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Subversion of Tradition and Anorexia: Feminist Narrative in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

Josna Rajan & Deepa L.C.

Margaret Eleanor Atwood published her first novel *The Edible Woman* during first wave feminism in 1960. It can be read as a manifesto of post-colonial women's sensibility and sensitivity in which the state of marginality is seen as the source of the potential energy for change and progress. Atwood explores predominant feminist issues such as loss of identity, male domination and chauvinism, consumerism, and sexual identity. It can be seen that in the novel, Atwood tends to subvert tradition in an attempt to keep up her individuality, universality and humanity intact. Moreover, she employs anorexia nervosa — an eating disorder, as a metaphor for mutiny and protest. This paper focuses on the “abnormally normal” protagonist, Marian's struggle to overcome alienation and achieve personal and social integration by subverting the society's traditional expectation of the female role. In the end, she regains her “self” through her symbolic rejection of food. The women protagonists of the novel, like most of Atwood's women characters, carry the message of women's independence and equality in a patriarchal world.

Margaret Eleanor Atwood has great universal recognition as an ingenious and versatile Canadian woman writer. In her stories, the narration is at times conventional, at other times innovative, subversive, modernist, postmodernist and inventive. As a novelist, she defies to be defined and classified under any specific category for reasons of complexity and mixing up of various genres in her novels and narrative forms. A great poet before entering the world of fiction writing, Atwood instills a poetic vision in her storytelling while keeping a realistic touch and a solid commitment to contemporary society and humanity. Often, as a subversive writer, she goes against literary conventions. The question of the status of women has been a frequent issue in Atwood's works. Her protagonists are women who range from the conventional type to the revolutionary and predatory type. This article explores the vanquishment and marginalization of women in a patriarchal society as represented in her novel *The Edible Woman*. *The Edible Woman* can be viewed as a manifesto of post-colonial women's sensibility and sensitivity in which the state of marginality is seen as the source of the potential energy for change and progress.

In literature, feminism as a distinctive and concerted movement started its impact in the 1960s. However, political and social struggles for women's freedom and equality had been witnessed two centuries prior to that. Most feminists who led these struggles believed that women as a group had been treated oppressively and differently from men and that they had been subjected to personal and institutional discrimination. Feminism plays a pivotal role in the narration in many of Atwood's novels. As a writer of a colossal range, Atwood presents a tremendous challenge to those who jeopardize generalizations about her writing. When asked in Australia, in 2001, if she was a feminist, Atwood replied:

My bottom line is that women are human beings, a fact that is disputed elsewhere on the globe, and if they're human beings, they also have human rights and human frailties. And then we can go on talking about the right and frailties, but if we don't take 'human beings' as the axiom, we won't get anywhere. (Turcotte 19)

Turcotte rightly hints at the subversive writer in Atwood. She does not deserve to be either generalized or categorized based on some theory or ideology. She is not "traditional," "modernist," "romanticist," or "feminist," in the strict sense of each of these terms. Atwood is, in fact, "Atwoodian," so to say. Yet, she keeps up her individuality, universality and humanity intact. Some of the Atwoodian attitudes can be found in Marian, the narrator of her first novel. Both traditional and modernist traits are there in Marian; however, she is exclusively neither. She subverts both to assert her own independent will.

Subversion of the Traditional Role of Woman

In today's consumer society, woman is considered the "second sex," a commodity for the carnal gratification of male-chauvinistic desires. In *The Edible Woman*, Atwood explores predominant feminist issues such as loss of identity, male domination and chauvinism, consumerism, and sexual identity. It can be called a proto-feminist narrative as it was published just in time to coincide with the rise of feminism in North America. The novel's themes suit the ideological flavour of the times.

In *The Second Sex*, de Beauvoir states the underlying inequality between the gender roles in society. She argues: [woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute she is the Other. (16-17).

The protagonist Marian absorbs the social idea of women as the “other” to such an extent that she cannot identify her “self”. On the other hand, Ainsley, Marian’s dynamic and rebellious roommate, subverts the traditional victim-predator role and exploits man to satisfy her needs. She wished to have a baby without the encumbrance of legal marriage. Women like Marian and Ainsley search for their freedom and liberty and wish to have a distinct identity by gaining a secure and lucrative job. To them, getting married is inviting subordination and getting children by marriage is just like making a mess of one’s life. They wished to kill the “Angel” of the house before it killed them, thereby reminding the readers about Virginia Woolf’s book *Killing the Angel in the House: Seven Essays*. They both reflect the subversive attitude of Atwood. Concerning the novel as a whole, marriage is a threat to romance in Marian’s case or a way of resolution from the crisis for Ainsley. Their feminine views reveal an undercurrent of egoism and self-centeredness. Hence Atwood’s works precipitate and predict certain salient future moments of feminism. Tolan remarks, “Although it is impossible to provide empirical proof of this . . . Atwood’s work demonstrably anticipates future movements within feminism.” (4). The confinement of women to their own bodies based on the popular Freudian archetypes was a literary convention of the 1950s. Atwood mixes this convention with the feminist trends prevailing in the 1960s in narrating the story relating to Marian and Ainsley.

Marian is aware of Peter’s motive to annul her individuality and devour her in a civilized way. She spurns to be Peter’s “edible woman”, thereby representing the modern woman who subverts tradition by rebelling against the system of gender and its tyranny. Marian wants to become neither a “man” nor a “machine” as in Seymour Surveys. Even the taking up of the job at Seymour Surveys is not because of her liking it but because she wants some job soon after her graduation. She is seeking her identity as a self-dependent woman. Bouson, in his *Brutal Choreographies*, observes,

It is ironic that Marian perceives Peter as a “fixed barrier” against the amorphous world of femininity which she dreads. Because romantic love assigns her the male-defined feminine roles, she wishes to escape and insists that she consent to femininity, her romantic affiliation with Peter leads not to heightened self-definition but to a frightening sense of self-diminishment (23).

Peter outwardly loves Marian. He does not have sincere, selfless love in his heart; his love is rather sensuous. His desire to marry her is in consideration of the gains he might benefit from by the conventional role assigned to women in family life. He wishes that she relinquish

her job without surrendering her femininity. Peter expects the traditional role of a wife and mother from Marian, but she does not wish to crush her identity and individuality with the “decorative” family life. She wishes to have fresh air and the freedom to flourish and refine her personality. De Beauvoir writes: “woman has ovaries, a uterus: these peculiarities imprison her in her subjectivity, circumscribe her within the limits of her own nature” (15). Marian conforms to de Beauvoir’s view. Marian feels that the compulsion of avoiding an undesirable marriage and an unwanted pregnancy can be a veritable entrapment and, of course, is a positive feminist approach.

Marian’s acceptance of Peter’s marriage proposal makes her feel that she has lost herself completely. Later when Peter tightened his arms around Marian and asked again, “‘how do you think . . . we’d be married?’” (80), suddenly she draws back from him and feels being digested by his reflection, “small and oval, mirrored in his eyes” (80). To Kenneth Hermansson, Marian feels diminutive before him and the reflection of herself that she sees in Peter’s eyes has the resemblance of an egg, which suggests that she is going to be consumed like an egg (qtd in Ashraf). Here Marian’s reflection is related to the “egg” image. His eyes, looking like an egg, gazing on her, actually seem grazing or consuming her gradually. They seem eager to satisfy their appetite by consuming egg—raw or deliciously and variously cooked as omlette, bull’s eye, fried, scrambled etc. Marian is not completely transformed in spite of the new assertiveness she has acquired. She feels herself to be more than one person, she is now conscious of the two sides of her personality—the old, calm, docile, diffident self; and the angry self who has taken wings from an intolerable situation. In her ambivalent situation she relents and agrees to his marriage proposal. This resentment only intensifies as time passes and with more experiences with him.

As the proposed date of her wedding approaches, the conflict that was raging in Marian reaches its culmination. Before Marian comes to her final decision, she considers the resolution of her crisis by resorting to psychiatric consultation which she discusses with Duncan. Mc Lay regards Duncan as a mythical guide, “. . . dehumanized, even grotesque, related to the grotto or underground caves” (131). She tells him that others close to her say that she was living in a world of fantasies. He asks her why she cannot go back to Peter as she is getting married soon. Duncan is noncommittal as ever. However, she tells him: “‘Maybe I should see a psychiatrist,’ she said gloomily. . . . What she really wanted, she realized, had been reduced to simple safety. She thought she had been heading towards it all these months but she hadn’t

been getting anywhere” (275-76). The narrative clearly reveals the sad plight of Marian. The passage in the third person point of view—Marian speaking to herself in the first person within—presents her as on the verge of a mental collapse. Here, Atwood employs the self-conscious narrative strategy which is at the same time dramatized by interior monologue. At the lowest line in her spirits, Marian is pathetically trying to grope for “simple safety,” conscious at the same time of her split self. She gets no help or consolation from anyone around, she is aware that she cannot get them from Duncan or Ainsley as they are unconcerned about her, though in different ways. This is perhaps the way of the world. However, the crisis of the submissive woman is overcome by her own sudden resolve, and Marian decides to subvert the traditional woman role by asserting the feminist trait lying deep down in her psyche.

After Marian’s meeting with Duncan, she decides to stop eating wholly and her abstention from eating is at once a physical expression of her powerlessness and an act of resistance against that powerlessness. Duncan is actually Marian’s alter-ego and functions as her double throughout the novel. Duncan plays an important role in enabling Marian to subvert the traditional role of woman thereby achieving selfhood. He does not want to stick to the supposition created by romantic desire. M.F. Salat believes that: “the Marian-Duncan encounter parodies the Jungian archetype of descent into and confrontation with the other/shadow self and re-emergence and new knowledge about self” (100).

As Tolan observes, Marian’s engagement to Peter “... signals a shift in the text from a first person narrative to a third person narrative, and it is clear that the realization of her goal has been achieved at the cost of her subjectivity” (13). She also recognizes that modern technology provides women ample possibility to free themselves from reproduction to experience a new liberty. Throughout the novel the “abnormally normal” Marian is seen nurturing a more positive identity which is the true spirit of postmodernism, the desire for a single, unified spiritual identity. Marian’s struggle to overcome alienation and achieve personal and social integration is regarded as a freedom to love, to share joys and sorrows, and to enjoy a state which is our spiritual home, the human goal.

Anorexia—a metaphor for rebellion

Anorexia nervosa is defined as an eating disorder characterized by an abnormally low body weight, an intense fear of gaining weight, and a distorted perception of one’s own body. Psychological factors such as a high level of perfectionism, low self-esteem and high anxiety

are often found to lead to anorexia. Atwood makes brilliant use of anorexia in *The Edible Woman* as a metaphor for mutiny. Atwood consciously makes use of Marian's anorexia as a means of her subversive reaction against patriarchal capitalism, which is strongly prevalent in society.

Atwood points out in an interview:

It's a human activity that has all kinds of symbolic connotations depending on the society and the level of society. In other words, what you eat varies from place to place, how we feel about what we eat varies from place to place, how we feel about what we eat varies from individual to individual as well as from place to place. If you think of food as coming in various categories: sacred food, ceremonial food, everyday food, and things that are not to be eaten, forbidden food, dirty food, if you like—for the anorexic, all food is dirty food. (qtd in Lyons 228)

The protagonist, Marian Mc Alpin's quest for self-identity rejects the pre-set feminine roles offered by the society. Her relationship with food is the most vital element in charting her self-discovery and development in the novel. Her eating disorder places her as the starving woman in literature. She finds her body going beyond her control, "my subconscious getting ahead of my conscious self" (100). Her eating disorder is her rebellion against exploitative, predatory consumer culture. This tunes with Maud Ellmann's work about women and hunger in *The Hunger Artists: Starving, Writing and Imprisonment* ". . . the starving body is itself a text, the living dossier of its discontents, for the injustices of power are encoded in the savage hieroglyphics of its sufferings" (17). Marian's difficulty lies in her self-identification with the objects that society is consuming. She starts viewing herself as being consumed rather than the consumer, and she stops eating. The novel argues for certain revolutionary changes in connection with gender differences in society: "' . . . a way out of gender power-struggle'" (Tandon 24).

Through food and body image, Marian communicates her resistance to domineering and reductive conventions of society. When she goes to a restaurant with her colleagues, she finds it difficult to eat. Marian is surprised at herself that she had been dying to go for lunch, she had been starving, and now she wasn't even hungry. Emma Parker, in her *You Are What You Eat: The Politics of Eating in the Novels of Margaret Atwood*, rightly believes that in Atwood's novels:

All the heroines interpret the world in terms of food and negotiate their way through life using food. For women, eating and non-eating articulate that which is ideologically unspeakable. Food functions as a muted form of female self-expression, but, more than that, it also becomes a medium of experience. Food imagery saturates the novels and becomes the dominant metaphor the heroines use to describe people, landscape, and emotions. (358)

In Marian's case, she feels exhaustion in body and mind although there is no evidence of "loss or increase of weight" as such; she, however, has been experiencing "psychic distancing" of herself, which is at the root of her identity crisis as a woman. She has become hysterical and out of her mind as a result of her engagement of marriage with Peter, a feeling that gets intensified as time draws nearer and nearer to that day. The symptoms of her ailment are more physical than mental and she repeatedly suspects, to her dismay, that she is in the grip of anorexia nervosa, a medical term which came to be used in the second half of the nineteenth century. Showalter in her *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture* observes, "When only the body was regarded as important, anorexic girls paraded physical starvation as a way of drawing attention to starvation of their mental and moral faculties" (128). In the novel, Marian displays anorexic symptoms as a way of escape from Peter who has been hunting her and monopolizing her. She asks her friends and Peter whether they think she is normal. She is more and more worried when her body increasingly rejects food. However, when these symptoms started in her she had been trying to pretend that there was actually nothing wrong with her, and that it was only a superficial ailment, or it might be the thought that she is not normal that is troubling her.

Rejection of food acts as a weapon of resistance against Peter's attempt to subjugate Marian in the name of femininity which he uses as a conventional weapon for woman's submission. Although she herself is uncertain about the consequences of food rejection, she lets her body become weaker and weaker, thereby unconsciously gaining greater mental power of resistance. This is a subconscious endeavour that surfaces more and more in the course of time. After becoming determined to plan her own future living, she designs artfully and artistically the making of a delicious edible cake-woman and invites Peter and Duncan to share it in eating. Marian, with her repressed fear of being consumed by Peter, mustering at the same time enough courage, confronts him with the question: "'You've been trying to destroy me, haven't you?'" (284). By placing the cake-woman before Peter, Marian has taken an act of sweet revenge on him, her "enemy" who wanted to "destroy" her. Her ingenious plan

works marvellously. She relishes the impact of her baking the cake-woman. She feels calm, composed and completely free from the angst she has been suffering for quite some time. Her endeavour to escape under her own skin ended, and her split personality vanished. She feels herself to be a liberated woman now. This also accounts for the change in her narrative from the third person point of view to the first person point of view with the prospect of a promising future. Howells remarks that baking the cake can be read as “the central metaphor for Marian’s perception of women’s condition and fate as decreed by the feminine mystique” (qtd in Tolan 33). Marian refuses to be consumed any further. She offers Peter “a substitute, something you’ll like much better” (284). Dismayed and shocked at seeing this symbolic “edible-woman,” Peter abruptly departs from the scene, never to come back. Marian eats the cake, which Peter rejects, to show that women should not be treated as a base object in the consumer ridden society. Ironically Marian’s cake eating reminds the reader about Peter’s condemnation, “You’re rejecting your femininity” (77). The eating of her wedding cake—a cake woman which she has made and which Peter rejects—demonstrates that Marian is once again in her own control without being consumed by the male dominated society. Marian thus built up a robust psychological wall before Peter, which could not be penetrated. Emma Parker comments: “By demonstrating how consumption is related to power, Atwood subtly urges women to empower themselves by urging them to eat their way into the world”

Atwood defied the generalization of women in accordance with history and culture and wished to restructure their lot with proper feminist understanding. Through her novels, she tries to unveil the blind spots within the feminist doctrine. Bouson, in her *Anxiety of Being Influenced*, says that Atwood, through Marian in *The Edible Woman*, attempts to “. . . expose and subvert the ideological constructs that have long defined and confined women” (230). The women protagonists of her fiction and most of the women characters, in one way or another, carry the message of women’s independence and equality. Unlike the stereotyped traditional women, Atwood’s women characters are daring enough to break the shackles of society’s perception of women and live among the readers not as fictional characters but as women with flesh and blood. Atwood, in *The Edible Woman*, makes powerful use of anorexia as a metaphor for mutiny and protest. Atwood consciously makes use of Marian’s anorexia as a means of her subversive reaction against patriarchal capitalism which is strongly prevalent in society.

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Mirrors of Society: Exploring the Spectrum of Disability in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Manju R.

