learning context but draws and beautifies the letters. So, there is a deferral of meaning of the content of the narrative. Thus, in a cultural context with variation in instances of history, cultural alienation takes a meandering course of its path keeping the flow persistent as the recurrence of exploitation is of the same strain till the end. History in the context is a series of changes entangled with the prominent theme of exploitation unchanged. Language is enthroned to beautify the texture. The agents of exploitation stick to their guns despite Biswas being susceptible to the changing recourse of history.

The novel is univocal, saying much about Biswas and the other characters are just attached in the journey of the life of the main protagonist, Biswas. Biswas attains a deplorable state of disintegration of his equipoise and mental tranquility. He almost touches

insanity after the passing away of his mother. By virtue of Biswas' engagement with sign writing, reading the novels of Dickens and making peace with the bygone days, Biswas recovers from madness. He attains his wholesome being again after his insanity gripping him at Greenvale. Language negotiates the real with the imaginary contradictions merging into meaninglessness and incoherence. Language acts as a means of deferral to point out the brink of insanity and again makes us reach the pacified state of sanity, a recovery from the hold of mental disintegration, which the novelist points out as violation of self-consciousness. Biswas rationalizes in his heart-felt piece of writing to his dead mother, about his inabilities of mental equilibrium, "He wrote of a journey he had made a long time before. He was hungry; she gave him food. He had nowhere to go; she welcomed him; the writing excited, relieved him." (Biswas – 484) He further continues "The poem written, his self-consciousness violated, he was whole again." (Biswas – 484) Biswas, the aesthetic being with in him is able to come over even when he is standing on his last legs.

The house of Mr. Biswas is the central metaphor related to the other incidents connected with it. The various other details are within the parameters of the novel. Each detailed account points at a separate signification and together with others produces a multiplicity of understanding. There may be divergences in the context of the novel carrying us into multiple arenas of reserved insight but the master-impulse propels with a prominent march of its own. So the prominent theme of the novel lying in Biswas' making a house of his own is entangled with the summons from several regions of culture, history and ideologies. The play of meanings never receives a termination. The social factors involving the discarded and the rejected section of the society under turbulence contain within the alleviation of poverty of Biswas. The circumstances are autonomous with Biswas' persistent struggle quite personal. They form the purification, the penumbra to the umbra symbolizing Biswas' struggle. The crux lies in Biswas' fulfilling his ambition of a house. Biswas is caught into a mire of poverty, where poor people dwell. Biswas wants to rise above them by making things for himself prior to all. He wants to escape the turbulent state of life experienced by others by reaping faster than others. But the actuality is resistance caused on the ways. Fredric Jameson says "The wish fulfilling imagination does its preparatory work so well that the wish and desire itself, are confounded by the unanswerable resistance of the Real." (Jameson) The values of the society are unreal and false to the self-designed ambition of the protagonist till it is attained. The critics especially Reed Way Dasenbrock say comparing Daniel Deronda and Dorothea Brooke with Biswas "All of these protagonists

move from a set of false values imposed by the community of a false family to their own freely chosen self-hood which finds expression in a new family, community and place of dwelling.”(Dasenbrock-1985) Thus Biswas has an eye on the main chance. He is after loaves and fishes and does not like to be left in the lurch.

It is a mythical design that forms the superstructure of the novel and embodies with in as base, the exploitative plight of the migrants. The banishment of Rama into the deep dense forest removed far from his kith and kin, his own kingdom and people is a parallel delineation to Biswas, the migrant Indian placed in a foreign surrounding trying helplessly to make his pros and cons. The forests of Panchabati and the abode of Ravana, Lanka are places connecting two new social situations to construct a harmony of social representation eliminating evils and injustice. Here, Biswas is setting a similar connection through his personality and actions along with his people between India and Trinidad, the two widely apart ways of life. The heinous social strangeness of Trinidad and Tobago is a parallel substitute for evil occurrences faced by Rama near Kiskindha and the events extending beyond the sea till Lanka inhabited by demons, gifted with evil forces. They are colonial beings removed far from homeland and are subjected to the rigours of a foreign land. The stage interplays exile and alienation involving history, myth and social situations. The tragedies of pain, torture and displacement are parallel narratives. They illustrate the predicament of the tragic alienation. George Steiner, in his introduction to Walter Benjamin’s text *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* has brought out a keen comparison between *The Ramayana* and *A House for Mr. Biswas*. The protagonists are in a quandary of situations. Both Rama and Biswas, are in the queer streets of society as abandoned beings endeavouring tooth and nail for a just social serenity.

Ambiguity in poly-ethnic society offers a doubtful personality and an insignificant identity to the protagonists. A complex relationship is built between the white upper class and the natives formed by the coloured middle class. A conspicuous distinction is between the Kinky hair and light brown coloured people in one community and straight hair and olive skin in the other community. The local ethnic labels are referred to in the texts as white, black either Afro-Trinidadian or African, coloured either as brown or red, East Indian and Chinese. The East Indians are of Indian origin. The word “creole” refers to Trinidadian but is different from East Indian origin. There is no religious diversity but there is social classification based on ethnicity, class, gender and locality. Biswas, before making a home

for himself, recognized among Trinidadian way farers, with all his fears and anxieties as an alienated Indian in a non-Indian community is frustrated enough for his ambition is thwarted. Thus *A House for Mr. Biswas* is a portrayal of a sensitive account of ethnography and historicity. The protagonist faces many setbacks and disappointments taking on the challenges of modernization and urbanity. The traditional and original language and custom tolerate a pressure and threat while the East Indians are struggling to put up with the urban creoles. A strive towards modernization is cursed with a loss of originality. The novel depicts a scene of rural-urban liaison, a change and continuity of lives in Indo-Trinidadian villages and a perpetual tension between Indian and non-Indian communities. The phrase - cultural and ethnic tapestry- is used to describe the intermingled lives and realities in Naipaul's literature. The protagonists in Naipaul's narratives represent the chief individuals of the picaresque novels undergoing a series of ups and downs to cut the Gordian knot. He is to take French leave from the exploiters and the subjugating society.

In the end, Biswas reaches his halcyon days. He emancipates from the bondage of his society and the strangles of the past. It is a freedom and release from a long sustained subjugation. Naipaul paints the picture of Biswas with a Victorian largeness. He undoes the constraints as David Copperfield or Oliver Twist. Naipaul has Eliot's morality and Dickens' sympathy while portraying the protagonist. The previous values for the protagonist are vicarious and false. The community and the society create such mental turbulence that he seeks a release from them. He makes a new family, a community and an independent house of his own. It is emancipation from the spiritual and cultural bondage captivating him for long and long years. Biswas comes out with a separate identity and could pull through the challenge. He is able to offer his hostages to fortune; his son, Anand, his daughter, Savi and his wife, Shama a comfortable abode. Biswas has broken the ice as a member of the exodus. The coast is clear. The saga of the indenture or Girit has reached its consummation as a legend and a history.

The issue of conflicts in *A House for Mr. Biswas* receives varied interpretations. The conflict sets off when Mohan is betrothed to Shama. His persistent look out for a way out to manifest his own identity tussles with the conservative credos cultivated by the Tulsis. A conflict has its roots in a relationship and the ideologies valued both by the single individuals and the classes in wholeness come into debates and contradictions against one another. The ideological opinions contrast against one another to enter into the conflicts. Althusser opines,

that “Ideology is a representation of the imaginary relationship of the individuals to their real conditions of existence.” He further adds, “What is represented in ideology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals but the imaginary relations of these individuals in which they live.” (Althusser)

Bakhtin rightly argues that literature’s relation to reading is both positive and coherent: Literature and reality are of the same order which is ideological. However, the special qualities of literature have a distancing effect on the ideologies that it represents. (Jefferson – 43)

In *A House for Mr. Biswas*, the conflict is between the aristocratic class and the working class; the landed aristocracy exerting the workers with their dominant strategy of exploitation. Similar conflict ensues from *The Mystic Masseur* between the feudalistic tendencies and the capitalistic mottoes. Each party of the conflict has a bone to pick with the other.

Biswas, the immigrant labourer belongs to the fragile world purged of manliness that is castrated. Slavery, poverty and dispossession for long have made the world lack its vigour and strength. Nandini Bhattacharya discusses with us the emasculation of the world by the beings that mock heroism and masculinity. She says, “it is a world that moves between the poles of futile emasculation, and vicious, brute aggression that is only a parody of true and heroic manliness.” (Bhattacharya)

The social dominance is defined in terms of aggression of males over females, masculinity over femininity. The persistent humiliation and the constant poverty take the lively sauce out of the inhabitants. From castration, they are subjected to death, diseases and extinction. The author gives evidences. For instance, Bipti’s father is suffering from asthma whom “Fate had brought him from India to the sugar estate, aged him quickly and left him to die in a crumbling mud hut on the swamplands.”(Biswas-15) The protagonist cuts a poor figure to fetch the society only disenchantment about itself. However, the attempts of the protagonist to catch up with the masculine strain are a far cry as he is already vitiated and mutilated in the struggle. He attains a state of mimicry or a ridiculous imitation of the colonial rhetoric. It appears as if produced out of effort and not spontaneous to his natural style. The protagonist is put to task to disorient the natural order of verbosity and eloquence.



Nandini Bhattacharya sums up, “Mohun’s internalization of the colonial rhetoric of masculinity and his paradoxical struggle to construct a heroic persona constitutes the crux of the novel.” (Bhattacharya)

The characters of Naipaul disown and hide their real persona. They are forced to despise their own individuals. The self is defied. Ashish Nandy says about Naipaul, N.C. Chaudhury and Kipling on their styles of self-effacement that they fetch “secondary elaboration of a culture designed to hide the real self – the deepest social consciousness of the victims from the outsiders.” [Nandy, Ashish]

The strains of criticism on self-defiance by Naipaul continue. Manjit Inder Singh writes, “None of the [novelist’s] figures are allowed authenticity or a place in the landscape he inhabits, indeed Naipaul sees a necessarily fleeting and absurd wish in them to cross barriers, erected by the limitations of colonial culture that in the end can only lead to a falsity of purpose, supplemented or aggravated by a consciousness of unimportance.” (Singh, Manjit Inder)

Naipaul elaborates upon the building up of national identities arising out of ethnic particularities. In the making of nations, the ethnic specificities are obliterated. The communities both compete and share mutually on a stage of ethnic diversities. The members of the Indian diaspora inhabiting the Caribbean territories as immigrants are pervaded throughout by a new nationalistic creed other than theirs. The Indian mingles with the Caribbean to express itself not as a harmonic but as a rootless and decayed Indian culture perverted by the inevitable juncture of two wide-apart cultures. Languages and religions are now mixed versions affecting the heritage of the immigrants, not personal but mostly collective, communicated and expressed among all members of the immigrants’ community. The pre-existing strains of language, culture and religion merge with the new, synchronizing with the rising of the new nations in the making.

The traces of the native are erased to put forth new tulips fetched by the waters of a distant land. Naipaul paints a panoramic account of the cultural visions pertaining to the indentured that is world-wide. The ways of life of several communities receive a fresh treatment but they are mixed, coagulated and hybrid. William Walsh writes, “His vision is his own, un-enervated by contemporary social clichés or political routines with the mixture in



him of creeds, culture and continents.” (Walsh) Further, the characters of Naipaul break off from their original strain of culture and language; it indicates their acceptance and assimilation into a larger stage constructed by societies and nations. The new hybrid one seems gall and warm wood and the old native one does not stand its ground.

The title of the topic in the novel is justified in Biswas’s attempt to make a house for him. It is to gain social assimilation and offer value and worthiness to the youngsters after he passes away. His idea is big and Herculean, strengthened and determined. The meaning transcends beyond its physical structure of four walls. A house is not simply an accommodation for one but, is esteemed as the socio-cultural institution. William Walsh opines that it is “a shelter, a fortress, a declaration of independence, a shaping of the impersonal in the service of the personal.” (Walsh)

His struggle manifests itself in making the house with repeated attempts from place to place. Meenakshi Mukherjee says that the central concern of the novel is about “the unaccommodated man’s repeated attempts to find a stable location in a ramshackle and random world . . .” (Mukherjee)

*A House for Mr. Biswas* is compared with the Ayemenem house in Arundhati’s Roy’s *The God of Small Things* and *Wuthering Heights* of Emile Bronte.

A lone man’s struggle is portrayed as a panacea for all kinds of depravity in the face of destitution. The indomitable Biswas comes out with flying colours having a four-walled house. Blessed are the joys of eternity, blessed is his struggle and blessed is his emancipation from the social bondage.

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## TRANSITION IN THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE OF ‘CHINDU BHAGWATAM’: AN ORAL FOLKLORE OF TELANGANA

Gouri Mandapaka

### *Abstract*

‘Chindu Bhagwatham’ is a folklore performed by Chindu artists of Nizamabad district in Telangana. The artists belong to the Madiga (lower) caste. Their traditional style of narrating mythological stories had gained popularity during its early years and later it faded and lost its popularity in the contemporary times. (The Hindu, Aug 30, 2012). In an effort to preserve and popularize their traditional art form the ‘Chindu’ artists bring variations in theme and narrative technique to suit the contemporary stage and audience. This shift in their style of narrating (changing the form) the content has made a great impact in the acceptability of this oral art form. The Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky says that the technique of art is to make objects ‘unfamiliar,’ to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (Shklovsky 16) and therefore it is the de familiarization of the form/ narrative technique, which becomes the key feature in deciding the effect it will have on its audience. Therefore, the study of the changes in the style of narration is essential and integral in identifying the cause of decline of this traditional oral art form. It is in this context that this paper attempts to study the changes that the art form ‘Chindu Bhagwatam’ has undergone with an emphasis on the transition of the narrative technique and its aesthetic appeal from the time of its origin till the present times.

*Key words: Narrative Technique, De familiarization, Oral folklore, contemporary stage, Chindu Bhagwatam, aesthetic appeal*

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### **Introduction**

Folk Literature finds its meaning and purpose in the traditional, cultural, ethnographic and geographic structures of a place. ‘Chindu Bhagvatam’ is one such folklore of Telangana which projects and depicts their cultural background and also speaks in volumes, the different social levels at which this art form was practised and received by its audiences.

The Chindu artists of Nizamabad district in Telangana belong to the Madiga caste. Their traditional style of narrating mythological stories had gained popularity during its early years and later it faded and lost its popularity in the contemporary times. (The Hindu, Aug 30, 2012)

In an effort to preserve and popularize their traditional art form, the 'Chindu' artists bring variations in theme and narrative technique to suit the contemporary stage and audience. This shift in their style of narrating (changing the form) the content has made a great impact in the acceptability of this oral art form. It is in this context that this paper attempts to study the changes that the art form, 'Chindu Bhagvatam' has undergone with an emphasis on the transition of the narrative technique and its aesthetic appeal from the time of its origin to the present times.

This paper aims to study the narrative techniques of 'Chindu Bhagvatam', mark the transition in the narrative style and then decipher the reasons for the decline of the art form. Every folk literature is written in a certain context (Erich L. Montenyohl) and therefore it is vital to revisit the historical origins of the art form to understand the transition in the narrative style. In its early years, when the Bhagvatam was recited, only the upper caste Brahmins had the authority over it. The Brahmins recited it and performed it and since they were educated, they could read, understand and interpret the 'Bhagvatam' well. In the later years this oral art form was practiced by Madigas, a sub caste in Telangana region, which were authorised to practice and perform the 'Bhagvatam' much later. Bhagvatam was now performed under the patronage of the Madiga caste which gave shelter and training to other sub-castes like 'Chindu Madigas'. There are many mythological stories where the artists narrate stories of the origin of their performances and inclusion in the Madiga caste. Most of the performances were in Sanskrit. They are now performed in Telugu, keeping in view the need of the region to which the audience belonged.

It is essential to note that most of the Chindu artists were not educated and therefore they could barely manage to read and understand the 'Bhagvatam'. The text had been handed over to them from one generation to the other. The richness of the language used by the present day artists has declined significantly. It does not have the same impact as it had when the artists had used Sanskrit words in the earlier times. In this context, the Russian formalist Shklovsky, says-

*'The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (Shklovsky 16)*

Therefore, it is essential to retain the richness of the language and the form/narrative style which gives a unique distinction to the art form. It is the de-familiarization of the artistic

form that becomes the key feature in deciding the effect it will have on its audience. The distortion in the form of narration also has had a great impact in the acceptability of the art form.

During the early years, the artists of the Bhagvatam followed the Yakshagana style of narration. The Yakshagana follows the scroll narrative style which has a story sequence. It is the most flexible form of narrative style, as it gives the artist complete freedom to experiment with the story line and the background. Therefore, most of the performances in the earlier times were based on the Yakshagana style of narration, which is the ‘purana pravachana’ tradition of narration. ‘Yakshagana’ is a story telling format, where one artist performing a character from the Mahabharata or Ramayana would enact the episode by reciting it, a commentary of the Bhagvatam. In the present times, the source of the stories has changed from legendary mythological stories to social issues of the modern times. The change in source has diluted the effect and resulted in the decline of the art form.

Another important marker of transition in the narrative technique is the story sequence. The Bhagvatam in its early form was recited as depicted in the main text with no variations by the artists. When the Madigas became the patrons of this art form, they included a new story sequence where they ended the bhagvatam with a ‘samvad’ (dialogue) between Jambu Mahamuni and the ‘Brahmin sage’. Since then the artists have been trying to add new episodes and texts to create more interest in the audience. In the process of doing so they have changed the purity and originality of the main text.

The change may not have appealed to the audiences of the present times because; a) It distorts the story sequence b) This new form does not have the essence of the original, which was a much more celebrated and accepted model c) The transition in the form from the old to the new does not have a synchronic flow. d) The replacement of the language from Sanskrit with regional dialects and slangs dilutes the aesthetic value.

Caste has been a major subject of contention and debate in Indian Literature. The history of the origin of this art form; ‘Chindu Bhagvatam’ also finds a vital place in the caste debates. Chinnaiah Jangam, in his research paper on ‘Caste from below: Memory and subversion of caste in Chindu Yakshaganam’ makes an important observation-

*‘Chindu performers invert the Hindu Brahmanical worldview by narrating and performing Puranic stories upside down to present the phenomenon of caste and its origin myths from a Dalit perspective.’*

In this context, ‘Chindu Bhagvatam’ brings a story sequence of ‘Jambu Puranam’ (mentioned above) which is a dialogue between Jambu Mahamuni and the Brahmin sage. This dialogue is also an anti thesis subverting the social order, where Jambu Mahamuni representing the Madiga cast, (supposed to be at the bottom of the social order) gets the power and privilege to stand at power with the superior (Brahmin) class. In this dialogue Jambu Mahamuni shows his superiority by placing himself at a superior position, where he claims to be older than the sky and earth and to have been born before the holy trinity of the Hindu religious order: Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh. It further belittles the upper caste by foregrounding the double standards of the Brahmins who propagate their purity and superiority and changing the worldview in their favour. Jambu Mahamuni proves his superiority with reason and tact and defeats the Brahmin priests in his arguments. This dialogue has a great significance even now in subverting the caste equations for Chindu artists in the society. This played a very important role in the lives of Madigas in securing a secure position in the society.

Gender has always remained one of the essential features of all critical debates and analysis of narrative, which essentially plays a vital role in the performance and acceptability of the art form. Bhagvatam was performed only by men in the beginning. Men would play the role of women. The Madigas and the chindus followed a very patriarchal system where women were confined to the house hold work. This scenario changed when a Madiga performer in the early twentieth century introduced his little child to the stage and named her Yellama. She played Balakrishna and lord Krishna as a child artist which made her very popular amongst not only the Madiga caste but also the upper castes who appreciated her work. The art form gained popularity with her performances as she was successful in bringing a case for gender equality. She displayed courage and the confidence to portray male and female roles with aplomb. In the times when ‘Chindu’ women were treated inferior to not only men in general but even to men of their own community. Yellama became an iconic figure and a very integral part of ‘Chindu’ performance.

Later on the women could not participate due to family constraints and poor economic conditions. As a consequence, women were not seen as main performers. This had a great

impact in the acceptability as the men who played the female characters could not justify the roles and as a result it lost its charm and impact.

The Chindu artist brought variation in the stage and costumes to suit the contemporary demands and interests. Earlier they performed in an allotted place in the village at a particular time. Later they started performing at places where they could find more people as explained by Sri Gaddam Sammaiah (Chindu artist) in an interview.

He says they now perform at places where they can attract more people. They do not have a proper allocated stage, which they decorated with leaves and flowers. In order to suit the time and convenience of the people they even perform the entire night. In his interview he mentioned that the clothes and costumes which were made earlier looked very natural as they were made out of leaves and natural colours of trees, flowers and herbs, but the artist of the present times use various kinds of artificial colours which do not give the same effect and essence to the character they perform. This could be another reason for the decline of this art form.

The artists confess that they have very few people, who appreciate and promote their art now. This has affected their lives in a significant way. Earlier, when their fathers and grandfathers performed they would have the entire village for their performance, now they are forced to make changes in the script, stage and costumes to suit the popular demands of the present times.

As a result of this change in the popularity of the art form, Madigas who gave shelter to the Chindu artists and patronised this art form are unable to support them financially. The artist of the older generation are unable to pass on this oral folklore to their children, The younger artists are migrating to other states to seek better jobs, as a result they have very few artists who can perform and carry on this tradition in the present times.

### **Conclusion**

In this rapidly changing social, political and cultural milieu, institutions like the film industry and the social media have had a greater demand and impact. Bollywood and social media have a complete monopoly over the viewership in the present times. Most of our audience, who belong to the younger generation, have better access to technology and less time for revisiting the rich cultural heritage of the past. The ever growing demand of modern life has resulted in a strong disconnect with their traditions and cultures.

This has eventually led to the decline of folklore and oral art forms in our country. The government has taken initiatives to preserve this oral folk tradition. The Telangana government has allocated areas in the state, where these artists perform to promote various

social awareness programmes such as family planning, environment, literacy and health care measures to the villages. (The Hindu). They have also tried to support these artists financially by helping them by sponsoring their performance and giving them some incentives to preserve this oral folklore from getting completely extinct.



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**PLAY AND GAMES AMONG THE BAIGAS OF MADHYA PRADESH: A PLEA  
FOR TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT –A SOCIAL CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL  
FOCUS**

**Dr. Abhijit Das\***

*Abstract*

Play and indigenous folk games are the integral aspects of tribal culture in India which have always been overlooked till date mostly by the social scientists as well as anthropologists. The recreational games and allied playful activities are found in different tribal groups in Central India. The text and context of such play and games vary from economic categories and their ecological settings of the age-old habitats of the communities. It has been observed that among most of the tribal communities in India, variegated indigenous play forms and folk games still exist with some borrowed urban based modern popular games due to acculturating with mainstream culture. The *Baigas* of Madhya Pradesh try to patronize their indigenous knowledge and ideology around their cultural traditions through play and games. Few games are purely playful but in most cases the physical skill, fitness and strategies are required to perform successfully in order to achieve the goal as per the game texts and hence, individual performer should have to possess good health for playing successfully. Therefore, the present study, basically ethnographic in nature, deserves urgent attention of the planners, policy makers and physical educators as well as sports educators. It can also interpret to protect these indigenous games through the increasing consciousness of physical culture in regular basis through awareness and competition practices along with institutionalizations like those of modern sports. It may be one of the vital aspects of tribal development programme, keeping the basic appeal of sustainable development intact.

Keywords: Play, Games, Institutionalization Development, Ethnography.

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## Preamble

Recreation is an aspect of culture. Pattern of recreation varies from one culture to the other. It plays a refreshing role to each culture. Through recreation the toils of different human activities are removed and it leaves the dynamics of culture afresh. In most cultures, play and games represent one of the patterns of recreation (like music, dance, song, art etc.). The pattern of games and allied playful activities may be individual or group as well as team based. There are traditional as well as folk games are existing in many pre-industrial societies like tribals of India. Some games are borrowed. Such borrowed games and play patterns are selected and incorporated by the mental aptitude of the traditional culture. At the present level of developed system communication and urbanization, many modern games and sporting activities are directly borrowed to the recreational milieu of a given culture by the interested people in it. Leisure time recreation through games often vitalized the activities, capacity of action and thinking of people.

Play and games have always been of interest to anthropologists. They tried to distinguish 'play' and 'game' though both are basically considered as recreational activities. Play is free and spontaneous activities; one is engaged in it with his/her free volition. And thus it is not for any specific objectives or ends. Therefore, play may be assumed to be a behavior which is an exercise of voluntary control systems. From a cultural point of view, it is normal to emphasize that play is unique and individual, but ephemeral; whereas a game is sufficiently systematic and may be repeated by others in other places. Games are repeatable because of their systematic pattern and predictable outcomes. Play on the other hand is less systematic and is open ended with regard to an ultimate outcome. For an activity to be classified as a game, it must be "characterized by: (1) organized play, (2) completion, (3) two or more sides, (4) criteria for determining the winner, and (5) agreed upon rules" (Roberts, Arth, & Bush, 1959: 597) . Games can be classified into three basic types delineated by such nineteenth century anthropologists as Morgan (1962), Tylor (1879), Roberts and Sutton-Smith (1962):

(1) Games of Physical skill, (2) Games of Strategy, (3) Games of Chance.

All these types can be broadly categorized into Indoor and Outdoor games. Games scholars often classified as individual as well as group game and so on. All these categories and sub categories express the fact that aspects of physical and socio-cultural environment often can be interpreted through the play and games as exist in a society. Therefore, since the games of strategy (e.g. chess, playing cards etc.) simulate comparatively complex social systems, those

systems should be complex enough to generate such needs for expression. Simple societies may not possess games of strategy and should resist borrowing them from other cultures. That is why in almost all the tribal societies this category is more or less absent.

### **Aim and Objectives of the present Study**

The present study basically ethnographic and qualitative in nature has been carried out with the following aim and objectives–

- To know the different texts and contexts of indigenous folk games of Baigas in the wider gamut of their traditional folk culture.
- To evaluate the position of play and games in their leisure time recreation as one of the vital aspects of culture.
- To interpret the games as adaptive strategy of the ecological settings of the community under study.
- To give a profile of the play and games as interrelated system of their day to day interaction in socio-cultural system.
- To highlight the urgent attention of the planners, policy makers as well as anthropologists to those play and game elements in order to protect these from decaying day by day, like other indigenous elements of culture, and lastly-
  
- To interpret to protect these games through the increasing awareness of physical culture in regular basis by institution based competitions as these are played with minimum equipment available in their surroundings.

### **Venues of Observation**

Central India covers part of Gujrat and Maharashtra (this would be Western Central India) and parts of Bihar and Orissa (which would form Eastern-Central India). Madhya Pradesh lies at the heart of India. Most of the state is a high plateau, historically known as Malwa Region, the home land to many Pre-Aryan tribes. A number of tribes occupy Madhya Pradesh, including the Gond, Bhil, Baiga, Korku, Kamar, Kol, and Maria. Many of the tribal traditions are still vital and strong, although they have been exposed to outside cultural

influences, hence significant and relevant to anthropologists till date. It is also justifiable to mention here at the same time, that, a great deal of tribal mythology as well as folklore is also well preserved regarding their myths, legends, songs, dances together with folktales, riddles, proverbs, folk games and playful activities illustrating their ecological, techno-economic and mainly socio-religious spheres of cultural heritage. Away from the tribal stock of Madhya Pradesh, the rest of the population consists of Hindu communities. They

Include Rajput landholders, traditional merchant classes and established agriculturists. The industries and factories in the urban areas have drawn labour from all the classes (Mohanty 2006; Mishra 2009, Jain Sharma 2009).

From the foregoing discussion, it is clear that the Baigas are one of the important primitive tribal groups (PTGs)<sup>1</sup> of Central India. The largest number of Baigas is found in Baiga-Chawk in Mandla district and Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh. Their population as of census 1981 was 2,48,949, (Singh, 2010) they practice shifting cultivation (Bewar) in forest areas. Until fairly recently the Baigas practiced “dahiya” cultivation that is slash and burn. Thousands of square miles of sal forests have been Clean and destroyed by them in the progress of their dahiya cultivation, the ground being afterwards occupied by dense scrub of low Sal pieces springing from the stumps. The Baigas are courageous woodsman and hunters, now-a-days.

Therefore the Baigas of Madhya Pradesh are to be considered here for the main focus of observation as per the aim and objectives of the present study.

### **Texts & Contexts of Play & Games: An Ethnographic Profile**

While leading such labourious bread earning jobs the Baigas, mainly children and boys and girls of age group (10-15) years practice their plays and games which are part and parcel of their life and culture. All these playful activities and games keep them fresh and give them joy because most of these are recreational in nature.

The play and games as practiced by them can be classified as playful activities without goal or predictable outcome, indigenous folk games, and games with physical prowess or sporting activities. The first and second categories are more in number which are played in almost pure oral traditions with few rhymes and riddles, hence, have a significant role in maintaining their age old folklore as well as folk culture of the territory under study. The rules of such games are flexible and subject to amendments of the will of the players. The third category is

few in number and mainly played by the senior boys because the Baigas of the forest and hilly areas have to possess tremendous amount of physical strength for their daily sustenance in their habitat. These categories are better to call as physical contests. Here in these contests they are showing individual physical prowess and skill. These patterns are mainly found to be played during the ceremonies and festivals. It is also worth mentioning that very few modern urban based games are borrowed now-a-days and getting popularity, but these have been exempted from the present study.

Now, we shall pass on the variegated texts and contexts of the play and games as played by the Baiga children, and boys and girls of different age groups.

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The Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) embrace such tribal people who are characteristically benighted in the different dimensions of their way of life. Economically they still indicate their specific trend of continuation of the archaic pattern of existence. Living very close to nature and their utter dependence on the bountiful natural resources, their way of life and basic philosophy have been moulded accordingly and thus any sort of severance from this deep-rooted matrix results in an unbalancing situation.

Regarding spontaneous play forms like everybody else, what the Baiga children like most is jumping off things and rolling about. They can spend a happy morning and afternoon climbing onto a fallen tree and leaping down to the ground. Sometimes they abore rolling over and over in the soft worm send of the river bed. Other forms are as follows:

Bazar-Bazar (Market game): Like the. Bazar-bazar game of rural areas of West Bengal the children often like to perform miracles of imaginary bargaining of amerceable items like leaves, stones and bits of stick etc. some of them act as ‘soller’ and other purchase the items as displayed in the ‘market’. The junior boys and girls of age group (6-10) years prefer this game.

Rehcchi-khel (Rolling a log): It is also a spontaneous play rather than a game. It in played by placing one log of wood (gundi) across another. Two boys sit on it and the others spin them round. The sitting players try to balance on the log very skillfully.

Gai-gai (Cow game): The Boys and girls of age group (6-10) years are generally play this game with pleasure. In this game a boy gives a realistic imitation of a cow along with making sound also. The other girls and boys scream with delight, resist the ‘cow’s onslaughts but not for ever.

The games like Ghore-gatlti, (Horse and More), Chag-khel (Goat game), Morga-Murgi (Cock Hen Game) etc. are also under the same texts and interactions between players. Similarly, more innocent animal games like Kukur-Bilai (Dog and Cat game) and Hati-khel (Elephant game) are also taking popularly among the school going children.

Dhulai-Putari (Family game): It gives Baiga children a lot of pleasure because of the extra ordinary interest which they, in common with their elders, “take in family relationships. It one observe this spontaneous play it is found that it depicts the socialization as well as enculturation process of Baiga society as adult roles are displayed through the activities of the players involved.

In this game the players make a dolls of mud, bits of wood or ton scraps of cloth and with great zest and excitement marry them off to each other, create and settle family quarrels, arrange intrigues and dispose of divorce proceedings. So a brief profile of socio-cultural customs of the community may be interpreted through this game.

Dauki-Ciumdi (Tree game): This game needs certain physical strength as well as skill of climbing on the big trees. Here a bunch of soft of maidens hair of a pole is tied to the topmost branches of a big tree like semur tree. The boys put it there on the most difficult branch they can find. A girl has to climb the tree to bring it down, spit on it and throw it away. Her failure is likely to expose her to obvious penalties.



Sadhu-khel (Saint & begging game): It is also a spontaneous play with dramatic acts rather than a game. Two boys of age group (10-15) years decorate themselves as sadhu (saint) and try to act of begging with bowl and stick. The first 'Sadhu' ask the second all the name for different part of the body; the second gives the usual names but the first rejects them and suggests synonyms, dancing girkly as he does so. As he gradually approaches the more critical and intimate regions the excilerance becomes intense and his arrival there is greeted with uproarious applause.

Luka-Puka (Hide and seek): This game is simply 'Hide and seek' as popularly found in rural and urban areas across the country with variegated nomenclature. But the game texts have an almost uniform appeal. Two boys staral facing each other and hold up their arms to make an arch. The others form a queue each holding the waist of the other players in front. They go round and round in the out of arch telling a rhyme- "Dandati-bha-ratti todi ai basuri"! (Those who want come inside). From time to time the 'arch' collapses on to the procession and its 'members' (players) are caught one by one. By this process two teams are formed. Those who are caught 'turn into cats' (suppose A team) and lie down holding the feet of the boys who make the arch. When all are caught these try to run away, but as their feet one tightly held, they ('B' team) fall over on top of a struggling heap of laughing children.

Karpet-narvel (Blind man's buff): It is like the 'Kanamachi' game of rural Bengal. Here, in this game one child covers his/her eyes with a piece of cloth and the others hit him/her until he/she has guessed correctly who did it. It is generally popular among the junior children.

Nawan goti (Hunt the slipper): The children sit in circle passing stone (goti) secretly from hand to hand. The child who is cut has to catch the stone in someone's possession.

Tapori khel (Clapping game): It is very amusing. The hands are clapped and the elbows and head touched in rapid, complicated and rhythmic succession with a song sung by the performer. It is like a rhythmic exercise which needs physical skill with sound health and fitness.

Kauda khel (Garden of roots): It is the most characteristic and important of the Baiga game. A group of boys sit in a line each between another's legs which are extended. Little bits of wood, the roots are also put between their toes which are considered as 'Kanda-bari' (garden of roots); Three boys are chosen to be the husband and 'wife' who own the 'bari' (home) and a 'Chaprese' (server). First of all the husband and wife go round the line waving their hands

over it: this is the wahring of the field. Then the husband hops round on one leg shouting: “I am pulling it up”. He gives her ‘gali’ (slang words) and they have a pretty quarrel to the delight of all. Kukri-Chu (Cock by hens): It is a question answering game in which the cock by hens attended singles them from the crowd one by one. A boy stands alone facing group of children, preferably girls and cries ‘Kukri chu Kukri chu’ (cock, please chase). Someone in the group calls out “whose cock are you”? He names someone, perhaps his prospective father in land, but at least someone who cause amusement. Then “where do you come from”? ask the ‘crowd’. He tells them “what do you want”? “I have come for a hen”. He says “which would you like”? He chooses one of the ‘croud’ (hens) and she (hen) at once runs to him her fellows try to stop her. If she gets away, the dialogue is repeated and continues till the cock has carried off the hens.

Ghar-gundia (Making of house): It is probably the most famous games of all. A group of children wanders off into the jungle. They build some rough shelters with branches and leaves. They pair off, little girl with little boy and each family sets up house. (ghar) A few stone makes a hearth, some leaves and sticks are food and vegetables. The divisions of labour are also depicted in the game when one finds that the boy goes and fetches wood for a fire. The girl on the other hand pretends to cook. They divide the house into kitchen and bedroom, and after their meal they creep together into the inner room. Once coming home from the day’s work the pairs are married. The customary rites are properly observed and two children began their married life together.

It can be interpreted here from the text of the above game that it takes place in the sex education of children which is held by the Bachelor’s Dormitory elsewhere. But it is also worth mentioning here that after the age of fifteen or sixteen the boys and girls never play this game.

Chango-khel (Circular running with pebble): The game text follows the Nawan goti game, but more elaborate in nature. The children sit in a circle each clasping his right knee with both hands, the thumbs sticking up one boy with eyes blindfolded is sit down in a corner to make ‘cow dung pats’ Another player takes a little pebble and goes round the circle touching each kuee in turn. He slips the pebble under someone’s thumb and cries out that everyone should close their thumbs. Then ‘cow-pats’ boy gets up and his eyes are uncovered and he goes round singing– ‘Ela-chango Ela-chango” (where is the pebble?) to find the pebble.

Finally after trying few times one succeeds and becomes Raja (King) but if fails he must go back to his cow dung.

### **Discussion, Interpretation & Remarks**

It is found from the foregoing paragraphs that most of the play and games of Baiga children and junior boys and girls are simply the imitation of adult behavior of the day to day life and culture. Today, the overall picture of their recreational patterns including play and games are changing very slowly due to certain unavoidable factors of the present decade.

Due to the slow impact of communication, urbanization, industrialization, advent of education and also the impact of Hinduism and Christianity, a slow change in the culture of the Baigas is found today. These have a considerable impact on their recreational patterns along with play and games also. The tribals who make a frequent contact with the people of Bilashpur, Durg districts show their up to date choice not only in terms of occupations dress and other traits but in borrowing few modern media based sports. Very few of the Baiga children attend school and they are also gradually fond of modern games and sports. Thus it can be concluded that the Baigas of Madhya Pradesh may show a slow mixing with the culture of the neighbouring communities and urban dwellers as well in near future which will bear a good sign that they are gradually trying to go towards the mainstream of the state as well as national culture.

The traditional folk patterns of play and games are slowly dwindling along with the other elements of Baiga folk culture. These need to be recorded as an ethnographic account urgently on the priority basis and anthropologists must not deny their responsibility regarding this vital task. Still at the present century the tribal play and games in India failed to attract the urgent attention of the anthropologists and also of the planners and policy makers. It remains neglected until recently when the policy for the protection of indigenous cultural traits was drafted.

Therefore, it has been noticed that the Baigas generally lack in successful utilization of recreation through games and sports. Due to certain environmental and economic situations, they have reached a stage of stagnation. It is supposed that if proper incentives are given to the tribal people through games and sport as well as physical culture, they may come forward of their cultural stagnation. The data of the present study may be utilized in this sense for

applied aspect of rejuvenation of the cultural life of the tribes, which is obviously an aim of tribal welfare in the truest as well as holistic sense.

Lastly, it can also be interpreted to protect these games through the increasing consciousness of physical culture on a regular basis through awareness and local competitions (hamlet wise or village wise), practices along with institutionalization like those of modern sports. It may be one of the vital aspects of tribal development programme, keeping the basic appeal of sustainable development intact.

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## EXPERIMENT WITH FOLKTALES: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE IN KARNAD'S

*NAGA-MANDALA*

Dr. Shyam Babu

*Abstract*

Folk form is one of two dominant forms of theatre in India, the other being Sanskrit. Sanskrit is known as *Margi* (connected to *Shastra*-well thought or well gotten) tradition and folk is *desi* (connected to *loka*-people). Indian folk theatre in the form of rituals stayed over the years, from the ancient times to the present because of its participatory and fluid nature. One of the reasons folk theatres could sustain the hardship of times, was their nature of oral tradition. These forms of drama go beyond the entertainment values. These folk forms of drama are related to the popular belief and rituals of common people, Richmond *et al* call them "ritual performances". Experimentation with folk forms and rediscovering the power of it is doubly rewarding for the Indian playwrights: they get the audience and as well as freely change the form whenever required. And if "the unique character of all folk theatres lies in its folk audience, it is audience who breaks the imaginary forth walls by participating (in performance) and extending the rationale of the visual story.

Karnad has extensively used folktales to expose the gender disparity, caste issues and hegemonic power structures manifested in religion, state and family through *Naga-Mandala*. The paper thus seeks to underline the role of folk narratives and its rationale in the subversion of power dynamics and showcases how confrontations between society and its ideological apparatuses has been dealt with the *nagas* (snake) myths and their connection with the human beings in the (southern) India.

**Keywords:** Folklore, oral, performance, power, identity, subversion, alienation

**Folk in Modern Indian theatre**

GirishKarnad (b.1937) is one of the stalwarts of modern Indian theatre. He is also well known as an actor, director, script writer and cultural critic; hence he is a multidimensional personality. He belongs to, as Karnad has described in 'Introduction to Three Plays', "The first to come of age after India became independent of British rule." (301) Karnad has shown a theatrical acumen, unique talent for visualization, rich theatrical aesthetics, and has drawn both from Indian classical and folk forms, and as well as western dramatic forms.

In India, the political decolonization starts in early fifties. Indian theatre practitioners, however, started looking in the Indian indigenous performance traditions in later sixties as a part of 'write back to power' strategies. Folk form became one of the dominant forms to decolonize the Indian stage, as it were. The noted modern playwrights such as Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar, Habib Tanvir, Girish Karnad and C Kambar to name only these started creating a new idiom forging link with Indian folk and modern European dramaturgy. Indian modernists hence used folktales for the subversive purposes to highlight the sociopolitical crises on urgent basis.

Folk is one of two dominant forms in the Indian theatre, the other being Sanskrit. Sanskrit is known as *Margi* (connected to *Shastra*-well thought) tradition and folk is *desi* (connected to local-people). Indian folk theatres in the form of rituals stayed from the ancient times to the present because of their participatory and fluid nature. Folk theatre could sustain the hardship of times because of its nature of oral tradition. Hence folk theatre has still continued to survive in India even without having any state patronage, though Ministry of Culture, Gov of India claims to disseminate the folk studies. The situation has a bit changed. As the globalization started taking its roost, the local and ingenious get commoditized. As the result the public and private sectors initiated many efforts to study and preserve the folklores and oral cultures in India. The Sahitya Akademy, India's premier institution of letters, and the ICSSR (Indian Council of Social Sciences and Research) took some major steps to revive the folk performance, arts, paintings and oral narrative.

There are some preeminent folk forms of theatre in India which are practiced across the different linguistic regions: *Ramlila*, *Raslila*, *Nautanki*, *Khyal*, *Mach*, *Nacha*, *Pandawani*, *Bhawai*, *Jatra*, *Ankiya Nat*, *Tamasha*, *Dashavatar*, *Pawda*, *Chhau*, *Yakshagana*, *Baylata*,

*Kutiyattam*, and *Kathakali* among others. The chief characteristics of such theatres are stylized acting and improvisation. There is always an intermediate narrator in performance. These forms are visually so spectacular that they are surrounded by the audience from all the four sides. They are also considered 'total theatre' because audience participates in the performance. These dramas go beyond the entertainment values. As they embody popular belief systems and rituals of common people, Richmond *et al* argue that folk theatres are "ritual performances" (1990, 121). Since they deal with contemporary issues, they do not create an illusion of reality. They follow anti-realistic approaches. Folk forms always undermined the notion of holy character. A folk actor plays role sometimes as a character and sometimes as a masquerade and often actor oscillates between the character and audience. The very holistic sense of character is undermined in the folk theatre. Folk theatre also prioritizes body over script and movement over dialogue. The body movements correspond with the rhythm of sound and musical accompaniments as wide as Dol, Tambura or *Dapfali* among others.

Modern Indian playwrights like Karnad used folk form not only as a source of material, but also as the subversive tool against the realistic as well as colonial artistic hegemony. By adopting techniques of *Yakshgana*, such as *Sutradhra*/string-holder as a narrator (who directly talks to the spectators/readers present in theatre) he tried to demystify the proscenium/realistic modes of theatres. Avant-garde theatre in India 'is re-examination and redefining of (folk) form' (Awasthy 1989, Schechner, 1993) and Karnad reused it for the subversive purposes. Karnad intended to expose the gender disparity, caste issues, hegemonic power structures manifested in religion, state and family. He highlighted the confrontations between society and its ideological apparatuses. His folk form was poised to encounter such forces. Experimenting with folk was exponentially rewarding for the Indian playwrights as audience members could break the imaginary forth-wall by participating (in performance) and they could extend the rationale of the visual storytelling (which the modernists otherwise intended) because "the unique character of all folk theatres lies in its folk audience." (Hollander, 2007)

### **Karnad's *Naga-Mandala*: subversion of power**

*Naga-Mandala: A play with Cobras* is a brilliant folk play which seeks to subvert the hegemonic power structures in society. Karnad's conspicuous ability to exploit the folktales for the contemporary needs is quite commendable. This play is dedicated to A.K. Ramanujan, an



eminent poet and folklorist. About the tales Karnad says, “ these tales are narrated by women- normally the older women in the family- while children are being fed in the evenings in the kitchen or being put to bed”( *Collected Plays-I* 314). *Naga-Mandala*, as the subtitle refers is a play by a snake. The central story revolves around Naga and Rani and her husband Appanna. The play begins with direct addressing of story and taking into account the attention of the audience and the story acts as a narrator and commentator throughout the play. The story begins “A young girl. Her name ...it does not matter. But she was an only daughter, so her parents called her Rani” (*Naga- Mandala*, 252).

The play is divided into two acts. The prologue sets the tune of the play and it ends with the Rani’s happy marriage. From the story we learn that Appanna is a young man who belongs to a rich family and his parents are dead. Rani was the only daughter of her fond father and mother so she was called Rani-the queen of the whole world. She was also called so because she was queen of her long tresses and if she tied them up in a knot it looked like a huge black King cobra on the nape of her neck. Appanna married her when she just reached her age and he brought her to his house. As he was a regular visitor to concubine he locked her up in the house. When Kuruddava, the friend of her husband’s mother came to know her problem she advised her to use aphrodisiac roots which was supposed to have love potion. It had a magic power to mesmerize any male towards a female. Rani prepared it indulgently to give to her husband but first time it didn’t have any effect. When she prepared the second time the herb roots (Aphrodite) turned into blood red. She was so scared that she poured it down in the hole of an ant hill near her home. Since *Naga* was inside the hole he fell in love with Rani and got infatuated with her. As a result of which he began to visit Rani at night in the guise of her husband Appanna. When her husband, Appanna came to know about her pregnancy he was utterly shocked. So he made up his mind to punish her for adultery and demanded that she must take a test (something like *agni-pariksha*) in front of elders to prove her chastity. She consented to give the *Naga* ordeal by holding a cobra in her hand. In the test the snake didn’t bite her because he was the same reptile who used to visit her at night. Thus she was canonized as the goddess incarnate by the villagers and she became a proud mother and a wife. She could know that all these happiness in her life was made possible by *Naga*.

The play follows the multilayered plot pattern. Apart from the main plot (Rani-Appanna-Naga) there are subplots like the appearances of the Flame, Story and the Man, and the episode of Kuruddava and her son Kappanna. The play begins with the prologue where we encounter the story of 'Story', Flames and the Man. The setting of the play is the inner sanctum of a ruined temple at night and the image is fractured. Man looks worried and addresses the audience (here man acts as *Bhagavata*) because a mendicant has foretold that if he did not stay awake at least one whole night in the month, he would die on the last night of the month. This had disturbed the man and he had been dozing off many a days and passed many nights without a wink of sleep. To the wonder of the audience the man has committed a crime by writing *a play* and he is accused of having caused many good people to fall asleep in miserable chairs. The man is narrating his story to the audience and wants to escape death. If he only survives the night, he would have nothing to do with plot, themes and acting. Hence, the man is consciousness of prospective damage to his life. Thereafter the story of Flames comes. They are heard speaking female voice from the offstage, as they have disguised themselves as women and they are giggling with each other. They are naked and floating in the air without any concrete forms. The flames reveal another story that when all the lamp are blown off, flames come to meet in the temple and chat about their masters and their family. These inanimate flames are projected as the super natural living beings. The new Flame says that her mistress is an expert of story and song but now- a-days she is reserved and keeps all the stories with herself and they are getting choked in her mouth. When she took a nap in the day and started snoring, the story and song came out and hid themselves in the attic. The story is dressed up in a colorful sari of the song and is welcomed by a group of surrounding flames. She is also worried over the condition of story:

STORY: Thank you, my dears. It is kind of you. But what is the point of your listening to a story? You cannot pass it on (251).

The story has been used as a metaphor for the plight of Indian woman who gets married and leave her place to go to her husbands' house. The flames too, are like the women of villages. This folk narrative serves as a structural device and it has, as Karnad has stated, "a parallel system of communication among the women in the family". It is also a resistance of woman collective towards the patriarchal norms of subjugation and exclusion. The flames are 'imaginative', 'non scripted or oral' to counter the hegemony of 'practical, patriarchal and

scripted. These framed stories are the fictionalization of women's harsh experiences. They have their own stories to tell and to be heard independently. Karnad has rightly maintained that stories are the embodiment of the daughters in Indian family who are struggling for their identities and are not allowed to have their say in the family matters. Here folktales serve as the structural device to express the problems of the women in general and the character Rani in particular.

The Story is quite desperate because the Flames cannot pass it on. Meanwhile when the story and flames were talking to each other they feel interrupted by the presence of 'the man'. All the animated flames are huddled and scared and they try hard to set themselves free from the grasp of the man. The man wants to listen to her for keeping himself awake. He though promised to listen to her, he felt sorry as he could not tell anybody else because earlier he had taken a vow that he will not do anything with themes, plot and acting. Man wants to present a play before the audience because he has to escape death. Hence he requests the audience and promises that he will make it interesting and he calls the musicians and story to begin the proper play of Rani and Naga. This interactive mode of play narrows the gap between stage and spectators. Sub plots play an important role in the development of the main plot. They intersect the main story and have an independent existence.

The story of blind Kuruddava and her son Kappanna is an example of plot within plot. Her superstitions and beliefs add another dimension to the play. It is Kuruddava who manages to solve Rani's problems. She gives the aphrodisiac roots to Rani which was supposed to make Appanna her beloved husband. Since she herself is familiar with the magical power of the roots and had used it when nobody was attracted to her. She describes its effect on the man whom she made drink this root:

He finished his meal. Gave me one look and fell in love. Married me within the next two days. Never went back to his village (261).

Rani to her advice makes a paste of the roots and gives him after which Appanna falls ill (inversion of tale) and it was of no avail. But when she prepares the potion and poured in the ant whole, Naga drinks and became her lover. The ambience of the play is Appanna's house where Rani's bed room is clearly visible.

The main theme of play is the search for identity and subversion of power. Rani after marriage was never allowed to have her say. She could see only two men in her life. The one Appanna (husband) harsh and cruel in the day and another Appanna (Naga) caring at night. She is on her toes:

How it fills the house before he comes! How it welcomes him! God, how it takes me, sets each fiber in me on fire! (281).

Another recurring theme of the play is the freedom of women from the male hegemony. Rani transgresses all the cultural norms made by men and patriarchal institution like marriage which only advocate the fidelity of woman and not of a male (hence, Karnad problematizes sexuality). As she goes against the norms of men and rebels, Karnad's through clandestine love –relations has undermined the whole concept of sexual purity or chastity against the existing ideology of subjugation through the folk narrative of *Naga*.

