

AUTOCRITICAL POSTCOLONIALISM
Disciplining the Temporalities

AUTOCRITICAL POSTCOLONIALISM

Disciplining the Temporalities

Editors

Rituparna Chakraborty

Shubham Bhattacharjee

Published by

BOOK VALLEY

in collaboration with



Swami Vivekananda University

AUTOCRITICAL POSTCOLONIALISM
Disciplining the Temporalities

Editors

Rituparna Chakraborty
Shubham Bhattacharjee

First Published: 2024

ISBN : 978-81-970208-1-0

© Swami Vivekananda University

Published by

Sk. Mustafa Ali

Publishers & Book Sellers

15, Shyamacharan Dey Street

Vidyasagar Tower

Kolkata 700 073

Phone: 8910141386

No part of this book may be translated or reproduced in any form, by print, photoprint, microfilm or any other means without written permission from the publishers.

The responsibility of the views expressed and information provided in the essays included in this book, lies with respective authors. The editors and publisher are not responsible.

Typeset by Indika, Kolkata

Cover designed by Babul Dey

Printed by Shanti Udyog, Kolkata – 700009

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword | 7 |
| Acknowledgement | 9 |
| <i>Tughlaq</i> , a Dreamer and an Idealist torn apart by the pragmatic needs and demands of Politics: A Postcolonial Perspective <i>Rituparna Chakraborty</i> | 11 |
| Shattered Illusions: <i>The Great Gatsby's</i> Pessimistic Inquiry into the Ephemeral Nature of the American Dream <i>Tirna Sadhu</i> | 17 |
| Decolonizing Nature: Unveiling Ecological Narratives in Postcolonial Perspectives <i>Anup Kundu</i> <i>Shantanu Siuli</i> | 25 |
| Mimicry in Indian Serials: A Post-Colonial Reading of Select Television Daily Shows <i>Shreyoshi Dhar</i> | 31 |
| Unveiling Spatial Trauma: Exploring the Ontology of Pain in Post-Colonial Cinematic Discourse <i>Agnidepto Datta</i> | 36 |
| Transculturalism as the Remedy of Colonialism: A Study of Tagore's <i>Gora</i> <i>Anirban Banerjee</i> | 42 |
| An Exploration of the Nuances of Patachitra and the Identity of the Patua in Colonial and Postcolonial Bengal <i>Shyamal Mondal</i> <i>Shubham Bhattacharjee</i> | 46 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Beyond the Margins: Audience Reception and Empathy towards Derogated Bodies in Indian Theatre <i>Moupikta Mukherjee</i> | 60 |
| Analysing Gender and Postcolonialism in <i>Wide Sargasso Sea</i> and <i>The God of Small Things</i> <i>Natasha Chatterjee</i> | 65 |
| Negotiating Guilt and (Post-)Colonial Conscience in J.M. Coetzee's <i>Disgrace</i> <i>Debarshi Arathdar</i> | 70 |
| About the Contributors | 76 |

FOREWORD

This collection of critical essays seems to be splendidly catering to a multidisciplinary audience. It is an intricate tapestry of various pedagogic dissemination striding across disciplines like media studies, cultural studies etc.

This volume negotiates the multidisciplinary subject positions in terms of various theoretical underpinnings. As posited by the New Education Policy 2020, the emphasis on multidisciplinary critical studies has been placed in most Indian universities under the new curricular framework. This collection is therefore a laudable attempt to create a consortium of multidisciplinary ideologies.

Professor Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay
Former Founder Vice-Chancellor
Bankura University
Chief Executive Director (Academics)
Swami Vivekananda University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

For the successful completion of this edited volume, we are most indebted to the vision of our Hon'ble Chancellor, Dr. Nandan Gupta, the inspiration of our Hon'ble Vice-Chancellor Professor (Dr.) Subrata Kumar Dey, the support of our Chief Operating Officer, Shri Saurabh Adhikari, the guidance of our Chief Executive Director (Academics), Professor (Dr.) Deb Narayan Bandyopadhyay, and the co-operation of our Registrar, Professor (Dr.) Pinak Pani Nath.

We would also like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the concerned faculty members of Swami Vivekananda University, the contributors and collaborators, who have played an active part in the realization of this book.

***Tughlaq*, a Dreamer and an Idealist torn apart by the pragmatic needs and demands of Politics: A Postcolonial Perspective**

Rituparna Chakraborty

Girish Karnad, one of the leading dramatists of India began writing plays in Kannada but later was compelled to write in English, trans-creating his own Kannada plays into English for production by theatre groups. The first of such plays was *Tughlaq*, published in Kannada in 1964 and produced in the English translation in 1970. In his Introduction to *Three Plays*, Karnad states: “My generation was the first to come of age after India became independent of British rule. It therefore had to face a situation in which tensions implicit until then had come out in the open and demanded to be resolved without apologia or self-justification: tensions between the cultural past of the country and its colonial past, between the attractions of Western modes of thought and our own traditions, and finally between the various visions of the future that opened up once the common cause of political freedom was achieved. This is the historical context that gave rise to my plays and those of my contemporaries.” (Karnad 1)

The drama is basically the character study of an over-ambitious king, Mohammad-Bin-Tughlaq. Karnad states in an interview: “When I read about Mohammed bin Tughlaq, I was fascinated. How marvelous this was, I thought. Tughlaq was a brilliant individual yet is regarded as one of the biggest failures. He tried to introduce policies that seemed today to be farsighted to the point of genius, but which earned him the nick name — Mohammed the mad then. He ended his career in bloodshed and chaos.” (Mukherjee 35)

Tughlaq was the most remarkable among the rulers who reigned over the throne of Delhi He depicted excellence in religion, in philosophy, in calligraphy, in war-field and in fact in whatever he did, he seemed to outshine all his predecessors and successors. According to Lenpool, a

noted historian “he (Tughlaq) was the most remarkable among the crowned heads in medieval India.”

Tughlaq is an interesting character in Indian history, particularly because of his unprecedented administrative and financial reforms.

The public figure of the emperor was obviously formed by the private individual—Mohammad Bin Tughlaq—a man who was alone, alienated craving recognition as a sympathetic human being. So whenever this craving met with an obstacle, he became cruel and he did things which he repented later. Thus, there came to exist a cruel ruler and a delicate human being. Iban Batuta, who received his hospitality, observed, “he was fond of both giving gifts and shedding blood.” His relation with his young step-mother was a sort of expression of this complex personality. Possibly, this is the reason for which most of the critics find a similarity between Karnad’s *Tughlaq* and Camus’ *Caligula*.

Caligula, one of the twelve caesors, as described by Suetonius, was notorious for his whimsical cruelty and his promiscuous nature. However, there is also great difference between Tughlaq and Caligula. Tughlaq is more human than Caligula.

Contemporary relevance of *Tughlaq* is great. Karnad comments on this play in June 1971, “what struck me absolutely about Tughlaq’s history was that it was contemporary. The fact that here was the most idealistic, the most intelligent king ever to come on the throne of Delhi...and one of the greatest failures also.”

Tughlaq was ruined within a period of twenty years. One of the reason for his doom was his idealism. We cannot deny his flaws - his impatience, his cruelty, his stubbornness. However, the play’s main interest lies somewhere else, in the character of the eponymous hero, the intriguing nature of his complicated personality.

Tughlaq and his enemies appear to be idealists, while in the pursuit of the ideal, they brought out the very opposite. The entire play is framed on binary—the ideal and the real, the divine aspiration and the diabolic intrigues.

Aziz and Azam may be said to represent in their ambition and their political intrigue, the lower aspects and negative dimensions of the Sultan’s character and personality. Without the vision and idealism, the intense desire for divine grace, Tughlaq would be like Aziz and Azam. Tughlaq is aware of the tragic irony of his life when Aziz, who exploited all the missions of Tughlaq for his own purpose, slays Ghiyas-Ud-din and comes

in his disguise, as a holy harbinger of peace to the land and resurrect the prohibited prayer. In this respect, they are the doppelganger of Tughlaq to a limited extent.

In the first of the thirteen scenes of the play, we find, the old man refers to Tughlaq as a “thing”, expressing the general opinion that he is more of a curio than a revered ruler. The Hindu man admits “The moment a man comes along and says, “I know you are a Hindu, but you are also a human being—well, that makes me nervous.” (Karnad). Tughlaq’s abolishment of the Jigiya tax was a secular move, but it was not comprehended by his contemporaries. He was much ahead of his time. He gained a vision of plurality from the Greek philosophers. He opined: “My kingdom has millions—Muslims, Hindus, Jains. Yes, there is dirt and sickness in my kingdom. But why should I call on God to clean up the dirt deposited by men?.. And my kingdom too is what I am—torn between two pieces by visions whose validity I can’t deny. You are asking me to make myself complete by killing the Greek in me and propose to unify my people by denying the visions which led Zarathustra or the Buddha. I am sorry. But it can’t be done.” (26-27) In the very first speech, Tughlaq sets the pace of the play:

“My beloved people, you have heard the judgement of the kazi and seen for yourself how justice works in my kingdom—without any consideration of might or weakness, religion or creed May this moment burn bright and light up our path towards greater justice, equality, progress and peace—not just peace but a purposeful life.

And to achieve this and I am taking a new step in which I hope I shall have your support and co-operation

Later this year the capital of my empire will be move from Delhi to Daulatabad ... Daulatabad is a city of the Hindus and as the capital it will symbolize the bond between Muslims and Hindus which I wish to develop and straighten in my kingdom.” Hussain commented about this shifting of the capital: “[It] brought destruction to the capital city and misfortune to the upper classes, as well as decline of select and distinguished people ... He devastated Delhi so much that in its inhabited areas, inns and suburbs not even a cat or dog remained... Many people, who had been living in their homes for years, and had been attached to their forefathers’ houses for generations, perished on the long way. (Husain 109-110).”

Tughlaq projects himself as a towering hero. A poet, a philosopher, a man of science and a man with a vision of India as a secular Nation—

these noble qualities in Tughlaq are in constant conflict with his Machiavellian wiles in ambition and action. He is torn between his idealistic vision and murderous ambition. Vincent Smith described Tughlaq as an “oriental despot”. According to Smith “astonishing that such a monster should have retained power for twenty six years, and then have died in his bed” (Smith 254). Barani has lampooned Tughlaq for not following the principles of Islam strictly.

At the end of the play, Tughlaq’s life and works are in ruins. The Sultan goes mad at this point realizing his blunder. The people rise to a revolt because famine has struck the country.

There is religious, political and economic anarchy all around Tughlaq, which goes beyond his control – He is now exposed to retributive justice. Tughlaq’s political adviser Nazib is murdered by his stepmother. His stepmother is murdered by him. His only friend the historian Balauni also leaves the country and Tughlaq.

The play does not end with Tughlaq’s death but deadlier is the excruciating solitude and alienation to which the Sultan is doomed because of the hellish circumstances he has created through his own volatility, ruthlessness and fool-hardy idealism, that only stumbles on monumental blunders. Tughlaq, like a true fanatic, redoubts his own efforts when he knows he has bitten more than he can chew.

It is a tale of the crumbling to ashes of the dreams and aspirations of an over-ambitious, but considerably virtuous king. Despite the foolishness of deciding to shift the capital to “centralize administration, despite the highhandedness of making copper coins equal in value to silver dinars, despite the shamelessness of designing a conspiracy to kill his own brother and father at prayer hour. What is remarkable in the character of Tughlaq, is the willingness to work for his people and ensure their happiness, the courage to take initiative in the direction of communal harmony and a keen-observing and ever-diligent mind. The disappointment in the end when he is not understood by people is quite obvious. A change of interpretative light would reveal the figure of Tughlaq in another posture ; a compulsive speaker, a demagogue, a clever rhetorician making his real moves as an emperor flaunting his romantic schemes to secure an immortal place for him in history. According to Karnad, it is the tyranny of the absolute individualism of the West over the Indian view which sees man in multiple social and cultural relationships.

In spite of the carnage and bloodbath that his action lead, to, the

audience in the end cannot help feeling a twinge of pity for this hapless prisoner of his own follies. Tughlaq's situation is exactly like Shakespeare's Macbeth. Like Macbeth, Tughlaq had great nobility and potentials, like Macbeth all his qualities are destroyed as he begins a career of blood and murder. At the end of the play, Tughlaq, like Macbeth, is all alone on the verge of madness. Macbeth laments that everyone has left him. He has no friend, no supporter, no admirer, but only enemies, overt and covert. He is completely isolated and all alone. And in this situation life appears to him as "a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing."

Macbeth was once a super-hero like Tughlaq"Bellona;s bridegroom lapped in proof, a great patriarch and saviour of Scotland." At the end, he becomes a dead butcher. This is the graph of Tughlaq's life and rule too. At the end, we find a mad, lost and lonely king who has reached his point of destruction. This is the tragedy of Tughlaq, as it is the tragedy of Macbeth—Men with great vision, torn between pragmatic needs and demands of politics—tragic heroes turned into tragic villains.

References

- Husain, Agha Mahdi. *The Rise and Fall of Muhammad Bin Tughlaq*. Delhi: Idarahi-I Adabiyat-I Delhi, 1972.
- Karnad, Girish: *Three Plays: Nagamandala, Hayavadana and Tughlaq*, Oxford: OUP, 1999.
- Mukherjee, Tutun, Ed. *Girish Karnad's Plays*. New Delhi: Pencraft International, 2006.
- Pradhan, R. P. "Historical Perspective in Karnad's Tughlaq." *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama*. Tandon, Neeru, Ed. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2006
- Rao, P.H. Sethumadhava. "New Directions in Girish Karnad's Plays". *The Plays of Girish Karnad: Critical Perspectives*. Dodiya, Jaydipish, Ed. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1999.
- Sengupta, Ashis (2003). "Being and Roleplaying: Reading Girish Karnad's "Tughlaq"." *Indian Literature*. 47 (1): pp. 161–173.
- Smith, Vincent. *Oxford History of India*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958.
- Srivastava, Priya. "Social Alienation in Karnad's Tughlaq". *Perspectives and Challenges in Indian English Drama*. Tandon, Neeru, Ed. New

Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2006.

Talwar, Urmil. "The Protean Self: Karnad's Tughlaq". *Contemporary Indian Drama: Astride Two Traditions*. Chakrabarty, Bandana and Urmil Talwar, Eds. Jaipur: Rawat Publications, 2005.

Virmani, Dr. Smt. Shalini. "Use of History in Girish Karnad's Tughlaq". *Postcolonial Indian English Literature*. Agrawal, Krishna Avtar, Ed. Jaipur: Book Enclave, 2007.

Shattered Illusions: *The Great Gatsby*'s Pessimistic Inquiry into the Ephemeral Nature of the American Dream

Tirna Sadhu

ABSTRACT

Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* successfully portrays the predominance of political corruption, societal discomfort, and cultural degradation in the post-First World War. In light of the same, the present paper shall contend the fact that society's intense fascination for luxury, materialism, and extreme happiness has introduced spiritual hollowness and existential crisis. The paper shall affirm that the narrative of *The Great Gatsby* proves that the American dream records a shallow concept of perfection, something that can never be attained but always be aspired for. The paper shall discuss that the text is certainly a critique of the values, beliefs, dreams, and life of the American population during the 1920s. The paper shall reverberate with implications that the American dream which was said to be the national ethos of the United States failed to recognize serious issues like misogyny, racism, tax evasion, xenophobia, and other difficulties. Therefore, the text notes the identifiable behavioural shifts in the 1920s American culture. These shifts reflect the prominent difference between the original American dream and the corrupted American dream.

