



Ruminations

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FOREWORD

I am delighted to present the fourth edition of the departmental journal of PG English.

The earlier volumes have been collections of scholarly, insightful writings by eminent faculties of the discipline as also thought provoking articles by our students.

This volume promises to be different in the sense that much of it comprises a wide variety of well researched articles selected from class presentations. This volume is truly one by the students for the students.

Since its inception as a post graduate department in 2011, it has embarked upon several academic projects, providing a platform for students pursuing higher studies and engaging in meaningful literary exchanges.

The journal has offered a publication dais for our students to acquaint them with the nuances and technicalities of academic writing and a critical learning experience for those aspiring to be a part of this profession.

The last one and a half years have been challenging in unprecedented ways. But it is deeply heartwarming and a matter of immense pride to see our students rise to the occasion and bring forth a volume that embodies not only creative literary outputs but also the invincibility of hope.

My sincere congratulations to the Editorial team for this wonderful exercise in making our present relatable irrespective of the magnitude of challenges.

Best wishes

Aditi Dey

Principal

INTRODUCTION

In his short essay 'Why Read the Classics ?' published in *The New York Review of Books* in 1986, writer and journalist Italo Calvino enumerates fourteen criteria for what makes a book a 'classic'. One of them is: “A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say”. 'Eng. Lit.' syllabi are replete with classics of all genres, and the postgraduate courses particularly are populated by texts of greatly nuanced complexity.

One of the abiding pleasures of being a teacher of English, especially in the postgraduate section, is to be able to introduce comparatively mature students to these landmarks of literature. In doing so, we initiate them into the continuing conversation between these works and their readers. Literature enables the forging of connections with great intellects separated from us in time, allowing them to take us by the hand and sit us down for an intimate tête-à-tête. It allows us to inhabit myriad minds and undertake experiences other than our own, refracting our single monochrome life into a vibgyor of varied ones.

While this ability of the literary arts has been celebrated as long as the human race has been reading, this magic power proves particularly potent in the present times. Locked in by a pandemic that is frighteningly fierce in its intensity and unsettlingly uncertain in its duration, books provide a welcome escape. Amidst the many hardships and losses that we are grappling with, our classes remain oases of tranquillity. They afford our students and us some time apart when pressing everyday concerns recede into the background; we lose ourselves in the pages of the texts we study together.

The present issue of *Ruminations* is the outcome of this engagement of our students with their literary discoveries. The articles that follow are results of what the learners have to say, after listening to what the classics have been saying to them through the last academic session. In the process, they become a part of the ongoing exchange that flows between generations of readers and texts – an interaction which refuses to degenerate in relevance. As we get ready to send another batch out into the world and welcome a new one, we reiterate our love for literature through this issue of our departmental journal. Our job as educators is to teach each student to immerse herself in what she reads, and “[f]rom that time on, the world [will be] hers for the reading”. (Betty Smith, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*).

Dr Debnita Chakravarti
Coordinator, PG English

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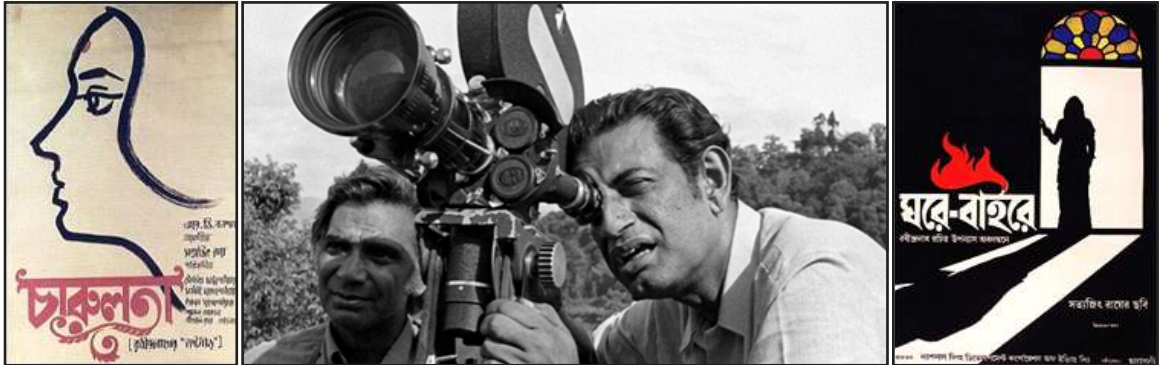
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RAY'S WOMEN THROUGH THE LENS OF PARTHA CHATTERJEE'S *THE NATION AND ITS FRAGMENTS*