The practice of mixing human and animal or non human being in the play suspends our belief in the reality of the stage performance. The mixing of non- human elements in the play to get the message across is an efficient dramatic device to suspend the illusion of reality from the minds of the audience. When the non human body is presented or shown on the stage it creates the estrangement and impels us to think that what is being enacted is merely a show of story or 'illusion of reality' on the stage and the not reality itself. In Indian belief snake is the embodiment of fertility and male prowess and is acknowledged as the giver of life and happiness. When Naga visits Rani in the guise of her husband Appanna she never questions because he fulfills her long felt desires of happiness and a life of full woman. However, she at the same time feels that the person who comes at night and talks so nicely is not the same who comes in the day and locks her up without any sympathy. Appanna (Naga) who comes at night bears the scars on his body due to fighting with mongoose. When Rani goes to the mirror box to apply the ointment on his body she happens to see the image of big cobra sitting by her. She was afraid even though she never interrogates him. She gets a chance to listen to the hissing sound of snake mixed up with the sound of the dog's howl but she pretends as if she does not know anything. Her silence is puzzling and the story comments over the confusion of Rani:

...That night he did not visit her. There was no sign of him the next fifteen days. Rani spent her nights crying, wailing, piping for him. When he started visiting again, his body was covered with wounds which had only aptly healed...But she never questioned him about them, it was enough that he had returned. Needless to say, when her husband came during the day, there were no scars on him (281).

To fulfill his purpose Karnad has devised the masks because the person who is acting the role of Appanna is also playing the role of Naga. It was possible only by using the mask. Thus mask is devised in the play to play the double role: Appanna and Naga simultaneously by the same actor. So the audiences are constantly reminded that they are watching a play of Naga-Rani and are sitting in the theatre hall. The role of story occupies a significant position in the folk narrative. It is personified from the very beginning to narrate the story of Rani and also to comment over the past and present action of the story. It acts as an agency like Brechtian chorus or like *sutradhar* of the Sanskrit theatre. Story narrates some actions which act as link scene:

“The death of dog infuriated Appanna. He next brought a mongoose. The mongoose lasted only one day. But it had evidently given a tougher fight...” (281).

Finally it is story that sums up the whole gist of the play:

So Rani got everything she wished for, a devoted husband, a happy life. For Appanna’s concubine was present at the trial... in due course, Rani gave birth to a beautiful child. A son. Rani lived happily ever after with her husband, child and servant (293).

Most of the actions of the play are mimed by the actors. Their gestural movements express the meaning in the play. The stage performance has been presented more as a ritual. The enactment becomes interactive as the Rani’s trial is about to begin. The stage is full of villagers from all the sides and there follows commotion and confusion among the audience. The elders come on the stage and then it becomes the village square and here Rani has to pass the test of snake ordeal. Finally the story exits and it is left for the readers to discuss what should be the ending of the play. The Flames want the happy ending whereas the Man who has the experience

of storytelling wishes it to be a tragedy as it is the essence of life. The discussion between Man, Story and Flame is interesting to feel the pulse of the audience:

MAN (exasperatedly): These flames are worse than my audience. Can't they wait till the story is over? ...

FLAMES: But isn't it?...

MAN: It cannot be.

STORY: But why not?

MAN: Too many loose ends. Take Kappanna's disappearance, for instance.

STORY: Oh that is Kurudavva's story...I am only Rani's story (294).

The debate between story and the man is the projection of confusion of the playwright himself. They convey the two selves of him: the creative personality and the story is his figment of imagination. This is an introspective reflection over the pros and cons of playwriting and act of observation from the spectator's point of view. This makes the production a participatory ritual.

The ending of the play is like that of the problem of Appanna the most disturbing thing to the audience. There are open endings like when cobra dies it is proposed that on the day of snake's death anniversary the child of Appanna(naga) and Rani will pay homage and burn incense sticks because cobra not only gave life to child but also the couple's lives by sparing them. Rani feels a heavy weight in her hair and when she combs her hair a living snake falls down, Appanna runs to get a stick to kill it. But she let her hair down and quietly hides the snake in her long tresses:

Quick now. Get in. are you safely in there? Good. Now stay there. And lie still. You don't know how heavy you are. Let me get used to you, will you?... This hair is the symbol of my wedded bliss. Live in there happily, forever (299-300).

The play unfolds some of the unpalatable questions: who is responsible for the vulnerability of Rani? Who is chaste in the in game of (love) life? Or is happiness the co-existent

of infidelity? Or can life be sustained without the compromise with circumstances? But all these questions are manipulated in the folktales and it becomes really mind boggling to deal. Such subversive potentiality of folktales exposes the social and moral codes of the society.

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**‘THINGS FALL APART, PARAJA CANNOT HOLD’: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE SELECTED FICTION OF CHINUA ACHEBE AND GOPINATH MOHANTY**

**Mr. Jaya Pal**

*Abstract*

*Paraja*, an English translation by Bikram K. Das of Gopinath Mohanty’s original novel in Odia *Paraja*, is remarkable for the depiction of tribal life in the hills and jungles of the eastern ghats of Orissa. These primitive people follow all the ancient customs of marriage, festivals, hunting and are exploited by money lenders and government officials. In his portrayal of tribal life, Gopinath Mohanty invites comparison with the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe. Achebe’s primary theme of this novel is the colonization of Africa by the Europeans, particularly the British. For which African tribe’s life became negative and violent, their as usual order of life became disorder and the cause of all these are the entrance of the British. In the name of modernity, they did many unusual activities which brought local (African tribe) people to disturb their smooth way of living. They (British) wanted to convert African people to Christianity by bringing missionaries into the local place.

The paper, thus try to explore why the normal life of both these communities were disturbed and disrupted with the force of colonialism. Why the forces of materialistic society corrupted their indigenous way of living in the name of modernization?

Key words: Tribal life, colonization, materialistic society, missionaries, modernization.

*Paraja*, an English translation by Bikram K. Das of Gopinath Mohanty’s original novel in Odia *Paraja* (1945), has translated to about 40 languages, and this masterpiece created Mohanty’s identity. This novel is remarkable for the depiction of tribal life in the hills and jungles of the eastern ghats of Orissa. These primitive people follow all the ancient customs of marriage, festivals, hunting and are exploited by money lenders and government officials from top level officers to lower level peons. Shukru Jani the widower protagonist of the novel

represents the Paraja. His vision of future makes him a universal man or ‘quintessential’ man. In the novel Gopinath Mohanty provides many ethnological details which highlight the life style of the Paraja, Domb and Kondh tribes. He is called ‘The Chinua Achebe of Odisha’, who penned the first ever story based on tribals called *Dadibudha* (1944), which is one of the jewel of Odia Literary world. His novel *Amrutara Santana* (1947) is the first novel to receive Sahitya Akademy Award in 1955. His other famous awards are Padma Bhushan and Jnanpith. In his portrayal of tribal life, Gopinath Mohanty invites comparison with the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe.

The setting of the Achebe’s novel is in the outskirts of Nigeria in a small fictional village Umuofia, just before the arrival of white missionaries into their land. Due to the unexpected arrival of white missionaries in Umuofia, the villagers do not know how to react to the sudden cultural changes that the missionaries threaten to change with their new political structure and institutions. Hence, this essay aims at analyzing the effects of European colonization on Igbo culture.

The theme is the colonization of Africa by the British and the negative and violent changes this brought about in the lives of the African tribes. Along with colonization was the arrival of the missionaries whose main aim was to spread the message of Christianity and to convert people to their religion. As a story about a culture on the verge of change, *Things Fall Apart* (1958) deals with how the prospect and reality of change affect various characters. Okonkwo, for example, resists the new political and religious orders because he feels that they are not manly and that he himself will not be manly if he consents to join or even tolerate them. He had complete faith and strong belief upon his own culture and tradition, law and order system, etc. are better than the western system which are forcibly implementing.

Both Achebe and Mohanty’s visions are almost indistinguishable: they visualize the disintegration of a primitive community under the impact of a new faith or an alien value system. Both the writers have focused on the tragedy of the innocent. Those innocents had only one thing remains constant and that is their daily struggle for existence as the repressed, downtrodden and exploited section of the society. Important of Mohanty and Achebe is that their literature is the reflection of life, an exposition of human emotions.

Mohanty's story goes in this way, Sukru Jani, a Paraja, tribal man, lives with his family which consists of two sons Tikra and Mandia and two daughters Jili and Bili. Spends his life happily and peacefully with his family. He earns his living from the small piece of land. He has no wants. Before the influence of modernity his family had a very simple and content life, as we can note from Mohanty's novel:

Sukru Jani lives in 'Paraja Street'. He has his hut and his small family, and he lives in peace. His needs are simple: a bowl of mandia gruel every morning and again in the evening, and a strip of cloth four fingers wide to wrap around his loins—and these he had never lacked. (Mohanty, *Paraja* 2)

Then the forest guard sees his daughter Jili and wants to seduce her. The forest guard sends a mediator to get Jili for him. Sukru Jani is angry and sends back the mediator without Jili. The forest guard wants to take revenge on Sukru Jani. Sukru Jani, who represents the whole paraja tribe, knows that forest is his own property and no one can go against him on that. One day Sukru goes to the forest to fell a tree without understanding that the government or the forest guard has the control over it. A case has been registered against Sukru and fine has been levied. To pay the fine, Sukru has to mortgage his piece of land and one of his sons. This made his family to live in misery. His daughters have to go and work under a contractor who tries to seduce one of them. Things get more complicated when the elder daughter, Jili became wife of the same Sahukar who had snatched their land, cheated, exploited and tortured her father and brothers. Thus Sukru Jani's happy world is shattered. He is exploited by the money lender, newly introduced institutions like the forest guard, the law courts, police stations and contractor. Disgusted and insulted Sukru Jani cuts the money lender's head and goes to the police station and admits his crime and is ready to accept the punishment. These forest guard, law courts, police and contractor symbolizes the westernized policy implemented upon traditional and simple tribe called paraja and disrupted their (paraja) way of simple living. In the same way, the African people have varying behaviors, believes, mannerism, thought patterns and way of interaction formed their culture and way of life. Entrance of the Europeans to Africa came cultural infiltration, pollution as well as alteration. All these brought about by westernization.

*Paraja* depicts how the tribe failed when it is seen confronting the newly emerged law and order in the highlands during the advent of modernity and colonial encounters in the hills

and mountains of the undivided Koraput district. It portrays a tragic view of the tribal way of life in the Eastern Ghats in Odisha.

The course of the narrative in *Dadibudha* (The Ancestor) by Mohanty, visualizes the disintegration of Paraja belief system; in the narrative the tribal way of life has been casted as a dilemma of the indigenous society and culture and it is represented under the unceasing threat of the newly emerged colonial modernity especially the spread of Christianity in the hills and mountains of Odisha. *Dadibudha* is the first ever fictional narrative in Odia literature which depicts a class of indigenous religious views and the ideology of Christianity and caste questions in tribes. The disintegration of the primal way of life is depicted in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. The western colonizers are to blame for the collapse of the African system as they came uninvited and then dominated the people and their beliefs.

The significant note in the narrative of *Paraja* and *Things Fall Apart* is the perception and methodology of representation by a non-tribal and a tribal author on the disintegrated tribal society and culture; Gopinath Mohanty is an outsider to the Paraja community of the Eastern Ghats, whereas Chinua Achebe is a member of the Igbo community which lives in the south eastern Nigeria. Hence, the narrative approach of Mohanty in *Paraja* may be seen different than Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*.

The narrative of *Paraja* is more inclined to the ethnographic details and the tragic view of the disintegration of the primal life, whereas the course of narrative of *Things Fall Apart* is socio realistic and historical, and largely promotes ethnic pride. Mohanty in *Paraja* is sympathetic with the Paraja tribe and Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* commands truth of the history without communal compassion. In both the novels we could find that, a simple, honest and loyal person/community can't tolerate the corruption of a corrupted person/community if it crosses the limit. Same thing happened in these novels: in *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo beheads one of the white messengers who were trying to stop meeting of the Igbo which was about the war against white/corruption. His novel shows:

'In a flash Okonkwo drew his matchet. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow. It was useless. Okonkwo's matchet descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body. The waiting backcloth jumped into tumultuous life and the meeting was stopped. Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man.' (*TFA*, 184)

And in *Paraja*, the innocent Mandia Jani, son of Sukru Jani, couldn't control the corruption and torture of the most corrupted and looter Sahukar/Zamindar Ramachandra Bishoi and beheads with his axe. Mohanty's novel depicts:

'In a flash he raised his axe and brought it down on the Sahukar's head. Immediately the other two joined in. The Sahukar fell like an axed tree, and Mandia went on dealing blow after blow, shouting: 'You didn't enjoy the land! you didn't enjoy the land!''(*Paraja*, 373)

The paper, thus try to explore why the normal life of both these communities were disturbed and disrupted with the force of colonialism. The forces of materialistic society corrupted their indigenous way of living in the name of modernization? In addition to show what kinds of damages were incurred to these indigenous tribes of the world in the name of development? It highlights the various ways in which the agonies of these marginalized and downtrodden people are reflected in the process of colonization. The systems clash and everything seems to fail. The western colonizers are to blame for the collapse of the African system as they came uninvited and then dominated the people and their beliefs. In the same way paraja tribe also disrupted after the entry of western laws and systems.

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## THE VOCAL MEMOIR OF BLACK GIRLHOODS

Ann Mathew

*Abstract*

In the writings of African American women, the realities of their lives are mostly explored through their understanding of the intersectionalities of race, class, gender etc., among other categories. Their writing canvas most often depicts these aspects, their practice become theoretical and their lives become political. To understand the emergence of this formulation, where the Black woman stands in relation to the Black community and the reason why she chooses what she writes about, this paper will explore the relationship between the Black girls and their communities, by listening to their voices, expressing their own lives and where they figure in the world today. Memory, memorializing and illocutionary words are often used by them as the tools for the expression of their life. Bell Hooks' memoir *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* (1996) analyses how Hooks expands the meanings of genre through her lived reality in a particular timeframe. I expand the timeline and the genre to view the current scenario of the voice of a young Black girl activist and, in turn, the voices of disconcerted African American girls, who are developing a vocal memoir through their writings and public activism.

**Keywords:** African American Girls, Memoir, Genre, Activism, Intersectionality

Writing about her childhood, Bell Hooks narrates her experiences of being a poor, Black girl in the US South during the 1950s in her memoir *Bone Black: Memories of Girlhood* (1996). It offers a complex reading of her race, class and gender identities while interacting with the Black community to construct her girlhood that has impacted the development of the Black woman she has become and the future choices that she makes. Through the genre of the Memoir, Bell Hooks creatively moulds her girlhood experiences into forms that can be read as a passage of the development of the Black consciousness from her girlhood days to her life as an adult Black woman. This paper will focus on the Hooks' narrative of resistance during girlhood and how these acts of rebellion play an important role in fashioning the genre of memoir and its connections with many other acts of Black girls and women's resistance across America.

Born in 1952 as Gloria Jean Watkins in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, Bell Hooks' memoir opens with a dream involving her mother and grandmother, her mother's mother, Saru. Hooks (1996) has just received a quilt from the hope chest, a trunk that contains objects that elicits a trip to the past of the family's ancestors (p. 1-2). In her dream that night, Hooks finds herself back on a journey to discover that her house and the memories and materials it held has been burnt down. She is first met by her mother, who hands over a candle and encourages her to look through the ashes, recovering bits and pieces of their past and present. This memoir beckons the reader to partake in Hooks' storytelling process of recovering her past and the connections between her past and her present selves. The storyteller is both Hooks and her grandmother, where the two women, generations apart, kindle similar stories that reflect and perpetuate their lives in its comparable socioeconomic and cultural imagination.

It is imperative to look at the genre of memoir and its conceptualization since it leads an important discussion regarding memoir writing and the articulation of Black girlhood. For Hooks (1996), it is "the story of girlhood rebellion, of my struggle to create self and identity distinct from and yet inclusive of the world around me" (p. xi) and her narrative is part of multiple stories about Black girlhoods. In her definition of what the modern memoir entails, Judith Barrington identifies few key distinctions of the genre. Firstly, the selection of theme matters, unlike in the case of the autobiography which gives a detailed and chronicled, factual account of life events (Barrington, 2007, p.109) although similarities between memoir writing and fiction have also been observed. The extent to what is embodied as real and fictional rests in the hands of the author and Hooks brings these two elements together in the narrative of her life. As a curious and adventurous girl, Hooks (1996) explores around her house and walks up to her favourite tree. She speaks to a bright green snake about her isolation and sadness. It becomes a symbol of her creative voice, suggesting that Hooks projected her desires upon a creature that was sympathetic to her rebellious self (p. 11). It is a reflection of her creative ways of defying life's hardships brought upon by a poverty-stricken family, whose disciplinary measures weighed upon the mind of a young Black child. While portraying exemplary women, Delia Jarrett-Macauley writes about the creativity of Zora Neale Hurston, the prominent Black author and anthropologist, who was described as "contradictory" and "difficult" (p. 38) in a similar comparison to how Hooks was described as a "problem". Hurston and Hooks cull the perceptions and assumptions about African American women by casting their lived realities upon



the images and interacting with the memories of their struggles as girls in a rural Southern culture.

As she rebels and resists punishments, defies orders and norms, Hooks (1996) constantly labels herself as a “problem child” through her writing (p. 11). Barrington (2007) formulates three roles of the memoir writer – storyteller, interpreter and the protagonist – who is also adept at inserting their retrospection to the scenario they are describing (p.111). When Hooks labels herself as the “problem child”, she is placing herself as the main character through which the story progresses. The story extends her narrative as a curious and wayward child whose choices become problematic for the parents, siblings, other familial members or friends that she interacts with. She adds on to the resistance narrative by describing a time when she became resentful towards Sister Ray, her father’s mother. She recalls that Sister Ray felt a particular dislike towards her because Hooks never seemed to desire to become brown, or lighter than the “color of darkness” which she inherited from her father (Hooks, 1996, p. 14). By repressing her identity, her resistance towards dominance and exclusion of her ‘self’, Hooks defines the ways in which Black girlhood is formed albeit multiple circumstances, through one distinct prism of input. While hiding in the car parked at her house, she provokes anger and terror in *Sister Ray*, who was searching for Hooks and her siblings. Hooks thus builds up a strategy to control how she is perceived, how she will be labelled by her family and takes upon the “otherness” that accompanies her decision. These individual acts of resistance create the crux of turmoil in the writing process of her memoir informing her writing self of the reasons why she seeks to belong, to find a place, a home, where she can perpetually return to without fear of being exiled, misunderstood and condemned. She discovers her place towards the end of her memoir when she claims, “I belong in this place of words. This is my home. This dark, bone black inner cave where I am making a world for myself” (Hooks, 1996, p. 182).

The fear of being misunderstood is one of the main characteristics that accompany Black girls and women. Being questioned about their writing, of people “forgetting” their creative and intellectual contributions, these Black girls’ and women’s experiences form a pivotal role in their narration, one which is difficult to glean from archival research and they are oftentimes interpreted in narrow and violent terms (Griffin, 2018). In such contexts, African American girls’ and women’s voices create a direct confrontation of their presumed roles in the family and

society at large. In the genre of memoir, Bell Hooks not only creates, fusing her memory, events and imagination but also sheds light on the various ways a Black girl child is constructed. Hooks learns what the boundaries and limits of her race, class, sexuality and gender are, at an early age. Once, Hooks (1996) chooses the doll of her preference, a baby doll that is “brown like light milk chocolate” (p. 23), a seemingly unusual preference for little girls although the reality for Black girls was that the conventional Barbie doll did not represent them. Through the constant trope of marrying off the dolls, Hooks realizes that her expected role as a woman in the society was to marry, which she consistently refuses throughout the memoir (p. 22). Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (2014) speaks of the expectations of a woman’s role in society, where they must always “aspire to marriage” and make decisions which are dependent on the idea that “marriage is the most important” (p. 27-30) and this is one of the biggest challenges that women and girls from across the globe encounter. The questions regarding women’s choice of partner, of career and of their futures are raised here in a manner that most often counters and disrupts the formative experiences of their childhood. These are political choices and these are framed for several African American girls from their childhood.

On another instance, Hooks (1996) desires to play indoors with her brother’s games. She is reprimanded several times but she recalls how she “hated the way he could assert these boy rights and not include them in games” (p. 29). Angered by her brother’s taunts, Hooks expresses her discontent through disobedience and is punished for “too much spirit” which had to be “broken” (p. 30). This language, of breaking the spirit, echoes in traditional patriarchal family setups, which are dependent upon women’s subordination to the male figures in the family. While Hooks tried to rebel against her brother’s taunts, her father becomes the corrective figure in the family and this represents the family, the community and in turn the American society and nation at large, as “mini-nation-states” (Collins, 1998, p. 68). One manifestation of this lack of visibility and diversity is in the academia where there are continual fundamental layers of discussion and expansion about African American women’s positions which are yet to be achieved. Continually, “women are given mediocre reviews...mistakes are often amplified” and they bear the “ultimate social tax: their child-bearing, child rearing and care-taking roles” (Evans, 2007, p. 133) which have transitioned to other debates where Black women academicians are kept ignorant about institutional structures for a successful tenure, demands on their time, intellectual labour and energy were claimed, an uncooperative and “cold

environment” were prominent in the interactions with white and/or senior colleagues, justifying one’s existence (Moore, 2017, p. 201-202) among several other challenges. In these scenarios, a reminder of the significant endeavours of African American academicians can be noted through a conceptual point that Patricia Hill Collins (1989) raises in her work “The Social Construction of Black Feminist Thought”. She claims the requirement for successful interface of knowledge and wisdom, co-working strategies of survival while also existing in unjust and discriminatory practices. Thus, on one hand, there is the breaking and silencing of the spirit, while on the other hand is the situatedness of their bodies and its implications which reinforce the necessity for support emerging either from networking and creative manufacturing of survival strategies or finding encouragement from “Black extended families and Black churches” (p. 762). Hooks’ narratives of support are steeped in Black communities because of this knowledge about the burden of segregation that a young Black child has to endure.

Hooks’ (1996) desire to connect with the women in her family is expressed through the traditional coming-of-age process of “pressing” the women’s hair (p. 91-92), to indicate the transformation from girlhood into womanhood. However, Hooks is deeply disconcerted by this gesture although she craves for this attention, “comforted by the intimacy and bliss... our ritual and our time... a time without men” (p. 92). It is seen as the precious time she spends with her sisters until she undergoes this pressing, this straightening that does not take her desire to become like the powerful women around her – with nappy, steel-like hair, unruly. She comes to associate the act in a negative light, that which distances African American women from their womanhood, that which plies them into the ideals of White womanhood. Hooks’ search for her garden, Alice Walker’s (1984) conception of the garden, is not found among the space of these women. Instead, she fondly remembers the time with her grandfather, Daddy Gus, whose wisdom she grips strongly for foundation, his age providing gentle guidance for her “problems” and balm to her wounded ego (Hooks, 1996, p. 85). She follows the calm of her grandfather’s voice, whose tranquillity and patience she describes in the memoir as a formative experience of her life (p. 86). Therefore, Hooks searches both in men’s and women’s lives for her nurture.

A little older, Hooks begins to read books voraciously and would choose to scour through popular early 20<sup>th</sup> century romance literature. Hooks (1996) observes that the characteristics of the women in the writing were filled with poor women finding fortune or marrying rich, although

extremely independent yet putting caretaking of others, especially children, above themselves. The character always got married towards the conclusion of the book and had happy endings to their stories (Hooks, 1996, p. 119). Hooks understands that such dreams and fantasies are a momentary relief of her distorted reality and her existence in the altered space of reading provided her comfort and hope for her as a young black girl. Once again, she becomes the object of curiosity for other White people in the library, who are suspicious of her reading activity but she also recognizes herself as a subject undergoing these self-consolations through her hardships (Hooks, 1986, p. 120). Hooks recognises that her feelings of hatred and bitterness towards White people are because of the lessons from school that teach slavery and the construct of Black bodies as “savages” (p. 31). Hooks (1996) reiterates that she does not understand poverty, and she observes the use of lye soap for bathing, eating laundry starch to satiate hunger, going to a country school and walking for miles (p. 4-5, 37), working in different capacities at different ages (p. 7, 57) and then she provides a history of many poor Black girls’ lives in the South, living by simultaneously understanding and figuring their economic and social class in relation to other children and communities. These children are at the receiving end of the perpetuated fixation of the African American women as situated in the “bottom of this division of labor” (Brewer, 1999, p. 36) and their realities are taken from an “inherited” sense of work where “Black women are often expected to do everything” and this work’s devaluation as a constant factor in their lives (Brewer, 1999, p. 41). Hooks (2000) writes in her work *Where We Stand: Class Matters* of class and its silences that framed the work for her mother, herself and almost all Black women. She places her narrative in “the world old poor agrarian southern black landowners living under a regime of racial apartheid” (p. 17). One can observe that writing about her girlhood is a decolonizing experience, one where the experienced self stands behind the past self and deconstructs the ways of life dictated to her Black and poor southern family. Her girlhood had been in the confines and desires of her parents and other authoritative figures, while, mostly, her life was lived in creative freedom and in want of an escape route.

The Combahee River Collective (1977) is a monumental statement in feminist history, whose role in defining the intersectionalities, ideological alliances and distances had an impact in Black feminist thought, especially while speaking about sexuality. Hooks (1996) is deeply aware of how sexuality affects Black girls, that it is seen as a “curse” (p. 112), the experience of which indicts them of a knowledge that equates to pregnancy, as a loose woman, a prostitute and a

social welfare seeker (p. 113). She clearly notices that her object of pleasure is not the imagination of the involvement of a man but that of a personal place of “refuge, a sanctuary” (p. 113). Constantly, the safe spaces that she discovers are threatened by lack of privacy (p. 114), of being condemned (p. 158) and pressured into desires that are perceived as lacking by her parents (p. 159). She notes how particularly harsh they are when they speak of homosexual individuals, the “*funny*” ones (p. 136) where gay men in the communities are noticed but gay women are unaccepted and ridiculed because they go against the social order of gender, race and class hierarchies, that is, hierarchies existing in a way where the woman takes care of the family, earns for the man and fits themselves in the role of the mother and/or caretaker.

Looking at the complexities of the intersections that Hooks has analysed in her memoir, what stands out is the narrative style – short chapters that briefly look at deeper experiences and meanings of living. The structure of the memoir is unusual from the traditional memoir genre and offers hard-hitting reality. A reality which, even forty years after the Combahee River Collective statement (1977), Black women seemed to experience through the constant marginalization of their voice (Cespedes, Evans, Monteiro, 2018, p. 380). The voices and identities in Hooks memoir, the writings of Black women’s life in academia and as I shall continue to show, the vocalization of the disproportionate representation of these women, continue to form some of the major issues that are being talked about in Black feminism, in a manner where a “collective memoir experience” can be traced. This memoir becomes important because it reflects and cuts across Black girlhoods in America, situated in their spaces and reiterating the same kinds of prejudice that exist in the society. Many voices speak as one voice, weaves life stories of different kinds but fits well with the next cloth patch and the one following that. The stitches of intersectionality hold the layers of the quilted piece (Hooks, 1996, xiv) and its expanse speaks back to the overarching pressure of power of various kinds in these women’s lives.

In the performances of her girlhood, each stage of her life in bursts of short chapters represents a burst of memory, that tries to pry open the boundaries of the genre of memoir. Hooks (1996) argues that there is no one narrative of Black girlhood (p. xiii) but, as restated through the events and its interpretations above, her memoir is a partial autobiography of Black girls’ lives. The “I” spoken of is splinted by their collective experience of discrimination and

poverty but is splintered by multiple selves, bound by traumas wrought by race, sex, class and other dimensions which find their way into speaking similarly. Hooks (1996) views impressions that are left in the mind of the young child as much more valuable than the events itself (p. xv) and in these exercises, of writing and activism, there is the voice of hope of better lives for Black women. Perhaps our entry into the world of Hooks' creativity as readers is limited through her words that she writes over pages. However, her act of writing is also an invitation to the reader to observe her world making process, her memoir that writes of truths, resistances and words from her world as a young Black girl.

Observing writers who have experimented in the genres of autobiography and memoir writing, although not taking examples from Black women's writing, Laura Di Summa-Knoop (2017) has defined the term "Critical Autobiography." The term encompasses a rethinking of the genre of memoir and deviates from its threefold "standard features"— confession, coherent narrative and representation of their identity (p. 9-10) are able to accommodate the discussion around Bell Hooks' memoir. The selection of Hooks' life that she chooses to reveal, the almost fictitious elements in her life, punctured with phenomenological reality challenges the reader's limits of understanding of the genre. Hooks (1996) admits to this memoir being unusual, "unconventional" (p. xiv), yet, it is functioning also as illocutionary (Summa-Knoop, 2017, p. 3). The manner in which this memoir stands out is, perhaps, not only in the stylistic change in the form in which the memoir has been written, but the content therein, which is able to depict and question the various perspectives of Black girlhood within the community that she is living in. Hooks tries to present her narrative in chronological order, without explicitly stating the year and uses techniques of clues scattered around, like menstruation, having good hair as a coming of age tradition, dating as an older girl etc. Hooks sheds light into the lives of Black people, of the occupations, the wages, their sexual and emotional lives where few are able, or have the resources to express themselves, and it has laid a platform, a possibility for Black women's voices.

Hooks has expressed the variety of Black girlhoods in America, and the study in the field of Black girlhood is magnified through the extensive work done by Nazera Sadiq Wright (2016), Ruth Nicole Brown (2013) and Rebecca Carroll (1997) among several others through the *bildungsroman* stories which replicate the comparable lives across time. Wright (2016), while

writing of the genealogy of Black girlhood, traces her own development of Black girlhood by presenting the picture of “brave, bold, black girl who battled injustices – when adults in their lives were unwilling to” (para. 1). It could be seen as a conflicting statement to Hooks’ experience of young Black girls being “assertive, speak more, appear more confident” (Hooks, 1996, p. xiii). However, Hooks breaks down this assumption by connecting it to the training they receive, in terms of how these young girls are representatives of their race wherever they go and not necessarily due to their gender identity, a characteristic that may seem as a cut above the rest of the White girls (p. xiii). Wright’s association is largely with the inaction from the part of Black adults who are responsible and are capable of making changes in the community, yet are not doing their part, whereas Hooks’ comparison is with that of the ideals placed on women’s lives, on a girl child’s life. Especially if she is Black, her burdens are multiplied. Some poignant topics explored in Ruth Nicole Brown’s (2013) “Black Women Remember Black Girls: A Collective and Creative Memory” (p. 46-97) makes a case for the present voice of young Black girls, the expectations from them and the kinds of changes they want to bring to the public space – to voice and seek change in their lives. Particularly where young Black girls are expected to be aware of the future life, “premature and slow death, as they are often the first to be sacrificed, the expected carriers of heavy loads, made to feel invisible and inferior...” (p. 47).

This is not to place the burden on the Black children for the plight of an entire race but to see the kind of action they are willing to take for their communities. It is a collaborative process where Black voices are raised in unison to see a long-term change in how laws and regulations are made concerning their lives. In Hooks’ memoir (1996), she speaks of a specific instance where walkouts from schools were a common form of protest (p. 154-156). School walkouts are a peaceful method of boycotting classes and organizing against the system of power, to speak of certain issues in the precincts of an institute that affect a set of students. It calls for institutional amendments and seeks support from the school board, their parents and/or the public by appealing to their conscience for their conditions and concerns. It can last for a number of days (Franklin, 2006) or for a few minutes, which shall be discussed in the context of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas shooting on February 14, 2018. Hooks (1996) recounts how black students walk out in protest and are punished by the White teachers and principal. In Hooks’ school, Black students are constantly aware of the gaze to perform well, to remain in the boundaries drawn between the races, especially White girls and Black boys (Hooks, 1996, p. 155) and to



continuously mediate or become the tiring mouthpiece that runs the mill on how they can assimilate (p. 156). She sees this as a futile exercise and believes that they are relentlessly policed, the first victims of racial prejudice. It is a constant conversation on how violence continues to perpetuate in Black communities, among Black boys and Black girls in their schools, a space for learning and nurture that are imbued with fear for their life. This kind of anger that builds in the Black girls is expressed against the deep dissatisfaction of the system to accommodate and listen to them (Wun, 2016, p. 11). However, in the increased visibility of social media, Black voices and violence are reported and are often sought as indications of change, holding authorities accountable for their actions and claiming that their lives are no longer disposable. These are vocal memoirs being created and these voices are widespread as well as layered now, more than ever.

Making her statement on gun violence and its impact, especially among Black communities, the eleven-year-old Naomi Wadler opened up a forum for discussion of her activism, a vocal memoir, through the speech she delivered during the demonstration of March for Our Lives movement on March 24, 2018. After the shooting that took place at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14, 2018, several survivors of the shooting formed an organization named “Never Again MSD.” The mission stated a demand for stricter regulations to prevent gun violence. One month after the shooting, the “Enough! National School Walkout” on March 14, 2018, saw a response from many students and parents who demonstrated solidarity with student activists of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School by walking out of their schools for 17 minutes, one minute for each student who died in the shooting. In Alexandria, Virginia, Black student Naomi Wadler and another White student, Carter Anderson, organized a walkout in their school – George Mason Elementary School – which was met with some resistance by the school authorities. The students were later allowed to hold their protest. *The Guardian* reporter, Lois Beckett tweeted what Wadler touched upon in her March for Our Lives speech, that she was termed as too “young” to comprehend the meaning of her actions (Beckett, 2018). Wadler added an extra minute for the walkout in memory of seventeen-year-old Courtlin Arrington, an African American student who was a victim of the shooting at Huffman High School on March 7, 2018. During her speech in Washington, Wadler had added the names of two other Black girls, Hadiya Pendleton, a fifteen-year-old who was shot in January 2013 and sixteen-year-old Taiyana Thompson who was shot in January 2018.



As an eleven-year-old, Wadler is memorializing the deaths of fifteen, sixteen and seventeen-year-old Black girls and women who, in Wadler's words, are those victims of gun violence, the disproportionately murdered and who have become part of statistics (CBS News, 2018). This speech contains many pointers towards the kinds of activism that Black women and girls have been involved in for decades. Like Hooks has demonstrated in her writings, Black girls have represented themselves and crafted their narratives of resistance in the context of the vision of the future, which is heavily laden with the past of Black women's and girls' deaths. From Hooks' narrative of creative resistance and activism, the work that Black girls do, one must observe the model of Black girl's development into Black women. The time, geographies and histories are vastly different although connections can be made through the emphasis on the critical roles of participation of African American women and girls in American society. One must ask – What is Wadler saying? What was Bell Hooks talking about in her memoir? The kinds of Black girlhoods constructed by the world and by these African American girls themselves are important discussions, which needs to be had, today.

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RECLAMATION OF MEMORY: A STUDY OF MICHAEL ONDAATJE'S *RUNNING*  
*IN THE FAMILY* AND ROMESH GUNESKERA'S *REEF*

Vara Ranjani

*Abstract*

Memory is one of the most fascinating theme and an essential element in the lives of diasporic writers. These diasporic people rely on it so heavily, that their very survival depends on their ability to remember who they are and their past experiences. This paper focuses on reclamation of memory by two diaspora writers Michael Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* and Romesh Gunsekera's *Reef*. These writers are connected to their home with their memories. For these writers, a memory is something that has happened in the past and does not stop in time but it is active in the present. It carries vast amounts of information which takes many different forms like thoughts, images, photographs, stories and other sensory like sounds, smells and tastes. These diasporic writers no matter how far they go their past follows like a shadow where they cannot disconnect. These nostalgic memories instead making them caught in reminiscence, it helps them to deal with their loneliness and allows them to find meaning in life.

**Keywords:** over-romanticize, estrangement, Rootlessness, fragmentation, Reconstructing

Memories and longing for the past has become the central preoccupation of diasporic people. These immigrants feel not only awe and adventure in the new country but also a deep sense of loss, a feeling of isolation and nostalgia for their home. One way or another, wherever they go they carry their memories and these memories lure diasporas to hold on to their roots. So nostalgia should neither look down on the host land nor should it over-romanticize its homeland. The Russian writer Svetlana Boym calls the diasporic intimacy, "Diasporic intimacy does not promise a comforting recovery of identity through shared nostalgia for the lost home and the homeland...a hope that sneaks in through the backdoor in the midst of habitual estrangement of everyday life abroad."

Nostalgia and memory help to mediate between the old and new homes of the diaspora. In *Midnight's Children* Rushdie remarks about memory saying, "I told you the truth...memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also...trusts someone else's version more than his own." They evoke the past in highly selective ways constructing a present that is a hybrid of multiple cultures and experiences. Immigrants resort to retrospection, which involves referring to the past so as to clarify their origins and history. The family history is a valuable source of treasure which takes the immigrant back to his traditional home where the fragments from the past, is captured and relived through photographs, slides, thoughts, images, stories and other sensory like sounds, smells and tastes. Immigrant's memories get transformed over time becoming personal creation of truth and they become custodians of the collective history of their people.

Neuroscientists have revealed that when people evoke an old memory, it immediately reactivates in the brain more like a cinematic effect that often includes the people, location, smells, music, and other minute details. Both the writers gaze half in the past and half in their own time, their stories are built by the help of flashback technique. The writers highlight the cultural clashes both in the homeland and the country of adoption thus becoming folk historians and myth makers. In many instances, as the Canadian novelist Vassanji states, "this reclamation of the past is the first serious act of writing. Having reclaimed it, having given himself a history, he liberates himself to write about the present." Writing provides a negotiating space to compete between memories of the past that is distant in time and space, and the displacement of it in its relocation within the new culture. The two writers learn to tame nostalgia and hang on to a memory that contributes to their work in a host land.

Michael Ondaatje's third novel *Running in the Family* published in 1982, is a quest to know his family and his community which he had left behind for twenty five years. The memoir is composed of two return trips to Sri Lanka in 1978 and 1980 with his wife and children. As a result, everything in the book connects to the memory of someone or another and not just short-term memory but a memory that is engrossed in everybody's heart. He collects his family's mysterious and bizarre past from gossips, anecdotes, secrets, poems and documents which are embarrassing, hilarious and at the same time adorable. He also thinks that his present has been shaped by what went on earlier in his life that is his parents' divorce and his love towards his

father, Mervin Ondaatje, whom he missed when he first migrated to England in 1952 at the age of eleven. So, the book attempts to establish the past link between him and his father and written together with brothers, sisters, aunts, and other relatives.

In an interview with Maya Jaggi, when asked why he had wanted to go back to Sri Lanka in his mid-thirties, Michael Ondaatje said that he had left his homeland Sri Lanka for many years and so he wanted to reclaim and reconnect his past. His nostalgia created a longing in him to return to the past and relive in his memories of his home. He preferred to deal with his own and his family's past, "I wanted to touch them into words...solitary desire," indicating a writer's desire. His desire to reclaim of his past resulted in writing the memoir *Running in the Family*. With the help of his large number of relatives, friends and colleagues he was able to learn much about his father, he hardly knew, and his grandparents he never knew. Through this book Ondaatje takes the reader physically to the living rooms and gardens of his surviving aunts, cousins, and stepsisters to trace his family tree, his relatives, socio-political events, landscape, climate, culture, tradition, and history.

The immigrants are born with a home, but their diasporic condition makes them unhomey, and this condition makes them emotionally to reclaim their home through nostalgia and memory. Ondaatje describes his home Sri Lanka as a familiar place but at the same time it becomes unfamiliar place also. He romanticised his country Sri Lanka, which is exotically packaged for the western reader, capturing through nostalgia. He evaluates his past not just to see how it shapes his early perceptions, but also to see the ways in which it continues to shape present events. Ondaatje makes it clear from the beginning that his home is in the past and his present in-between condition does not prevent him from an imaginative perception of the past. After twenty-five years of absence, Ondaatje's memories are faint because of the distance from home but still he was able to take the reader back to his past by some resources that connect to an event from the past.

Ondaatje beautifully portrays these domestic scenes and personal traits of his family from different sources of information that is from Aunts Phyllis, Dolly and Sister Gillian who retraced his ancestry with labyrinth of memories. So his home is built by different layers of memories which does not freeze, Ondaatje says that memory has, "moved tangible, palpable, into her brain,

the way memory invades the present in those who are old, the way gardens invade houses here...” Since he had gone away from his homeland at an early age, he had not fully understood what he had missed. So the book helps him to bring back his missing past together and he first started to gather information on his parents. When Ondaatje visits his father’s old army colleague, the former Prime Minister, he learns of hilarious incidents and an outrageous behaviour of his father such as, hijacking of trains several times in a drunken state. There were reports of him keeping the Trincomalee-Colombo train running up and down for a considerable time and in one incident he was running naked into a train tunnel at the kadugannawa.

Past can be imprisoned through photographs and Ondaatje uses his family photographs to remember his lost childhood. Ondaatje uses photographic evidences in his work to show the diverse mannerisms of his ancestors and his understanding of his role as a writer. A photograph ceases the past and brings it alive in the present. They can only document the distance between the past and present but can in no way, join the past and present together meaningfully. The fourth section of the book is called ‘Eclipse Plumage’ which opens with a group photograph that shows a fancy-dress party in the 1920s and his parents photograph which he was “waiting for all [his] life,” showing his father Mervyn and his mother Doris on their honeymoon, facing the camera and making hideous faces and this shows that they were perfect for one another. Ondaatje writes “In the large house whose wings are now disintegrating into garden and bush she moves frail as Miss Havisham.” As one reads in *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham was described as an old, frail woman living constantly in her past as a result of her loss of love in the past. When Ondaatje uses this allusion, he shows that one of his Aunts is also stuck and broods in the past. This past proves useful to Ondaatje who is trying to reconstruct his family tree.

The book is a personal homecoming of sort, where Ondaatje feels that he has ‘grown from’ his childhood and his physical journey to his homeland is a necessary step towards ‘growing up.’ So the memoir shows the journey to one’s homeland is the narrative that bridges between childhood and adulthood. The novel then moves to his familiar environment in the tropical rain forest of Jaffna, where long afternoons filled with conversation and the “noisy solitude”, which characterized his time in Northern Sri Lanka where Ondaatje returns to his homeland to learn the history of his large and illustrious family. In order to understand physically about his home the writer says that, “My body must remember everything, the brief insect bite,



smell of wet fruit, the slow snail light, rain, and underneath the hint of colours...” He is trying to remember and bring back the sensuous acquaintances of sounds, smells and colours of his childhood home and by creating this kind of association, he internalizes the rich experience. So physically he tries to understand his homeland through family, relatives, friends, landscape, culture, and history.

*Running in the Family* is partly a memoir, partly a travelogue, partly a biography and partly a history which represents a migrant’s diverse views. No doubt the book is preoccupied with memories. The narrative fragmentation in Ondaatje’s work reflects his interest in the plurality of stories. Different narrative threads cross, bend, and entangle with one another where the past interrupts the present and vice versa. He shifts from writer to listener to recorder introducing unsettling splits in the narrative. He continually undermines the authenticity of his sources, suggesting that “No story is ever told just once. Whether a memory or funny hideous scandal, we will return to it an hour later and retell the story with additions and this time a few judgments thrown in. In this way history is organized.” Ondaatje is aware of his duality, as a native and a foreigner and agrees that the experience of the loss is intensified in the immigrants, who are far-away in space as well as in time, where they become an outsider in their own country. The detachment from home distorts the facts and memories shows only incomplete truths. He honestly accepts that the book is partly fictionalized because in Sri Lanka, a well-told lie is better than a thousand truths.

On the other hand Romesh Gunsekera’s debut novel *Reef* was published in the year 1994 and included in the shortlist for the Booker Prize from among two hundred works. From his first book itself, Gunsekera has created a scintillating work, setting him on the path of an award-winning writing career. The novel is short and crispy but it takes the reader on a long journey starting in the 90s and going back to the 60s, where the writer explores a feudal master-servant relationship and a tempting taste of exotic flavours and feelings of life rooted in the past. It is an emotional journey towards a childhood homeland present in broken memories and distanced from a time and place gone forever but remaining alive in the young immigrant’s mind. Despite being a short novel it touches on loss, journey, memory, identity, the eroding passage of time and ruined homeland.

The protagonist imagines his homeland Sri Lankan as a paradise which is lost forever and the only way is to recollect through memory. The novel is written in the first person, from the point of view of the main protagonist named Triton. The novel starts with the prologue where the protagonist had been staying in England since twenty years suddenly his memory is triggered when he encounters a fellow Sri Lankan. The rest of the novel is the recollection of his journey to his homeland, where he talks about his childhood, his coming of age, and his growth as an individual under the wings of his master. Through memory of the protagonist, the author describes in detail the socio-political changes and the changing ethnic instability in Sri Lanka.

It is a human tendency that the brain, apparently sets on fire, tugs at a loose thread of an old memory when it come across a familiar smell or a person or an experience. Triton's past is triggered when he encounters with a fellow Sri Lankan so called refugee who is alienated by language, where he doesn't speak fluent English or Sinhalese, "I tried speaking in Sinhala, but he shook his head. Wrong language; 'Tamil, Tamil. English only little,' he said. The tip of his tongue hovered." This incident made Triton to bring back a wave of memories from his home, Sri Lanka and his early days in England where it took time for him to gradually assimilate the new culture and he says, "broke all the old taboos and slowly freed myself from the demons of our past," the only means to survive in the new land is to let go ones past. The refugee reveals to Triton that back home everything is on the verge of war, a battle zone of ethnic riots, "Very bad war now back there." The painful news of his homeland makes Triton to remember his home once a paradise but now a land of warfare, "I could see a sea of pearls. Once a diver's paradise. Now a landmark for gunrunners in a battle zone of army camps and Tigers." For Triton his lost homeland becomes a mythic place of desire in his imagination and he tries to reclaim it through memory. Triton's mind suddenly turns to his homeland that was distanced by time and place for twenty years. It is through the compatriot that Triton feels the sense of rootlessness, pain and agony for the lost homeland. He unwraps his forbidden past through a series of memories from his childhood days that he had spent in his homeland. This loss is filled by recreating one's native homeland through the buried past and is brought to the present.

Nostalgia is a leitmotif that runs through much of Gunesekera's writings where many of his characters go down the memory lane and yearn for the tranquil homeland, Ceylon, of yesteryears. Triton's imagination unfolds back into a series of flashbacks and traces out his childhood homeland in the year 1962 when he was eleven years old. He was taken by his uncle

to the town to work as a servant boy for a marine biologist, Mister Salgado. Triton as a child comes without a past where his name was not known and there is little mention of his rustic life where he mischievously burned the thatched roof of his school and this made his uncle take him to the city and put him to work as a housekeeper. It was in his master's house that Triton acquired a new identity for himself with a new name called 'Triton' which was given by his master Salgado. One of Gunesekera's major victories in the novel is the viewpoint he presents, which moves from that of Triton as an adult in England to that of him as a local boy in his homeland Sri Lanka. The result of this crossing point between past and present, this reworking, is the production of cultural identities that in Stuart Hall's term are in 'transition.' Being young and immature Triton's first job is to serve Mister Salgado his morning tea in bed and sweep the house. But later he began to cook and experimented with food and it was motivated and supported by his master Salgado. Triton learns almost everything from his master, Ranjan Salgado, a generous man who loved to study and protect the coral reef of his homeland.

In the beginning of the novel Triton confesses that he has completely rejected the past. For twenty years in the host land Triton was not sentimentally disturbed by his past, "A long time protected from the past." He confesses that he is away from his past, because his past has nothing to do with the present condition in the host land and so he rejects the past. His life starts from those meek origins in a remote village in his homeland Sri Lanka and he becomes a survivor in the West enabling him to survive anywhere in the world. But ironically, Triton is not fully cut-off from his past because he recollects his past story in the beginning so that he can evaluate his past life in terms of the present life. So humans cannot reject the past, it exists, and it also persists in different modes and manners. Gunesekera says that the land of one's childhood always haunts those who leave it, and the memories, joined with the imagination, become essential to the identity of the immigrant in his host land. The past can become a cage that entraps immigrants and prevents them from breaking away from it and so immigrants who want to assimilate into the host land should learn to tame nostalgia and preserve the past so that it promotes survival in the new land. The fragments from the past, become a valuable scrap which migrants use when stitching together new ways of thinking about their identity and their place in the world. Even though Triton's past has no identity, his past experiences have given him a new identity in the present as the owner of a restaurant. Like many diasporic writers even Gunesekera creates a 'double-voiced discourse' that is blending of voices where he situates his work in the

past, a space other than presently lived in. But in his attempt to evoke the past or the earlier place he could not recapture it completely but somehow he brought it into being.

Triton in the beginning suffers from a nostalgic feeling towards his lost homeland when he goes to the sea shore in England where he hears migratory bird gulls he felt like crying out sadly of their uprooted lives and he also asks his master Salgado whether it is the same sea in England as it is in his homeland Sri Lanka. Triton was finally left alone in a land which does not belong to him but it is his life now and he had to survive without his master beside him. He was left with a bundle of memories and a faded past. When the immigrants are cut-off from the past or from their roots they try to assimilate into the new environment and to form a new identity and live a peaceful life. To survive in the host country Triton put aside his past, his inherited name and his generous master but he doesn't give up his love for cooking. In his own immigrant identity formation, he rejects everything unpleasant or pointless, keeping only his food-based memories, for his new life in Britain. In the beginning he learns to earn his livelihood given in an acutely moderate account, "The nights were long at the Earls Court snack shop with its line of bedraggled, cosmopolitan itinerants.... without a past, without a name, without Ranjan Salgado standing by my side." It was Triton who succeeded in fulfilling the vision of his master by opening a fast-food stands and later becomes a restaurateur. Triton himself adopts the survivor status in the host country without the claims of the past. His position and his wish for voluntary exile from his own homeland, and his anxiety with commercial success, create a transnational identity. But whereas for his master things did not work out well in the host land.

As for his master Salgado, a man who has a well-formed past, yet, throughout the book, one can see him as a person who is not at ease with an open world and actually wants a closed, familiar and small world. At one point, Salgado painfully recalls the futility of the failed dreams of his past vision of building a marine sanctuary, but he was not able to fulfil his desire. Later at the end of the novel Salgado says, "We are only what we remember, nothing more...all we have is the memory of what we have done or not done, whom we might have touched, even for a moment." In a sense, neither his sense of the past nor his past privileges have helped him. He was not able to discard the past and the past haunted him even after living in London. Being a diasporic migrant, Salgado is janus-faced for, despite living in England, he keeps looking back at his past, and is caught between two nations and two societies. Master Salgado heard that the

condition in his homeland Sri Lanka has become miserable and his former lover Nili, who is running a guest-house was destroyed and her life was devastated in a Tamil attack. Finally Salgado returns to his homeland, Sri Lanka in search of his lover Nili and this makes the reader to assume that Salgado himself will fall victim to further violence. Both Triton and his master Salgado end in two different fates. Triton was able to assimilate into the host land whereas his master returns to his homeland with disappointments.