KEYWORDS: American dream, Misogyny, Xenophobia, Spiritual hollowness, Behavioural shift

INTRODUCTION

It appears strange to associate the narrative of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* with the American Dream because the idea of equal opportunity, honouring of material well-being, and individual success related to the latter had been completely challenged and negated in the narrative of the former. Readers find the novel concluding with the death of the deceived protagonist, murdered by the insane husband of the lady who was assumed to have been killed by Gatsby.

Tom Buchanan from *The Great Gatsby* is fearful about civilization breaking into pieces, the cultural fear evident in the 1920s. Nativism introduced an all-encompassing fear of overseas immigration as well as the migration of the blacks from South to the Northern cities. Tom's fear of the Nordic civilization being destroyed has direct connections to Fitzgerald's depiction of race and immigration. The text constantly accommodates a dominant threat of loss for both the white and the patriarchal civilization. The situation of women, the new modes of behaviour, the industrialization, and its subsequent effects on the expression of masculinity were sufficient to threaten a traditional society.

The world's population honours the American dream, they deserve to believe it because it has been a proven reality for many, except those who were born at the bottom. The group that can move towards prosperity and attains personal fulfilment; for example, immigrants who are unable to speak English can with time acquire proficiency, become employed, settle for themselves, become eligible voters, and live a graceful life. However, the paradoxical condition identified in *The Great Gatsby* is that Americans have always already accepted the American dream to be an extended myth, an ideology, a propaganda.

It can be assumed that Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* purposefully introduces the hint that the idea of the American dream that the generations are growing up with is essentially beyond their reach. The population might have its desires met in material terms, but will never be content, never happy.

Fitzgerald like a modernist writer projected the bleak reality of the present civilization that is tempted by cold machinery and increased capitalism inevitably inviting loneliness and moving towards human alienation. The author deliberately denied the traditional notion of a beginning, middle, and end to focus on the ills of the time. Fitzgerald created a masterpiece by

effortlessly capturing the then New York through Gatsby, one of the American dreamers belonging to the repressed section of the society, who commits himself to the possibility of achieving the Dream.

Literature Review

The present paper has relied heavily upon book chapters and journal articles such as “Feeling “Half Feminine”: Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in The Great Gatsby.” *American Literature* 68.2 (1996): 405-31. Web.

Bizzell Patricia’s, ‘Pecuniary Emulation of the Mediator in The Great Gatsby’, *MLN*, 94.4 (1979), 774-83 (p. 778) <<https://doi.org/10.2307/2906299>>. Lena Alberto’s, ‘Deceitful Traces of Power: An Analysis of the Decadence of Tom Buchanan in The Great Gatsby,’ in *F. Scott Fitzgerald’s The Great Gatsby*, edition by Harold Bloom.

Methodology

The American Dream is an ongoing concept, the content of which has been debated since the birth of the United States as an independent nation. The paper will materialize the fact that in the present times, its limits have been extended making it a universal dream. The paper uses Marius Bewley’s *Criticism of America* to prove how the Jazz Age had inextricably confused the idea of natural spiritualism with that of worldly materialism which is prominently criticized through the pages of *The Great Gatsby*. The paper will then present how Fitzgerald portrays in a sarcastic manner that American imperialism was pivotal in having a happy and content life. The text intelligently reworks the misconceptions of the 1920s. Finally, the paper shall be assisted by Whitman’s idea of the ‘Transcendentalist Self’ to discuss his reinterpretation of the ‘Great American Dream’ which had been the real impetus behind George Washington’s original idea of the American Dream. By exploring the protagonist Gatsby’s life and his continuous efforts to belong to the elite class, which had destroyed his love life and forced him towards his death, Fitzgerald proved that the refined version of the American dream is a bane of human life.

Discussion/ Result Analysis:

The idea of the American dream as socially corrupt

The Great Gatsby is a successful response to its time. The technological

and industrial revolutions were able to change both the home and the workplace of Americans. These in turn heralded transformations in the traditional social norms and customs because the society was welcoming a new metropolitan value system. The enfranchisement of women made them culturally powerful, thereby introducing a great change in the role of women in the then-American society, a society that observed the stupendous degradation of Victorian norms for female behaviour. In addition, mass consumerism made its way toward women cultivating the “flapper” identity, that allowed the female to practice smoking, drinking, and maintaining a degree of sexual freedom. This equation of femininity with mass consumerism created a conflict in the minds of those who were intent on preserving traditional American culture. The participation of women was identified as the prominent cause of the breakdown of American cultural values. Despite the social liberation of the women in the 1920s they were yet to live an independent existence by not subscribing to the patriarchal structure.

So, it can be contended that the idea of the American dream is a subjective one, which means that every individual is free to choose her/his views, definitions, and experiences of this dream. However, the idea of the dream included truth and justice, but the ongoing scenario did not allow society to play honestly. Fitzgerald intentionally made room to view the success of the dream by portraying Gatsby as an idealistic yet mysterious personality, who happens to be till the end of the novel a composed character, an embodiment of the American dream. But the society where he lives never sees and accepts him as a morally sane character. People continue to gossip about his fortune even after attending his parties and enjoying themselves. This proves that the dream is essentially and innately corrupted and hollow because a self-made millionaire is disapproved of and refused by society.

The dream according to Fitzgerald had jeopardized the American lifestyle which he proves by referring to the racism in the novel. There happens to be a continuous hatred towards the coloured race in comparison to the elites who are enjoying the ‘inherited’ American dream, this is perhaps an evil consequence of American imperialism. Tom Buchanan in the novel claims that the rich elites are the dominant race who are sufficiently righteous to supervise the classes who are in rags otherwise the latter group shall attain the power to control. Daisy Buchanan states that they must thrash them (the other classes) down. They see this domination as

their traditional birthright. Despite the bourgeoisie and the elites attending Gatsby's parties, Tom never attends them. It is Tom's blotch on his pride to attend Gatsby's parties unless the latter personally invites him. This sense of vanity stems from the evil exuberance of the American dream. If Gatsby had been a man of colour, then Tom would perhaps have had extended physical violence towards him.

Nick Carraway the narrator of the text announces that the people attending Gatsby's parties are deeply interested in flaunting their wealth. This scene depicts their desire to attain material power which Gatsby possesses. Evidence suggests that these people were living under the shadow of Gatsby's material valour. Gatsby's guests' constant contempt and jealousy towards him the extent to which their humanism is deceitful and therefore, becomes a bane to the American dream.

Gatsby is a “mythic” character

Marius Bewley rightly asserts that Gatsby is a legendary character because he on the one hand is the epitome of the dispute between illusion and reality which is central to American life and on the other hand a romantic hero who is the rightful heir to the American dream. Gatsby's commitment to Daisy and his love for her makes him an American romantic hero. His intention of loving a lady outside the ambit of his societal class tempts him towards following a morally corrupt path because his idea is already already polluted by the exploitation introduced by the material greed of the American dream.

According to Tyson Gatsby represents the American dream because he tries hard to attain it through criminal activities. Daisy who belonged to the rich upper class did not consider Gatsby to be an eligible suitor because the latter was not in a position to provide the Materialistic matrimonial life that she desired. Daisy's interest in Gatsby was intensely reignited with passion when she found Gatsby rich. Gatsby is found showing his shirt to Daisy who sobs and states that she has never seen such a beautiful shirt before. Her sadness is materialistic in the sense that Gatsby's fortune is something that she had desired. The American dream was seen as a destructor of the love between the two.

The American dream was a confirmed bane within the familial relationship between Henry C. Gatz and his son James (Jay) Gatsby. After Gatsby's death, his father is completely awestruck at the status of the former's wealth and he is foe sometimes engulfed by the material

possessions that he desires, forgetting everything, including his son.

Where does this take us?

The American society that Fitzgerald documented provided a revised version of masculine expression. The idea of gender was being reviewed; women began to receive a changed position in society. The racial fear was perhaps gaining momentum and was also built a larger threat of the decline of civilization through the feminizing effect of consumer and popular culture.

The *Great Gatsby* revolves around the non-fulfillment of the American dream. Gatsby's poverty questioned his love for and expected marriage with Daisy. This pursuit of happiness propelled him to participate in an illegal business which finally snatched away his life. Therefore, for Gatsby, his version of the American dream had transformed itself into an undeniable Daisy. This was Gatsby's subjective attempt to achieve a content and well-regulated life.

Conclusion

The narrative dissolves with the sudden and unpredictable death of the protagonist. A reader is awestruck at how the people in Gatsby's life react to his demise. Of all the people who had endlessly entertained themselves at Gatsby's parties, of all his peers and fellow mates, only three people at Gatsby's funeral. An observer can effortlessly conclude that the huge crowd around him was there to enjoy the benefits of his material affluence as fun, frolic and money were the chief purpose of the 1920s American society.

Fitzgerald sees Gatsby's death as the loneliest moment in his (Gatsby's) life as he becomes a speechless observer watching himself fall apart. Alike is the concept of the American dream, which few chases to taste the perceived mystery of freedom, money, and happiness while forgetting its obvious consequences. Gatsby was great only by dint of his materialistic ability to host parties and live a luxurious life.

The novel signals the emergence of the Great Depression. Gatsby's demise symbolizes the closing of the happy-go-lucky era of rapid movement from rags to riches. Perhaps, Fitzgerald had not merely represented the American society of the 1920s but had also hinted at the former's intention to reach up to the level of the European culture. The

green light of hope is apparent in American society.

The story shows Gatsby – an American, who has achieved everything himself, from rags to riches. Although Gatsby fills his library with lots of books, he does not understand that it is equally important to be able to read the purchased copy of the book. Fitzgerald asserts the then prevalent mood of the American culture that praised a book by the colour of its cover, overlooking what it contains.

Therefore, *The Great Gatsby* is a pessimistic examination of the American dream as it exists in a degenerate period.

Fitzgerald emphasized the unquenchable gap between the Americans of the 1920s, people who were able to attain the glamour of an elite class looked down upon the ones who either struggled to exist or barely survived. The American Dream, therefore, cannot survive in such a corrupt society.

Evidence suggests that the American Dream was dead long before people tried to incorporate it into their lives. According to Fisher, anybody who tried to live the American Dream had not realized it in practice. The dream is essentially faulty at its core, corrupted, and fanciful.

References

- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. Planet EBook. Planet EBook. Planet EBook. Web.
- Kerr, Frances. "Feeling "Half Feminine": Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in *The Great Gatsby*." *American Literature* 68.2 (1996): 405-31. Web.
- Baym, Nina. "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors." *Feminism and American Literary History: Essays*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1992. N. pag. Print.
- Todd W Reeser, 'Concepts of Masculinity and Masculinity Studies', in *Configuring Masculinity in Theory and Literary Practice*, ed. by Stefan Horlacher, *DQR Studies in Literature*, volume 58 (Leiden: Brill Rodopi, 2015), pp. 11-38 (p. 11).
- Brucoli, Matthew J., and Scottie Fitzgerald. Smith. *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1981. Print.
- Callahan, John F. "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Evolving American Dream: The

- 'Pursuit Of Happiness' In Gatsby, Tender Is.." Twentieth Century Literature 42.3 (1996): 374-393. Academic Search Elite. Web. 28 Jan. 2013.
- Elmore, A. E. "Color and Cosmos in "The Great Gatsby"" The Sewanee Review 78.3 (1970): 427-73. JSTOR. Web. 10 June 2012.
- Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby. New York: Scribner, 2004. Print.
- Froehlich, Maggie G. "Jordan Baker, Gender Dissent, and Homosexual Passing in The Great Gatsby." Space Between: Literature & Culture 6.1 (2010): 81-103. Academic Search Elite. Web. 20 May 2012.
- Gildley, M. "Notes on F. Scott Fitzgerald and the Passing of the Great Race." Journal of American Studies 7.2 (1973): 171-81. JSTOR. Web. 27 July 2012.
- The Great Gatsby. Dir. Jack Clayton. Perf. Mia Farrow and Robert Redford. Paramount Pictures, 1974. DVD.
- Hays, Peter L. "Oxymoron in The Great Gatsby." Papers on Language and Literature 47.3 (2011): 318-25. Academic Search Elite. Web. 20 May 2012.
- Kerr, Frances. "Feeling 'Half Feminine': Modernism and the Politics of Emotion in The Great Gatsby." American Literature 68.2 (1996): 405-32. Academic Search Elite. Web. 20 May 2012.
- Korenman, Joan S. "'Only Her Hairdresser...' Another Look At Daisy Buchanan." American Literature 46.4 (1975): 574-78. JSTOR. Web.

Decolonizing Nature: Unveiling Ecological Narratives in Postcolonial Perspectives

Anup Kundu
Shantanu Siuli

ABSTRACT

The Ultimate and the profound have long been explored via the mirror's lens reflecting the human experience from a post-colonial environment. Post-colonial environment examines the relationship between contemporary environmental crises and culture by offering a series of provocative writings. It focuses on the nature of the political, social, and economic characteristics of countries that have gained independence from colonial rule. The post-colonial writing attempts to recover the historical backdrop of the colonized and present history according to the colonized perspective. Migration, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, mimicry, migration, etc. are elements of a post-colonial environment. "Post-colonial Environments makes a valuable contribution both to the emerging post-postcolonial eco-criticism and to the established field combined in Mukherjee's timely and informative book" (Graham Huggan). "Postcolonial ecocriticism (or ecocritical postcolonialism) is a robust, vibrant, and important field to which Mukherjee's volume is a valuable contribution". (John Miller, Green Letters). I also try to look at and beyond the revolution that has been pictured through the writings apart from the colonial aspect. Here try to objectify cultural identity, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, subjectivity, language, and power. At this time writers were influenced by post-structuralism and post-modernism. All writers re-conceptualize the colonial thinking. All writers re-consulate about rewriting historical events, cultural

identities, mimicry, hybridity, and nativism. “The Wretched of the Earth” (1961), “Orientalism” (1978), “In Other World” (1987), “The Empire Writes Back” (1989), “Nation and Narration” (1990), “Culture and imperialism” (1993) represent post-colonial theories to represent the post-colonial atmosphere. I want to point out the concepts of writings as like Othering, diaspora, and mimicry writing which also demented writings and literature.

KEYWORDS : Environment, theories, eco-criticism, post-colonialism, and environmental discourse

INTRODUCTION

While ecology has received little systematic attention within art history, its visibility and significance as grown about the threats of climate change and environmental destruction. By engaging artists’ widespread aesthetic and political engagement with environmental conditions and processes around the world. Decolonization is a historic process that picked up momentum in the second half of the 20th century. Tagore sought to decolonize the minds of people through education reform by first setting up his school in 1901 and then establishing Visva-Bharati University in 1921. Tagore, who is the author of the national anthems of two independent modern South Asian Nation-states, never saw independent India. Tagore’s philosophy and practice of pedagogic reform sought to “decolonize education” in British colonial India. Tagore’s writings on education beginning in 1892 reveal that his philosophy and practice to “decolonize education” was based on the memory and critical reflections on his own experiences as a student in mainstream school during the British colonial era in India. Tagore’s perspective on “decolonizing education” can provide us with a deeper understanding of the educational problems posed by British imperialism.