In *Midnight's Children*, by Salman Rushdie and *A Fine Balance*, by Rohinton Mistry, the portrayal of disability is nuanced and reflects the complex intersection of individual experiences with societal structures. Both authors depict characters with disabilities as multifaceted individuals, highlighting their strengths and challenges within the broader context of their lives. Rushdie weaves disability into the narrative to explore the broader themes of identity, nationalism and the impact of historical incidents on individuals. Mistry portrays characters with disabilities facing the harsh realities of societal prejudices and economic disparities in India of the 1970s. The characters, Omprakash and Ishvar endure physical disabilities, reflecting the broader socio-political challenges of the time. In both novels, the authors use disability as a lens through which they explore deeper societal issues and offer a critique of a society that marginalizes those with physical differences. Their portrayal of disability adds depth to their exploration of human suffering and survival in their novels.

Salman Rushdie gained international fame with his novel *Midnight's Children*, which won the Booker Prize in 1981 and the 'Booker of Bookers', which is awarded to the best novel to have won the Booker Prize in its first 25 years. Rohinton Mistry is a Canadian author of Parsi descent, who is celebrated for his poignant storytelling that delves into the lives of ordinary individuals facing extraordinary challenges. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the bodies of the protagonists become the mirror that reflects the turbulent periods in Indian history, like the wars with China and Pakistan, and the imposition of the Emergency rule. David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder in their book, *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and the Dependencies of Discourse*, have rightly commented that "various historical periods influenced literature's appropriation of disability" (5).

Though Saleem Sinai, the protagonist of *Midnight's Children* suffers from physical disfigurement, he is gifted with special powers. He is one of the 1001 midnight's children born on the night of August 14-15, 1947, coinciding with the birth of free India. All these children have physical peculiarities and they are endowed with extraordinary powers. The most talented among them is Saleem, as he is born exactly at midnight. Though he has a disfigured face with a long beaked nose and dark birth marks, he has the miraculous power of telepathy, the ability

to “look into the hearts and minds of men” (*MC*, 239). His face resembles the map of India; his raised temples suggestive of the mighty Himalayas and his long, thin chin suggestive of the southern part of India. His history is intertwined with the history of India and when the country passes through a tough phase, it gets reflected in the body of Saleem. During Indo-China war, his sinuses “puffed up” and his nasal passages “were in a state of acute crisis” (*MC*, 260). He suffers from amnesia and forgets his name in the period of civil war between East and West Pakistan. He calls himself ‘Buddha’. He regains his identity when Parvati, another of the midnight’s children recognizes him and calls him by his original name. His son, Aadam Sinai is born on the midnight of 25 June 1975, the day on which the Emergency rule was declared in India. Aadam has large ears, but is born dumb. His dumbness can be related to the curtailment of freedom of expression and strict press censorship during the period of the Emergency. He also suffers from a mysterious disease, but he is cured with the lifting of the Emergency.

People were forced to undergo family planning operation and Saleem and his friends were imprisoned in Widow’s Hostel in Benares. Saleem and all other midnight’s children were forced to undergo ectomy. They were denied the possibility of reproducing themselves as “ectomies were performed, but irreversibly: testicles were removed from sacs and wombs vanished forever” (*MC*, 439). After the effect of anesthesia waned, the building is filled with “the tormented cry of children who had lost their magic” (*MC*, 435). The surgery turned them into ordinary human beings and they lost the power to connect telepathically. The physical and mental trauma they suffer is imposed upon them by the dominant political forces of the society and thus, they become victims of cultural disability. The aim of cultural disability, as the eminent critic Tom Shakespeare points out is “to show how disability is not simply about having a medical condition, but is about how medical conditions come freighted with meaning and symbolism and connotation” (50). Ultimately, Saleem’s disfigurement serves as a central motif in the novel, reflecting themes of identity, belonging and the search for meaning in a complex world.

Rushdie also uses many minor characters as disability tropes in his novel. Ocular disfigurement is highlighted in the character of blind hostesses, “who have eyes tattooed on their eyelids” (*MC*, 454) who accompany Saleem and Mian Abdullah to Midnight Confidential Club in Mumbai. Ocular disability is employed ironically in the case of Ghani, who is blind, but is presented as pretending to appreciate European paintings (*MC*, 21). Blindness is equated

with unlawful act and extended as punishment to one of Mian Abdulla's assassins, "whose eye cracked and fell out of his socket" (*MC*, 48).

Deafness is also used as a disability trope by Rushdie to portray the chaos and confusion that prevailed during the time of war between East and West Pakistan. Saleem, fleeing from the battlefield enters the Sunderbans forest in the company of three other soldiers. They lose their power of hearing, when they stuff their ears with mud to block the "taunting voices of the jungle" (*MC*, 368). They talk together without being able to hear one another and it creates a pandemonium, as they exhibit "disturbed antics and gestures such as grabbing at their faces and eating ants" (*MC*, 369) and "staring glassily at new things they encounter" (*MC*, 370).

Padma, who serves as a confidante and companion of the protagonist, Saleem Sinai, is born with a cleft lip. Despite her physical disability, Padma possesses a sharp wit and intelligence. Padma is the reader's substitute in the novel. As a listener and a critic of Saleem's narration of the story, she gives the basis and power to the writing project. As Saleem says:

I am learning to use Padma's muscles as my guides. When she's bored I can detect in her fibres the ripples of uninterest; when she is unconvinced, there is a tic which gets going in her cheek. The dance of her musculature helps to keep me on the rails . . . (*MC*, 270)

Being Rushdie's surrogate reader within the novel, she often asks questions to Saleem, the narrator. One of the novel's main narrative structures is the Saleem-Padma conversations which hold various strands of the story together. She also performs the choric function of an epic. At the end of Book I, Saleem says that the photographer gave his mother a cheque for one hundred rupees to celebrate his birth. Saleem considers this as a derisory sum, but Padma grumpily tells him not to worry, for birth is after all a commonplace occurrence: "One hundred rupees is not so little; after all, everybody gets born, it's not such a big thing" (*MC*, 120).

It is Padma who fixes the novel to the present time, while Saleem's narrations shift to past time as he tells the story which spans more than six decades. His narration is interspersed with wild flights of imagination, visions, hallucinations and recollections. But Padma, preoccupied with earthly realities, forces Saleem down to the narration of actual events. By helping Saleem to keep his feet on the ground, Padma ensures the progression and formal integrity of the narrative. Besides being a nurse and cook for Saleem, she inspires his creative genius. He admits that when his imagination runs wild, it is Padma who brings him "back into

the world of linear narrative, the universe of what-happened-next” (MC, 38). Similarly, when the narrator spends a long time in telling his story before his birth, Padma becomes impatient and she tells him to increase the pace of his story: “At this rate, you will be two hundred years old before you manage to tell about your birth” (MC, 38).

Padma’s relation to Saleem is filled with drama. Once she becomes furious and leaves him because Saleem has written in the novel that Padma, his “squatting glimpser, is captivated helpless as a mongoose frozen into immobility by the swaying, blinkless eyes of a hooded snake paralysed . . . by love” (MC, 121). Her abandonment irks his male ego; he cannot stand being turned down. At the same time, it also leaves him insecure:

It has been two whole days since Padma stormed out of my life A balance has been upset; I feel cracks widening down the length of my body; because suddenly I am alone, without my necessary ear, and it isn’t enough. I am seized by a sudden fist of anger: why should I be so unreasonably treated by my one disciple? (MC, 149)

Padma’s love for Saleem is sincere. Defying all codes of social propriety, Padma, a traditional Hindu woman, decides to stay with Saleem, a Muslim widower. Even after knowing that Saleem is disintegrating and dying, she is ready to marry him. This reveals her extraordinary courage and intense willpower. Padma’s presence adds depth to the narrative, contributing to the exploration of identity, love and the human experience in post-colonial India. Rushdie portrays her as a multifaceted character who challenges preconceived notions about disability and resilience.

The writer uses disability as an analogue for social degeneracy and disorder prevailing in society and his use of disability tropes are not just images of ugliness: but they refer to disability as such, as is evident in the depiction of Karachi in the novel, which “had acquired the misshapen lumpiness of a gigantic dwarf” (MC, 307) and “was full of deformed houses, the stunted hunchback children of deficient lifelines, houses growing mysteriously blind, with no visible windows” and “houses which fell over with monotonous regularity, like drunks” (MC, 309). Karachi, the urban metropolis, is personified as a crowd of incapacitated drunkards, which dehumanizes that imagined crowd, which in turn, turns disability into an analogue for decadence social degradation.

Rohinton Mistry’s *A Fine Balance* faithfully reflects the period of the Emergency in India and it serves as a powerful backdrop against which the characters’ lives unfold. It shapes

their experiences, decisions and relationships in profound ways. According to Savita Goel, the novel becomes a “template for a stark and unsparing portrait of that time in India” (196). The two major characters in the novel, Ishvar and Omprakash, work as tailors. They belong to Chamaar caste, which is considered one of the lowest in the caste hierarchy in India. Their disabilities are a result of the violence and discrimination they face as members of the lower caste. The most horrific aspect of the Emergency was that all people, irrespective of their age or marital status, were compelled to undergo family planning operation. In the police raid, Omprakash and Ishvar were forced to go to a sterilization camp of the village. Only those who had a family planning certificate were issued ration cards. The Rations Officer told the tailors that he would accept their request for ration card, only if they underwent vasectomy. Ishvar told a lie that he had done vasectomy and that the certificate was destroyed in fire. He asked him to do it once again and offered two transistor radios as reward. The Facilitator at the sterilization camp opines that the Rations officer cannot be blamed because according to the new rule, every officer had to encourage people to get sterilized: “If he doesn’t fill his quota, no promotion for him” (*AFB*, 178).

Omprakash was about to get married soon and so, Ishvar pleads with the authorities not to sterilize Om. But his plea falls on deaf ears and both of them are forcibly sterilized. The only hope that Ishvar had was that a reverse operation could be done to Om, to restore his fertility. Provoked by Om’s act of spitting towards him, the Thakur, the villain behind their family’s ruin, orders another operation on the already sterilized Om. Thakur orders the doctor to remove Om’s testicles. The doctor tells Om that he is suffering from testicular tumour and he castrates Omprakash. Ishvar’s feet, wounded at the beautification project, develop gangrene and his legs are amputated. They return to the city of Mumbai with a little trolley, fitted with small wheels for Ishvar and a rope for Om to pull it. The physical disability and the mental agony that these innocent tailors endure, is the result of manipulation of the rich and powerful people who are backed by corrupt politicians. Om and Ishvar’s disabilities shape their experiences and interactions with the world around them, highlighting the injustices faced by marginalized individual in our country.

Nosey is a beggar woman who lives on the streets of Mumbai. Soon after her birth, her father, who was a drunkard, slashed off Nosey’s nose in his rage, as he was disappointed with his wife for giving birth to a daughter, instead of a son. Nosey’s mother had nursed her wound and saved the newborn’s life. But her father kept asking her to let Nosey die, adding that her

ugly face was the only dowry in store for her. Because of her father's continuing harassment and persecution, she was sold into the begging profession. Social norms regarding gender bias makes her physically mentally and intellectually disabled for life. Nosey represents the marginalized and vulnerable members of society who face numerous challenges due to their disabilities. Mistry portrays Nosey's character with empathy, shedding light on the struggles and discrimination faced by individuals with disabilities in Indian society.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, offer nuanced portrayals of disability, showcasing the diverse experiences and challenges faced by individuals with physical and emotional disabilities. The disabled body symbolizes the diffuse invasions that threaten the stability of the nation. Both the authors weave intricate connections between disability and the broader issues of cultural, political and social fragmentation. For both the writers, disability becomes a metaphor for societal marginalization and the complex interplay between power, identity and destiny. They explore how these characters navigate their disabilities within the harsh social and economic realities of India. The struggles that these characters undergo highlight themes of resilience, and the quest for dignity in the face of adversity.

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Within and Beyond the Colonial Experience: A Study of Doris Lessing's "The Old Chief Mshlanga"

Reshmi R.L.

Dealing with all the major themes – the individual and the collective, love, conflict, survival, and the relationship between the sexes – in a unique way, Doris Lessing has been dubbed a Communist writer, a feminist writer, a mystic writer, a psychological writer, a science fiction writer and an African writer. Lessing presents the land, Africa as a source of inspiration and as a source of exploitation in her works which is very visible in the African collections of short stories. "The Old Chief Mshlanga", a story from the collection titled *This Was the Old Chiefs Country*, demonstrates Lessing's disapproval of political prejudices and colonialism in the Southern African society. Though Africa is perceived through the sensibility and sensitivity of an alien colonist, the story is not a pro-European story. The paper attempts to explore racism as well as the narrator's- a fourteen year old girl- transforming attitude towards racism. The girl who has been brought up without regard for the natives later discovers that the land she thinks her father owns, really belongs to the Chief Mshlanga. The paper also investigates the attitude of Lessing who was well aware that the land had been occupied before the arrival of the settlers. Thus, by creating a link between the country- Africa and the British girl, the concept of cross-cultural interchange is fully explored in "The Old Chief Mshlanga".

Doris Lessing's depiction of Africa is quite notable as she obviously feels herself the conscience of White Africa. But strangely, it is the Afrikaners who come off best in her stories rather than the Whites. Presenting the land as a source of inspiration Lessing's stories make the readers think that the bonds between place and identity can influence social formations, cultural practices, and political actions. Dealing with a range of social and cultural issues, from women's rights and feminism to post-war and post-colonial identity, Lessing pictures the consciousness as shaped by society. In many of her stories she wanted to talk about and expose racism as a prominent theme. Africa, the landscape, its people – both black and white – are the subject matters of a major part of her writing. Lessing says in her introduction to *African Stories*:

I believe that the chief gift from Africa to writers, white and black, is the continent itself, its presence which for some people is like an old fever, latent always in their blood; or like an old wound throbbing in the bones as the air changes. That is not a place to visit unless one

chooses to be an exile ever afterwards from an inexplicable majestic silence lying just over the border of memory or thought. Africa gives you the knowledge that man is a small creature, among other creatures, in a large landscape. (6)

Doris Lessing's two volumes of African Stories, *This Was the Old Chiefs Country* and *The Sun Between Their Feet*, the novels, *The Grass is Singing*, and *The Children of Violence* series, reflect her childhood and adolescence in a district of Rhodesia in the colonial era and they give a vivid picture of the settler society and the African terrain. In *This Was the Old Chiefs Country*, Africa is perceived through the sensibility and sensitivity of an alien colonist. She writes that "while the cruelties of the white man towards the black man are among the heaviest counts in the indictment against humanity, color prejudice is not our original fault, but only one aspect of the atrophy of the imagination that prevents us from seeing ourselves in every creature that breathes under the sun". (*This Was the Old Chiefs Country*, Preface 8). Most of Lessing's fiction is autobiographical, coming from her childhood experiences which are largely concerned with people and problems involved in the social and political upheavals of twentieth century Africa. Due to her excessive writings on the African culture and how the white colonists acted toward the black Africans, in 1956 Lessing was declared a prohibited alien in both Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.

The story "The Old Chief Mshlanga" is about the deep injustice in South African society on various levels; personal, social, psychological, economic and legal. "The Old Chief Mshlanga" is from the collection *That was the Old Chief's Country* that reflects Lessing's early career as a writer and most of these stories are centered on her childhood, giving an insight into the life of the author. As Lessing incorporates her African experiences in this story, the reader obtains a detailed image of Africa. Although this story is written over fifty years ago, it can be applied to the everyday life of African people even today. "The Old Chief Mshlanga" depicts the story of the transformation of a little white girl in colonial Africa from innocence to experience. In the beginning of the story the protagonist, a fourteen-year-old girl whose name is not mentioned other than her African nickname Nkosikaas—chieftainess, is presented as one who indiscreetly accepts the racist attitudes conveyed by her parents. Walking over the large farm that had been taken over by whites from the black natives who once lived on it and pushing her way around green aisles, and opening her eyes curiously on a sun-suffused landscape she presumptuously accepts it as her own and tries to familiarise all the nature around her. This is the story that most clearly describes the Africa of the Africans, but at first

the girl sees the country through the filter of her European readings. She is not familiar with the landscape in the African veld, because “her books held tales of alien fairies, her rivers ran slow and peaceful, and she knew the shape of the leaves of an ash or an oak” (14). In spite of her attempt to be in communion with the place, she fails to recognize a msasa tree or a thorn since her books bore the tales of alien fairies of England:

She knew the shape of the leaves of an ash or an oak, the names of the little creatures that lived in English streams, when the words ‘the veld’ meant strangeness, though she could remember nothing else.

Because of this, for many years, it was the veld that seemed unreal; the sun was a foreign sun, and the wind spoke a strange language. (13)

The story happens in a time when there was a gulf between the white people, the settlers and black people, the natives. It is evident that the feelings, emotions and ideas of an individual grow out of life’s unique and shared experiences.

On the rare occasions when white children met together they could amuse themselves by hailing a passing native in order to make a buffoon of him; they could set the dogs on him and watch him run; they could tease a small black child as if he were a puppy- save that they would not throw stones and sticks at a dog without a sense of guilt.

Later still, certain questions presented themselves in the child’s mind; and because the answers were not easy to accept, they were silenced by an even greater arrogance of manner.