The immigrants have a strong desire to return to their homelands, similar to the Freudian desire to return to the womb, but it remains a desire never to be fulfilled. The only way that these immigrants can reach their homeland is through memory, a psychological journey to their homeland. The history of the homeland may appear to be just stories from the past, fragments of lives but these experiences are crucial resources for the immigrants who can work out to formulate their way into the future. So nostalgia becomes a positive emotion where relocation and acceptance of the past is necessary to adapt to a new way of life. M.G. Vassanji, the writer who has an entirely opposing and inconsistent view with regard to the past, though a diaspora himself intensely believes that the past must not be forgotten, because he says “a person without history is an orphan.” In the novel Triton confronts his past which finally results in a re-discovery of his own nation, roots and identity, and becomes a search for reality, an attempt to regain his belongingness, and affirm his ancestry. In the beginning of the novel itself he is psychologically transported through his memory to his childhood homeland Sri Lanka, which is six thousand miles away. Triton’s “voyage of discovery”, involves re-visioning the experience of the past. Being a postcolonial writer Guneseekera engages himself in a process of reconstructing his national and personal history with the objective of analyzing and understanding his own past.

The diasporic experience comprises multiple journeys, which makes the migrant to retrospect the past, particularly at their origins and history. Both the novels are narrated through the fragments of memory and a cinematic melodrama of the past is beautifully depicted. *Reef* is a fictional reflection on the issue of memory and it is heavily bonded in allegory. This novel is heavily bonded in allegory from the past on family league, their life style and habits in a particular period in the history of a nation and its people. Guneseekera wrote the way he saw it and how he lived in it as a child. Triton is not an Odysseus longing to go back, but like Oedipus fleeing home and remembering it in memory. In *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje recollects his

childhood memories of the homeland with organization of stories on family league, their life style and habits in a particular period in the history of a nation and its people. The narrative strategy they both use creates a textual space in which fantasies and realities coexist. A popular critic David Lowenthal comments on memory as, “History extends and elaborates memory by interpreting relics and synthesizing reports from past eyewitnesses” and according to LaCapra even false memory might have historical value in particular situations, like ‘lies’ allow generalized truths to appear later as historical doubts. It is history’s job to shape a narrative from the ‘living source’ of memory and in the process it should differentiate fact from fiction. The writers muse about the past because they want to recreate a satisfying emotional experience that will help them to understand their roots better. These emotional memories of the diaspora writers are powerful and serve to guide and inform the writers as they plot a route to the present and prepare for the future. Memories are a rich source of precise testimony of our history and the diaspora writers are the true historians.

## AFTER THE RAIN: AN EVENING WITH POET RAMAKANTA RATH

Bidyut Bhusan Jena

**Introduction**

*Dukha* (grief) is the source of creation. On the banks of Tamasa, Sage Valmiki, on seeing the plight of the bird couple, was overwhelmed by *dukha*, which culminated in the first verse of the *Ramayana*. If one digs deep into the source of *dukha*, one would certainly find a tale of separation. And separation, in turn, is the condition for creation. The seed is separated from the tree and the sapling comes into being; the baby is separated from the womb and a new life sees the light of day. Thus, our lives – an ever-ever tale of separation, can be looked upon as a footnote to *dukha* – the memory of separation from the original source – the remembered beginning. Therefore, one reminisces and sometimes tries to recreate the unrepeatable. This could perhaps be one of the reasons why Albert Camus in the “Preface” to his book, *Lyrical and Critical Essays* writes that “a man’s work is nothing but this slow trek to rediscover, through the detours of art, those two or three great and simple images in whose presence his heart first opened. This is why, perhaps, after working and producing for twenty years, I still live with the idea that my work has not even begun.” And in a perfectly parallel mode, Poet Ramakanta Rath said something like this upon my asking him about his life on that evening after the rain.

**Source: Google Images**

Ramakanta Rath (1934) is one of the foremost modernist poets writing in Odia. With an inimitable use of imagery, Rath’s poetry mediates upon the themes of mysticism, life and death, the mystery of the Self, and the enigma and infinite possibilities of some arrival across the

intimate horizon of some unnameable elsewhere. He received the Central Sahitya Akademi award in 1977, Saraswati Samman in 1992, Bishuva Samman in 1990 and the Padma Bhushan in 2006. Some of his major works are: *Kete Dinara* (1962), *Aneka Kothari* (1967), *Sandigdha Mrugaya* (1971), *Saptama Rutu* (1977), *Sachitra Andhara* (1982), *Simanbasa* (2002) and *Sri Radha* (1984).

It all happened a couple of years ago. I was still reeling under a personal tragedy and had emptied my vial of tears as it were. And then, one afternoon, I felt like listening to old Odia songs. There is something magical about one's mother tongue. For me, it is not just a language; it is a landscape of inexhaustible memories and infinite longing. And these memories come alive when one is away from the place of their making; when the pangs of loss gnaw at one's heart. After all, memories lend a different hue to one's days lived. They spur one into phases of suffering and monumental moments of creation. As Ruskin Bond has rightly said in his autobiographical story, "Life with Father", "Some of us are born sensitive. And, if, on top of that, we are pulled about in different directions (both emotionally and physically), we might just end up becoming writers." And as a poet such memories have breathed ever new life into my being.

Thus, the old Odia songs transported me to another order of time. It was a magical afternoon indeed. Song after song played on my computer, lulling me to a siesta of dreams. And when I woke up, it was the most natural way of waking up to a new state of being. There was a longing-soaked silence in my house with warm fringes of an orange tint – the afternoon sunlight just before the dusk. I gifted myself a cup of peach flavoured green tea and without any rehearsed thought sat before my bookshelf.

My bookshelves have comforted me in the darkest of times. There is something about the printed leaves that escapes speech. The new, old, yellowish, white, fragile and sometimes dog-eared pages still my being. But that day I was drawn to the Odia section of the bookshelf; to a particular book in fact – *Simantabasa* – a book of poems by Ramakanta Rath – one of the renowned Odia poets. I had read this collection of his in the past, but that day the poems touched a deeper part of me. The words revealed themselves to me creating a dream sequence of sorts. I could feel every single word quite distinctly. It was almost an epiphanic moment, reminding me of the following lines from Raja Rao's book of meditative essays, *The Meaning of India*: "If the



transient speaks to the transient it becomes a cacophony. But if the eternal, the unchanging, speaks to the unchanging, in me, in you, we have one language.” Maybe the eternal in Rath’s poetry had touched the eternal in me. Maybe it was a pure moment of *rasa* – aesthetic realization. And that day I did not just want to limit myself to reading. I wanted to translate. And within the next few hours I had already translated a couple of poems from the collection. The next day I had the wish to have a conversation with the poet and show him my translations. But I did not have his contact details with me. After a moment’s pause, I contacted another renowned Odia Poet and my teacher, Shatrughna Pandab and requested him for Rath’s contact number.

That very afternoon I made a phone call to Ramakanta Rath. At the other end I heard a chiselled, distant and still voice. It was like the sound of the residue of raindrops falling from trees and thatched roofs against the background of the silence that follows the rain. I did not know how to begin the conversation. After a brief introduction, I told him about my translating ten of his poems from the collection *Simantabasa*, and how I wanted to show them to him. He paused for a moment and what followed was one of the happiest things that had ever happened to me. He was visiting my current city for some work. And upon request he shared his address with me and told me that we could meet one evening.

It was a hectic day at the workplace. After the work, I with Pramod Kumar Das, a dear friend of mine of many years, took an auto to Rath’s current place of stay. It rained all through our journey, further perplexing the auto driver by casting a film of watery oblivion on everything. The rain had stopped by the time we reached our destination. After buying sweets for the poet from a nearby shop we walked on. Again we had to make a call to Rath for directions. Within a couple of minutes we were in front of his house. Our hearts missed a couple of beats moments before we knocked on the door. His son-in-law opened the door. We were made to sit in the drawing room and in no time a tall, graceful and kurta-clad old man, with measured steps, came out of the other room. He walked as though he paused and felt every inch of the floor under his feet. He smiled at us as he approached our sitting place and in turn we greeted him by touching his feet. All of us sat down leaving behind a trail of silence. It was as though a moment of spell had been cast on us. Then I began the conversation with a “how have you been”? And what followed was a long pause culminating in a response almost inaudible – “how must I be if I have not been able to write the poem that I have always wanted to write!” These words of his were followed by yet another moment of silence leading to an unforgettable conversation which

veered between the reading and writing of literature. There was yet another reason for the conversation holding out the promise of being etched in my memory for a long time. And it was the poet's reflection on some of the thoughts on art that I had always believed in as a poet, writer, reader and translator.

While dwelling upon the topic of literature, Rath stressed the need for simplicity in writing, so that the reader is not utterly at the mercy of the writer. When I asked him about his favourite authors, Rath mentioned some of these names – William Shakespeare, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Franz Kafka, Thomas Mann, Dante Alighieri, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Walt Whitman, Albert Camus, Sylvia Plath, W. B. Yeats, Anna Akhmatova, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Leo Tolstoy and Fyodor Dostoevsky, to name a few. Rath, also, recollected his memory of visiting the houses of Tolstoy and Goethe. However, he was pained by the fact that many in Russia and Germany still did not know their great writers, quite similar to the situation in India. He stressed the need for not only remembering the writers, but preserving some of the greatest and rarest books of the world. He was alarmed by the fear of a cultural impoverishment. And in this connection, Rath alluded to the redeeming dimension of translation as a process of cultural preservation and transference. Our discussion also led us to some of the important Odia authors like Kanhucharan Mohanty, Ramachandra Behera and Shatrughna Pandaba. Time and again, Rath mentioned Kanhucharan Mohanty and showed his displeasure at how the latter was yet to get his due owing to some kind of literary and political apathy. Rath was also alarmed by the disappearance of bookshops and people's lack of interest in *bhasa* literatures. He looked upon the disappearance of bookshops as symptomatic of cultural amnesia. In the context of our conversation, I also broached the topic of how bookshops were being closed down in Odisha, that too in the capital city of the state, resulting in the unavailability of books by great writers of yesteryears.

Then all of us fell into a moment of silence. Rath broke the silence by asking me if I wrote. When I told him that I was a published poet, his curiosity seemed to grow, and he asked me in which language did I write? When I told him that I wrote both in Odia and English, he took a pause and in a low and non-judgemental tone suggested that I should write in Odia. Also, he was willing to share with me the details of some of the important Odia magazines that publish poetry and contacts of some of the editors. In fact he readily shared with me the contact details of renowned poet Bibhu Padhi. Rath also mentioned Nityananda Satpathy and recounted his

friendship with author and my teacher Ramachandra Behera. Rath, also, reiterated the need for revisiting the authors that came before us. As we took a pause for a moment, his daughter served us tea and snacks, and I took the opportunity to show Rath the manuscript containing my translations of some of his poems from *Simantabasa*. He took a look at the manuscript for a while and told that he would read it properly and get back to me.

I also gifted him a book of novellas by the great German writer Thomas Mann. Rath was happy to receive it and told me that years ago he had read *Death in Venice*. While referring to the great books of the world, Rath mentioned the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, and spoke passionately about the contribution of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Central Sahitya Akademi towards popularizing these great books. He also stressed the need for turning to such timeless works for inspiration. In that context, he also mentioned that Kannada Sahitya Academy had invited him to give a talk on the *Mahabharata* as he was in the town for a couple of days.

After a moment's pause, upon hearing that we were teachers, Rath promptly mentioned how fortunate he was to have not chosen teaching as a profession. Though I did not press him further with a 'why', yet I, from my experience, somehow understood the possible reason for Rath's saying so. Maybe as a teacher, one tends to theorize literatures a lot and dissects it to the point of damaging its very spirit. Thus literature evaporates in theorizing. Maybe this could be one of the reasons why Rainer Maria Rilke in one of his letters to Franz Kappus was suspicious of the critics of art.

Thus ended one of the beautiful conversations I have ever had. As we were getting ready to leave, the poet gifted us the books of his poems – one, a collection of some of his memorable poems in Odia, *Srestha Kabita*, and *Frontier Lyrics*, a collection of some of his self-translated poems in English. As he inscribed, "To dear Bidyut, Ramakanta Rath" in Odia, with his shaky hand, undefined tears welled up in my eyes. Then I mustered courage to ask him the reason for the bandage on his forehead. And he said that he tripped and fell and broke his head. Then he took a pause and said, "old age it is"; and fell into his silences, ending the evening of poetry between pauses.

## CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER AND PATRIARCHY: A CRITICAL READING OF THE FILM *KOTHANODI*

Sikha Das

### *Abstract*

This paper is an attempt to understand the depiction of gender, marginalisation, witchcraft and possession in the Assamese film *Kothanodi* (2015). The film is based on four folk stories from the region of Assam. It has been taken by the filmmaker Bhaskar Hazarika from the book *Burhi Ai's Sadhu*, (Grandmother's tale) published in 1911 compiled by Laxmi Nath Bezbaroa. Although the stories were written in Assamese, it has been collected from different groups of people of the region. The filmmaker has given a contemporary perspective to the stories. Among the four stories, one is based on a king and his seven queens. Hazarika has changed the location and has narrated the story, in the film, taking place in the village. Although the filmmaker has shown a contemporary village for the stories, it is important to look at the time period when the original text has been written. These stories were based on the social structure of that time period. In the constructed social structure how different categories of people are restricted within the norms that are assigned to them. In the film, construction of gender in a patriarchal society has been portrayed in a visible manner. The marginalised position of women, as a stepmother, practitioner of evil power, possessed by an evil power, greed for wealth has been discussed in the film. Assam is known for its age-old practice of magic. Further, the film has portrayed the belief system about healing among the people of the region. The paper intends to understand the construction of gender, patriarchy and how it is connected with the social structure of different community through feminist research methodology.

**Keywords:** Gender, Witchcraft, Possession, Patriarchy, Social Structure

### **Introduction**

The paper intends to understand the depiction of different categories and their assigned norms in a social structure. It will engage with a critical analysis of the film *Kothanodi*. In this paper, the first segment is the synopsis of the four folk stories that have been narrated by the

filmmaker in the film. The later part of the paper is a critical analysis based on these four stories. The first part introduces the context while the second part critically analyse this context and tries to understand why it is still relevant. The issue those have been portrayed in the film is significant to the current scenario of the region. Witch hunting is a burning issue in different parts of Assam. A large number of people have been killed and abandoned from their own house and village in the name of witch hunting. Different people of various communities have been marginalised in the name of class, gender and religion. It is also important to analyse the engagement of the filmmaker with those four folk stories which have been compiled during colonial period. Why the filmmaker has chosen those stories for his film? The issues focussed by those folk stories are still relevant with the contemporary social structure of Assam.

### **The Four Folk stories**

*Kothanodi*, the film is based on four folk stories written by Laxminath Bezbarua. It is a debut film of the filmmaker Bhaskar Hazarika. The four stories go simultaneously and intricately linked with each other. The film starts with a scene where a man is holding an infant baby in his one hand and a fire torch in the other hand as he walks inside a jungle. After reaching a certain point, he keeps the baby on the ground and places the flaming torch on the branch of a tree. In the same place where he has stopped, he buries the infant and leaves. As the story proceeds, the man buries two more infant one after other at the same place. Later it showed that the three infants, that he had buried, were his own children. It is revealed later that after the birth of each child, he and his wife would go to his uncle's place to get his blessings, as he was a fortune teller. After he touched the child the uncle would tell them to kill the child. But when they went to his place with their fourth child, he gave the child his blessings and declared that that fourth child would be a blessing in their family. Further, he told the couple to go to the place where they buried their three children on a full moon night. He said that they will find the reason behind his command to kill them. As instructed, the couple then goes to the place where the man had buried their children. As they sit down at a distance and patiently waited, they saw the arrival of the three buried infants. The children then start to talk and discuss that if they were alive; their father would have been killed by them at their different age. The conversation of those three buried children gave them the reason to trust their uncle's words.

In the beginning, while the husband was a believer of his uncle's words, his wife was sceptical to believe his prediction about their children. After listening to the conversation, both of them were shocked and their belief in their uncle's prediction had become stronger. The story again showed that the first three children were male whereas the last whom the uncle has declared as blessings for them was a girl.

In the second story, a weaver Keteki who gives birth to an elephant apple was accused to be a witch and thrown out from the village by her husband. At first, she was scared of the elephant apple, but later she kept the elephant apple with her and moved far away from her own village. Later, when she moved from the village, the elephant apple starts to follow her. While no one was aware of her identity, she was still ostracized as the elephant apple kept following her. As a result, she was allowed to stay at the end of the village, which was not connected to the main habitat of the villagers.

The third story starts with a group of people were trying to catch some object in the jungle. It is not clear what the object is. A man was sitting in a bullock cart and waiting for the group to come back. Later, the group informs the man that they have caught hold of the object and were returning to the bullock cart. The man who was sitting on the bullock cart was their master. All of them came back to the house where a lady was buying ducks from a seller. Her name was Dhoneswari. While talking with the duck seller, another woman informed her that her husband has reached home with the object. A victorious smile is visible on her face after listening to the news of the arrival of her husband. She tells the duck seller to keep all the ducks she has brought and leave. One of the women is asked to bring the plate which she had already prepared for the welcome of her husband and the object.

Later the story reveals that the object was a reptile which has been brought to marry their daughter. Dhoneswari was the second wife of her husband. The daughter of the first wife was married to a python and the python gave her gold jewellery as a gift. Seeing that, Dhoneswari also forced her husband to catch a python from the jungle to marry her daughter. In both the situation, the difference was that the python, with which the daughter of the first wife got married, came willingly and could speak in a human voice. The second python was forcefully caught by the people. The idea of shapeshifting has been showed in this film through the folk

story. In the end, the daughter of the second wife was killed by the python. She was found in the stomach of the python in the next morning of her marriage.

The final story is about Tejimola, a young daughter of a merchant. After the death of Tejimola's mother, the father married another woman. But his second marriage was only meant for the sake of Tejimola. As he goes around for his business trip, he needs somebody to take care of his daughter. The second wife felt cheated by her husband. After a few days of her marriage, he left for his business and gave the entire responsibility for his household and Tejimola to his new wife. After his departure, Tejimola was given different forms of punishment by her new mother. Tejimola's mother goes to meet one man at night on the river bank that the filmmaker portrays it as an evil spirit. She starts to follow his words and shows her power over Tejimola with different forms of punishment. In the end, she kills Tejimola brutally and buries her in their courtyard.

### **Methodology**

The researcher has tried to understand the film through feminist research methodology. Gender is a concept that has been structured through social and cultural norms of a society. While the researcher was trying to analyse the film from a feminist standpoint, she was looking at the ideas of gender, patriarchy and how it is connected with the history and social structure of the region. Without tracing the history of the social structure of the region, it is difficult to understand the perspectives that have been depicted in the film. Feminist research methodology always gives emphasis on the politics of individuality. How each individual has their own perspective in a given situation or in the same social structure? The researcher has to be careful while choosing their samples. Location of the researcher has been taken as a major factor to understand the area of research.

In this film, the researcher has critically engaged herself to analyse the position of the different protagonist from their perspective. Each protagonist has taken their political stand from their own location. As Mary E. John (2015) has discussed, "Inter-sectionality is to draw attention to the fact that individuals are not single entities. They are located at the intersection of various different identities like developing country, age, race, gender, education".

**Construction of Gender**

The film has portrayed different norms that are set for different category of people. It has also discussed how a patriarchal social set up gender roles were defined and how different categories were confined to those constructed norms. Whosoever has come out from those assigned gender roles have been taken as a threat to the social structure. Gender is a cultural category (Moitra, 2002:6). Different culture constructs their own cultural norms for their social structure. Patriarchy is 'the absolute rule of the father or the eldest male member over his family' (Geetha, 2015).

In the film, the four folk stories narrate the position of men and women in a patriarchal society. Their roles were constructed according to their socio-cultural norms. In the first story, although the wife was not ready to bury their infant children, later she followed the words of her husband. Her opinion was not taken into account. While in the second story, the woman was first ostracised and later thrown away from her village. She was not capable enough to give birth to a human child. Instead of a child, she gave birth to an elephant apple. No one questioned her husband's ability for reproduction. In a patriarchal society; it is always a woman who has been questioned for her reproductive ability and inability. The third story depicts the stereotypical notion of gendered norms in a patriarchal society. Where the husband goes on a business trip and his wife has been given the responsibility to take care of his daughter without taking any opinion from her. She was considered a bad woman by the society because of her exceptional behaviour. The fourth story talks about the greed and jealousy of a second wife.

**Belief System and Healing**

Assam is known for its history of magic, healing, totemism and use of traditional medicine. Different communities practice various belief systems and their own traditional healing system. Establishment of institutionalised medical, implementation of forest act has overpowered the practice of traditional healing system. Still, the practice is prevalent among certain communities of Assam.

The first folk story which has been portrayed in the film discussed the belief system of a group of people. They work on the basis of their existing belief system of society. Belief about malevolent and benevolent power, belief in healing and the future prediction was a part of their



everyday life. It is so prevalent that the couple buries their first three infant children based on a prediction made by an uncle of the husband. In the story, the wife was not ready to agree with the words of their uncle. Her voice has been marginalised in a subtle manner and the husband followed the words of his uncle. In the end, it was the decision of the man who takes the ultimate choice and buries their three children. The story again highlights the rule of the elder over their children. According to V. Geetha (2015), this power structure is called patriarchy. Patriarchy is not always domination of men over women. It is the domination of elder men over their family. Further, the story shows that the first three infants were a boy and the fourth child was a girl. Why the story was written in a manner where girls were given more importance than three boys. Because the stories were collected from different communities of the region, there is a possibility that for certain community girls are more important than boys. Boys are considered violent. The social structure of the region was based on both matrilineal and patriarchal. A few communities have transformed their social structure through social upward mobility from matrilineal to patriarchal. Moreover being a child when we were told the story, the moral lesson we learnt was always obeyed the elders. Disagreement and disrespect to the words of elders can risk our lives.

### ***Daini* (Witch), Witchcraft and Witch Hunting**

Violence, in the name of *daini* has become a serious issue in the region of Assam. A large number of people have been killed and thrown away from their villages in the name of *daini*. The phenomenon of *dainihatya* (witch hunting) is prevalent among different tribes of Assam. While looking at the phenomenon of witch hunting among different tribes of the region, it is important to understand the history, socio-economic and socio-cultural situation of the community. Why naming and killing has increased in last few years? Globalisation, liberalisation, implementation of forest act, the establishment of poor health facility have become some important factors which affected the socio-economic and socio-cultural structure of various communities. As a result, economic disparity has increased among the people of a same social structure. Villagers were not able to understand the reason behind the quick changes that have happened in their social structure. According to their belief, they blame malevolent power for their break down of the different socio-economic condition. At that time, villagers started to suspect their own community members for bringing destruction. Further, in that process of a naming *daini*, different groups from the same social structure have various agenda to fulfil. Belief about evil power has

been used as a tool to fulfil their hidden motive. Property rights, sexual exploitation, to maintain the power structure and jealousy are a few factors that are closely associated with the phenomenon of witch hunting. Single women and widows were named as a witch by their immediate kin members for property rights. Refusals of sexual favour, forced marriage have transformed many women as a witch. Economic upliftment of lower class has put them in the category of a witch.

In the film, the second story discusses the position of woman, who has been branded as a *daini* (witch) by her own family members. She was an expert weaver in the village. The naming started with the birth of an elephant apple from her womb. A normal woman cannot give birth to an elephant apple. It is believed that she has some supernatural power to give birth to an inanimate object. The social norms consider unnatural things with evil power. She has been named as a practitioner of evil power, a bad woman and is thrown away from the village. But nobody questions the position of her husband. In a patriarchal society, it is always the women who have been made responsible for their reproductive power. Keteki has also been marginalised based on her reproductive capacity. Women who are not capable to fulfil the norms of reproduction are categorised as unproductive. The situation is not same as a man in the same social structure.

### **Women as Agents of Patriarchy**

In the third story, the nature of women was showed as greedy and attacked towards wealth. Again it showed the relationship of two wives of the same husband. The first wife has been sidelined after the entry of the second wife in the house. Further, it highlights the relationship between a daughter and a stepmother. Women were shown as the agents of patriarchy. It was the second wife who controls the entire household.

Further, the story brought the history of magic and existence of power like shapeshifting in the region. Champawati, the daughter from the first wife has been approached by a python for marriage. Easterine Kire (2014) has discussed the belief about shape-shifting among tribes of Nagaland.

Further, the position of the second wife in a patriarchal society has a negative connotation attached to it. It is always the position of women which has been looked as wicked, not the men.

Both the women in the same household threaten their position of 'wife'. One is showed as docile and the other one as wicked. The second wife was trying to establish her position in the family. In that process, she has taken the norms of patriarchy as a strategy to abandon the first wife and set up her position.

### **Possession as a Strategy**

Construction of gender and construction of motherhood has been broadly discussed in the fourth story. At the beginning itself, the story showed the gendered work of men and women. Where the man goes for his business trip and woman has been given the responsibility of motherhood without considering her opinion. In the story, parenthood has been restricted to the work of the mother. The protagonist of the story delivered a dialogue, "Khodagore koisilmoi tar ghororgrihastinihom, kotgrihastinihombandiholu" (Merchant (her husband) told me that I will become the owner (authority) of the household, but my position has been restricted as a service provider).

The notion of stepmother has also discussed with the filmmaker in the film. In a patriarchal setup, the position of stepmother has a negative connotation attached to it. Being a stepmother, it has become the responsibility of the women to overcome those stigmas those were attached to the notion of stepmother. Further, fulfilling the norms of motherhood has become a burden on the stepmother. If she fails to fulfil the norms, the position has been stigmatised with the established patriarchal norms of stepmother. Again, her individual position has never been considered by the society.

Pameli has used possession as a strategy to resist her position assigned to her by the society. It has been illustrated that every night she goes to meet a man near the riverside. The features of that man were portrayed as an evil power who directs her to persecute the daughter of the merchant. In a way, he possessed her with his words and pushed her to kill the girl. Through possession, she was showing her power of authority which has been denied to her. On the other hand, it was a man who was playing the role of master and the woman as his slave in the film.

**Conclusion**

The four folk stories film has discussed the ideas of gender, patriarchy, construction of motherhood, power structure, possession and how it functions in different social structure. In a patriarchal social structure, both men and women have been categorised under the norms of that particular social structure. In the film, women's position has been showed as doubly marginalised and restricted than men. They can just step into a place created for them by their family and the existing fabric of society. Their position was questioned and stigmatised with different notions like a witch, stepmother, and second wife.

The researcher has made a shift in her understanding of these folk stories. During childhood, these stories were taught to her to give moral lessons by her elders. But when she tried to understand these stories from a critical perspective, these stories were not told only to give moral lessons during childhood. It was more than that. Through these stories, she has been taught different norms of their social structure. The norms assigned to her according to her gender and class. It has a political aspect attached to it. From the childhood onwards the social structure shaped individuals on the basis of their norms through a different approach.

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## REINFORCING GENDERED SUBJECTS: ANALYSING THE FOLK SONGS OF THE BODOS OF ASSAM

Kanki Hazarika

### *Abstract*

Folk songs play a multi-dimensional role which is significant for the people belonging to the community concerned. These are integral to their culture; a reflection of their social life and carry of the socio-cultural values of the community that have been passed onto generations. The present paper intends to analyse the folk songs of the *Bodo* community of Assam. The community, which did not have written script before the colonial period, used oral modes of communication such as folk songs, myths, legends, tales, proverbs etc. to transmit knowledge. Not only these songs have socio-cultural values but also it has political underpinnings. Each community has its own specificities, its own codes of conduct to maintain the social order and community identity. The folk songs of the Bodos whose origin is not known, but have been passing on from generations, help to reiterate those values among the members of the community. It is against this backdrop, the paper would like to understand the ways femininity and masculinity are perceived by the Bodos and how these songs have reinforced the gendered construction of behaviour among the individuals. In parallel, the connection between the social construction of gender and broader communal identity reiterated through the songs would also be looked at to understand how women have been influenced and perceived by the society. With these objectives, the present paper analyses few songs from the book “Folk Songs of the Bodos” a compilation of folk songs by Mohini Mohan Brahma. Additionally, one song ‘*mane jiu hwgwn arw raijw lagwn in Bodo*’ that is available on *youtube* is also looked at in the paper.

Key words: Bodos, folk song, gender, masculinity, women, culture, community, identity

### **Introduction**

Oral narratives play a significant role in understanding the living traditions and culture of a community. The Bodo community of Assam did not have written histories until the colonial period. Several oral modes of communication such as folk songs, folk tales, myths, legends were used to transmit knowledge and culture of the community from one generation to another. For them, oral narratives are pivotal in maintaining and transmitting the cultural beliefs and practices, lived experiences of people. Folk songs, one of the forms of oral narratives, have been

crucial in this regard that help in the construction of socio-cultural identity of a community. A community and its social structure and cultural beliefs can best be understood by reading the texts of these folk songs. Furthermore, it reflects how these songs communicate and transfer socio-cultural particularities among the community members.

This paper analyses the folk songs of the Bodos of Assam to discern how these songs emphasized and re-emphasized certain societal norms for the members of the community that are considered integral to the community identity, producing gendered subjects that have been regulated through cultural practices. It must be noted that these songs are composed within a particular socio-cultural setting and display the ways of living, their norms and rituals etc. The Bodo, an agricultural community by occupation, has folk songs narrating the rustic agricultural or social lives of the people that are expressed rhythmically. These songs enunciate the emotion and desires of the people. A critique of these songs throws light on the socio-cultural underpinnings of a community as well as the collective psychology. Passed down from generations, it is difficult to trace the origin of these folk songs. These songs, often with repetitive lines are portrayals of the imagination and profound thoughts of the people as Brahma (1960) mentions; these are spontaneous and simplistic in nature and hence easy to understand. This genre can be categorised into different sections based on themes such as love songs, patriotic songs, ritual songs, songs of marital life and pastoral songs etc. manifesting diverse ways of their lives. Folk songs inculcate the codes of conduct, moral values among the members of the community. In addition to that, they also reflect male-female subjectivity and expressions of the desire, imagination and controlling of sexuality of women, which form the subject of this paper. With these objectives, a book titled as *“Folk Songs of the Bodos”* written by Mohini Mohan Brahma has been referred in this paper. This book is a compilation of various folk songs collected from the Bodo people of Assam. These songs are written in three languages, Bodo, Assamese and English respectively. The researcher has cited the English translations of the songs in this paper. Additionally, the original Bodo and its translated Assamese texts have also been referred to. Apart from that, one song ‘*mane jiu hwgwn arw raijw lagwn in Bodo*’ from the *youtube* channel has also been cited here.

**A brief note on the Bodos**

The Bodo is an indigenous community living in Assam, other Northeastern states, West Bengal and the bordering countries of Nepal and Bangladesh. The community is scattered throughout the state of Assam and categorised as a Scheduled Tribe under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India. Agriculture is the primary occupation of the Bodos, followed by other livelihoods such as fishing, piggy, poultry, weaving etc. Traditionally, they are the followers of Bathou religion which is a form of paganism and animism and worship siju plant (cactai family). With the influence of Hinduism especially from West Bengal, many Bodos converted to Brahma religion, a socio-religious reform movement. With the coming of Christian missionaries during colonial period, many of them converted to Christianity. Unlike some other tribes of Northeast, the Bodos follow a patriarchal and patrilineal structure.

**On Women: Reinforcing Patriarchy through Folk Songs**

Patriarchy operates at different levels starting from the family to community and the state with varying degrees. It has been manifested in various forms such as controlling of female sexuality, sexual division of labour, construction of masculinity and femininity. Women performing familial duties as well as carrying the moral responsibility of both the family and the community is inherent attribute of patriarchy. For a woman, the primacy given to marriage over other jobs amongst the Bodos reveals how she is perceived and defined within the social structure. While it comes to the woman, the gendered appropriate behaviour, legitimised through social sanctioning is measured through the virtues of docility, submissiveness and how proficient she is in carrying out domestic responsibilities. In this context, folk songs have been instrumental in guiding women in the 'socially sanctioned behaviour', to act according to the codes of 'feminine demeanour' and direct her duties as woman. These criteria decide the eligibility of a girl for marriage who would bear the responsibility of the husband's family and household chores. There are songs advising the woman to forget her relationship with the parents, siblings and other relatives from the day she got married, and embrace the new conjugal life. It also hints how the concept of family is narrowly defined for a woman.

Menon (2012) writes, "Women have to learn to remake themselves completely, but even more significant is the fact that the entire period of their lives before this singular event of



marriage, is spent in anticipating and preparing for this specific future, from choice of career and job options to learning to be adaptable from early girlhood.”

*“Oh sister, you are lucky*

*Through the grace of the Creator*

*You will now own*

*Spotted cows and large granaries*

*From now on,*

*Your parents are no longer your kin*

*Your father-in-law and mother-in-law*

*And relatives of your husband*

*Are now your near and dear ones*

*Oh little sister*

*Stay with your husband*

*Work well, be happy*

*And lead a fruitful life.”*

In the original song which is in Bodo language, the woman is asked to ‘*be submissive to her husband, work well and manage her family peacefully and happily*’ which has been expressed in the English translation by using the lines ‘*stay with your husband.....fruitful life.*’ This song sung by women is an illustration of the hierarchical nature of the conjugal relationship where the woman is expected to be submissive. The quality of her being submissive defines her as an ideal wife and also decides how good and happy a family is. The projection of man as the head and decision maker of the family and woman as subordinate is significant in a heteronormative patriarchal Bodo family. In this particular song, the girl is apparently reminded

of how lucky she is to get a husband from a well-off family. Pointing out directly on the secondary position of women within the community in the song, the girl is asked to oblige to her husband. The concept of 'happy family' is projected on the performance of the woman who is to be abided by her husband and obey his rules. The kind of songs sung by women also reveals how the women act as 'active agents' of patriarchy through continuous reiteration of gendered behaviour and codes of conduct.

The patriarchal understanding of an 'ideal woman' proceeds on the premises of the notions of domesticity, chastity, docility, modesty or purity of a woman and this ideology is prevalent amongst the Bodos as well. Such stereotyped image of a woman defines her position in the society. These are the attributes needed to be thrust upon by a woman without transgressing the societal norms. The sanctity of marriage lies on maintenance of chastity and morality by her before marriage, which have been reinforced and inculcated in their minds through folk songs. Female sexuality has to be repressed until they get married which has been conveyed to them as the onus of the family and the community 'honour' lies on the girl. The imagery of a woman in the community is quite paradoxical; she is seen as the honour of the family or community or flag bearer of the culture and yet, objectification of woman is normalised amongst them.

*"Don't you weep, dear*

*The virgin hen has been taken out of the sty*

*She is ready to be taken*

*To her groom's place....."*

*"...do not weep, dear*

*You are still chaste and pure*

*Like the virgin hen*

*We are today taking you*

*To your husband's house...."*

The deliberate use of the term ‘virgin hen’ exhibits how woman is dehumanized and relegated to the position of mere object/animal and a ‘prized possession’. Such objectification of women precisely articulates the idea of a female body as an object of male desire. An interpretation of the designations such as virgin, chaste and pure for a woman shows her being an ‘ideal object’ based on these qualities for marriage. Proclaiming these characteristics as inherent to a woman has been time and again reinforced amongst them through these songs. These stereotypical notions, values or ideas have been internalised and perceived by the community members, thereby strengthening the patriarchal roots amongst them.

*“The fish Batia, shakes, the fish, Batia, shakes*

*Darling you don’t get annoyed*

*Don’t get angry*

*If you do not do your duties properly I shall rebuke you*

*You shall not get angry*

*If you do foolish job*

*I shall beat you*

*You shall not get angry.”*

This particular song delivers the message to woman how she is supposed to behave even if she gets beaten by her husband and accept it. The husband asks her to perform her duties ‘properly’- the duty of an ‘ideal wife’ – to take care of all the household chores and the family, obeying her husband and other family members. The woman is subjected to domestic violence if she fails to perform her duty ‘properly’; she would be beaten by her husband if she does anything wrong. A reading of the text exhibits how normalisation and perpetuation of violence on wife or woman per se, authorised by the patriarchal mindset has been done through various forms like folk songs. Beating wife is an act of manliness, valour; giving the authority or power to men that displays the patriarchal hierarchical relationship within the family. While the reverse is highly condemned and if a wife does so, they have to perform a ritual to expiate the ‘sin’ as the researcher was informed by the people from the community.

*“Wife: From the Bhutan Hills*

*Whither are you going*

*For cutting wood?*

*Fetch me, oh dear,*

*A shuttle made of sal wood*

*Husband: Most gladly I will*

*Oh Dear Goychiri, my jewel*

*But keep ready*

*Wine for me”*

These constructed gendered norms have put pressure on both women and men to maintain the qualities of manliness or womanliness. Giving a brief idea on the kind of works they do, the song exhibits the gendered division of labour amongst the Bodos. While the man is going out to earn livelihoods, woman is asked to make the rice beer (it is integral to Bodo food culture), an important task woman must know. Further, the original word used in the song in their language was ‘Mainao’ instead of the word ‘jewel’. The word ‘Mainao’ remains the same in the Assamese translation as well. Amongst the Bodos, the goddess Laxmi is referred as ‘Mainao’. The researcher wishes to analyse the word *Mainao* used in the original song instead of the English word used in the translation. Referring his wife as Mainao or ‘goddess Laxmi’ has manifold innuendos. Unlike the goddess Durga or Kali, who are considered as fiery goddesses, Laxmi is seen as more of a gentle, calm and loving figure and goddess of prosperity. The equation with the goddess Laxmi epitomises the image of a woman and puts pressure on the woman to act in a certain way that establishes her as an ‘ideal woman’.

### **Woman’s Body and Reimagining Community Identity**

Each society has its own codes of conduct to regulate the behaviour of the individuals, to maintain the socio-cultural fabric of the community. Intricate to these codes is the concepts of purity and identity. Purity and continuation of identities such as community, caste, race etc are

needed to be ensured through policing of female sexuality. Controlling the sexuality of woman is crucial to their identities, which has to be read within a larger picture demarcating 'us' from 'them' or 'self' from 'others'. Policing women's sexuality has been included within the sphere of cultural norms of the Bodos who prefer endogamous marriage. Although both the genders are encouraged to do endogamous marriage, societal pressure is more on the girl. The institution of family and marriage cannot be separated from the broader public arena. The marriage, solemnised between two individuals is not only a private subject but also a community affair having many nuances. Every community is influenced by the historical situation, the geographical condition and its neighbouring communities living in the same region. Each of these factors influences the socio-cultural structure of a particular community in one way or the other, facilitating the interchanging of various socio-cultural elements between/among communities and in constructing new norms in accordance with their situation. Thus culture is not a static phenomenon; rather it undergoes processes of changes over time. At this juncture, we need to locate the construction of the cultural norms of the Bodos historically. A critique on this subject would help us to understand how the emergence of the socio-economic order brought by the colonial rulers influenced them in various ways. The changing scenario of the region, the new policies on land and several other issues introduced by the colonial regime has an obvious impact on their culture in terms of constructing new norms, codes etc. Several folk songs have expressed these concerns and as well as the codes or the norms and transfer the knowledge or their past to the people. How do we connect this political situation of the Bodos and controlling of female sexuality or marriage so to speak? What was the need to police sexuality of woman and her marriage? It was obvious that the community inhabiting the region from a long time has been threatened on various grounds with the coming of new regime and immigrants. While the numbers of immigrant settlers are continuously growing, it has become urgent to strengthen their community. This understanding has given legitimacy or justification to control women's sexuality which seen as 'dangerous', yet 'fragile'. It has become pertinent to strengthen the population by controlling her marriage and reproduction in addition to the notion of 'honour' associated with the women.

A heteronormative family is the connecting point between personal and political. The institution of family plays a crucial role in shaping the identity of the community. In this regard, the line between private and public is vague. Intertwining of familial duties or values with the

broader public arena can best be understood by analysing folk songs. Given this background, I would like to discuss one particular song '*mane jiu hwgwn arw raijw lagwn in Bodo*' sung by a Bodo male singer which is available on *youtube* (cited the link in the reference section). Here, the singer apparently expresses his wish to do polygyny citing his concern for his community and a homeland. The video starts with the clipping of a rally by Bodo youth shouting slogans like 'we want Bodoland', 'No Bodoland, no rest'. The singer asks his fellow mates to do the same for the interest of the community. The reproductive capacity of a woman is perceived to be the potential to rescue a community from extinction of its culture and identity. An engagement with this song elucidates the larger political picture of the region where the community has been struggling for a long time to get a separate state affected by both colonial and post-colonial rule. This apprehensiveness is articulated in this song, which connects the community identity with that of personal through marriage. Here, the notion of marriage is looked as a social responsibility. The indispensable criterion of marriage is to legitimise the sexual act and involved in procreation. The reproductive capacity of a woman is a medium to maintain the family lineage as well as the community honour. It is seen as an essential factor for identity and existence of the community who has been trying to create an identity of its own. Procuring children is of utmost important for their already diminishing population and identity and makes the community a dominant one so that they can claim a separate homeland. Hence, getting married to multiple women is seen as a viable arrangement to this problem. The woman's body has, thus, become an interface of biological and social, a site for negotiation to accomplish the broader political objective. Here, a woman's body is associated with 'we' instead of 'I', a communal property and thus objectifying it with the intention of reproducing children. Polygyny is not just matter of population growth, but underneath this, there are socio-cultural underpinnings, the gendered norms and controlling of women's body. The whole notion of womanhood with its significant criteria such as reproduction, chastity, purity and her choice for inter-community marriage have been quintessential aspects for the reconstruction of the community identity. In that case, not only her body or sexuality but also her agency or choice is regulated and the folk songs manifest these notions either explicitly or implicitly. Procreation is just the beginning of the responsibility, but all other aspects of reproduction, inculcate the values, norms and cultures of the community lies on the woman. Thus to develop a sense of sentiment towards the community by injecting these values on children is the responsibility of the woman.

In this context, woman's body no longer remains a physical body, but transcends beyond the physical body and becomes an embodiment for the community.

The instrumentality of family in shaping the identity of the community encompasses procreation and inculcating the moral values or codes of conduct to its members. The whole concept in the song sounds similar to the Hindutva ideology propagated by Rashtriya Samajsevak Sangh (RSS) although the context is different. The idea of making a Hindu nation manifests the proposition of impregnating women. The construction of womanhood in Hindutva ideology encourages women to give birth to more children. Similar to this ideology, the above mentioned song exhibits the community sentiment, making an exclusive homeland for them that can be achieved through impregnating women.

The operation of the community identity in the marriage can best be understood by reading the text where the girls is asked to marry within community or asking her not to cry as she is getting married to a Bodo, not to a Bhutanese or Assamese.

*“Why do you weep, dear?*

*Do not you weep, girlie.*

*You have been married not to an outcaste*

*But to a right and Bodo youth proper*

*To lead a proper family life.....”*

*“Do not you worry, dear*

*Do not you grow sad*

*You have not been given away in marriage*

*To a non-Bodo or a Bhutiya....”*

Anandhi(1998) writes, “While women are assigned the task of reproducing community identities, their sexuality is contained both physically and ideologically. Both these processes

mark out and celebrate the so called ideal/pure women, elicit their compliance with the patriarchy inherent in identity politics by giving them a sense of pride and participation....”

### Performing Masculinity

Reinforcing the concepts of masculinity or femininity by constructing gendered norms and behaviour have been significant in the folk songs of the Bodos. The construction of masculinity is an important aspect of these folk songs. In the song that has been discussed above, portrays the man as the protector of the community or a nation. A homeland is always represented as the feminine one that needs protection when it is under threat. Here, the singer asks all his male friends to perform the duty of safeguarding their culture, identity or the nation by impregnating women in a legitimized manner that is through marriage.

*“Drive fast your steed, Bachiram*

*A hero you are,*

*The Bhutanese soldiers are marching*

*Tighten the rein and use your spur...”*

The Bodos have been living in the foothills of the Bhutans, which were under the control of the Bhutan king before the colonial period. The folk songs have been significant in terms of carrying historical stories of the region and the community; these songs have also spoken about the tension, animosity and war between them and Bhutanese. Bodo men have been encouraged to go to the war to fight against the enemy to protect the nation through songs. Masculinity is constructed and reemphasized through these songs who are asked to take responsibilities as the head, go for hunting, or to cut timber in Bhutan forests etc. Women ask their men to bring bangles, chains, *dokhona* or yarn for her through her songs. The men not having enough property are not considered as suitable for marriage, he is expected to perform the role of decision maker and carry the economic responsibility of the family. The man is asked to go out in search of work or do cultivation if he intends to marry a girl.

*“Oh revered father*

*Do not give me away in marriage*

*To a youth of non-descript family*

*Be guided by the footprints*

*Of horses and elephants*



*Do not follow the foot marks  
Of dogs and crows. I will not  
Go to the inconsequential nasty houses.  
Be guided by granaries and cowsheds  
Wherever these be,  
Thither shall I go, father dear.”*

Manliness or masculinity is associated with dominance and power over women in both private and public, while submissiveness, docility these are the qualities identified with women. Concepts such as power, heroism, valour, virility, protective etc are associated with a man. A man is expected to perform certain roles and duties in accordance with the norms of masculinity. The body is a site of interface between the social and biological which is acted on. Turner (1984, quoted in ‘*Embodying Gender*’, pp.21) in his ‘*Body and Society*’ mentions about ‘institutional subsystems’ of a society to govern the body in terms of the reproduction of the bodies in time, the regulation of bodies in space, the restraint of internal desires and the external representation of the body.

Inspired by Foucault framework, Howson mentions how sociological discourses around the body also involve the regulatory and disciplinary-these two types of powers to control the body socially. While regulatory power involves institutions and populations, the disciplinary power refers to practices and disciplinary mechanism, in which individuals themselves engage. As a result, the control of the body becomes itself embodied. Individual are not forced directly to practice the set of behaviours and rules, instead they internalise those values with constant repetition or reinforcement of those through the various mediums used in the subsystems (ibid. Pp.23-24). In this whole process of regulating the body based on their biological traits, the institutions construct gendered subjects and naturalise those rules and behaviours. These gendered subjects are produced and regulated through their everyday cultural practices. Folk song is one such medium that inculcates those behaviours, moral values and social norms in accordance with their culture.

**Desire and Emotion in the folk songs**

Desire, emotion, love are some of the fundamental attributes of human being. This attributes have been expressed through music, dance and songs in most of the societies. The vigorousness of these medium helps in expressing the subjectivities in a more lucid way. These songs are expression of their emotion for their love, their happiness or sadness, their work etc.

*“Oh flower, oh flower,  
Fully blossomed flower  
Alone you bloom, alone you wither  
Our years too  
Have arrived in full youth  
They are also withering in loneliness”  
“I am not a bird, not a pig  
You cannot keep me detained at home  
In a cage or sty  
Ceaseless and boundless blows the breeze  
Flowers are falling of the plant, you cannot keep it.  
Breeze cannot be prevented  
From blowing  
Those who should be kept back  
Them you detain, not others  
I am brought up by you  
I have attained the age  
When I can be a mother  
I cannot be kept home  
Like birds or pigs*

*But should be given away in marriage”*

Although a woman’s physical body is policed, the mind or emotion cannot be always put into regulation. This particular song sung by a girl articulates her desire to get married as she has attained the ‘marriageable age’. As a young girl who is restricted within the domestic sphere, whose body is controlled, asks her parents to let her go and not kept in a cage like an animal. Her emotion through this song has been emanated from the social-cultural situation, her lived experience. A reading of this song discerns the kind of resistance by the woman to the gendered ideologies and social construct. The words such as pig and bird used in the song to describe herself denote how a girl is looked at, who is believed to be more of an object rather than human. It reflects the existing social reality within which a woman is born and brought up. It also suggests folk songs not only as a medium of communication but also it is a platform for these women to express their lived experiences, subjectivity that might not have been possible directly. Songs sung by women together is not only about emphasising or resisting the existing structure but also validation of the cohesive solidarity of women that comes out of their position of being women. However, a reading of these songs also reveals the shifting and often contradictory positions of women based on their extraordinary experiences and different positions as a wife, daughter, widow and so on.

Within the subjective approach, the question “not only how gender defines women's treatment, occupations, and so on, but also how women perceive the personal, social and political meanings of being female” emerges as pointed out by Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck (*A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women* by Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth Pleck, 1979, quoted by Lewis, 2018). Instead of accepting it as a social construct, they perceive it as natural as these things are naturalised and deeply penetrated. The internalisation of the construction of gender through songs and other mediums have reinforced and reemphasized to perform according to the established order.

### **Contemporary period**

It must be noted that folk songs of the Bodos in earlier period was produced based on the context, their religion etc. No culture is static; these have been subject to change with time and

situation. Much has been changed from that time suggesting cultural fluidity. Many folk songs have been lost over time, and with the conversion to other religions, people have stopped singing as well as forgotten those traditional folk songs and dance. For instance, Bodo Christians sing gospel songs combined with their traditional music instead of these folk songs. Nevertheless, patriarchal forms prevail amongst the Bodos in one form or the other depending on the situation, be it in the past or the present. It has been endorsed through other modes such as religion. Romanticisation of the qualities of an 'ideal' woman still exist among them, yet there have been changes such as women going out, taking education or jobs with the demand of the situation. In the present day scenario, the folk songs play a crucial position amongst them that carries socio-cultural values. It has become significant especially when there has been an identity movement by the community going on in the region and efforts have been taking place to revive the traditional culture by forming several community organizations.

### Conclusion

Katerina Tsetsura (2010) expresses. *"History of culture, therefore, can be told through folk music, and songs and dances are not only cultural artefacts but also communicative manifestations of one's cultural identity."* Folk songs have not only social and cultural significance but also they carry political meaning with it. It exhibits how a community's life is intertwined with the geographical and social environment and culture is constructed accordingly. Moreover, it carries the history of the people as well as the region from one generation to another. Being a community who did not have written script, this form of oral communication has helped the present generation to understand their past and why it has become important for their present identity.

It is also important to be critical about how folk songs act as guidelines for the members of the community asking them what and how to act. The gendered construction of subjects such as the secondary position of a woman and, moreover, men being the dominant has been reinforced by those songs. Through this reinforcement, it naturalizes the behavioural pattern of men and women. Culture is not static; it is fluid in accordance with the time. Preserving these songs does not necessarily mean to practicing those norms, instead it would give the community to look back to their past, their history and analyse how far they have come and what can be done in the future.

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**SOCIAL INCLUSION OF TRIBAL WOMEN****(Data from a few Juang dominated villages of Keonjhar, Orissa)****Jharana Mishra****S. C. Pujari****Introduction**

The status of tribal women can be discussed in term of their demography, health, education and employment. The present paper discusses about their social inclusion. Despite constitutional protection and assurances, their status is found to be lower than not only that of women in the general population and the scheduled caste women but is also lower than the status of tribal men. It is characterized by over-work, invasion of sexually exploitative market force in tribal society, illiteracy, sub-human physical living condition, high fertility and high malnutrition. The tribal women, constitute as in any other social group, about half of the total population. However, the importance of women in the tribal society is more importance than in other social group in India, because of the fact that tribal women, more than women in any other social group, works harder and the family economy and management depends on her.