Literature Review

The paper of Nilakhi Goswami examines the Iranian diaspora centering on the aftermaths of the post-1979 Revolutionary period while focusing on graphic memories as the fundamental basis of self-reflection and cultural translation. Addressing Marjane Satrapies’ graphic memories in Persepolis:

The Story of a Childhood (2003), Persepolis: The Story of a Return (2004), Embroideries (2005) and Chicken with Plums (2006), my argument rests on how these diasporic identities reflect both transnational subjectivity and historical exigencies, which take place in the form of a constant dialogue between the non-linear and disconnected spatiotemporally. These authors brought fresh perspectives and innovative storytelling to the genres.

Asha Gangadhar Dhumal shows the cultural identity of Hindu Women in a Postcolonial Indian Novel that was an attempt to study the postcolonial period. The cultural identity of women has undergone tremendous changes. The women had been rendered disillusioned, they have been disillusioned with the traditional customs, their roles at home, and their being to secondary position of men in all walks of life. Here wants to point out is to apply the parameters of mainstream culture of the world the women of Indian culture whose identity has been to change during the post-colonial phase. Rishika Sarma points out Indian culture and customs. By presenting Sara Jeannette Duncan's novel "The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib" author wants to point out British citizens and lovers of Indian culture. It is the story of an English memsahib and her day-to-day experiences in India. So here author points out post-colonial thinking and love for Indian culture and customs. The writings of Aijaz Ahmad Ganie reflect two traditional Indian tales, 'Folktale' and 'Fable'. Here also represents the thinking apart from the ancient one. Here also deeply points out the core concept of traditional thinking of post-colonial thinking. Firstly, the writings of the author Saadat Hasan Manto demystify post-colonialism in Indian Literature under the Historical Framework. Then he also points out the aftermaths of Post-Colonialism in the Indian Subcontinent deals with the existence of colonialism in India, and provides a detailed account of when and how India came under the British Colonial Empire. Also, the next part indicates those postcolonial people who were subjugated by the so-called civilized society. Here also explore the theme of being exploited, humiliated and victimized in one way or the other way. Most of his stories pectized about womanhood or a woman's body and had been analyzed to explore the voice of the silenced class of gender. Through the presentation of Lata Mishra wants to point out Western culture and discourse about sustaining the colonial enterprise as well as the cultural impact of imperialism on both colonizer and colonized. The interesting part of the whole canvas is that both ancient and modern offered to claim themselves as spreading morality, discipline, culture and religion through Christianity and

civilization.

Methodology

I have gathered data from multiple sources, including the internet, journal papers, and theses like the National Library at Kolkata, which is an excellent approach to ensuring the quality and comprehensiveness of my research. In object-oriented programmes, subroutines within a class are often referred to as methods. These methods can only be called by objects (instances) of that class and are used to encapsulate behaviour to that class.

Discussion

The direct effects models assumed that post-colonial people were deeply influenced by the post-colonial atmosphere. It suggests that individual would accept and initialise post-colonial thinking through their writing. The direct effects reflect the writer throughout the world. All writers and scientists they newly established their opinions apart from colonial thinking. They want to point out social aspects. And also most probably they try to celebrate their ideas throughout their writing. There is also a huge gathering of ideas that are all dimensioned about the new thinking and revised thinking. This field of study falls under various academic disciplines. Rishika Sarma points out Indian culture and customs. By presenting Sara Jeannette Duncan's novel "The Simple Adventures of a Memsahib" author wants to point out British citizens and lovers of Indian culture. It is the story of an English memsahib and her day-to-day experiences in India. So here author points out post-colonial thinking and love for Indian culture and customs. Human geographers' recent turn toward post-colonialism has had a marked impact on disciplinary conceptualizations of indignity. More specifically, however, postcolonial attention to indignity and the concerns of Indigenous peoples emphasize expressions and materializations of power, particularly as those expressions and materializations inform relationships between colonial subjects and Indigenous people. Most postcolonial geographic concerns with indignity identify material and intellectual tools for of disposing Indigenous peoples from lands and culture. The production of reserves, however, is understood as inseparable from the colonial apparatuses which first imagined, and then legitimated, Euro-colonial visions of their right to dominance.

Following this logic, material objects like maps, trading posts, missionary schools, and state agents are all implicit to and inextricable from the 'grounded' geographies of 'Indian' reserves. In other words, within colonial practices and processes, the ontological and material cannot be extricated from the epistemological and discursive.

Conclusion

Post-colonial environment examines the relationship between contemporary environmental crises and culture by offering a series of provocative writings. It focuses on the nature of the political, social, and economic characteristics of countries that have gained independence from colonial rule. The post-colonial writing attempts to recover the historical backdrop of the colonized and present history according to the colonized perspective. Migration, identity, multiculturalism, hybridity, mimicry, migration, etc. are elements of a post-colonial environment. "Post-colonial Environments makes a valuable contribution both to the emerging field of post-postcolonial eco-criticism and to the established field combined in Mukherjee's timely and informative book" (Graham Huggan). "Postcolonial ecocriticism (or ecocritical postcolonialism) is a robust, vibrant, and important field to which Mukherjee's volume is a valuable contribution". (John Miller, Green Letters). I also try to look at and beyond the revolution that has been pictured through the writings apart from the colonial aspect. Here try to objectify cultural identity, gender, nationality, race, ethnicity, subjectivity, language, and power. Despite the embracing of post-colonialism in many aspects of geography and a political impetus to acknowledge and hear marginalized voices, the spectral presence of the subaltern continues to haunt the discipline.

References

- Nilakshi, G. (2017). "Memory Humor and Iranian Diaspora Unveiling Political Discourse in the Graphic Memories of Marjane Satrapi" The English and Foreign Language University.
- Sharma, R. (2017). "Colonial and Postcolonial Encounters in the Fiction of Sara Jeannette Duncan." University of Jammu.
- Ganie, A. A. (2018). "Post Colonialism in Short Stories of Saadat Hasan Manto". Jiwaji University
- Zinsser, W. (2001). "On Writing Well: The Classical Guide to Write Non-

Fictional.” New York: Quill A Harper Resource Book.

Dhumal, G. S. (2011). “Cultural Identity of Hindu Woman in postcolonial Indian novels” Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University.

Mishra, L. (2017). “A study of the Fiction of Chinua Achebe in the Context of Post-colonial thoughts”. Jiwaji University.

Appadurai, A. (1997). “Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization”. New Delhi. Oxford University Press.

Anjararia, U. (2016). “A History of Indian Novel in English.” Cambridge University Press.

Mandal, B. (2018). “A Cultural Study in Representation of the Subaltern in Selecting Contemporary Bangla Noveles 1980-2010”. Shodhganga. Visva Bharati University.

Mimicry in Indian Serials: A Post-Colonial Reading of Select Television Daily Shows

Shreyoshi Dhar

ABSTRACT

The term ‘hybridity’ is found to be widely used in the context of post-colonialism, referring to the phenomenon of cross-cultural exchange especially between the colonizers and the colonized. Similarly, the concept of ‘mimicry’ has been a recurring theme closely associated to post-colonial studies. Homi K. Bhabha, Indian scholar and critical theorist concerning post-colonial studies, developed both these concepts to explain metonym of presence. In simple words, mimicry in this frame of reference can be defined as a tendency of the colonized people to imitate their oppressors in mannerism as well as in appearance. Television media being the most commonly used medium to portray the socio-cultural milieu often use the motif of mimicry in daily soaps and serials. This paper will demonstrate how Indian serials of Indian Television and Film Industry feature protagonists as well as other supporting characters whose actions, behavioral patterns, and mannerism reflect the post-colonial theme of mimicry.

KEYWORDS: hybridity, metonym of presence, mimicry, socio-cultural milieu, post-colonial studies

The popular concept of hybridity has its root in 17th Century biological science but with time it has been associated with various discourses of study which includes linguistics, social studies, cultural studies, sociology, etc. Etymologically the term refers to the process of cross-breeding two different organisms and species. Homi K. Bhabha, an eminent theorist in

both literature and cultural studies, vividly dealt with two major concepts ‘hybridity’ and ‘mimicry’ to explain the ambivalent relation between the colonial masters and the colonized people while theorising different psychosocial aspects of colonialism and post-colonialism. He used the term in socio-cultural milieu to explain how culture and identity are created within an environment featuring colonial antagonism and equity. Though hybridity has been utilized in formulating a discourse of ‘racial mixing’, yet at the end of the 18th century it has been viewed as an aberration. Children born to parents belonging to different races during that time were identified as hybrid offspring and were looked down upon. Nevertheless, it has its positive sides too. Papastergiadis asserts in Werbner and Modood (2000) – “the positive feature of hybridity is that it invariably acknowledges that identity is constructed through a negotiation of difference and that the presence of fissures, gaps and contradictions is not necessarily a sign of failure” (Papastergiadis 258). In this context, Bhabha refers to hybridity as metonym of presence but using it to ascertain the power struggle between colonial and resistance hybridization; the linguistic and literary discourses being the determiners to decide the equation of domination or subversion.

In connection to the concept of hybridity, ‘mimicry’ is another important idea advocated by Bhabha in the postcolonial discourse; both hybridity and mimicry being two elements evolving as “effects of cultural displacement” (Bertens 200). An attempt to define the term literally would lead us to assign the meaning of mimicry as imitation and using this means to be as superior to the inferior. However, in the perspective of colonial studies, mimicry refers to an opportunistic pattern of behaviour by which colonial population tends to embrace the cultural habits and value system of their colonizer masters and thus mimic them. Jacques Lacan in this regard prescribes that “The effect of mimicry is camouflage . . . it is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled – exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare.” (Bhabha 121)

Homi Bhabha further explains that mimicry can be viewed as an ambivalent strategical tool by which the people belonging to the subaltern regions exhibit their subservience to the colonial power, who are accepted as more powerful by these indigenous population and hence they subvert that power by making use of this tool which often seems to be mockery. In the essay “Of Mimicry and Man”, Bhabha describes this subversive attitude

as rather unintentional. Here, he refers to Jacques Derrida's deconstructive reading of the concept of 'performative' in the theory of J. L. Austin, where mimicry being a kind of performance unravels the pretentiousness of all the symbols pronouncing power. It is very commonly observed that oriental people tends to get obsessed with codes that define Englishness proper but through their performance proves the codes to be too hollow.

A very common demonstration of mimicry in all forms of literature or media is someone being portrayed as travelling to the west and then returning home being fully transformed. Frantz Fanon also used this motif in his famous text *Black Skin, White Masks*, where he criticised the artificiality of the Martinician. Similarly, in Tsitsi Dangarembga's novel *Nervous Conditions*, the cultural confusion that has been created in the family of Nyasha serves as a central issue describing the impact of mimicry. Graham Huggan attempts to explain how colonialism and mimicry is intrinsically connected with each other in his essay "A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry" where regarding Fanon's concept of mimicry with respect to post colonialism, he stated,

For Fanon, mimicry is the result of a colonial indoctrination process through which Caribbean men and women, denied an autonomous cultural identity, have been coerced into seeking legitimacy through the imitation of Western models—through the strategic adoption of 'white masks'. Fanon urges Caribbean writers to free themselves from mimicry ... (Huggan 643)

In the post-globalized time frame, Indian film industry has witnessed an increasing tendency of adapting cultural trends which seem to be absolutely western in nature and this leads to a complete destruction in retaining the distinct indigenous character of our national culture. Popular cinema and television serials are observed to be mimicking, imitating, and parodying the western norms with the advent of globalization.

Over the last four to five decades, television shows have become very popular in each and every households and its impact can be largely visible in the contemporary society. In this postcolonial and post-globalized society, the first aspect where we find the influence of the western culture is the outfits which have undergone a major transformation. The contribution of media is perhaps the greatest in this regard. Almost in every daily soaps and serials, we find the characters denying their native attires and fashioning themselves in western looks. Traditional garments

in India include dhoti, kurta, saree, salwar kameez etc. worn in different styles in different parts of the nation but every television show including reality shows, serials, films, news etc. feature people dressed in suits and other western garments. Even the women characters wearing saree style their attire not at all in a traditional manner. To name a few, *Bojhe Na Se Bojhe Na*, *Irabotir Chupkotha*, *Mohor*, *Mithai*, *Kon Gopone Mon Bheseche* are a few among the most popular Bengali serials while *Geet Hui Sabse Padaya*, *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Du*, *Saath Nibhaana Saathiya* are some of the popular Hindi shows featuring the protagonist characters who have gone to first world countries either for their education or for their profession and have then returned back home but none could return to their own culture. In their dressing, food habits, language and all other perspectives, they become carrier of the western codes of conduct and culture.

Cuisines are another aspect where post-colonialism shows its mark. After returning from abroad, most of these Indian characters continue with their western food habits. They are shown to detest Indian food and the taste of the Indian dishes. In an episode the hero of *Mithai*, known by the name of Siddharta, was seen to be having a popular Bengali dish called 'Luchi' using fork. This motif is in most of the times projected invariably not to dishonour or criticize Indian food habits and cuisines but as a healthy practice which needs to be followed in order to be healthy.

Mimicry is also expressed at its height in the language used and expressions given by these characters. In case of both adversities and joy, they use different exclamatory words and phrases, idioms and proverbs in foreign language so that the audience does not forget the fact that the characters in some point of time in his or her life has been to foreign lands.

It is very commonly observed that the narratives of these shows include episodes celebrating elaborately various rituals and festivals which do not belong to our culture like Valentine's Day, Christmas, Halloween, New Year etc. Even bachelor parties are thrown by the characters of these shows which in no way were a part of our culture and can be concluded as a direct impact of colonial culture. As it is a known fact that modern society defines their progressiveness by adapting these trends and these media shows act as the most important source.

The concept of mimesis as formulated by Aristotle during the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century dominated almost all aesthetic theories. Even stage acting at that time was popularly known as

“imitative art”. Denis Diderot in this context strongly opined in *Paradox sur le comedian* (1758) that actors rather than depending solely on their strongly felt emotion or sensibility must also depend on imitation. As a justification to this fact, he asserts that one who are too much prone to rely on their own emotion often are observed to have a tendency of losing control and are unable to reproduce the same emotion again and again. On the other hand, imitative actors are rather more apt for sublime and flat performances being performed simultaneously as they are keen observers of human nature and social conventions being at play in various forms and from this they can conveniently develop fantastic models of dramatic characters and perform the same behavioural pattern and colours of emotions repeatedly on stage. For this reason, the very concept of imitation had a very positive connotation in the neoclassical times when actors would be rather trained to imitate and mimic gestures and model characters. Nevertheless, in the postcolonial context, this act of imitation of western codes of conduct and cultural nuances is never appreciated as it shows submission to the colonial masters and at the same time disrespect for native tradition and culture.

References

- Papastergiadis, Nikos. *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalization, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*. Polity Press, 2000.
- Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theory, The Basics*. Routledge, 2001.
- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Huggan , Graham Huggan . “A Tale of Two Parrots: Walcott, Rhys, and the Uses of Colonial Mimicry”. *Contemporary Literature* 35, no. 4 (1994).