It was even impossible to think of the black people who worked about the house as friends, for if she talked to one of them, her mother would come running anxiously: ‘Come away; you mustn’t talk to natives.’ (15)

As proven by researches, it is through the senses of the parents that a young child perceives and understands the world and the first environment an infant explores is none other than his parent. The adults are necessary not only for the children’s biological survival, but also for developing their sense of an objective place. As the girl’s individuality in this story is already been shaped by the white parents, she begins to look at the natives and the country with sheer indifference.

At the age of fourteen Nkosikaas has moved beyond the security of her childhood and stepped into an unknown world. When the land becomes too small to hold her curiosity, “she

carried a gun in the crook of her arm and wandered miles a day, from vlei to vlei, from kopje to kopje, accompanied by two dogs: the dogs and the gun were an armour against fear. Because of them she never felt fear".(14). To her, the land is only a space rather than a place since place refers to how people are aware of or attracted to a certain specific space. When she is walking down the side of a field, a group of three Africans come into her sight and when they are not ready to move aside in respect for her passing, she becomes angry. She strongly believes in her parent's teachings: black people are only servants, who have to do anything she wants. At that time an old man who stops walking and asks:

"Morning, Nkosikaas," he said, using the customary greeting for any time of the day.

'Good morning,' I said. "Where are you going?" My voice was a little truculent.

The old man spoke in his own language, then one of the young men stepped forward politely and said in careful English: 'My Chief travels to see his brothers beyond the river.'

A Chief! I thought, understanding the pride that made the old man stand before me like an equal- more than an equal, for he showed courtesy, and I showed none.

The old man spoke again, wearing dignity like an inherited garment, still standing ten paces off, flanked by his entourage, not looking at me (that would have been rude) but directing his eyes somewhere over my head at the trees.(16)

This is her first encounter with the Chief Mshlanga which is described by the author in the first person point of view and so the reader can easily understand the changes taking place in the young girl by viewing the story through her eyes. The grace and courtesy of the old chief influences Nkosikaas' character. Her arrogance regarding that she is a white and has a power and high standard than black people is gone and a new realization dawns on her. The meeting of the girl with the old chief Mshlanga who so intrigues her that she even visits his kraal or village, changes her attitude towards the locals and later it grows into an easy friendliness that makes her become aware of the immense landscape of Africa. She starts loving the land as a place rather than mere a space. Not long after this incident, she gets an opportunity to read an old explorer's book which contains a phrase: "'Chief Mshlanga's Country'. It went like this: "Our destination was Chief Mshlanga's country, to the north of the river; and it was our desire to ask his permission to prospect for gold in his territory."(16). Later her sole purpose is just to meet the black people to show her greetings, exchange courtesies like a gentle girl. She discovers that the land which she believes it is owned by her father, really belongs to Mshlanga.

Nkosikaas realizes that both black and white people can meet gently with tolerance and starts treating the blacks as fellow human beings.

This story portrays the sharp contrast between the respect which is shown by the villagers towards their land, their care for their homes and the whites' attitude towards the land which is dirty and poorly maintained by them. She understands certain facts relating to the land and its natives that highlight the significant cultural differences between her community and the native community of Africa:

When I saw a native approaching, we offered and took greetings; and slowly that other landscape in my mind faded, and my feel struck directly on the African soil, and I saw the shapes of tree and hill clearly, and the black people moved back, as it were, out of my life: it was as if I stood aside to watch a slow intimate dance of landscape and men, a very old dance, whose steps I could not learn.

But I thought: this is my heritage, too; I was bred here; it is my country as well as the black man's country; and there is plenty of room for all of us, without elbowing each other off the pavements and roads.(17).

She realizes that the land belongs to those who nurture it. In fact, for the chief's people, it was not about owning the land, but caring for it.

Only after a long time she comes to realise that the cook who works in her house is the son of the Chief and he will be the boss of the tribe when the old man dies. One day when he goes home, Nkosikaas follows him and arrives at his village the next day, where all the natives live, as if it is their own little town. In the journey, trekking a new path, she experiences the silence of nature which fills a strange fear in her as she is moving without the gun, but at the same time she begins to respect a new nature, a new Africa. She enjoys the beauty of the wide green valley where a small river sparkles and the sight of the water birds darting over rushes gives her a sense of warmth and happiness. But as she walks aimlessly, an unknown fear terrifies her:

It was extraordinary, even humiliating. It was a new fear. For all the years I had walked by myself over this country I had never known a moment's uneasiness; in the beginning because I had been supported by a gun and the dogs, then because I had learnt an easy friendliness for the Africans I might encounter.

I had read of this feeling, how the bigness and silence of Africa, under the ancient sun, grows dense and takes shape in the mind, till even the birds seem to call menacingly, and a deadly spirit comes out of the trees and the rocks. You move warily, as if your very passing disturbs something old and evil, something dark and big and angry that might suddenly rear and strike from behind. You look at groves of entwined trees, and picture the animals that might be lurking there; you look at the river running slowly, dropping from level to level through the vleis, spreading into pools where at night the buck come to drink, and the crocodiles rise and drag them by their soft noses into underwater caves. Fear possessed me. I found I was turning round and round, because of that shapeless menace behind me that might reach out and take me; I kept glancing at the files of kopjes which, seen from a different angle, seemed to change with every step so that even known landmarks, like a big mountain that had sentinelled my world since I first became conscious of it, showed an unfamiliar sunlit valley among its foothills. I did not know where I was. I was lost. Panic seized me. I found I was spinning round and round, staring anxiously at this tree and that, peering up at the sun which appeared to have moved into an eastern slant, shedding the sad yellow light of sunset. Hours must have passed! I looked at my watch and found that this state of meaningless terror had lasted perhaps ten minutes. (19-20)

The fear that the girl bugs to mind the boy's fear in the story "The Sunrise on the Veld" when he sees the ants devouring the buck: 'as he drew in his breath and pity and terror seized him, the beast fell and the screaming stopped' (p.31). Fear is indeed part of the experience of wildness in many of Lessing's stories. Maria S. Suarez-Lafuente contends that 'The most frequent word in Lessing's African narratives is *fear* ('The Effect of Nature in Doris Lessing's *African Stories*.':5). The girl's fear causes her to lose bearings. The protagonist is destabilized by changes in the natural surroundings and hence has to readjust her sense of being. This sensible experience with nature shakes her to the core and makes it impossible for her to have the same confidence as she had previously. The sense of alienation which she feels underlines her growing sense of the settler's presence as intrusion. Since place and identity are inextricably bound to one another, she encounters the problem of existence. But she continues the journey and moves towards the village with a quiet but divided mind as she thinks of what she should do when she enters the village and she realizes that a new sensation is also added to the fear, that is, loneliness.

However, the rest of the story describes how she has overcome the loneliness. When she gets an opportunity to meet the old Chief once again and he welcomes her whole heartedly. Soon after the second meeting with the Chief, she retraces her steps back to her farm with the hope to build up a homogenous society. "I went slowly homewards, with an empty heart; I had learned that if one cannot call a country to heel like a dog, neither one can dismiss the past with a smile in an easy gush of feeling, saying: I could not help it. I am also a victim." (23). The girl realizes that the white settlers will never be able to appreciate the natives as the inhabitants of the land though she wishes that both black and white people can meet gently with tolerance for one another.

The story ends with a conflict between the narrator's father and the old chief over the issue of twenty goats. Her father's land is trampled down by the goats of Chief Mshlanga's kraal and her father bans them by taking all the goats and sends a message to the Chief that if he wants the goats he must pay for the damage done to the land. The old Chief becomes angry because the goats are the livelihood of his people: "Twenty goats! My people cannot lose twenty goats! We are not rich, like the Nkosi Jordan, to lose twenty goats at once." (23). After a long conversation Nkosikass's father refuses to compromise and the old Chief declares "That means that my people will go hungry when the dry season comes." (24). The son of the old Chief Mshlanga who is his translator and has remained silent for the whole time, now offers his opinion: "My father says: "All this land, this land you call yours, is his land, and belongs to our people" (24). And having made this comment, he walks off into the bush following his father whom the narrator has not seen in her life again. Later it is known that Chief Mshlanga and his people moved to another place. The story ends with the revelation of the girl that the village of the Old Chief has lost its vigour and vitality as there is no life there after their desertion.

Set in Southern Rhodesia during British rule, the story effectively demonstrates the two tiered system consisting of white dominated colonies and white minority colonies. It becomes disturbingly clear when goats from the chief's village roam onto her father's land, damaging some of his crops. The father demands the goats in payment of the damage done, though the chief despairs that his people will starve over the winter. When the father comes with a white policeman, the Chief and his people are moved off their lush and caringly cultivated land, and move towards a proper native place of about two hundreds of miles away. Landscape is used in this story to show the behavior of the whites who have inhabited Rhodesia. At the beginning, the girl distances herself from the land, because she feels like a stranger. This is shown in the

way she imagines the cold northern forests and rivers. Nevertheless, she compares her white father's farm to a bush because large parts of the farm are not used: "like every white farm, was largely unused, broken only occasionally by small patches of cultivation. In between, nothing but trees, the long sparse grass, thorn and cactus and gully, grass and thorn"(13). Though the whites live in this African land, they feel that this is not their homeland which is far away from here. Lessing recounts in her non-fiction memoir *Going Home* of the impossibility of knowing her countrymen: "Never to know, from the inside, the life of the people of one's own country" (Lessing, qtd. in Taylor 43). But later, when the girl learns the lesson of love and care, she begins to feel an affinity with the landscape that seems to be now more hospitable "and slowly that other landscape in my mind faded, and my feet struck directly on the African soil, and I saw the shapes of tree and hill clearly"(19). She considers the land as her heritage because she breeds there and "it is my country as well as the black man's country; and there is plenty of room for all of us, without elbowing each other off the pavements and roads."(17). Lessing is also very conscious of the impact of the natural world on the human world. In an interview with Roy Newquist in 1964, she has remarked:

Then I wrote short stories set in the district I was brought up in, where very isolated white farmers lived immense distances from each other. You see, in this background, people can spread themselves out. People who might be extremely ordinary in a society like England's where people are pressed into conformity, can become wild eccentrics in all kinds of ways they wouldn't dare elsewhere... I don't think my memory deceives me, but I think there were more colourful people back in Southern Rhodesia because of the space they had to move in (Ingersoll, *Putting the Questions Differently: Interviews with Doris Lessing* 3).

For Lessing, Africa, the land fascinates her most as she notices the extreme squalor of the place.

Lessing's novel *The Grass is Singing* presents various unwritten laws of colonial Africa which serve as convenient support for an arrogant kind of colonialist attitude. The novel is a psychological portrayal of the female protagonist, Mary Turner, from her childhood to death,

and as a political exposure of the futility and fragility of the colonial society. At the beginning of the story it is said that Mary Turner, the wife of a British farmer, has been killed by a native house boy, that the murderer is caught, and that he has admitted the crime. Lessing, by depicting her protagonist in a particular British colonial setting, suggests that her identity is constructed by the social and behavioral expectations and is developed through her racial role as a white woman colonizer. The laws regarding black-white contact like one could not put a black man close to a white woman, even though she was dead, and murdered by him (28). Thus the black becomes the constant, the invariable, the epitome of crime and violence (29); and the whites get special privileges as having behind them the police, the tribunals and the prisons. Even the black police men are not permitted to touch a white man in the pursuit of their duties (13). The whites are so certain about the necessity and rightness of their treatment of the blacks. Moses, stands as a representative of the blacks who even dares to touch her:

He put out his hand reluctantly, loathes to touch her, the sacrosanct white woman, and pushed her by shoulder; she felt her gently propelled across the room towards the bedroom. It was like a nightmare where one is powerless against horror: the touch of this black man's hand on her shoulder filled her with nausea; she had never, not once in her whole life, touched the flesh of a native. (186)

He considers Mary as a representative of the whites. The mistress and servant relationship, a prototype of domination and submission, is undermined by Moses' control of Mary. In the colonial discourse, the black natives, employed whether as domestic servants in feminine sphere or as impoverished agricultural workers, are usually represented as wild, violent, potential rapists, and threatening the white women who need the white men's protection against the natives. A woman who is privileged racially can simultaneously experience gender limitations and class difference within her own category, like in the case of Mary Turner. The novel reflects the author's disapproval of political prejudices and colonialism in the Southern African setting. Mary Turner is not able to grasp her own identity because her identity is compounded by the overpowering colonial narrative in which she is knit. The colonial ruling power dictates that she as an individual has to behave according to the terms imposed by her imperial identity.

But the vast difference between the attitude of the whites towards the black in both these works- *The Grass is Singing* and the short story "The Old Chief Mshlanga" is notable. Seeing all black people as criminals and the embodiment of their childhood fears, the whites

are presented as neurotic in their treatment of blacks in this novel. But, in the short story the Natives are portrayed as the individuals who are even capable of reclaiming their cultural heritage. Though in the beginning the young protagonist who is called as little Nkosikaas, has been presented as a white girl who is brought up without regard for the natives or the land, the girl's transforming attitude towards racism makes the story a different one. She gets a new revelation regarding her people and of the Africans who lived there long before the English came. Later her purpose is to meet more black people to extend her greetings and exchange courtesies like a gentle girl. Unlike Mary in *The Grass is Singing* who cannot act according to her wish because she is still the prisoner of the cultural commitment as the false basis of white civilization, Nkosikaas, another white representative, realizes that both black and white people can meet gently with tolerance for each other. Thus by creating a link between Africa, the land of the Natives and Nkosikaas, the white representative, the concept of cross-cultural interchange is fully explored in "The Old Chief Mshlanga".

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Migration and Minority: Guise of Community Discrimination in Benjamin's *Jasmine Days*

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The word 'diaspora' is a Greek origin, means scattered or dispersion. Generally, Diaspora literature emphasizes the group of minorities who leave the homeland by forced or by voluntarily, and their settlement in the new land. Migration and Immigration are the two different terms, always collide with diaspora narratives. Yet both have distinct features. Migration refers to the people who move from the homeland as workers of the country and consequently, they set down in the foreign land; whereas Immigration refers to the people who shift their home permanently to another continent. Many writers have focused on these two broad subjects with multifarious connotations through startling stories and bizarre backdrops. Some of them are Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi, Jhumpa Lahiri, Chitra Banerjee, Uma Parameswaran, Shyam Selvadurai, and Joy Kogawa. Benjamin is one of the modern diaspora writers and also a settler of Kingdom of Bahrain from 1992 to 2013. Primarily known for his *Goat days*, he attempts the second novel, *Jasmine days* (Mullapoo Niramulla Pakaluku), recently, to dramatize the agony of immigrants in the borrowed land. Yet, he specifies the identity and rights of immigrants with the origin of the territory. The story opens with a young Pakistani incomer Sameera Parvin, who works in the radio station in the unnamed Middle Eastern "City". Through the protagonist Sameera, Benjamin clearly shows the domination of communal issues and the denial of basic rights for the minority. The critical purpose of the paper are, to highlight the conflict of immigrants who have been living in the foreign land as much as time the natives have ruled and occupied the country; and to reveal the "second-class" discrimination towards the citizens of the region.

"A Caste System is an artificial construction, a fixed and embedded ranking of human value", says Isabel Wilkerson, the first African-American woman to win Pulitzer Prize in American Journalism, in *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* (2020). Class and Community are the imaginary ideology of humans who create the divisions in order to implicate the power of authority to the top rank of hierarchy and control the bottom rank in the triangle of institution. One faces many discrimination and challenges in the society to feature one's identity in the midst of many narrow-minded citizens and the ruling party.

Diaspora Literature is the intensified study on cross-cultured homes which define the existence of one's ethnic community. Unlike homeland, the migrated people confront many demands, even to get a proper job for the survival, even though they fulfill the eligibility criteria for the desired occupation. To elaborate this notion, Benyamin's *Jasmine Days*, a docufiction, is interpreted in the view of immigrant characters who settle in the unrevealed city of Middle East. Sameera Parvin, the former radio jockey in Orange Radio, is known for live show "Rush Hour" (JD 9), is under house arrest. She searches for the opportunity to escape from "the City of the Sumerians" (39). She feels that it is no longer her home. Once, she believes that Taya Ghar is the safest place and the large town where she realizes her own worth is no longer her "village" any more.

With the support of Programme Manager Imthiaz Sir and her father's brother Bade Taya, the protagonist Sameera changes the outlook of alienation in the migrant land, "that knowledge that this place is not mine, these ways of talking are not mine, these silences are not mine, this etiquette is not mine... sometimes you have to work hard to earn your little corner in it. Till that place becomes yours, till you find your own equilibrium there, there will be a gap between you and the place" (16). Being a Pakistani, she is born with the attitude of "Indians are enemies" and "Wars are daily events". By observing different colours of people ranges from Sri Lanka to Filipinas, she flies away her first impression on her colleagues: "... I was shocked to see all the Indians walking around. How would I work among so many monsters? Impossible! What if they all turned against me and killed me?" (17) Yet she sees the other side of the coin after seeing Ali Fardan, a technical staff at Orange Radio.