In all societies economic activities constitute the main source of survival and sustenance and women have always been an important part of work and economy. However because of difficult economic situations and lack of bargaining power, women workers all over the globe, especially in the developing world, have to accept low wages and work under debilitating conditions. Tribal women have the primary responsibility for food gathering from communal lands and forests. In most countries livestock husbandry is also the responsibility of women. Despite women's enormous contribution to agricultural sector, much of domestic and agricultural work done by women is unpaid and more often overlooked. Women workers in the tribal areas tend to be consistently handicapped owing to the traditional division of labour. The lack of adequate data on women's role used for data collection do not reflect small-scale or subsistence agriculture, ignoring important parts of women's work and overall economic production.

Though everyone is now recognizing the invisible economic contribution of women, methodological problems persist in measuring certain aspects of women's work. By far the most "invisible" of all work done by women the world over, is domestic work, which continues to go unrecognized, unpaid, undervalued and largely ignored, despite its crucial importance to society. It has been argued that if domestic work were to be quantified, it would contribute up to forty per cent of the gross national product. In both the developed and developing world, women work on an average of sixty hours a week around the house. Yet social values are such that most women whose job description reads "housewife" do not consider themselves economically active (Singh, 2001: 118).

The status of women in tribal economy is closely linked to the mode of production prevalent in that tribe. The economic activities vary from one society to the other depending on their exposure to the outside world. The Juang have also their set of economic activities and the women contribute maximum of it directly and indirectly. The Juang women's economy that mainly centers round agriculture and forest depending on their natural environment, the main source of income for them therefore comes from food gathering, cultivation, handicrafts and labour work.

The paper is the outcome of our research work undertaken in the four villages namely, Budhighar, Phulbadi, Bali and Panasana under the traditional territorial unit of *Jharkhandpirh* (south-centrally located) in the Banspal Block of Keonjhar district in Orissa.

The Juang are one of the major aboriginal tribes of Orissa that has been very little affected by civilization. The community is confined only to Orissa and especially to the districts of Keonjhar and Dhenkanal. It belongs to the Proto-Australoid racial stock (Patnaik, 1989: 1). The Juang are medium in stature with long head, high cheek bones and broad nose with depression at the root is the physical construction; brown to dark brown is the skin colour; black, coarse and wavy hair and strait eye-slit.

### **Women and Agricultural Operation**

The Juang on the hilltops and slopes largely practices shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation is a traditional method governed by environmental conditions, rainfall, steep slopes, thin population density and inaccessibility. The number of years of holding land for shifting cultivation and the number of years for which it is left fallow for regeneration of forest depend

upon factors such as rainfall, pressure of population and condition of the terrain. As a general rule, tribals hold the land for shifting cultivation for two or three years and wait for five to six years for regeneration of forest cover.

Significant use of indigenous knowledge is seen in the various agricultural practices of the Juang women. They are very knowledgeable about the kind of crops that can be cultivated in each type of land. Their use of the local resources and even their food habits reflect their knowledge of their environment.

To maintain the fertility of the soil, the Juang use cattle waste, ashes and compost. Every few years they also change their cultivation from one traditional rice variety to another in order to conserve their traditional paddy varieties and to prevent the loss of fertility in their soil. They also use the *ghadatulasi* (*Osimum basilus*), *salpa branch* (*Caryota urens*) and *karadabbranch* (*Helicterus isura*) as insect repellents and spider webs to prevent attacks from insects.

The year round agricultural activities for Juang women is found in all the six types of land, viz. *Toila*, *Ekan*, *Nala*, *Guda*, *Bakadi*, *Bila*. In the month of Feb. and March the felling of trees in *Toila* land is done where women occasionally take part. In the month of August, both men and women take part in debushing. In the month of November-December, they are engaged in watching the crops and in December they take part in harvesting. In *Ekan* land women start their agricultural operation with degrassing in the month of April. Here debushing and weeding is done both by men and women in September and October. The watching and harvesting is done here in the month of November and December both by men and women. In *Nala* land women are not engaged in the work of harvesting with men. There is no need to watch crops in this type of land. Work of women in *Guda* and *Bakadi* land is quite similar to the *Nala* type of land. In the month of April women do manuring in the *bila* type of land. Then they are engaged in weeding in this type of land in the month of August and September. They do the harvesting in the month of December and January.

When we analyze the work distribution in terms of participation in agricultural work we find in the works like ploughing, broadcasting seeds, stacking and storing, women do not participate, as it is a taboo for them in the Juang community. But in other agricultural operations like leveling the field, field preparation, carrying seeds, transplanting, weeding, manuring and fertilizing, harvesting, threshing, winnowing and drying women are engaged fully or partially.



Here we find a clear division of labour between Juang men and women in the agricultural sector. It is also important to note that without women's participation the agricultural work gets hampered. The invisibility of women as the primary breadwinner is ignored in the Juang *pirh*.

### **Women and Non-agricultural Operation**

The evidence of diversity of women's expertise is strong in the field of technical changes in agriculture. It is associated with higher capital intensity, greater mechanization of production and post harvest operations, the introduction of exogenous knowledge and the development of crops and livestock with diverse characteristics geared to the requirements of commercial commodity production. It has been accompanied by changes which women experience in unique ways. Women's knowledge has been the mainstay of the indigenous dairy industry.

Animal husbandry as a non-agricultural work of a Juang woman is very much linked to her agricultural tasks. For agricultural purposes generally the cattle are kept. Other animals like goat, pig, sheep and chicken are kept for entertaining guests and also for sale. Everyday women use to clean the cattle shed. For fodder they bring wild grass, green leaves with them while coming back from forest. To keep the insects away she burns fire at the shed. Dogs she keeps that helps her husband in hunting and also watching crops. The chicken is mainly used for rituals, slaughtered for meat to entertain guests and marketing. Buffaloes she takes care for milk and milk products and ploughing the field.

The narrow streams being full of stones and boulders are not suitable for fishing. The Juang women are found to catch fish with the help of their saree in the rainy season. A portion of the catch it is consumed at home and the rest is sold in the market. However, that is not a stable source of income. The difficult economic situation and a lack of bargaining power resulting from gender inequality, many Juang women have been forced to accept low wage and poor working conditions and thus have often become preferred workers. They have entered the workforce increasingly by choice as the family situation compels them to earn for maintenance of the family. But, they never prefer to go far away places or are engaged in such activities like wage earning on a regular basis. Whenever there is a wage earning opportunity, a Juang woman goes accompanied by her husband to the work place. The general preference is to work at a place close to their home so that it will not effect their home management.

### Tapping Forest Resources

Minor forest produce forms a major source of income in the Juang community. Women and children are almost exclusively involved in collection of minor forest produce, its storage, processing and marketing. Increased government control of forests has distributed the Juang economy adversely affecting their lives, particularly that of women. Appointing of agents from outside for collecting forest produce has not only affected their livelihood, but has also made the work of women more difficult. Collection of fuel wood has become more difficult since it is less accessible and more time-consuming. The result has been less income combined with less fuel wood available for themselves and lesser nutrition. It also leaves them little time for earning wages. Government control over forests has also reduced hunting to a ritual.

In the Juang community a special relationship exists between women, the family and trees. This fact has not been properly acknowledged in all earlier works. The agricultural products manage to feed the Juang people for three to five months. The rest of the year the people rely on forest based products. United Nations report found food rich in vitamins consumed in African countries are collected from forest (UN, 1994: 4). Trees also provide food in a number of indirect ways, Juang people use nearby forest as an important source of collecting honey and edible fungi.

Juang women are found, engaged in collection of different food items from the forest throughout the year. However they are not allowed to engage themselves in hunting. Juang women spend major part of their life in going to the forest and collecting different items from forest. *Mahua* (a flower) she collects for liquor while it accompanied with *kendu*, *chara*, honey, mushroom she collects, give her a good amount in return. Pulses she uses as exchange products. Brushing stick collected by women from forest are used in home as well as marketed throughout the year. Fruits she gets plenty in summer while mash rooms are available in rainy season. Juang women rely on the collection of non-timber forest products that include medicinal herb, home based processing foods, fibers, dyes and liquor. They also prepare different type of handicrafts for sale in the local market.

Juang women collect the fodder for domestic animals from the forest. Without fuel to cook with, as the Juang women know well, there may be nothing to eat. Fueling and tending the household fire has always been women's work. So they have much harder job of collecting and

transporting the fuel. They have acquired an intimate and practical knowledge of the suitability of different tree species for cooking. They know which wood burn slowly or fast, which smoke and which kindle easily. The wood must be dry and be able to give fire for a long time. They, collect some extra wood to store for rainy season.

Juang women use neem sticks and neem leaves to keep mosquitoes away by setting fire to it. She smokes fish and meat on fire. In the night she light the house with fire. For drying the wet harvest she uses fire. By boiling leaves and bark women prepare natural medicine to be used for minor diseases.

Juang women also rely on forest to maintain many parts of their household. Women always do minor household repairs. Trees provide nearly all that is needed: poles for building shed, leaves for thatch *beta* (canes) and steams of large grass for *hatia* (wattle), fibers for *daudi* (twine). *hatia* (wattle), *kathi* (brushing stick), *tupuli* (bawls), *dhenki* and *kuta* (mortar and pestles), *kula* (used for cleaning grains), *tokei* (used for keeping things) are things prepared by women by materials collected from forest for use at home and sale at market. Small-scale forest based enterprises such as the collection and processing of raw materials into useful products are a major source of income for Juang women. They use canes for making furnitures, fibers for net, ropes and mats, bamboo for basketry, gums and resins and kendu leaves for making *bidi*.

Women collect the beads for necklace, flowers for decorating hair bun from forest. Ireson found that, in Laos, women in the Bolikhamsai province gather or hunt 141 different forest products, including food plants, medicinal products, household items and small animals for domestic consumption and sale (Ireson, 1991: 23-26). I have not calculated each item of MFP used in the Juang community, but I feel it may cross the number stated by Ireson. For collecting these forest products women have to cover 0 to 11 kilometers.

Juang women who provide a major contribution to family economy through agriculture and M.F.P are now overburdened as deforestation has made them to cover more distance to meet their needs that was an easy task for them in the past. Whatever it may be, the invisible contribution of women to Juang economy cannot be overlooked as portraying their work, a duty for family maintenance. The foregoing analysis shows a clear picture of the contribution of Juang women to household economy.

One may at the outset feel that issues like rest, leisure or holidays have no meaning for Juang women. But any discussion on women in general, and working women in particular, is likely to be left incomplete if an important question like leisure time is not raised and answered.

Work and leisure are the two aspects of human life, which is found among Juang women in the form of dwelling at home, farm, forest or construction site and leisure when they sleep.

### **Learning the Skill to Work**

Whenever a reference to work is given there the question arises how women learn these skills, and the answer is that the environment in which they grow gives them the opportunity to learn themselves in the process of doing these works. Though there is lack of formal education to learn the skill to work, in a Juang society a woman's education is a lifelong learning. It is a lifelong process by which every female starting from childhood till old age acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes, and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Continuous learning is enforced through: stories, songs, observation, social interaction, speech and conduct towards elders. They transmit knowledge and social customs, and define relationships and belongings in the society. Here the lines written by Riesman very well fits into the Juang women's learning the skill to work where he quotes, "proverbs are one means of sharpening adult consciousness and of fixing in memory the truths that seem necessary for social life" (Riesman, 1992: 150). The traditional attitudes of the Juang very well mesh with their economic activities. The division of labour between men and women makes their knowledge base gender-specific according to their roles and perceived responsibilities.

Understanding the indigenous knowledge system is key to understand skill acquisition among women in the Juang social structure. This is because there is transfer of skills from the household and culture to work. Skill acquisition integrates with household relations. The idea of education in the Juang tradition cannot be separated from that of training. Women learn by their socialization process from key figures in their lives (mother, aunt, or any other older female relative) and through the long-standing traditional apprenticeship system in the Juang social structure. All of these are embedded in the everyday life of their society. The system itself

teaches both specific skills for social behaviour and working ability. It provides internal structure for ways of knowing and a means to transfer that knowledge.

No specialized training course is needed for a Juang woman to learn the household and extra-household activities. She learns by visualizing and accompanying her elders doing those activities. It is always associated with the environment where the girl is brought up. Taking care of the younger brothers and sisters, works related to agricultural operations, washing clothes and fetching water all become a daily schedule of activity as a girl grows up in the Juang social structure. Thus, she experiences of doing all the household and farm activities before marriage that continues as a routine work after her marriage.

### **Concluding Remarks**

There have been a number of studies on the tribes, their culture on the impact of acculturation on tribal society. There have also been studies on the status of women relating to their socio-cultural problems, their economic rights, their participation in management, their access to employment, food, health, etc. but these issues have not been properly focused in relation to the tribal women and their social inclusion. There are only a few studies on the status of tribal women in India. Thus the study of tribal women cannot be ignored. It becomes important because the problems of tribal women differ from a particular area to another area owing to their geographical location and historical background.

For this, there is a need for proper understanding of their problem specific to time and place so that relevant development programmes can be made and implemented. the present paper tries to make a humbles attempt for undertaking a region –specific study of the status and role of tribal women, which alone can throw up data that will make planning for their welfare more meaningful and affective. We need to create legal, regulatory and policy frame works that promote social inclusion of tribal women.

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## THE SOCIO-CULTURAL PRACTICES DURING MENSTRUATION AMONG NEPALI WOMEN IN NORTH-EASTERN INDIA

Pooja Chetry

### *Abstract*

Menstruation or monthly cycle is the biological phenomenon of a woman's body which signifies that her body is healthy. However the stigma, shame, fear, taboo and religious beliefs associated with it even in present times, sidelines all the health concerns and hygiene surrounding menstruation. The patriarchal stigma around menstruation is indoctrinated in our minds, that no conversation or discussion takes place around this topic in open or public spaces. It is a topic which is discussed only behind closed doors or whispered about, symbolizing it to be a matter of shame and embarrassment, even in today's time of advancement and development. The paper therefore, attempts to study the religious and cultural practices followed by the Nepali women during menstruation and its associated belief systems. It argues that the cultural taboo, violence and exclusion practiced during menstruation are embedded in these religious beliefs and practices. The paper also tries to examine, if any, the changing social norms and methods adopted by the working class, migrated Nepali women who juggle and tries to fit-in between modernity and religious practices. It looks into her changing belief system, family orientation, job and location. The study is based on qualitative method, using tools such as personalized interviews and discussion with Nepali women between the age group of 20-50 years. They are housewives, working ladies, students; and are selected through snow-ball sampling method.

Key words: Menstruation, Nepali Women, Taboo, Shame, Religion

### **Introduction**

Menstruation is a biological cycle of women's body signifying that she is healthy and reproductive. Scientifically menstruation occurs because of ovulation, followed by missed chance of pregnancy that results in bleeding from endometrial vessel (Garg and Anand, 2015). Bleeding is a way of body's saying that it has got rid of unused eggs and is now preparing itself for next cycle. Globally all girls bleed for the first time at the age group of 11-14 years (Garg and Anand, 2015), marking the onset of her puberty. It is across all culture and religion that myths

surrounding menstruation are developed to control a woman's sexuality, movement and beliefs system. The perceived causes of menstruation across cultures is said to be curse, impure state, dirty blood coming out of women's body which act as a carrier of bad omen. It brings sufferings and harm to others around them. Women is said to be impure and unclean during menstruation and anything coming into close vicinity or contact with them becomes dirty. These gives rise to menstrual myths and taboos.

Menstruation is a taboo subject which is not considered to be worthy of discussion in households. In India, it is so much tabooed that other related issues around menstruation such as health, menstrual cramps, hygiene, mental depression and anxiety during the menstruation is not considered worthy of discussion. The culture of shame and silence associated with menstruation puts the health of a woman at high risk. If she faces any kind of health issues regarding her menstrual cycle, she becomes hesitant to speak about it and ignores the symptoms. Only when the matter escalates towards worst, she sees a doctor. A girl, who needs special attention and dissemination of knowledge about her body, when having her menarche, is primarily educated about the socio-cultural taboos and religious practices to be followed while menstruating from day one. The understanding of puberty, menstrual hygiene or reproductive health becomes secondary knowledge imparted to her. The concept of purity and sacredness is so much internalized in our thought process that women are considered to be impure and untouchable during their menstrual cycle. The discriminatory and exclusionary attitude towards women has been openly proclaimed by the religious associations and priests. Scholar such as Judy lever states, it is societies attitude where it has treated menstruation as something to be ashamed of and hidden away, in contrast to pregnancy which is proud moment to be announced and welcome (Lever, 1979). Women learn to hiss away her menstrual problem unlike pregnancy, if there was no healthy menstruation cycle, the pregnancy would not have taken place in women's womb.

Traditional Indian society considers motherhood and reproduction to be the very essence of womanhood. However, this same traditional society constructs the idea of shame, vulgarity and stigma around menstruation and womanhood. The Sabrimala temple of Kerala is one such institution, which believes that menstruating women should not be allowed to enter the places of worship. The temple prohibits entry of all women in between the menstrual age group because they believe that bleeding makes a woman impure (Kumar, 2016). Different religion such as



Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity etc. talks about menstruation differently and imposes restriction on women's movement. However there is a common point of belief among these religions where woman are consider being impure during menstruation. Prohibition imposed upon women during menstruation are- worshiping, cooking food, no physical intimacy with husband, living in separate room or house away from man are common among all religion. The Vedas talks about menstruating women's body and its impurity in the *Hindu* religion. The origin of menstruation within Hinduism historically dates back to Vedic times when lord Indra out of anger beheaded a Brahman named Vishwaroopa because ostensibly he could not pronounce the Brahman name. Therefore according to Vedas women have taken the sin and guilt of lord Indra upon themselves and to immaculate Indra from this guilt for which woman bleeds every month.

Each culture and religion has their own dos and don'ts for women during menstruation. These dos and don'ts vary massively according to cultural and religious traditions, age groups and social class. The data for this work is though collected within the Nepali community but the research is an exploratory work where the response of the entire respondent varies. The respondents had different stories to tell. New ideas and value system emerged from their self-narratives and lived experiences which gave seed to new discussions on subjects such as interchangeable gender roles among the parents, presence or absence of father and male members in the family during their menarche, which determined the religious practices to be followed or not to be followed during menarche.

The current study is therefore undertaken to highlight the cultural practices during menstruation among the adolescent girls and women within the Nepali community. The cultural and religious practices within the Nepali community vary on the basis of the caste system. The location of the Nepali community, assimilation of cultural practices among different communities also impacts their belief system and religious practices. The study therefore brings out the changing norms and notions about menstruation among the adult woman and girls who have migrated from their hometown because of different factors such as education, job and marriage. The paper argues that the religious and cultural practice during menstruation affects the mental health of the adolescent girl and young woman because of seclusion faced during

their time of menarche. It creates a culture of shame, silence, violence, taboo and exclusion among girls and women from a very young age.

The paper is divided into four sections, where the first section is title *Myths, Beliefs and Cultural practices among the Nepali Community*. This section addresses the different cultural practices followed by Nepali women during her menstruating days and the rational adopted for following this rituals. It is observe that the male member of the family enjoys supreme authority and position in the family which governs the actions of a woman who is in her periods. The second section deals in narratives of Nepali women about menstruation. This section is title *Difference of narrative within the women of Nepali community regarding menstruation*. It basically highlights how the family settings in terms of nuclear or joint, presence of male head member and man-woman ratio in a family change the whole ritual practices at a household. The age group women think differently regarding menstruation practices. The third section deals with concepts such as violence and exclusion and is title *Perpetuation of violence and exclusion during menstruation on Nepali women*. These sections try to bring out violence and exclusion in embedded norms which is followed without questioning during menstruating days by women. It also brings out different emotion a woman or a girl undergoes when she is force to practice certain rules and restriction she does not believe in. *The last sections talks about Migration and changing norms within the Nepali community*. Due to moving out of traditional family system, living in nuclear family where it's just husband and wife in another city, or being a student or job goers who lives away from home, the rules and restriction gets demolished or becomes hazy. The location and time constraint in daily life rigs the rules during menstruation and the migrant Nepali community starts to form their own set of rules which becomes mix bag of old norms and new thought process.

### Methodology

It is a qualitative research where purposive snowball sampling methods has been used to select the subject of study. Snowball is a tool of research where one respondent led me to another respondent by contacting their peer groups or close associates. The respondents helped me develop a communication with another respondent thereby helping me to get consent for conducting interview. The sample size is 20 between the age group of 20-50 years. The entire respondents belong to Nepali community. The group interviewed belong to different caste such

as General, Other Backward Caste, Schedule tribe etc. holding surnames such as Sharma, Chetry, Rai, Thakuri, Pandey etc within the Nepali community and are Hindu by religion. As Nepali speaking Indian are historically a migrant community, they have settle in different corners of India. Therefore, the respondents are not from a particular region but are chosen on the basis of their Nepali lineage for the purpose of the research. They belong to Assam, Nagaland, Sikkim, Meghalaya states of north-east and are students, research scholars, school teacher and homemakers. Some of the respondents live as single unit away from family and home. The data was collected in form of personalized interviews, discussion. The question was in open-ended, semi-structure format where the respondent was asked about her first menarche, the cultural practices she follows while in menstruation. Her experience when she had her menarche. How did her ideas and notion about menstruation changed, if it has? Does she still practice those norms and rituals when she is staying outside her home independently as adult? How seriously does she take her menstruation problem, if any?

### **Myths, beliefs and cultural practices during menstruation among the Nepali community**

The Nepali community majorly follows Hindu religion and according to the majoritarian Hindu traditions, there are number of social and cultural restrictions and taboos concerning menstruation. The most common social and cultural restriction concerning menstruation among the young girls and women are not entering *thepuja* room, not entering *thekitchen*, not looking into *themirror* and not attending *the guest* during menstruation (Kumar and Srivastava, 2011). These are common rituals followed by all women and girls irrespective of communities in the Hindu culture. Young girls and women during their time of menstruating days are forbidden to take part in kind of holy activities; their movement is restricted and is outcast for generally 7 days. However the Nepali communities have some specific rituals to be followed during the first time of menarche. The girls having menarche specifically have to maintain *parda* (*have to hide themselves*) from the male members of the family for seven days. On knowing that the girl has got her menarche, the mother secretively takes her to a relative's home, and keeps her hiding till seventh day in a room without the knowledge of her brother or father. The girl is advice to not look into the rooftop of her house during menarche and for this reason she is kept in a relative's home. She has to wake up before sunrise and take bath, use washroom before wakening of any male member of the family where she is kept hiding. Once she uses the washroom in the wee

hours of morning, she is restricted to come out of the room. If she has to use washroom during day time, she have to wait till all male members have left the house for some work or the other. In the presence of the male member she has to secretively use the washroom hiding from their eyesight. Mostly, the doors and windows of the room are kept closed to keep her invisible from the sight of the male members. Only the women of the family are allowed to visit her in her room. Her food is delivered in her room. She is given a particular utensil which she has to use. It was said that if the male member sees the girl in her first period days, his pride or masculinity would be hurt, also it would bring him bad luck. One of respondent answered upon asked why the girl was kept under *parda*, she replied in nepali “*Shir dhalcha*” meaning he have to bow his head down and have to compromise on his ego and avoid eye contact with the girl, be it his daughter or sister. The concept of purity and male honor is so much embedded within the rituals. The necessary ritual which Nepali community follows before the hitting of menarche is called *Guneo- Cholo*, where a girl when reaching the age of menarche is gifted *Saree* by her parents and a puja is performed. Close relatives and friends are invited for the puja. It symbolizes that the girl has reached the age of puberty and has attained marriageable age. Sometime the ritual of *Guneo-Cholo* is also performed after 21 days of the girl hitting her menarche.

The upper caste Nepali families are very much stringent with the rules to be followed during menstruation. While the girls are kept at the relative place during her menarche, the rules and restriction during every menstrual cycle is very hard on the girls. A girl or women during her menstruation is in literal sense outcaste. She has her separate utensils which are not to be mixed with the utensils used by other family members especially male. She has to sit separately avoiding any kind of physical contact with other members. She has to sit and sleep in the ground avoiding any kind of contact with other members. Her sitting and sleeping mattress would be separate; she cannot pass by the side of other members. She cannot enter kitchen, touch any food, nor even water. She has to depend on other members for survival during these days in literal sense because all her movements and activities are restricted in name of customs and rituals. On seventh day she has to take bath, wash her hair, clothes and bed sheets used during those days in order to be pure. The whole house is to be cleaned and holy water is to be sprinkled in the whole house. This process is called “*chokhiyeko*” in Nepali meaning purification. According Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* (Douglas, 1966), bathing is the highest rite of purification. There are three degree of religious purity- highest is necessary in performing

worship and in Hindu Nepali culture worshipping one's kuldevta(ancestral deity) or conducting puja in puja ghar(place of worship) is restricted during menstruation. In order to be purified one has to bath, wash hair and clean all clothes to be purified. The second state is the normal times when menstruating; women's entry is restricted into kitchen and other community and family services. The third is a state of impurity. The second and third degree are interlinked with each other as menstruating women is consider being impure and polluted. She cannot mingle or come in contact with male members as she is impure and man being the highest authority after god in patriarchal society is considers being the purest. He would get polluted when come into physical contact with wife. It is a battle between sexes where one has to maintain the purity of oneself thereby subordinating the other through exclusionary measures.

### **Difference of narrative within the women of Nepali community regarding menstruation**

Nepali community is patriarchal in nature, yet the power equation and gender-roles among the husband and wife is changing. This can be understood through the interview collected while conducting this research. The women in their early 20's and 30's who are living with their partner in another city as nuclear family have a different take on menstruation and its related norms and rituals. Whereas women in their late 40's and 50's think that following the norms and restriction during menstruation is good culturally and for physical health. Their explanation for following these norms is to maintain social order and safeguarding the culture. The older women could not provide any explanation for their beliefs in these norms but reinforced the idea that observing the rules is good for society. Scholar such as Mary Douglas uses term like medical materialism or medical materialists in her book Purity and Danger (Douglas, 1966), which was coined by William James. Medical materialist are people with primitive thoughts where they justify the ritual actions in terms of aches and pains which would affect them when the rituals are neglected. Douglas also states that its rituals and rules are supported with beliefs that specific danger is attended on breach of these rituals. This argument of Douglas stands true when one of my respondent states that she suffer from guilt for not following restrictions and rituals whenever something goes wrong in the family or her mother falls ill.

In another interview it was reflected that woman who during her early years of menstruation was not hardcore essentialist in following the rules during menstruation has turn out to be vice now. One of my respondent who is in her early 20's mentioned that her mother

who is a working lady and a nurse by profession was very informative, cautious and not so restriction imposing during her initial year of menstruation, but now she has become ritualistic. Though she (mother) does not observe much rules and cooks food during her menstrual cycle, yet she restricts herself from going to temple thereby keeping her religious practices intact and pure. The respondent says, she gets perplexed of her mother's behavior, a lady who was progressive in thought in her early 30's, now seems to be conservative after entering her 40's and her circle of friends has changed. The groups and the company she keeps now might have affected her thought process for which she has turned more ritualistic.

Another respondent who is in her early 30's and is Brahmin by caste has another narrative of her childhood days of menstruation. She says because there was no male figure at home and her mother herself did not follow any rituals or restriction because of her medical condition and removal of uterus, she as a child had no restriction during menarche. It was just like any normal and usual day for her when she had her first period. She kept playing, going to school, entered kitchen etc. the only restriction she faced was worshipping. She was restricted only going to temples and doing puja. Another respondent in her late 20's, married and lives in another city with her husband says that in her maternal home she did not follow much of the rules. The only rules she had to follow were not doing puja and entering kitchen. Other than that she could move freely, go to school, sit at the same dining table and have food. This was done because her father was away from home and her brother was small who did not know much about menstruation and its practices. However in her husband's home her mother-in-law who is in her late 50's is stringent about the menstrual norms. Whenever she is with her in-laws she has to be particular with restriction. She cannot enter kitchen, has to sleep separately from husband, cannot go out or visit relatives during menstruating days. Her mother-in-laws take on imposing this restriction as that she says why to impure someone's home when you are menstruating. The concept of purity is embedded in the fear or belief of a human that horrible disasters might occur when the forbidden lines are crossed.

### **Perpetuation of violence and exclusion during menstruation on Nepali women**

Pollution is used as an analogy for expressing a general view of social order (Douglas, 1966). In case of menstruation, the social order being established through hierarchy between man and woman which leads to perpetuation of trauma and mental violence upon

woman. The practices such as leaving one's home and staying away from family for 7 days because of natural body function leaves a mark in a child mind of being outcast and excluded. No proper reasoning is provided to the child for her menstruating body. She is forbidden to see, talk or meet her own father and brother, making her believe that they are superior being and her presence around them during menstruation might hurt or hamper masculinity and ego. She starts considering herself to be a bad omen during those days and starts practicing separation from family. These generate different emotions within a child mind. Violence in women's body and mind are of different kind. A woman who because of her progressive thoughts and challenging attitude might question the rituals of seclusion but she cannot change the society's attitude and her husband's behaviour towards her. There are men who negate the restriction imposed on menstruating women thereby deconstructing the gender role and help their wives in childrearing but when it comes to taking charge of the household during his wife's menstruating days, he breaks the rituals and asks the women to cook, clean and stay in the same room according to his own convenience. Reflecting upon the emotion a woman and girl child undergoes during these days I quote two of my respondents. To quote my respondent- she says *"I used to feel hurt and angry when my father allowed my mother to keep me at another's house. I was not able to see and talk to him". "I was angry when my maternal uncle was sent back home without allowing him to meet me"*. Another respondent's take on trauma is different, she is a married lady in her early 40's, she says- *"in joint family you can take rest during menstruation and not do household work but in nuclear family you have to work even if you have menstrual cramps or mood swings. It's so paradoxical; you have to bath in morning, and go to kitchen and cook but not do puja. My husband says when I have given permission to cook during this time; it will not be considered as sin. At times I feel so annoyed and helpless"*.

### **Migration and changing norms**

Breaking up of the joint family system, coming of urbanization where different community people stay together, assimilation of culture taking place, and family members moving out of home states and city have brought significant changes in the menstruating norms. Nepali community is historically a migrant community settled in different parts of India, the customs and traditions therefore have undergone some form of assimilations and customization according to the place and surrounding. Today the rituals and restrictions surrounding



menstruation is more in self-decisive form than impositions of a society. The woman according to the suitability of her family structure decides to follow certain rules such as not worshipping, going to temples and cleaning all household clothes as primary restrictions rather than completely out casting herself from family structure.

### Conclusion

The ritual and restriction followed by Nepali women during menstruation varies according to the location and age group of the women. Though with changing time rules such as cooking food, cleaning home, touching objects, or taking drinking water oneself, free mobility etc are being overruled by women irrespective of caste or age. This change in the thought process has come because of nuclear family units. When in a family there is husband, wife and small children, being the only women, the wife cannot afford to impose restriction upon herself during menstruation. This is also because of assigned gender role a society imposes upon women where she has to mandatorily do household work. As there is no other woman in the family, she chooses to overrule the ritual and continue with household work and feed the husband and children. Here the interesting point is a man, who acts as the guard of culture and customs at other time is ready to overrule the menstruation rules where he have to work and do household work during his wife menstruation days, which at normal time he does not consider his work.

Secondly, all Nepali women had a common restriction of not doing puja or going to temples. They had a common belief that worshipping would bring bad omen. So with religious sentiments and beliefs such as why to angry god or bring bad omen menstruation rules were followed. A younger generation woman who lives independently decides to negate the rules when living alone but prefer to abide by some rules such as not worshipping or entering "*Puja Ghar*" in order to not hurt her parents religious sentiment. The absence of male members in the family had major significance in observing or negating the norms. It came out from the interviews that the norms were majorly followed for the well being of the family and for the head of the family, who is a male and a patriarch. The belief system and conceptualization of menstruation is now no more static in nature rather it has become more dynamic. With the changing status of women and girls in Nepali society, inter-caste marriages, education, job and change of location etc, the notions surrounding menstruation is also changing. Menstruation belief now has become a mix bag of old traditional belief and modernity concept of hygiene and health concerns.



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## A SOCIO – ECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF MALAI PANTARAMS AT ATTATHODU

Priya Soman

### *Abstract*

Tribals are considered as a social group existing outside of or before the development of states. A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated into the national society. Tribals in Kerala are living on the hill ranges, mainly on the Western Ghats bordering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The mountainous regions of Kerala are inhabited by the tribal communities. They are reckoned as the descendants of the Negrito race. Malai Pantaranga is one of the most important tribes in Kerala. The Malai Pantaram was mainly found in the deep forest near by Achankoil in central Travancore. They had their own socio – economic problems and government's effort didn't be sufficient to overcome their problems.

### **A Study on the Social and Economic Condition of Malai Pantarams at Attathodu**

Tribals are viewed, developmentally or historically, as a social group existing outside of or before the development of states. A tribe is a group of distinct people, dependent on their land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and not integrated into the national society. It is perhaps the term most readily understood and used by the general public to describe such communities. The tribal people are entitled to many importances in the tradition and the history of India. As a human society is an active presence in India's great Ithihasa and Puranas. In the story of Mahabharata, Vyasa revealed Hidimba as the lover of Bhima, she and her son Kichak were tribes and the Ekalavya traced in martial arts was also a tribe. And the great monk and the author of Ramayana, Valmiki was also a tribe named Ratnakara. The tribes in India form an important part of total population. The tribal population of India constitutes nearly 8% of the total population.

India has the largest concentration of tribal people in the world. Tribal administration was a central subject under the government of India act of 1935. The government classified aboriginal into excluded and Partially Excluded Areas which did not leave any jurisdiction and

control to the provisional Government. In India the tribal peoples were mainly settled in north eastern India and South.

### **Tribals in Kerala**

Tribals in Kerala or Adivasis of Kerala are the indigenous population found in the southern Indian state of Kerala. Most of the tribal people of Kerala live in the forests and mountains of Western Ghats, bordering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Tribals in Kerala are living on the hill ranges, mainly on the Western Ghats bordering Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The mountainous regions of Kerala are inhabited by the tribal communities. They are reckoned as the descendants of the Negrito race. A majority of these tribes of Kerala build their settlements in the forest grounds and also on the top of the mountains. Kerala was popularized in the settlements of tribes the names Adiyani, Arandan, Eravallan, Malapulaya, Irula, Kadar, Kurichyas, Kurumba, Malayaraya, Malavedar, Malankurava, Mannan, Muthuvar or Mudugar. The tribal people who have settled down in different landscape even before 1000 years in all over the world are called the Gothra janatha. From the different stages of the old era and also in various places like the forests, plateaus and plains these tribal's had started their settlement. The nature has very important role in every tribe's life. In Kerala there are still 37 Scheduled Tribes out of 48 tribal communities; their number is only 1.26% of the state's population. What this figure indicates is that the rate of the assimilation of the aboriginals of Kerala has been extremely rapid. In the past few years 11 tribal communities have been declassified on account of the social and cultural progress they have made.

Among the Scheduled Tribes of Kerala the numerically dominant ones are the Pulayans, Paniyans, Marathis, Malayarayar, Kurumans, Kurichiyans, and Irulas. The numerical strength of each remaining tribes is more or less 1,000. .

Most of these tribes are forest-dwellers and food-gatherers. Increasingly, they are found living on the fringes of the forests near the highways and the villages of the plainspeople, yet apart from them. This frontier existence of the tribals is highly symbolic. They are caught between two worlds. Their forest home cannot support them any longer, for food in forests is getting scarce because of the state policy against deforestation.

There are fewer and fewer wild animals to hunt; there is also a legal ban on hunting. For rice and clothes they have to depend on the plainspeople who continue to exploit the helplessness of the tribals. The few tribesmen who go to towns looking for jobs soon find it difficult to cope with the demands of civilization and return home to jungles to live on the edge of culture and nature.

Tribal people groups who are food-gatherers (without any habit of agricultural practice), with diminishing population and very low or little literacy rates can be called as Primitive Tribes. Cholanaikkans, Kurumbas, Kattunaikkans, Kadars and Koragas are the five primitive tribal groups in Kerala. They constitute nearly 5% of the total tribal population in the State. Cholanaikkans can be said as the most primitive of them and found only in the Malappuram District. Only a handful of families are living in the Mancheri hills of Nilambur forest division. Kattunaikkans, another lower-hill community related to Cholanaikkans, are mainly seen in Wayanad district and some in Malappuram and Kozhikode districts. Kadar population is found in Trisur and Palakkad districts. Kurumbas are living in the Attappady Block of Palakkad district. The Koraga habitat is in the plain areas of Kasaragod district

The native Adivasis of the district belong to various sects like Paniyas, Kurumas, Adiyars, Kurichyas, Ooralis, Kattunaikkans and Uraali Kurumas. They are mostly physically distinguishable with darker skin and stout built physique. They often live in houses made of thatched roof, mud, bamboo and brick houses set in swampy valleys and plateaus. Though many of them said to be primitive tribes all of them have a story of migration to the hills. It is likely to believe that these tribes were living there for several centuries! "The story of tribes on the Western Ghat mountainous ranges have is less than 300 years", says Philipose Vaidyar who had visited and stayed with several of these tribal groups. Cholanaikkan is said to be the most primitive and a vanishing tribe. "Discussions with them and the history during the British times, the capture of local kings and their fights have much to reveal about their migration from the valley to the hills" he says. Read more about Tipu Sulthan and Pazhassi King and learn how some people were lost in the deep forests. The Irular people of Idukki districts complaint about the heavy taxes they had to pay to the kings which resulted in their exodus from the Kochi kingdom to that of an animal kingdom. History of British period approves this.

**Malai Pantarams in Attathodu**

Malai Pantarangel is one of the most important tribes in Kerala. The Malai Pantaram was mainly found in the deep forest near by Achankoil in central Travancore. These tribes mostly settled in the areas of Attathodu and regions along with it in Pathanamthitta district. Attahodu area is a small village filled with beautiful forest in the district of Pathanamthitta. It is surrounded by Pathanamthitta Taluk towards south, Elenthloor Taluk toward west, Konni Taluk toward east and Kanjirapally Taluk towards north.

Malai Pantaram, which are isolated families, they became wandered in the forest solitary. Generally the Malai pantaram live in families of two or three in a locality. For decreasing the distribution of food items, in which they gained by hunting. A major part of Malai Pantaram tribe of Kerala was placed in the Pathanamthitta district, which are in the area of the place Attathodu and their nearby region which are: Muzhiyar, Nilakkal, Chalkkayam, Plappali etc there were scattered.

**Social and Economical Conditions**

The tribal's living in the tribal colony called Attathodu, in the 9<sup>th</sup> ward of Sabarimala forest region in Pathanamthitta district is called Malai pantarangel. There were not more than 6-7 families. The knowledge of the outer society about these societies is very limited. Most of the people in both the rural and urban area don't know about the existence of this tribe living in the Attathodu. It is since 2005, that this isolated tribe, living in the forest has been found out and we tried to get in contact with them. The tribal's spread among the areas of Attathodu, Calakkayam, Nilakkal, Muzhiyar, Plappilli, Rajampara, Angammodi had a traditional way of dressing till the time they were being found out by the other world. The modern way of dressing like saree and mundu were adopted by them, the modernist society entered to their Zone. Earlier they used leafs and bark of trees for dressing<sup>i</sup>.

They battered and then dried the Antiracism toxic-aria bark ( Arayanjili tholi) and they cut out the Vanda testate (Maravazha) and then wilt it and used these as their dress. The contact of several social associations or departments and the countnous company of the people outside the forest made the way for them to choose the present mode of dressing. This tribal living is small huts keep migrating to other places<sup>ii</sup>. This is for their living and well-being

The collection of Frankincense (kunthirikkam), forest honey, yam (kizhangu) ponnambu are there main way of making money for their living. During the earlier stages they collected food only for single day (daily use up to date use). And it's after that they began the collection of honey and Frankincense knowing the behavior and features of the forest, they go to forest during March (Meena masam) to collect the Honey. As some times this requires a long period of journey, they took their families with them. The Malai Pantarams move from place to place with the quantity of money, water, frankincense, Kuttamanthal that they get from that place<sup>iii</sup>.

Their huts are made of bamboo, straw and grass. They usually keep footwear outside the house. Leather made of cow-skin is considered as polluting and not used. They are good hunters and are skilled gatherers of forest products such as wax and honey. They use to breed pigs, goats and poultry. They are non-vegetarian in food habits but do not eat beef. Drinking alcohol is occasional. Cultivation is a recent development among themalai Pantarams. The forest Department used to employ them as guards and for labour. Malai Pantarams are animists and worshiped trees, rocks, hills and snakes. Due to interaction with the outside communities, they also worship primitive Hindu deities and celestial bodies like sun and moon.

If the month of march is the period of prosperity for them then the month of monsoon (june,july) is a period of distraction (ruin), loss, diseases, risk and danger. During monsoon the tribal's in the colony of Attathodu face starvation and diseases. In contrast with attathodu the tribes living in chalakkayam, Nilaykkal, plaappailli, Rajampara face more starvation than the former.

Even though they use Rise, salt and Chilly, the main food of Malai Pantarangel in Attathodu is Panambodi, Manthal (Kaatumathal/Kattukachi/noora), which is a traditional food item. They dig out, fried (smoked) and then eat the Kattumathal. Without having any utility of plates and due to the lack of knowledge about the plates, in the earlier period these tribal's used to fried the Kattumanthal and then this came to be their main food. For this technique they still use the primitive fire starting method. This is a piece of bamboo. They fill this with the cotton of Elave tree. They place a piece of iron bar in one of its end and they rub it with a white stone to make fire<sup>iv</sup>. This technique is used by Malai Pantarangel for baking.

Grant from government is available for the tribal's in their present social condition. Govt. of Kerala has organized rice, pea and rupees 450 for each month for their food safety. Even though govt. has organized such plans, these were not available to them. The things that they get sometimes by the organization were mostly being destroyed by wild animals. The people of Attathodu knew a special hymn to protect them from the attack of wild animals. This knowledge of hymns has been transferred to generation after generation. These hymns are learned by the children from their childhood itself. They grew and feed pet dogs in each homes to know to the presence of wild animals and to stop them from entering near their zone<sup>v</sup>.

The tribal's of Attathodu have a great knowledge about herbs for treatment. When they face body pain they use forest herbs as the primary way treatment. A main medicine used by them for treating body pain, is called "urappatta". The bark of Uthira tree, Uruppatta is cut freshly and this being battered and it's treated with water and this wetted material is then converted to pulp. This is then used as medicine. They use the hospital facility if and only if the primary method of treatment didn't attain any result.

The Malai Pantarams who are living in forest are illiterate. With respect to this, they face tolerance in all way<sup>vi</sup>. Women in Attathodu are having a pitiful life. These women's are being tolerated by men outside the forest. The women's of Malai Pantaram tribe living in Chalakkayam face more exploitation and are being attacked by society. These innocent and illiterate tribal people are largely exploited by the society. The tribal's in Attathodu, mostly wish to live within the forest itself. It is mainly because of climatic condition in the modern society that these tribal's are not coming to our society. They can't also afford the change from their forest atmosphere. These lead too many diseases. Another major reason behind, that not being coming to our society is due to the fear of attack and exploitation from our society. They didn't keep relation.

They pray both the nature and human deities. They also worshiped the trees in accordance with the tradition. As they have considered both nature and forest as god, "maladaivam", they are able to live a peaceful life and with this custom they very less diseases but when they came out of the forest to the outer society, they would not accept the atmosphere and the change in climate, causes diseases<sup>vii</sup>. Kallel urali or vadakkanpurathurali is a human deity that change in climate, causes diseases. Kallelurali or vadakkanpurathurali is a human deity that is

being worshiped by the tribal's of Attathodu. According to their belief and myth, kallelurali was a person among their tribe. They believed that he became vanish when his devotional hymns increased. It is said that the hut and place in which kallelurali lived still exists. This place is known as "Uralikkala". Kalleluruli who has once disappeared has then become as Malai Daivam and the Malai Pantarungal in Attathodu came to warship him. Now they devote alcohol, coconut, betel leaf, areca nut, rice flakers, and sugar candy to their Gods. Children have diseases they prey to become mentally matured (4 years of age). When the children have diseases they prey to Malai Daivangal. They believed that in doing so, the disease will be decreased. Women's are not permitted to enter into these worshiping areas. Men wear new dresses while they enter into these temples. They sing devotional songs to impress the Mala Daivangal.

They didn't have any type of festivals. They have a simple marriage custom. There exists system of monogamy and polygamy in the tribe of Attathod. Men have the right to accept 2 or 3 women as their wife<sup>viii</sup>. According to their tradition; the groom has to give betel leaf and areca nut to the bride's home, to take the bride. This group of people believes in clearness (shudhi) and fault (ashudhi). The people of this tribe have a customs of isolating the pregnant women's.

They will make pregnant women's to live in another small hut built near their own hut<sup>ix</sup>. This hut is known as "mattaveedu". The new born baby and the mother will be allowed to enter their hut only after 90 days, after having religious body clearness (dehashudhi). During the time of pregnancy women's have to live alone. Only old women's are allowed to stay with them. If there is no old women's have to live alone only old women's are allowed to stay with them. If there is no old women's in their tribe, then these young women's have to do all alone look after themselves and to cook, during their pregnancy period. The entry of the mother and the baby is conducted like a small celebration; they prepare and give sweets (payasam) and small sadhya (food) to the people of their tribe. They also follow the custom of keeping girl's away from the family at the time when they became physically matured period<sup>x</sup>. This house's which are used by them are called 'puraveedu'. This type of cultures makes them different from the modern society.

The leader among the tribes of Attathodu, 'Urumuppan' has a very important place among them. They believe that the main duty or dharma of the muppan is to pray hymns to Malai Daivangal for treatment to get someone cured. If their present Urumuppan dies, then the next successors as Urumuppan will be the one who have a grey hair. If there is not an aged man



in that tribe, then there won't be any Urumuppan at all<sup>xi</sup>. To give a person the place of muppan, they have special hymns or customs. Dravidian tradition is followed in their culture. As a traditional custom, the Urumuppan should live an isolated life. Then they won't have a relation with their family. Their funeral system is in a different way. A person who dies among them is cremated without any rituals. Then the hut which they lived is dismantled and put above where they have been cremated and after they will leave that place behind and will shift to other place. They will never again return to this place.

Women are treated equally to men, in marked contrast to the Hindu peoples of the lowlands. While Malapandaram women gather vegetable foods, haul water, find firewood, and do the cooking, men normally do the hunting and harvesting of wild honey. The divisions are not rigid, however: men may help gather firewood and assist with cooking meat, while women may help hunt small animals. The simplicity of their gathering and hunting economy fosters individual self-sufficiency and economic independence, so social relationships tend to be based on positive feelings rather than economic dependence. Marriage for the Malapandaram is an extremely loose monogamous convention: they do not emphasize long-term, binding relationships. Spouses often exhibit quite warm feelings toward one another—but when the warmth cools, the relationship ends. Recently, however, Malapandaram women in some communities are reporting that they live in fear of sexual harassment, both by outsiders and by their own men.

Infants are held and carried about constantly by their mothers, who nurse them on demand. Children have the freedom to explore without restraint and to handle sharp tools such as axes and billhooks. When children in the two to four age bracket cry, they are quickly soothed, and if the mother is too busy to respond then other adults or children will. However, by the time they are five or six years old, children have been socialized into patterns of individual autonomy, they have lost their emotional ties with their parents (though they may continue to show some affection), and they often live with adults other than their own parents. Adults only limit children's autonomy by controlling their expressions of aggression against other children or adults.

The Malapandaram are very timid, nonviolent, and retiring in their relationships with outsiders. The agents of forest contractors frequently patrol their territories and attempt to cajole,

sometimes coerce, and, at times, physically assault the Malapandaram to force them to gather more forest products for them. The forest dwellers have thus learned their shyness and timidity as a response to those practices, and they still tend to hide from the agents when they are about.

By conducting awareness classes to them, we can help them to overcome their social problems. Spread of education only can help these tribes. Besides that, by providing vocational education, they got a special chance to mingle with the rest of the society and they can earn their own. The government of Kerala and the Central government should join their hands together to provides them, necessary grants and aids by the time. If it is possible, we can upgrade the socio – economic backwardness of the Malaipantarams of Attanthodu, without cut their connection with their habitat.

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**BANDIT QUEEN: A TESTIMONY OF DALIT WOMAN****Surya Pratap Bharati***Abstract*

This paperwork will offer a fresh reading of the Hindi film industry and the problems of Dalit women. It will help to understand the various issues of filmmaking and the function of filmmaking in this globalized capitalistic world. It also tries to offer a fresh approach to the concept of testimony in Hindi cinema and the role of Dalit women. Bandit queen must be treated as testimony, and this would also create an area for further research about the role of the feminist methods. This paper would explore the socio-political and economic aspects that have enabled the rise of such a space for Dalit women's role, and also the opportunity for the Dalit women rights. This paper explores how the entry of big production houses have contributed to the formation of space for the underprivileged by trying to create a more multiplex driven audience and charting the upward mobility in the class structure. This paper aims to try to map the relation between production with distribution and exhibition and eventually how they lead to the emergence of space for Dalit women rights.

Keywords: Dalit women, Hindi cinema, Caste, Testimony

The movie Bandit Queen is based on the life of Phoolan Devi, a woman who rebelled against casteist society and its oppression. The movie was released in 1994 in Hindi cinema directed by Shekhar Kapur. Bandit Queen is a revenge saga of a Dalit woman who sought to avenge herself from her tormentors. The movie shows the caste testimony of a Dalit rape victim and her transformation into a great fighter queen who unites men for the battle to regain the dignity of her people. The movie also highlights the heart-wrenching reality of lower caste people in India. The protagonist, Poolan Devi, was born to a poor lower-caste family, later she has been sold off at the age of 11. Phoolan lived in a very exploitative and repressive environment which made it hard for her to survive. In the history of the world, it was challenging to tolerate the hierarchy in a caste-based society. It is not good for humanities. Phoolan got raped

by her upper caste master. She then runs away from there and goes to her home where she is treated like the other, someone who does not belong to that family. The trouble of her life she has been suffered by her parents and refused to take her in-home by advising her to go back because she has no place in that home which also makes her become a bandit. Still, she stays for a while, but things get more complicated when an upper-caste Thakur attempts to rape her. She opposed it and then, brought in front of the sarpanch who was the rapist's father. There, she gets embarrassed publicly. The trial is an open attempt to repeat every rape trial across the world, and how as the entire village supports therapist. She is then exiled for being 'trouble' with the village boys, and start to live with her cousin Kailash. But this doesn't last soon, and his wife asks her to move out, and she has nowhere to go but return home. Then, she is arrested for returning despite her exile and is gang-raped in a police cell by two policemen. She gets bailed by paying Rs 25,000 from Thakurs, but they sell her to Babu Gujjar's dacoit gang to recover their money. One day when she was returning her home for shelter, somehow policemen and Thakur get news about her presence in the village. They all come to her home to capture her but her father, despite his unfaltering sexism, tries to hide her, but when her brother's life is endangered, she gives herself up. She knew the outcome of her surrender, but she comes out. Babu Gujjar rapes her multiple times and also beaten-up. Ultimately, a member of the gang, Vikram Mallah Mastana, who is becoming infamously irritated by her victimization, kills Gujjar and joins Phoolan as their gang member.