Unveiling Spatial Trauma: Exploring the Ontology of Pain in Post-Colonial Cinematic Discourse

Agnideepo Datta

INTRODUCTION

Post-colonial narratives in cinema offer a diverse spectrum of tales that delve into the repercussions of colonialism, wrestling with the intricate legacies of oppression, displacement, and cultural erasure. Embedded within these narratives lies the pervasive theme of spatial trauma—the lasting marks etched upon landscapes, bodies, and psyches by the brutality of colonial domination. As Franz Fanon eloquently expresses in *The Wretched of the Earth*, “Colonialism creates a mental disorder, a trauma that permeates every aspect of the colonized psyche” (Fanon 45). This quotation underscores the profound impact of colonial violence on the psychological and emotional well-being of colonized individuals. In this paper, we aim to dissect the ontology of pain within these cinematic representations, exploring how they encapsulate the multifaceted dimensions of trauma and its intricate relationship with concepts of space, identity, and memory.

Understanding Spatial Trauma in Post-Colonial Contexts

Spatial trauma refers to the lasting impact of colonial violence on physical landscapes and cultural identities. As Homi Bhabha contends, “Colonial power marks the colonized body; it imprints upon the subjected race a notion of cultural inferiority” (Bhabha 12). This quotation underscores the intricate ways in which colonialism leaves its indelible mark not only on the physical landscapes but also on the collective psyche of the colonized populace. The colonial project, with its systems of oppression and cultural hegemony, embeds itself deeply within the geography and cultural fabric of colonized territories. This insidious

presence perpetuates a lasting legacy of trauma that reverberates across generations, shaping identities, influencing social structures, and informing collective memory. The scars of colonial violence endure in the cultural, political, and economic realities of post-colonial societies, reminding us of the profound and far-reaching impacts of historical injustice.

The Cinematic Lens: Interrogating Post-Colonial Trauma

Cinema emerges as a potent medium for delving into and confronting post-colonial trauma, offering a lens through which the complexities of historical injustices can be examined and understood. In Gillo Pontecorvo's seminal film *The Battle of Algiers*, the Algerian struggle for independence unfolds amidst the backdrop of urban warfare and colonial oppression. Pontecorvo's masterful portrayal captures the visceral realities of the Algerian people's fight against French colonial rule, laying bare the brutality and resilience that characterized the struggle for liberation. As Edward Said argues in his seminal work *Culture and Imperialism*, "Cinema provides a visual and narrative space in which the subaltern can assert agency and challenge dominant historical narratives" (Said 78). This quotation underscores the transformative potential of cinematic representations in amplifying the voices of the marginalized and reshaping collective understandings of history.

In *The Battle of Algiers*, one character's poignant declaration resonates deeply: "Our pain is not forgotten; it echoes in the streets, in the alleys, in every corner of our city" (Pontecorvo). This quotation encapsulates the pervasive nature of spatial trauma, which reverberates throughout the collective consciousness of the oppressed Algerian population. The pain and suffering inflicted by colonial oppression leave indelible marks on both the physical landscape and the psyche of the colonized, perpetuating cycles of violence and resistance. In her article "Post-Colonial Trauma and Collective Memory in Film," Maria Giuseppina Cappello argues that "Cinema serves as a medium for the articulation and transmission of collective memories, allowing marginalized communities to reclaim their narratives of suffering and resistance" (Cappello 102). This perspective underscores the significance of cinematic representations in fostering dialogue, empathy, and understanding in the aftermath of colonial trauma.

Through Pontecorvo's lens, *The Battle of Algiers* invites audiences to bear witness to the harrowing realities of colonial oppression and the enduring resilience of those who fought for freedom. The film serves as a

powerful testament to the enduring legacy of post-colonial trauma and the imperative of confronting historical injustices in the pursuit of justice and reconciliation.

Voices from the Margins: Reclaiming Narratives of Pain

Post-colonial cinema provides a platform for marginalized voices to reclaim their narratives of pain and resistance. In *Rabbit-Proof Fence* directed by Phillip Noyce, the journey of three Aboriginal girls forcibly removed from their families epitomizes the erasure of indigenous identity under colonial rule. As one character reflects, “Our spirits are tied to this land, but they try to tear us away, to erase our existence” (Noyce, 2002). This quotation highlights the intimate connection between spatial trauma and the erasure of cultural identity experienced by indigenous communities.

The Legacy of Colonial Violence: Interrogating Memory and Trauma

Colonial violence casts a long shadow over the physical and psychological landscapes of post-colonial societies, leaving behind enduring scars and trauma. In Ken Loach’s film *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*, the struggle for Irish independence serves as a stark reminder of the deep-seated wounds inflicted by British colonialism. As one character poignantly laments, “Our land bears the scars of centuries of oppression; the blood of our ancestors cries out for justice” (Loach 206). This evocative statement encapsulates the profound legacy of colonial violence, which reverberates through the collective memory of the oppressed Irish people. The physical scars of colonial rule are visible in the ravaged landscapes, the remnants of conflict, and the enduring symbols of resistance. However, it is the psychological trauma inflicted by centuries of subjugation and exploitation that leaves the most indelible mark. The trauma of colonial violence permeates every aspect of Irish society, shaping identities, shaping narratives, and shaping the collective consciousness. It manifests in the lingering sense of injustice, the intergenerational trauma passed down through the ages, and the persistent struggles for autonomy and self-determination. Through Loach’s lens, the film lays bare the complexities of post-colonial trauma, inviting viewers to confront the painful realities of colonial oppression and its lasting repercussions. The quotation serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing quest for healing, reconciliation, and justice in the aftermath of colonial violence, resonating with the

experiences of oppressed peoples around the world who continue to grapple with the enduring legacies of colonialism.

The Politics of Representation: Contesting Colonial Narratives

Post-colonial cinema serves as a vital avenue for challenging dominant narratives of colonial history, presenting alternative viewpoints that disrupt hegemonic power structures. In Michael Haneke's acclaimed film *Caché*, the lingering specter of French colonialism in Algeria casts a shadow over the lives of a bourgeois French family in contemporary Paris. As the characters grapple with their entanglement in the erasure of Algerian memory, one character poignantly reflects, "Our privilege is built on the suffering of others; our comfort is stained with blood" (Haneke 144). This profound statement exposes the uncomfortable reality of colonial complicity, compelling audiences to confront the concealed legacies of colonial violence and exploitation. Through *Caché*, Haneke skillfully unveils the enduring ramifications of colonialism, prompting viewers to engage critically with the ethical complexities of privilege and complicity in historical injustices.

In her article "Revisiting Colonialism in Contemporary Cinema," Sandra Ponzanesi highlights how post-colonial cinema offers a space for reevaluating colonial legacies and their impact on present-day societies (Ponzanesi 145). This observation underscores the significance of films like *Caché* in fostering dialogue and reflection on the enduring repercussions of colonialism. Through cinematic storytelling, *Caché* invites audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about the historical and ongoing effects of colonial domination, urging a collective reckoning with the complexities of privilege, responsibility, and complicity.

The Ethics of Witnessing: Bearing Witness to Post-Colonial Trauma

Post-colonial cinema compels audiences to bear witness to the enduring trauma of colonialism and its aftermath. In *Hotel Rwanda* directed by Terry George, the Rwandan genocide serves as a harrowing testament to the consequences of colonial legacy. As one character reflects on the international community's indifference to Rwandan suffering, he observes, "Our pain is invisible to the world; our cries for help fall on deaf ears" (George, 2004). This quotation underscores the ethical imperative of acknowledging and confronting the legacies of colonial violence, even in

the face of indifference and apathy.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the realm of post-colonial cinema emerges as a potent platform for interrogating spatial trauma and unravelling the ontology of pain in the aftermath of colonialism. Through the lens of cinematic representations, marginalized voices resoundingly reclaim their narratives of suffering and resistance, disrupting dominant historical narratives and laying bare the enduring legacies of trauma. As Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak asserts in her seminal work *Can the Subaltern Speak?*, “The marginalized voices in post-colonial societies serve as crucial agents in destabilizing hegemonic discourses and articulating alternative narratives of resistance” (Spivak 58). This quotation underscores the transformative potential of post-colonial cinema in amplifying the voices of the marginalized and challenging the entrenched power dynamics of colonialism.

Moreover, Frantz Fanon’s insights in *Black Skin, White Masks* shed light on the intricacies of colonial trauma, stating, “Colonialism inflicts deep psychological wounds on both the colonizer and the colonized, perpetuating cycles of violence and oppression” (Fanon 72). Fanon’s analysis elucidates the profound interplay between psychological and physical dimensions of trauma within post-colonial contexts, highlighting the urgent need for acknowledgment and healing. As audiences bear witness to the stories of the oppressed depicted in post-colonial cinema, they confront the ethical imperative of acknowledging and addressing the pervasive effects of colonial violence on individual and collective psyches. Through engagement with post-colonial cinema, viewers embark on a transformative journey of remembrance, reconciliation, and reckoning with the enduring legacy of colonialism. By confronting uncomfortable truths and amplifying marginalized narratives, post-colonial cinema becomes a catalyst for social change, fostering empathy, solidarity, and a renewed commitment to justice.

References

- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 1994.
- Cappello, Maria Giuseppina. “Post-Colonial Trauma and Collective Memory in Film.” *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2015, pp. 98-115.

- Fanon, Franz. *The Wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press, 2004.
- George, Terry. *Hotel Rwanda*. Unite d Artists, 2004.
- Haneke, Michael. *Caché*. Sony Pictures Classics, 2005.
- Loach, Ken. *The Wind That Shakes the Barley*. IFC Films, 2006.
- Noyce, Phillip. *Rabbit-Proof Fence*. Miramax Films, 2002.
- Pontecorvo, Gillo. *The Battle of Algiers*. Rizzoli Film, 1966.
- Ponzanesi, Sandra. "Revisiting Colonialism in Contemporary Cinema." *Journal of Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2017, pp. 143-158.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage Books, 1994.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?*. Columbia University Press, 1988.

Transculturalism as the Remedy of Colonialism: A Study of Tagore's *Gora*

Anirban Banerjee

Rabindranath Tagore, the prolific Indian poet, philosopher, and Nobel laureate, left an indelible mark on literature with his multifaceted works. One of his lesser-known yet profoundly impactful novels is *Gora*. Published in 1910, *Gora* delves into the complexities of identity, nationalism, and societal norms against the backdrop of colonial India. Tagore's exploration of these themes, combined with his mastery of storytelling, makes *Gora* a timeless and thought-provoking novel. The narrative unfolds in the late 19th century, a pivotal period in Indian history characterised by the burgeoning nationalist movement and the clash of traditional values with Western ideals. The protagonist, Gora, is an orphaned Hindu zealot raised in a Brahma household, reflecting Tagore's exploration of diverse religious and cultural perspectives. Gora is fervently committed to his Hindu identity, and his journey becomes a microcosm of the broader struggle for identity in a rapidly changing society. One of the central themes in *Gora* is the quest for identity. Gora grapples with the dichotomy of his upbringing – torn between his Hindu heritage and the rationalistic Brahma Samaj values instilled in him. This internal conflict mirrors the societal struggle for a coherent national identity in the face of British colonialism. Tagore skillfully uses Gora's personal journey to comment on the larger dilemma faced by a nation striving to define itself amidst cultural diversity and external influences. But when Gora gets to know his genealogical identity, he feels lost. Throughout his life Gora had been fighting for the Hindu radicalisation and believed that only the ancient Hindu teachings can take India to a higher level. But once he gets to know that he is actually Christian by birth, his entire existence comes into question.

The novel also addresses the theme of nationalism, highlighting the

tension between the desire for independence and the potential pitfalls of radical nationalism. Gora's fervour for Hinduism and his initial rejection of other religions reflect the divisive nature of extreme nationalism, serving as a cautionary tale about the dangers of excluding diversity in the pursuit of a singular identity. Tagore, a staunch advocate for social reform, uses *Gora* as a platform to critique societal norms and challenge regressive practices. The novel explores issues such as caste discrimination, gender inequality, and blind adherence to tradition. Through Gora's interactions with various characters, Tagore exposes the flaws within the social fabric, encouraging readers to reflect on the need for progress and inclusivity. As India grappled with its colonial past, Tagore's novel provided a poignant reflection on the complexities of defining oneself in a rapidly changing world. "Gora" continues to resonate with readers, inviting them to ponder the enduring relevance of its themes in the context of contemporary global conversations on identity and social dynamics.

This paper shall try to understand Tagore's idea of global citizenship and transcultural identity in an age of colonialism versus nationalism as presented through the character, Gora. For that, we should understand Tagore's idea of nationalism. Tagore's nationalism diverged from the prevailing sentiments of aggressive patriotism and jingoism that characterised the early 20th-century movements. His vision was deeply rooted in a universal humanism that embraced diversity and sought unity through a higher spiritual and cultural understanding. Tagore rejected the narrow definition of nationalism that often led to exclusion and conflict, advocating for an inclusive, cosmopolitan perspective that celebrated the richness of different cultures.

Tagore believed that true nationalism could only flourish when people embraced a shared cultural heritage that transcended political boundaries. In his essay "Nationalism in India," he emphasised the importance of cultural unity as the foundation of a strong and enduring nation. Tagore envisioned a society where diverse communities coexisted peacefully, fostering mutual respect and understanding. He argued that the pursuit of common cultural values could bind people together in a more profound and lasting way than political ideologies. Tagore's critique extended beyond the confines of Indian nationalism to a broader condemnation of Western nationalism, which he viewed as divisive and destructive. He expressed concern over the rise of aggressive nationalism in Europe, particularly during the aftermath of World War I. Tagore foresaw the dangers of narrow

nationalism leading to conflict and emphasised the need for a global perspective that prioritised humanity over parochial interests. In his famous work *The Home and the World*, Tagore delved into the complexities and potential pitfalls of nationalism. He warned against the dangers of fanaticism and the suppression of dissent that often accompanied nationalist movements. Tagore recognized the potential for nationalism to devolve into chauvinism, stifling individual freedoms and fostering a narrow-mindedness detrimental to the overall well-being of a society.

Tagore's vision of nationalism extended beyond the borders of individual nations. He championed the idea of internationalism, advocating for cooperation and understanding among nations to foster a global unity that transcended narrow nationalistic interests. He believed in the interconnectedness of humanity and the importance of mutual respect and collaboration to address global challenges. His vision, grounded in a deep appreciation for cultural diversity and universal human values, offers an alternative to the more exclusionary and divisive forms of nationalism that have, at times, plagued societies. Tagore's message encourages us to embrace a broader, more inclusive perspective that recognizes our shared humanity and promotes unity through cultural understanding and mutual respect. As the world grapples with ongoing challenges related to nationalism and identity, Tagore's insights continue to provide valuable guidance on building a harmonious and interconnected global community.

Tagore's portrayal of the character Gora is in that sense a perfect critique of the nationalism that Tagore has been talking against. Gora's rigidity and pride over his birth suggests the singularity of nationalism, where only one culture can dominate the human race. But in the later part of the novel, Gora's realisation of his actual birth and his lineage shakes his idea, and makes him a perfect hybrid man, who has no boundary. Thus, Tagore shows how culture is never singular. Just as Gora's European origin gets moulded due to his upbringing, similarly culture throughout the ages has been moulded by various influences into what we see today. Gora was a freedom fighter who himself was not free from the bondage of casteism, his fight was only limited to the freedom of Hindus or only India as a political locale. But at the end he becomes a true freedom fighter whose fight for freedom is not limited to a specific community or nation, but is for the freedom of humans. Tagore here critiques that the freedom fight was mostly driven by hate, hate for the Europeans. Whereas, it should be free from hate. Tagore's *Gora* shows freedom fight should be driven by

love for human beings, irrespective of culture, class or religion. Gora's new transcultural identity, where he transcends all the boundaries and becomes free is the actual postcolonial attitude. A colonist snatches the rights of other human beings because of the hate that person feels for the colonised. By hating the colonist the colonised basically plays the same role. No difference remains between the coloniser and the colonised. Therefore, hating the colonists is not the solution, rather, hating colonisation is the key. Gora used to hate all other views other than the orthodox Hinduism and used to debate with anyone. But once he comes to know that nothing is determined by birth, as he is the son of an European brought up in a Hindu family, he realises that his belief was a social construct that makes him exclude himself from others. He becomes a transcultural man who is the exact opposite of the colonists. Colonisers exclude others, but a transcultural person transcends that pettiness and becomes superior to the former.