Anneysha Chatterjee, *Semester-IV*

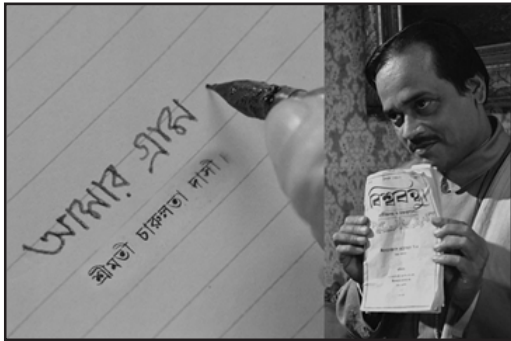


Satyajit Ray's cinema has recurrently exposed the multifacetedness of womanhood through a constellation of ideas, images, debates, reflections, histories and provocations. Situating the eye as a site of perception and reflection, his films stress the important role of cinema in articulating and structuring the identity of women in India. The representation of women in his films have been highly inspired by the works of Indian polymath Rabindranath Tagore. Through his portrayal of Charulata (*Nasthanirb* or *The Broken Nest*, 1901 & 1964) and Bimala (*Ghare–Baire* (1916) or *The Home and the World* (1984)) he re-accesses modernity by interpreting the past and exploring the complex interaction between reality, culture and identity.

Ray's *Charulata* is based on the 1901 novella *Nasthanirb* (*The Broken Nest*) by Bengali polymath Rabindranath Tagore. The story is widely believed to be inspired by Tagore's relationship with his sister-in-law, Kadambari Devi (Hecate) who represented Charulata in every sense of the term. In *Charulata*

there is an evidence of cinema born out of the exquisite love affair between intimacy and spectacle and an Ophulsian cinematic spectacle. The acclaimed Bengali film critic and director Chidananda Dasgupta acknowledged *Charulata* through the terms of Satyajit Ray, “Calm Without; Fire Within”.

Charulata chronicles the life of a bored and neglected housewife, caught between ancient traditions of Calcutta and late imported Victorian values. Set in the backdrop of the late 19th century, it narrates the story of a young, intelligent, educated and beautiful woman Charulata, wife of an affluent, Bengali gentleman Bhupatinath Dutta, an erudite scholar and an ardent follower of the Liberals. He runs an English language paper named 'The Sentinel' with the motto 'Truth Survives' which aimed at criticizing the biased practices of the British government in India. Being an idealist, he is worried about the expansion of British territories beyond the Afghan border and therefore fails to notice the subtle transformation of his wife from a child bride to a young woman who is absorbed in her own resources. Later, sensing her loneliness, he invites his brother Umapada and his wife Mandakini, the former appointed as the manager of the English daily and the latter a mere companion to his beloved wife. Throughout



the film it is evident how Mandakini fails to be a perfect companion for Charulata. Mandakini, being a feather-headed gossipmonger by nature, always idled herself by playing cards and taking naps numerous times throughout the day, while, on the other hand, Charulata enmeshed herself in reading numerous books and weaving different clothes and accessories.



All of a sudden, the light in the room darkens and the winds pick up threatening the base tranquillity of the household. The storm heralds the arrival of Amal, Bhupati's younger cousin who is lively, enthusiastic, cultured and an aspiring writer. Bhupati entrusts Amal with Charu's literary education, admitting that she has a very faint taste of these things.

Reminiscing Tagore, Ray marshals nature's tantrums to foreshadow or punctuate the turning points in the lives of his characters, and this moment is particularly poignant as neither the aspiring writer Amal nor the

dutiful wife Charulata expect the doom to befall the household. Their literary intimacy gradually shaped into affection towards each other. It was Amal's constant provocation that led Charulata to explore herself as a poetess. Her idleness is of a different kind reminding one of a fruitless tree. As she gradually develops an expressive selfhood, both through her love and through her writing, the challenge of demarcation of her domains comes to face her which demands a heavy price at the end. These qualities hints at how both the women in the household had their different tastes—one always idling away her time and the other making productive use of it. Though both of them are locked in the house, Mandakini prefers to be a Prachina but Charulata, through her creative eye, travels the world by skimming through the pages of the books. This way she differentiates herself from Mandakini and thus tries to become a Nabina. As she had confined herself to the four walls of the household, she could only partially prove herself to be Nabina as her journey was limited to this sphere.

From the point where Charulata's journey halts, there emerges another powerful female protagonist of Tagore, Bimala of *Ghare Baire* (1916) (*The Home and the World*, 1984). Bimala has been portrayed by Tagore as a devoted Bengali housewife to her godlike husband Nikhilesh, the Zamindar of Shukshayar, an educated, soft-spoken and revered nobleman of refined tastes. The sudden arrival of Sandip, Nikhilesh's bosom friend and a charismatic leader of the Swadeshi movement, led to the establishment of the dichotomy of literature and politics, which served as the recurrent motif throughout the novel. Together, they form a small group of ideas and emotions, growing and shifting, mirroring in their secluded chambers the violent changes in India. Nikhilesh believed in the idea of emancipation of women and therefore always encouraged his wife to take western education, consequently appointing Miss Gilbert to teach her music and other refined etiquettes. He always encouraged her to explore the world and not to confine herself to the inner sanctum of the household.