Their new gang pulls off daring attacks, always careful not to molest women or children, and to target only the rich as she is raiding, she shouts, "If any man marries a little girl, I'll kill him!" Phoolan has decided to become a protector from a victim seeking out for people who are restricted by unethical cultural practices.

At one point, after Vikram is betrayed by an upper-caste Thakur – Shri Ram – and shot, the pair flees "to a doctor, who they cannot pay... and so Phoolan takes Vikram back to her village. Her family tells her it is only proper she go back to her husband. Seething, she does, and it doesn't end well for Puttilal the Pedophile. She parades him around his village on the back of a donkey, then lashes him to a post and beats him (ostensibly) to death in a state of high agitation – one can understand the real Phoolan's objection to the state of unrestrained emotion she is portrayed in if it isn't accurate.

(<https://www.thequint.com/entertainment/movie-reviews/bandit-queen-phoolan-devi-movie-review>) (website title- Millennials Review Classics: 'Bandit Queen' Doesn't Flinch ...).

The revenge she extracts is epically satisfying. As she talks to Vikram about Puttilal later, she says, "My whole-body aches... but I feel at peace, like after a pilgrimage." In a country (and world), where female anger and vengeance is muted and suppressed, this scene feels like justice. Of course, no good thing can last for long. Vikram is finally shot and killed by Shri Ram, who is resentful of a woman in a position of power, particularly a woman who would not submit to his revolting advances. She is captured, taken to a remote village, and gang-raped by upwards of 10 men.

(<https://www.thequint.com/entertainment/movie-reviews/bandit-queen-phoolan-devi-movie-review>)

The graphic depiction seems gratuitous, but it "is again the depressing reality. Asked about the portrayal of her rape in the film, the real Phoolan tells (<https://www.thequint.com/entertainment/movie-reviews/bandit-queen-phoolan-devi-movie-review>)

Poolan Devi interrogates the casteist attitude that prevailing in Indian society. Do you have any idea what it's like to live in a village in India? What you call rape, that kind of thing happens to poor women in the villages everyday life. It is expected that the daughters of the poor family have been used for the rich people and They try to torture them. In the villages, the poor have no toilets, so we must go to the fields, and the moment we arrive, the rich lay us there; we can't cut the grass or tend to our crops without being approached by them. We are the property of the rich.

Paraded naked in public and released after two weeks of persistent abuse, she goes to Man Singh, a friend of Vikram, to set about avenging herself again. She is given control of a new gang by a dacoit leader and gets wind that Shri Ram and his men are going to be attending a wedding at a village. She makes a beeline straight there and lays siege. "She rounds up all the Thakur men and demands to know where Shri Ram is, nobody screeches. She catches two men who raped her and she kills them. Expended by rage at their reluctance to reveal Shri Ram's location, and in an act that makes her infamous, she beats and shoots 22 of the Thakurs dead,

bringing the state police down on her and eventually leading to her surrender. This paper also argues that how Dalit women were labouring in the home and that very common kitchen? Who brought the water? Who cooked the meals? Who birthed and raised the children? But of course, women's labour is out of the kindness of their hearts, needing no pay or recognition, able to be swept aside in favour of actual labour in the fields what a happy coincidence for men.

Dalit women are considered to be the most disadvantaged group left out at the bottom of the hierarchal caste society for years in Hindi cinema. They suffer multiple marginalized; one being a Dalit and two being a woman, and also being in Hindi cinema. Being Dalit, they suffer due to caste discrimination and being a woman the patriarchal social order victimizes them both in their homes as well outside in Hindi Cinema. Dalit women have been denied for their rights, and to be side-lined at three levels: caste, class, and gender in Hindi cinema. The violence against Dalit women continues to be believed in several areas. Dalit women have been misrepresented in Indian Hindi Cinema, and most of the male writers are biased towards Dalit women to write a film script on Dalit women. They are portrayed as sex objects for the upper caste men in movies such as *Bandit Queen* (1994), *Shudra the Rising* and *Manjhi: The Mountain Man* (2015). Dalit women are forced to be biologically weak; a victim of men's sexual prowess and passive partner in sex. The movie *Bandit Queen* which is the biographical movie of Phoolan Devi is a critique of child marriage, men's sexual politics and the double standard of higher caste upon those who are not a conformist. Phoolan who is assertive about her modesty and integrity refuses the abusive and imposing sexual advances made by her husband and upper caste men only to be ex-communicated from the village.

I would like to demonstrate the problem of Dalit women how Dalit women are exploited in several ways because they are gendered as weak and because they are Dalit women. The *Bandit Queen* is a critique of men made evil in patriarchal society. Due to social pressure, Phoolan is given away in child marriage. Puttilal, her husband abused her physically and sexually. As a child, it was a traumatic experience. Her condition is worsened when the upper caste men made the sexual advance on her, and there is no sense of justice for her. Her decision to become a Bandit is not a choice but something which she was forced to take up for justice, vengeance and vindication. As a Bandit, she is considered as a social menace, but in fact, she is reformer threatening to shoot people who advocate child marriage.

Hindi Cinemas show how Dalit women are not given social equality; it is social hierarchy by birth and supported by their community. Historically, Dalit women have been oppressed and sexually assaulted by the upper caste men and Dalit men themselves. To understand, I would like to connect with Mulk Raj Anand 'Untouchables' and The Prisons We Broke demonstrate the crimes done on Dalit women. Even in feminist discourse, Dalit women issues are hardly studied along with the writings of upper caste Hindu women, and high caste Hindu has not shown real sympathy for Dalit women in their writing. It is because for the upper caste Hindu women; the Dalits are less than human; just as the black women are less than human for the white women. Dalit women believed to be alienated at three levels: caste, class, and gender. The violence against Dalit women continues. Dalit women have been misrepresented in Indian literature and Indian English literature; most of upper caste male writers are biased towards Dalit women. In this paper, I would like to apply some of the theory which constructs on patriarchy system as Freudian theory such as the penis envy has denied women a sense of individuality socially, sexually, culturally and in language. Freud theory regarding the human anatomy has theorized that women have fewer writing blocks than men because the women's urinary bladder is designed to release. In psychology, the word 'lack' has been traditionally associated with women. Even Lacan's concept of castration is a metaphor for female literary and linguistic disadvantage.

Cinema is the most powerful medium to represent of Dalit women for social justice, but the problem of Hindi cinema is a very critical condition in its way. It plays a significant role to bring the challenge in front of the public. It reflects many of the trends, current virtues, social struggles and patterns of living in a society. Culture is the underlying current of society. A society thrives on its values and ideology through the medium of culture. As Anil Saari says, 'Hindi films have always reflected the prevailing mood of the society'. "Bollywood has always tried to represent Indian culture and its ramifications. There are lots of movies on women, dowry, corruption, poverty, Hindu Muslim unity, Diasporas but only some names are there when it comes to Dalits. 'Dalit' word originated from Sanskrit which means 'oppressed', 'suppressed', or 'broken to pieces'. This term was first used by" (<http://www.researchscholar.co.in/downloads/32-Manoj-kumar.pdf>) Mahatma Jyoti Rao Phule for those who were untouchables. These people call themselves 'Dalit' because this word is indicative of their consciousness of the oppression and their demand for dignity and right to self-determination. Movies on Dalits women caste divisions have formed the backdrop of some Hindi films such as Achhut Kanya, Shudra Sunrise, Majhi the



Mountain Man. Achut Kanya (1936) was one of the most respected social films to come from Bombay Talkies. It was probably the first representative features of the Indian social film of the first decade of sound. The central story is of the unhappy love affair between Kasturi, the Harijan.

Hindi Filmmakers have not a possible activity to Dalit society bringing out social issues through movies. There is a lot of discrimination in Hindi movie. But Anil Sari, a famous critic, says, whenever society itself has seemed to have lost a sense of direction, cinema has been equally afflicted by the social confusion.

Finally, I would like to conclude my paper by stating that cinema is an essential medium of culture. According to Raymond Williams, it is a whole way of life.' Cinema not only reflects culture, but it also shapes culture. Cinema is always affected by contemporary issues, and it can open up the viewers for discussions.

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## PERFORMANCE IN THE TIME OF DISPLACEMENT

Anupama Priyadarshi

**Introduction:**

In the dark times  
Will there also be singing?  
Yes, there will also be singing.  
About the dark times.

--Bertolt Brecht<sup>55</sup>

This paper, *Performance in the Time of Displacement* explores displacement, dispossession, and performance in the context of performance culture of an Indian Santhal adivasi community. This paper tries to understand displacement of culture, in relationship to the performance of Sohrae. Sohrae, also known as 'Got-Puja', is a popular cultural festival of Santhal adivasi communities in the Santhal Paragana, Jharkhand. It is a traditional agricultural festival, which is performed annually in the Hindi month of *Magh* (December-January) in Jharkhand. *for this study* I have immersed myself with the community to understand displacement in context of culture and performance through the cultural festival of Sohrae. This work is based on a three month's field study in Godda district in 2012 and 2013 of north-east Jharkhand, around 350 kilometer from the capital city Ranchi. I have seen different communities of adivasi students as well as nearby villagers celebrate this festival in the college campus and their respective villages. As students said that they did not go to their home because their families are away from home for their livelihood to other places. But my focus is of the festival celebrated in boys' college, so that we can understand how young generations react to their displacement of culture. Boys also invite adivasi girl from Mahila College, Godda to participate in this festival. These students live in the hostel or in rented room nearby college. They, during festival season

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<sup>55</sup>

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/bertolt-brecht> - retrieved on 5th June 2014.

won't participate in the festival at home due to study and their families have gone out of the state for livelihood. So they celebrate this festival in the college campus itself.

### Displacement and Development:

'Popular' imagination about adivasi community generally comes along with two prominent imageries: firstly, as a community languishing in cultural backwaters, uncivilized and primitive, who live in jungle and survive on hunting and gathering; secondly, in a romanticized version as a forest dwellers and a self-sufficient community who are extension of forest and on the mountains. This is to be noted that a major section of land in Jharkhand state falls under the forest category regulated by the Indian Forest Act (IFA) of 1927.<sup>56</sup> IFA classified these forest areas into three categories: reserved forests, protected forest and village forests. The classification was based on propriety rights. Reserved forest is the land, which is property of the government, and the government is entitled to use the forest product the way it wants. The same rule also applies to the protected forests. This distribution of forest can be understood by the sheer fact that while reserved forest constitutes 18.5 per cent of the forest, the protected forests constitute 81 per cent, so altogether they constitute 99.5 percent of the total forest in Jharkhand<sup>57</sup>. It means adivasi only have right on 0.5 percent of the forestland. Even in the rest of 0.5 percent, the enactment of Bihar Land Reform Act of 1950 has declared a significant part of them as the *Gair Mazurua* Khas (GMK).<sup>58</sup> For example, the Santhals' worshipping place *Jaheer-Than* and the community land having the worshipping tree, *Sal* and *Palash* are put under the GMK. Through these laws and manipulative acts, the state establishes a clear monopoly to sell these lands to private companies and firms.<sup>59</sup> Following these laws, the state has sold out *Sundar Pahari*,<sup>60</sup> one among the *Panch Pahadi*<sup>61</sup> of the Santhal Pargana region. Recently, the Government has leased a significant part of this hill to the Jindal Power project.<sup>62</sup> This *PanchPahadi* was very important

<sup>56</sup> The Indian Forest Act, 1927 largely based on Indian Forest Acts implemented under British Rule. It defines the procedure for declaring an area to be Reserved Forest, Protected Forest and Village Forest.

<sup>57</sup> Chhota Nagpur Tenancy Act was passed in 1908 and Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act was passed in 1949.

<sup>58</sup> GMK means the land belonging to the government in which local residents may still have customary rights to use (Vasan, 2009: 122).

<sup>59</sup> The Hindu May 1, 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Panch Pahad is a plateau in Sahebganj district and is Situated in east of Godda district.

<sup>61</sup> The Panch Pahad is constituted of Five major hills:- North-Jognisthan, South-Trikut, East-Sunder Pahad, West- Mandar hill, North East-Rajmahal Pahadi.

<sup>62</sup> [http://pd.cpim.org/2013/1222\\_pd/12222013\\_jharkhand.html](http://pd.cpim.org/2013/1222_pd/12222013_jharkhand.html)

for the Santhals residing in this region. This region also has a coal field, *Lalmatia*, which is Asia's biggest open cast coal mine and mountain Rivers, which is attracting companies to purchase land in these areas. This geopolitics changes has an immense impact on the community's imagination of their landscape as this pahadi used to be an important centre of Sohae celebration.

Here, I argue that this displacement needs to be understood not only in terms of geographical and physical displacement but also in term of cultural displacement. Imagination, memory, and landscape are deeply interconnected and one cannot be thought without other. Since cultural landscape is product of the land, forest, and mountains, the displacement of them is also the displacement and dispossession of memory and imagination. Paul Connerton has rightly argued that the state systematically deprives its citizens from memory (Connerton 1989). Connerton elucidates that,

Despite this independence from social memory, the practice of historical reconstruction can in important ways to receive a guiding impetus from, and can in turn give significant shape to, the memory of social groups. A particularly extreme case of such interaction occurs when a state apparatus is used in a systematic way to deprive its citizens of their memory (Ibid: 14)

In recent years, Jharkhand and other adivasis regions have witnessed unprecedented displacement and migration. Violating all the constitutional rights and the basic human rights laws, the government has been forcefully removing these adivasi communities from the land of their inhabitants for the interest of big corporate and foreign direct investments (FDIs). Adivasi regions have the biggest deposit of minerals which have drawn much interest of the government and corporate. Not surprisingly, the question of displacement has emerged as the major issues in the contemporary development discourse. Many eminent scholars have discussed these issues of displacement and dispossession in the context of land, law, occupation, and livelihood (Shah 2010), (Prakash 2001). More so, their major focuses have been on the economical and material aspects of displacement (*Jal, Jangal and Zameen*).

**Displacement of Culture:**

Here in Sohrae, adivasi students of Godda College, Godda and Mahila Mahavidyalya, Godda organize festival in the college campus. They make, clean and decorate the place of ritual of festival. They place three eggs, Pochai (rice beer), five chicken, Sal leaves and Arwa rice on the festival place. Three eggs represent Jaher Era, a fertility deity and a primal spirit Bonga an ancestor and family spirit that stand for the nature both in animated and unanimated forms (land, mountain and forest) and Bonga is supposed to represent both benevolent and malevolent spirit and often functions as an energizing power for the community. Jaher, Era, Bonga and Bonga are supposed to reside in Jaher-than (also known as Manjhi Than) adivasi temple, the worshipping place of the community. As most of adivasi villages in this locality have a Hindu temple in front of their village's entrance suppress adivasi temple with chanting of bhajan over loudspeakers.

Both adivasi girls and boys when they unite for festival in the college campus they visit nearby adivasi village and its temple as well. Students are in their traditional dress and with their traditional musical instruments so to remember their culture as a community. They along with villagers sing adivasi songs and dance along.



As Connerton says that the method of “organized forgetting” apart from displacement includes *Hinduization* and corporatization of cultural values. After 1990s, when neoliberal globalization has entered India in big ways, then this process of ‘organized forgetting’ on the behalf of state has further accelerated. Against this political and cultural backdrop, Santhal community is feeling threatened and culturally marginalized. These areas have flourished with opening of schools like Gayatri Vidyapeeth, Saraswati Shishu Mandir, and many huge temples of durga and shiva. Concentrated attempts of rightwing forces such as Rashtriya Swayam Sewak

Sangh (RSS) to Hinduise adivasis communities through the various education and cultural outfits have further put a new challenges for the community. With mobilization of adivasi identity politics and adivasi consciousness, the sense of loss of culture and community are getting aggravated. Here it is noteworthy that on the one hand the cultural process of Hinduisation is taking an aggressive turn, on the other new indigenous politics is preparing new strategies and politics to counter this kind of attempt. And for both Soharae becomes a site of struggle and appropriation to establish cultural and political claims. In this research, my focus is primarily on the Santhals' celebration of Soharae by the activists, students and the local village community. This politically conscious celebration needs to be situated in the larger struggle of indigenous communities in India which is asking for greater autonomy and rights on their land and region. For instance, Ram Dayal Munda and other prominent adivasis leaders have taken concentrated attempts to enter the spaces of these festivals to make political and cultural interventions and to create self-consciousness among the community. Adivasis students of College have initiated the celebration of their festival in the campus. They visit nearby adivasi villages invite villagers to their campus and with them they celebrate their festivals. Students are taking an effort to spread conscious in the community about their culture. Amit Prakash writes that this self-consciousness is not inherent among members of ethnic groups. Intellectuals from within the ethnic groups, who are deprived of desirable positions in society by the dominant ethnic groups, create it (Prakash 2001). The activists have understood the importance of this cultural festival, therefore, during the festival they are not only performing for the emerging new educated middle class among them to assert their identity but also performing for the larger community to assert their culture and identity. This shows, what Diana Taylor argues, that performance can play an important role in strengthening the network and communities that can bring about social change (Taylor, *Performance and/as History* 2006).

The concerns mentioned above are nevertheless very important. However, one needs to think about displacement in a much broader term aptly in contexts of cultural dispossession and displacement of memory, imagination and the sense of community. It is apprehended that scholars might have not given enough attention to the question of displacement of cultural elements, but the community, which are being displaced, seems to understand the importance of culture and performance in their struggle for survival. Indeed, performance has emerged as one of the most basic strategy and survival tactics for these communities. In this backdrop, *Nachi*

sebecomes a performance strategy to survive, resist, and imagine a ‘performance of possibilities’ in the time of displacement. Remarkably, Sohrae along with other cultural festivals such as Sarhul and Karma have emerged as the sites of cultural resistance against this displacement. This research argues that for these marginalized communities ‘struggles over cultural meanings are inseparable from struggles of survival’ (Rege Mar. 16-22, 2002). For this reason, *Nachi se Bachi* bears the shades of what McKenzie (Mckenzie 2001) has indicated, ‘perform or else’ in his acclaimed work. It is to be noted that *Nachi se Bachi* does not exist either in reality or in rhetoric, it has been rather created as a part of strategy and as an evidence to resist this nature of displacement and dispossession.<sup>63</sup> I have argued that in recent years, cultural festivals and cultural symbols have been recreated and re-strategized to assert certain kinds of political cultural identity to resist the ongoing displacement. However, this is not the first time that Sohrae has emerged as a performance of cultural resistance for the Santhals. Even during the historical Hool movement (upsurge) of 1855 in which almost 30,000 adivasi was killed by the colonial government,<sup>64</sup> Sohrae emerged as the major site of political activities. It has become the site of imagining the resistance and building the community against the Britishers, local Zamindars and moneylenders. The memory of Sohrae celebrated during the Hool revolt in 1855 is still lived in the community and embodied memories of that time. The memory of Soharae is invoked time to time in the time of crisis. This primary question leads to the related questions of memory, imagination, and performance. There is a strong connection between the performance of memory and imagination and building of a “political community” in Sohare. In this regard, Paul Connerton has argued that ‘images and recollected knowledge of the past are conveyed and sustained by ritual performance’ (Connerton 1989). The performance of memory or performance as the reservoirs of memory not only gives the sense of struggle to a marginalized community but also helps them to revitalize their identity. This research is not about the anthropological meaning of Sohrae rituals or about its evolutionary formation, but rather engages the actual meaning of the performance in a volatile political situation where Sohrae works as a performative site. Broadly, It is into the ways marginalized communities perform and imagine their struggles against dominant practices and ideologies. For instance during Sohrae, college

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<sup>63</sup> In an interview with Carol Babiraci, Ramdayal Munda, one of the leading scholar and activist acknowledged that *Nachi se Bachi* as a saying was never there. The saying was used by an outsider, which later has turned to be a performative rhetoric and slogan of the adivasi movement (Babiraci 2000/2001: 37).

<sup>64</sup> The Santhal Hool was a led by four brothers Sidho, Kanho, Chand and Bhairav of Bhogandih in Dumka district of Santhal Parganas. This was happen in 1855 against British rule, landlords and moneylenders of this area.



students go to the village streets to perform. Through the cultural performance of Sohrae, the questions of what society perform and why society performs.

### **Sohrae as Performative sites:**

Sohare, Sarhul and Karma festivals of adivasi became the major cultural sites to mobilize community. Sohrae helped community to build up the sense of community with a new energy and vigor. In this way, Sohrae festival becomes, what Soyini Madison says that the cultural performances are not only a reflection of what we are. They also shape and direct who we are and what we can become (Madison 2005). Sohrae becomes an act of becoming by celebrating Sohrae in a particular way. The question is here why a community on periphery has to perform in the time of crisis at the time of their displacement from their own home and dispossession of identity. Sohrae is not merely an annual festival or a ritual for the sake of ritual but it is alive and creates a platform where community can share and recreate and reinterpret memory for the community strength. During this festival, college students leaf rosary to their head, Tamad (tradition drum) and whistle to call other students to place of worship. Adivasi community usually calls any community gathering in this way. Villagers and community associate this calling to the “hool” movement. This performance of calling community relates its present crisis with historical event so that community could stand as united (Taylor, The Archive and the repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas 2003).

Secondly, art and cultural festival are considered as leisure activities in the elite discourses. There have been some works around the questions of how does a society remember and how does a society perform, but there is no such work on why does a society or community perform, especially those communities who are pushed to the survival level. Based on my fieldwork and some existing writings, I could see five major reasons on why an adivasi community performs. This includes the process of community building, reclaiming land and forest, and resisting hegemony.

### **Performance in the time of Displacement:**

The *Sohrae of Santhal*’ is the efforts to look into the displacement of adivasi in Godda district of Jharkhand. Generally, the existing works have/had the tendency to see displacement in context of land, economic and geographic displacement of indigenous community and indicative

of the physical displacement. However, certain morals of community also cause the 'youth' not to manage with those morals. Such displacements certainly have affected the culture of the adivasi community. The intricacies of cultural displacement could not become the major part of such displacement discourse. I looked the cultural displacement especially displacement of cultural memories. In this way the celebration of festival by adivasi students of Godda College becomes an important site to locate their community's memories. The students are conscious member of their community and they have come from different parts of the district. Celebrating Sohrae they uphold their community hood. In the 'performance in the time of displacement' I looked into the cultural practice done by adivasi students. The right wing forces and Hindu practices have created an environment where adivasi community feel displaced. Hindus not only captured their community spaces but also built towering Hindu temples in front of their village. This method of "organized forgetting" apart from displacement includes *Hinduisation* and corporatization of whole cultural values. *Santhal* adivasiare now facing great challenges and hegemony from dominant communities like the Hindus. The *Hinduisation* process has becomes more aggressive. However, the cultural performances like *Sohrae* remained performance of recollecting and asserting those memories. The cultural symbols they used in the festival are epitome of their associated memories. They have selectively used those symbols of the community.

### Developmental activities

The intricacies of cultural displacement could not become the major part of such displacement discourse. I looked the cultural displacement especially displacement of cultural memories. In this way the celebration of festival by adivasi students of Godda College becomes an important site to locate their community's memories. The students are conscious member of their community and they have come from different parts of the district. Celebrating Sohrae they uphold their community hood.

Today, Jharkhand is going through lots of turmoil. Adivasi populations are being displaced and dispossessed. Forced migration has become a common practice. The predominant factor for this is the loot of natural resources through mining projects, power projects and crushing of mountains. Along with the corporate, the Jharkhand state government is also involved in anti-people policies/activities. It is not only renewing old leases but also giving new

lands to new lease (Sunder Pahari to Jindal). The government till recently has signed more than hundred leases with private companies.

Jharkhand is witnessing a number of socio-cultural and political interventions these days. Many rightwing organizations are working in Jharkhand from cities to remote areas to implement their policies, program or ideology. In this respect RSS which is well known Hindu right wing organization is working there in the name of development and serving 'nation and nation hood.' These rightwing consider adivasis as *Adi-Hindus*. But this usurpation is creating many religious and social tensions. Adivasis feel cheated by these Hindu fundamentalist. Hindu right wing forces are trying hard to pull them in their fold to expand their ideologies. These fundamentalist forces are also working in tandem with the state and helping it in its mainstream 'development' programs. So it is very much evident that the right wing Hindu forces are working there as an agent of state. These exercises are making adivasis, economically, culturally and ideology dependent thus slaves of the state. State is exercising its power to control people's life according to their need. So it can be safely argued that state which has responsibility to protect culture, art, livelihood for every segment of society is directly engaged in destroying people's livelihood and facilitating the loot of their resources. Plunder, uncertainty of life, state repression is now the everyday experience. The entire fabric of traditional socio-economy is destroyed by the state. So it is need of the hour to problematize the role of state in 'developmental activities' of the region.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF RURAL FEMALE FOLK DEITIES- RITUALS, CULTURE, BELIEF SYSTEM AND CELEBRATIONS IN TAMIL NADU

**Padmini Rangarajan**

### Abstract

India is a country of cultural inspiration and amusements. It is the land of folklores, folktales, temples and tourism. Again it is the beautiful fabrication of inter-culture and intra-culture, belief systems and people that paves ways towards research explorations and opportunities. Recent visits to 'Amman', 'Gramadevis and Gramadevata' temples, in rural areas near Chennai pushed me to study the significance of rural female folk deities and the rituals associated with it. The following paper is an attempt made to study the predominance of female deities worshipping especially by women folk with vigor as religious routine for daily life existence in rural Tamil Nadu.

### Introduction:

India well known as a country of villages with the majority of population living in villages and semi-urban settings backed with strong rituals and cultural belief system. The belief system vested in powerful divine presences of the Gramadevis/Gramadevatas, a deity who is chiefly identified with the villages and the villagers. It is not uncommon, to witness several village deities in a village, each of whom have been attributed with a specialized function.

The Gramadevis/Gramadevatas or village deity concept is prevalent all over India from the time immemorial. State of Tamil Nadu has more temples for Gramadevis/Gramadevata than any other states in India. So is with other temples and temple architectures.

### Who is Gramadevi or Gramadevata?

Gramadevis/Gramadevatas the manifold manifestations of the supreme reality described as '*Brahman*' in Upanishads as described by H. Krishnasastri (1986). Gramadevata or Gramadevi is a chosen deity for the entire village or the rural setting whose primary duty is to 'safeguard' the interests of the villagers. People often have a special affection and gratitude towards the deity.

Thus every family in the village has a special kind of emotional attachment or bonding towards deity and the temple. Many of these village deities are deprived of well-built temple a structure which again has a story rolling connecting to folk mythology. These village deities are not necessarily to be represented in anthropomorphic images-can be in the form of a stone, a tree, a pillar, totem, and bunch of feathers, mound of earth (anthill), or with a proper form of human or animal. It could be a sacred space with absence of shrine. It is during special festivals the temporary structures are built to house or represent the deity. These manifestations have been nurturing the strong faith and belief system of the illiterate masses.

Periodical mass congregation prayers and celebrations to these deities are for seeking to control epidemics, for good health, for monsoon rain, good harvest and so on. The names of the gramadevi or devatas advocate varied characteristics and functions of them. These deities have a regional status too.

The names of a certain gramadevatas are popular throughout the region. The goddesses 'Mariamman', 'Karumariamman', 'AngalaParameshwari', 'Pachaiamman', 'Muthumariamman', 'Pachaiamman', 'Muthumariamman', 'Ponniyayi or Ponnuthayi', 'RenukaParameshwari', 'Bhagavathiamman', 'Kaliyamman', 'Karumariamman', are quite popular rural Tamil Nadu.

Some deities enjoy the status of monopoly recognition in one region like 'AngalaParameshwari' of 'Melmalayanur' near Chennai, 'SamayapuramMariamman', 'Banniamman near Satyamangalam' and so on.

The most prominent characteristics of rural Tamil Nadu are the multifaceted Hindu religious beliefs and ritual associated with the worship of the Goddess- 'AMMAN'. Amman is a common name which suffixed with other names like 'Mariamman', 'Karumariamman', 'Pachiamman', 'Muthamariamman' and so on.

'Amman' in Tamil means 'mother'. According to studies, a considerable number of goddesses are known from various Hindu scriptures and the Vedic hymns. However in the contemporary period numbers of goddesses are remarkable with popularity associating right from birth to death. The beliefs' system, rituals and worshipping is backed up with a rich source of mythology, tradition and diverse history of each goddess.

My little exposure to some parts of rural Tamil Nadu helped me to conduct a baseline study not only the appearances of Goddess but also the significance of her being worshipped with faith. I borrow the lines from David Kinsley (1998) conveys better that the rural female deities are more exhaustive in numbers and nature than the restricted numbers visible in Vedic literatures and schools of thoughts of the Hindu tradition:

*The goddesses, who are usually associated with popular Hinduism, often illustrate important ideas of the Hindu tradition, ideas that underlie the great Hindu philosophic visions. Several goddesses, for example, are unambiguously identified with or called prakrti, a central notion in most philosophic systems. Prakrti denotes physical (as opposed to spiritual) reality. It is nature in all its complexity, orderliness, and intensity. The identification of a particular goddess with prakrti is a commentary on her nature. At the same time, descriptions of her nature and behavior are a commentary on the Hindu understanding of physical reality.*

The beauty of many goddesses wide spread over geographical areas of subcontinent establishes a relationship of sanctified universe and spiritual freedom. The core philosophic texts and beliefs rests that 'all gods / goddesses are one ultimate truth or universal power' with

extended diversion appearance, nature and forms to be fitting to the geographical setting, people, customs and rituals. The basic nature of these gods and goddesses are diversified. In most cases it is either interchange of roles or intra changes of roles between gods and goddesses. For instance, 'Sita' establishes the nature of devotion and divine relationship of human.

Whereas, some of the rural goddesses are as strong as masculine in nature, some are potent maternal in nature and savior, powerful warriors and destroyer, some identified with male deities, some goddesses are identified with wild and wildlife, multifaceted, some are personification of art, literature and culture.

Despite the variation of these village deities with respect to names, number, and nature, there are some similarities too. Firstly predominantly, most of rural deities are female deities/goddesses. Speaking of South India, Henry Whitehead (1976) says that the village deities, with few exceptions, are female all over Southern India... the village deities are almost exclusively female. It is quite common to find, *Male Deities like 'Karuppanna samy'* also known as 'Karuppu samy' or 'Karuppar', 'Munieshwar samy', 'Muniyandi', 'Munisami' and 'Muniappa' and so on are the twenty-one associate folk deities of 'Ayyannnar' and thus popularly known as 'Kaval daivam'- meaning 'protecting gods'.

In the rural Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and even in Kerala states, one can find these 'Kaval daivam' –male protecting deities or male attendants to the female deities and the village as a whole. They are believed to guard the shrines and carry out the commands of the goddesses. Huge –gigantic statues of these male deities with wide opened horrifying large eyes, opened mouth with a long tongue protruding out, holding weapons like *Aruval*-the sword and *Sangili*-the iron chain and seen along with white horse and 'veetai nayi'-the hunting dog. The male deities are also offered with a cigar and a bottle of alcohol. Even the worshiping pattern of these temples are non Vedic and non- agamic (agamic of agama Shastra). Folk tales, folk songs, 'Villupattu', 'Karagam' and 'Koothu' are the main folk forms through which the worshiping.

Yet another significance feature to note here is that these deities of goddesses are worshipped with full vigor and devotion than the main Vedic gods and goddesses with an exception to 'Pillayar' or 'Ganesha' and 'Murugan' who are considered as the children of the goddesses. Again 'Murugan' is believed to be in the snake form residing in the snake nesting burrows or also commonly called anthills. It is not surprising to find heap of *Mud Mountain* like snake nesting burrows near *Amman Koil* or *Kovil* or temples. Also one can find 'Margosa' trees- *Neem* trees in the temple premises. It is the margosa leaves considered sacred and of medicinal value for intake consumption and for external application with turmeric powder.

It is the month of Aadi Masam (Masam-month) is the fourth month in Tamil Calendar which an auspicious month for the festivity celebrations called 'Aadi Thiruvizha' in all the *Amman kovil* or *koil* or temples throughout Tamil Nadu. It is an auspicious month of celebration, fulfillment of vows for Tamilians, unlike for Telugu and others who call it as Aashadam or Aashada who consider this as inauspicious. However it is also considered as an inauspicious month for humans' personal celebrations or engagements like weddings and house warming as such.

**Edible and other Offerings to Amman**

The offerings to *Amman* are mostly non-Brahminical in nature. Nevertheless, offerings of camphor burning, flowers and coconut breaking are commonly seen in Amman kovil. The offerings offered in the form of materials and food to folk and Vedic deities differs significantly. The Vedic deities are offered with expensive materials of expensive metals like gold, silver, sandalwood, silk, precious stones and so on whereas, inexpensive materials are offered to the folk deities. However, today one can find even expensive articles like sword, crown, body and so on are done in silver and gold studded with precious gems even for the folk deities. These are used during annual festival celebrations or *Aadi* and *Tai masam* or months or during *Navaratri* celebrations.

**Koozhu Ootharadu and Sweet Pongal Padayal**

Koozh or Koozhu is the porridge cooked of country millets in earthen pots in and temple premises which is offered with delight in almost all the Amman Kovil. Women and children carry an earthen pot on their heads decorated with margosa (neem) leaves known as the Amman's favorite leaves. Some even carry pot of charcoal fire burning on their heads. The typical *koozhu* is mixed with buttermilk, salt and raw onion and is partaken as health drink. Apart from offering *koozhu*, even 'Sweet Pongal' - pudding kind prepared by cooking rice, green gram, jaggery and milk in earthen pots.

Other edible materials forms of offerings offered to *Amman* deities are as part of type of worship and fulfillment of vow. Folk deities are commonly worshipped with animal sacrifices. Buffaloes, sheep, goats, pigs and fowls are offered to *Amman*. Black fowl offering is considered very special and as sign of good reward. These animal sacrifices are signifies the defeat of evil or demon/s. The blood of the sheep or goat offered to Amman is to appease her. The offerings of animals like goats or chickens, which are sacrificed in the name of *Amman* (killed) in the vicinity of the shrines and then consumed in communal meals by families and friends.

During the annual festivals and *Aadi Thouvizha* large numbers of animals referred above are sacrificed. Pallu refers fish, dry fish, goat, sheep and egg as common non-Brahminical offerings along with sugarcane, banana and coconuts considered as Brahminical offerings.

There is a belief that not a single drop of blood should be shed on the floor when the animals are beheaded so the possessor sucks all the blood of the sheep/ goats and then in an anger mood utters the future predictions with regard to the village, rainfall and prosperity in general and also to individuals who approach them with regard to future welfare or present sufferings. Nevertheless this practice is slowly changing in some of the Amman kovil due to the influence of the Vedic and Brahminical customs and ritual practices.

In addition to this, the devotees have to undertake torments like 'fire walking known as 'Pookkulithal' or 'Poomedikkaradu'. 'Pookkulithal' means walking on bed of flowers. However here burning charcoal and firewood chunks are symbolized for flowers. Some even go to the extent of carrying fire pots on heads and palms as part of the ceremonious ritual too.



Next is piercing a metal rod called '*Alagu Kuthikaradu*' or '*Vel*' at the middle of one's tongue, passing from one cheek to another through mouth or through lower jaw in order to fulfill their vows. Some even hook swinging on the back of their body. Offering heaps of cooked rice or by carrying Karagam. '*Mavu Vilakku*'- lighting of rice flour lamp on once abdomen is yet another popular ordeal practiced even today. Each and every deity gets either vegetarian or non-vegetarian offerings according to the established traditions in the culinary tastes of the village.

In order to carry out the ordeal successfully the individual who intends to perform needs to observe a strict ordeal ritual observation this commences by wearing a '*Malai pottukarddu*'- wearing of scared garland and need to follow with adherence for twenty-one days during *Aadi Masam*. For this period, the devotee eats just a single meal a day or consumes koozhu, sleeps on the ground and avoids sexual pleasure. Some put themselves through a special tribulation of having one of the sacred weapons, dagger, trident, or a spear, inserted through their cheeks or tongues.

### Form of the Female Deity

The female deity is usually seen with four arms, three eyes, red or yellow complexion, holding a skull mace known as '*Kattuvanga*' or holding a pot or a cup with blood, prominent teeth like fangs, a long garland of skulls around her neck- '*rundamala*' or '*mundamala*', a snake or hood of five snakes behind the main deity, a toddy cup, a demon lying underneath one of her legs, mostly in a sitting positing and sometime also seen in standing position.

The goddesses '*Mariyamman* or *Mariamman*' or even '*Mariyathal*' in Tamil Nadu and '*Manasa*' in North India and '*Shithala*' in West Bengal and North-Eastern India are the most common deities of regional popularity associated with small pox, chicken pox, measles, and rashes. The word '*Amman*' means mother and '*Mari*' means 'rain and small pox'. Common mass worship her in order to beget good rain fall which is directly related to the fertility and agricultural crop growth and harvest and so on. Also, to protect from epidemics related diseases. This is due to the direct association with the deity without discrimination and for the well being of the whole village.

In most of the temples the priest is from lower caste community known as '*Pallis*'. In the '*Karumariamman*' main temple in '*Thiruveerkadu*' near Chennai, and in '*Mariyamman*' in '*Samayapuram*' near *Trichirapally*, the priests are from Brahmin community whereas, in rest of the *Mariamman* temples across Tamil Nadu one can still find priests from lower untouchable community and caste.

Another significant feature of these temples is annual festival congregation which lasts from three days to nine days celebration. During this period the main priest or the member of the priesthood family from the lower caste is dressed like a 'Bridegroom' and stays in the temple for till the commemoration of the festival and ties the sacred thread called '*Tali*' a symbol of marriage of the female deity.



The traditional folk story narration of '*Mariamamma*' and '*Yellamma*' or '*Renukamma*' is quite similar and one and the same. *Mariamamma* is who is said to have a Brahmin head and an untouchable's body. In most of the Mariamma temples only the head portion is installed in the temple sanctum sanctorum.

Thus to conclude, *Amman* or *Mariamman* is the ancient Dravidian female deity who is the chief village deity of prominent importance and popular among common masses. Nevertheless the Brahmanization of Amman is also visible in major temple cities where the chief Vedic deity is either Shiva or Vishnu. Further, it empowers every rural woman to participate in temple activities and carry out the traditional rituals, customs and belief system by upholding their rights. The quotes found in one of the studies rightly points out that "Women perceived in traditional religion and enhancing the status of women within that religion".

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Balusubramani (2018, April-June).Amman temples, rituals, culture, belief system and celebrations.(Personal Interview).Mr. Balusubramai and his family members are regular visitors to Angala Parameshwari, Maariamman and other Amman Temples. Mr. Balusubramani has visited almost all the temples irrespective of Vaishnava sect, Shaiva sect, Madhwa peetam and Shakto peetam. Of all according to him visit and participation to Amman temples during Aadi masam is of prominent importance. His family also makes offerings to the Goddesses and also undertake ordeal of piercing metal rod "Alagu Kutikaradu" and "Pookkulithal".

## **LANGUAGE IN PEDAGOICAL PRACTICE**

## PRONOUNS OF POWER AND SOLIDARITY IN NEPALI: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC STUDY

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Dr. Hemanga Dutta

### Abstract

This paper attempts to analyze the pronominal systems in Nepali along the dimensions of power and solidarity. Pronominal systems and the honorific values associated therein always play a crucial role in understanding the linguistic and cultural nuances of a speech community in a systematic manner. The data were collected from forty native speakers of Nepali and the methodology used in this paper were not only confined to questionnaire approach but also Normative Behaviour task, Cloze test, Translation task and Text Improvement Task etc to determine the usage of Nepali pronominals. All the tasks had one thing in common: elicitation of patterns of the second person pronoun “timi” in Nepali in different social contexts. The findings suggest that age is given priority over intimacy in choosing the honorific pronominal terms. However, the most honorific pronominal “tapain” is exclusively used while addressing the younger males, not the younger females which show explicitly gender bias in Nepali speech community. It is interesting to note the patterns of pronominal change in terms of non- intimate asymmetrical relationship governed by Text Improvement Task designed to see the change in patterns of pronominal usage during the past thirty years. The three tasks based on the play ‘paytalaamuni’ showed that most of the informants avoided the usage of impolite form –ta in situations where the author considered its use as appropriate. Besides, they also avoid using the most honorific form “tapain” in several situations. Interestingly, we thus find a shift towards the use of “timi.”

Key words: pronominal system, Normative task, Text improvement task, Translation task

### Introduction

The choice of pronominal forms in the Nepali speech community is undoubtedly an interesting theme to explore the elements of power and solidarity of the social group. Pronominal system bears the traces of cultural and linguistic repertoire of a particular speech community.

This paper is divided into five sections. Section one discusses about Nepali language and its linguistic features in general. In section two, we focus on the pronominal system and its correlation with the notion of power and solidarity. Section three attempts to apply the concepts of power and solidarity reflected in social relationship of a speech community with reference to Nepali language in particular. It also elaborates upon the methodology carried forth in this paper. Section four is dedicated to the observations and analysis of the data elicited in the target language which is followed by a summary of the findings and limitations of the research in the final section.

### **Nepali language and its linguistic features**

Nepali is a modern Indo Aryan language and is listed in the (VIII) schedule of India. It is the chief language of Nepal and is also spread countrywide. It is widely spoken in Sikkim, the northern districts of West Bengal, in many pockets of North- eastern states like Manipur, Assam etc and in Northern India in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Uttarakhand etc (Clark 1963). In assessing the relation of Nepali to other languages of the Indian sub- continent, its full development of status / honorific registers both in pronouns and verbs, that range from intimate / abusive usage to forms of address for royalty, cuts above the rest, across all languages of the Indo Aryan language family.

In Nepali, certain usages of pronouns show that pronouns are important vehicle of politeness. It may be noticed that politeness consists not in using an honorific pronoun as generally assumed but in choosing the appropriate pronoun (whether honorific or not) according to the relationship between the participants both in terms of status and intimacy, the setting, speakers intuitions etc (Mishra 1977). As the language passed through different changes in its history, it was bound to come under the influence of many Indo- Aryan languages to the South and especially of the speeches of the Tibeto-Burman family which it was rapidly replacing. (Agnihotri et. al 1988)

Due to contact with other languages, however some features in terms of vocabulary, have evolved both from Indo Aryan languages like Sanskrit and Hindi and words from Tibeto – Burman origin.

Overall in assessing the relation of Nepali to other languages, some chief peculiarities involves the total loss of gender and plural marking with reference to nominal forms, its frequent use of in-fixation to form the negative, the full development of status both in pronouns and verbs that range from intimate / abusive usage to forms of address for royalty and the variety and complexity of onomatopoeic expressions (Brown and Gilman 1960).

**Pronouns of Power and Solidarity**

Power and Solidarity and the related concepts were introduced into sociolinguistics by the social psychologist Roger Brown (1960). Power is an unequal relationship between two people and it is non-reciprocal, which means that only one of the two or more people in the conversation has the power over another. The criteria of power in any society exhibits age, sex, wealth, status, occupation, etc. Solidarity on the other hand, concerns the social distance between people and is symmetrical and denotes a mutually equal status between any two people, which means that it is a reciprocal relationship characterized by intimacy, region of origin, sex, race, occupation and interests etc. (Subbarao et.al, 1991). Thus, power has to do with controlling others, superiority, and social status, and solidarity dealing with our desire to be friendly and create a rapport. It concerns the social distance between people – how much experience they have shared, how many social characteristics they share (religion, sex, age, region of origin, race, occupation, interests, etc.), how far they are prepared to share intimacies, and other factors (Brown and Gilman 1960). Power - Solidarity relations between speaker and addressee may be considered as a special case of a general phenomenon, concerning the speaker's relations of power and solidarity with the world at large. It seems that language often encourages, or even forces, us to define our relations with what we talk about. For instance, Grice (1975) examines the various maxims of communication such as the co-operative principle, maxim of quality and quantity, maxim of relevance and maxim of manner in order to maintain an effective communication. Besides, there are two important criteria that determine the nature of communication, Context and People involved, followed by sub –criteria such as sex, age and status.

Each society sets some rules which are / to be ruled followed by everybody and the whole communication occurs keeping in mind each other's FACE. Every time two people talk there is a constant risk of FACE- LOSS. Goffman (1967) notion refers to an individual's self esteem / image in a society. And there is a need to keep the other person's face in order to maintain yours. There are two Faces of an individual: Positive Face: want of an individual for his / her wants to be recognized, acknowledged. i.e. never ignore an individual's needs and wants. On the other hand, Negative Face wants of an individual to be free i.e. having freedom of action, thought, space and time. That nobody should impede his/ her action is the prime concern of everyone. If we look at various Speech- acts; they normally are made keeping in mind the 'Face' concept, i.e. they invariably address Positive Face or Negative Face. Further, they could be Face – keeping or Face- Threatening Acts ( FTAs) depending on the context.

Fraser (1990) defines politeness as a 'property associated with an utterance in which, according to the hearer, the speaker has neither exceeded any right nor failed to fulfill any obligation. He stresses that it is a property of an act and not the the act itself. Whatever the intention of the speaker may have been, it is the hearer who assigns politeness to any utterance, within the situation in which it was heard. This simply

means that politeness is a property of utterances and not of sentences, so that assigning politeness to any particular structure cannot be done out of context.

In a plural society such as India, the analysis of politeness patterns in Indo Aryan and Dravidian languages shows that genetically unrelated and geographically separated languages may share certain politeness strategies having parallel linguistic correlates and that common socio- psychological pressures may lead to parallel linguistic developments. (Subbarao et. al, 1991).

Over the ages, linguists have concentrated heavily on the formal aspects of pronoun use usually on the formal aspects of pronoun regarding semantic and functional issues as either of marginal relevance or simply as straightforward extension of formal analysis. The fact that pronouns are indexical has not been taken sufficiently seriously and this partly accounts for the lack of attention to the use of pronouns in social discourses' (Peter Muhlhausler and Rom Harre, 1990). Class divisions are essentially based on status of power and solidarity in a society. Status refers to whether people are respected and deferred to by others in their society or conversely, looked down on or ignored and power refers to the social and material resources a person can command, the ability and social right to make decision and influence events.

Power– Solidarity relations between speaker and addressee may be considered as a special case of a general phenomenon, concerning the speaker's relations of power and solidarity with the world at large. It seems that language often encourages, or even forces, us to define our relations with what we talk about.

Many linguists have tried to give the explanations of the usage of pronouns as a device to manifest the power and solidarity. The studies by Brown and Gilman (1960) show that there have been considerable changes through time in the norms for using the French pronouns, which derived from Latin pronouns where the distinction was one of number only (*tu* 'you, singular', *vos* 'you, plural'). For a number of complex historical reasons *vos* and its historical derivatives came to be used to refer to someone with greater power (especially the emperor), without regard to solidarity, but later solidarity became increasingly important until nowadays it overrides power in determining which form to use. For instance it was normal until quite recently for French children to call their fathers *vous*, in recognition of his greater power but now it is usual for them to call him *tu* because of high solidarity. Similar changes have taken place in many Western European languages such as German and Italian (Brown & Gilman 1960), and also in Russian (Friedrich 1972). It has been noticed that the use of two different forms for the second-person singular pronoun, reflecting power and/or solidarity, is an 'areal feature' of Europe and it is also found in non-Indo-European languages such as Hungarian (Hollósy 1977). It has also been traced in Persian (Jahangiri 1980). It is not hard to relate changes in relative importance of power and solidarity in choosing pronouns to concurrent changes in social structure, and such connections are in fact made by the linguists mentioned above. A survey of the use of *tu* and *Lei* by members of both middle and lower classes in Rome (Bates & Benigni 1975) showed that, those who used *Lei* most often

were lower class male youths, who might have been expected to be in the lead in extending the use of the ‘democratic’ form *tu*. In interpreting these finding, they suggest that middle-class youths are moving nearer to what they think is the more democratic usage of the lower class, while lower-class youths are moving towards what they consider a prestigious middle-class usage. If the process continues, we might expect middle and lower classes simply to exchange norms, to the bewilderment of many Roman!

### **Pronouns in Nepali: A linguistic tool to understand power and solidarity**

Linguistic signaling of power and solidarity is a very interesting area of study in the Nepali context. It involves the study of the social profile by focusing on the linguistic features such as the ones we have discussed earlier namely the multiple tasks involved in order to find out which pronominal forms (“tapain” (HON), “timi” (you) and “ta” (least formal) are employed by the Nepali speech community. The pronouns of power and solidarity have been neglected area particularly in the Asian context. The present work is intended to look at various usages of pronouns in Nepali.

In Nepali, certain strategic usages of pronouns show that pronouns are important vehicle of politeness. The exact balance between power and solidarity in resolving intermediate categories is “timi” in Nepali speech community. This category has emerged in the urban area recently as lower pronoun “ta” in the urban usage is now being associated with it. Thus, the three tier address system “ta”, “timi” and “tapain” is again being reduced to two tier systems “timi” and “tapain”.

The usage of these pronouns is governed by the social relationship existing between the two interlocutors. For example, it would be interesting to look at the exchange of pronouns of address between master and servant, an officer and his subordinate, a husband and wife, between friends, brothers and sisters. While the first three examples manifest power semantics, the last three reveal instances of solidarity semantics.

#### **Master- Servant:**

The master addresses the servant as *timi* ‘you 2’ while he is ordering his servant to do something:

**Master:** *timi ka gakotheo?*

You 2 where go+past

Where did you go?

**Servant:** *ma tapai ko kapd-a linu gakothe*

I You 3 clothes to get go+ pst

I went to get clothes for you

But when the Master shows his irritation to the servant, he uses *ta* ‘you 1’ as in:

*ta lai kati khep samjhaunu*

‘you1’ how many times remind

How many times should I remind you?



**Officer - Subordinate:**

The subordinate official always uses *tapai* 'you 3' in all situations. Even if his superior official is talking to him informally and about something personal and is using the solidary *timi* 'you 2', he (the subordinate official uses only 'you 3'):

**Officer:** timro chuTi kaile bata cha

'you 2' holiday when from is

When does your leave commence?

**Subordinate:** tapaiko aashirbaad le sanchai chhu

'You 3' blessings INST fine is

With your blessings, I am doing fine.

**Husband - wife:**

The husband usually addresses his wife by the pronoun *timi* 'you 2', while the wife uses the pronoun *tapai* 'you 3' in all the situations:

**Husband:** timi kaile bazaar jane?

You 2 when market go

When will you go to the market?