References

- Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, 2004.
- Sarkar, Pabitra. "Tagore's Idea of Nationalism." *The Daily Star*, The Daily Star, 9 May 2022, www.thedailystar.net/views/in-focus/news/tagores-idea-nationalism-3019536.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. *Gora*. Rupa, 2003.
- Tagore, Rabindranath. "Nationalism in India." *Rabindranath Tagore - Essays - Nationalism - Nationalism in India* (), www.tagoreweb.in/Essays/nationalism-216/nationalism-in-india-2626. Accessed 3 Feb. 2024.

An Exploration of the Nuances of Patachitra and the Identity of the Patua in Colonial and Postcolonial Bengal

Shyamal Mondal
Shubham Bhattacharjee

ABSTRACT

India, with its colonial history and contemporary postcolonial culture offers an elaborate arena for the interpretation of the Patachitra art form of different states- Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and most importantly West Bengal. Although through the rise of Edward Said's "Orientalism", it was India which first exercised literary influence on the West, similarly Indian Rural Cultures like Patachitra, miniature painting, pottery and other crafts have spread on a global scale. Especially the Patachitra of West Bengal with its ethnographic reflections is like to leave a permanent and positive mark on the world. In some historical narratives, miscellaneous studies are conceptualized to reveal the significance of the Patachitra art of Bengal, particularly the Patachitra of East and West Medinipur. Approximated to be dating back to 13th century this art form has reflected topic from far and wide, from myths to current social issues. This hand printed and hand painted imageries that emerged during the colonial rule and then achieved its phase lift during the post independent era shows how the popular images made at the cultural taste of a particular time of a particular space. This paper is an attempt to assert that in the 21st century how the Patua, the disempowered sections of society, continues to develop their own indigenous art tradition, the Patachitra art of West Bengal, engaging in cultural practices and shaping their identity.

KEYWORDS: Culture, Colonialism, Post-colonialism, Ethnographic, Indigenous and Identity.

India is renowned for its unique characteristic of unity in diversity, akin to the various blossoms adorning an orchard with their distinct shapes, colors, sizes, and textures, contributing to its charm. Similarly, the richness and intensity of Indian culture stem from its diverse elements. The vastness and diversity of India are evident not just in its expansive geography but also in the cultural tapestry that permeates it. According to the esteemed poet and writer Rabindranath Tagore, India is an ocean where humanity, with all its diversity, has seamlessly blended and united.

In one of his great poems, *Bharat- tirtha* ('The Sacred Waters of India'), Tagore states:

“No one grasps whose call, so many streams of men flowed in resistless tides from a place unknown and were lost in one sea; here the Aryans, the Dravidian, Chinese, and the Sakas bands and Hunas, and the Pathan and Mughal have become combined in one body. The door to the west has also been opened, and they bring presents from there: they will give and will take; they will unite and be united, and will never go away, in this ocean shore of Great Humanity of Bharata India” (qtd. in Sengupta 2).

The twentieth century in Bengal, India, witnessed upheavals across political, social, and cultural domains. Ordinary people bore the brunt of these changes, undergoing a profound transformation of their value systems, traditions, and long-nurtured beliefs spanning generations. The turmoil was largely fueled by the imminent departure of British colonizers. India eventually gained independence in August 1947, initiating a struggle to adapt to the newfound freedom, a garment that would only fit comfortably with the passage of time.

The shift from colonial subjugation to independence brought about dilemmas, confusions, and fragmented notions. While the British had undeniably exploited and harmed India, they also left behind positive influences, prodding the complacent Indian populace to reflect on their lives and philosophies. The colonial legacy raised questions and offered glimpses into alternative ways of life, influencing both men and women. However, the enduring impact on women became more evident over time. The widespread celebration of independence in 1947 was accompanied

by a conviction that societal norms needed to change, signaling a moment for women to step into new roles. Yet, this transformation, affecting political, social, and cultural spheres, encountered resistance, ironically often originating from within the system and, at times, from women themselves.

This liberation manifested in various forms, with accounts of women asserting themselves within the household and actively participating in crucial decision-making processes. Additionally, narratives depict women venturing outside their homes to earn a livelihood and enhance their quality of life. Overall, these women endeavored to rediscover their identities and grappled with the challenge of establishing a new independent sense of self. India, with its colonial history and contemporary postcolonial culture offers an elaborate arena for the interpretation of the Patachitra art form of different states- Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and most importantly West Bengal. Although through the rise of Edward Said's "Orientalism", it was India which first exercised literary influence on the West, similarly Indian Rural Cultures like Patachitra, miniature painting, pottery and other crafts have spread on a global scale. Especially the Patachitra of West Bengal with its ethnographic reflections is like to leave a permanent and positive mark on the world. In some historical narratives, miscellaneous studies are conceptualized to reveal the significance of the Patachitra art of Bengal, particularly the Patachitra of East and West Medinipur. Approximated to be dating back to 13th century this art form has reflected topic from far and wide, from myths to current social issues. This hand printed and hand painted imageries that emerged during the colonial rule and then achieved its phase lift during the post independent era shows how the popular images made at the cultural taste of a particular time of a particular space. This paper is an attempt to assert that in the 21st century how the Patua, the disempowered sections of society, continues to develop their own indigenous art tradition, the Patachitra art of West Bengal, engaging in cultural practices and shaping their identity.

"Culture is a means of communication, language carries culture and culture carries , particularly through orature and literature, the entire body of values by which we come to perceive ourselves and places in the world." (Thiong'o P-16)

The Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o in his canonical essay *Decolonising the Mind: the politics of Language in African Literature*

(1986) precisely explains the co-existence of language, culture and communication. Culture and language are intimately connected to each other. Patachitra art form is supposed to be the byproduct of the indistinguishable relationship of language and culture. Patachitra tradition in Indian socio-cultural scenario is the most significant platform where various modes of communication have merged including visual messages, oral traditions and music. It portrays nature, society and culture with narratives of social transformation, migrations and socio-political and religious reflections through the folk songs. And their identity as Pataua belongs to one particular culture and ethnicity. In this discourse of identity formation, it is often associated with the idea of self-conception and self-perception. So the term cultural identity obviously refers to an individual sense of self derived from formal or informal membership in a group which transmit and inculcate knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes and ways of life.

In this perspective, it is noteworthy to mention the ideas expressed in *Modernity: An Introduction To Modern Societies* edited by the Jamaica-born British Marxist sociologist, cultural theorist Stuart Hall who explores some questions about the cultural identity and a crisis of identities. Cultural identity is passing through some transformations. It is shifting from the individual consciousness to collective identity and social identity. The concept of collective identity was first introduced by Freud in his essay *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921). Freud argues that the individual is always a part of a group. It is also important to note that when a given group is formed, no matter whether it is an ethnic group, a nation or just a crowd the individuals behave uniformly to tolerate the peculiarities of the members of the group and feel themselves to be equal. The difference between social and cultural identity could be made much easier, if the first is related to society while the second is used to refer to culture. So, the artist of Patachitra art form consists of a collective identity of a specific culture in West Bengal. The 'Patuas' together form a cultural identity that is highly significant to prove existence in the world of globalization and commercialization.

Therefore, language as culture is the collective memory bank of a people's experiences in history, values and aesthetics that is quite interestingly visible in the creative works of Patachitra art form. The choice of language and the use of language is important to identify the definition in relation to the entire universe. Thiong'o argues that language has dual

character. It is actually a medium of communication and a carrier of culture. The Patachitra, a traditional and mythological heritage of West Bengal, signify a specific culture which is transmitted through language in its universality and as the language of a specific community with specific history. Every Patachitra in Bengal has a song connected to it, which the artist sings during the performance of unfurling the Patachitra. The language of their 'Patuasangeet' is generally indigenous ethnic languages of different parts of West Bengal. The local language of the Patuas reflects the identity of the Bengali artists with their cultural heritage.

In this cultural formation, the Patachitra is one of the most integral parts not only in west Bengal but also in India. The Patachitrawell-known for its distinctive play of color, is a traditional folk art of Bengal that has been in existence for many centuries. It is the world's first attempt to create motion pictures. There are different ideas about the dates of ancient 'patas' but it has been indicated on the basis of historical themes connected with the Patua songs. It dates back to the pre-Pala period from the days of Mohenjo Daro to the 9th century A.D is also interesting to note that this Patachitra folk art is still practiced in some small villages of Medinipur, Bankura, Purulia etc. Although in some Buddhist literature, there is reference of 'pata' in the 1st century A.D. The word, pata is derived from the Sanskrit word 'patta' which means a piece of cloth. Pata or pot as pronounced in Bengali means a canvas on which picture/illustration are made. The painting is called 'Patuas'. Patuas don't just paint; they also sing as they display the painting to the audience.

Dating back to the 12th century, the Patachitra was actually regarded iconic art/ paintings of the local deities of Odisha. Puri Shree Jagannath temple is predominantly decorated with the galleries of the Patachitra of Sri Jagannath. It is important to note that not only in Odisha but also in the different states of India the Patachitra was emerging fluently to express the reality as well as the mythological narratives of the Hindu, Muslim, and Christian ideology. Especially the small villages in Pipla of Paschim Medinipur people use this spectacular art form with songs to express their existence and cultural identity. The Patachitra of West Bengal is generally classified in different types like Durga Pot, Tribal Patachitra, Medinipur Patachitra and Kalighat Patachitra. The themes of their painting is mostly cultural, mythological, religious, folk lore and socio-political. Most significantly, the religious patachitra of West Bengal covers the narratives of Hindu epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata and it also relates the

Hindu God and goddesses Radha Krishna, Chaitanya, Kali, Lord Shiba. Most popular of this Patachitra is Bengali folklore of Manasa Mangol, Chandi, Behula and Lakhinder.

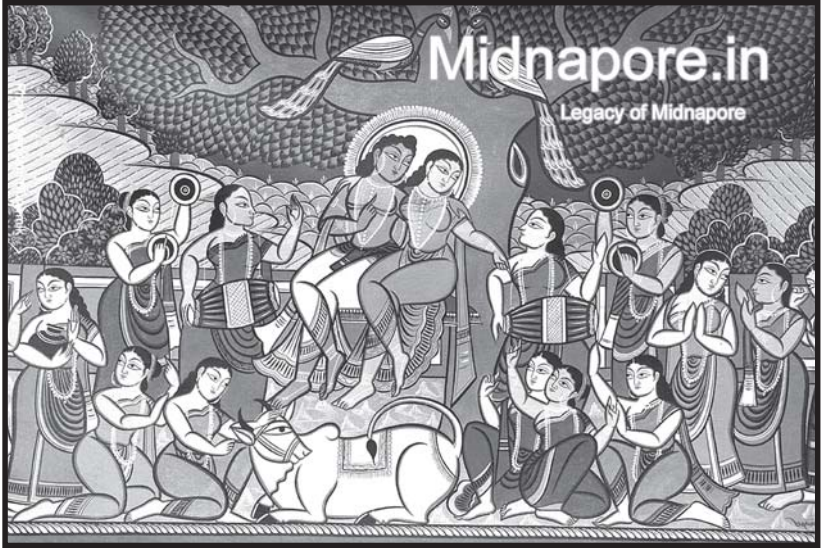


Figure 1. Radha-Krishna with Sakhies Patachitra of Midnapore.

Traditionally Patuas were men who were accompanied by their women partner in several stages; but in recent times women have come forward to show their talents as patta artists. This tradition of the 'chitrakar' is believed to have been inherited from the family inn the form of sketch book over the generations and cherished it as a sacred precious profession. Although earlier this heritage was a man's domain, now the women play active role in unfurling the Patachitra. The women are mainly involved in the perpetuation of this beautiful art from preparation of ingredients to the performance with song. Apparently it was man who sang the song of adroit craft, then woman appeared to sing the song and lead the visual representation of the Patachitra. For instance, Patua artist Moyna Chitrakar of Nirbhayapur in Paschim Medinipur has done the illustration for the graphic novel, 'Sita's Ramayana' by Samhita Arni - a Bengalaru based writer.

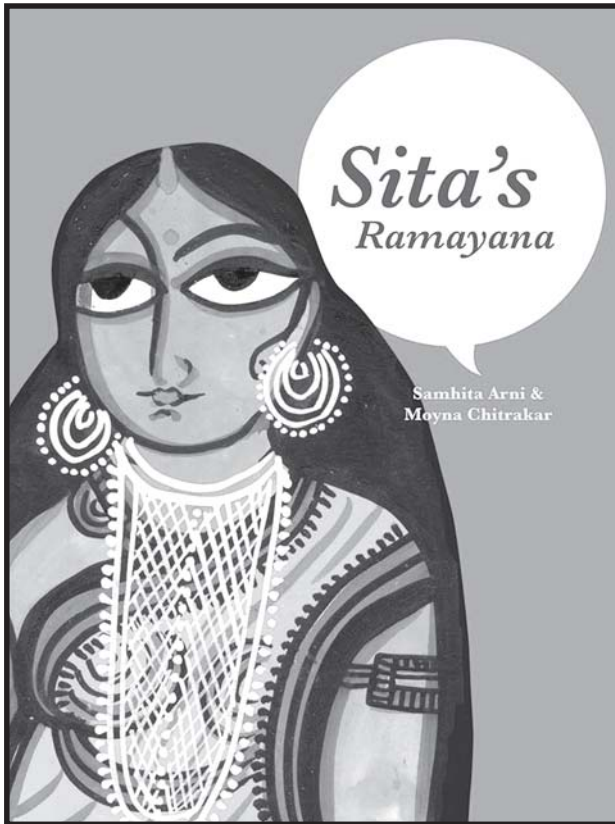


Figure 2. It is portrayed by Moyna Chitrakar of Nirbhayapur in Pachim Medinipur.

The power of love to acquire hope and overcome different obstacles is the gist of the great epic poem Ramayana, written in Sanskrit in 300 B.C. Rama's mission to reunite with his princess, Sita, is the subject matter of the classic Ramayana and Rama populated by monkeys and endangered by shape-shifting demons ventures to hell and back. Told from a female perspective, this graphic novel is replete with Hindu wisdom and charms from beginning to end. Moyna Chitrakar superbly illustrates the narratives of Ramayana in the Patua scroll painting tradition. Even they are invited abroad to show their talent through some exhibitions of their creative works narrating the social, cultural and religious sides of West Bengal.