In this context, Professor Partha Chatterjee in his phenomenal work *The Nation and Its Fragments* mentioned how the constant support of the Bengali intelligentsia paved the way for proper education of women, formerly under the tutelage of Christian missionary institutions and later by those run by Indians themselves. Ghulam Murshid stated that the penetration of western ideas in the mind of the liberal, rationalist “Baboos” of Bengal led to the growth of modernisation and subsequently the position of women. Colonialism, apart from instituting orderly, lawful and rational procedures of governance,



was performing a “civilised mission”. (Chatterjee, 1993; 65-6). Chatterjee further mentions how society seemed to avoid these progressive women. Even Bimala's frequent visits to the bahirmahal (outer courtyard) created much furore among the other members of the household. He further provides us with examples where he shows how Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay in his book *Paribarik Prabandha* (*Essays of Family*, 1882) suggested that excessive interference with the exterior world will lead to the negative flow of energy within the woman and which

would bring undesirable effects on both the society and family. Thus, women must concentrate on their household duties and on nurturing their children without which the sanctity of the household would be lost. (Chatterjee 69) While addressing this issue, Kundamala Debi wrote in her book in 1870 that “if you have acquired real knowledge, then give no place in your heart to memsahib-like behaviour. That is not becoming in a Bengali housewife. See how an educated woman can do housework thoughtfully and systematically in a way unknown to an ignorant, uneducated woman. And see how if God had not appointed us to this place, in the home, how unhappy a place the world would be”. (Chatterjee 71)

The emancipated New Woman was later subjected to New Patriarchy. The New Patriarchy distinguished between “new” and “common” women, the former consisted of the educated and progressive woman and the latter represented women who were coarse, vulgar, quarrelsome, devoid of



superior moral sense, sexually promiscuous, subjected to brutal physical oppression by men. It was this degenerate quality of women which the nationalists wanted to reform and it was through these contrasts that the New Woman of nationalist ideology became culturally superior to those of the westernised women. He further showed how Nationalism separated the domain of culture into two spheres - the material and the spiritual which later became a powerful dichotomy between the outer and the inner. By applying the inner-

outer distinction to the matter of concrete day to day living, he separated the social space into 'ghar' and 'bahir', the home and the world. The external world of men represented the domain of material. The home, on the other hand, represented one's inner spiritual self, one's true identity and therefore became a place for women. This theory reminds us of the dichotomy reflected in the characters of both Charulata and Bimala.

From the beginning of the text, Charulata portrayed herself as an avid reader of books which later along with Amal's provocation inspired her to be a poetess. By skimming through the pages of the books she visualises the world through her inner eye. Ray's technique of framing the shots with Charu's opera glass provides an insight into her inner thoughts and feelings. First, she looks at the world from the indoors; second, she looks at her inattentive husband as he walks past her, unaware of her presence. The opera glass does not only provide an insight into her mind but it is accentuated with sparse speaking. Ray's filmmaking shows that the 'female' gaze is not about the reversal of 'male gaze' but about a truthful reflection of whatever context in which the woman sees the world. He does not ignore the male perspective while focusing on the female one but tries to establish the fact that both the perspectives are necessary for the development of society. Through this he emancipates Charulata from the confines of patriarchal notions and attributes.



Tagore never gave Charu the freedom to explore the world externally but Bimala being portrayed much more progressive and pragmatic (and also having the advantage of being much ahead of Charu's time) by Tagore enjoyed the freedom of exploring the world externally. Both of them are enjoying the outside world but through different techniques. It is from this point of view that Charulata does not fully succeed to be a 'Nabina' as her journey halts abruptly which places Bimala at a much higher level as her journey starts from that point where Charulata has left. Sandip's arrival led Bimala to break the norms of conservative Indian society and present herself to the bahirmahal (outer courtyard) from the andarmahal (inner courtyard).

On the other hand, the role played by Boro Rani needs special mention. She has been portrayed as a



widow accompanied by maids and busy maintaining the tranquillity of the household. She never questions Nikhilesh's idea of making Bimala an emancipated woman, nor does she dislike their excessive fondness for foreign goods. Hence, she receives much reverence from them. Both Tagore and Ray have very subtly pointed out this aspect in Bimala and Boro Rani, that though the former has been narrated as highly progressive and pragmatic in her outlook yet she fails to understand Sandip's real motive behind his "excessive

fondness” for her but the latter, though primitive in her outlook understands the real motive behind Sandip's friendship from the beginning. In both the films *Charulata* and *Ghare Baire*, minor characters have been very well established. Illustrating on this issue, Ray comments on how two minor women



characters from different texts have different sensibilities. Analysing Bara Rani and Mandakini on this note, it is distinct how both are “Prachina” at the first place yet the former is extremely virtuous than the latter as the latter is not only devoid of superior moral sense but is also avaricious and self-centred. It is due to the cunning plan of Mandakini and her husband that the Dutta family had to face dire consequences in the end. Therefore, keeping these characteristics in mind, it might be surmised that both of them act as a foil to their

protagonists (Charulata and Bimala). This shows how Tagore had adeptly analysed the woman characters in his work proving himself to be one of a kind.