**Wife:** tapai ko kapda dhura

You 3 GEN clothes wash+ Fut

After washing your clothes.

**Between friends:**

The use of pronouns is reciprocal as given below:

**Friend 1:** timi mero ghara kaile auchau

You 2 my GEN house when come Fut

'When will you come to my house?'

**Friend 2:** timi paila aao, pheri ma auchu

You 2 first come, then I come Fut.

'You come first then I will'.

**Brother- Brother:**

If the difference between the ages of two brothers is not much then they address each other by name and use the pronoun *timi* 'you 2' reciprocally:

**Brother 1:** Dada timile mero kitaab lai deu?

Brother you 2 my book acc bring

Brother did you bring my book?'

**Brother 1:** timile bhaneko thenau

You 2 ask Pst ERG be NEG

You never asked me.

**Sister – Sister:**

Sisters address each other in a reciprocal form with *ta* – you 1, which is the most intimate and casual term of address

- Sister 1:**        baini    ta        kaile janchas  
                 sister you I    when go-pres.  
                 Sister, when will you go?
- Sister 2:**    jaba ta kaam khatam garchas  
                 When you I complete work-Fut  
                 ‘When you complete your work’.

It may be noticed that politeness consists not in using an honorific pronoun as generally assumed but in choosing the appropriate pronoun ( whether honorific or not) according to the relationship between the participants both in terms of status and intimacy, the setting, speakers intuition etc. (Goel 1982).

Nepali has first, second and third person pronouns both singular and plural. Second person pronouns are graded according to status and respect. The use of ordinary or lowest grade pronouns often indicate familial intimacy, inequality or even abuse. The other pronoun shows varying degrees of respect, from use among equals to a full set of expressions for royalty.

Among the second person pronouns, “ta” is the most intimate as well the most abusive “timi” is used between family members who are equals or inferiors in relationship or age. For the second person, the pronoun “tapain” is commonly used as a sign of respect or remoteness among perceived equals or to a superior. For example, the relationship between a husband and a wife, a teacher and a student etc can better reflect such patterns. In Nepali speech community where “ta” can be used reciprocally as a sign of intimacy and high informality, i.e. where age is the crucial factor and no sense of inferiority is involved, “ta” is the normal usage and the use of plural pronoun “timi haru” could not convey any respect. On the other hand in situations where “ta” can be used and it signals a sense of inferiority as in between a master and a servant “timi” will be considered polite and “tapain” can also be used depending on the age of the addressee as a form of politeness.

### Observations and Data Analysis

The proposed work covered the usage of Pronouns in Nepali in terms of Power and Solidarity and the sample and instrument designed to elicit social- psychological and linguistic data and the work restricted itself to the synchronic study.

**Sample:** The informants for the present study were forty native speakers. The sample is broken down on the basis of mother tongue, age and sex. (N= 40). We collected the sociolinguistic data in the form of questionnaires as included in the Appendices II (A,B,C,D). The purpose behind this was to elicit patterns of pronominal usage in asymmetrical relationships in four major linguistic tasks: Normative Behaviour

task(extremely formal), to least formal such as Cloze test, Translation and Text Improvement Task). All the tasks had one thing in common: elicitation of patterns of the second person pronoun – *timi* in Nepali in different social contexts. The variables were: age, gender, relationship, place of interaction and the variants were old and young, male and female, intimate and non intimate and Home and outside respectively . (Appendix 2)

In the Normative Behaviour Task , the informants were asked to tick one of the alternatives from the three second person pronouns used in Nepali, ( *ta*, *timi*, *tapain*) taking into considerations the above given relationships and place of interaction, (home / outside).

In order to show the asymmetric but intimate relationship, e.g., the special case of mother and son interaction, a sample of the same play were given by modifying the original and deleting some pronouns and some words here and there.

In the final task, i.e., Translation, was designed to examine asymmetric intimate relationships. Here, the informants were asked to translate English text to Nepali. It consisted of a conversation between two friends of unequal rank so that the occurrence of ‘you’ would be translated to Nepali either by one of these pronominal forms ( *ta/ timi/ tapain*), respectively.

All these tests hold one objective in common: elicitation of patterns of the use of Second Person Pronouns in different contexts. Our focus here is to observe which pronominal form (- *ta*, -*timi*, -*tapain*) would be extensively used by the informants. A story like passage were given to them and similar other tasks taken from Kadka Raj Giri’s play ‘ *Paytalamuni*’ where the informants were asked to select any one of the alternatives based on the three pronominal forms stated.

### Major Findings and Limitations

Based on an extract of khadka’s *Paytalaamuni* (1976) where the author extensively uses the least honorific form –*ta* throughout the play, the four linguistic tasks such as Normative Behaviour Task, Translation, Cloze Test and Text Improvement Task were contextualized. In all the three tests, excluding the Normative Behavioral Task analysis we excluded Normative Behavior Task since the reciprocal usage of the different pronominal forms could not be ascertained and analyzed in this task. Therefore, for a specific case of non-intimate asymmetrical relationship, the Text improvement task was designed and for intimate asymmetrical relationship, modified Cloze test and Translation were taken into account. The informants were asked to retrieve the pronouns they found to be most appropriate. We found that ‘age’ supersedes the intimacy factor no matter whatever level of intimacy one holds, for we would generally address an old person by the most polite form “*tapain*”. Though some people might address an elderly

male by slightly lesser polite form “timi” but they never use the least honorific form “ta” in any case. For instance, an intimately known female for example, a mother or an aunt are addressed by “tapain” and mostly by “timi” largely out of affection but never with the least honorific “ta”. The pronominal form “ta” is never used to address a mother or an aunt under any circumstances in Nepali speech community. However, when we observe the address terms of intimacy used for young males and females, we noticed that ‘sex’ of the addressee became an important variable. The most honorific term “tapain” is never used for younger females as it is exclusively reserved for the male counterparts. It shows explicitly the genders bias prevalent in the speech community of Nepali. It is interesting to note the specific patterns of pronominal change in terms of non- intimate asymmetrical relationship governed by Text Improvement Task designed to see the change in patterns of pronominal usage during the past thirty years. For instance, we found high usage of “timi” used by the informants where the author has used “ta” in order to strike a balance between the supreme power the doctor holds and the servant. Not a single token of “ta” token was used by our informants throughout this task. With regard to the intimate asymmetric relationships carried out in Cloze Test and Translation, in the former case, the informants showed their preferences for the more polite forms between the mother and son. However in the latter task, i.e. Translation, it was observed that in intimate- asymmetrical relationships, the informants preferred to use more polite form “timi” for addressing two friends despite of unequal status. It clearly shows that a significant change has taken place in the use of the pronominal forms from then to now. The three tasks based on the play ‘paytalaamuni’ showed that most of the informants avoided the usage of impolite form –ta in situations where the author considered its use as appropriate. Besides, they also avoid using the most honorific form “tapain” in several situations. Interestingly, we thus find a convergence towards the use of “timi” is clearly noticeable. Our conclusions are tentative as it is not based on natural speech and all the three situations were fully contextualized. Thus, a movement towards equalitarianism and reciprocal pronominal usage should be addressed in order to explore the validity of these findings in natural speech.

## APPENDIX -I

## QUESTIONNAIRES

## A. NORMATIVE BEHAVIUR TASK

Tapaiko gharma daaju ko bia cha ani dherai manche aako chan..aphno ra taarai ko. Unaru sita kasseri bhet garnu huncha...ta / timi/ tapai ko bisai ma.

1. Euti tapai ko najeeke saathi sanga .....ta/ timi/ tapain
2. Euta tapaiko purush saathi sanga.....ta/ timi/ tapain
3. Euta tapaiko najeeke saathi.....ta/timi/tapain
4. Tapaiko saathi ko bhai.....ta/timi/tapain
5. Tapaiko bahine ko saathi.....ta/timi/tapain
6. Euta chorri.....ta/timi/tapain
7. Euta chorro.....ta/timi/tapain
8. Euta bideshi chori..... ta/timi/tapain
9. Euta bideshi chorro..... ta/timi/tapain
10. Tapaiko ghar ko nokar..... ta/timi/tapain

## 2. MODIFIED CLOZE TEST

Tala ko kahaani padera kunai pani ta, timi ra tapai ko prayog garnuhola

Tulki ko choro ahyepugio ani ule bhanin .....mero pyaaro kancha lai mero samjhana awethiyo ki.....thyio. Chorro le bhanyo malai ta gharighari .....samjhanna aye rakthiyo.Tulki bhanin.....ke kaam ma byasta huntheo.Mora ..... ke asadhi bhayo ke .....mero kaile yaad ayena.Mora .....jasto chorra paonu bhanda ta bori chorri nai thikai thiyo. ....kaile pani sacho baat gardenas.....khali .....khushi ma jewcha

**3. TEXT IMPROVEMENT TASK**

Yo kahaani padhda –ta,-timi ra –tapain ko prayog garnu hola jata pani aeko praayog huncha. Kahaaani esto cha ki euta doctorle aphno patient lai sochchan ki tapaiko biye na bhako bha ke garnu hunthyo. Patient le bhancha ki mo ajai padhthe. Pheri doctor le bhancha ki tapai ta dhare padhai garne naani thena syano ma. Doctor le sochcha pheri ki tapaiko baaba ko gaadi cha ra. Patient le bhancha ki talai ke ko matlap mo hindai jam ki na jam talai ke ko matlab.

**4. Translation**

Tulki and Meera are best friends. Tulki belongs to a rich family and Meena is a daughter of a farmer, Few months ago, Meena had borrowed a notebook from Tulki. Now she wants it back They are having a conversation as given below:

Tulki: How are you? Did you get my notebook today?

Meena: Oh, I have forgotten completely about it.

Tulki: That means I have to copy notes in a paper again. Tell me, why are you so careless?

Meena: I will get your book tomorrow.

Tulki: When will your tomorrow come? You often fool me like this.

Meena: Please, I will get your book tomorrow.

Tulki: You've been saying this since ages, you are so careless. You often fool around like this. Enough of your tricks!

Meena: Please don't be so rude. I promise, I will get your book by tomorrow.

Tulki: Listen, you should never make a promise unless you are sure of yourself. I will accept your request provided you would bring tomorrow else I will never forgive you.

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## IMPACT OF TEACHER'S ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING ON CLASSROOM DYNAMICS: AN EXPLORATION

Nittala Noel Anurag Prashanth

### *Abstract*

Classroom dynamics refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to keep learners organized, orderly, focused, attentive, on task, and academically productive during a class. When classroom-management strategies are executed effectively, teachers minimize the behaviours that impede learning for both individual learners and groups of learners, while maximizing the behaviours that facilitate or enhance learning. In general effective teachers tend to display strong classroom-management skills, while the inexperienced or less effective teacher has a disorderly classroom with learners who are not working properly or not paying attention.

### **Introduction**

Although the importance of classroom management is widely recognized, its definition is elusive. Given below are some of the definitions of classroom management by eminent scholars in the field.

Walter Doyle (1986) defines classroom management as “covering a wide range of teacher duties from distributing resources to students, accounting for student attendance and school property, enforcing compliance with rules and procedures to grouping students for instruction...”(p.394)

Daniel Duke (1979) defines classroom management as “the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which instruction and learning can occur” (p.xii)

Jere Brophy (1996) defines classroom management as “.....actions to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction (arranging the physical environment of the classroom, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining attention to lessons and engagement in academic activities” (p.5)



While a limited or more traditional interpretation of effective classroom management may focus largely on “compliance” rules and strategies that teachers may use to make sure learners are sitting in their seats, following directions, listening attentively, etc. a more encompassing or updated view of classroom management extends to everything that teachers may do to facilitate or improve learning, which would include factors such as behaviour (a positive attitude, happy facial expressions, encouraging statements, the respectful and fair treatment of learners, etc.), environment (for example, a welcoming, well-lit classroom filled with intellectually stimulating learning materials that’s organized to support specific learning activities), expectations (the quality of work that teachers expect learners to produce, the ways that teachers expect learners to behave toward other learners, the agreements that teachers make with learners), materials (the types of texts, equipment, and other learning resources that teachers use), or activities (the kinds of learning experiences that teachers design to engage learner interests, passions, and intellectual curiosity). Given that poorly designed lessons, uninteresting learning materials, or unclear expectations, for example, could contribute to greater learner disinterest, increased behavioural problems, or unruly and disorganized classes, classroom management cannot be easily separated from all the other decisions that teachers make. In this more encompassing view of classroom management, good teaching and good classroom management become, to some degree, indistinguishable.

Teachers play various roles in a typical classroom, but surely one of the most important is that of classroom manager. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. If learners are disorderly and disrespectful, and no apparent rules and procedures guide behaviour, chaos arises in the classroom. In these situations, both teachers and learners suffer. Teachers struggle to teach, and learners most likely learn much less than they should. In contrast, well-managed classrooms provide an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish. But a well-managed classroom doesn't just appear out of nowhere, it takes a good effort to be created and the person who is most responsible for creating it is the teacher.

### **Background to the Problem**

Classroom management (CM) involves organizing learning space to create a stimulating learning environment. It is affected by the classroom teacher and depends on teacher characteristics such as the teacher academic and professional qualifications, teacher experience,

age and gender. The components of CM include planning for the lesson, class control, seating arrangement, management of time, management of learning resources and management of learner's records. Dorit Sasson (2007) points out that good teaching is a mix of CM strategies and interesting teaching approaches that motivate pupils which enhance the achievement of teaching objectives in a pre-school class. Using a variety of CM strategies such as maintaining learners' discipline, a teacher can improve quality of a lesson (Sasson, 2009). To achieve class control the teacher has to maintain learners' discipline by setting class rules.

A skilled pre-school teacher (PST) who prepares well for lessons ends up with an effective class and positive results. Good seating arrangement for pupils in a preschool ensures that the classroom is an environment of fun instead of chaos. Effective PSTs organize learning materials well ahead of time and keep them within reach to the learners as well as to themselves. For the PST to fully understand pupils well, it is necessary for proper classroom records to be maintained. Time management in a classroom ensures that maximum time is spent on instruction.

### **Literature Review**

It is probably no exaggeration to say that classroom management has been the primary concern of teachers ever since there were teachers in classrooms. However, the systematic study of effective classroom management is a relatively recent phenomenon. Some of the relevant studies on classroom management that have been conducted in the recent past are:-

Arguably, the first high-profile, large-scale, systematic study of classroom management was done by Jacob Kounin (1970). He analyzed videotapes of 49 first and second grade classrooms and coded the behaviour of learners and teachers. It is worth noting here that he identified several critical dimensions of effective classroom management. Those dimensions (among others) are (1) "withitness," (2) smoothness and momentum during lesson presentations, (3) letting learners know what behaviour is expected of them at any given point in time, and (4) variety and challenge in the seatwork assigned to learners. "Withitness" involves a keen awareness of disruptive behaviour or potentially disruptive behavior and immediate attention to that behavior; of the four dimensions, it is the one that most consistently separates the excellent classroom managers from the average or below-average classroom managers.

In 1976 Brophy and Evertson reported the results of one of the major studies in classroom management, up until that point, in a book titled “Learning from Teaching: A Developmental Perspective.” Their sample included some 30 elementary teachers whose learners had exhibited consistency better than expected gains in academic achievement. The comparison group consisted of 38 teachers whose performance was more typical. Brophy and Evertson's study, then, might be considered a comparison of exceptional teachers with average teachers. Although the study focused on a wide variety of teaching behaviours, classroom management surfaced as one of the critical aspects of effective teaching. Much of what they found relative to classroom management supported the earlier findings of Kounin. Brophy and Everson (1976) mentioned in their study:

“Much has been said...in the book about our findings concerning classroom management. Probably the most important point to bear in mind is that almost all surveys of teacher effectiveness report that classroom management skills are of primary importance in determining teaching success, whether it is measured by student learning or by ratings. Thus, management skills are crucial and fundamental. A teacher who is grossly inadequate in classroom management skills is probably not going to accomplish much.”(p. 27)

The Classroom Strategy Study conducted by Jere Brophy was the next major study addressing classroom management. It involved in-depth interviews with and observations of 98 teachers, some of whom were identified as effective managers and some of whom were not. The study presented teachers with vignettes regarding specific types of learners (e.g., hostile-aggressive learners, passive-aggressive learners, hyperactive learners) in specific situations. Among the many findings from the study was that effective classroom managers tended to employ different types of strategies with different types of learners, whereas ineffective managers tended to use the same strategies regardless of the type of learner or the situation. One of the study's strong recommendations was that teachers should develop a set of “helping skills” to employ with different types of learners.

In spite of the profound impact of these various studies, classroom management received its strongest endorsement in a comprehensive study by Margaret Wang, Geneva Haertel, and Herbert Walberg (1993). They combined the results of three previous studies. One involved a content analysis of 86 chapters from annual research reviews, 44 handbook chapters, 20

government and commissioned reports, and 11 journal articles. This analysis produced a list of 228 variables identified as having an impact on learner achievement. The second study involved a survey of 134 education experts who were asked to rate each of the 228 variables in terms of the relative strength of their impact on learner achievement. The third study involved an analysis of 91 major research syntheses. The end result of this massive review was that classroom management was rated first in terms of its impact on learner achievement.

### **Statement of the Problem**

According to Dorit Sasson (2007) good teaching involves CM strategies. The strategies include learner' seating arrangement, management of learner' discipline, management of classroom time, organization of learning resources and keeping of classroom records. Using such a variety of CM strategies helps the learners to learn what the teacher intends to teach while lack of the strategies denies the learners the chance to learn. The PST should apply skills of CM to make learning a success. PSTs have the role of implementing pre-school curriculum through CM strategies. In RangaReddy District, Telangana, India PSTs have different teacher characteristics, as each teacher has his/her own characteristics, which influence their performance in CM. The characteristics include the teachers' academic and professional qualifications, teachers' experience, teachers' age and gender. As far as training is concerned, there are diploma holders, ordinary certificate holders and also untrained teachers in the country. Teacher training programs continue to be implemented to improve some of the teacher characteristics but little has been done to assess the effect of these characteristics on CM.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of teacher's academic experience and training on classroom management in pre-schools in RangaReddy District, Telangana, India.

### **Research Objectives**

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:-

- To determine the effects of a pre-school teacher academic and professional qualifications on Classroom Management.

- To establish the effects of a pre-school teacher experience on Classroom Management.

**Research Questions**

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1. What are the effects of pre-school teachers' academic and professional qualifications on Classroom Management?
- 2. In what ways does a pre-school teacher experience affect Classroom Management?

**Definition of Key Terms and Abbreviations**

The following operational definitions are adopted in the study:

- Classroom Management (CM) refers to organization of learning space to create a stimulating learning atmosphere. It involves such components as discipline, teacher preparation, seating arrangement, organization of learning materials, organization of classroom records and classroom time management.
- Pre-school Teacher (PST) refers to a teacher who teaches at the preschool level.
- Teacher Characteristics refers to the teacher qualities that may affect the performance of the teacher. Teacher characteristics include qualification, experience, age and gender.
- Untrained teacher refers to a teacher who has not undergone any of the teacher training programs. The teacher has no certificate, diploma or university degree.

**Methods used to Collect the Data**

At the first stage of data collection preschools in the district of Rangareddy, Telangana were identified. At the second stage appointments were taken in order to meet the school management, after meeting permission was taken to observe the classroom. The teachers were informed well before the classroom observation was conducted, avoiding any sort of

inconvenience to the teachers which might have influenced the data. At the third and the final stage while observing the class, the observer made use of a classroom management checklist. Data was collected using a checklist which was adapted after considering many checklists which focused on CM given by various experts in the field. Likert scale was used in order to assess the data.

### **Sample Group**

The sample group for the study comprised of five PSTs'. They were divided into two groups depending upon their academic and educational qualifications, experience in teaching and whether the teachers were trained or untrained. Group 1 had three teachers who were not trained, inexperienced and had no proper qualification for teaching, where as Group 2 had two teachers who were trained experienced and qualified.

### **Findings**

The data collected aided in answering the research questions. It had been observed that the manner in which the classrooms were managed by the untrained PST's, who belong to Group 1 was different from that of the trained PSTs' who belong to Group 2, where it was observed that the trained PSTs' had an edge over the UTs'. The different aspects involved in CM such as control of the teacher, preparation of lesson, declaration of the objectives, organizing activities, using materials, learner importance, time management, giving opportunity to all learners and etc was observed to be better in the trained PSTs' when compared to the untrained PSTs'. Experienced teachers who belong to Group 1 were able to handle things appropriately without causing much disturbance to the other learners by not focusing on a single learner for a long time during a class hour. It was also observed in the study that the experienced teachers were efficient time managers when compared to the novice teachers who belong to Group 2 as they lacked proper time management skills.

After analyzing the data collected from the checklists which had three untrained and inexperienced PSTs' and two trained and experienced PSTs' it was evident that the trained and experienced PSTs' differed qualitatively in the way they manage a class. The results of the study prove the fact that PSTs' academic experiences and training does have some kind of influence on the strategies used by them for CM. It was found that the PST's who were qualified are better

than the PST's who are not qualified in CM. The experience of the PST's also affects CM, as it was observed that experienced teachers were able to manage the classroom efficiently when compared to the novice teachers.

**Conclusion**

Hence, it can be concluded that the PSTs' belonging to Group 1 were better classroom managers than the PSTs' belonging to Group 2. The study conducted might be beneficial to evaluate the efficiency of the PSTs' in identifying the required teacher characteristics to manage a classroom better. After the evaluation the managements of the schools concerned will be able to make decisions concerning the recruitment of the teachers to their respective programs. It may help them assess the efficiency of the teachers. The organizations may also benefit by setting a standard criteria when recruiting, training and mentoring the prospective candidates. The results might be useful to the teacher trainers, pre-school management committees and also aid in guiding the pre-school management committees in employing pre-school teachers who have the right mix of required teacher characteristics.

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## READING AND INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

Dr. P. Sunama Patro

*Abstract*

The literature pertaining to incidental vocabulary acquisition has invariably highlighted the role of L2 reading in the lexical development of language learners. A good number of studies have already been conducted to examine the effects of extensive reading, graded readers, and authentic texts in this regard in EFL contexts. However, the present study under the spectrum of incidental vocabulary acquisition investigated the possible acquisition of six selected aspects of target word knowledge from reading of three teacher-prepared texts (graded). In order to dissuade the participants, ninety Odia ESL learners of class XI, from paying attention to the individual words and working on them for meaning, the nature of reading was kept meaning-focused. Soon after the reading they were administered an immediate post-test. The descriptive analysis of the data suggests that a significant amount of learning, in terms of acquisition of the target word properties, occurred from meaning-focused reading. The findings suggest that learners' ability to recognize and produce the target words in meaningful contexts was effective. Moreover, it was observed that some aspects of word knowledge could easily be acquired before other aspects. Hence further research can be conducted to explore patterns of L2 lexical development in ESL learners from reading.

**Introduction**

It is a fact universally acknowledged that increasing second language proficiency largely depends on the knowledge of the target language vocabulary. This L2 lexical knowledge is believed to be the result of exposure to L2 texts in formal instructional settings or autonomous vocabulary development contexts. Primarily, vocabulary development seems to follow two processes: explicit or intentional and incidental vocabulary acquisition. Though researchers argue in favor of explicit or intentional approach to learning L2 vocabulary for short term lexical gains or comprehension, the effectiveness of the approach is yet to be proven when the considerations towards long-term retention and productive use of vocabulary are in focus. Likewise, a similar argument can also be made for incidental vocabulary acquisition. The rate of lexical acquisition is believed to be slow and incremental regardless of the processes followed to

acquire L2 vocabulary. Yet researchers have argued in favour of incidental vocabulary acquisition for the space and pace it provides for autonomous L2 vocabulary development among learners. In literature, incidental vocabulary acquisition has been defined as ‘picking up’ of unknown words while engaged in meaningful activities such as reading, listening, speaking or writing (Schmitt, 2000; Rott, 2013). Moreover, lack of commitment or consciousness or intention to transfer the word into the memory is considered integral to incidental vocabulary acquisition (Hulstijn, 2001).

The process of acquisition of a word is believed to be a fairly complex one since a single word entails a plethora of knowledge or properties such as orthographic structure, meanings, syntactic category, phonetic realization and the like. However, advanced language use largely depend on knowledge of words’ pragmalinguistic functions, their syntactic frames, and their “meanings in conventionalized and metaphorical expression” (Nation, 2001; Schmitt & Carter, 2004; Rott, 1999). And acquisition of all these aspects seems impossible from formal and intentional study of words, from dictionaries or word lists available, with regard to the number of words one needs to know to attain advanced language levels. Hence, in ESL contexts written texts could prove to be facilitative to acquire these aspects while learners are engaged in comprehending the text.

Traditionally, reading texts are believed to provide better contexts to acquire the said properties of a ‘word’, and several factors such as context (guessing from texts using contextual clues or word-forms), task-type (learning word-meanings to complete a communicative task), and repetition of words (multiple encounters in speech or written texts) significantly contribute to the process of incidental vocabulary acquisition (Nation, 2011; Laufer & Girsai, 2008; Webb, 2008). In second language vocabulary acquisition research, the effects of these factors have been studied extensively to understand their effects on incidental vocabulary acquisition from reading. However, the first two factors offer a narrow focus for the objective is limited to short-term lexical/communicative gain compared to repetition of words. Repeated encounters with target words in reading could be effective in consolidating the previously learned lexical knowledge of the same words to the next level, and learners might be able to retain and retrieve them for long-term productive use. Hence, in the context of the present study, incidental vocabulary acquisition has been defined as ‘acquisition of unknown words through multiple exposures from meaning-focused reading’ (Rott, 1999; Chen & Truscott, 2010; Heidrari-Shahreza & Tavakoli, 2012).

However, it might be intriguing to explore how learners ‘intentionality’ works while working on a text used to examine how learners’ acquire vocabulary incidentally. Just as there are degrees of attention, intention to learn can be seen as a continuum (Barcoft, 2004). There could always be individual variances in terms of attention level with regard to “the nature of lexis present and the cognitive demand of the task” (Doczi&Kormos, p.119). And it is possible that some of the word(s) might not go unattended. Hence a careful consideration must be built towards text preparation to keep the nature of learning incidental. The coverage of known words must be high in the texts so as to enable them view the target words, unknown in nature, in a larger context in order to construct meaning of the text rather than meaning of the individual target words. The present study adopted several such criteria to prepare the texts which would be discussed in detail under the heading reading materials.

### **Vocabulary Acquisition from Graded Readers and Authentic Texts**

Reading is believed to enhance communicative competence and general language ability of learners with its contextualized and meaningful input (Coady, 1997; Gu, 2003; Nassaji, 2003; Horst, 2005). From two of the most used reading strategies, intensive and extensive reading, in reading instruction programmes the latter one has the potential to contribute significantly to the developing general language proficiency as the objective of this nature of reading solely remains meaning-making. And the possibility to acquire new words results from a meaning-making process such as reading as the case may be for acquisition of L1 vocabulary. Learners’ engagement with the text as a meaningful unit creates rich semantic contexts to acquire vocabulary; and this learning condition has been understood and viewed as ‘incidental’ in SLVA research. Several studies have tried to examine this nature of vocabulary learning from reading of authentic texts and graded readers as part of the extensive reading instruction (Waring&Takaki, 2003; Horst, 2005; Pigada& Schmitt, 2006; Kweon& Kim, 2008; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Rashidi&Piran, 2011; Daskalovska, 2014; Zaboli&Bozorgian, 2016). Mostly, these studies have credited repeated occurrences of target vocabulary in reading texts to have played a role in incidental acquisition of new words.

Waring and Takaki (2003) tried to investigate the rate of acquisition of new vocabulary, by fifteen Japanese female participants, from reading of a 400 headword graded reader, *A Little Princess*, using several retention measures unlike the previous studies who only measured

retention of meanings of target words and word-forms. The results suggest that a number of words can be learned incidentally, however, majority of the new words remained unlearned. In addition, the meanings of frequently occurring words were remembered and more resistant to attrition compared to words which occurred less than eight times. Moreover, the tree types of lexical gains were decreased over a period of time and the rate of acquiring new words remained poor as one hour of reading could only help learning one new word. However, the target words occurred at different frequency levels were manipulated and were substitute words which reduced the ecological validity of the words (Patro, 2016). In contrast, Horst (2005) reported stronger lexical gains from reading of four 20 page-long extracted graded reading materials by 21ESL learners. The participants could learn well over 17 previously unknown words which represented more than “half of the unfamiliar words they encountered in this reading” (Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010). Unlike the previous studies which only focused measuring meaning, this case study by Pigada and Schmitt (2006) sought to give credit to the partial lexical knowledge, believed to have been enhanced from the reading of simplified graded readers (level 1), involving meaning, spelling, and grammatical features of 133 unknown target words. The results indicated that the knowledge of 65% of the words was enhanced on one of the three aspects with spelling being the most effective one compared to the others. However, for most part of the gains only spelling seemed strongly enhanced than meaning and grammatical characteristics of the target words. Rashidi&Piran (2011) in a comparative study tried to check the effectiveness of intensive and extensive reading on 120 Iranian EFL learners’ vocabulary size and depth using graded readers at two different levels of proficiency (intermediate and advanced). The data suggested that both reading strategies impacted vocabulary growth, however, the learners at the intermediate level benefitted from intensive reading than intensive. On the other hand, for the advanced group extensive reading was more beneficial than intensive reading. In an experimental study with 30 EFL female learners Zaboli and Bozorgian (2016) tried to examine whether extensive reading of intermediate graded readers (stories) accompanied by vocabulary enhanced exercises could enhance incidental acquisition of vocabulary. The participants were administered an affective questionnaire to gain insights into learners’ attitude towards incorporating extensive reading (ER) as a component into the reading instruction programme. The findings suggested that ER can enhance incidental vocabulary acquisition when followed by text-based vocabulary exercises and can promote positive attitude towards L2

reading. However, the pre-test and the post-test used to measure primarily measured the meanings of the target items and overlooked other aspects of word knowledge. Moreover, there was no control exerted to keep the learning incidental as the learners in the experimental group were very much aware that they would be tested on some selected target items prior to the reading activity.

Several researchers engaged in examining the role of reading in incidental lexical gains have argued in favour of use of authentic materials to examine the same in contrast to the use of simplified graded readers (Kweon& Kim, 2008; Pellicer-Sánchez & Schmitt, 2010; Daskalovska, 2014). They suggested that authentic materials provide EFL/ESL learners with opportunities to acquire novel vocabulary and words that are less frequent from better contexts. Kweon and Kim (2008) used authentic texts (chapter books) meant for native speakers to measure acquisition of both higher and lower frequency words by 12 Korean EFL learners in an experimental design. The analysis and comparison of the participant's responses obtained from the three tests (pre-test, immediate test, and post-test) showed significant lexical gains between the pre-test and immediate test and most of the words were effectively retained after 4 weeks. Moreover, words with most frequently occurring were learned easily than less frequent words, and lower frequency words were better learned when their meanings were crucial for comprehension. However, the study lacked measures which could have been used to capture small lexical gains representing different aspects of word knowledge. The participants' responses on the three tests seemed to have only captured their partial knowledge of the target words. With a more updated design Pellicer-Sánchez and Schmitt (2010) conducted a study in which 20 Spanish EFL learners read an authentic novel (Things Fall Apart) and encountered 34 African target words at different levels of frequency. Later, after the reading they were tested on their knowledge (spelling, word class, meaning, and meaning recognition) of those 34 words and the analysis indicated that the overall learning ranged from 14-43% though not consistent on all the four measures. The findings were in congruent with the findings reported by several studies who concluded that incidental lexical gains were reportedly small. The role of multiple exposures was significant and more exposures resulted in significant vocabulary learning. However, the target words were culturally different from real English words with unusual spelling patterns which could possibly have caused learning difficulty. On the other hand, the highly salient nature of the African words might have invited learners' attention limiting the notion of 'incidental learning'. In yet another

study, Daskalovska (2015) with 18 advanced EFL learners demonstrated that 24% of the previously unknown words were learned out of 24.1 target words (TWs) from reading of a few chapters of an authentic novel (*Pride and Prejudice*). However, the use of the pre-test and post-test modeled on the Nation's (1990) Vocabulary Levels Test could only measure their knowledge of meanings of the TWs and ignored other related aspects. Unlike the previous studies, the present study concluded that frequency of words did not play any significant role in the acquisition of the target words.

Often authentic materials do not help learners acquire low frequency words as their frequency of occurrence is relatively less in comparison to high frequency words. Frequent encounter with unknown words in regular intervals help learners notice and attend them when crucial for reading comprehension. However, in extensive reading learners do not get enough time to attend to and work for meaning as the purpose of reading differs from that of intensive reading instruction. Hence to help learners acquire words, considered to be essential for academic use and to deal with tasks meant for language learning, teachers propose use of graded readers for short term lexical gains as they offer meaningful and better contexts and are designed to suit their existing level of proficiency. However, reading authentic materials enable learners experience vocabulary used in real-life like contexts and can possibly help them acquire and use the same in similar contexts. With regard to the advantages of using graded readers for acquisition of foreign vocabulary, the present study tried to examine the effectiveness of reading graded readers in acquisition of selected target words and some of their aspects.

1. To what extent can meaningful-reading of graded readers help ESL learners acquire selected target word features?

## **METHOD**

### **Participants**

The sample selected for the study comprises of ninety ESL learners of Odia aged 15-16 from class XI. They shared a common linguistic, economic and social background with minimum seven years of exposure to English as a second language in formal contexts. Their ability to recognize and use the target language vocabulary was considered as a measure to establish homogeneity (linguistic) among the learners. For doing this, results from the administration of 3000 word level Vocabulary Levels Test (VLT) were obtained, and learners

who scored 27.5 or more were selected as the participants of the main study out of a total of 214 students.

### Target Words

Selection of target words (TWs) has always been a concern for researchers investigating acquisition of second/foreign language vocabulary as the degrees of knowledge (partial complete) related to each individual target word may vary for each individual learner. Hence it becomes very difficult to ensure that the target words are within the learners' existing level of vocabulary proficiency and at the same time unknown to them. Second, every language is endowed with a huge number of words, and the availability of such number poses a practical problem in terms of selecting a few potential target words which might be considered as essential for learners in their academic as well as personal sphere. Therefore, a total number of twenty words (see table 1) were selected as potential TWs from the first 1000 frequent words of the 3000 Core Academic Vocabulary List (Gardner & Davies, 2013) prepared from the analysis of the Corpus of Contemporary American English. Later, these twenty words assumed to be unknown to the learners were embedded in sentential level contexts where the learners were supposed to match their meanings in a matching type task as part of the diagnostic test.

Table 1 Potential target words

<b>Verb</b>		<b>noun</b>		<b>Adjective</b>
Implement	Abandon	Dilemma	Fragment	Apparent
Constitute	Advocate	Instance	Perspective	Subsequent
Attribute	Comprise	Prejudice	Precision	Strategic
Endeavor	Manipulate	Dichotomy	Constraint	Substantial

### Reading materials

The reading texts (appendix A) used to investigate the above stated issue were very crucial for several reasons. First, the saliency of the target words needed to be controlled for overall meaning of the text(s). Second, the texts must be prepared in such a way that the learners should be able to comprehend the texts on their own with regard to their vocabulary level. Next, the texts must be interesting and familiar and should not be lengthy and complex. Hence three texts were prepared around 200 words each with 90% of the words from the first 2000 words in

English and the rest from the next 1000 level. Each of the reading texts contained 150-200 words. All the three texts were run through lex-tutor for the analysis (appendix b).

### Instruments

#### *Word diagnostic test*

The word diagnostic test was proposed to select target words unknown to the learners but well within their existing level of proficiency. Therefore, each of the twenty potential target words was contextualized at sentential levels followed by matching type task where the learners were supposed to match the words with their corresponding meanings. The test was administered to twenty learners believed to be similar in all respects with the sample of the main study. A total number of eight words (see table 2) on which seventy percent of the responses found correct were selected as target words which featured in each of the reading texts.

Table 2 Target words

Verb		Noun		Adjective
Implement	Endeavor	Dilemma	Precision	Strategic
Constitute	Manipulate	Prejudice	Perspective	Substantial

#### *Immediate post-test*

The immediate post-test was designed to measure possible acquisition of six selected aspects of word knowledge. It consisted of six sub-tests each representing a particular aspect of lexical knowledge involved in the target words. The selected aspects are believed to be crucial for any learner to develop depth of vocabulary knowledge involved in a particular word. The selected aspects included both the receptive and productive dimensions to aspects such as spelling, parts of speech, lexical meaning and association (synonymy).

Table 3 Aspects of word knowledge

Order/Sub-test	Word knowledge	Item type
1	Productive knowledge of spelling (PS)	Dictation
2	Receptive knowledge of spelling (RS)	Objective
3	Receptive knowledge of parts of speech (RP)	Objective
4	Receptive knowledge of meaning (RM)	Matching



5	Receptive knowledge of association (RA)	Objective
6	Productive knowledge of parts of speech (PP)	Sentence formation

In sub-test 1, the learners were supposed to listen twice to the dictation of each target word and write its spelling. In the following sub-test they had to ensure that they chose the correct spelling of the target word from three options. In sub-test 3, learners' receptive knowledge of the parts of speech was measured by instructing the learner choose the correct grammatical category of the target word (whether a noun, adjective or verb) from contextualized phrases taken from the texts they just finished reading. The following sub-test intended to measure whether the learners would be able to match the target words with their corresponding meanings in a matching-type task. Next, sub-test 5 aimed to test learners' ability to find a word closest to the target word in meaning (synonym) from three given options. In the final sub-test, the learners were asked to use the target words in their proper grammatical category, as used in the texts, in sentences of their own. The sub-tests were all stapled together except the first sub-test just to ensure that the learners do not crossover to other sub-tests to get the correct spelling.

### **Pilot study**

The pilot study was conducted with twenty learners, assumed to be parallel with the main sample, to check their response to some factors related to the texts and sub-tests. In the first instance, they were provided all the three reading texts and were asked to rate whether the texts were interesting, lengthy, complex and unfamiliar. This was followed by the administration of the immediate post-test. In this case, the learners were asked whether the sub-tests were familiar in format and too difficult to respond. In addition, responses were also sought from them regarding the instruction provided to respond to each sub-test. Moreover, they were asked whether they had some knowledge of the eight target words previously to which all of them responded negative. Hence based on their positive response on the factors related to the texts and tasks and on the target words, they were retained for the main study without any modification.

### **Procedure**

From the administration of the 3000 word level VLT a total number of ninety students were selected from 214 based on their score (27.5 or more from a maximum score of 30). Next, they were provided the three texts to read and to ensure that the learners avoid paying attention

to the target words and work on them for meaning they were told that the reading would follow a reading comprehension test. In this was it was supposed that the reading was kept meaning-focused. Soon after they finished reading all the three texts, they were given the immediate post-test instead of the reading comprehension test as told earlier.

### **Data analysis**

In order to answer the research question regarding the acquisition of selected target word properties, the participants' scores on the six vocabulary sub-tests were submitted to Microsoft excel for the descriptive analysis. The analysis would show the mean scores and the standard deviation calculated for each sub-test and would show on how effectively learners acquired each aspect of word knowledge.

### **Results and Discussion**

The below table (table 4) provides the mean scores and SD calculated on each sub-test which carried a total maximum mark of eight. At the level of orthography, learners' performance on the productive aspect of spelling seemed to be lower compared to their performance on the receptive one. This could be due to the fact that the sound-symbol correspondence in the target language often does not match and production requires a lot of mental manipulation. However, in the case of parts of speech, learners' performance on the productive aspect remained better than the receptive test. This might be possible for learners experienced the target words in contexts they were familiar with; and the co-text surrounding each target word might have also helped them to come up with their own unlike the receptive test where the learners were supposed to find out their grammatical category from isolated phrases. At the level of semantics, learners could acquire the lexical meanings of the target words relatively better than finding words closest in meaning to the target words. However, it should be noted that on all the sub-tests learners displayed a better rate of acquisition considering the time allotted to them and the task condition under which they performed.

The discussion of the results provides significant facets to our understanding of how learners acquire vocabulary. First, learners learn better when words are contextualized and repeated. This helps learners extend the use of the newly learnt words to novel contexts, thus, enabling them retain the words for a longer period of time. Second, reception precedes production. In order to use the target word features productively one must ensure that the said

knowledge has been consolidated well into the mental lexicon which is possible only when the learner encounters and experiences the word in written and spoken discourses first. Third, the level of cognitive load and involvement required to acquire a particular aspect of word knowledge varies from aspect to aspect. As evident from the analysis, the cognitive load required to acquire the orthographic properties of a word seem to be lesser when the acquisition of the semantic properties of the word is in question.

Table 3 Mean scores (M) and Standard deviation (SD) calculated on each sub-test

Order/Sub-test	Word knowledge	Mean	SD
1	Productive knowledge of spelling (PS)	4.80	2.11
2	Receptive knowledge of spelling (RS)	6.86	1.37
3	Receptive knowledge of parts of speech (RP)	5.07	1.93
4	Receptive knowledge of meaning (RM)	4.80	2.67
5	Receptive knowledge of association (RA)	4.56	1.54
6	Productive knowledge of parts of speech (PP)	5.91	1.59

## Conclusion

The acquisition of vocabulary is not an all or nothing phenomenon. There are several cognitive processes and conditions which make acquisition a complex process. Reading is just one of the modes of acquiring vocabulary in which learners are exposed to target vocabulary several times and in contexts which demand construction of meaning. In view of the significant amount of learning occurred through reading of graded readers, it can be argued that such practice should be introduced in classrooms or similar contexts to enable learners enhance their repertoire of target vocabulary. The scope for research is undoubtedly large when it comes to investigate the relationship between reading and acquisition of vocabulary. It is possible that learners can go beyond what is expected of her to acquire; and eventually, it becomes difficult to be accountable for that learning in research. Hence the need to bridge the gap between instructions and acquisition in teaching-learning contexts becomes inevitable. Research to understand the possible strategies and the various knowledge sources learners make use of to acquire vocabulary can be promoted in second language vocabulary acquisition (SLVA) research, and reading as a skill can help researchers build insights into the said proposition.

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**Appendix A (Sample text)**

For some people science and religion have historically been in conflict. So, man finds himself in a **dilemma** of choosing the one over the other. If he chooses religion, he will take pride in it and in the subsequent moments will develop bias against science and vice-versa. This growing gap between science and religion has led both to **constitute** two different groups of people with opposing views. What contributes to the gap between science and religion is the practice man holds. He surrenders to religion but will always **endeavor** to live by science. Clearly, science makes **substantial** contributions to life and its comforts; and religion provides a divine **perspective**. But in some cases clever godmen can **manipulate** him as he lacks precision in his thoughts. Therefore, there is a need for a **strategic** choice combining science and religion. The need is to **implement** a plan with a right mix of religion and science.

**Appendix B**

(Lextutor analysis of the sample text)

5/16/2015

VP table output

	<u>Families</u>	<u>Types</u>	<u>Tokens</u>	<u>Percent</u>
K1 Words (1-1000):	59	67	126	81.82%
Function:	...	...	(75)	(48.70%)
Content:	...	...	(51)	(33.12%)
> Anglo-Sax	...	...	(17)	(11.04%)
=Not Greco-Lat/Fr Cog:	...	...		
K2 Words (1001-2000):	8	8	9	5.84%
> Anglo-Sax:	...	...	(3)	(1.95%)
1k+2k		...	...	(87.66%)
AWL Words (academic):	10	11	11	7.14%
> Anglo-Sax:	...	...	()	(0.00%)
Off-List Words:	<u>2</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5.19%</u>
	77+?	94	154	100%

LINKING WRITING DEVELOPMENT WITH EMOTIONS: TOWARDS A PERSON-  
CENTRED FRAMEWORK OF TEACHING WRITING

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Dr. Barkha Chhetry

*Abstract*

In the domain of language learning, there has been an upsurge of learner-centric pedagogies derived from the realization that emotions play a significant role in enhancing learning. The understanding that positive emotions is the foundation of learning, informs most of the recent innovative strategies. However, a reading into the literature on writing skills reveal that despite the growing body of research into the issues relating to writing, there is a dearth of research in the area of emotions and their influence in writing. Consequently, this paper is intended to be an inquiry into the affective dimension of the writing process. It seeks to arrive at a conceptual framework of teaching writing which would embed the emotional aspects of learning.

**Introduction**

The importance of effective writing skill cannot be ignored in today's era. In both the academic and professional contexts, the ability to write well positively correlates with success. While proficient writing skill is continuously becoming recognized as a job requirement in the competitive job market, writing is the underlining performance that determines the students' overall academic achievement. However, it is also a skill that is difficult to master. Even great writers have often mused on the difficulties of writing. One of the most celebrated American novelist Hemingway says that '*We are all apprentices in a craft where no one ever becomes a master.*'

In the educational domain, writing is a skill that is very challenging for both students and teachers. Universities worldwide share the same concern of poor academic writing skills among students. This is because of the complexities involved in the process of writing. Writing is a lot more than presenting accurate grammatical features and choosing appropriate vocabulary. It is a process that involves the act of giving life to the inherent ideas with the right choice of words

while trying to avoid ambiguity. Unlike speech, writing is a highly demanding task which requires writers to pay attention to various aspects to achieve clarity and purpose.

‘Writing’ continues to be a problem area that students and teachers alike grumble about in almost all institutions. Students’ attitude towards writing is often ‘avoidance’, which greatly increases the teachers’ problem of dealing with writing. In our own classrooms, we have encountered students who would keep the writing tasks in abeyance until the last date and those who would completely boycott the writing classes. Such behaviours are a result of a negative attitude towards writing where writing is viewed as burdensome and strenuous, which can be altered, but only, through encounters with writing. The challenge then is in making the ‘students-writing’ encounters as variedly interesting as possible, with each encounter giving them a sense of achievement and development.

### **An Overview of the Domain of L2 Writing**

There is undoubtedly a huge body of research in the domain of L2 writing, but ‘writing’ continues to be a problematic area for students and teachers alike. The dilemma of making students write better continues to plague teachers and educators in schools as well as colleges and universities. Historically, the domain of teaching writing has seen the product approach and later the process approach. The product approach viewed and treated writing as a mechanical writing exercise and followed the traditional approach of learning. The process approach to writing emerged as a reaction to this traditional approach of writing with the understanding that writing could be much more than simply putting down structures on paper, that it could actually involve a process through which students need to brainstorm, generate ideas, negotiate meaning, organise details and revise their drafts around the late 1970’s to the 1980’s. The process approach in the words of Brown (2001) allows students to manage their own writing by giving students a chance to think as they write. There is no doubt that the process approach to writing has roped in a lot of benefits in the field of L2 writing but it has also been criticised on various grounds.

Till date there has been no consensus on the most effective methodology or approach for teaching L2 writing. In other words, no single approach had been able to achieve the desired outcome as the weaknesses or limitations of each approach seem to impede learners’ writing skills. One undisputed reason is because of the complexity of writing skill itself. Another reason



would perhaps be the failure of the existing approaches in recognising key issues concerning learning. The contention here is then, that writing approaches should recognise the affective factors at play in the writing process instead of placing so much emphasis on cognitive factors.

### **The Role of Emotions in Writing**

Thomas (1992) in a study explored the emotional experience of ESL writers and concluded that emotions can have either a “facilitative or debilitating” influence on the writing process of ESL students. Further, in an L2 writing study, Hassan (2001) found a significant negative relationship between writing apprehension and the quality of compositions. In another study Balemir (2009) pointed out that writing anxiety occurs due to language complexity in general and the complexity of writing as a skill in particular. Lin and Ho (2009) went further and identified some of the anxiety provoking factors such as *time constraint*, *evaluation*, *peer competition*, *writing subject* and *writing format*.

On the other hand, McGroarthy (1996) stated that learners with positive attitudes and motivation towards writing for academic purposes experience success unlike those with negative attitudes. Similarly, Myles (2002) identified factors such as *motivation* and *attitudes* as influencing second language writing while stating that if students are motivated to write in L2, they will develop a higher level of proficiency and positive attitudes, which can have a positive effect on their writing.

The place of emotions in the process of writing implies the importance and need for teaching methods and environments that can trigger positive emotions in the student writers, an approach that is concerned with the learner as a whole and a classroom in which students learn as a whole person, with mind and emotions in harmony with each other. Writing is a task that demands an active thought processing which is dependent on the affective state. The teaching of writing should therefore take into consideration both the cognitive and affective state of learners so as to achieve more desirable results.

### **An Overview of the Person-centred Approach**

The person-centred approach developed by Carl Rogers (1969) is widely known and adopted in the field of psychology, counselling and education. In the field of education, this

approach emphasises that the goal of education should be facilitation of change and learning which goes beyond cognitive and intellectual education to include the education of the whole person. It has its roots in humanism and has been developed out of humanistic values and principles. It is an approach which shares similar themes of learner centeredness with the recent innovative changes in the field of education at large. It views people as striving towards meaningful growth and development wherever possible. In the words of Thorne (26), *“the whole conceptual framework of Carl Rogers rests on his profound experience that human beings become increasingly trustworthy once they feel at a deep level that their subjective experience is both respected and progressively understood”*.

The Person-centred approach to learning places importance on the emotional environment of learning, a climate of trust in which willingness to learn can be nourished and enhanced. Such an environment, according to this approach will promote significant and meaningful learning. The implication here is that teaching should involve facilitation of learning rather than direct instruction, involving learners in problem-solving which may require them to hypothesise, ask questions and discuss lines of enquiry and to achieve this, it is fundamental for teachers to provide an emotionally warm environment.

### **Establishing a Person-centred Framework of Teaching Writing**

It may be stated that the teaching of writing is a domain that needs to integrate the learner-friendly approach. One viable way of making the writing classrooms more learner-friendly is to adopt the person-centred approach towards teaching of writing. Below is a conceptual framework for introducing a person-centred framework in the writing classrooms;

#### **1. Emotionally Safe Classrooms**

Writing is a skill that cannot be instantly mastered and hence the writing environment should instil confidence in the students to take risks in their writing. The possibility of improvement is greatly increased when students are allowed to make mistakes and learn from them. If the learning atmosphere provides positive experience, then they can gradually learn how to take control of their negative emotions in an attempt to overcome obstacles in their learning.

**2. Authentic and Engaging writing tasks**

Teaching writing authentically simply means teaching within the context of the students' interest. If writing tasks are authentic or are attached with authentic qualities then student engagement will increase in which process, learners' motivation will be enhanced, and they will feel empowered to write. Authentic writing is all about making writing more meaningful and more relevant to the learners

**3. Making writing as an active classroom activity**

In the traditional classroom, writing had often been viewed as an individual activity that should be done in silence and was evaluated only by its degree of grammatical correctness. In most classrooms writing is rarely integrated into the lesson plan and is relegated to homework. The obvious need and our argument here is to view writing as a communicative process and transform mere writing activities to communicative activities. It simply implies making writing a real communicative activity which allows learners to engage in the tasks through brainstorming or interaction with peers to negotiate the meaning of the tasks.