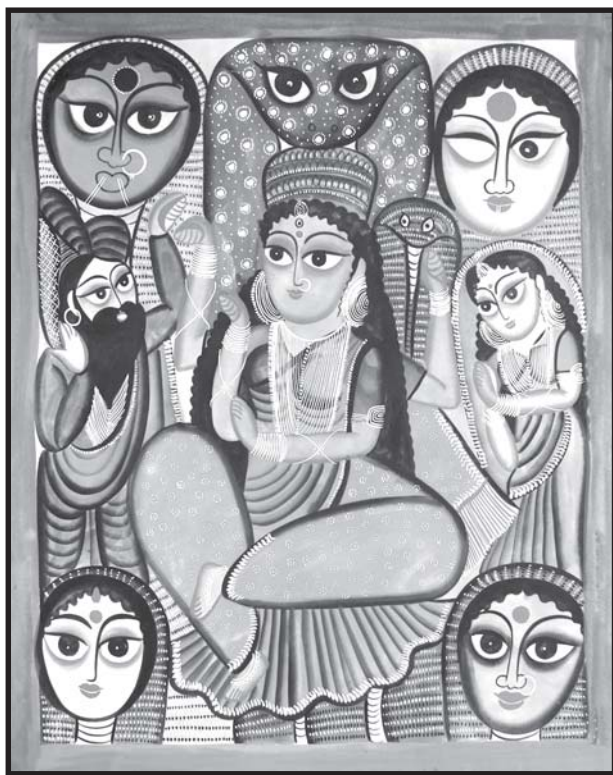


Figure 3. Chouko Pat on Popular Folklore of Manasa Mongal Kavya by Swarna Chitrakar 2018.

This Patachitra describes a most significant and popular folklore of Bengal, Manasa Mongal Kavya Goddess Manasa, goddess of snakes is considered to be one of the most powerful goddess in Bengal. The narrative of Manasa Mongal begins with the dilemma of the merchant Chand Sadagar and ends with Chand Sadagar appearing as an ardent devotee of Manasa Mongal though he was a worshipper of Lord Shiva. This story is vividly shown with the visual representation while performing a song or Patua Sangeet.

There are three types of Pater Gaan based on the difference of regional, cultural, religious and mythological stories. This kind of lyrical drama is composed of the Krishnilila, Gouranglila, Ramlila, Shib-Parbotilila etc. is called *Lila kahini*. Panch Kalyani type is other types of music that is not

based on any specific story or adaptation. It has many senses of sundry gods and goddesses. So it's called *PanchaKalyani*, an amalgamation of various stories. Gopalan or Cattle farming story is another category of Patua Sangeet. It is quite obvious that the songs narrate the religious and cultural perspectives of regional people in West Bengal.

In the volume titled *Art and Nationalism in Colonial India (1850-1922)*, Partha Mitter identifies two clear periods of art production in colonial Bengal. He places the first period within the time frame of 1850-1900 and demonstrate it by the introduction and absorption of Renaissance naturalism in India. Then between the years 1900-1922 there appeared the counterpoint during which a cultural nationalism emerged with orientalist groups in Bengal. Surprisingly the impact of European art tradition in India created a wave of reaction in the Indian world of artistic expression with Bengal school of painting as led by Abanindranath Tagore. Most amazingly apart from this western impact of arts, the Patachitra emerged as unique creation of a distinctly Bengal identity through art. Between 1929-1940 at the verge of the nationalist movement in Bengal, Gurusaday Dutt in British India gathered sundry folk artifacts across the rural regions of Bengal including the Patachitra, a cloth based indigenous art forms and a living tradition. These collective items of artifacts are stored at Gurusaday Museum in Calcutta.

It is interesting to note that before British colonialism and before Islamic Invasion, the rural cultures of India like 'Patuas' and other numerous art forms were practiced in the villages of Bengal and this practice of Patuas had remained relatively unchanged for centuries. Traditionally Patuas worked by travelling from village to village with painters of epic stories engraved on scrolls. In each village they would sing songs narrating the stories on canvas while showing their talents and creating a dynamic oral tradition. The subjects of their painting were predominantly religious in nature and both Hindu and Muslim tales were depicted- most importantly the famous parts of Ramayana and the lives of popular Islamic saints. At this period, their objective was not to sell their work. Instead, they earned their bread from the donations for their performances.

The ancient pats mostly were painted on palm leaves, though pre-19th century Patuas created their own scrolls in the process connecting strips of paper end to end to achieve the length of the scroll taking up to a week to finish. Gradually the Patachitra in the late 19th century began to move in the cities. So we can say that, Patachitra, a primary example of Indian

rural culture especially rural folk art has as much to be with the individual talent and vision of the artist especially the women artists with honors and respect. We need to make out that Patachitra is both the living work of modern-day artists and also a way of serving historical precedent. Development of Patachitra in the Post-Colonial Bengal: After the British colonial power, the Bengali Patuas in the 19th century Calcutta set in motion with evolving relationship between folk culture and Indian nationalism. The Patachitra's fight for survival and its existence as a symbol of Indian rural culture was a major issue to brood over seriously. Although there was the British socioeconomic influence on India, Patachitra gradually settled around Kolkata's Kalighat temple. Instead of travelling from village to village, they displayed their Patuas at Kalighat. With the modernization of our civilization the oral element of pats diminished, for without scrolls singer had little need for their oral tradition.

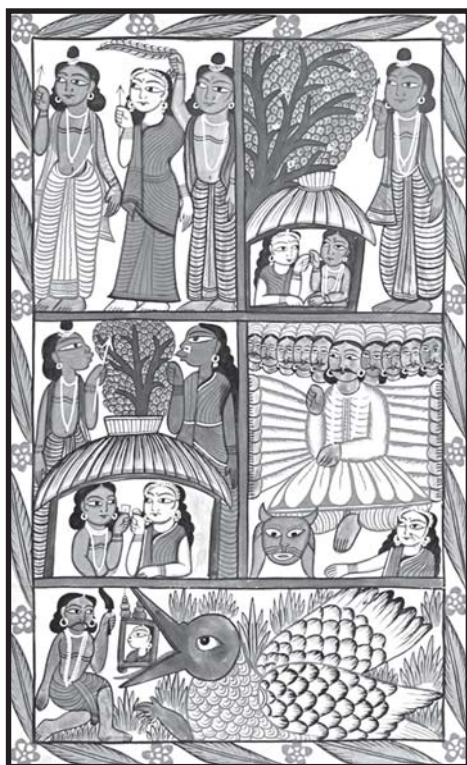


Figure 4. Stories of Ramayana (Kalighat painting-water color on paper).

The folk traditions and morals of the rural immigrants now clashed with the increasing influence of European life style on the rich residents of the city. Its subtle influence put in place an artistic hierarchy in the minds of educated Bengali with English art at top distracting them from the work of their countrymen. During the post- independent phase, in the transformation of the Patachitra, those who felt the fear of losing Indian Culture due to British colonial power would soon use folk art as a tool for elite nationalistic self –determination, setting in the motion of culture of patronage that would support the folk art into 21st century. In post-modern society the t-shirts and umbrellas are printed with the style of Patuas artist paintings.



Figure 5. Tribal Patachitra Bengal from Joy Roychoudhury's web log.

This Patachitra is inspired by the aboriginal life and culture in West Bengal. Tribal people also moved forward to show their talent of artistic representations with their tribal culture and religion. Aboriginal life was once upon a time highly marginalized in the society but later on they appeared to be independent and powerful community that is economically, socially and culturally enriched. In various consumerist market the Patachitra on indigenous culture and community is in high demand showing the existential survival of this artifacts in West Bengal.

At the beginning the 'Patuas' make brilliant use of eco-friendly colors by collecting them from leaves, fruits, flowers, plants, trees and other natural elements. As example, they extract saffron from lotkon leaves, blue from Aparajita flowers, brown from segun tree etc.

Another different and dynamic style that falls under the title of Patachitra, is the work of the Jadu Patuas from the santal tribe, the largest tribal community in India. Jadu pats generally depicted the tribal origin stories as well as scenes from marriage ceremony to different festivals. Jadu painters lack the vibrant color of other Patuas. Yet they are incredibly

important to the spiritual life of their community beyond the story tellers. On some festive occasions, they display the paintings of sundry recurring topics of Ramayana and Mahabharata and even the paintings of the very current issues like 26/11 in Mumbai and Covid-19 pandemics, etc.



Figure 6. It is done by Swarna Chitrakar of Pachim Medinipur about Covid19.

Side by side they begin to represent the Patachitra on the theme of 9/11 in USA.



Figure 7. Swarna Chitrakar's Patachitra on 9/11.

Chitrakars of West Bengal covers a lots of social issues like Tsunami, child marriage, HIV/AIDS, trafficking of children, Covid-19, 9/11 attacks through their Patachitra and self-composed *Patua sangeet*. So it is an ancient form of artistic expression that portrays ‘narrative art’ in the form of paintings. This cultural tradition of singing Bengal Patachitra is astonishingly now cherished and people find a renewed interest in this motion picture of Pataachitra in West Bengal.

There is only few scope of how Patuas are making a way to revitalize them through art in 21st century. By re-learning their own past they are emerging tradition and use it as an inspiration to fuel their art for future. As globalization in India progress, the balance between reflection on the past and questioning the future will be crucial in keeping folk art alive. But this folk art intimately connected with the cultural heritage of a community. It is also about the health and economic solvency of rural Indian artisans in the age of neo-colonialism. But now a day the artistic Patuas painting have become popular across social boundaries and to everyone from poor to the British elite. Western cultures purchased them as the way of possessing the authenticity of the East and in particular as Orientalist painting. Thus, this paper is trying to exhibit the development of rural culture particularly Patachitra folk art with its emerging scenario in India. A sincere endeavor is made by the government of India to protect the cultural values of this kind of arts form. It is also important to note that the Ministry of Rural Development, a branch of the government of India is entrusted with the objectives of speeding up the socio-economic development of rural India by Akshata Mokashi.

In the subaltern section of society, the Patuas both male and female attempted to create their identity engaging in cultural practices. Interestingly female Patua finishing their household duties attempt to paint on scroll different stories of Hindu mythology and contemporary significant events. In colonial Bengal female Patua could not flourish due to male supremacy because male Patua travel from village to village to show the art to earn their bread while female Patua remained at home. In independent India after woman emancipation, the female Patua gradually came forward to represent their creativity and artistic zeal in the field of cultural tapestries.

References

- Arni, Samhita and MoynaChitrakar 2012. Sita's Ramayana. Chennai and UK: Tara Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Basu, Gopendrakrishna 1966 BanglarLoukikDebdebota.(Bengali) Dey's Publishing, Calcutta, India.
- Blackburn, Stuart H. and A.K. Ramanujan (ed.) 1986 Another Harmony: New Essays on the Folklore of India. Oxford University Press, New Delhi, India.
- Bose, Nirmal Kumar 1953 Folk religion of Bengal, part I number I (A study of the Vrata rites). S.C. Kar, Benoy Bose Road, Calcutta, India
- Bhattacharya, Ashutosh 2005. BanglarLok-Samskriti [Bengali- The folk culture of Bengal]. New Delhi: National Book Trust.
- Bhattacharya, Ashok ed. 2001. PaschimbangerPatachitra [Bengali- The Patachitra of Bengal]. Kolkata:Loksamskriti O AdivasiSamskriti Kendra.
- Bhattacharya, D. K., 2005 Studying folklore- The Indian Experience lecture paper unpublished, University of Delhi, India
- Brochure- ParamparikKarigar: An Association of Craftspersons. Of Art exhibition held between December 7-11, 2011 at December 7 to 11, 2011 at Coomaraswamy Hall, ChhatrapatiShivaji Maharaj Sangrahalaya<http://paramparikkarigar.com/images/Brochure.pdf>
- Chitrakar, Moyna and JayadevChitrakar 2009. Tsunami. Chennai: Tara Books Pvt. Ltd.
- Chitrolekha International Magazine on Art and Design, 2011, Vol. 1, No. 3, 2011
- Issue: www.chitrolekha.com/v2n3.php- an article by SaurabhDatta Gupta- Village of Painters> A Visit to Naya, Pinglahttp://www.chitrolekha.com/V1/n3/03_Patachitra_Bengal_Naya_Pingla.pdf. "Village of Painters": a Visit to Naya, Pingla.
- Datta, Birendranath 2002, Folklore and Historiography. Chennai: National Folklore Support Centre.
- Ethnomagic 2010. Ethnomagic Going Global (project) (December 2009 to November 2011). [banglanatak dot com](http://banglanatak.com) in partnership with International Institute for Culture, Tourism a Development, London and Planet Art Exchange (PAX), Liverpool, supported by the European UnionFoundation,Daricha-<http://www.daricha.org/>

Beyond the Margins: Audience Reception and Empathy towards Derogated Bodies in Indian Theatre

Moupikta Mukherjee

INTRODUCTION

In the multifaceted and culturally vibrant realm of Indian theatre, depictions of marginalized bodies serve as crucial channels for investigating societal stratifications, historical inequities, and the complex layers of identity. Indian theatre, with its kaleidoscopic array of traditions, languages, and narrative forms, provides a fertile ground for exploring the intricate dynamics of power, privilege, and oppression. Representations of derogated bodies within Indian theatre often function as powerful catalysts for introspection and critique, illuminating the deeply entrenched hierarchies and systemic injustices that permeate Indian society. Through nuanced performances and narrative frameworks, playwrights and performers navigate themes of caste, gender, religion, and class, shedding light on the myriad ways in which marginalization manifests and is perpetuated. Moreover, Indian theatre's historical resonance and performative vitality afford these representations a heightened impact, resonating deeply with audiences and prompting broader conversations about social justice and inclusion. By foregrounding the experiences and perspectives of derogated bodies, Indian theatre not only challenges dominant narratives but also fosters empathy, solidarity, and collective action in the ongoing struggle for equality and dignity.

In sum, the portrayal of derogated bodies in Indian theatre serves as a dynamic site of resistance, resilience, and transformation, inviting audiences to confront uncomfortable truths and envision more just and equitable futures. Within the intricate tapestry of Indian theatrical narratives, derogated bodies stand as symbolic embodiments of the

systemic injustices and power imbalances that permeate society. Through the medium of theatre, artists delve into the depths of human experience, shedding light on the lived realities of individuals relegated to the margins of societal discourse. These representations not only serve to illuminate the immediate realities of oppression but also provide a lens through which audiences can critically examine deeper structures of privilege and discrimination embedded within the fabric of Indian society. By foregrounding derogated bodies on stage, Indian theatre catalyzes conversations around caste, class, gender, religion, and ethnicity, challenging prevailing norms and narratives that perpetuate inequality and marginalization.

Moreover, the portrayal of derogated bodies in Indian theatre serves as a potent catalyst for collective introspection and societal transformation. It prompts audiences to confront uncomfortable truths about systemic injustices and compels them to reckon with their own complicity in perpetuating oppressive systems. Through the emotive power of storytelling and performance, Indian theatre becomes a transformative space wherein audiences are invited to empathize, reflect, and engage in dialogue that fosters greater understanding, empathy, and solidarity across diverse cultural landscapes.

Audience Engagement with Derogated Bodies

Audience engagement with derogated bodies in Indian theatre is a multifaceted phenomenon, influenced by factors such as cultural background, personal experiences, and socio-political contexts. The rich tapestry of India's cultural heritage, coupled with its dynamic societal fabric, adds layers of complexity to the audience's reception of performances featuring marginalized individuals, fostering dialogue, introspection, and perhaps societal transformation through the medium of theatre. As theatre scholar Rajiv Mishra contends, "Audience reception is not merely passive consumption but an active negotiation of meaning, shaped by individual perspectives and collective identities" (Mishra 56). In the realm of theatre, spectators invariably carry with them a mosaic of personal histories, biases, and empathetic faculties, all of which intricately shape their interpretations of performances featuring marginalized or derogated bodies. These individual lenses, cultivated through diverse life experiences, intertwine with the narratives unfolding on stage, influencing the audience's nuanced perceptions and responses to the portrayal of such

bodies in theatrical artistry.