The New Patriarchy brought about a change in women's outlook. They began to take part in various programmes as they were able to develop their own perspectives. Even Bimala started behaving in a similar manner. Due to her education, she developed a refined taste of her own which led her to be mesmerized by Sandip's immense vitality and aura. In him she discovered what she missed in the small world – the passion of the Swadeshi movement, the magical vibrations of Vande Mataram and the life energy of a charismatic hero. Here Prof. Chatterjee mentions that the New Patriarchy advocated by Nationalism conferred upon women not only the task of female emancipation but also the historical goal of creating a sovereign nationhood. These led them to visualize women as an epitome of the Goddess or Shakti which binds the whole universe. This has been very skilfully framed by both Ray and Tagore in their portrayal of Sandip. Sandip is a shrewd political leader with Machiavellian instinct, and he initially wins the game by successfully persuading Bimala to fall in his trap by using different and so-called aesthetic techniques, like referring her to be the epitome of the Goddess (Shakti) and lovingly acknowledging her as the Queen Bee (Makkhi Rani).



Rabindranath Tagore has quite artistically narrated both the novel and the novella. His characters are not only lively but they reflect the present scenario of the world. All the characters – Charulata, Bhupati, Amal, Bimala, Nikhilesh, Sandip and



others do not restrict themselves to the novel, they prove themselves to be a part of the social scenario. This could be possible because of Tagore's prudence. Without Tagore and Ray's insight it would have been impossible for the audience to understand the characters as a reflection of themselves, each playing a significant role either consciously or unconsciously in heralding and shaping the concept of sovereign nationhood which eventually tends to merge the gap between the 'inner' and the 'outer'.

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ESTATE SATIRE IN GEOFFREY CHAUCER'S 'GENERAL PROLOGUE' TO *THE CANTERBURY TALES*

Rima Nath, *Semester-IV*

ABSTRACT

This paper presents a detailed study of the “Three Estates Model” of the Medieval society in Geoffrey Chaucer's the '*General Prologue*' to *The Canterbury Tales*. Based on the descriptions, assumptions and cymini sectores (hair splitting analysis) of the characters, it aims to explore the hierarchical structure of the Medieval society which is divided into three “Estates”: the one who prays, the one who rules and governs and the one who works. Accordingly, the aim of this paper is to demonstrate how Chaucer employs the Three Estates Model through descriptions in the '*General Prologue*' to *The Canterbury Tales* and to what extent his characters, belonging to chivalry, clergy and the commoners, carry the features of their respective social class. His grouping of different kinds of people according to ranks and occupations is rooted in the Medieval tradition of Estates Satire. Estate Satire both relies on and exploits the medieval social and hierarchical stereotypes. In order to present the qualities of the three estates of medieval society and achieve the purpose of estate satire, Chaucer tries to reveal the characteristics of each social type through an example. For examination of the character portrayals, Chaucer's three pilgrims who complete the “Three Estates” model are 'The Knight', 'The Parson' and 'The Plowman' and their descriptions depict a perfect unity of all the three estates: Clergy, Nobility and Peasantry. Also, by offering contrasting views to these optimistic traits in the portrayal of almost all the other characters as illustrated in the portrayal of the 'Monk', 'Reeve', 'Wife Of Bath' and 'Prioress' in this paper, he skilfully criticizes the vices and sins of the people belonging to the three pivotal social classes of the Middle Age.

Key words: Three Estates, Estate Satire

Geoffrey Chaucer, who is regarded as the greatest poet of the Middle Age, holds a permanent niche in the English Literature with his magnum opus *The Canterbury Tales* which has long been praised as the ultimate achievement of Chaucer's art and has hardly suffered from lack of critical attention. It has been composed during the end of 14th century and effectively criticizes, even to the point of parodying, the prime societal classes of that time comprising The Church, The Nobility and The Peasantry which represented the majority of the population for an extended period of time. Chaucer presents a series of character sketches that are representative of the three estates and through these depictions he investigates the social characteristics and roles of the medieval people who are expected to speak and behave in accordance to the social group they belong. While representing the three estates model, he

employs “ESTATE SATIRE TRADITION” by criticizing the social vices through the characteristics and virtues of The Knight, The Parson and The Plowman. He demonstrates the perfect integration of the people belonging to the chivalric class, clergy and the common people of the Medieval English Society. On the other hand, he provides ample contrasting views by portraying almost all the other characters including The Monk, The Reeve and Wife Of Bath as well.

Chaucer who is regarded as one of the finest poets of the Middle Age holds a noteworthy place in the domain of English Literature with his masterpiece *The Canterbury Tales* which is regarded as the most influential and praised literary works of Medieval Literature. The significance lies in his mastery of using narrative techniques skilfully and for the descriptive representation of the social structures during that era. To what extent Chaucer represents the three estates in the ‘General Prologue’ is a much debated issue among the critics. The meaning of the word “estate” which concerns us, is thus defined by the Middle English Dictionary as a class of persons, especially a social or political class or group and also a member of a particular class or rank.

Ruth Mohl, who studied “literature of the estate”, describes its characteristics which include a catalogue of estates aimed at completeness, criticism of their failings and remedies for those failings, the divine ordination of the three estates, the dependents of estate on all these three for stability and the necessity of their preservation by maintaining the status quo.