Benyamin always represents the untold stories of marginalized in his novels. He exposes the alienated feelings of the scattered groups in the host place; they try to accommodate themselves to the new society, yet they are rejected in the names of "Hybridity", "Orientalism" and "Displacement" (Samuel 95-96). Friendship with Ali, Sameera spots the autocratic status of the country that they belong; also she finds the huge disagreement between the Shia-Sunni Community (though both comes under the roof of Islam). At one instance, Ali reciprocates the sufferings of one class of the immigrants who leave Iran and settle in the foreign land many a time; still they consider as "second-class" (JD 62). However, the major problem is the rights of second class citizens are decided by "His Majesty" (62). They do not get any sort of respect, equality and freedom in their second home: "Do you know for how many years we've been suffering this discrimination? The curse of not belonging to the ruling majority!"

You will never understand how terrible it is till you experience discrimination in your own land...someday, we will also be acknowledged as humans” (63)

Sameera Parvin was born in Faisalabad as an established Muslim girl. She transfers into the new place even before getting her degree certificate. After coming to the alien land, she realizes that she has “an extra identity” (64) i.e. she belongs to the Sunni Community which is the highest and prestigious group that His Majesty belongs, and moreover, Ali introduces her, there is one more community—Shia which is hated by the government and the authority oppresses that group of people by usurping all the resources from them.

Once, Sameera sees a parade full of people marching on the road; they wear black dress and for every rise and fall of the songs, they beat their chest violently. It is the procession of packed people from the child to the old man. Each one of the group has the same passionate urge of emotions. In history of Muslim, there has been an internal conflict between the Shia-Sunni Community to choose the next Caliph after the death of Prophet Muhammad. The Shia people choose Hussain as the next ruler whereas the Sunnis select the person outside of the prophet’s family. During the fighting of Injustice, unfortunately, Hussain of Shias dies at Karbala. The incident brings the radical change to the both community. The Sunnis become the major ruling party and the Shias, the originators become the minorities and oppressed people. The history repeats the war between the groups in each decade.

To remind of the Martyr Hussain, every year Ashura is celebrated. The Fanatics “sing songs, beat our chests and hurt ourselves with chains and swords so that we remember Hussain’s courage and sacrifice. By wounding our bodies, we re-create Hussain’s sacrifice” (66-67). Robert Lowell, in his poem “After the surprising conversions”, shows the religious madness and despair of the people during the war. Based on the letter of Jonathan Edward in 1736 of Southern New England, Josiah Hawley reveals the salvation sermons of Edward which highlights that suicide is the power to win the war of religion and politics. Thus, Ali in *Jasmine Days*, in the side of Minority, believes that affliction is the weapon to fight against injustice and dictatorships: “...these rulers should remember that we have thousands of young men ready to become martyrs” (JD 67).

Every rebel has a starting point. An irresponsible incident becomes the major cause for a big revolt; As Coretta S. King, wife of Martin Luther King Jr. notes down the experience of black discrimination in the white country in the book of *My Life with Martin Luther King*

Junior. In one of the chapters, Coretta S. King describes an episode happened on December 1, 1995, which later dilute the reservation treatment of whites in the Montgomery government bus service. Mrs. Rosa Parks, the middle aged tired woman occupies the front seat of the bus due to her tiring day. However, it is “unlawful” in the regulation of whites because they have to occupy the prior rows. Hence, she gets arrested and asked to pay the penalty of ten dollars. The imprisonment news of black woman spreads like a wild fire. With the guidance of Martin Luther King Jr., the protest is begun by boycotting the bus services; consequently the court breaks the “segregation” in bus services on 20th December, 1956.

Similarly, the protest of minorities begins firstly in the neighbouring city in *Jasmine Days*. Jasmin and his elder brother are immigrant college students. They do sell fruits and vegetables as a part-time job to support their education. A policewoman arrests the brothers in the case of “breaking the Business Act of the country by running a vegetable business without a license” (JD 85) and she mocks at by saying that “...bringing shame to the country and its ruler by riding a donkey cart through such an important road...” (84-85). Despite the lady releases the brothers by evening, she never returns back the cart which is “the only source of livelihood” (85) for them. The Mayor rejects the proposal of the brothers of returning the cart. Despairingly, the young brother Jasim fires himself in the front of the office of the Mayor. The whole country watches the fire shot in every corner of social media.

The author writes this event inspired from the true story of Mohammed Bouazizi who kills himself because of police harassment in Tunisia. This incident formulates much protest which named as “Arab Spring” and aims for the modification in the reign of Totalitarian. As a result, President Zine El Abidine terminates from his position and lots of changes proceed in the country. Based on this scene, the single combat in *Jasmine Days* collects the big crowd of Shia Minorities in the Square of Pears to voice out the discriminative acts of the ruler and his followers.

Leon Trotsky, the prominent leader of Bolshevik Revolution wrote, “Let us not forget that revolutions are accomplished through people, although they be nameless. Materialism does not ignore the feeling, thinking and acting man, but explains him” in his *Introduction to History of the Russian Revolution* (1917). Taking the above quote, it is clearly evident that revolution is done by the community not an individual. Yet their goal is common, which is to bring the change in the ruling government. Ali demonstrates the purpose of rebellion to Sameera in *Jasmine Days*. He clarifies that the Power Elite of His Majesty denies the fundamental

rights of Shia immigrants though they are smart and intelligent, "...how much we express our patriotism, how much we declare our love for His Majesty—we could never join the army or the police. Because we are Shias. This is life as a second-class citizen" (JD 91).

Ali points out that the Sunni Immigrants are used by His Majesty to destroy other immigrants like them. He dishonors the father and uncles of Sameera who are also the adoptive citizens like Ali but for the sake of their profession of police, they fight with their own community to save His Supremacy. During the attack of Square of Pearls, the soldiers kill the people ruthlessly. Many protestors run for their life. Among them, one-legged man is saved by a mother and daughter. They distract the soldiers by throwing trash cans on the path of vehicles. Yet, they are caught in the hands of the troopers. The merciless men shoot the wounded man and woman and take away the teenaged daughter. They molest the girl inhumanely. Sameera shocks at the depraved behavior of the soldiers who are also working along with her father and uncles: "But perhaps the soldiers who had just taken away the young woman were also loving fathers and uncles and brothers at home? How did they turn into animals in heat on the street? Were all men angels at home and beasts outside it? (196)

To justify the murder of Sameera's father by Ali, a friend of Ali's uncle said once, a granddaughter always tells that, if one eats an onion, one will become beautiful and if one eats fish, one will become a good swimmer. He hears the words often and at one point, the old man starts accepting it. The same situation happens with the police and the soldiers of His Majesty. They just forget their semblance in the foreign land and their neighborhoods and attack their own people by hearing the "smooth-talking politicians and religious leaders kept talking to us, insisting that they alone have the truth. Our biases and beliefs have a lot to do with what we grow up hearing" (232).

Discrimination is a wide term, encloses specialized sects of favoritism. Sometimes it measures with the stereotypical abstraction. Countless individual or groups face such inequalities in workplaces, institutions and even in neighborhoods. Disparately, the administrators treat groups of immigrant with the notion of prejudices of race and ethnicity in *Jasmine Days*. During the war of recognition, Ali's father goes out to buy foods for the family. He is investigated by the police force. He shocks to hear that the way of handling the person is decided with what community he or she belongs in the city. He has lived in this place for twenty seven years; he believes that it is his home.

Notwithstanding, the persistent government categories the citizens in two separate voices of commonality: “Are you Sunni or Shia?” (101) Obviously, Ali’s father is an innocent Shia, arrested by the police mercilessly without acknowledging any of his position in the society. Ali has been three years boy when his father is gone away. His father is “just a dream” (101) for him. Before move out of this trace of trauma, he is mortified by the tortures of his uncle in the “cell was only as long as my body. I could not stand upright in it. I lay on the bare floor” (114).

Ali’s uncle is an Arab school teacher of speaking hypnotizing English. Happened like Ali’s father, he too is stopped by the police when he is returning from the school in 1981. Three policemen voluntarily asked him to wait in the police station for six hours. He is beaten by the police to admit that he has plotted against the government. He is a hard-shell, persists all torments for three years. Yet the police men never release him. They put him in the dark prison and he stays there for eighteen years, like a living dead. “I had no connection to the outside world. A hole in the ground in the same room was my toilet...No soap, no brush, no toothpaste, not even a candle for some light...I ate the exact same meal three times a day—two kuboos, some curd...some prisoners... died in those cells. For days their corpses lay there. I can still smell all that rotting flesh” (114).

The frozen sufferings of his father and his uncle create a scar in the minds of Ali, like many youngsters go through. Once, he denies the offer of Sameera spending a good time of watching Justin Bieber’s concert and play happy music with the friends of String Walkers. Later, he confesses that the raptures of songs are trembling nightmare for him. The tunes remind the agonizing days of his uncle in “a secret prison under a huge auditorium in the middle of the city” (114). Ali imagines, “My guitar is for the songs of the abandoned and oppressed...whenever I see a stage where music or dance is performed, I feel a shiver of fear. For how many years my mamu lay under a stage like that...who knows, maybe my baba is still lying somewhere under a stage. How can I stand on top of all that terror to sing and dance?” (116-117).

Religion and politics are two distinct branches. They have a common goal of acquiring power. The former conquers the power in order to preach the morality and divinity, whereas the latter acquires the power to rule the people and the society. Yet the former is a customary and the latter is dynamic. Religion, not in the least, crosses the path of politics. But, the politicians often exploit the ideology of religion, to acquire the domination over the population.

There is a customary thought that politics have dominated the religion in the medieval period only, and the millennium does not have this kind of domination; But of course, analyzing the struggles of Ali's uncle in the adopted land during the close of 20th Century War. It clearly indicates that the religion is oppressed and manipulated by the politics. The devotees of doctrines are still fight for freedom and humanity and in the process of battling; they are ready to sacrifice their lives: "Thousands have sacrificed their lives for the freedom in the city; perhaps you wonder why we keep throwing our lives away. I could have easily escaped my cell if I had confessed to some crime or betrayed some innocents. But my self-respect was too precious to me" (115).

After 11th September 2001 attacks, many Pakistanis are labeled as "terrorists". As the name indicates, "War on Terror" is still reached high in Pakistan after 2000. The minds of youngsters are corrupted in the name of religion. They are influenced by the actions of corrupted leaders. They have believed that revenge is the solution for the freedom, basic rights and separation of land. The similar thing happened with Ali while he grows up in the family of adversity and shocks. Without proper guidance, he chooses "leaders taught them to throw a bomb at the slightest provocation. Like a child insisting that onions make you beautiful, Ali's leaders kept telling lies till they became true... he grew up thinking that killing a policeman would help overthrow the government"(233). Harinder S. Sikka, too, wrote on terrorism in Pakistan and tension between India and Pakistan in his debut spy novel *Calling Sehmet* in 2008. Like Ali in *Jasmine Days*, Sehmet moves to the new land for her new life. Yet she struck in between the promise of her father Hidayat Khan to do a spy service to Indian Government. Her whole mission is circled with the thoughts of collecting information for the handlers rather than to see her innocent husband Iqbal Syed and his family. Finally counterbalancing the emotions, the Indian Army saves INS Vikrant with the help of information given by Sehmat.

Although the story ends in positive note in *Calling Sehmet*, Ali's anger in *Jasmine Days* turns into brutal action of killing Sameera's father during the attack of Square of Pearls: "Perhaps when he was hitting your father he was remembering how, centuries ago, when the prophet's grandson Hussain was killed in Karbala, the soldiers of Ubaidullah rode their horses over the corpse again and again" (JD 233). Thus, youngsters are easily affected during the war and the previous generations pass their sufferings and venges to the succeeding generations. The past discrimination of First generation set as a default memory for the present generation.

It makes them fight for the past causes, leaves out their identity in the society and forgets that the other humans may affect in the progress of conflict.

Considering the history of Shias and Sunnis, the Shia is the originator of the Muslim land. The Sunni community is considered as the successor. Additionally, the Sunni immigrants are considered as “intruders”. During the times of protest at the Square of Pearls, people come from various places to join the riot. Sameera and her family watch the enthusiastic crowds from the balcony. Among the protestors, one point at her that she (includes all foreigners) is the reason for the discrimination and the revolt. Even Ali states the same statement when all the colleagues converse about the protest. He blames the Sunnis immigrants are blocking the benefits of Shia minorities in the country: “The reason we never get these jobs is because you are ready to work for such meager pay. If you were not here, one of us would be paid well to do the same job... why should the people of this country live like the citizens of India, where millions live below the poverty line?” (130) Though she prefers to stay in this city and mingles with other citizens, Sameera feels guilty after seeing the continuous fumes and glares of haranguers. “I had indeed played a part in making their lives unhappy... this food is not my food. It is stolen from the people of this country” (131).

Once, when she organizes the show, she is stopped by the co-operators; they get the information that both the government and the fighters jump the gun each other in the public places. It is dangerous to continue the show and other hatreds break the gate of radio station. Escaping by the car, Sameera and her friends are stopped by the objectors. She never fears to reveal her identity of Pakistani. She is a brave and upright lady, always relies on that righteousness is humanity. So only, she saves the wounded man, without flash any of his identity in riot, when she travels in the car, with her aunt. She fights with the hospital of minorities that service to humans is different with the pride of belonging to one’s community, when the nurse rejects to treat the injured man: “this hospital is not for your likes. This is for our own people... should I treat people like you who go around singing that bastard’s praises? ... Why don’t you take him to your hospital? We will not waste even a drop of medicine on you” (154). Stopping the car by the strangers, she hides herself; because she does not know whose side does the person belong to and if she reveals her identity to the wrong person, her life will get worsen like a hell of tortures.

Children and Youngsters are the most stimulated person in the war and riots. The violation builds traumatic memories in their mind. They torment with the war scenes. Laila is

the former receptionist at the Orange Radio. She has a cheerful personality and pride of being Shia. After the protest, Sameera meets her unexpectedly; she feels that Laila has lost her tone. Laila exposes that many people, like her, participate in the riot because of their angry towards the mass of other class. She assumes, “they were getting rich off us” (211). However, she realizes that the consequences of conflict reflect at the attitude of her seven years old daughter: “The Sunni kids won’t play with her. And that’s not the worst part. She now tries to imitate the Sunni kids. She wants to dress like them, talk like them. Who are we any more in this country?” (212) The expectation of Shias is to stabilize the identity of their community in the foreign land; because of resignation from the revolt, they pay “a high price” (212) for their dashes. Two women Sri Lankan writers Yasmine Gooeratne and Chandani Lokuge have written on second generation diaspora communities in the novels *A Change of Skies* and *If the Moon Smiled*. The characters struggle between the birth place and the homeland. They are, though, born in the foreign land and ponder it as their “Home”, the culture difference deduces them stand apart in the crowd.

Likewise, Farhana, cousin of Sameera in *Jasmine Days*, is born and brought up in the unnamed city. She, until now, credits that the country is her belonging and identity. But the clash between the two communities makes her to realize, stubbornly that, she too has the same right to stay in this place as far as the protestors’ concern: “‘why should I return to Pakistan?’ ...I was born here, I grew up here and I have every right to continue my life here...this land belongs to me just as much as it belongs to the protesters...this city where we had made our homes for so long—were we to pack up everything and leave like refugees...” (150) Not only youngsters, but also the adults, have built lots of memories and experiences in the land, feels heavy hearted. They never fantasize of “having to fill ten or twenty years’ worth of life into one suitcase” (168).

At the Closing point, Salman Rushdie’s “Imaginary Homelands” (1991) states, “how long can one remain a foreigner and not take root? What is home?” The immigrants arrive to the alien land with the glimpse of hope and recognition. They move to this place for many reasons, by voluntarily or by forced. Their minimal expectation is to get recognized in the foreign land and lead a peaceful life. But they are oppressed by the host in the names of community and colours. Over again they fight with the adopted land to get back their rights or citizenship in the migrant place. But the government suppresses the one generation to the extent of war and conflicts. Subsequently, they roots to the revenge mind and angriness of

another generation. Considering that, the paper concludes with the thoughts of the author that an individual is developed and shaped by the society. The Dictator is the key player of giving probabilities to form a harmonious and ingenious society.

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From Italy to Turkey: A Comparative study of *The Name of the Rose* and *My Name is Red*

Minnu James

Orhan Pamuk's *My Name is Red* and Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose* are comparable texts and they are 'paradigmatically' identical. Although they are centered round two different civilisations, east and west, the basic implications these novels call attention to are one and the same. Religion, honoured traditions, learned men who redden their hands with the blood of their comrades and a vulnerable investigator from their own ranks- these are the elements these books share. Nevertheless, these novels differ in the style of narration.