**4. Personalised Teacher Feedback**

Most teachers usually follow the traditional feedback style which is very general, vague and mechanical such as "need improvement", "rewrite", "not satisfactory" along with red-ink marks all over the students' writing without any specific guidance as to where and how they can improve. These kinds of feedback are not only vague and insufficient but also de-motivating to the students. The contention that this paper makes is that teachers can make use of their feedback as a guideline for improvement at the same time as a source of encouragement and motivation for students. The feedback can begin with acknowledging what the student is good at followed by advice on what should be done for improvement. It takes into consideration issues relating to the students' writing at the same time seeking to motivate them.

### 5. Alternatives in assessment

Alternatives in assessment may include self-assessment, peer-assessment, portfolio assessment, self-reflection essays and so on, which allows students to reflect upon their own learning process and to understand learning strategies or styles that they need to embark on. Such techniques in assessment allow students to evaluate themselves while reflecting on their own learning process. The ultimate purpose is to embed learning with assessment and evaluation and to increase student-centeredness in the teaching-learning scenario.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, it may be reaffirmed that writing is a skill wrought with many problems, but it is also a skill that can be taught and developed. Teachers can help students write better by motivating and encouraging them towards the '*write*' direction. While there is no ready-made recipe for making students effective writers, writing consistently and constantly is the key to effective writing. This paper is an attempt at exploring the ways in which students can be provided writing opportunities to develop their writing skills. It has attempted to establish the undeniable relationship between the cognitive and affective dimension in L2 writing while raising the need for approaches in the teaching of writing to be more learner-centred. It sought to address the continuing dilemma of making students writer through the inclusion of person-centred approach within the framework of teaching writing. Recognizing that writing is a skill that needs to be treated with more seriousness and attention in the classrooms, this paper has sought to make a call to teachers and educators to embed the learner-centric paradigm in the teaching of writing to help the writing classrooms become more vibrant and engaging.

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**CHILDREN LEARNING THE WAYS OF LIFE IN THE JUANG  
COMMUNITY: A CASE STUDY OF TWO JUANG DOMINATED VILLAGES OF  
KEONJHAR, ODISHA**

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**Jharana Mishra**

Every child is gifted, gifted with the inalienable right to explore the world, to seek information, to go beyond what he knows empirically, into the realm of imagination. Foster this with stories and songs with poems and parables; with love and laughter and in the course of growing up he will also develop a lively imagination. The various games played by the children of the Juang society cannot be considered as mere play of games; but it is a source of learning apart from being a source of pleasure. All the games have got some social significance. Children become intimately acquainted with their socio-cultural fabric and learn how to play appropriate roles in upholding their age-old traditions. It also helps them in finding their own identity within the ambit of their socio-cultural surroundings.

The ST population is estimated to have reached 88.8 million in 2001, which is 8.6 per cent of the country's total population. Of this, 1.32 million (1.95%) belong to Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) who are more marginalized than other ST population. They have a heterogeneous cultural and economic pattern of life, largely conditioned by the ecological settings and ethnic environment. Inevitably, these leave the effect upon socio-economic development, as well as education. For centuries, the tribal communities lived in isolation from the social mainstream, maintaining the cultural identity and transmitting their skills and knowledge through oral traditions from one generation to the other. However, in India, during the course of the last hundred years or so, the rapid advancement in transport and communications affected these tribes to some extent. It is impossible to isolate these communities from the effect of cultural and technological changes taking place around them. The Juang is one of the primitive tribal groups exclusively found in Orissa. Linguistically they are Munda speaking people (Munda being one of the Austro-Asiatic language families) Each Juang village is an autonomous socio-political unit managed by a set of traditional leaders and a corporate body of village elders called *barabhai*. Their economy centers round shifting

cultivation, which is the main source of livelihood. To a large extent this is supplemented by some other economic pursuits such as food gathering, hunting and wage earning. Food crisis is one of their major problems. The Juang family needs the contribution of each and every capable family member in this struggle for their existence and in the struggle the contribution of Juang children cannot be undermined. The Juang are far away from the mainstream. They still stick to their traditional pattern of life style.

Studies of Indian Psychology stress that the child grows up in intimate emotional contact with the mother and other mothering persons, because conjugal martial relationships are de-emphasized in the joint household, a woman looks to her children to satisfy some of her intimacy needs. Her bond to her children, especially her sons but also her daughters, becomes enormously strong and lasting. A child is suckled on demand, sometimes for years, sleeps with a parent or grandparent, is bathed by doting relatives, and is rarely left alone. Massaged with oil, carried about, gently toilet-trained, and gratified with treats, the young child develops an inner core of well-being and a profound sense of expectation of protection from others. Such indulgent and close relationships produce a symbiotic mode of relating to others and effect the development of a person with a deeply held sense of involvement with relatives, so vital to the Indian family situation. Because children have proved that when they are involved, they can make a difference in the world around them. They have ideas, experience and insights that enrich adult understanding and make a positive contribution to adult actions. When the drive is neither respected nor nurtured, when children are excluded or ignored by adults, their potential to contribute to their communities is compromised. Such children are likely to act as they have been treated, i.e. as social outcasts – with their energies and creativity directed into subcultures and away from creating a cohesive community. It is not if children participate, but how they participate, that is a critical issue now, when so many millions of children are hungry, diseased or exploited. It is quality of their interactions with their social environment that is vital and the paper tries to find out how external forces are influencing the rich Juang tradition, the paper makes a humble attempt in understanding the socialization process of the Juang children,. This is part of my ethnographic research that was conducted in a two tribal dominated villages namely Guptaganga and Gonasika of Banspal block of Keonjhar district of Orissa.

**Growing up**

Close knit communities like the Juangs interweave their forms of cultural expressions. Painting, wood carving, songs, festivals, birth, death, animals and forests are components of a cycle which metamorphose together to give their philosophy and understanding of the cosmos a holistic dimension.

*Ninjiya Gaon - (Our Village)*

*"Uli tulia nal kantua ninjiya san gaon  
Ale, alsam, bangru, jambu lagare swad.*

*Sang jalare man kusire dulite kaleke anje.*

*Majadang duwar dal adaj kusire ande anje.*

*Pathsala the padhke path eanch anch jala.*

*Gadag bilte lakuke kiti jati jati pasal"*

English:

On the foothills besides the stream lies our small village. Mango, jackfruits, grapes and flowers are so sweet. With a joyous heart I play with my friends. The sound of the changu from the *mandaghar* makes me happy, I go to the school along with my friends and I also participate in agricultural activities and reap a rich harvest.

This is how a Juang child describes his social life in the village. The children love their natural surrounding and growing-up in a natural environment makes them capable of playing the future role of an adult. . For the Juang there is an invisible link between the fertility of crops and fertility of their womenfolk. Both are engaged in continuing the creative act that not only brought human life into being, but also made land productive. If a young wife conceives she becomes reciprocally a symbol of blessing to her husbands family land.

The mother has received blessing of her husband's ancestors. The marriage is now secure. She is now pregnant. Her dread of barrenness is removed, for were she barren, after some years the husband would have been within his rights to send her back to her parents and



take a second wife. Nevertheless, for nine months (or “ten months”) she is creature of two worlds, the bridge between the living and the unborn, who is now known only to the ancestors. Certain safeguards must, therefore, surround her in the form of taboos.

Since food is very limited for most of the year, the Juangs observe very few food taboos during the time of the pregnancy. She may not eat meat from either of the community's source, i.e. from an animal sacrifice or from a kill in hunting. She must also avoid anything that might startle or frighten her, these being “little deaths”. She must, in fact, keep away from any reminders of death, for then a pregnancy may lead to a miscarriage, a still-birth or even the death of the mother. These tragedies are believed to be due to the activity of evil spirits. If at any point the pregnant woman becomes sick, suffers from debility or has any antenatal problems, the priest or the traditional village medical practitioner may prescribe further taboos and rituals to safeguard her well being. Otherwise she continues her strenuous daily work in the home, the hill fields or gathering wild produce from the forest until the final stages of pregnancy. She also continues sexual relations with her husband until close to her confinement.

The birth of a child is a matter that requires no assistance from outsiders. At the time of childbirth the husband's mother is usually in-charge along with at least one other woman from the village who is called a traditional birth attendant. She does the more minor jobs for the mother and infant, but it is also her privilege to announce the sex of the child to the waiting community and to name it after a deceased member from the paternal grandparents' generation. The paternal grandmother or great-aunt severs the umbilical cord. This is done with a knife. The father buries the placenta behind the house. The birth attendant smears the stump with turmeric paste and ties a protective cord round the infant's neck and another round the mother's neck. These are worn for about two weeks. If the child dies before the umbilical cord has fallen off, it is not cremated but buried without the usual rites because it is not yet fully recognized as a family member. Age-grade plays a vital role in Juang society. The baby is now given a warm bath, and after that is massaged near the fire. The birth attendant receives payment in the form of paddy, a chicken and food. If the child is a male the payment is double. This highlights the preference for a male child. In case of a difficult delivery, the patient squats while the attendant massages her abdomen. That failing, the traditional medical practitioner is called in. He offers prayers and tries herbal remedies. If these also fail, it is a sign that an evil or evil spirits are at work. After

surmising on what exactly may be the cause – may be an offended ancestor spirit – he takes the necessary steps to remedy the situation. An ancestor is pacified through a chicken sacrifice or offerings of liquor, tobacco and rice; otherwise through reversal procedures directed towards the person believed to be sending out the evil eye.

The birth makes both the parents ritually unclean, so they are not allowed to enter any home, or touch anyone in their homes, or handle things of common use. During and immediately following the birth, the mother must not cook; which is done for the two of them by the husband. Both attend a ritual of purification the next day when they bath and wash their cloths in the stream, and the mother also washes the mat she has been sleeping on. She also throws away her old cooking pots, replacing them with new ones. On return from the stream the father does the Juangs' traditional act of self-purification by placing a copper coin in a pot of water. He sprinkles this water around and inside the house and over himself and his wife. Then he offers husked rice and turmeric to the two deities, the Creator (sky) and the Mother (earth). He may also make the sacrifice of a chicken to the ancestors and local deities on behalf of the new born child and his other children if they are already there. Then the parents ceremonially greet the child by dipping their fingers in turmeric powder and very lightly pinching its forehead and chin. The mother duly purified now may resume cooking, but she must observe certain food taboos; she must eat only rice, greens and fried salt, and certainly no meat or fish. She stays in seclusion and is restricted from doing any hard work. She resumes her normal diet and routine work only about four or five months or when the child begins to crawl. These months give her enough leisure to feed and care for the child constantly. The taboos, the baby would suffer from stomach trouble and diarrhea, which are common. These are the most common cause of infant death, because they result in rapid dehydration.

By Juang rule, the child's parents must observe continence until the child begins to stand and tries to walk. Though a name may have been given to the child earlier, a public name giving ceremony marks the end of this probationary period. By staying alive for several months, the infant has proved itself to be no temporary or destructive interloper from the spirit world, but a genuine human birth into the family. Family membership cannot be recognized, however, without a rite of integration for the child and alongside this, the end of the required period of segregation of the mother. Part of the reason for her remaining separate until then is not simply the belief about her earlier physical impurity, but is due to her close tie with the infant during its

period of marginality between the two worlds. Difficult labour is ascribed to the evil eye of the enemies or to the ill will of some malevolent spirits dwelling on hills, forests and streams. If displeased the ancestral spirits also create countless troubles in case of childbirth. To counteract the evil eye and to neutralize the effect of sins or ill temper of the ancestors a number of magical rites are performed. The *Raulia* (ghost-finder) is summoned to perform rites to expel the ghosts. He first gives a few medicinal herbs to the expectant mother to help ease delivery. If this fails the *Raulia* gets confirmed that some evil spirits are creating troubles. The *Raulia* measures three reeds to detect the spirit or the person obstructing the delivery. If the evil maker is detected to be a sorcerer the *Raulia* performs magical rites to counteract or to neutralize the evils played by the sorcerer. If the labour pain is believed due to the whim of some displeased ancestor sacrifice of chicken, tobacco, liquor and cooked rice are made to avert his ill temper. The other spirits causing troubles are also properly propitiated to help easy delivery.

If the baby is male one the *sutrunihari* shouts saying that the child is *sengan* or firewood (meaning male child); and in case of a female child she is referred to as *alak* (leaves). The midwife cuts the naval cord of the newborn, anoints turmeric paste and bathes the baby in tepid water. She cleans the mother and the apartment, and lights a fire to warm the baby and the mother. The mother is advised not to expose herself to rain or cold. The midwife is given remuneration, which consists of five to ten *pai* of paddy; one chicken, and leaf cupful of cooked-rice and curry. In case a son is born she may be given extra amount of one to two rupees and a brass bangle for her services. Though Juangs hail the birth of a child as a happy event, there are, however, situations when a birth is not considered desirable, as before a marriage or too soon after a previous birth. But there are also certain elderly women in some villages who supply a root, which can prevent childbirth.

### **Fostering a Child**

In order to avoid the premature death of a child whose elder brother and sisters died young the parents may ceremonially hand over the child to the *bara bhaiki* (village elders) and *mabhouniki* (village women). The Juangs believe that if the child is ceremonially made over to the care of the villagers it restores health and happiness. On a particular day the father intimates his intention to the villagers, and all the elderly men and women assemble in his house. The *Raulia* reads omens and detects the agency creating troubles to the family members of the affected

person. An earthen doll is made representing the evil maker and the *nagam* (priest) makes offerings praying *Basumata* (Earth Goddess); *Dharma Devta* (Sun God), *Gramsiri* (Village Deity) and other deities. He first draws a circle on the floor with turmeric powder. The doll of the troublemaker is placed inside the turmeric circle and the *nagam* offers husked-rice grains, molasses and liquor to him praying for the health of the child. Three pairs of split *sal* twigs, measuring three to four inches in length and about an inch in diameter are kept on the hands of the image and the *nagam* tilts the image to make the split twigs fall down on the floor, while doing this he pours liquor before the image and prays the image to forget anger and take back his curse. All the three pairs of the *sal* twigs are thrown from the hands of the image pair by pair until all the three pairs fall down in a definite manner that is viewed to be auspicious. Of the two split pieces of the twigs one should fall down with the flat surface down and the other one reversely in order to indicate good luck. After this the women bath the child in turmeric water and make him to sit on the lap of women. They contribute one or two beads from their necklace and make a necklace for the child that is tied around his neck. They put turmeric powder on the cheek of the child and bless for his good health. They give a new name to the child and announce him to be their son. The elderly men and women assemble together and perform a liquor ritual. They pour liquor on the ground in the name of the deities and the *pitruki* (ancestors) and sprinkle a little over the head of the child wishing him a smooth life. While performing the liquor ritual they pray:

“O *Basumata*, *Dharam Devta*, *Gramsiri*, *Pitru Pitaki* (ancestors). From today the child ceases to be the son of his father; he becomes the son of the villagers. From today we pour all our blessings over him. Let him be free from all diseases and let him lead a happy life, if any body tries to endanger him, let that person be eaten by tiger, and let his heart burst; and let his tongue be uprooted.”

Though the child is ceremonially handed over to the villagers he still retains all his normal relations with his family members. He continues to remain with his parents, and is fed by them as usual. After he grows up, and before his marriage, his parents present about one or two *khandi* of husked rice, a goat, and liquor worth two to three rupees to the villagers to get back their son ritually. A feast is held and the food is distributed among all the families equally. Apart from singing and dancing, the community and the family does not duly recognize

any other creative activities of the children. But a person who is good at agricultural operations and household works is always appreciated.

### Daily Schedule of Activities of Children

Children in the age group of 0-6 and 7-12 get up from the bed at around 5.00 A.M. but the children in the age group of 13-18 (especially girls) usually get up as early as 4.00 AM. After meeting the calls of nature from 6 A.M. to 8 A.M. older children (7-12 and 13-18) attend the younger ones (0-6) and girls assist mother in their household work. After taking their morning meal the older children prepare to go to work with their parents. They do not come back home for the mid-day meal. Small children gather to play around village and girls assist mothers in performing domestic work. After the evening meal the younger ones go to bed but the grown up boys and girls engage in gossiping, joking, *changu* dance and singing.

Laxman Juang a 15-year-old boy said:

Going to the forest has taught me a lot of things; things like working in close co-ordination with others and self-reliance. The forest has also given me a lot of beautiful moments. Do you know there are so many types of animals in the forest? Once I saw a tiger. It was terrifying but exiting. Unfortunately I am not good at sketching so I am not able to get the exact image on paper. Yet, it was quite an experience, one that I enjoyed tremendously.

While analyzing the daily schedule of activities and the annual calendar of activities of the Juangs, it is found that children are involved in most of the day-to-day activities of the Juang community. The children through informal social group activities are taught their role in their own community. Such activities further help the children to learn the cultural practices of the community. Therefore, it has rightly been said that, a man's culture is what he has, the totality of his life and interests. This is especially true of the Juang people because they are still not much exposed to outside influences. Traditional yet, somewhere open in their attitude, the two mix-up to give a unique distinction to this tribe. And growing up in a Juang village with its own social system, cultural patterns, customs, religious belief, marriage system all have their own uniqueness.

Juang children's contribution to the family economy often as an invisible force is noteworthy. The household works are considered as the monopoly of the women. The Juang boys are not concerned with this work. The girls from an early age start working at home. They do all the household work such as cleaning the house, washing the cloths, cleaning the utensils, bringing water etc. Besides they also collect firewood from the forest. But their work goes unnoticed as it is mainly confined in domestic sphere.

The routine work of the Juang children, centre rounds their economic activities. It is very systematic and regular. Work in their society starts before sun rises and continues till late in the evening or early part of the night when they go to bed. In the daily round of labour the Juangs extract work from all, young and old, male, female and children by assigning specific works. The women and grown-up children always lend a hand in all food getting activities. There is a division of labour along the sex line. The common practice is that the men attend to more arduous work whereas the women and the children do relatively lighter works. The men do the works requiring strength, whereas women do the works connected with preparation of food. Ploughing, sowing seeds by broadcasting, thatching, tree felling are exclusively the works of men whereas weeding, transplanting, reaping and threshing are done jointly by men and women. Both the sexes including the children and old men and women go to the forest for collection of minor forest produce. During slack season one may see the men spending time leisurely, while the women are always engaged in some work or the other. Grown up boys and girls assist their parents in the field and small boys and girls do lighter work like weeding in the field, looking after infants and collecting fruits. The girls help their mothers in domestic works like cleaning the houses, cooking, grinding, and pounding grains. The Juangs support their economy by collecting minor forest produce. Animal rearing, cottage industries and wage earning are their other subsidiary occupation.

Majority of Juang non-school going children are wage laborers, they work in agricultural fields and various construction sites. Some of them also work in hotels of Keonjhar. The school going boys do not work during the school hours and school days but in the long vacations, they earn money by taking up some occupation. Both girls and boys in the age group of 12-18 years go for wage earning. They also help their parents in agricultural field. Children in the age group of 5-11 years mainly collect minor forest produces (MFP). The Juangs follow the age and sex wise

distribution of labour. The heavier work such as cutting trees, ploughing, hunting, etc. fall on the shoulder of boys while lighter work such as domestic work, cooking, thrashing are done by the girls. Certain works such as clearing the forest, transplanting, harvesting, and collection of minor forest produces are done by both boys and girls. All these works are seasonal by nature. The construction works are undertaken mainly in summer and winter, but once the agricultural season starts they come back to the field. The pre-agricultural activities start with the selection of hill slopes for cultivation. The children help their parents in their field in felling trees and cleaning bushes, piling of felled trees and firing, ploughing and sowing, transplantation and weeding and finally harvesting. In all these activities children have some contribution to make. Hence, in a Juang family the children start sharing the economic burden of their parents from an early age.

Children, like adults, gain their self-esteem through positive and active engagement with the world. A sense of respect and responsibility for self and others is a value that is lived from the early moments of life and experienced constantly in interaction with the world. Where we see instances of authentic child participation in the family, school, community and society, we hear children and young people tell us that they are more confident in themselves, more aware of the community and its problems, more committed to serving and working with others and more optimistic about the future and their role in it. The phenomenon of working children is invariably associated with poverty and is usually considered to be a by-product of under-development. The highest incidence of child labour is said to be in the poorest countries of the world, and is the poorest regions of those countries. Globalization, indebtedness and widening income gap between the rich and the poor countries may also exacerbate the problem. Several studies have pointed out that globalization does have a negative influence in the short term. Structural policies of adjustments have resulted in many developing countries spending less on basic services. However, a crucial distinction has to be made between child labour and child work. Child work should be used as the generic term, and should refer to any type of work in any mode of employment relationship. The concept of work, which is description of a physical (or mental) involvement in a job, may be an activity which, rather than being harmful, is beneficial to the child in its formative socialization. The concept of labour, on the other hand, should be restricted to the production and services, which interfere with the normal development of children as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. There is a perception that quite

a lot of what has been subsumed under child labour, is actually work performed during a standard process of socialization and not associated with labour exploitation or interfering with the quality of development which the child in the given circumstances could expect. .

The groups and functionaries were well noted by Rout (1969-70) of the Tribal Research Bureau, Bhubaneswar, and some years ago. They are listed here with additions and amendments resulting from our recent fieldwork.

***Kangerki (boys and unmarried youth)***

- Bringing firewood for sacred fire in the Community House.
- Thatching and repairing the Community House and aiding in the reconstruction of the new building if the village site is changed.
- Making and restoring the traditional mud-relief pictures of persons or animals on the walls of the Community House. They collect mud of different colours from places nearby and also prepare colours from plants. Now-a-days, if there is a market nearby, they buy powdered colours.
- Installing the stone pillar symbolizing the presence of the guardian deity at the new village site.
- Making the sacred *changu* drums and the lesser drums, and keeping all drums in good repair.
- Jointly contributing a goat or a pig for important village rituals. These are bought with the earnings of the *kangerki* members engaged as a group in other villages.
- Cooking for certain guests on ritual days.
- Collecting paddy and other grains from every house for the common fund set aside to feed guests, who consist, among others, occasional visitors and invited groups of marriageable young women and dance visits from other villages; also packing this grain into fiber-rope baskets for storage in the Community House.
- Working on the land allotted to them for shifting cultivation, and storing the harvested grains as part of the village fund in the Community House, and keeping money gained from their cash crops to buy small presents for the visiting dancers.
- Helping the men to sweep, fetch water and cook at festivals and marriages.



- Helping any needy folk in the community to build or repair their houses when asked and even outsiders by carrying their baggage to the next nearest village.
- Beating the sacred drums overnight on ritual occasions, and at dances held periodically between ritual events, especially if the elders so request.
- Obeying their elected sponsors and the village elders in work and conduct.
- By available on hire as a community working party by their sponsors or by other villages, the wage payment is meant to go to the village fund.
- Bringing firewood to the houses of the bride or groom for marriages, and also for their sponsors and ritual elders on festive occasions.

***Selanki* (girls and young unmarried women)**

- Plastering the Community House and sweeping the dancing ground, every three or four days and always-on ritual occasions.
- Plastering the house of those who need help in building or maintaining them.
- Making leaf cups and plates for feasts and festivals, or for guests.
- Grinding spices and fetching water on festive occasions; husking paddy from the common fund, baking rice cakes for certain village rituals.
- Functioning as a community working party for women tasks in the preparation and cultivation of hill plots, etc.
- Dancing overnight on ritual and festive occasions.
- Obeying the elected sponsors, the widows and the village elders.

The life of a Juang is based on a nine-fold age-grade classification. According to this the male and female populations are divided into nine classes. The discrepancy between the biological and social age groups is bridged up within the framework of youth organization. The social norms do not favour an ordinary person to joke with anybody who stands in adjacent generation to him or her, but the *kangerki* and *selanki* of own, alternate, and adjacent generations are allowed to joke with each other within their own group. This is because, in a broad sense, all the *kangerki* are considered as brothers and all the *selanki* as sisters to each other.

After marriage, a *kanger* automatically steps into the status of a *kamathara kanger* but he continues to work and co-operate with the *kangerki* till he can afford to get himself detached from the association of the *kangerki* through a special observance. Right after the marriage the groom does not sleep with his wife. A new house is built for him and on the consummation day of the marriage he has to take farewell from the *kangerki* by giving them cakes, tobacco, and a mat.

After this formal observance the boy is permitted to sleep with his wife, but he still continues to be a regular member of the boy's dormitory and fulfils most of the obligations of his association group. When he wants to resign from the group of the *kangerki* he gives some rice and a chicken to the *kangerki* on the *Amba Nua* ritual day. It is after this only that he ceases to be a working member of the youth's group. Similar is the procedure for a girl to get herself detached from the membership of the youth organization. After her marriage and before she sleeps with her husband she visits the *kangerki* and *selanki* of her village to take farewell from them and offers them cakes, tobacco and a new mat.

Every age group is entrusted with special roles and responsibilities under the purview of the dormitory and youth organization. The boys and girls of the *Majang* choose a sponsor of their own, known as *tandakar* who acts as their guardian and moral adviser. Failing to do the duty, as prescribed by the norms of the society, is considered as a deviation for which the village elders punish the offenders.

The punishments are of the following four kinds: -

- Expulsion from the *Majang*.
- Physical punishment like standing on one leg holding the ears, putting the second finger in excreta, etc. in minor offences, and beating in case of adultery and incest.
- Fines of money, liquor, goat and rice.
- Verbal scolding and caution not to repeat the work again.

Both the girls and the boys are punished for failing to discharge their duties properly. The boys are generally punished for not bringing firewood to the *Majang* and for not obeying the village elders similarly the girls are found fault with if they do not plaster the *Majang* and sweep the plaza regularly. If first attracts the attention of the village elders when the boys or girls are

found guilty in neglecting their duties, they first accuse the *tandakar* for not supervising the work of the *kangerki* and *selanki*. Sometimes the *tandakar* is fined one or two rupees for the fault of the boys or the girls after which the blame falls on the actual offenders. One of the main features of the Juang youth organization is collective responsibility of its members. For negligence of one duty or for the failure to carryout any assigned task in case of one member of the dormitory, all the members of the organization are liable to be punished. They are fined, the fine being rice (generally one to two *khandi*), a goat or a pig, and about two to five rupees for liquor for the village elders. They collect these things from their own houses or borrow from some body on an arrangement to pay it off by working on the creditor's field. The fines are used for holding a feast in the village.

### Learning Through Rhythm and Movement

Children learn in a variety of ways. What is crucial is that the experiences are meaningful to the reality. Children's natural flair for experimenting with body and sound goes beyond the traditional rigor of the classical forms. They incorporate meaningful digressions and suggest "swaying like a tree" or "running like a deer" or "imitating mother when she is angry". Music and dance are effective tools to capture a child's attention. *Changu* drums hold supreme place among the Juang musical instruments due to three factors; the sacred value set upon this type of drum, the importance of rhythm in the Juang music, and the close-knit relationship in the village community calling for the rhythmic drum messages being easily heard and understood by all. The *changu* drums are large, shallow tambourines, two feet or more in diameter, with a single memberance of stretched deer hide, or more often goatskin. The outer hairs are carefully scraped from the hide, which is then stretched over the circular wooden frame and attached all around the sharply pointed hard wood nails. The Juangs also use a kettledrum and a thin, barrel-shaped double memberance drum, and both of these are of cowhide and resemble those commonly found in Orissa. The *changu*, which is hung from the left shoulder of the drummer and covers the upper half of the body, is beaten with the fingers and palm of the hand. Usually two or three drummers move together, stepping, turning, stooping and straightening in the closest possible harmony. When not in use, the *changu* drums hang from horn or wooden pegs on the walls of the Community House, for they are sacred to the deities residing there and may be played only by the men and the *kangerki*. Their most common uses are two: first is for religious rites and festivals, and second is for the occasion of visits by the young women of *bandhu* village.

Always before being played and at intervals throughout a performance, the instruments are warmed at the Community House fire to tighten the skin and so produce the full sound.

**Conclusion**

The anthropological study on education has challenged the traditional ideas regarding education, opened new avenues in the realm of psychological investigation, resulting in the refinement of cross-cultural studies to understand the educational pattern and motivation of any primitive society. Margaret Mead (1928) was the pioneer in this field, whose work attracted a number of psychologists and anthropologists towards the subject. The researcher's emphasis lies on the fact that the child born with a clean state of mind and is molded by its culture to fit into its society. Games played by Juang children has got tremendous educational value, which creates new aptitudes in them and the imitation and pretence practiced by children cultivate power significance and the learning of things they have to do in their practical life, Acharya (1993). This is also observed in the case of Juang children of Keonjhar District of Orissa. The various games played by the children of the Juang society cannot be considered as mere play of games; but it is a source of learning apart from being a source of pleasure. By playing the games with the playmates they build themselves for their future life. They form some ideas about their social life, such as rituals and the work they have to perform in their matured life. Manipulating, experimenting, trying out, exploring, discovering new things and communicating, the child develops by employing all these strategies. The eagerness to learn is inherent in the child. The Juangs believe that providing a suitable environment, assisting, appreciating, supporting and being part of the excitement is what is parenting all about.

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## EXPLORING ESL LEARNERS LANGUAGE SPEAKING ANXIETY: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

**Dr. Suraj Nandkumar Dhumal**

### *Abstract*

The present research study attempts to explore the factors of language speaking anxiety among the ESL learners. The investigation of the study was centered on two research questions: To what extent the ESL learners' experience language speaking anxiety? and Which factors of language anxiety have a strong influence on the ESL learners' classroom speaking anxiety? The study employed a mixed methods research design and the data was collected through FLCAS, learner questionnaire, learner interviews, classroom observations, audio recordings, and reflective journals. The quantitative data was analyzed with SPSS software and qualitative data was analyzed through thematic coding. The findings of the study demonstrated that ESL learners experienced language anxiety at three different levels: low anxious, moderate anxious and high anxious. What was most surprising about these findings was the percentage of the learners in each category: low anxious 20%, moderate anxious 26.67%, and high anxious 53.33%. The findings related to the factors of language speaking anxiety showed that eight major factors (communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient teacher support in the classroom, inadequate learner involvement, anxiety provoking classroom environment, learners' pessimistic previous language learning experience, and learner irrational beliefs about speaking English) caused language speaking anxiety in the ESL learners.

Key words – Language speaking anxiety, factors of language speaking anxiety

### **Introduction**

Language anxiety is an important area of investigation in language studies. Based on the observations and the findings of the research studies researchers and practitioners agree that investigation into language anxiety has the potential to contribute positively to learners' language development (Gardner, 1993; Krashen, 1988; Ellis, 1985; Pappamihel, 2001, Horwitz, 2001; Liu, 2006; Mak, 2011).

The research into language anxiety indicates that most of the studies have been conducted in the foreign language context however; very few research studies have been done in the second language context. This indicates that the research of language anxiety in the second language context is still in infancy mode and such research should be encouraged. Thus, the scope of the present research lies in exploring language anxiety and speaking skill in the second language context. Through this study, we will be able to contribute to the second language research and also generalize its findings with the help of findings obtained from the foreign language research.

### **The role and significance of affect in ESL/EFL context**

So far numerous researchers have indicated the importance of affective factors in the second language classrooms. This can be explicitly seen in three different domains: research, methods of teaching language, and curriculum design. In the research domain various studies have depict the significance of affect. For example, in one of his studies Chastain (1975) stated that affective domain is a subjective area of the learner, which includes individuals personal experiences, desires, interests, feelings, fantasies, imaginings, and opinions (p.212). Further, while illustrating the significance of affect he illustrated that the cognitive domain is vital for learning to take place, but the lesson content for language practice is usually more appealing when it springs from the affective domain of the learners” (Chastain, 1975, p.212). Other researchers who have profoundly discussed the significance of affect are Arnold (2005) and Seo (2004). According to Arnold consideration of affect while teaching language can result in more effective language learning. Further, another scholar who investigated the role of affective experience in the language learning is Seo (2004). He asserted that the learners who experience positive feelings in the classroom tend to focus on searching and attaining positive outcomes, where as the learners who experience negative emotions process information with a lot of difficulty and show ‘a defensive behavioural orientation’(p.430).

For the past twenty-five years, many of the major developments in the field of language teaching suggest that they are in some way related to the need to recognize the importance of affect in language learning. For example, the methods which came to the fore in the 1970s – suggestopedia (Lozanov, 1979), silent way (Gattegno, 1972), community language learning (Curran, 1976), and total physical response (Asher, 1977) take into account the affect in language learning in a very central manner. Further, teaching approaches like communicative

language teaching and the natural approach (Krashen and Terrell, 1983) too consider the importance of affect in language learning. The natural approach, developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983), considers affect in a prominent way. One of the five hypotheses in Krashen's theory of second language acquisition is the affective filter hypothesis and the activities in the natural approach are designed to minimize classroom stress.

Even curriculum design in recent times has been influenced by humanistic affective thought. For example, Nunan (1988) and Tudor's (1979) work in curriculum design have developed undeniably humanistic learner models, which demonstrates the necessity of focusing more on language learners and their experiences rather than simply on the narrower field of non-learner related linguistic corpora. Thus, the above discussion indicates that affect assists in establishing interesting and learner friendly learning environment in the classroom.

#### **Language anxiety as an identifiable affective factor in EFL/ESL Context**

Second language theorists such as Gardner, 1993; Krashen, 1988; Ellis, 1985; Pappamihiel, 2001, have recognized the vital role of anxiety in the language learning process. According to them, every second language learner suffers some form of anxiety regardless of their age, experience with language, the type of language learning setting and location. In the same line of research, Ellis (1994) stated that the construct of language anxiety refers to the subjective uneasiness, nervousness, apprehension, and worry experienced by second language learners who are required to use the second language in certain conditions like public speaking or classroom discussions. Thus, here it is crucial to note that the construct refers to the learner's subjective perception, evaluation, and experience of the language-learning situation which means that language learning has a subjective component to it and the language learners differ in the level of language anxiety based on factors such as age, knowledge of the language, and the individual's culture, among others (Horwitz, 2001, P. 112).

Dornyei (2005) characterized language anxiety as an individual difference variable along with creativity, learner beliefs, and general anxiety and suggested that the individual difference variable of language anxiety is an essential learner characteristic in acquisition and use of a second language. Here, Dornyei's (2005), concern about language anxiety is in its integration in paradigms of research. While talking about language anxiety Oxford (2005), stated that if the



teacher or the learner identifies the language anxiety and does something positive about it then it can have a positive impact on the learners; on the other hand, if they avoid it then it can have a negative impact on the learners and can lead to dropping out of the programme or losing a prospective career in the programme.

Krashen (1981) suggests that operations have a profound effect on the affective state of the learner. It includes egocentrism, which in turn leads to increased self-consciousness and greater reticence. Thus, young adult learners tend to obtain less input and make less effective use of the input. Now language anxiety has become the preferred term when discussing communication apprehension in the second language (Horwitz & Young, 1991) and the negative effects of language anxiety can be explained by proposing that the arousal of anxiety causes an increase in self-focused attention and distracting, self-deprecating thoughts (Eysenck, 1979; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994b). This cognitive disruption and its consequences can occur within an individual without a single act of communication behavior; simply being aware of potential future communication with another person can create distraction and disrupt the language learning process (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994a, 1994b). According to Arnold (2005), “anxiety is quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process. it is associated with negative feelings such as uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, and tension” (p.8). While talking about anxiety, Eysenck (1979) explains that anxiety present in classrooms have a down-spiraling effect on the learners’ language learning (p.364). It makes them nervous and afraid and thus contributes to poor performance. According to him, the feelings of fear and nervousness are intimately connected to the cognitive side of anxiety.

### **Conceptualizing language anxiety**

So far the researchers have conceptualized language anxiety in three different perspectives such as trait anxiety, state anxiety, and situation specific anxiety. Trait anxiety perspective is generally known as personality trait, where learners are found to be anxious because of their personality trait. Spielberger (1983) defines it as an individual becoming anxious in any situation. This suggests that a person with high trait anxiety would likely to be anxious in a number of different situations leading to impair cognitive functioning, disrupt memory and avoidance behaviour (Eysenck, 1979). Research related to this perspective is considerable and have demonstrated that trait anxiety can have a pervasive effect on the learners cognitive,

affective, and behavioral functioning (Levitt, 1980; Spielberger, 1983). Although trait anxiety perspective has its strength in describing the effects of generalized anxiety, which is applicable across situations, it has faced with criticism as well. While commenting on this perspective, Endler (1980) argues that traits are meaningless unless they are considered in interaction with situations. This suggests that to study anxiety one needs to examine the interaction of the learner in the situation and that's how the trait anxiety can be investigated.

The perspective of state anxiety is a combination of the two approaches – trait and situational anxiety. According to Spielberger (1983), state anxiety is apprehension experienced at a particular time, for instance speaking in the class. He defined state anxiety as “an immediate, transitory emotional state of subjective, conscious feelings of tension, apprehension, nervousness, and worry associated with an arousal of the automatic nervous system reactions in response to a particular stimulus such as giving speech or taking an examination” (Deyuan, 2011, pp.13). In one of his studies, he found out that the high level of trait anxiety is highly correlated with the state anxiety. As like trait anxiety this perspective has been criticized by various researchers. For example, MacIntyre and Gardner (1991) criticized this approach in terms of the assessment of the state anxiety in the learner. They argued that in assessing state anxiety the subject is asked, “Are you nervous now?” instead of asking, “does this situation makes you nervous?” This implies that the subject is not asked to attribute the experience to any particular source. Therefore as an alternative to state anxiety, a concept of situation specific anxiety was adopted by several researchers.

The third perspective situation specific anxiety is known as an alternative perspective to the state anxiety. In this perspective, learners' anxiety is tested in a well-defined situation such as public speaking, writing examinations, or classroom performance. At this juncture a learner is asked about the various aspects of the situation, which in turn clearly delineates the situation of interest for the learner. Thus, making situation as the main focus of the study, this perspective allows the researcher to avoid making assumptions about the source of the anxiety reaction and offers a better understanding of the source of anxiety. Until now, many researchers have adopted this perspective in their investigations (Horwitz, 2001; Liu, 2006; Mak, 2011) and have found this perspective as a better approach for investigating the construct of language anxiety. Although there are many advantages of this perspective, it has also faced some criticism. A

criticism of this approach is that the situation under consideration can be defined variously such as very broadly (e.g., shyness), more narrowly (e.g., communication apprehension), or quite specific (e.g., stage fright). Thus, it is the researcher's responsibility to define a situation that is sufficiently specific to be meaningful for the purpose at hand, yet to have reasonable generality to permit generalizations (MacIntyre and Gardner, 1991). Since the broad-spectrum of study is to understand the targeted learners' language anxiety, the framework of this perspective aptly suits the aim of the study. Hence, the situation specific perspective forms the base for the present study's framework. Therefore, by considering this view the present research study adopts Horwitz's (1986) definition of language anxiety as "a distinct complex of selfperceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 125).

### **Research setting and sample**

The sample of the study comprised sixty ESL learners pursuing their career in the engineering field. As a part of first year engineering curriculum, they were asked to study ELCS Lab (English Language Communication Skills Lab) which was primarily designed to enhance their speaking skills. In this course learners were mainly asked to participate in the speaking activities like give oral and power point presentations, participate in debate, group discussions, deliver speech on various topics etc. So in this course they were mainly asked to concentrate on the speaking skill which is considered as one of the most anxiety provoking skills. The sample was heterogeneous in terms of their proficiency with eight years of exposure to the English language. The study was carried out over a period of one semester resulting in six months of data collection and data analysis.

### **Research design**

The present research study employed a mixed methods research design by utilizing both quantitative and qualitative tools of data collection. In this research quantitative tools like FLCAS (Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale) see appendix I, and learner questionnaire, assisted in the initial investigation of learners levels of speaking anxiety, whereas learner interviews, classroom observations, and reflective journals became part of the qualitative tools and helped further in exploring the factors of language speaking and their possible influence on

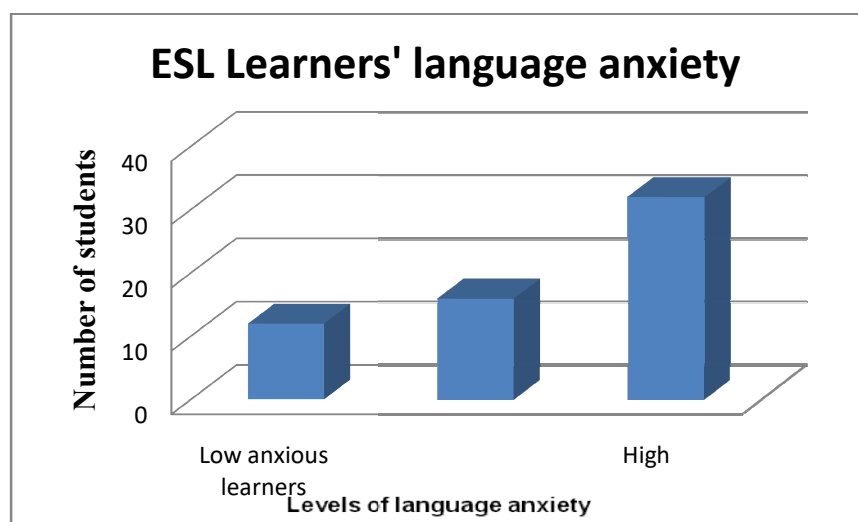
the learners. In this study we employed the mixed methods research mainly because language anxiety is a complex psychological phenomenon, hence researching it with only qualitative or quantitative method would not contribute in obtaining the comprehensive data for the study.

### Data collection and data analysis procedures

To explore to what extent ESL learners experience language speaking anxiety, first FLCAS and learner questionnaire was administered to the sixty ESL learners and subsequently the data was analyzed with the help of SPSS software. In the second phase, to investigate the factors that cause language speaking anxiety in the learners' their verbal and non-verbal behavior was observed in the class. Later their semi-structured interviews were conducted and they were asked to record their feeling and views about their oral performances in the reflective journals. All the qualitative data was analyzed by thematic coding.

### Findings and discussion

The quantitative analysis of the FLCAS revealed that the sample of the study experienced language anxiety at three different levels. The following bar graph indicates the findings obtained from the FLCAS.

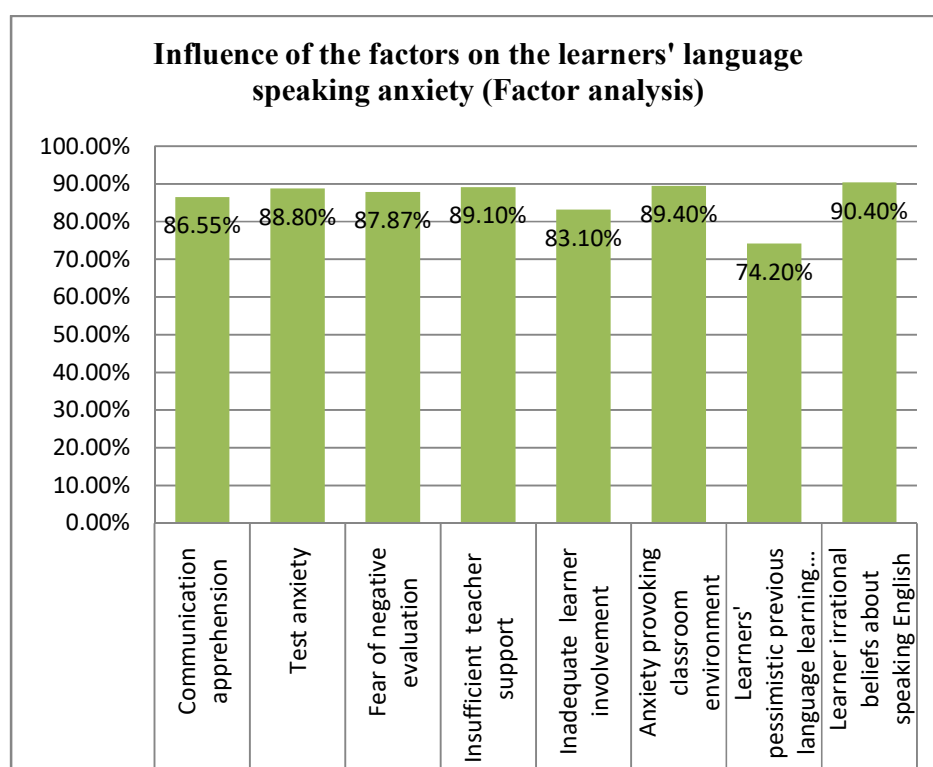


Bar graph: 1

The above bar graph indicates that 20% ESL learners experienced low language anxiety in the classroom, 26. 67% experienced moderate anxiety and 53.33% experienced high language

anxiety in the classroom. What is most surprising about these findings is that more than fifty percent of the ESL learners felt highly anxious in the classroom. This indicates that to a greater extent ESL learners experienced language speaking anxiety in the classroom.

The findings of the factor analysis of FLCAS and learner questionnaire and the qualitative data divulged that there were eight major factors that contributed to the ESL learners' language speaking anxiety. The following bar graph provides the overall picture of the findings.



Bar graph: 2

The above chart indicates that factors like communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient teacher support in the classroom, inadequate learner involvement, anxiety provoking classroom environment, learners' pessimistic previous language learning experience, and learner irrational beliefs about speaking English were the major factors that caused language speaking anxiety in the ESL learners. Among these factors learner irrational beliefs about speaking English was the most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the learners. The bar graph two indicates that the factor had 90.40 percentages influence on the learners speaking anxiety. The findings obtained from the qualitative data also

significantly supported these findings. The thematic data analysis of the learner responses revealed that ESL learners gave exorbitant importance to the excellent pronunciation, and error free usage of English. Further it was also found that learners strongly believed in pause less conversations and speeches. These responses indicate that ESL learners had unreasonable beliefs about speaking English which subsequently created language anxiety in them.

The second most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the learners was anxiety provoking classroom environment. The findings of the factor analysis showed that the factor caused 89.40 percent influence on the learners speaking anxiety. The findings of the qualitative data also considerably endorsed the result. The thematic analysis of the learners' responses indicated that the learners did not experience positive and learners friendly classroom environment. Their classmates never encouraged them to speak in the classroom; instead, they made fun of their broken English. Subsequently, their teacher always corrected their errors in the classroom and they were not encouraged to use English in and outside of the classroom. Thus, the findings clearly showed that such classroom learning experiences caused language speaking anxiety among the learners.

Another influential factor that enhanced learners' language speaking anxiety was insufficient teacher support in the classroom. The findings of the qualitative data showed that the factor had 89.10 percent influence on the learners language speaking anxiety. The thematic analysis of the qualitative data too substantiated this finding. The findings of the thematic analysis revealed that the learners did not received timely support from the teacher. They were given very less speaking practice in the classroom and with that they were asked to participate in other speaking activities. This suggests that the learners received insufficient teacher support in the classroom causing language speaking anxiety in them.

The next most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the learner was test anxiety. As the bar graph indicates, this factor had 88.80 percent influence on the learners language speaking anxiety. The findings of the qualitative data considerably supported the finding. The findings of the thematic analysis revealed that the learners worried about their results of failing in English class. They also experienced the pressure of English exams and felt more confused when they studied for an English test. This indicates that test anxiety also considerably contributed to the learner language speaking anxiety.

Fear of negative evaluation was the fifth most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the ESL learners. As the findings show this factor had 87.87 percent influence on the learners language speaking anxiety. The findings obtained from the qualitative data significantly supported the finding. While responding to the factor learners said that they were afraid of the negative evaluation of their speaking performance. They were of the opinion that their peers and teacher would blame them for their inappropriate speaking performance and would create their negative image in the class. Thus, such circumstances caused high level of language speaking anxiety in the ESL learners.

The next most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the learners was communication apprehension. The findings of the factor analysis revealed that this factor had 86.55 percent influence on the learners language speaking anxiety. In this case, it was observed that there was a significant agreement between the findings of the factor analysis and the findings of qualitative data analysis. The thematic analysis revealed that low language proficiency and the feeling of being nervous when speaking in the class caused language speaking anxiety in the learners. The learners' responses to this factor clearly indicated that due to their language deficiency they could not do well and caused high language speaking anxiety in them.

Inadequate learner involvement was the seventh most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the ESL learners. The findings of the factor analysis indicated that this factor had 83.10 percent influence on the learners language speaking anxiety. The thematic analysis of the qualitative data showed that learner involvement in the class was not to the expected level. Similarly, the learners were also not given adequate speaking practice in the classroom. So whenever they were asked to speak in the class they felt very anxious. This indicates that inadequate learner involvement caused high language speaking anxiety in the class.

The last most influential factor that caused language speaking anxiety in the learner was learners' pessimistic previous language learning experience. The factor analysis of the qualitative data indicated that this factor had 74.20 percent influence on the learners language speaking anxiety. The findings of the qualitative data considerably support this finding. The thematic analysis of the qualitative data revealed that learners' previous language learning experiences were not joyful. They were full of bad memories like teacher correcting their mistakes,

humiliating and punishing them for their mistakes. In addition to that they also had a lot of parental pressure for getting good grades in the English. So such experiences caused high language speaking anxiety in them.

### **Conclusion**

Our research has indicated that language speaking anxiety is a complex construct which must be investigated with the mixed methods research design. The findings of the study show that ESL learners experienced language anxiety at three different levels: low anxious, moderate anxious and high anxious. What was most surprising about these findings was the percentage of the learners in each category: low anxious 20%, moderate anxious 26.67% and high anxious 53.33%. This reveals that to a greater extent ESL learners experience language anxiety in the classroom and hence, teachers must take initiative to understand the factors that cause such anxiety in the learners.

The research findings related to the factors of language speaking anxiety show that there are eight factors such as communication apprehension, test anxiety, fear of negative evaluation, insufficient teacher support in the classroom, inadequate learner involvement, anxiety provoking classroom environment, learners' pessimistic previous language learning experience, and learner irrational beliefs about speaking English that cause language speaking anxiety in the ESL learners. In this case our research has contributed significantly by adding three new factors of language speaking anxiety to the present literature in the ESL context and they are inadequate learner involvement, learners' pessimistic previous language learning experience, and learner irrational beliefs about speaking English. The present research just explored the levels of language speaking anxiety and the factors that cause such anxiety among the ESL learners, thus the further research need to be taken up to find the strategies of reducing ESL learners language speaking anxiety.



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## IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AMONG PROFESSIONALS IN ANDHRA PRADESH: A STATISTICAL APPROACH

**Dr.B.Sudha Sai**

**Dr.K.Aruna Kumari**

### *Abstract*

In a student's academic career, Intermediate is the turning point where his future gets decided. There is no doubt that majority of the students in Andhra Pradesh are eager to join professional courses like Engineering and Medical stream. They are not given a chance to pursue the course for which they have flair or aptitude. A student who is good at English in school tends to neglect English at Intermediate level by over-emphasis on science subjects. In addition to it his parents too believe that only Engineering and Medicine courses would fetch him a good job. The present article, a part of a Major UGC Research Project entitled "Emphasis on English Language at Intermediate Level in Andhra Pradesh" with a total grant of 4.7 lakhs, is on asserting the role of English language in a professional student's career and the need for English Language Proficiency in the domains of Engineering and Medicine in Andhra Pradesh with the help of a statistical analysis.