It is true that the Estates included in Estate Literature are not only classified in terms of what we now recognize as their occupation, but also, for example, can be distinguished according to clerical or marital status. However, those clerical and marital statuses inevitably include some notion of particular duties and temptations of work that accompany them. Ruth Mohl's book is solemnly devoted to the genre in terms of four characteristics :-

First, an enumeration of “estates” or social and occupational classes whose aim seems to be completeness. Secondly, dissatisfaction with the faults of the estates. Thirdly, the philosophy of divine ordination of the three principle estates, the dependence of state on all three principle estates and the necessity of being content with one's station. Last but not the least, an attempt to find remedies for the religious or political defects of the estates. However, by no means, these characteristics are found in every piece of estate writing.

In order to present the qualities of the three estates of Medieval society and the purpose of Estate Satire, Chaucer depicts characters from each social rank and cites a whole lot of examples. Thus, Chaucer quite beautifully portrays the three pilgrims – The Knight, The Parson and The Plowman – and through their descriptions, he represents the perfect integration of the three estates – Clergy, Nobility and Peasantry, for continuation of social organizations.

The Knight stands as an emblem of Chivalry who has been blessed with his chivalric values that give him the right to govern and the responsibility to protect his community. The optimistic characteristics

which are attributed to The Knight depict him as the perfect representative of Chivalry. His devotion to the chivalric values such as truth, honour, freedom, courtesy, his loyalty to his Lord and his defence of “cristendom” prove his worth as an ideal Chivalric Knight.

“Ful worthy was he in his lordes werre,
And therto hadde he riden, no man ferre,
As wel in cristendom as in hethenesse,
And evere honoured for his worthynesse.”

(Robinson 79)

Thereafter comes The Parson who serves God flawlessly by both teaching people the Christian Gospel and being an appropriate example for them to lead a proper religious life. He is not a wealthy person but he is spiritually rich. He solely believes in the importance of clergy and in shaping the social and individual traits of people which illustrate his praiseworthy characteristics.

“He was also a lerned man, a clerk,
That Cristes gospel trewely wolde preche;
His parissshens devoutly wolde he teche.”

(Robinson 123)

The Plowman is the third ideal pilgrim who completes the Three Estates Model in the ‘General Prologue’. He belongs to that particular social class who deals with the supply of material goods as well as labours to people belonging to the medieval society. He is also depicted in positive terms as he works hard for the sake of the church and the society, especially for the ones who are in need:-

“At alle tymes, thogh him gamed or smerte,
And thanne his neighebor right as hymselfe.
He wolde thresshe, and therto dyke and delve,
For Cristes sake, for every povre wight,
Withouten hire, if it lay in his myght.”

(Robinson 127)

The portrayal of The Knight, The Parson and The Plowman suggests that they have performed their societal duties with utmost diligence and exactly the way they are expected to perform. Thus as a result, these three noble characters represent the Three Estates Model quite effectively. However, it would be wrong to deduce that all the characters in the ‘General Prologue’ are presented in accordance with the tradition of the three estates model. Apart from The Knight, The Parson and The Plowman, almost all other pilgrims have individual social traits which are not expected of their ranks and duties. At this point, Chaucer’s satire is at work for the presentation of malfunctioning of the social constructs. He employs the tradition of Estate Satire in order to illustrate people who do not fulfill the duties that have been assigned to them for the perfect continuation of the social services. Furthermore, he specifies some

particular sins of these people who belong to the different groupings of the society in relation to their neglect and abuse of the social positions and roles that they hold.

One of the best examples concerning the negligence of social duties can be found in the portrayal of the “Monk”. Chaucer's portrait of the Monk clearly demonstrates how some clerical figures ignore their social roles and even perform deeds that are unexpected from a cleric. The presentation of the worldly, self-indulgent, corpulent monk not only goes against the moral issues of the clergy, but also criticizes such clerical figures for fulfilling the exact traditional definition of bad monks who diverge from the path of ideal monasticism. Instead of leading a humble and studious life, he indulges himself into a lifestyle which consists of hunting and riding that are more suitable for a Lord.

“Ne that a monk, whan he is reccheles,
Is likned til a fissh that is waterlees,-
This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
But thilke text heeld he nat worth an oystre;
And I seyde his opinion was good.
What sholde he studie and make hymselfen wood,”

(Robinson 91 & 93)

The Estate Satire in the ‘General Prologue’ takes a harsher tone through the portrayal of the “Reeve”. The Reeve belongs to the social group of commoners in the Medieval society. Chaucer portrays the Reeve as a badly infected money-grubber, low-born commoner in employment of a socially superior master, who cunningly manages to acquire wealth by stealing his Lord's properties. As a result of this, the death-like manner of his dealings with other people is his obsession for private storage of wealth which is quite wrong both socially and spiritually and ultimately leads to the utter damnation of soul.