Empathy as a Catalyst for Social Change

Empathy plays a pivotal role in audience reception towards derogated bodies in Indian theatre, serving as a catalyst for social awareness and collective action. According to psychologist Shreya Patel, “Empathy involves not only understanding the experiences of others but also feeling emotionally connected to their struggles and aspirations” (Patel 72). In the context of Indian theatre, empathetic engagement with derogated bodies enables audiences to transcend superficial judgments and recognize the shared humanity and dignity of marginalized individuals and communities.

Empathetic Responses to Derogated Bodies

Empathetic responses to derogated bodies in Indian theatre often manifest as emotional identification, moral reflection, and calls to action. As theatre critic Ananya Roy observes, “Moments of empathy on stage have the power to disrupt complacency, challenge prejudices, and inspire social change” (Roy 89). Through empathetic engagement with characters and narratives that embody marginalized experiences, audiences confront their own privileges and complicity in systems of oppression, fostering a greater sense of solidarity and social responsibility.

The transformative potential of empathetic engagement extends beyond the confines of the theatre space, spurring dialogue, advocacy, and grassroots activism in wider society. As playwright and activist Arjun Singh emphasizes, “Theatre has the capacity to ignite empathy and solidarity, mobilizing individuals and communities towards collective action for social justice” (Singh 104). By bridging the chasm between individual experiences and communal strife, Indian theatre nurtures empathetic citizens dedicated to confronting inequality, amplifying the voices of the marginalized, and forging inclusive communities. As theatre scholar Maya Sharma contends, “Theatre has the transformative power to bridge divides, fostering empathy and solidarity among diverse audiences” (Sharma 78). Through the shared experience of witnessing performances that depict the struggles of derogated bodies, audience members are encouraged to transcend their personal boundaries and connect with broader societal issues.

Indian theatre serves as a potent catalyst for collective reflection,

dialogue, and action, inspiring individuals to recognize their roles as agents of change within their communities. By immersing audiences in compelling narratives and provocative performances that confront issues of marginalization, inequality, and injustice, Indian theatre ignites a spark of awareness and consciousness among its spectators. This awakening prompts individuals to critically examine the structures of power and privilege that shape their social realities, compelling them to actively engage in efforts to dismantle oppressive systems and foster inclusive, equitable environments. Through grassroots organizing, advocacy, and community-building initiatives inspired by the insights gleaned from theatrical experiences, individuals harness the transformative potential of storytelling and performance to effect meaningful change, paving the way for a more just and compassionate society.

Furthermore, the empathetic ethos cultivated within the theatre permeates into everyday interactions and social engagements, extending its transformative influence far beyond the confines of the stage. As audiences engage with the profound narratives and embodied performances depicting derogated bodies, they are prompted to reflect critically on their own biases, privileges, and responsibilities within society. This reflective engagement fosters a deeper sense of empathy and solidarity, encouraging individuals to recognize and challenge systemic injustices in their communities. Through dialogue, activism, and compassionate action, the spirit of empathy nurtured within the theatre becomes a catalyst for positive social change, forging pathways towards greater understanding, inclusion, and justice. The power of theatre lies not only in its ability to entertain but also in its capacity to provoke thought, inspire action, and evoke empathy. As spectators immerse themselves in the intricacies of human suffering and resilience depicted on stage, they undergo a transformative experience that often ignites a fervent desire to effect positive change in the world around them.

At the heart of theatrical narratives are stories that reflect the myriad facets of the human condition. Whether exploring themes of oppression, discrimination, or triumph over adversity, these narratives serve as mirrors to society, inviting audiences to confront uncomfortable truths and reevaluate their perspectives. Witnessing characters grapple with systemic injustices and societal barriers prompts spectators to interrogate their own roles within these structures and consider avenues for meaningful intervention.

The emotional resonance generated by live performances fosters a profound sense of solidarity with marginalized communities whose voices are often marginalized or silenced. Through empathetic engagement with characters facing oppression or discrimination, audience members cultivate a deeper understanding of the systemic forces perpetuating inequality and injustice. This heightened awareness serves as a catalyst for advocacy efforts aimed at dismantling oppressive systems, amplifying marginalized voices, and championing the rights of disenfranchised groups. Theatre, therefore, becomes a platform for social critique and collective mobilization, galvanizing individuals to actively challenge the status quo and advocate for transformative change. Whether through community dialogue, grassroots activism, or policy reform, spectators harness the insights gleaned from theatrical narratives to propel meaningful action in pursuit of a more just and equitable society.

In essence, the transformative power of theatre lies not only in its ability to captivate audiences but also in its capacity to inspire a shared commitment to social justice, solidarity, and human dignity. As spectators navigate the complexities of the human experience within the confines of the stage, they emerge as empowered agents of change, fueled by the conviction that every voice deserves to be heard and every life deserves to be valued. In this way, Indian theatre becomes a beacon of hope and empowerment, fostering a sense of solidarity and shared humanity that transcends barriers of caste, class, and creed.

References

- Mishra, Rajiv. 'Theatre and Society in Contemporary India'. Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Patel, Shreya. "Empathy and Social Change: Exploring Psychological Perspectives." 'Journal of Applied Psychology', vol. 45, no. 3, 2019, pp. 68-85.
- Roy, Ananya. 'Theatre and Empathy: Reflections on Audience Responses'. Routledge, 2020.
- Sharma, Maya. 'The Power of Theatre: Empathy and Social Change'. Cambridge University Press, 2019.
- Singh, Arjun. "The Role of Theatre in Social Transformation." 'Theatre Journal', vol. 30, no. 2, 2018, pp. 98-115.

Analysing Gender and Postcolonialism in *Wide Sargasso Sea* and *The God of Small Things*

Natasha Chatterjee

ABSTRACT

Gender and postcolonialism are two pertinent perspectives through which one can scrutinize and comprehend English literature. The convergence of these two theories allows to explore how gender roles, identities, and power dynamics are portrayed in works that address the legacy of colonialism. So, it can be deduced that Gender and postcolonialism are two very important themes in English literature that interweave to elucidate the experiences of vulnerable population within postcolonial societies. This paper explores the convergence of gender and postcolonialism, calling attention to the challenges faced by women and the various approaches by which literature deals with these issues.

INTRODUCTION

Postcolonial literature can be explained as a literature by the writers who belong to such countries who were under the colonial rule. In many postcolonial literary works, we see a reimagining and re-evaluation of traditional gender norms. Writers from colonized or formerly colonized countries often challenge and subvert the dominant gender ideologies imposed by colonial powers. They give voice to marginalized groups, particularly women, and offer alternative perspectives on gender dynamics. One example of this can be found in the novel “*Wide Sargasso Sea*” by Jean Rhys. This book serves as a prequel to Charlotte Brontë’s “*Jane Eyre*” and focuses on the character of Bertha Mason, who is portrayed as

the “madwoman in the attic” in Brontë’s novel. Rhys explores the experiences of a Creole woman in colonial Jamaica, shedding light on the intersection of race, gender, and power. Through her portrayal of Bertha, Rhys challenges the colonial narrative and gives agency to a character who was previously silenced.

Effect of Gender in the novel “Wide Sargasso Sea” by Jean Rhys:

“Wide Sargasso Sea” is a part of postcolonial literature written by Jean Rhys in the year 1966. She was a Dominican-British author. In this novel the reader can find that this novel serves as a prequel to the novel written by Charlotte Bronte named Jane Eyre. In this novel Mr. Rochester’s marriage has been described but with the angle of his wife Antoinette Cosway, a Creole inheritress. The character of Antoinette Cosway is depicted in such a manner, that it has a lot of similarities with the Rhys’s narrative of Charlotte Bronte’s “madwoman in the attic”. The narrative of Antoinette’s starts from a very young age when she was a youthful woman living in Jamaica to her transition into a married woman who is not at all happy in her relationship with her husband. Her husband Mr. Rochester, an Englishman, is an unfaithful and ruthless person. As the novel progresses Mr. Rochester, changes the name of his wife from Antoinette to Bertha, proclaims her to be mad, moves with her to England and keeps her in his captivity, secluding her from the rest of the world in his mansion. In this novel the character of Antoinette is depicted to be a victim of the patriarchal society in which she is suppressed and subjugated to many atrocities by the white people. *Wide Sargasso Sea* explores the power of relationships between men and women and discusses the themes of race, Caribbean history, and assimilation as Antoinette is caught in a white, patriarchal society in which she fully belongs neither to Europe nor to Jamaica. In the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the male domination is shown through the character of Rochester, who uses his power to dominate Antoinette. He regards Antoinette as subordinate to her and torments her as a result of it she becomes silent and she is forced to stay in the attic. Rochester deems Antoinette as mad, harmful, dumb and inferior. He tries to overpower Antoinette with his phallus strength. She is subjected to inhuman oppression by her own husband Rochester, who married her for money. As *Wide Sargasso Sea* is a postcolonial novel it shows the torments, humiliation, oppression and domination of a society which is highly influenced by colonial and patriarchal frame work. Therefore, Antoinette

had to live under the dominance of her husband due to the pressure she had to face because of her race and gender. She was compelled to cringe her own identity.

Effect of Gender in the novel “*The God of Small Things*”:

Another notable work that explores gender and postcolonialism is “*The God of Small Things*” by Arundhati Roy. Set in postcolonial India, Roy examines the lives of women within a rigidly patriarchal society. She portrays the struggles and oppressions faced by women, particularly through the characters of Ammu. Roy’s novel highlights the ways in which gender norms are perpetuated and reinforced by the legacy of colonialism.

“A lot of atmosphere in *The God of Small Things*”—is passed on my experiences of what was like to up in Kerala. Most interestingly, it was the only place in the world where religious coincide there’s Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism and Islam and the all live together and rub each other down. When I grew up it was The Marxism that was strong, it was like the revolution was coming next week, I was aware of the different cultures when growing up and I’m Still ...” (Arundhati Roy’s *The God of Small Things*.)

The God of Small Things depicts the male influenced patriarchal society that highlights social prejudices that includes discrimination on the basis of gender, caste and class. It portrays the split between the rich and poor, eminent and unimportant, feeble and powerful, touchable and untouchable. This novel actually reveals the real plight of women in our country. In this novel one can see the never-ending struggle of the females because of the continuous oppression, torments and challenges that they are subjected to because of the male hegemonic orthodox set up. The frame work of the society depicted in this novel is such that the society does not have anything to offer to the women folk. The female protagonist Ammu is shown to be abandoned by everyone and the unfortunate part of all is she is castigated by those people whom she thinks they are her own. Arundhati Roy through this novel portrays the life of Ammu from her childhood, progressing to her youth and ultimately to her death.

Ammu is shown in the novel having a very distressed childhood she was tortured by her own people, like there was many incidences in her life when her father inflicted brutality on her as well as on her mother Mammachi. Her father had Schizophrenia and due to that in his fit of

anger, once he tore her brand-new pair of shoes. She did not get proper education. Her father Pappachi did not take good care of her and her mother. He used to beat his wife each night as he wanted to dominate her, he even used to tear the curtains, broke the furniture and crashed the table lamp in his fit of rage, for him marital relationship was not a devoted relationship, he interpreted this pious bonding as a license to satisfy his male ego by beating and dominating his wife. Ammu was not happy as a child due to these issues when she entered her youth her life changed as she met her husband, while she was attending a wedding ceremony in Calcutta. Her husband was on a leave, he used to work at a tea state in Assam as an Assistant manager. Ammu takes a rash decision without knowing much about her husband Babu she decides to marry him. This was due to the reason that she was sure that her family in Ayemenem would not approve her decision of marrying Babu. She married him and informed her parents but she did not get any response. She did this as she was lonely and thought it would work out for her.

She did not get any love or support from her husband, as within a few days of her marriage she became aware of the fact that he was an alcoholic and also an abuser. She faces gender biasness when to her dismay her husband forces her to satisfy the physical needs of his employer Mr. Hollich, so that he can save his job. Ammu was shocked and hurt to receive this kind of humiliation in the hands of her husband, in her fit of desperation and rage she hits her husband with a heavy book and leaves him along with her twin babies Rahel and Estha. She reaches Ayemenem, but she was not welcomed there, she was full of pain to see the plight of her innocent babies who curled up to each other. The life of Ammu was devastated as a result of her troubled childhood and carelessness of her parents. Again, as the story progresses it can be seen that her twins were subjected to a similar destiny. Her twins Estha and Rahel live a pitiful life as they always yearn for love, care, attention and affection. The author of this novel Arundhati Roy in '*The God of Small Things*', tries to expose the double standards of the menfolk as at the beginning of any relationship they first try to own her, with much pride, but on the other side they start to dominate her and later on subject them to relentless torments and oppressions. They try to control and manipulate her according to their own wish as if the women are lifeless plaything. In this way Arundhati Roy tries to depict Gender prejudices and the oppression of women by male hegemonic society in "*The God of Small Things*". This was one of

her most famous novels for which she won the Booker Prize in the year 1997. The major issues with which the novel deals are suppressing female by patriarchal setup, male hegemony, gender bias, humiliating women etc. This novel by Arundhati Roy not only bring her a lot of fame and recognition, but it also lets the writer to experiment with a number of writing techniques and mixing them to form her own new style or creation.

Conclusion

Gender and postcolonialism are complexly associated in English literature, providing a platform for examining the challenges encountered by women within postcolonial societies. The novel acts as a postcolonial and feminist prelude to Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* delineating the background to Mr. Rochester's wedding from the perspective of his wife Antoinette Cosway, a Creole heiress. "*The God of Small Things*" examines the lives of women in postcolonial societies of India. The novel delves into themes of forbidden love, societal expectations, and the consequences of breaking gender norms. Roy's portrayal of the characters' experiences reflects the complexities of gender dynamics within postcolonial societies. In conclusion, gender and postcolonialism in English literature offer a rich and complex framework for analysing the representation of gender roles, identities, and power dynamics.

References

- Chan, Bonnie (2010). "Madness and Identity". Cultural Logic Seminar, pp.1-5.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Gubar, Susan (1979). *The Madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale UP.
- Bhatta, Indira, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (ed.), Creative Books, New Delhi, (1919).
- R.S Sharma, Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (ed.), Atlantic pub. New Delhi, (1919).
- K.B Sunderan, *The God of Small Things: A saga of Lost Dreams*, Atlantic publication, New Delhi, (2000)

Negotiating Guilt and (Post-)Colonial Conscience in J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*

Debarshi Arathdar

JM Coetzee's novel is an exploration of postcolonial identities both from the oriental and the occidental ends wherein the sense of sin and redemption are stimulated from variant subjective perspectives. The text sets out with the story of Michael, a university professor and his scandalous relations with his former student that eventually leads to his eventual professional demise. The novel's reception is marked with intense controversy in South Africa, especially regarding the 'double silence' of the female characters both white (Lucy Lurie) and coloured (Melanie or Soraya). The novels *Lacuna* (2019) and *Letter to J.M. Coetzee* are both replies to the canonical text from an-other perspective, from the stance of marginalised, subaltern roles that find neither significant focalization nor foregrounding in the canonical text.