Orhan Pamuk's deep affinity towards Umberto Eco makes these novels worth comparable. Besides, he is deeply inspired by Italo Calvino, Thomas Mann, Marguerite Yourcenar, classical Ottoman and Persian miniatures, the style of western painting aesthetic, the timeless beauty of Istanbul and above all, the greatness of Muslim culture. In an interview, Pamuk states:

I am forty eight and at this age the idea of influence makes me nervous. I'd rather say that I learn and pick-up things from other authors. I've learned from Thomas Mann... Italo Calvino taught me that inventiveness is as important as history itself. From Eco, I've learned that the form of the murder mystery can be gracefully used. But I've learned most from Marguerite Yourcenar... what inspired me most for *My Name Is Red* were the Islamic miniatures. Thousands of little details from countless miniatures that I've looked at took their place in the novel. Behind these scenes of love and war lie the classic Islamic texts because the miniatures were always drawn to illustrate the best scenes of stories that once upon a time everyone knew by heart and today, because of westernization, very few remember. ("A Conversation with Pamuk")

The Bible, the Conan Doyle stories, the works of Aristotle, medieval literature of every sort - herbals, theological studies, romances - and Eco's own writings on semiotics are the most important sources and inspirations for *The Name of the Rose*. The novel is a roman-a-clef; many of the characters of the novel resemble real or fictional figures. William of Baskerville, a tall thin English detective with a fondness for a substance that induces lethargy is the perfect double of Sherlock Holmes, whose use of cocaine is legendary. Also, William's novice resembles Holmes' faithful and bright historian, Dr. Watson. The blind Spaniard, Jorge

of Burgos has the features of the Argentine writer, Jorge Luis Borges, who also created labyrinths and imaginary libraries. Just as Dante fills *The Divine Comedy* with his fellow Florentines, so Eco adds disguised figures from post war Italian politics to his novel. For example, Renato Curcio, the leader of the terrorist movement in Italy resembles the radical reformer Fra Dolcino, who turned to violence to achieve a peaceful world.

Orhan Pamuk and Umberto Eco treat a single theme in different ways in different places at different points of time. The theme is the same, but the treatment differs. And hence the textual experience also differs. *The Name of the Rose* and *My Name is Red* are non-traditional murder mysteries; the chief attraction of these novels lies in their detective element; it involves the investigation of murders in a remote Italian abbey and in an Islamic painting milieu respectively.

The novels resemble each other in characterization too. William of Baskerville and Adso of Melk are rendered the responsibility of investigating murders in *The Name of the Rose* while in *My Name is Red*, the enquiring agents are Black and Master Osman. Adso serves as William's disciple and scribe at the same time; Master Osman is Black's guru and mentor. The detectives, in both the novels, share a father-son relationship; Master Osman and William of Baskerville appear as father figures to Black and Adso respectively. Adso's statements, after leaving William, reveal William's fatherly affection towards him:

My master gave me much good advice about my future studies, and presented me with the glasses Nicholas had still young, but they would come in handily. Then he embraced me with a father's tenderness and dismissed me. (498-99)

And Black tells about Master Osman, "When I'd reached Master Osman's house, I knew that within a week's time he had gradually usurped my late Enishte's place in my thoughts" (358).

William and Black are not professional, but private detectives. They do not hail from outside domains; they are of the same ranks as that of murderers and victims. In both these novels, the detectives, murderers and the scapegoats have the same vocational backdrop. In *The Name of the Rose*, all the monks belong to Benedictine or Franciscan religious orders whereas in *My Name is Red*, they are Islamic miniature painters.

Through the novels, Umberto Eco and Orhan Pamuk choose to go against the traditional 'successful hero' story. William and Black fail so regularly through out the novel and they are characterized as vulnerable detectives. Though they expose the murderers, William and Black

allow them to be triumphant in their respective motives and aims. William finds the second book of comedy by Aristotle and traces the murderous actions of Jorge and others involved. Yet Jorge succeeds in his mission of restricting the dissemination of dangerous ideas by eating the poisonous pages of Aristotle's Second Book of *Poetics*. Likewise, Black makes Olive uncover the murderous situations, but he becomes victorious in his motive of hindering the completion of the illustrated work. Black's victory is temporary, for, Olive is killed by Hasan and the book remains unfinished. In the last chapter, Shekure tells, "Shevket and Orhan never forgot that it wasn't Black but their uncle Hasan who was the one who killed my father's murderer" (502).

William's second major task is to solve the mysteries surrounding the murders that occur at the Benedictine Abbey. Primarily the abbot asks William to investigate the unsolved death of Adelmo, the first in a series of an eventual seven. By the point of William's introduction, there have been four murders. William has only managed to identify the circumstances after these four people are dead, which naturally is too late. He is appointed to solve the mystery and thus prevent any further death. But he fails to prevent the calamities that surround the abbey. Though William is unrivalled in making hypothetical inferences and deductions, he errs several times in the course of investigation. William has been mistaken in following a pattern of crimes. It is only at the end, he realizes that Jorge has never based his actions on a literary pattern from *The Book of Revelation* and Adelmo has committed suicide. William says to Adso:

I arrived at Jorge through an apocalyptic pattern that seemed to underlie all the crimes, and yet it was accidental. I arrived at Jorge seeking one criminal for all the crimes and we discovered that each crime was committed by a different person, or by no one. I arrived at Jorge pursuing the plan of a perverse and rational mind, and there was no plan, or, rather, Jorge himself was overcome by his own initial design and there began a sequence of causes, and concauses and of causes contradicting one another, which proceeded on their own, creating relations that didn't stem from any plan. (492)

Umberto Eco and Orhan Pamuk endeavor to reverse the traditional roles of hero and villain through their novels. They make the heroes and villains retain their title, in spite of their various victories or defeats. Unlike traditional heroes, Pamuk's Black is passive, absentminded, unresisting and subjected to failures and Eco's William fails in his missions. The

prime duty of Black and William is not murder investigation; they take the responsibility of finding out the murderers only by a mere chance. William comes to the Benedictine Abbey, where the calamities have taken place, as an envoy to mediate between delegations from Pope John XXII and Michael of Cesena, which would be meeting there. And he has to protect Michael of Cesena, ensuring that he is not required to attend the Pope at Avignon. It can be seen that William's first and foremost mission fails; the meeting ends in chaos and Michael ultimately ends up in Avignon, in mortal peril. Similarly, Black is summoned to Istanbul to help Enishte Effendi with the completion of the illustrated book, celebrating the Sultan. In Black's words, "Enishte invited me back to Istanbul, explaining that he was preparing a secret book for Our Sultan and that he wanted my help" (9). However, he cannot actualize Enishte's dreams of finishing the illustrated manuscript. Though Black marries Shekure, he remains forlorn and heartbroken till the end of his life.

Not for the sake of investigation, but to satisfy their vested interests, William and Black take up the responsibility of enquiring about the murders. William's love of knowledge and perhaps, a certain intellectual pride make him move forward with the inquiry. Nevertheless, Black's aim is to marry Shekure. In fact, as a whodunit, Pamuk's *My Name is Red* is less successful than Eco's novel, for, the range of suspects is quickly narrowed down to the three artists: Butterfly, Stork and Olive.

As a powerful construct, how religion exerts its power on the life of the people of each culture is the crux of these novels. It is "an internalized form" (Barry 164) and it determinates the specific dominant meanings of a society. It is an "ideological structure" (Barry 164); what it suggests is considered as the truth of a given culture. It makes use of all cultural artefacts, like art and literature, to sustain its basic ideals. In these novels, Christian libraries and Islamic art are treated as 'enculturing factors', capable of cultural reproduction. They are taken as vehicles to disseminate religious principles and morality. Using the same medium of art and literature, Pamuk and Eco dismantle the grand narrative 'religion'.

My Name is Red and *The Name of the Rose* reflect the complexities of the age with its conflicting worlds of thought; and these ideological conflicts are religious constructs. In Pamuk's novel, on the one hand, there are artists who stick firmly to the traditional Ottoman and Persian painting and on the other hand, there are artists tempted by the western style of painting. The moot problem in *The Name of the Rose* is whether certain books that do not cater to the Christian truth should be eliminated. Umberto Eco's *Jorge* and Pamuk's *Olive*

express certain religious attitudes of their time and so they need not be treated as villains. They do murderous actions, not out of greed or any personal reasons, but for the sake of their respective religions. Realizing their religious ideals being transgressed, they kill their comrades. Jorge and Olive are horrified by the young monk's fascination for comic images and the use of perspective in Islamic painting respectively, for these are a threat to their religions.

A love story runs parallel with the murder investigation in *My Name is Red* as well as in *The Name of the Rose*. The course of love, in both cases, doesn't run smooth; it gets fulfilled only to some extent in the end. In Eco's novel, Adso of Melk never learns the name of his beloved with whom he has the only sexual experience of his entire life time. Though Adso cannot marry the girl, she is the genuine love of his life. Adso comments, "she was the only earthly love of my life, and I couldn't, then or ever after, call that love by name" (407). In *My Name is Red*, Black and Shekure marry, after facing troubles and hardships, but it is not out of true love. For, Shekure sees in Black a protector and a surrogate father for her children, Orhan and Pamuk. Shekure's own remarks are a clear indication of this:

We, my children and I, were happy, but Black couldn't be...whatever the cause, Black remains melancholy. Because I knew that his sadness had nothing to do with his shoulder, I believed that somewhere in a secret corner of his soul, he was possessed by a jinn of sorrow that dampened his mood even during our most exhilarating moments of love making. To appease that Jinn, at times he'd drink wine, at times stare at illustrations in books and take an interest in art, at times he'd even spend his days and nights with miniaturists chasing after pretty boys.... (499)

Pamuk and Eco challenge the "constructedness of femininity" (Barry 133) and the conventional delineation of women via these novels. Unlike traditional heroines, Pamuk's heroine is a widow with two children and Eco's is a prostitute. Shekure, Pamuk's heroine is too powerful and decides the progress of the story. Though Black fails regularly through out his life, Shekure always wins in her path. However, Eco's female character is a minor one and a victim of phallocentric society. She is arrested for witchcraft by Bernardo Gui and no one is aware of what happens after this in her life. Yet, she is rendered the position of a title character. And Adso's words remind of her: "Yesterdays names endures in its name, we hold empty names" (Annuaire *The Name of the Rose*)

Sodomy is alluded to in both of these novels. Pamuk's *My Name is Red* contains matter of fact references to sodomy and beatings given to the lovely young pupils of the atelier by the masters. In *The Name of the Rose*, sodomy occupies the central role in the murder mystery and it is mentioned explicitly only two or three times in the novel. "There were illicit relations between Berenger and Adelmo, and between Berenger and Malachi, well, yes; everyone in the abbey knows this...." (445)

The novels reflect the bookishness of postmodern literature and are marked by a self-conscious 'intertextuality', that is, citation of one text within another. This involves explicit allusion to particular programmes and oblique references to other genre conventions and styles. There is a display of erudition in both the novels. They are a hub of philosophical discussions and intellectual debates. The philosophical dialogues about style, signature and blindness among Master Osman, Black and his miniaturists add intellectual flavour to the novel *My Name is Red*. Superficially about the nature of Islamic art, it touches on more universal themes: of tradition versus modernity, of discipline versus inspiration, of orthodoxy versus individuality. Black asks Master Osman what separates the genuine miniaturist from the ordinary and he answers:

There is no single measure that can distinguish the great miniaturist from the unskilled and faithless one....these changes with time.... I'd ask him three questions. Has he come believe, under the sway of recent custom as well as the influence of the Chinese and the European Franks, that he ought to have an individual painting technique, his own style?.... To determine precisely these things, I'd first ask him a question about 'style' and 'signature'....ask the illustrator a question about 'time'-an illustrator's time and Allah's time. The third would be blindness.....Blindness is silence. It is the farthest one can go in illustrating; it is seeing what appears out of Allah's own blackness..... (73)

In *The Name of the Rose*, there are discussions on the philosophy of Aristotle, fraternal debates regarding the poverty of Jesus, sermons about the coming of Anti-Christ, talks about the licitness of laughter etc. Throughout the book, there are Latin quotes, authentic and apocryphal. Numerous philosophers are referenced throughout the book, often anachronistically, including Wittgenstein. William's speech to the envoys of a strange concept of a temporal government is as follows:

Christ didn't come to the world to command, but to be subject to the conditions he found in the world, at least as far as the laws of Caesar were concerned. He didn't want the apostles to have command and dominion and therefore it seemed a wise thing that the successors of the apostles should be relieved of any worldly or coercive power... The church can and must warn the heretic that he is abandoning the community of faithful, but she cannot judge him on earth and force him against his will....If the Franciscans wanted to remain poor, the Pope could not and should not oppose such a virtuous wish...(354-55)

Heresies are alluded to in *The Name of the Rose* as well as in *My Name is Red*. Heretics are isolated from the dominant culture and are declared as blasphemous and devilish. It is impossible to identify all the heretics that are alluded in *The Name of the Rose*. In the novel, heretics are regarded as the forerunners of Anti-Christ and the signs of the coming Apocalypse. In *My Name is Red*, dervishes are treated as heretics and they are often attacked and suppressed by the Erzurumis. In chapter 3, 'I am a Dog', Husret Hoja states:

Dervishes are all kaffirs....Dervish lodges ought to be destroyed, their foundations excavated to a depth of seven ells and the collected earth cast into the sea. Only then might ritual prayers be performed there again. (14)

Pamuk and Eco present the historical context superbly. Their recreation of history is so plausible and so well sustained that it pervades the reader's consciousness. In these novels, history is foregrounded and treated as a co-text rather than a context; history and story go in parallel. These postmodern fictions are characterized by a historical blurring. That is, representations of the past and present are displayed together in a bricolage which juxtaposes previously unconnected signs to produce new codes of meaning. Bricolage as a cultural style is a core element of postmodern culture and observable in popular fictions. Here, they reread history in a postmodern perspective. Moreover, these novels are set in the medieval period; *The Name of the Rose* in 14th century Italy and *My Name is Red* in 16th century Istanbul. The former describes monastic life and highlights a tension that existed within Christianity during the medieval era whereas the latter zeroes in on the clash between East and West with 16th century Istanbul as background. In Eco's novel, the reader learns of the medieval church and of a Europe torn apart by theological argument. Battle between secular and divine worlds begins to emerge, as the Popes become more and more involved in everyday politics of Europe. Ideas concerning the divinity of Christ, the power of the Popes and the

importance of older pagan philosophies are continuously fought over. Pamuk presents a communitarian world where rules are set and established. The novel is permeated with the history of Islamic Ottoman and Persian miniatures and the living descriptions of real historical miniatures. It opens a window into the reign of Ottoman Sultan Murat III and unveils the tension between East and West.

Several literary genres overlap in *My Name is Red* and *The Name of the Rose*. There is a conglomeration of historical novel, detective novel, postmodern romance, encyclopedia etc. Then, in addition, there are 'constituent genres' such as the Biblical/ Islamic exegesis, the debate and the mystical- allegorical lyric.

The Name of the Rose and *My Name is Red* receive widespread popularity among readers and are sold well. Pamuk's novel had the largest first print run of any novel ever published in Turkey and it won the international IMPAC award. It is published in more than forty languages and read with completely different reactions in different countries. Eco's debut novel *The Name of the Rose* was first published in 1980 and became a bestseller throughout the world. It was also adapted for big screen in 1986, starring Sean Connery as William of Baskerville and Christian Slater as Adso and directed by Jean- Jacques Annuaud. A play adaptation in two parts was broadcast by BBC radio commencing Sunday 16 July 2006 and ending Sunday 23 July 2006.

Pamuk's novel differs from Eco's in the style of narration. *My Name is Red* is told from multiple points of view and each character has his say in chapters named after them. Even the murderer speaks directly to the reader though he is careful to conceal his identity. The two master artists have their voices as their pupils. And the voices of Shekure, Black, and Esther etc can be heard through out the novel. Each of these characters spins their own stories for the reader, but not all are to be taken at their word. In addition, the reader is treated to the entertaining monologues from a dog, a horse, a counterfeit gold coin, a tree, the colour red, from death and even from Satan himself. Nevertheless, *The Name of the Rose* is written in first person point of view and is narrated by Adso of Melk. He is an elderly Benedictine monk who writes of his experiences as a young novitiate who accompanies William of Baskerville on his trip to a northern Italian abbey in 1327 where they encounter a series of murders. Thus, Adso plays two roles in the novel.

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The Effect of ESL Learning Environment on Communicative Competence: A Study of Selected Variables

Deepa L. C. & Rhema Suresh

Communicative competence in English is an inevitable accomplishment in the present highly competitive and globalised world. Success is nearly impossible without at least a threshold level of ESL competence. However, it has been widely acknowledged that Indian learners of English often fall short of the desired level of communicative competence. Several social and individual factors – affective factors — come into play in building their L2 competence, of which some are beyond manipulation whereas certain others are malleable and can be controlled so as to ensure communicative competence to maximum number of learners (Gardner and MacIntyre 1993). The present study investigates some of the social variables operating on the communicative competence of Malayali learners of English, which can help us to incite the positive variables and inhibit the negative ones in such a way as to minimize mother tongue interference and augment the level of communicative competence attained by our learners. The variables selected for examination include teachers, group dynamics which includes teacher-student and student-student relationships, and physical setting of the classroom.

ESL Learning Environment

The learning environment of an ESL classroom is highly dependent on factors such as the teaching method employed, the syllabus, textbooks, the teacher, group dynamics, the physical setting of the classroom etc.