“His wonyng was ful faire upon an heeth;
With grene trees yshadwed was his place.
He koude bettre than his lord purchace.
Ful riche he was astored pryvely :
His lord wel koude he plesen subtilly,”

(Robinson 133)

The representation of the Wife of Bath puts forward the coarse sensuality of a habitual gadder, who is indulgent in freshly delights and has extramarital affairs apart from her five marriages approved by the church. Chaucer also brings forth the financial issues of the Medieval society by the portrayal of this rich widow with a flourishing cloth business which highlights the rise of the merchant class due to trade developments of the era. He not only addresses the material sphere, but also satirizes the behaviour of the people who try to dominate others by utilizing their economic power.

“She was a worthy womman al hir lyve:
Housbondes at chirche dore she hadde fyve,
And thries hadde she been at Jerusalem;
She hadde passed many a straunge strem;”

(Robinson 121)

Chaucer brings out the satirical portrait of the Prioress and makes it quite humorous by his ample usage of irony. The Prioress converses fluently in French according to the way its spoken in the school of Stratford-at-Bow, which is an ironic reference to her aristocratic breeding. Her attire and her fashionable manners are also satirized by Chaucer to a further extent. Her charitable nature is also depicted quite ironically in the forms of feeding her pet dogs with expensive foods. The ironic implications throughout the portrayal of the Prioress suggest that in spite of her holy calling, she is more preoccupied with the worldly materials than with the spiritual matters. Chaucer makes the Prioress quite amicable by emphasizing her essential femininity. The portrait is thus a prominent example of Chaucer's critiquing of the human failings which is presented in an amusing manner.

In conclusion, Chaucer has employed the tradition of the three estates model quite diligently, in the 'General Prologue', by both presenting the ideal trio of the estates and satirizing the social vices that result in the corruption of this model. Through the presentation of The Knight, The Parson and The Plowman he demonstrates the perfect integration of people belonging to chivalry, clergy and commoners in the Medieval society. Also, he offers fair contrasting views by portraying the Monk, the Reeve, the Wife Of Bath, the Prioress and many other characters and quite skilfully criticizes the vices and sins of the people belonging to the three main social classes of the Middle Age which mainly resulted from the religious, financial and moral corruption. As a consequence of the representation of virtue together with vice, Chaucer portrays his pilgrims in relation to how they should be and what they should do in order to be approved and appreciated by the Medieval English society which is strictly divided into various societal classes and imposes specific roles and duties on the people.

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POSTMODERNISM IN *LORD OF THE FLIES*

Nirrita Chakraborty, Semester-IV

Postmodernism is a socio-cultural and literary idea in addition to a shift in attitude that has been regarded in a huge variety of fields, such as the Social Sciences, Art, Architecture, Literature, Fashion, Communications, and Technology. Postmodernism may be related to the strength shifts and dehumanisation of the Post- Second World War technology and the onslaught of capitalism.

In *Lord of the Flies*, awesome and carnivalesque modes are used to subvert post-conflict English complacency approximately the deeds of Naismith, specifically the holocaust.

Golding subverted the notion of the racial and cultural superiority of the medical advance and cast a long shadow on the atrocities committed against Jews in World War II. It drew similarities in the violent record of the British imperialist youth male subculture and the extermination of Jews. Golding's complaint is targeted now no longer best on Nazi conflict criminals however additionally at the English post-conflict complacency wherein they eliminated themselves too fast from what the Nazis did. He raised his long-standing fascination with social Darwinism. In *Lord of the Flies*, Golding's critique of British imperial, protofascist records of powerfully registered with the aid of using the Nazification of English school-going boys: "Shorts, shirts and different garments they carried in their hands: but each boy wore a square black cap with a silver badge in it. Their bodies, from throat to ankle, were hidden by black cloaks which bore a long silver cross on the left breast and each neck was finished off with a hambone frill" (LF, 20-21).

The global of the island is visible thru the eyes of the schoolboys in *Lord of the Flies*. They appeared to be all-around empire Boys at first, characters from the island journey way of life that consists of Robinson Crusoe (1719), Treasure Island (1883), and Ballantyne's Coral Island. However, his fascination with organic events and survival fasting provides a fascination with the unknown and unfathomable, a chain of apparently supernatural happenings, they arrive head to head with animals and phantoms. The boys are subjected to mysterious happenings, which cause them to uneasy and terrified. People have doubts and reservations about the character of the "beast" and, as a result, the tension between them has escalated. Although at first, it's far best the "Littluns" that seem stricken by this fear, the circle widens till all of the boys, such as Ralph and Jack, agree with in "Beast". The term "beastie" fast matures into "beast".

In *Lord of the Flies*, the bizarre components paintings in unison with carnival topics to unsettle us and assign dominant cultural assumptions of the prevalence of civilised English behaviour. These are the styles of preconceptions that strengthened England's and different allied nations' complacency, especially, that the Nazis' horrors have been a uniquely German occurrence. The spoil from capability

supernatural rationalization to the unsettling and uncanny fact of herbal rationalization upsets us in the awesome framework: that the Beast is human, Nazi-like, and English. We proportion withinside the astonishment that this shift in standpoint causes. Instead of externalizing and projecting evil onto supernatural objects, ghosts, and beasts, we face the destructive facts of mankind.