### **Introduction**

Besides over-emphasizing on science subjects at the Intermediate level, there are a large number of other reasons for which students may neglect English at the Intermediate level. Furthermore it is commonly found with many of the English teachers from their long experience that the students at Intermediate level have forgotten all the English learnt for 10 years in school. In spite of this, some students are able to secure 90% in English at Intermediate level and others are effortlessly getting through it. At this point one needs to ponder on the point that 'should competence level of a student be decided on the basis of marks secured'? It could be one of the reasons that the students have developed an attitude of indifference and negligence towards English. So, they neither fare satisfactorily in examinations nor improve their oratory abilities.

When these students gain admission into an engineering program, it is found that a large number of students face great difficulty in the four corner skills of English Language proficiency, namely, Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. They make little or no attempt to improve their skills in the language and as a result, they perform poorly during the time of campus recruitment. They finally regret their lack of the appropriate employable skills but it is often too late to reverse the situation.

Similarly in the present era of globalization, usage of English language for the medical profession has gained a lot of prominence. For proper communication between a medico and a patient, language plays a vital role. Interaction between them very important especially in those cases where the diagnosis and the following treatment are based on the information obtained from such communication. Usually most of the interns or doctors prefer to speak in the native language which is common both to the patient and him. Sometimes they fail to connect well with the patients as they are unable to speak fluently in English. They are unable to make sure whether the patients understand what they are told and what they are supposed to do and why. Similarly most of the patients feel comfortable with the interns or doctors when they use their native language for communication. They think that their problems can be better explained by talking in the native tongue. On the other hand there are also some patients who flinch when an intern or a doctor doesn't speak fluent English.

### **Literature Survey**

National Employability Report by Aspiring Minds states that "India has a sizeable engineering talent pool. It produces about five lakh Engineering graduates every year, but only less than one- fifth of the total number of them are fit to be employable, especially in IT service sector. It also says that the percentage of ready to be employed engineers for IT Jobs is dismally low at 2.68%". The report which covered more that 55000 engineering students, who graduated in 2011, highlighted the fact that the zeal to increase the number of colleges has impacted on the quality drastically.

According to Purple Leap Survey conducted in the year 2012, only one out of ten students graduating from tier 2,3and 4 Engineering colleges can be readily employable. It also pointed out regarding the huge gap between education and employability of the so-called Engineering graduates. One third of these graduates who have done academically well by

securing 60% marks are unfit for employment even after being given proper training. The pass percentage of final year of Engineering in Andhra Pradesh was 49% in 2006, 35 % in 2007, 29 % in 2008. According to Aspiring Minds National Employability Report, which is based on a study of more than 1,50,000 engineering students who graduated in 2015 from over 650 colleges, 80% of the them are unemployable and the situation continues to worsen over the years. Drawing on data from 60,000 graduates pan-India by July 2018, an employability solutions company noted that around 47 percent of Indian graduates are unemployable. According to a McKinsey report, only a quarter of Indian engineers are employable. Other studies put it at a much lower figure and even as low as five percent.

### **Scope of Research**

Companies today want candidates possessing the three critical skills- Communication, Problem solving and Technical Skills, and ready to start working from day one, because nobody wants to spend and money on training. So students will need to do all that they can do to work on their skills and be industry ready. Just going to college and finishing their studies is evidently not enough.

Similarly as most of the medical books are written in English and the entire syllabus is taught in English, it becomes a prerequisite for a medico to have a working knowledge in English. Besides, all the latest journals and magazines are written in English and it is the medium of communication for doctors or medicos at all the national and international conferences. In spite of all the above reasons English has become a disconnect language for the medicos after their twelfth standard. Thus some of the interns with their good subject knowledge fail to connect properly with patients coming from different states due to poor grip on English language. They further miss better job prospects outside their respective state and country only due to poor hold on English Language.

### **Proposed methodology and discussion**

As a part of the main project, the present study has been conducted in some of the professional colleges of Visakhapatnam district by gathering information through questionnaires, personal interviews of the professionals. Students from 5 Engineering colleges and 4 medical colleges have been selected, thus making a total sample of around 200 engineering students and

200 medical students. After a gap of one month, collection of the filled-in questionnaires and personal interviews are carried out. To analyze the data, some statistical tools that bring out the best results have been used. The tools used are descriptive statistics with frequencies and factor analysis. The software used to carry out statistical analysis is SPSS (Statistical Package for The Social Sciences).

### **Experimental Results with Tables & Graphs**

To analyze the data of professional students, a popular dimension reduction technique, Factor Analysis is used to study the correlation structure among variables. It partitions the manifest variables into groups and each partition further signifies the effect of a latent variable called common factor. These new variables stand for constructs that cannot be directly measured. Such an analysis is vital in different fields of research such as marketing of various companies that spend huge amount of money towards advertisement of their products. This further facilitates to know whether it is worth spending money on an advertisement.

The objectives of the questionnaire:

- What are the factors that influence an engineer, a medico or a dental student in neglecting English language at their Intermediate level?
- Are the influencing factors same for the engineering students and the medicos?

The sampling units consist of 200 samples of engineering students and 200 medicos including dental, which further rate several variables on a 5 and 2-point semantic Likert-scale. The data obtained then is analyzed by using Factor procedure of SPSS package. In Data Screening after being given a set of variables, SPSS usually finds a factor solution to that particular set. The solution obtained does not have any real meaning in case the variables analyzed turn out to be insensible. There are several techniques such as study correlation among the variables, Anti-Image Matrix, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy that can be used to know whether to proceed with factor analysis of the given data set.

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy method is a popular diagnostic measure and provides a measure to assess the extent to which the indicators of a construct belong

together. There are no statistical tests for the KMO measure and the following guidelines are suggested (by Kaiser and Rice):

KMO Measure	Recommendation
$\geq 0.9$	Marvelous
0.80+	Meritorious
0.70+	Middling
0.60+	Mediocre
0.50+	Miserable
Below 0.50	Unacceptable

This criterion is accurate when there are less than 30 variables and communalities after extraction are greater than 0.7. On the other hand when the sample size exceeds 250 then the average communality is greater than 0.6. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy and Bartlett's Test values obtained for the data under analysis are given in the following table.

#### KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	.806
Bartlett's Test of Approx. Chi-Square	256.027
Sphericity df	10
Sig.	.000

Hence the KMO value, 0.806, suggests the appropriateness to proceed with factor analysis of the data on hand.

Further Bartlett's Test of Sphericity tests the null hypothesis to find out whether the original correlation matrix is an identity matrix, which would indicate that, the variables are unrelated. For factor analysis there has to be some relationships between variables and if the correlation matrix is an identity matrix then all correlation coefficients would be zero. Therefore, the present test has to be significant as it gives the result of the test. As very small values (less than 0.5) indicate that there are probably significant relationships among the variables, a

significant test tells that the correlation matrix is not an identity matrix. Finally one can expect some relationships between the variables. Had the value been more than 0.10, then it would have indicated the unsuitability of the data for factor analysis. As the significance value is 0.000 for the problem under analysis, it can be said that the variables are not independent.

Further the Extraction of Factors consists of selecting the method of extracting the components, the number of components to be extracted, and the method of rotation for interpretation of the factors. At present, the Principal Component Method of extraction and the Varimax method of rotation are taken into consideration. The number of factors extracted is based on Eigen value more than one rule.

Usually Communalities table gives the proportion of variance explained by the underlying factors. After extraction, some of the factors are discarded and the amount of variance in each variable that can be explained by the retained factors is represented by the communalities table below. It shows that the factors included in the analysis have accounted for fairly good amount of communalities among all the variables for both medical and engineering streams. Most of the communalities are above 0.4 and these values range from a minimum of 0.433 to a maximum of 0.799.



**Communalities<sup>a</sup>**

	Initial value	Extraction value for medical	Extraction value for engineers
1.Do you think that having fluency in English language is a boon at all professional courses:	1.000	.730	.441
2.Do you feel that a student with fluency in English has an edge over a student who is not so good at English:	1.000	.799	.583
3.Do the teachers insist on speaking in English in the class:	1.000	.602	.831
4.In which language do you interact with your friends outside the classroom:	1.000	.444	.438
5.Do you agree that a person with fluent English has higher confidence levels compared to his academic peers:	1.000	.705	.539
6.Don't you agree that all the latest developments in various professional fields can be accessed from journals/publications that are published in English:	1.000	.717	.663
7.Do you agree with the view that "English is the window to the world":	1.000	.433	.724
8.Don't you think as a student that fluency in English would make you stand in good stead:	1.000	.703	.765
9.Do you agree with the view that a strong grip on English will bring about an all-round development of your personality including various soft skills:	1.000	.683	.687
10.Do you regret now that you have neglect English, which has led to your inability to express yourself:	1.000	.613	.514
11.Do you wish to overcome the deficiency being created by neglecting English at intermediate level:	1.000	.741	.453

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Only for the cases where stream = medical/engineering is used in the analysis phase.

Some of the popular criteria are Eigen value greater than one rule and Total variance explained. Further the Total Variance Explained table given below says that there are three Eigen values greater than one. The maximum Eigen value among all the values is 0.941 and it is much below the unity. Further it can also be noted that the three factors that are larger than one and corresponding to these Eigen values, together account for 65.180% of total variance. Considering the kind of social survey, the amount of variance explained by the factor model is regarded to be fairly good.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.392	21.743	21.743	2.392	21.743	21.743	2.112	19.199	19.199
2	2.123	19.303	41.047	2.123	19.303	41.047	2.049	18.623	37.822
3	1.342	12.200	53.247	1.342	12.200	53.247	1.540	14.002	51.824
4	1.313	11.933	65.180	1.313	11.933	65.180	1.469	13.356	65.180
5	.941	8.556	73.736						
6	.824	7.490	81.226						
7	.702	6.379	87.605						
8	.473	4.296	91.901						
9	.397	3.605	95.506						
10	.328	2.979	98.485						
11	.167	1.515	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Only for the cases where stream = Medical is used in the analysis phase.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.116	19.233	19.233	2.116	19.233	19.233	2.073	18.848	18.848
2	1.739	15.808	35.041	1.739	15.808	35.041	1.663	15.123	33.970
3	1.542	14.018	49.060	1.542	14.018	49.060	1.605	14.595	48.565
4	1.243	11.298	60.358	1.243	11.298	60.358	1.297	11.792	60.358
5	.957	8.697	69.055						
6	.874	7.945	77.000						
7	.715	6.502	83.502						
8	.683	6.205	89.706						
9	.486	4.414	94.120						
10	.428	3.891	98.011						
11	.219	1.989	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.392	21.743	21.743	2.392	21.743	21.743	2.112	19.199	19.199
2	2.123	19.303	41.047	2.123	19.303	41.047	2.049	18.623	37.822
3	1.342	12.200	53.247	1.342	12.200	53.247	1.540	14.002	51.824
4	1.313	11.933	65.180	1.313	11.933	65.180	1.469	13.356	65.180
5	.941	8.556	73.736						
6	.824	7.490	81.226						
7	.702	6.379	87.605						
8	.473	4.296	91.901						
9	.397	3.605	95.506						
10	.328	2.979	98.485						
11	.167	1.515	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. Only for the cases where stream = Medical is used in the analysis phase.

**Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.116	19.233	19.233	2.116	19.233	19.233	2.073	18.848	18.848
2	1.739	15.808	35.041	1.739	15.808	35.041	1.663	15.123	33.970
3	1.542	14.018	49.060	1.542	14.018	49.060	1.605	14.595	48.565
4	1.243	11.298	60.358	1.243	11.298	60.358	1.297	11.792	60.358
5	.957	8.697	69.055						
6	.874	7.945	77.000						
7	.715	6.502	83.502						
8	.683	6.205	89.706						
9	.486	4.414	94.120						
10	.428	3.891	98.011						
11	.219	1.989	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

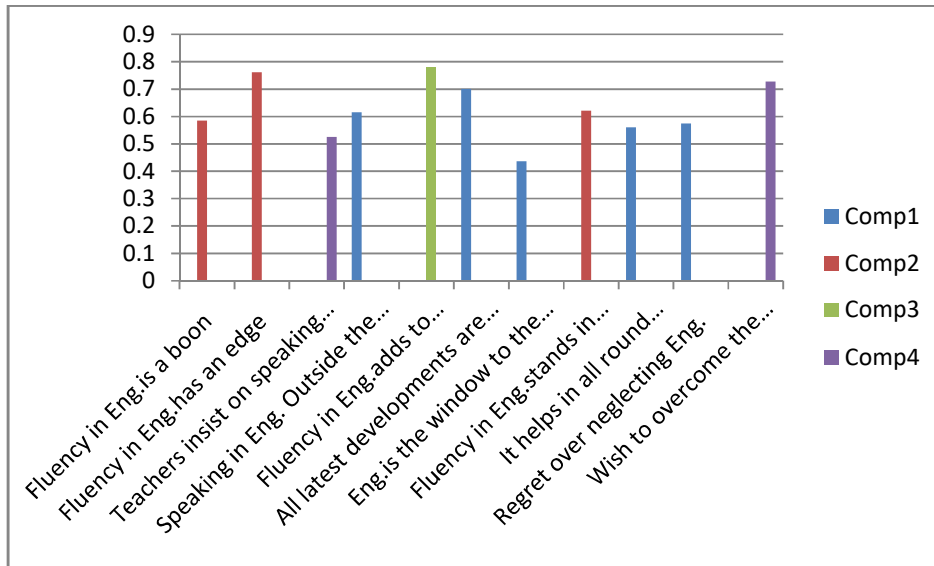
a. Only for the cases where stream = Engineering is used in the analysis phase.

The component matrix gives the estimated factor loadings. The elements of this matrix describe the covariance or the correlations between the manifest variables and the latent common factors depending on whether the covariance matrix or the correlation matrix is involved in the analysis. The sum of squares of the row elements of component matrix gives the communality of the corresponding variable. Using which we can estimate the specific variances of the manifest variables. Similarly the sum of squares of the column elements of the component matrix gives the Eigen values of the covariance / correlation matrix. These values help in the computation of the proportion of variance explained by each factor. The method of estimation used to get the component matrix is the principle component method of estimation. This is referred to as un-rotated factor solution.

Further the elements of the loading matrix or the coefficients of the factor model are displayed in the Component Matrix Table below. Factor loadings of this order are usually neglected. From the table below, it is observed that there are some values that are loaded on more than one factor. Thus this complicates the problem of identification of factors and necessitates rotation.

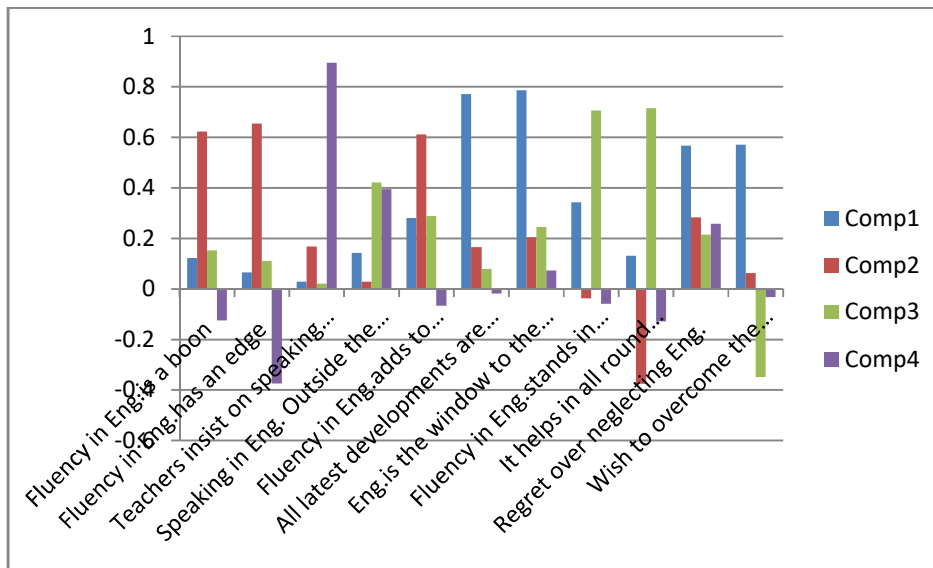
#### Component Matrix for Medical Students:

Factors For Medical Students	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Comp4
Fluency in Eng.is a boon		0.585		
Fluency in Eng.has an edge		0.761		
Teachers insist on speaking in Eng.				0.526
Speaking in Eng. Outside the class	0.616			
Fluency in Eng.adds to confidence			0.78	
All latest developments are in Eng.	0.701			
Eng.is the window to the world	0.437			
Fluency in Eng.stands in good stead		0.621		
It helps in all round development	0.561			
Regret over neglecting Eng.	0.575			
Wish to overcome the deficiency				0.727



### Component Matrix For Engineering Students:

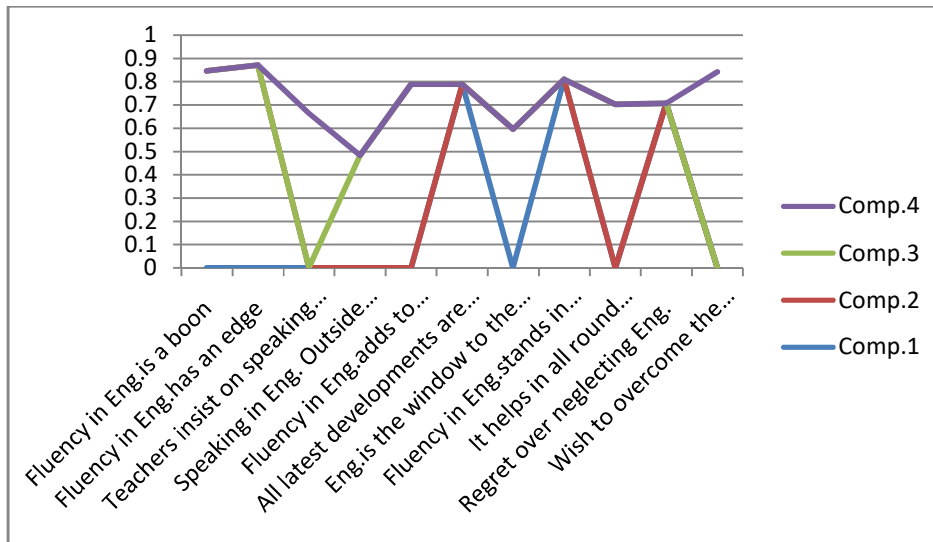
Factors For Engineering Students	Comp1	Comp2	Comp3	Comp4
Fluency in Eng.is a boon	0.123	0.622	0.152	-0.125
Fluency in Eng.has an edge	0.065	0.654	0.11	-0.374
Teachers insist on speaking in Eng.	0.029	0.169	0.02	0.895
Speaking in Eng. Outside the class	0.143	0.029	0.422	0.395
Fluency in Eng.adds to confidence	0.281	0.611	0.288	-0.066
All latest developments are in Eng.	0.772	0.166	0.08	-0.018
Eng.is the window to the world	0.786	0.204	0.245	0.073
Fluency in Eng.stands in good stead	0.343	-0.038	0.707	-0.058
It helps in all round development	0.132	-0.375	0.715	-0.129
Regret over neglecting Eng.	0.567	0.283	0.215	0.259
Wish to overcome the deficiency	0.571	0.062	-0.349	-0.032



From the above two matrixes one observes that most of the variables are loaded on to the first factor. A subset of the variables are loaded both on to the first and second factors and further another subset of the variables loaded both on to the first and second factor. One also observe that only one variable on the second factor has its loading value more than that of their counterparts on the first. However commonsense says that they do not belong to a single category. This makes interpretation of the factors difficult. To facilitate the interpretation of the factors, the varimax rotation is considered. InRotated component matrix all the variables have got partitioned into three mutually exclusive groups and are clearly interpretable. This explains how the rotation of initial factor solution is useful in the interpretation of factors. The factor solution obtained below clearly shows all the three mutually exclusive groups in the total set of variables. It can be further noted that the relative order of the factors are the same as in the case of the total sample.

**Rotated Component Matrix For Medical Students:**

Factors For Medical Students	Comp.1	Comp.2	Comp.3	Comp.4
Fluency in Eng.is a boon		0.845		
Fluency in Eng.has an edge		0.871		
Teachers insist on speaking in Eng.				0.664
Speaking in Eng. Outside the class			0.483	
Fluency in Eng.adds to confidence			0.788	
All latest developments are in Eng.	0.788			
Eng.is the window to the world		0.596		
Fluency in Eng.stands in good stead	0.809			
It helps in all round development			0.702	
Regret over neglecting Eng.	0.707			
Wish to overcome the deficiency				0.842



Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

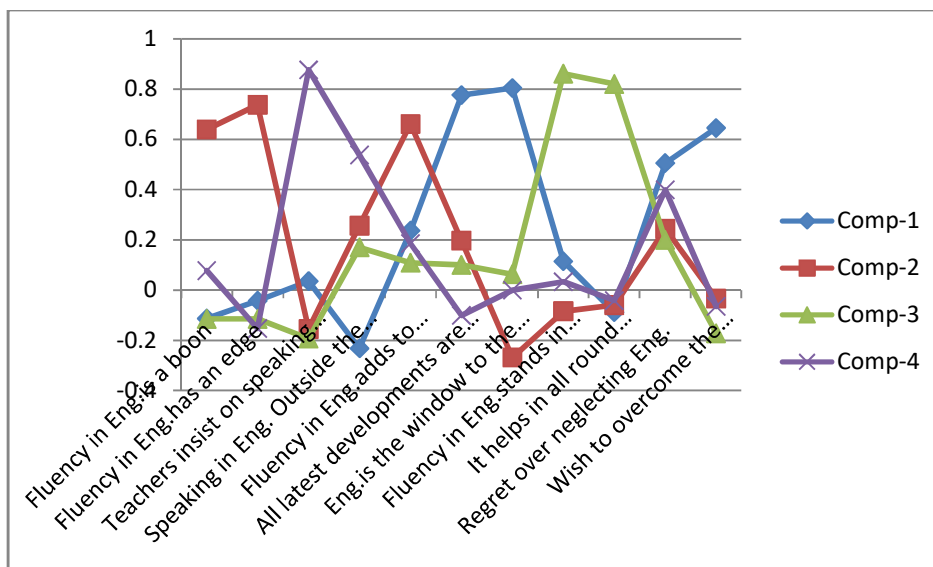
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

b. Only for the cases where stream = Medical is used in the analysis phase.

**Rotated Component Matrix for Engineering Students**

Factors For Engineering Students	Comp-1	Comp-2	Comp-3	Comp-4
Fluency in Eng.is a boon	-0.113	0.64	-0.115	0.077
Fluency in Eng.has an edge	-0.042	0.738	-0.115	-0.153
Teachers insist on speaking in Eng.	0.036	-0.155	-0.193	0.876
Speaking in Eng. Outside the class	-0.232	0.257	0.17	0.538
Fluency in Eng.adds to confidence	0.237	0.661	0.109	0.185
All latest developments are in Eng.	0.777	0.197	0.1	-0.101
Eng.is the window to the world	0.805	-0.268	0.063	-0.001
Fluency in Eng.stands in good stead	0.115	-0.084	0.862	0.033
It helps in all round development	-0.088	-0.059	0.821	-0.042
Regret over neglecting Eng.	0.506	0.244	0.2	0.399
Wish to overcome the deficiency	0.646	-0.034	-0.172	-0.065



Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

b. Only for the cases where stream = Engineering is used in the analysis phase.

**Conclusion**

From the factor analysis it is observed that the professional students have realized that fluency in English plays a vital role in their lives. They further wish to overcome the deficiency created by neglecting English at Intermediate level in A.P. The students feel that a student with



fluency in English has an edge over a student not all that confident in English. They agree that fluency in English is a boon for the professional student as it is the only language of instruction at the undergraduate level. They feel the importance of interacting with teachers and friends in English both in the classroom and outside. They also agree on the point that fluency in English would boost one's confidence levels and help in all round development of one's personality. They realize that English is the window to the world and all the latest developments in various professional fields can be accessed from journals/publications in English. Furthermore, students who are not confident in English regret over their negligence. They also agree that this negligence has further led to the inability to express effectively in future. They all wish to bridge the gap which is being created due to various reasons at the Intermediate level.

After considering the statistical report, a bridge course is suggested to improve Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills of the students who are not fluent at English. It is an attempt made both through literature and language to improve LSRW skills at the first year of their professional courses. It will try to fill in the gap and help them to come on par with the students that are fluent at English. It can be further suggested that a test of proficiency in English for the students already admitted into professional courses by the respective Institutions will certainly segregate the weaker students from the ones with fluency in English. The suggested bridge is meant for "not so confident in English" students to take up the course and fill in the gap in order to come on par with the regular batch of students. They will follow the course for 35 to 40 hrs in the first semester of their respective professional course for 3-4 credits. This bridge course has to run for only segregated weaker students in order to bridge the gap between students, not so fluent at English with the ones who are fluent at English and following the regular course in English prescribed by the respective Institutions. As medical students don't have English Language in their curriculum, the suggested list of reading given below will definitely be helpful to them who are not so fluent in English and wish to go out of state on a better career prospective. It will certainly prove to be helpful in meeting their requirements at the time of recruitment and later at various work places. It will contribute competency, efficiency, values and necessary life skills to the professional students and bring in a holistic development in them.

**Suggested-Reading:** A selection of fictional and non-fictional prose pieces from English and Indian Literature are chosen to introduce the students to different writings and induce the importance of values in life. The list includes different forms like short stories, novels, plays and autobiographies. The suggested writers are:

**17th Century-18th Century—**

- i. Charles Dickens-Great Expectations,
- ii. Thomas Hardy-The Mayor of Caster bridge,
- iii. Lewis Carroll-Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,
- iv. Arthur Conan Doyle-The Hound of The Baskervilles,
- v. Rudyard Kipling-The Jungle Book,

**19th Century-20th Century—**

- i. O Henry-Short Stories like Girl, Dream, After Twenty Years,
- ii. H.H. Munro-- Short Stories like The Story Teller, Tea, The Threat
- iii. Mark Twain—The Adventures of Tom Sawyer,
- iv. G.B. Shaw—Play -Pygmalion,

**20th century-- Present-**

- i. R.K. Narayan- Swamy and Friends,
- ii. R.K. Laxman—The Distorted Mirror,
- iii. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam—Wings of Fire,
- iv. Khushwant Singh—The Mark of Vishnu and other Stories,

Besides the above suggested reading, daily reading of the news paper will be certainly helpful to the students.

II. Writing- Paragraph, Essay, Précis, Reading Comprehension, Letter Writing, Resume writing, emails ,notices and minutes of the meeting.

III. Speaking and Listening- Students need to practice by listening to the news daily and speaking to others in English and participating in Just a Minute, Group Discussion and Debate.

IV. English Practice- Above all, grammar plays a key role both in the written and spoken communication of English. This umbrella term “grammar” includes many smaller components such as tenses, subject verb agreement, prepositions, articles, conjunctions and S+V+O (subject+ verb+ object) pattern. Thorough practice on all the above components will certainly make the students confident in their expression in English.

**Appendix-1****Questionnaire canvassed to 3<sup>rd</sup> year students of Professional courses**

1. Name of the student:

2. Name of the college:

3. Stream: Engineering/Medical/Dental

4. Do you think that having fluency in English is a boon for all Professional courses: Yes/No

5. Do you feel that a student with fluency in English has an edge over a student who is not

so fluent in English: Yes/No

6. How do you feel when compared to your counterpart coming from Telugu Medium background:

a) Subject understanding-poor/good/very good/excellent

b) Subject expression-----poor/good/very good/excellent

c) Oral communication----poor/good/very good/excellent

d) Written communication-poor/good/very good/excellent

7. Do your teachers insist on speaking on English in the class: Yes/No

8. In which language do you interact with your friends outside the classroom: English/others

9. Do you agree that a person with fluent English has higher confidence levels compared to his Academic peers: Yes/No

10. Don't you agree that all the latest developments in various professional fields can be accessed from journals/publications that are published in English : Yes/No

11. Do you agree with the view that "English is the window to the world": Yes/No

12. Do you agree with the view that a strong grip on English will bring about an all-round development of your personality including various soft-skills& emotional intelligence: Yes/No

13. Do you regret now that you have neglected English, which has led to your inability to express properly: Yes/No

14. Do you wish to overcome the deficiency being created by neglecting English at the Intermediate level: Yes/No

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## CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN INDIA

Subhashini Rajasekaran

Rajesh Kumar

### Introduction

Language is an essential part of our existence in society, as much as breathing is necessary for our survival. It ceaselessly marks its presence in every domain of our lives. Yet, two interrelated facts about language and its sustaining power evade us; and these have extremely crucial implications for society and for education. One, that languages are fundamentally porous, fluid and continuously evolving systems that human beings acquire and change to define themselves and the world around them. Two, that multilinguality is a norm, not an exception. It is constitutive of being human. We have a “linguistic repertoire” that enables us to engage in multilingual language i.e., to move easily between language systems that have some common and some unique characteristics. Multilinguality and porousness, taken together, suggest that languages are constantly evolving and interacting in a dynamic process. Thus, no language can be “pure”. In fact, the pursuit of purity in a language is like marking it for certain death. However, the State, the market and the schools impose monolingual and monoglossic language ideologies, policies and practices in the name of multilingualism.

To recognize multilingualism is to recognize translanguaging—a natural way for multi-linguals to access different linguistic features of so-called autonomous languages in order to maximize communicative potential. In this paper, key challenges and possible strategies are identified for leveraging the inherent heteroglossic multilingualism in education in India and for promoting its understanding and value among the masses.

### Challenges for Leveraging Multilingualism in India

Transforming the existing monoglossic school culture presents an enormous but not insurmountable challenge. The situation could be analyzed at four interdependent levels.

#### 1. Market Demands and the Politics of Power

A language wields tremendous power due to its ability to contain within itself the identity, attitudes, culture and aspirations of its people. Thus, these sociopolitical factors make some languages more prestigious than others, which then become accepted as “standard”. The demand for languages of power then drives State policies and the market, even though linguistically, all languages are equal. Today, English is definitely the language of power globally. It is a symbol of people’s aspirations, a gateway to opportunities. Similarly, at the State level, numerous languages are spoken but only the standard form of select languages gain favour

as the instructional medium in schools. The hierarchy of languages therefore comes to signify the hegemony of power amongst its speakers.

In such a scenario, parents naturally choose to educate their children in the languages of power in their most “standard” forms. There is a huge gap in public awareness of the empirically proven correlations between multilingualism and higher scholastic achievement. Since the educational system as a whole does not offer feasible options that consider multilingualism a resource, the parents have no choice but to succumb to the one-medium, one-school policy.

## **2. Systemic Drivers for Language Decisions are not Educational**

Historically, a few significant but strategic drivers at the national and state levels have formulated the way school education navigates the issue of language today. One, in 1949, the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution, titled *Languages*, declared Hindi and English as official languages (and not national languages) and recognized 14 major Indian languages. Two, in 1961, a strategic consensual decision was taken by the States to implement the Three-language Formula. This was later modified by the Kothari Commission to accommodate the interests of group identity (mother tongues and regional languages), national pride and unity (Hindi), and administrative efficiency and technological progress (English). The Commission described these changes as “impelling considerations that were more political and social, than educational”. Three, the higher education system blocks multilingualism, thereby triggering a high demand for English, Hindi and a few select languages at lower levels too.

As per the 7th All India School Education Survey, Hindi, English and Sanskrit were adopted as first, second and third languages respectively in the largest number of schools. Approximately 80-90 per cent of the schools had only one medium of instruction. Out of this, approximately 60 per cent used Hindi or English, with the former having a higher proportion. Hence, multilingual education policies such as the three-language formula are just additive monolingualism that ends up denying the complex translanguaging practices of much of the world.

## **3. School Organizational Constraints**

The overall structure of “school” is such that there is age-wise grouping of 25 to 45 students in a classroom, with clearly demarcated boundaries between subjects slotted into periods of 30 to 45 minutes in a fixed schedule. Children are officially expected to use the school’s single medium of instruction in all periods / subjects, except in second / third language time-slots, where “other” languages are “allowed”. Typically, strict policy measures control the language children speak inside and outside the classes, with consequences for non-adherence. Teacher recruitment and training is based on the ability to use the medium of instruction. Thus, the school positions a single medium of instruction as central to its overall working, in keeping with the market demands and policy measures discussed earlier.

Without doubt, operationally, this is an easier proposition due to a uniform medium of communication; but the implicit message is: this is the “preferred” language in its “correct” form. Usually, schools fail to clarify that the languages students personally identify with are not unworthy of recognition, are not inferior and do hold educational value. Overall, the school structure is unable to appreciate the multilinguality of its students.

#### **4. Teacher Ethos on the Issue of “Purity” of Language**

We spoke to six primary and middle school teachers about the maintenance of purity of language, their teaching strategies and their students’ language abilities. The following response sums up their views and concerns:

The (English) language ability of students is not very great. They think in their mother tongue and then translate ... if they can’t get a word they use from Kutchi, Gujarati, Hindi, etc. Mixing is natural. But it is fine only when children slip into another language and get back to English easily. For others, it’s a big no-no as it hampers the development of (the weak) language. When English, only English. If speaking Hindi, only Hindi. Only then I can say that a child is good in a language!

The above comment represents the myths of language learning, while also exposing the practical constraints within which teachers are expected to function to facilitate and assess their students’ language learning. The practitioners’ view that use of home languages provides a “crutch” seems legitimate and realistic since the teachers work under the pressure of delivering to demanding parents and school managements, unaware of the possibilities of using multilingual pedagogic methods. Questions of identity loss due to non-recognition of home language are not considered significant. Thus, the rich heteroglossic multilinguality of the classroom does not earn a legitimate place in the process of language acquisition.

#### **Key Changes Required in System and School Ethos**

Leveraging the strengths of multilingualism in the classroom would not only give voice and legitimacy to the identities of children, but has also been empirically proven to have a positive correlation with scholastic achievement, divergent thinking, cognitive flexibility and social tolerance. With such immense advantages, it is only natural that a market shift is necessary to increase the demand for education that values multilingualism to bring it into day-to-day practice. Since the school actually functions in response to market demands and government policy measures, a “bottom-up only” approach is bound to fail and needs to have strong top-down momentum.

#### **Top Down: Building Mass Momentum in the Long Term for a Mind-set Shift**

What is required is a consensual language policy by all States, that is a significant shift from a formulaic approach to a more principled approach (multilingual, acceptance of porousness) with strict implementation and stringent consequences for flouting it. This is definitely an uphill task,

given that education is a State subject, language is a political one and many vested interests are involved, besides pragmatic issues such as providing high-quality training for all teachers.

Widespread multimedia-based awareness campaigns and lobbying to develop a mass mind-set that links multilinguality with scholastic achievement, supported by empirical data, are needed. Focused efforts by interest groups from politics, industry, academics, media and civil society could build such a movement. Once awareness changes, so would the nature of the market demand.

New “Education Startups” that have the potential to disrupt the education space by leveraging technology on a mass scale, with a high level of sensitivity to multilingual needs of students, is an unexplored alternative.

### **Bottom Up: Leveraging Strategies in a Multilingual Classroom**

The following strategies could be gainfully adopted to leverage multilingualism in the classroom:

1. Build model schools and classrooms where multilingualism will hold a central place in all processes. Experiment and determine the practices, policies and ethos for running a school with multilingual language strategies. This could be done by borrowing from the successes and failures of other school systems globally, and testing them in Indian contexts. Analysis of student results in scholastic and non-scholastic areas could inform the formulation of policy decisions. The curricular objectives and overall methodology of such schools would be founded on well-proven principles of language acquisition, cognitive linguistics and child development theories grounded in solid research.
2. Popularize the value of multilingual practices in school, especially translanguaging, through strong empirical research that links it to scholastic achievement, beyond research journals and academic papers, to reach the common man.
3. Conduct metalinguistic awareness sessions with students and teachers about the nature of language and its structure, encoding processes of social exploitation and hegemony. Just as students today study about global warming and its dangers, they must also understand the role a language plays in their lives and what it means to be multilingual. Further, they must be able to analyse its socio-political-economic aspects. This could be done in many ways—as a standalone discussion, “language” as an integrated unit of study or as a specific research project.

### **Practical Ways to Build Multilingual Ecology in the School**

*Figure 1.* Multilingual ecology that welcomes families.

*Figure 2.* Multilingual ecology values student identities.

*Figure 3.* Curriculum that recognizes and connects to students’ identities.



**Conclusion**

In an increasingly globalized and technologically advancing world, language boundaries are fuzzy and fluid. There is a multiplicity of language practices and neo-cultural identity formations. However education leadership in India needs to move beyond the definition of multilingualism as additive / subtractive monolingualism and take a hard look at the socioeconomic political drivers, state controls and schools that are its implementing agents. Multilingual heteroglossic<sup>1</sup> education programs must be developed to support multiple languages and literacies, allowing for their functional interrelationships and complementarities to thrive.

**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Monoglossic ideologies treat languages as bounded autonomous systems without regard to the actual language practices of speakers. Heteroglossic ideologies respect multiple language practices in interrelationships. (García, O., 2009)

<sup>2</sup> Translanguaging includes and goes beyond code mixing and code switching, focusing more on the observable practices of multi-linguals that enable them to make sense of their worlds.

<sup>3</sup> The Three Language Formula (NEP, 1968) states that every child has to learn the following languages:

1st: mother tongue or regional language

2nd: In Hindi speaking States, another modern Indian language or English; In non-Hindi speaking States, Hindi or English

3rd: English or a modern Indian language not studied as second language

<sup>4</sup> From the Western scholarly lens, monolingualism was accepted as the norm and bilingualism as double monolingualism. (García, O., 2009) However, this additive / subtractive approach oversimplifies the complex area of linguistic cognition.

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## Interview with Alan Maley on Practical Approaches for Teaching Writing

by Sharoon Sunny

Alan Maley's career in English Language Teaching began with The British Council in 1962. After post-graduate training at the University of Leeds under Prof. Peter Strevens and Prof. Pit Corder, he worked for the British Council in Yugoslavia, Ghana, Italy, France, PR China and India over a period of 26 years. After resigning from the Council in 1988, he became Director-General of the Bell Educational Trust in Cambridge (1988-93). He then took up the post of Senior Fellow in the Department of English, National University of Singapore, where he stayed for 5 years. His last full-time post was as Dean and Professor of the Institute for English Language Education, Assumption University, Bangkok, where he set up new MA programmes.



Since retiring from Assumption in 2004, he has occupied a number of visiting professorial posts at Leeds Metropolitan, Nottingham, Durham, Malaysia (UKM), Vietnam (OU-HCMC) and Germany (Universitat Augsburg). He has published extensively and was series editor for the

Oxford Resource Books for Teachers for over 20 years. He continues to write for publication. He also remains active as a speaker at national and international conferences. He was a co-founder of The Extensive Reading Foundation, and of The C group: Creativity for Change in Language Education. He is a past-President of IATEFL, and was given the ELTons Lifetime Achievement Award in 2012.

**Conversation text from SSN Chennai conference interaction.**

Dated: Oct 26th, 2018

Time: 7:00 PM

Abbreviations: AM = Alan Maley; SS = Sharoon Sunny

SS: Alan, thank you for making time to talk to me especially at the end of a rather long day. This is perhaps a good time to share that I immensely enjoyed reading your book on creativity in the language classroom.

AM: You've read it? How did you get it?

SS: Yes, *Creativity and English Language Teaching: From Inspiration to Implementation* is available on Amazon.

AM: I know it is. It is very expensive but

AM: Thank you for buying it if somebody bought it i.e.

SS: It's a very insightful book. But I'd like to begin with how I became familiar with your work-my introduction to Alan Maley. During early days of my PhD classes, I met a lot of my professors to understand how I could fine-tune my research interest. When I met Prof. Jayshree Mohanraj and discussed my area of interest in writing, one of the first things she asked me was, "Have you read Alan Maley?" I said, "I haven't". She said, "Perhaps that's where you should start."

AM: So you started with that book?

SS: No, no. Not with that one; particularly with *Poem into Poem*. I started with you and with your articles and interviews. And what you say about using different elements in the English language classroom resonated with me. For example, you've said you use meditation.

AM: Well, that's one possibility.

SS: Also, theatre and music and there are the various other elements. We are whole people and we cannot live a language in isolation. But whenever I try to ask teachers to think about using

these various elements, I hit a barrier. What I hear is that, yes this is fantastic and I could use it but I honestly don't have the time. So I don't know how to get them to see the long-term benefits.

AM: There's no magical answer to that, is there? People say they haven't got the time but everyone's got the same amount of time. It is a question of how you deploy the time and I know (you are talking about teachers) teachers have an enormous amount to do and a lot of that is useless and pointless. There's no magical answer unfortunately. Only by example really.

SS: There aren't very many though

AM: Very many what?

SS: Teachers who lead by example

AM: No. Well you have to start with those who will. You may try to persuade large numbers of people that it is possible – but you will only get a few who will try it. And those are the ones you need to work with. It's human nature. And people are in the teaching profession for different reasons as well. Some are there to collect the money at the end of the month and get through the day with minimal damage or loss of feathers. It's sad I know but there isn't a magical answer.

I often suggest that teachers should try just one or two very small things, perhaps at the beginning of the class or at the end. Just leave 5 minutes and you can do something with those five or ten minutes and maybe you don't even need to do it every day. But do try small, small things and introduce new things. Once the kids latch on to it, it's good for the teacher as well. 'So tomorrow I'm doing a creative writing activity. Something to look forward to.' Many of these activities are very simple, so simple you won't believe it - and the kids love them. They really get into them. The activities don't take very long and students will even do them outside class once they get interested. The teachers will say, 'You know we did this and the kids loved it. Can we have more of this?' I think you can start really small and that is really the only kind of advice I can give you. I wish I had a magical philosopher's stone or something.

SS: For the longest time I've believed that using creative writing strategies in the classroom can improve overall writing abilities. I've not had very many takers.

AM: No?

SS: No. The learners love it because you can bring in so many elements.

AM: Absolutely. It helps the other kind of writing as well.

SS: Yes. It does.

(Sangeetha: Do some students get left out in this kind of a classroom? For some students their creative juices begin to flow and they benefit, but do the left-brained students get left out?)

AM: I don't think they do, actually. No. Although there's a lot of controversy about that anyway. You know people are not, with very few exceptions, wholly left-brained or wholly right-brained. So left-brained people also stand to benefit, since it supplies a mental activity that they don't otherwise get. And the right-brained ones of course love it and it is a great relief to them that they don't have to do all those left-brained things that actually make them marginalised - because they don't like doing them or don't do them very well. No, I think it's something for everybody but it's not a panacea. It just happens to work in most cases. You know I've never...let me think. No I've never had a creative writing session that didn't work at some level for everyone.

SS: I'll add to that, too. I tried using creative writing strategies for over 4 years and I have to say that it worked--it worked to enhance other kinds of writing. Now my aim is to help teachers understand that it works and that it is definitely not a waste of time, as they often see it. I want teachers to understand that this is not to fill a gap and that if used consistently it can produce striking results...

AM: Right. There are tremendous benefits. Benefits in lexical acquisition, grammatical reinforcement, you know and stylistic, and I'm saying stylistic in the broader sense of .the way texts are put together, they've got some understanding after they've done it themselves so that, in terms of reading, for instance, it helps with developing reading proficiency too.

S: Students begin to appreciate the language and the beauty.

AM: Yes, but that is true for the students but you are talking about the difficulty in persuading teachers that it's worth the investment.

SS: What was fascinating for me about the book...

AM: The BIG book...(laughter)

SS: The use of the word creativity was fascinating to me, because that's what I'm currently researching. What are teachers' beliefs about creativity and how do those beliefs impact the teaching of writing. So when I ask teachers if they think creativity is important, they say yes, it is absolutely necessary. But when I ask them if they can elaborate how they enhance this in the classroom, then I hit a big, empty, blank wall.

AM: Hmm...it's a blank wall. That's why you need to show how very simple things can be done. You don't have to be a genius to do that.

SS: So when you said you'd be releasing your haiku book...

AM: But that's not a teaching book. I want to focus on my own creative writing from now on. I am doing one last EFL book. It will come out as a freely downloadable book with the BC on their website like the other two. I've got 20 people. 20 experienced people, some of them very famous, some of them not famous at all, contributing one chapter each. They are drawn from a variety of countries with a variety of teaching contexts, from primary to university. We've tried cover all the angles as far as possible. And I asked them to follow more or less the structure of my talk at this conference: your earliest language learning experiences before you became involved in the teaching business, the places, people, books, ideas that influenced you. And as a result what are your beliefs? And then at the end I've asked them to give one or two teacher development activities which could be used in training sessions. The deadline for the submission is 31st of December, then it should come out by Sept. next year probably. They'll probably put it on their website, *English Agenda* or whatever they call it.

SS: I'll look forward to it.

Coming back to your haikus, the reason I'm excited about the haiku collection is because I'm asking teachers to write haikus themselves so as to understand the finer nuances of writing so that they will then be better able to teach it.

AM: Yes, of course this is how it should work.

SS: So the first place is to start with writing haikus.

AM: Well, it's very easy to write a bad haiku but never mind. I'd rather write a bad one than not write one at all. The good thing about haikus, and they have been used in mother tongue teaching for years and years, is the discipline they require. If you want to play by the rules, you know you need 5, 7, 5 syllables, so they have to go through a whole lot of reformulation to get the right number of syllables, which means they are recycling whatever language they have acquired quite deeply. So I agree that haikus are a good place to start...

SS: I ask teachers if they know what a syllable is.

AM: I'm sure you get some very funny answers too... (laughter)

SS: The other question I had was about the Asia Teachers Group -



AM: Which no longer exists. It became defunct around 2014. We met in a different country each year and that year we were to meet in Nepal again and that was the year of the devastating earthquake. Unfortunately, none of the other members offered to run it in their country instead - and without somebody taking it on, we couldn't do it.

SS: How did it work though?

AM: It worked voluntarily. I mean we had round about 40 members overall but they didn't always come to everything. Every year we would run one workshop lasting a week in one of the countries in the region. So we had run two or three in Nepal. Two or three in Indonesia, in Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and one in China. We would be together for a week - sometimes 10, 15 or 20 people. Every time I would set them a task beforehand so they would write before coming. They would come with some texts which they could share and comment on and do peer editing and everything. Then we would have sessions where they would be writing new material. We always had one day where we went on a writing excursion day to a place of interest. If we were here, for instance, we might have gone to Mahabalipuram, which would then have provided the stimulus. We would spend the whole day out - writing, writing, enjoying and playing around - and then come back and write up our notes and jottings. The next day we would share what we'd written. And when participants went back, they would write full drafts and send them to me and I would do an edit - and then it would be published.

So after every workshop that we did, we published a book.

SS: What were they called?

AM: I don't know...creative writing or poems. (See the list in the attachment) We usually did separate ones for stories and poems. Some of them would go back to try these things and come back with their practical ideas for the next workshop, or some would conduct workshops for local teachers themselves. Some of these people took it upon themselves to make this happen because you know, they weren't high up in the hierarchy. Most of them were simply classroom teachers.

SS: But they were passionate?

AM: Yes, they were very passionate. They would come paying their own airfares, which could sometimes represent a month's salary. So they were really committed to it and they got a sense of community as well. They were coming from a lot of different places and learning a lot about other places.

SS: I was so excited when I read about your interview with an Iranian named Ruzbeh where you said you considered all types of writing as creative: emails, blogs, essays, letters.

AM: Yes. You know some of the run-of-the-mill kind of writing tends to become very dull. I used to teach writing at NUS, and my undergraduates had some very funny ideas about writing. Even the MAs. They thought that if they were writing something academic, it had to be lengthy, convoluted, using high-sounding vocabulary and all those things which make it unreadable. Writing needs a personal voice.

SS: One of the things that i've always argued for is that each of us can build a writerly voice.

AM: Yes, you can. I used to write things and then someone would say, I knew it was you. It couldn't have been anyone else. That is a high compliment.

SS: The article that you wrote about researchers and teachers, I loved that one. I sent it to a few of my professors and they loved it, too.

AM: You did? But that doesn't change anything, does it?

SS: No. it doesn't.

AM: You know there is a vested interest in nothing changing. Going back to developing a personal voice in academic writing, I had an MA student who wrote a very interesting thesis on this very subject. How to develop a personal voice in academic writing. It was really good. One of the best I've seen actually. She worked on it very, very hard. But the idea that academic writing has to be conformist and dull is very deeply entrenched.

Elmore Leonard was an American who wrote detective stories. He was very dismissive and had scathing things to say about people who wrote enormously long sentences and all of these things. There is an article which lists ten things not to do as a writer - you'll find it if you Google his name. And one of them is "cut the hooptedoodle." It sounds very funny, but it is very, very true.

When I taught my writing courses at NUS, I did a lot of background reading on process writing and all of the stuff that we are familiar with. But I found that when we used creative writing, the expository kind of writing also improved. I did a survey way back then. I think I polled about 90 teachers worldwide and asked if they believed that improving creative writing

also improved other kinds of writing and 90% of them said, of course, yes. But of course, you can put this in front of people's eyes and show them and everything - but unless they are ready to commit to it themselves, what can you do?

SS: It's a chicken and egg thing, really. If you are not doing this while growing up, then you will not do it as a teacher.

AA: I agree. You have to do it yourself.

SS: I read this research article that said long term, consistent training does help. However, short-term workshops don't do much since teachers come in, listen and then go back to doing what they were doing.

AM: Yes, and this was something we noticed about that group. I said earlier that not everybody came to everything but there was a core group, you know this thing went on for over 10 years, so they would have come for 4 or 5 of these and then they started taking off on their own.

SS: So do you hold workshops?

AM: Yes, occasionally. I mean I'm 81, so I'm getting a bit old.

SS: I told Prof. Gunashekar that I'd be meeting you here

AM: Did he say, "Is he still alive?" (Loud laughter).

AM: I do it not just for teachers but also for others too. There are people who meet for Zen meditation and we'll be looking at haikus with them because there's a link between meditation and writing haikus. I'll be doing that over a weekend.

SS: I've been working with teachers on using mindfulness.

AM: Yes, teachers need to create a space for themselves or else you get wiped out. Teacher burn-out is all too common.

SS: Alan, it's been an enjoyable and insightful conversation this evening. I won't take more of your time. Thank you again for your patience and offering your perspectives for a wider audience.

AM: Oh. that's ok. I'm happy to answer any more questions you have over email.

SS: I will write again soon over email.

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