The Teacher

The teacher is the controller, assessor, organizer, prompter, participant and resource of the teaching-learning process. It is the teacher who should develop in the students the right attitude to the new subject. In an L2 learning situation as in India, the primary objective of the teacher of English is to provide the near-native experience of the new language to the learner in the classroom. The teacher should therefore stimulate the learners' innate language acquisition process that he has already gone through. Hence, competent teachers in adequate numbers are the first pre-requisite for the provision of optimal language experience.

The teacher, therefore, is a factor that is central to the classroom. The contemporary learner-centred concepts have passed on to the learner the responsibility for his learning, but

have in no way diminished the teacher's importance. Learner-centred learning is invariably teacher-dependent for its realization. The teacher has to manage the learning, by creating optimal learning conditions in the classroom and exploiting the resources of the learner. Action Research and Exploratory Teaching enable the teacher-researcher to theorize, to explore strategies and needs based on actual classroom practice, and to investigate learning problems with a view to understanding them though not necessarily solving them, thereby enhancing the teacher's understanding of the classroom situation. Good classroom management promotes higher levels of learner-involvement in learning activities and hence leads to higher levels of learning (Baker and Westrup, 2000). Teachers can control the operation of the affective factors by consolidating learner autonomy and self-esteem, reducing anxiety, promoting positive attitudes and enhancing learner motivation (Alrabai & Moskovsky 2016).

Various disciplines such as Linguistics, Psychology, Sociology and Technology enhance the personal art of the language teacher by providing him/her with tools more precisely designed for a specific teaching situation. Linguistics, which deals with the study of the structure, phonetics and phonology of the language, Contrastive Analysis and Error Analysis, Selection and Grading, analysis of the factors in bilingualism and multilingualism etc. is sure to help the language teacher in decision-making, and enable him to discharge his duties with confidence and efficiency. Since the idea of autonomous colleges is gaining ascendance, knowledge of Linguistics and Psychology will assist the teacher in selection and grading of structures and vocabulary, and in choosing his own teaching material according to the current assumptions in the fields. Psychology comes to the teacher's aid in testing and evaluation as well—to design examination, set questions, conduct examination, value the answer scripts and interpret scores. It also helps the teacher in the solution of problems in the classroom, in the development of emotional and moral life of the pupils. Both Psychology and Linguistics are of immense help in the production of teaching material, in the design of appropriate methods and techniques etc. Educational Technology enables the teacher to use the audio-visual aids effectively to produce maximum language learning with minimum effort. Therefore, proper training in these disciplines and their application definitely add strength and spice to the teacher's art (Stevens 1965; Wilkins 1972).

Group Dynamics

Group dynamics has a central role in the development of communicative proficiency. If the goals and feelings of various social sections are in conflict with one another, inhibitions and

anxieties may arise in the classroom. The interpersonal relations between the teacher and students and among the students themselves crucially influence the emotional atmosphere of the classroom. "... it is always the democratic class that is preferable to the formal class, be it a subject or language class, be it an elite or below average school, be it a developed or under-developed nation" (Prasad 2003, p.43). Warm and healthy relationships in the classroom help to relieve tensions and facilitate learning in the L2 classroom. In the typical L2 classroom, learners are often required to perform in a state of ignorance, which may make them feel anxious and constrained. A sympathetic teacher and co-operative atmosphere may nurture learning. Language teachers should try to create a relaxing atmosphere, in which students feel comfortable to try out the target language, even if they make mistakes.

Students are usually much more ready to interact with each other than with their teachers. This makes small group work all the more important. It is a big challenge to the teacher of a large class to keep the weaker students encouraged and to keep the stronger students motivated. Students may be asked to work in groups according to their different abilities. Groups can also be formed by putting students in mixed ability groups where stronger students can help the weaker ones. Underwood (1987) suggests that every opportunity should be utilized to encourage students who are making a real effort and not just to those who are most successful. The teacher must ensure that all students are involved in classroom interaction especially in oral practice, group work etc.

To encourage authentic language activity, the teacher needs to create an environment and develop a process wherein individual students feel safe in venturing their own contribution in interaction. There should be a warmth that welcomes what they have to contribute and gives it serious consideration, which builds them up in their own esteem and in that of their fellow students. (Rivers 1983, p. 151)

Uninhibited speech or writing is the result of much practice without the censorious figure of the teacher looming large. Error correction should not interfere with fluency development activities, which provide opportunities for communicative interaction in L2. Often, spontaneous speech of the native speakers reveal that they do not always produce the perfect structures of an ideal grammar; sentence structure changes direction while one is speaking, mistakes in subject-verb agreement occur, verb endings are omitted, incorrect prepositions step in, hesitation and fill-in expressions are frequent. Thus, the insight that errors are a natural and important part of the learning process, is very important. To stop a student in the midst of

speaking, for error correction is at odds with the goal of practising fluent and confident delivery. It is better to make a note of all errors—phonetic, grammatical and lexical—and deal with them at the end (Rivers, 1983; Broughton et al. 1980).

The teacher may plan a variety of activities to keep students interested and motivated to learn better, and encourage student contribution. Teacher can encourage all students giving lots of praise, especially to those who are trying hard and are lacking in confidence. Pupils' perceptions of how others in the class regard them in terms of ability, achievement and personal worth are important factors in shaping learning behaviour and achievement. Teacher expectation and behaviour are particularly important in creating a positive learning climate. Teachers create warmer relationships with children they have high expectations of; those students get more difficult learning tasks and more feedback, but the others get fewer questions in class, less difficult questions, less opportunity for response and less opportunity to pose questions. One of the best ways to gain and keep rapport with students is to learn and use the students' names. Group dynamics plays an important role in the development of oral proficiency. Group activities allow students to get better acquainted with each other and help to boost their confidence (Mohan et al 2001).

Physical Setting of the Class

The physical and sociocultural surroundings in which the learning takes place go hand in hand with what is taught in the classroom. "A flexible, dynamic and caring education system can make even poor teachers produce good results. A rigid, static and doctrinaire educational system, or a system whose constituents are at war with each other, can render futile the best work of its best teachers". National policies of education, cultural attitudes, political vicissitudes, class tensions, economic differences and other factors determine the sociocultural environment in the classroom. Timetables, work periods, breaks, homework policy, room size and shape, seating, lighting, recreation, tests etc. affect learning. Education is the product of a dynamic equilibrium among such socio physical factors. Nevertheless, an inspiring teacher can often compensate for the deficiencies in the physical setting of the class (McArthur 1983, p.83).

Methodology

The informants included a group of undergraduate students from various departments, and teachers of the department of English. The tools employed for the elicitation of data include both oral and written proficiency tests, interviews with students and teachers, and

separate questionnaires for students and teachers. The methods of data analysis include both descriptive and statistical analysis including chi-square analysis.

Findings and Conclusions

The influence of the selected variables on the communicative competence achieved by the high achievers and low achievers was studied, The analysis of the collected data yielded the following results.

1. Teachers

The teacher is the controller, assessor, organizer, participant and resource of the teaching-learning process. In our learning situation, the primary objective of the teacher of English is to provide near-native experience of the second language to the learner in the classroom.

The data relating to the factors that contribute to the quality of teaching was collected by means of teachers' questionnaire.

Qualification and Experience

The teachers provided general information about the length of service in college, academic qualification, special training they obtained in the teaching of English, etc. Table 2 depicts the analytical findings.

Table 1
Personal Details of Teachers Regarding their Profession

Length of Service	No.	Academic Qualifications				Special training in ELT
		M.A.	B.Ed.	M.Phil.	Ph.D.	
21 to 25 years	4	4	1	3	--	1
16 to 20 years	2	2	--	--	1	1
10 to 15 years	1	1	--	1	--	--
Total	7	7	1	4	1	2

Table 2 indicates that all the teachers have put in a minimum of ten or more years of service in college. Only one, out of seven, has had training in teaching, obviously because

B.Ed. is not a prescribed qualification for college teachers in Kerala. But two of them (28.57%) have claimed to have attended refresher courses/short-term courses in the teaching of English. Four teachers (57.14%) have M.Phil and one (14.2%) has Ph.D. qualifications. This throws light on the fact that the majority of teachers are highly qualified academically, though lacking in proper training in ELT. The work load is the same for all of them—sixteen hours per week.

Aptitude for Teaching

The teachers generally have a high aptitude for teaching. The reasons enumerated for having chosen the profession of teaching are various: job satisfaction, fulfilment of ambition, interaction with children etc.

Attitude to English

All the teachers reveal a positive attitude to English. They consider learning of English important since it is a link language and international language. All of them emphasized the importance of English as a language for communication. Six teachers or 85.71% recommend English as the medium of instruction at the school level while one favours the mother tongue upto the 7th standard and a medium of one's choice afterwards.

At the college level too, all the teachers except one, are in favour of English as the best medium; the one who dissents is of the view that both English and the MT could be recommended.

2. Group Dynamics

The group dynamics of the class involves classroom interaction and behaviour, which is mainly determined by the teacher-student and student-student relationships.

Teacher-Student Relationship

As revealed in the personal interviews with students and teachers, the relationship of the teachers with their students of General English classes is a formal one. Once the text book is closed after class there is no contact between them till they meet for the next class. Lectures are based purely on the text and there is no talk in the classroom outside the text, where language is used for authentic communication. Personal details of students, even their names, are not known to the teachers, except for a few who are class monitors or achievers in extracurricular activities. Students also admit that there is no warmth in their relationship with

teachers. The reasons cited are large classes, loss of working days, rigid examination system frequent examinations, lack of time etc.

Teachers too, revealed that there is no room for a good rapport with all the students at a personal level, especially after the introduction of the semester system in UG courses. In a rush to finish off the allotted portions before the exams, there is not much time left for interaction with the students.

Student-Student Relationship

From observation by the researcher and casual talks with students, it is seen that in most classes, students form groups within the class. For instance, students from the upper-class: English-medium, convent educated, flock together and keep themselves aloof from others. Students from rural areas form their own groups and a sort of rivalry exists among the groups. Class tension is strong within the classroom. However, in some classes, the group dynamics is more or less healthy.

3. Physical Facilities in the Classroom

Students' questionnaire was used to collect data on the physical facilities and conditions prevailing in the classrooms. The factors examined include the number of students, size of the classroom, seating arrangement, lighting and ventilation. 83% of students admit that they are not satisfied with the physical facilities in the class.

The average strength of an English class is 85-100 students. The classrooms in which General English classes are held are too crowded for the smooth conduct of the classes. Student strength is very high and most of the class rooms do not have enough space to accommodate them. Often, six students have to occupy a five-seater bench. Students do not get adequate space to sit freely or turn around, not to mention, to do the reading or writing tasks assigned to them. Most of the classes are well-lit and have proper ventilation.

Pedagogical Implications

The social variables examined may be managed and controlled for the benefit of the low achievers. Teachers are all well-qualified but often lack training in the teaching of English as L2, their attitude to English and aptitude for teaching are found to be positive. Teacher-pupil relationship is more or less formal, lacking in warmth and the peer relationships within the class are also not satisfactory due to various kinds of segregation. Physical facilities in the

classroom, such as furniture, lighting, room-size, etc are well-provided but the seating arrangement is unsatisfactory since English classrooms are cramped due to the combination of optional classes.

Even minor changes and reforms in the classroom can go a long way in building positive group dynamics and boosting the confidence of learners, thereby minimizing student reticence and ensuring maximum participation of students in the learning process.

1. A change of focus to systematic training in oral communication is imperative. This includes ear-training, effective loud-reading and training in oral communication for day-to-day activities. This calls for a thorough revamping of materials and methods involved in teaching English. Any reform in the existing syllabus is beyond the reach of the teacher. But learners' demand for communicative activities reveals positive learner needs and interest. So the teachers's responsibility is to sustain learner motivation. Communicative interaction can be generated in the classroom using the materials in the text itself by encouraging discussions, debates etc.
2. Teachers should be given adequate training in teaching English as a second language and student-centred methods of teaching
3. An eclectic method may be used to teach English so as to secure maximum interaction in the English classroom. Plenty of opportunities should be offered for authentic communication in English by means of activities like role-play, discussions, debates etc.
4. The use of ICTs (Information Communication Technologies) for the teaching of English is to be promoted. Teacher can make use of facilities such as Language lab, projectors, television, mobile apps, power point presentations etc to give the learners aural-oral training thus creating a real life experience of the use of English in the classroom.
5. Students can be encouraged to gain maximum input in English outside the class, through reading and from audio-visual media.
6. Teacher-student ratio is to be made at least 1:50 so that overcrowding of the General English classes can be minimized.

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Exploring the theme of corruption in Keisham Priyokumar's *The Acacia* and Lamabam Viramani Singh's *Inspection Report*

Donkaolung Malangmei & Elangbam Hemanta Singh

This paper seeks to explore the theme of corruption in the short story of Keisham Priyokumar and Lamabam Viramani Singh. Corruption is one of the cancerous elements that hamper the growth and development in the society. It plagues the society in every sphere, be it in administration, education, or politics etc. For some it becomes the means to advance themselves in the society, while for other it is an impediment that daunt their fervent aspiration for the social amelioration. Corruption is a social menace that needs to be systematically phase out from the society. The pertinent question is whether we can completely wipe it out or not. The two authors are well known writer from the states of Manipur, northeast India. Through their writing they express their deep anguish for the loss of social values in the Manipur society. The two writers with their keen perception intimate the ordinary people plight, discontentment, and despicable condition of existence in their story. The present article attempts to examine the corruption that is rampant in the administration and the education sector in Manipur state as projected in the two stories.

Corruption is one of the most dreadful diseases that society faced in the modern world. It is universally accepted that corruption prevails in most of the countries, be it developed or developing countries. It plagues our society in every sphere, in administration, education, politic etc. Some use it to advance themselves while others are hampered and impeded, which made them loss their faith in the system as it deters them to advance or progress themselves in the society. It is one of the major impediments in the process of development in many fields including in educational and administration. The corruption charges and allegations have ruined many acclaimed public figures, and tarnished the reputation of well-established and respected organization. Some of the corrupted firms and individuals have been booked accordingly to the law of the land and had received their fair share of punishment for the corruption. However not all of the corrupt organizations and individuals are punished rather it is only the few unlucky who are caught and have received the consequences of it. This paper seeks to analyze the theme of corruption in the short story "The Inspection Report" and "The Acacia". The two short stories are included in the collection of short stories, *The Grasshopper and Other Stories* compiles by M Mani Meitei.

Corruption can be defined as the use of public office for private benefit. Using of public office for their own advantaged, depriving and neglecting their service can be term as corruption. Practice like bribery, extortion, nepotism, favoritism, fraud, influence peddling, appropriation of public assets and property for private use, lack of responsibility etc. can be term as a corrupt practice.

Lamabam Viramani Singh the author of the short story, “Inspection Report”, begins the story with the lines narrating how the society of Manipur have accepted the unbecoming tradition of tagging a price for the job or promotion as if similar to that of the price of essential commodities. Ojha Tomba, a schoolteacher was very doubtful of his promotion to Assistant Inspector (AI) thought he had seen his name on the promotion order. The reason for doubting is that he had not paid even a single rupee for bribing his promotion. Ojha Tomba had narrowly evaded the bait as a man turn up to ensnared him, “Ojha Tomba, they’re going to promote some teachers as assistant inspectors, so why don’t Ojha too do the done thing” (238). The man came to the Ojha Tomba to extract money as a payment for his promotion. Tomba did not have the money to do their “done” thing and had not succumbed to the ensnarement. Despite fulfillment the criteria for the promotion Ojha Tomba had been asked to do some sort of the payment. The author gave us the picture of how a well-deserved person was advised to follow the pattern of corruption and pay for his job or promotion. Had Ojha Tomba had the money probably he would have follow the trend but luckily he did not possessed the amount needed for the transaction. He is the only person who was not promoted, while “All my friends have forged ahead (238)”. The author explored the theme of corruption and had shown to the reader how an upstanding individual faced the trouble and was left behind while all the others advance themselves. Most of the people followed the system that is practice in the society and indulged in corruption as everyone wanted to secure a job for a stable life or to forge ahead in one’s occupation. Luckily he had eluded the bait and was promoted to Assistant Inspector (AI). After being promoted, AI Tomba, being a sincere individual who rendered his duty honestly face lot of issued when he took up his new role as an Assistant Inspector. Through his inspection to the Middle District Primary School, AI Tomba witnesses the sorry state of learning environment in one of the primary school under his jurisdiction.

The AI observed:

I felt like having a look at the class and entered the room. It was quite a big school of four rooms. But without proper walls it looked like one huge room. As we entered, the children stood up immediately. The room was soon clouded with dust. The litter of paper, pebbles, pockmarked floors, - a stable will be slightly better, I thought (242).