One of the maximum effective carnivalesque factors in *Lord of the Flies* is that of the pig, which Golding makes use of symbolically to subvert dominant racial assumptions, especially closer to the Jewish and universally, closer to the ones people were taken into consideration alien or overseas to any grouping. This is alarmingly applicable to the crimes dedicated towards Jews in the course of World War II, however, it's been left out with the aid of using Golding and critics who've misinterpreted Golding's mixing of the pig hunt with the human hunt, in addition to the racial importance of eating pig meat in the course of carnival time. In *Lord of the Flies*, the pig image is elevated as a carnival pig. It is a prime motive: because the locus of projected evil; as meals for the schoolboys; as propitiation to the Beast; however greater than anything, like the beef the Jewish do now no longer eat. Golding's desire for a Hebraic name for the paintings reinforces the relationship between pig flesh and the Jews. "Lord of the Flies", or "Lord of Dung", as John Whitney renders it, comes from the Hebrew phrase Beelzebub. Unlike Ralph and Jack, the person named "Piggy" does now no longer seem in Ballantyne's *Coral Island*. Piggy is Golding's introduction that indicates a Jewish-like figure: "There had grown tacitly among the Biguns the opinion that Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent, which didn't matter, but by fat and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination for manual labour"(LF, 70). This portrayal of the bespectacled Piggy, together along with his awesome dialect and bodily feebleness, has a Jewish highbrow experience to it. The stereotype of Jewish feebleness has been an inventory withinside the alternate of anti-Semites and peddlers of degeneration theories. In essence, Golding used the imperial pigthorn lifestyle to express the continuum between British imperialism and fascism.

Lord of the Flies subverts the view that the "civilized" English is incapable of the sort of atrocities accomplished with the aid of using the Nazis in the course of World War II. These forms are used withinside the novel to criticise what Golding sees as a complacent English democracy, specifically its masculinity and upper-elegance perspectives closer to the emergence of National Socialism.

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MARLOWE'S ANTITHESIS OF FAUSTUS' FIRST AND LAST SOLILOQUY

Antara Das, *Semester-IV*

Christopher Marlowe structured his famous play *Dr. Faustus*, which represents a transition between dominant modes of drama straddling the medicines, tradition of morality plays and emergent genre of Elizabethan Tragedy. Marlowe exquisitely shaped Faustus as a classic Marlovian “Hero”. Just as Tamburline in *Tamburlaine the Great*, represents the exorbitant desire to conquer the world much like Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*, who desired the power of wealth, Faustus represents the Renaissance man's desire for limitless and boundless knowledge and power, with which he could vanquish the entire world beneath him. Faustus in his time, was regarded as the most learned scholar who covered the entire universe of knowledge that university could offer him at that time which included logic, psychic law and divinity but to no avail as he was not satisfied. Like Robert Browning, he felt the infinite passion of a finite heart that yearns like Tennyson's Ulysses :

To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought. (“Ulysses” lines 31-32)

The excessive ambition for boundless knowledge that would fetch Faustus limitless power, gradually tempts him to pluck the forbidden fruit : necromancy.

O what a world of profit and delight,
Of power, of honour, and omnipotence,
Is promis'd to the studious artisan!
All things that move between the quiet poles
Shall be at my command...A sound magician is a demi-god.
Here, tire my brains to get a deity. (Marlowe 73)

Marlowe's excellent use of soliloquy helps the reader to decipher a certain moment of realism, an unbalanced and direct revelation of character. It mainly focuses on the inner feeling and the constant ongoing conflict – whether virtue or vice – on the mind of the protagonist. To get an actual apprehension of the last delivered soliloquy of Dr. Faustus, the soliloquy must be contrasted with that of the opening one. The quintessential beauty of this soliloquy lies in its sheer antithesis with that of the opening soliloquy. If we bring out an insight into both the first and the last soliloquy, we find that Dr. Faustus contradicted his own words – salvation and damnation. While the opening soliloquy of Faustus presents him as an over confident being, the last one portrays him as a caged animal. Faustus' unbounded ambition, defiance of God, infinite hope, and Renaissance belief in the infinite possibilities of man is dominantly

recurrent in the first soliloquy. The last soliloquy is all about how he is responsible for all the negative deeds he had done, by portraying himself as a helpless and pathetic creature. A creature in profound despair, who clings to the medieval belief in the limitation of man. Although the first soliloquy, which is full of rhetorical flourish, epitomizes his rise, but the last one, with mundane entreaties, presents his fall.