Coetzee's tale recounts the immediate effects of the post-colonial period in a previously Apartheid stricken South Africa. However the following is not portrayed as a tale of stability and balance rather the dialectical of the same, a span of intense violence and settlement whilst finding newer avenues of communal being and identity. David Lurie is a senior lecturer of Communications who has an affair with his student (Melanie Issacs) who gradually later files for a complaint of sexual harassment. Lurie is tried in front of a jury of university authorities who give him all the chances required in order to absolve him of his charges which (due to conditions unclear) Lurie himself denies. The committee is a parody representation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in the country that eventually passes the motion of sacking him. Lurie is sacked from his position who eventually seeks out a nomadic lifestyle whilst ruminating on his research on Byron at the same time. He takes up shelter at his daughter's farm in Salem and begins to assist her occasionally until the

eventual rape of Lucy by a gang that eventually loots her house whilst suffocating Lurie and savagely killing off all the dogs and leaving with the only car that Lurie had brought. In a Post-Apartheid period, “These prototypes are national subjects corporeally mapped in the bizarre and morbid rape and murder of Jesse Hess and Uyinene Mrwetyana, Meghan Cremer and Leighandre Jegels whose femicide triggered the #MeToo protests in South Africa in 2019” (Hove 2022). The episode follows a period of intense violence and un-settlement in a post-apartheid stricken nation wherein community clashes are on the rise, especially between the formerly colonised and the coloniser.

“Disgrace” delves into a complex web of moral and power dynamics, as particularly explicated in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Rooted in a sense of entitlement and white privilege, Lurie’s crimes highlight the pervasive inequality and distorted power relations and structures that persisted after the fall of apartheid. The novel forces the reader to ask unsettling and uncomfortable questions about morality, responsibility, and the consequences of unchecked privilege. Coetzee deftly explores the moral ambiguity of Lurie’s actions, prompting readers to consider their own moral compass in a complex and evolving society.

The novel deals with issues of not only race but that of culture and class as well alongside showing the blatant realities that permeate a post-apartheid state and the indifference of the oppressed class with the tolerance of the former oppressor. The crux of power relations is not so much as that of race but rather that of gender. Lurie is mobbed, Lucy is raped, the difference lies not in race or anything else but that of gender. It seems then that several embedded domains of power politics dominate the narrative wherein one level supersedes the other in terms of the intensity of atrocity committed. As Lucy tries to create a new lifestyle of her own on the farm, she/they might be seen as coming to embody the symbol of a changing nation. Its struggles against violence, land rights and ownership and private enterprise reflect the complexity of a new post-apartheid identity. When Luria retreats to his daughter’s farm, he is faced with the need for a sense of redemption. Coetzee raises questions about redemption and the criterion for forgiveness. Luria’s attempt to find meaning in a simpler, pastoral life and connect with the land becomes a metaphor for a broader adventurous journey in a morally ambiguous world haunted by shifting power dynamics. The new challenges included notions of sin, forgiveness and redemption, prompting readers to comprehend and

question the limits of the human capacity for change and eventual adaptation in the face of the same. The landscape itself, like a character, witnesses the journeys of the characters and forms the basis for the novel's portrayal of social change.

Mentalizing and the Ethics of Relating

The text toys with the reader's sense of ethical responsibility and moral actions regarding their acts of 'mentalizing' or 'mind reading' (Zunshine 724) wherein they imagine themselves in the positions, conditions and situations of the characters. Based on principles of cognitive science and evolutionary psychology, Zunshine's theory posits that readers engage in a cognitive process of mentalization in which they attribute mental states, intentions, and emotions to fictional characters. This cognitive act is central to the reader's immersive experience and involves a constant negotiation between the character's internal states and their external behaviour. Zunshine's theory is imbued with critical rigour, drawing on interdisciplinary research to support its claims. Through careful analysis of neuroscientific findings and psychological frameworks, Zunshine establishes the cognitive foundations of mentalization, arguing that this process is not only intrinsic to reading, but is evolutionarily malleable and rooted in the human capacity for social cognition. Mentalization thereby becomes an important aspect of navigating the texts through the P.O.V. of the characters. Although David Lurie is the protagonist of the novel and his experiences are often foregrounded via indirect discourse yet one cannot but at least ponder the moral grounds from Lucy's perspective. Is her/their passivity and non-resistance stemming from a sense of the colonial guilt shared in lieu from the ancestors or from patriarchal power structures or perhaps a misc of both the elements? Whatever be the cause, the effects remain the same, at least on the societal scale, i.e. of a rape and subsequent robbery.

It is comparatively less stressful to mentalise with David Lurie from the heteronormative patriarchal background. However to achieve the same for either Melanie Issacs or Lucy Lurie seems a much daunting task as one needs to de-locate and deterritorialize their domains of lived experiences as objectively presented in the text. In order to subjectively process the conditions experienced by the female and minority characters, one needs to look at the variant ways by which the text has received several criticisms from an-other perspective. Coetzee's text elucidates the complex

ways in which violence is represented in art and aesthetics. It questions the re-presentation of women and the atrocities faced by them in the name of postcolonial angst and urges the reader to take a moral stance on such socio-culturally complex issues.

The Mimicry of Colonial Violence

The novel encourages readers to consider how symbolic power can perpetuate a vicious cycle of injustice that is as devastating as physical violence. Post-apartheid South Africa serves as the unsettling background of violence, where social violence is widespread. Lucy Lurie, David's daughter, is the victim of a monstrous attack on his farm. Trespassing, intrusion and violence occur in light of shared social tensions and power struggles in any changing state. Coetzee creates a narrative that weaves widespread issues of violence into the fabric of a nation and its inhabitants struggling with historical injustice. The novel however primarily posits "the question of how to represent sexual violence in art. Many of Coetzee's novels allude to incidents of violence against women, but with the exception of *In the Heart of the Country*, which is deliberately anti-realist, in none of his novels does he script the violence from a woman's perspective. This may be because as a man he feels too enmeshed with the voyeuristic gaze, and self-reflexively complicit in the deeds of men, to do so" (Harman 172-73).

'Disgrace' often reveals the theme of violence by establishing a web of power dynamics with(in) its characters. Lurie's status as a professor initially raises his power, but his inappropriate relationship with Melanie unmask the other side of such power-holding positions. This disparity remains further exacerbated when Lurie suffers the institutional consequences for his actions. Coetzee highlights the systemic violence embedded in institutional structures and represents how institutions can perpetuate crises alongside perpetuating cycles of shame at the same time. Whether it is the institution of the state or that of educational authorities, the problematic of violence and its causal effects remain the same. Coetzee uses a sense of symbolism to conjure violence and its representations, particularly the treatment of the animals and livestock on Lucy's farm. Violent and exploited dogs have become symbolic representatives of marginalised people in society. This symbolic violence reflects the broader problem of discrimination and exclusion faced by some groups in post-apartheid South Africa. The farm becomes a site for a microcosm of power

contentions that still echo through the undercurrents of our social fabric as “even though Disgrace predates Pankaj Mishra’s provocative title, *Age of anger*, both crystallise the South African and global disorder, when liberalism is under assault by violent extremism, populist nationalism, xenophobia, ethnic fissures, and anti-apartheid sentiments. Coetzee is perhaps more sardonic and mordant in his estimation of the ANC-led transition. Whereas the nationalist struggle overturned old patriarchal and social hierarchies and cultures of chromatic solidarity, it left economic, moral and spiritual vacua in the new economy and these challenges trivialise meaningful change” (Hove 6). Coetzee uses the postcolonial image of reclamation to symbolise the nation’s broader desire for identity and sovereignty as it emerges from the shadow of colonialism. The violence that befell the country and its people becomes a metaphor for ongoing struggles in the post-colonial context of South Africa, highlighting the difficulty of reclaiming the right to create a new order in the face of historical injustices.

Central to the investigation of violence and its ramifications is the postcolonial lens through which Coetzee examines the characters and their relationships. The novel shows the complexity of postcolonial South Africa, where the effects of apartheid are still felt within the social fabric. David Lurie as a white academic, has turned into a symbol of the recorded history of authoritarianism, and the general populace construes his shame on the side of his ancestors. Coetzee explores the complexity of Lurie’s identity as he relates the historical baggage behind it. Lurie’s education and romantic relationships reflect the historical and social roles that characterised the colonial era. However, as the story unfolds, Lurie himself becomes a victim, suggesting a shift in power and the relationship of oppression in later narratives. Coetzee intertwines the perspectives of victimizers and victims, encouraging readers to question notions of guilt and innocence and the contextual relevance of the same.

The dynamic nature of colonialism’s legacies emerges as Lurie’s work and its aftermath highlight the weakness of established principles and power shifts in the postcolonial era. The violence against Lucy, the white woman who leads a solitary life on the farm, is a poignant commentary on the weakness and powerlessness that people have faced throughout history, even within racial groups. Coetzee examines the post-colonial environment with a keen eye for power tactics, revealing how the legacy of colonialism continues to shape values, virtues and attitudes in contemporary South Africa.

References

- Lucy Valerie Graham (2020) Intercepting Disgrace: Lacuna and “Letter to John Coetzee”, *Safundi*, 21:2, 166-175, DOI: 10.1080/17533171.2020.1728956.
- Muchativugwa Hove (2022) Memory, spectacle and menace in J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace*, *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9:1, DOI: 10.1080/23311983.2022.2036306.
- Zunshine, Lisa. “The Secret Life of Fiction.” *PMLA*, vol. 130, no. 3, 2015, pp. 724–31. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44015759>. Accessed 31 Jan. 2024.

About the Contributors

Dr. Rituparna Chakraborty is Assistant Professor, Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University. Rituparna Chakraborty has done her M.A. in English from West Bengal State University and M.Phil. from Rabindra Bharati University. She was awarded Ph.D. from Raiganj University. She has cleared the UGC-NET examination. She has presented research papers in a number of National and International Conferences. She has also published several articles in UGC-CARE listed journals and International Peer-Reviewed Journals. Her areas of interest include: Popular Literature, Gender Studies and Postcolonial Studies. She is a Nominated Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (IASH), University of Edinburgh and Research Affiliate of the Scottish Centre of Tagore Studies (ScoTS).

Dr. Tirna Sadhu is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. She holds a Master Degree in English Literature from the Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan and has completed her PhD from the same institution. She has an experience of 10 years in the academic sector and has published several articles in reputed journals.

Anup Kundu is a Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University.

Dr. Shantanu Siuli is an Assistant Professor of English at the School of Humanities & Social Sciences; Swami Vivekananda University; Barrackpore. He has completed his Masters from University of Calcutta and his PhD from Seacom Skills University. With an experience of over 10 years in the academic sector, Dr. Siuli has published several papers in peer-reviewed international journals alongside having attended multiple international conferences. His research interests revolve around 16th & 17th Century Literature,

Renaissance Studies, Ancient European Classical Literature, Divine-aesthete Theory and Devotional Literature on Interdisciplinary Approaches.

Shreyoshi Dhar is currently serving as Assistant Professor, Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University. She is pursuing her Ph.D. programme from Rabindra Bharati University. Previously, she had also completed her B.A. (Hons.), M.A. and M.Phil. from the same institution. She is also in possession of a second M.A. Degree in English Language Teaching from Netaji Subhas Open University, alongside a Post Graduate Diploma in Translation and Transcultural Studies from School of Languages and Culture, Rabindra Bharati University. She has cleared the UGC-NET examination on multiple instances. Prior to joining this institution as an Assistant Professor, she worked as a Guest Faculty in Bengal School of Technology and Management, had engaged classes at Rabindra Bharati University since December, 2022 as a Junior Research Fellow along with being a Resource Person at Rani Rashmoni Green University, Tarakeshwar since April, 2022, where she was in charge of the day to day functioning of the Department of English. She is also currently pursuing her MBA course from Indira Gandhi National Open University. She has presented research papers in numerous national and international seminars and also has several published articles in reputed journals to her credit. The areas of her interest include Victorian Literature, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism.

Agnidepto Datta is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. He has completed his postgraduate degree from University of Calcutta and has received his M.Phil. degree from Vidyasagar University. He is currently pursuing his doctoral degree from Bankura University. His research interest includes Genocide and Incarceration studies, Philosophy and Literature, and South Asian Literature. He has presented multiple papers in International Conferences and has his research articles published in International Journals and edited volumes.

Anirban Banerjee is an Assistant Professor of English at Swami Vivekananda University in Barrackpore. He has done his M.Phil. research from Kazi Nazrul University, Asansol. His area of research

is myth and mythopoesis. He has published a paper on the heritage of Bengal as seen in a village full of terracotta temples.

Shyamal Mondal is an Assistant Professor at Mahisadal Raj College and Ph.D. Research Scholar, Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University.

Dr. Shubham Bhattacharjee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. He has received his Ph.D. from Rabindra Bharati University. During his research period, he engaged classes at Rabindra Bharati University from July 2019, initially as a Junior Research Fellow and subsequently as a Senior Research Fellow. Previously, he had also pursued his B.A. (Hons.), M.A. and M.Phil. from the same institution. He also possesses a second M.A. Degree in English Language Teaching from Netaji Subhas Open University, alongside a Post Graduate Diploma in Translation and Transcultural Studies. He is currently pursuing MBA in Human Resource Management from Indira Gandhi National Open University. Dr. Bhattacharjee has cleared the UGC-NET and WB SET examination on multiple instances. Prior to joining Swami Vivekananda University as an Assistant Professor, he worked as an Assistant Professor at Sister Nivedita University. Dr. Bhattacharjee has presented research papers in numerous national and international seminars. He also has several published articles in UGC-Care List Journals to his credit. His areas of interest include Romantic Poetry, Victorian Poetry, Modern and Postmodern Literature, 20th Century Literary Theory and Criticism etc.

Dr. Moupikta Mukherjee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. She has completed her postgraduate degree from the University of Calcutta and has received her doctoral degree from IIT-ISM Dhanbad. Her research interests are based on her fascination for how art and performance serve as an important medium of intervention for ensuring holistic development and empowerment for individuals with disabilities. She has been exploring this phenomenon from different perspectives in both her research and practices. She has worked on creative, pedagogic, research and field work related projects with various non-profit organisations like Kolkata Sanved, SAMYA

foundation, Partner Hooghly and Shyambazar Blind Opera House. She has presented papers in the field of art intervention and disability studies in several International Conferences and has her work published in journals of high repute.

Natasha Chatterjee is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. Her area of interest is Indian English Literature. She has done her Masters in English from Dr. C.V. Raman University. She has done her B. Ed from Dr. C.V. Raman University. She has done A-Level from DOEACC Society. She is doing her Ph.D. on the selected novels of Sudha Murthy and Anita Desai. She has presented papers in various national and international conferences. She has also published many articles in various journals.

Debarshi Arathdar is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Swami Vivekananda University, Barrackpore. He has completed his post-graduation from the University of Delhi and is currently pursuing his PhD from the same institution. Prior to joining Swami Vivekananda University, he was employed as a Guest Faculty in several colleges at the University of Delhi. His research interests include Cognitive Literary Studies, Narratology, Phenomenology, Contemporary Literary Theories and Philosophies and the interfaces between A.I. and Literature. He has presented his research at both National and International Conferences. He has published several articles in internationally acclaimed Peer-reviewed Journals and contributed Book Chapters in forthcoming projects. His research aims to unveil the complex intricacies of the mind's creative and comprehensive relation to texts at large.