The dilapidated infrastructure of the government school and lack of benches and desks was the clear sign of mismanagement in the school. It connoted the lack of care and non-performance of their duty from the peon and principal. Instead of upgrading and taking care of the school the Head Pundit and other well to do family established a private English School and sent their children to study there. The infrastructure of the Middle District Primary School was not properly maintained. The AI Tomba issued an explanation call for the absentee teacher who had been absent for more than a month. Having a nexus with the local MLA, the absentee teacher threatened the AI Tomba, when AI refused to accept his request. In the words of the absentee teacher, Ojha Jadumani said: “It’s no use AI Saheb, better get this matter settled. If we extend it, things will become unpleasant” (246). The corrupt teacher who failed to render his service did not have a single iota to accept his fault and rectify his mistake rather he tried to find excuses for his absentee and put the blame on other, like the Head Pundit. An elderly man came to the house of AI Tomba to solve the issued, requesting him to cut the matter short without the explanation call letter. From the words of the elderly man AI can understand some vivid trend of the way of the society:

All very concerned about me, he said, ‘AI Saheb, the times are bad. Don’t be like them. The times are sick with a disease you and I cannot cure. This society’s sick. Keep these two hundred rupees. We cannot change that man. You must have seen the houses that teachers build today and the cars they ride. If we want to live without worries in such difficult times, we have to feign a little blindness, a little deafness. We only have to ensure our salaries’ (246).

The words of the elderly man turn out to be true as the AI Tomba could not take action against the negligent teacher Ojha Jadumani. The Inspector had previously informed the AI to take up the proper legal action and intercepted the pay of the absentee teacher but when the payday came, the Inspector requested the AI to join the party being throw by the Ojha Jadumani; “when the Inspector saw me, he said, ‘Please take a seat. Ojha Jadumani says he’ll treat us to fruit juice’”(247). Without as any trace of dithering the Inspector suggested to the AI to pardon the Ojha Jadumani. Before the AI Tomba could put a word up, the Inspector

continue directing his subordinate officer AI Tomba to file the papers submitted by the Head Pundit, Pradhan and MLA, which state that “our” teacher came to school regularly. Perhaps the Inspector might have accepted the bribe of two hundred rupees which was not taken by the AI when it was offered to him. The Inspector recommended to file the latest report and destroyed the AI Tomba’s inspection report. The change of stand in the part of Inspector signals to the reader that he is also taken a part in the corruption process, alienating the only dutiful AI Tomba from their circle. AI Tomba represented the dilemma face by the common people who tried to live a truthful life. It becomes a Hercules task to rectify the system, when corruption prevails in every system. Assistant Inspector Tomba discovers himself that his ideal principles are impracticable in the nefarious society. Through the short stories the author brings home to the reader and the society at large, to ponder over the grim picture of the functioning of educational institution and offices in the society.

Keisham Priyokumar’s “The Acacia”, highlights the frustration of the Sanjenbam Yaima Singh, a superannuated man pursuing his pension file in the Imphal secretariat. The story exposes the deep level of corruptions that are practicing in the office. Yaima has been processing his pension file, and it has taken six months for his file to reach from the Section to the Secretary and is yet to be released. His only companion in the process is the Acacia tree that is on the roadside, near the Secretariat Building. The Acacia tree is the only companion for the Yaima who seems to understand the trouble face by him. The Acacia has provided shade for Yaima and under which he has enjoyed the shade during the summer season but now winter had arrived and Yaima seeks to bask in the sunlight a little distance away from the acacia tree. The appearance of Yaima shows the clear picture of poverty, as he has not received any pension. The following description from the author highlights the hardship he endured:

Both Sides of his worn-out coat were reduced to ash grey, the collar and cuffs torn and seams almost bursting. The coat was short and too tight to be buttoned up. His pair of trousers were equally tight, faded and showed signs of shrinkage from frequent washing. His leather sandal was full of sewed patches and hardly polished (230).

After much persuasion Yaima is able to enter the secretariat and when he enquires about his pension file, the clerk was rude and scolded Yaima not for remembering his file number and he was sent around from one desk to another, from the desk of the receipt clerk to that of the dealing clerk. The only hope the rekindle for Yaima to trace his pension file is

when the peon approaches him and who seems to be quite cordial toward him. When he narrated his trouble of tracing the pension file, Yaima was asked by poen to wait outside while he searches for the file. Through the crack of the door which acts as a peephole, Yaima surreptitiously observed the peon rummaging the stack of file and he found the seriousness of all the clerks quite impressive. Assuming that visitors were not allowed in, due to the serious nature of their work in the office and Yaima thinks highly of them. But the nonchalance way of reporting the missing file by the peon, shrugging his shoulder indifferencely tells otherwise. Even though Yaima is a simple retire school teacher he can easily know the concoction and fabrication of the peon about his file, when he said calmly what is to be done to retrace the missing file. In the words of the peon:

Fact is there are some errors in your service book. Oh, don't worry. It can be put to right. But it will take time. Your file has to go round form one desk to another. The clerks and the officers are to be approached once again. We have to pay them (236).

Yaima is completely taken aback when the peon who is supposedly appeared to be cordial toward him turn out to be a cunning person and resembling the sly fox, trying to suck the blood of an innocent old man, who could father him. Yaima is startled by his announcement "Uncle, your file is not here. I'm afraid it is missing". The peon had manipulated the file of Yaima to extract money from him. Bribery has become the only means to get things done in the office. Yaima had spent all his last drawn salary to make the file progress and he is left penniless. He is hoping that his pension file will be released but in the contradiction he was asked to pay five or six thousands rupees for releasing his file.

The two stories "The Acacia" and "Inspection Report" portray the evil nature of corruptions that are prevailing in the society. The paper has analyzed how dangerous it is for the society to let the educational system and administration tainted with corruption. Remedy must be sought to redress the deplorable condition in the educational sector and administration office without which development and progress will be a mile away for such society where rampant corruption prevailed.

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The Burden of the Spotlight: Fame, Reputation, and Gender from the Victorian Era to Today

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Celebrity culture, a phenomenon deeply entrenched in the public imagination, has evolved significantly over centuries while retaining certain core dynamics, especially concerning gender. The concept of celebrityhood has long captured public fascination, intertwining cultural ideals, public consumption, and personal narratives. While modern celebrity culture is often associated with mass media and social platforms, its roots can be traced to the 19th century. The burgeoning print industry, serialised novels, and public performances were crucial in constructing early celebrity images in the Victorian era. However, this fame was deeply gendered. Gender played a defining role in shaping these representations, with both men and women, but often women are celebrated or vilified based on their adherence to societal norms. Women were positioned as moral exemplars or cautionary figures, their public image intricately tied to their private virtue.

Central to understanding fame in the Victorian era is the cultural theory of commodification, particularly as articulated by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their concept of the “culture industry.” In Victorian society, fame began to emerge as a marketable commodity, aligning with the rise of mass print culture, industrial capitalism, and the development of consumerist values. Public personas, whether celebrated or vilified, became products consumed by society through novels, newspapers, and serialized publications.

Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley* (1849) examines the societal dynamics of fame and how it interacts with gender and individuality. The characters of Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone represent contrasting models of women navigating public and private identities within a society that increasingly commodifies personal traits and relationships. Shirley, a wealthy heiress, is celebrated for her independence and strength, yet her fame within her local community is contingent on the performative aspects of her gender and class.

Shirley’s celebrated status can be seen as a product of societal consumption, where her wealth and charisma become symbols of idealized femininity that align with Victorian expectations of women’s roles as benefactors and moral exemplars. Through Shirley, Brontë critiques the reduction of women to objects of admiration or marriageable assets, suggesting a tension between genuine individuality and societal expectations of female fame. Caroline

Helstone, on the other hand, represents the quieter, more private struggles of women who do not fit the mould of public admiration. Caroline's less visible position highlights the limited scope for fame among women who lack the material and social advantages that Shirley possesses. In this contrast, Brontë explores the ways in which fame, for women, is less about individual merit and more about their marketability as embodiments of societal ideals. In *Shirley*, the titular character represents the intersection of gender and class in this commodification process. Her fame, while empowering in certain respects, is also circumscribed by her performative role as a "proper" Victorian woman. Shirley's resistance to societal norms—such as her rejection of traditional notions of romantic love and marriage—challenges the commodified representation of femininity but also underscores the restrictive framework within which her fame operates.

Similarly, in *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886), Thomas Hardy examines the commodification of fame through the lens of male ambition and downfall. Michael Henchard's rise to prominence as the Mayor of Casterbridge exemplifies fame as a product of economic and social capital. His public identity is constructed through his success in the grain trade and his image as a self-made man. However, Hardy critiques the fleeting and precarious nature of fame, revealing how it can be both commodified and destroyed by the same societal forces that create it. Henchard's fame is closely tied to his performative public persona, which masks his inner turmoil and moral failings. As his fortunes decline, so does his public reputation, illustrating the Victorian tendency to commodify and discard public figures based on their utility to society. Hardy's portrayal of Henchard's downfall underscores the merciless nature of commodified fame, where personal worth is eclipsed by public perception. Lucetta's plight is encapsulated in her reflection, "It is because he does not think I am respectable. I have tried to be so more than you can imagine, but in vain!" (204). This line reveals the Victorian tendency to commodify women's reputations, making them both objects of admiration and scapegoats for societal anxieties. Hardy critiques this dynamic by illustrating the destructive consequences of a culture that consumes and discards female identities based on public opinion. Michael Henchard's rise and fall demonstrate the commodification of public identity, particularly in the context of masculinity. Henchard's fame as a successful mayor and businessman is intricately tied to his ability to project an image of self-made success. Yet, this fame is fragile and contingent, as his personal failings and public scandals ultimately lead to his ruin. Hardy critiques the

cultural forces that transform individuals into consumable figures, exposing the precariousness of fame in a society driven by market values.

Chris Rojek's theory of "celebrity as performance" provides a useful lens for analyzing how characters like Shirley and Henchard navigate the public and private aspects of their identities. Rojek argues that celebrityhood is constructed through the interplay of media representation, societal expectations, and individual agency. This performance often involves a careful curation of public image, as well as the negotiation of personal authenticity.

In *Shirley*, the protagonist embodies this performative aspect of celebrityhood. Shirley's public persona as a confident and independent woman is contrasted with her private vulnerabilities and aspirations. Her fame within her local community is not solely a reflection of her personality but is mediated by societal narratives that idealize her as a symbol of wealth, virtue, and progressive femininity. This duality underscores the tension between individuality and societal construction in the making of female celebrity. The titular character subverts traditional gender norms through her assertiveness and financial independence. However, her fame remains constrained by the societal expectation that women must embody virtue and moral responsibility. Shirley's reluctance to conform to these expectations complicates her relationship with fame, positioning her as both an admired figure and a subject of critique. Caroline Helstone, in contrast, represents the invisibility of women who do not conform to the mould of public admiration, highlighting the limited pathways to fame for women outside the parameters of wealth and beauty.

In *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Henchard's fame is similarly performative. His public identity as the Mayor is meticulously crafted to project authority and competence, masking his inner insecurities and moral flaws. However, the exposure of his past mistakes—such as selling his wife—reveals the fragility of this constructed persona. Hardy illustrates how fame, particularly for men, is contingent on their ability to maintain control over their public narratives, a theme that resonates with modern celebrity scandals and the cyclical nature of fame. The experiences of Lucetta Templeman and Elizabeth-Jane Newson offer contrasting perspectives on female fame. Lucetta's desire for social recognition and romantic validation makes her a subject of public fascination and scandal. Her tragic downfall, precipitated by societal judgment and gossip, exemplifies the double standards applied to women in the public sphere. Elizabeth-Jane, by choosing a quieter, more private life, avoids the pitfalls of fame but also remains marginalized within the narrative. Hardy critiques the cultural forces that commodify women's

reputations, illustrating how fame for women is often accompanied by objectification and vulnerability.

The gendered dynamics of fame are critical to understanding the plight of women in both *Shirley* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. Both novels examine the constraints and expectations placed upon women, offering valuable critiques of the ways in which societal structures commodify and control their visibility and agency. Judith Butler's theory posits that gender is not innate but performed through repeated actions and societal norms. In the context of fame and visibility, this performance becomes even more pronounced, as women are required to embody idealized notions of femininity to gain or sustain societal approval. Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* highlights the tension between individual identity and societal expectations of femininity. Here, Shirley Keeldar, challenges these expectations by refusing to conform to the passive, docile ideal of Victorian womanhood. Her wealth and independence allow her to assert agency, but she must still navigate societal pressures to "perform" her gender in ways that align with patriarchal norms. "She was glad to be independent" (181). This defiance underscores her rejection of gendered performance dictated by societal expectations. Yet, her status as an unmarried, wealthy woman subjects her to gossip and scrutiny, illustrating how even acts of rebellion are framed within the constraints of societal observation.

In Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, gender performance is explored through the character of Lucetta Templeman. Lucetta's position in the narrative is heavily influenced by her relationships with men, particularly Michael Henchard and Donald Farfrae. Her attempt to establish herself independently in Casterbridge is overshadowed by her past, demonstrating how women's visibility and public reputation are dictated by patriarchal norms. In this novel Lucetta becomes the target of the skimmington ride, a public spectacle that humiliates her by reducing her identity to her perceived sexual transgressions. The scene exemplifies how women's lives and reputations are commodified and policed, forcing them to adhere to societal performances of purity and virtue.

Laura Mulvey's concept of the "male gaze" critiques the objectification of women in visual culture, where women are portrayed as objects of male desire and spectatorship rather than autonomous subjects. This theory can be extended to literary representations, where women are similarly reduced to symbols within male-dominated narratives. In *Shirley*, the male gaze manifests in how female characters are observed and judged within the community.

Caroline Helstone, in particular, becomes an object of observation and desire, her worth tied to her quiet beauty and virtue. Her internal struggles highlight the oppressive nature of being viewed primarily through the lens of male approval. She is afraid of whether she has said more than Robert expected her to say (79). This internalization of societal judgment reflects how the male gaze shapes women's self-perception, limiting their sense of agency and self-worth. Shirley, on the other hand, resists the male gaze by asserting her independence and refusing to conform to the expectations of marriage and subservience. However, even her defiance is filtered through the perspectives of male characters, complicating her role as a truly autonomous figure. In Hardy's novel, Lucetta is consistently objectified and scrutinized, her beauty and past indiscretions becoming the focus of public attention. The skimmington ride vividly illustrates Mulvey's concept of the male gaze, transforming Lucetta into a visual and symbolic commodity for public consumption. "Lucetta next recognized him and more mistress of herself said archly, 'The Lass of Gowrie' from the inside of a seed-drill — what a phenomenon!" (202). Here, Lucetta's plight is made into a spectacle, reducing her to an object of entertainment and moral judgment. The episode critiques how women's lives are co-opted into narratives that serve patriarchal voyeurism and control.

Both novels demonstrate how societal expectations compel women to perform their gender roles in ways that align with patriarchal norms. The insights from Butler and Mulvey remain strikingly relevant today. Modern celebrity culture continues to demand gendered performances from women, who are judged not only on their talents but also on their adherence to societal standards of beauty and behaviour. The male gaze persists in the commodification of female celebrities, whether through hyper-sexualized imagery or the scrutiny of their personal lives. Caroline and Shirley's struggles with visibility and autonomy parallel the experiences of contemporary women navigating fame, from actresses and musicians to activists and politicians. Similarly, Lucetta's public shaming reflects the dynamics of modern cancel culture, where women's reputations are easily destroyed by moralistic judgment and media spectacle.

Similarly, The Victorian era placed immense societal pressures on men, often tying their worth to notions of success, reputation, and the ability to maintain social and economic control. For men, Victorian society demanded a public persona defined by authority, honour, and financial success. Male celebrityhood during this period often revolved around professional or moral accomplishments, creating a framework where the public gaze became a source of both validation and scrutiny. This burden of maintaining societal approval and personal pride

is vividly portrayed in both novels. In *Shirley*, the male characters Robert Moore and Louis Moore are shaped by the pressures of societal expectations and economic survival. Robert Moore, an industrialist, becomes a public figure due to his mill's prominence in the local economy and his controversial decisions regarding labor disputes. His fame is less about personal charisma and more about his societal role, making him a symbol of industrial progress and conflict. Robert's financial struggles lead him to take severe measures, including firing workers, which makes him a figure of notoriety. His actions provoke riots, turning him into a public spectacle of both admiration and resentment. This portrayal reflects how societal fame for men in the Victorian era was often tied to their professional roles, but such fame could be double-edged, as public opinion easily shifted from reverence to hostility. Louis Moore, on the other hand, represents the quieter pressures of male invisibility. As a tutor, his lack of wealth and status confines him to the periphery of public recognition. His eventual romantic relationship with Shirley Keeldar allows him to gain symbolic fame through association, highlighting how male reputations were often bolstered by alliances with women of higher social standing.

Thomas Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* offers an even more direct examination of male celebrityhood and its pitfalls. Michael Henchard rises to fame as the mayor of Casterbridge, building his reputation on hard work and ambition. However, his public persona is undermined by personal flaws and past mistakes, illustrating the precarious nature of male fame in Victorian society. Henchard's confession about selling his wife and child becomes public knowledge, leading to his downfall. His fame as a respected mayor collapses under the weight of moral judgment. This reflects the Victorian obsession with moral rectitude, where public figures were held to exacting standards. Henchard's story highlights the societal pressure on men to maintain an image of respectability, even when it conflicted with their private realities.

Judith Butler's concept of gender as performance is relevant here, as both novels show men enacting societal ideals of masculinity to sustain their public image. These performances are often unsustainable, leading to personal and public crises. Robert Moore's struggles with economic instability are emblematic of Victorian masculinity's reliance on financial success. His fame as an industrialist is directly tied to his ability to project strength and competence, even when his business is failing. His desperation to fulfill societal expectations leads him to make ethically questionable decisions, such as suppressing workers' demands and seeking a wealthy marriage alliance. Robert had long ceased to regard the working people in any other

light than as tools. This objectification reflects how the societal pressures of fame and masculinity force him into roles that dehumanize both himself and others. Meanwhile, Michael Henchard's public persona is similarly a performance designed to mask his past and reinforce his authority. The weight of societal scrutiny forces him to adhere to rigid notions of honour and morality, even as his private failures contradict these ideals. His inability to reconcile his public and private selves leads to his tragic downfall. His heart softened, and he suffered, keenly, at the thought that he had lost the world's respect. This internal conflict illustrates the devastating impact of societal pressures on men's mental health and sense of identity.

Both novels emphasize how societal approval determines male worth, turning men into commodities whose value is measured by their public roles. In *Shirley*, Robert Moore's fame is tied to industrial progress, while in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, Henchard's fame stems from his moral and civic authority. However, both men's celebrityhood is inherently unstable, as societal admiration is contingent on their ability to meet its high standards. For both Robert and Henchard, fame becomes a source of both power and vulnerability. While it elevates them within their communities, it also exposes them to heightened scrutiny and judgment. This duality reflects the precariousness of male celebrityhood in the Victorian era, where societal expectations could quickly turn admiration into condemnation.

The societal pressures faced by Victorian men resonate in modern discussions of male celebrityhood. Today, male public figures are still expected to embody strength, success, and moral integrity, often at the expense of their emotional well-being. The performative nature of masculinity remains a central issue, with men facing scrutiny for any deviation from traditional norms. Robert Moore's economic struggles find parallels in the pressures on contemporary male entrepreneurs and business leaders, while Henchard's moral downfall echoes the modern phenomenon of cancel culture, where public figures are quickly vilified for personal mistakes. These novels provide a historical lens to critique ongoing societal expectations of male fame, emphasizing the need for more nuanced and compassionate understandings of masculinity.

The commodification of fame, as critiqued by Brontë and Hardy, persists in contemporary society, where public figures are marketed as brands and subjected to intense scrutiny. The gendered dynamics of fame, explored through the experiences of Shirley, Lucetta, and Elizabeth-Jane, Robert and Henchard remain particularly salient, in the public eye, continue to navigate the double standards of visibility and respectability.

The commodification of fame in *Shirley* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* offers insights into the enduring dynamics of celebrity culture. In both novels, fame is presented as a double-edged sword—an avenue for empowerment and a mechanism of control. This duality is evident in contemporary celebrity culture, where public figures, particularly women, navigate the tension between agency and objectification.

Social media, as a modern “culture industry,” amplifies these dynamics, transforming individuals into consumable images and narratives. The Victorian media played a crucial role in constructing and perpetuating gendered celebrityhood. Periodicals, novels, and visual culture celebrated men’s public achievements while reinforcing women’s subservient roles. Male celebrities were depicted as individuals of substance and agency, while female celebrities were often reduced to symbols of beauty or morality. Publications like *The Lady’s Magazine* and Godey’s *Lady’s Book* further entrenched these stereotypes by emphasizing women’s domestic roles and physical appearance. While men were featured for their contributions to society, women were presented as objects of admiration or cautionary tales, perpetuating the Victorian gender hierarchy. The Victorian critique of fame as a market-driven construct offers a historical lens through which to analyse the complexities of celebrityhood in the digital age. Modern celebrity culture has evolved in significant ways, yet it remains deeply influenced by Victorian constructs. Social media platforms have democratized fame, allowing individuals to create and manage their public personas. However, this accessibility often exacerbates the scrutiny faced by women and men, perpetuating the gendered dynamics of Victorian celebrityhood. In the contemporary period, female celebrityhood reflects broader opportunities and shifting cultural values, yet it remains shaped by gendered expectations. Women are now celebrated for their achievements in diverse fields, including politics, sports, activism, and entertainment, signaling a departure from the restrictive Victorian ideal of domesticity. However, the commodification of female celebrities through beauty standards, media narratives, and public scrutiny persists, echoing Victorian patterns in a modern guise.

Contemporary female celebrities like Beyoncé or Malala Yousafzai illustrate the expansion of female celebrityhood to include agency, activism, and empowerment. Beyoncé’s artistry and advocacy for racial and gender equality challenge traditional notions of fame by centering intersectionality and self-expression. Similarly, Malala’s global platform as an advocate for education exemplifies how contemporary female celebrityhood can transcend beauty and entertainment, aligning with intellectual and humanitarian pursuits.

However, this progress is tempered by enduring challenges. Female celebrities face disproportionate scrutiny over their personal lives, appearances, and moral choices. The rise of social media has amplified this dynamic, creating new forms of commodification and surveillance. The body-shaming, cancel culture, and invasive media attention faced by celebrities highlight the continued vulnerability of female celebrities to societal judgment. The feminist movements of the 20th and 21st centuries have challenged the restrictive frameworks of female celebrityhood, advocating for greater representation and agency. Intersectionality, in particular, has expanded the conversation to include race, class, and sexuality, highlighting the diverse experiences of female celebrities. Figures like Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie embody this shift, using their fame to challenge stereotypes and advocate for systemic change. However, even as contemporary female celebrityhood becomes more inclusive, it remains influenced by the Victorian legacy of commodification. Social media amplifies this dynamic, transforming personal traits and narratives into consumable commodities. The Victorian critique of fame as a market-driven construct thus remains relevant, offering a historical lens through which to examine the complexities of modern celebrityhood.

In the contemporary era, male celebrityhood is shaped by the global reach of mass media, the rise of digital platforms, and the increasing diversification of public roles. Male celebrities are no longer confined to traditional fields of power, such as politics or industry, but also emerge from entertainment, sports, social media, and activism. This democratization of fame has broadened the criteria for male celebrityhood but has also intensified the pressures associated with it. Unlike the Victorian ideal of stoic masculinity, contemporary male celebrities often navigate more fluid and complex representations of gender. Actors like Timothée Chalamet challenge traditional norms through their embrace of androgyny and emotional vulnerability, while figures like Elon Musk draw on the Victorian archetype of the self-made entrepreneur. The diversity of these representations reflects changing societal attitudes toward masculinity and fame. However, the scrutiny faced by contemporary male celebrities remains intense. Cancel culture, for instance, mirrors the Victorian tendency to moralize and judge public figures, albeit in a more immediate and globalized context. The scandals of modern male celebrities, such as controversies surrounding athletes or tech moguls, echo the downfall of figures like Henchard, revealing the enduring tension between public image and personal behaviour. Both Victorian and contemporary male celebrityhood serve as mirrors of their respective societies, reflecting and reinforcing dominant cultural values. Victorian male celebrities

upheld ideals of progress and authority, which were instrumental in legitimizing the social hierarchies of the time. In contrast, contemporary male celebrityhood is more fragmented, reflecting a pluralistic society with competing narratives about gender, success, and identity. However, in both periods, male celebrityhood is not only an individual phenomenon but also a societal construct that reveals the collective aspirations, anxieties, and contradictions of the time.

The Victorian framework of celebrityhood continues to influence contemporary gender dynamics in fame. While modern media has diversified representations of celebrity, gendered expectations persist. Male celebrities are still celebrated for their achievements and agency, whereas female celebrities often face disproportionate scrutiny for their personal lives and appearances. Social media has amplified these dynamics, with male celebrities frequently portrayed as leaders or innovators, while female celebrities are often commodified through beauty standards or subjected to cancel culture for perceived moral failings. However, contemporary movements for gender equality and representation challenge these norms, creating spaces for more equitable portrayals of fame. The Victorian era laid the groundwork for modern celebrity culture, with its gendered constructs of fame reflecting broader societal values and anxieties. By comparing male and female celebrityhood in this period, we gain critical insights into the intersection of gender, power, and public identity. While contemporary culture has evolved, the legacies of Victorian gender ideologies continue to shape the ways in which men and women navigate fame, underscoring the enduring influence of this pivotal era.

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Roots of Violence: An Analytical Lens on Dalit Women

Sanil T. Sunny

Though, the right to equality is a fundamental right in India, institutional forces such as caste, class and community become stumbling blocks to abandon gender inequality in the country. Discrimination is shown towards women in all realms, in the guise of tradition and culture. The society tends to treat women as an object of sex and it is an established fact that women are looked down in all aspects of life in India. This can be more precise when one observes Dalit women who are dangerously exposed to the severely imbalanced socio-political power equations. Historically, Dalits have been placed as the 'other' and within the community, Dalit women are even more vulnerably placed, given multilateral discrimination.

The violence perpetrated against Dalit women is the core outcome of gender based inequalities compounded and intensified by caste discrimination. In India, violence acts as a crucial social mechanism to perpetuate the subordination of Dalit women to patriarchy particularly that of the dominant caste men. The insecurity generated through violence in the community and family shadows over the freedom of Dalit women and it ensures that they continue to be disempowered and exploited. The situation of Dalit women should be studied carefully as they are discriminated thrice: they are poor, they are women, and they are Dalits. They are discriminated against not only by people of higher castes, but also within their own communities. Though the traditional taboos are the same for Dalit men and Dalit women, Dalit women have to deal with them more often. The present study proposes that being positioned at the lowest social order of Indian society, Dalit women suffer from different forms of discrimination such as lack of education, economic disadvantages, social disempowerment, domestic violence, political invisibility, and sexual oppression. They have to face sexual or psychological violence from every side where both laws and human rights standards prove to be ineffective. The essay tries to locate the factors that influence and stimulate violence against Dalit women.

Patriarchy

In India, Dalit women face targeted violence like rape and murder, by the powerful members of the dominant castes. Gender inequality purified by religious and cultural norms subordinates them and they face verbal and physical violence in the public and private domain. The primary identified factor for this kind of violence in the general community is related to the

issue of Dalit women's bodily integrity. Sexual violence is used as a tool to reinforce the 'caste impurity' of both the Dalit women and their community. Further, Dalit women are often the victimised to trafficking and sexual exploitation, even from a young age. This sexual exploitation of Dalit women is a common occurrence and dominant caste members take advantage of their power and authority over them.

In the private domain Dalit women are assaulted for not being dutiful wives. It may be for not bearing children, more specifically male children or not bringing enough dowries into the marriage. Also they are attacked when attempting to seek justice after an incident of violence.

There are nine major forms of violence against Dalit women; six being violence in the general community – physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and assault, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction; and three being violence in the family – female foeticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse and domestic violence from natal and marital family members. (HRC 2)

Major forms of violence against Dalit women include violence in the general community – physical assault, verbal abuse, sexual harassment and assault, rape, sexual exploitation, forced prostitution, kidnapping and abduction and violence in the family – female foeticide and infanticide, child sexual abuse and domestic violence. The more frequent forms of violence that are perpetrated against the majority of Dalit women are verbal abuse, physical assault, sexual harassment and assault, domestic violence and rape.

However, sexual assault and rape of Dalit women and girls also occur within their own communities. For Dalit men, the suppression and rape of women could be a way to compensate for their own lack of power in society. Untouchability and social exclusion take shape of an institutionalized system in some places in context to Dalit women, called 'Devadasis.' Under Devadasi system, a Dalit family dedicates its young daughter to the village goddess, and when the girl reaches puberty she becomes an available sexual partner for the priest and all upper caste men in the village. The Devadasi system of temple prostitution is the most extreme form of exploitation of Dalit women.

Power Relations and Lack of Political Voice

A second frequent causal factor for violence in the general community directly links to gender inequality and Dalit women's counter discourse of equality, rights, dignity and self-

respect. Studies on violence against Dalit women in India present clear evidence of widespread exploitation and discrimination against these women subordinated in terms of power relations to men in a patriarchal society. This is a widespread phenomenon found in India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka where caste-based discrimination subjects millions of Dalit women to inhumane living conditions and systematic human rights violations.

Other causal factors for violence are the socio-economic vulnerability and lack of political voice. They simultaneously reduce the ability of Dalit women to escape. The aspect of economic exploitation in the caste system is related to land, or other economic resources such as wages. The poor economic status of Dalit women is reflected in their lack of ownership of land in combination with their concentration on wage labour which is synonymous to low wages and dependence on the dominant castes. Dalit woman's social struggle is first of all a familial struggle. A Dalit woman, only if she has a support in her family, can advance in social sphere and this needs a change in attitude of man towards woman. Till then, Dalit woman cannot forge ahead. In the realm of political rights, several Dalit women's assertions of their basic political rights provoke violent backlashes from dominant castes. Dalit women have lesser power within the Dalit community itself. Women are active in large numbers in many movements but most leadership positions in the organisations, local bodies and associations have until now been held by men.

Resistance

Violence also takes place when Dalit women seek justice and the protection of the law for violence done to them, or to forestall such action. The majority of cases of violence against Dalit women are not registered. The lack of law enforcement leaves many Dalit women unable to approach the legal system to seek redress. Women are also often unaware of the laws and their ignorance is exploited by their opponents, by the police, and by the judiciary system. Even when cases are registered, the lack of appropriate investigation, or the judge's own caste and gender biases, can lead to acquittal. Sanctioned impunity on behalf of offenders is a major issue in India, and the police often deny or purposefully neglect and delay Dalit women's right to legal aid and justice. There is a consistent pattern of delay in report filing and irregularities regarding criminal procedures, which leads to widespread impunity and creates serious barriers to justice for Dalit women. Often in cases of rape, Dalit women are pressured to withdraw or settle, sometimes making a 'compromise' and receiving a small payment by dominant caste members or others in the community. Another tactic is for the accused or a dominant caste

member to file a counter case and make a false accusation against the woman or her family. These cases are often more vigorously investigated than the original case lodged by the Dalit woman.

The rights of Dalit women are breached systematically. The system of registration of child birth or marriages is found ineffective. This is not only a barrier for the realisation of civil and political rights; it also prevents the protection of Dalit girls from sexual exploitation and trafficking, child labour and forced and early marriages. The right to work and to form trade unions, the right to social security, protection of the family, the right to an adequate standard of living, including food, housing and clothing, and the right to health are to be protected. Dalit women hardly enjoy any of these human rights. Dalit women also face hardship because of child marriage, bigamy and dowry practices that continue to prevail despite having been officially outlawed.

Future

India is a democracy concerned of the major human rights treaties and these treaties provide the same rights for men and for women. But the government has to do more than just pass legislation to protect human rights and it has an obligation to take all measures, including policy and budgetary measures, to make sure that women can fulfil their rights such as the right to life, freedom from torture, punishment or inhuman or degrading treatment, freedom from slavery, the right to be equal before the court, the right to recognition as a person before the law, the right to privacy, the right to marry only with free and full consent, and the right to take part in public affairs. The life and dignity of Dalit women depend on the realisation of these human rights.

We should recognize Dalit women as a distinct social group rather than subsuming them under the general women or Dalit category, and accordingly evolve and implement a specific focus and activities on Dalit women's rights within the broader framework of the Dalit and women's empowerment agenda. Introduce affirmative action policies to increase Dalit women's participation in the police, judiciary, legal professions and education. Measures should be taken to increase protection of Dalit women from crimes such as various forms of sexual violence, forced and ritual prostitution, trafficking, domestic violence and punitive violence and to tackle impunity and discrimination in access to justice. Such measures can include police and judicial training and monitoring, legal assistance for prosecution of crimes,

strengthening laws, awareness campaigns to help prevent exploitation, and investing resources into education for women and girls affected by caste-based discrimination.

Law enforcement agencies, the judiciary and the civil society must combine efforts to enable such change and firm measures must be taken to punish officials who neglect or violate legal and other statutory provisions. Court trials should be time bound to secure speedy justice for victims of violence and atrocities. This would be similar to time bound investigation and charge sheets for the police. Gender-disaggregated data on caste-based discrimination should be collected and it should be done in consultation with affected women.

Particular attention should be paid to combating intersecting forms of discrimination in the sectors of education, employment, health care, access to land and personal security. Targeted programmes for Dalit women must be implemented focusing on key development indicators such as food security, access to clean drinking water, health and sanitation, education, and decent employment. Women from caste-affected communities should be supported to increase participation at all levels of political governance as well as in other decision-making structures. The formation of high-level skills in capacity building training for Dalit women should be prioritised, in order to provide them with opportunities for employment at the regional and global level, which will lead to increased development and financial support to eliminate caste-based discrimination. Proportional representation of caste-affected women in parliaments, legislatures and local governance systems should be mandated. Land reform programmes should be implemented with the objective of redistributing government owned land resources to the landless, targeting Dalit women residing in rural areas, to use it for agriculture based income generating activities.

Ultimately, the problems of Dalit women should be made visible to the public eye through an exposure of the reality of the violence and disempowerment to which they are subject. Measures are to be taken to combat violence against Dalit women at the grass roots. Legal and structural mechanisms can only function effectively if the attitude and perception of people are changed.

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