From the first soliloquy we could figure, Faustus' ultimate willingness is to gain limitless knowledge in order to become a superior being. He mentions how he examined the advantages of studying different disciplines like theology, law and medicine and how he rejects them by putting forward his own logic. Faustus discarded theology on the ground that it cannot afford wonder and will only be able to help squabble well. Medicine is rejected on the basis of not performing any miracle as by making the dead alive. As Faustus rejected the above two disciplines, on the same ground he discarded law by putting his logic that it cannot provide any ability other than to deal with the "petty case of paltry legacies!" (Marlowe 71)

And the practise of divinity only confirms the fact that he shall inevitably die as humans indulge themselves in immoral acts. After all the conflicts that Faustus had within himself; between choosing the discipline he should study and whether he should pave his path towards practising 'necromancy', he chose the latter. Clearly, his focus is to become the superior being, to enjoy all the powers and to exercise them as per his wish. He desired to obtain that section of study which is beyond the capability of man. The Faustus, whom readers view, represents a true Renaissance man, who can cull out whatever he likes. The same person changes drastically during the last soliloquy as he desperately seeks to find a way out to keep himself off his final destiny – Damnation. If we count on the first soliloquy, Faustus is a metaphorical Icarus in his floridity but in the final soliloquy he is projected as a caged beast.

In *Doctor Faustus*, soliloquy plays a pivotal role. Throughout the play, we find that the protagonist is constantly disobeying God and is defiant against His rule made for human beings. In spite of receiving several hints and chances from God to keep himself away from the evil path and to focus his attention towards the saviour, he refuses to do so. God repeatedly sent him messages and alarmed him while he was on the verge of signing the treaty with the evil Lucifer. Even the Good Angel could not convince him to put down his decision of entering the evil world. Though God congeals his blood, nothing distracts him from signing the deal. While taking this dreadful decision of signing the treaty with evil agents, he misses out the fact that neither the earthly life nor the pleasure he is deceiving himself with is eternal. The only eternal thing that Faustus could have kept with him was God's blessing. As soon as he chose necromancy and the art of black magic as his field of study, he was left behind by God. This very decision made him repent at the end of the play when he is already the puppet of Lucifer. This unchangeable mistake made him realise that "Faustus must be damn'd", and before he serves his last and final soliloquy, desperately tells the scholars that, "I will leap up to my God!"; and he finally understands that, "[O]ne drop (of Christ blood) would save my soul", but Faustus was too late to realise his immoral deeds as he had indulged in blasphemous deeds. (Marlowe 153)

From the first soliloquy, this is very much evident that he wanted to be more than a normal human

being. He wanted to be superior to mankind. The only reason why Faustus rejected any field of study was because those did not fetch him any extra capability which could be compared with God's.

Yet art thou still but Faustus, and a man (Marlowe 71)

He made God his competitor and wanted to get close to Him in the field of power. This very desire made him suffer in the end and he desperately craved for God's help to save him from the infernal agent. Although from the beginning of the play, his main objective has been to be a superior human being, later his objective changed at the end of the play from being a man to being subhuman. To get rid of the torture and harassment of Hell, Faustus asks God several times to help him by making him an inferior creature. Faustus was also ready to get transformed into a single drop of water and dissolve into the ocean to escape from the torments of the infernal agents. His desire for self-preservation gave way to begging for self annihilation.

The final speech that was delivered by the Chorus after the demise of Faustus clearly reveals the moral purpose of the play. The Chorus says that disobeying God is a heinous crime and that one must not cross the boundary of human limitation:

Faustus is gone : regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits,
To practice more than heavenly power permits. (Marlowe 156)

We all can consider 'Time' as a great player as well as a great determiner in this anagnorisis of Faustus. While signing the treaty he ignored all cautions sent by God. He considered the time span of twenty-four hours to be similar to eternity. Faustus expected to survive even after the completion of the stipulated time period mentioned in the treaty. But his excessive confidence, went into vain, when Lucifer came to take him to Hell. At the ultimate end, when an hour was left, Faustus notices his irrevocable sin. He neglected the general human caution; "Time was, time is, but time shall be no more." (Joyce)

Simply, time flies and things change. He, therefore, appeals to earth to stop rotating and asks daylight to stay and to never go away, so that everything stops and remains unaltered. Faustus at the end agrees to enjoy "[A] thousand year" and even "[A] hundred thousand year" in hell if he could get back to his good old days of merriment and happiness. But it is impossible because, "no end is limited to damned souls." (Marlowe 154)

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A Comparative Analysis : *Top Girls* and *Ladies Coupe*

DRAWING PARALLELS IN WOMEN'S PLIGHT AND RELATIONSHIPS

Sayani Sengupta, Semester IV

Abstract :

This paper aims to give a comparative analysis of women conditions concerning Caryl Churchill's 1982 play *Top Girls* and Anita Nair's 2001 novel *Ladies Coupe* explained majorly based on the relationship they form among themselves as well as their individual experiences, and how all of these elements unite as a whole in the end. These themes will be addressed here in the paper utilizing a parallel discourse, drawing out instances, events, conversations, deeper thematic or symbolic outlooks, and interpretations, from both Caryl Churchill's play *Top Girls* and Anita Nair's novel *Ladies coupe*. The paper will talk about a variety of subjects concerning women conditions such as marriage, individuality and self-identity, motherhood, career ambitions, love, rebellion, relationship among women, different economic and social backgrounds as well as age playing a vital role in their formulation of different perspectives. It will also focus on the journeys and struggles that these women undergo in their life and in the end their hopes for the future.

Introduction :

“Anything may happen when womanhood has ceased to be a protected occupation.” (Woolf 40) The plight of women is not a phenomenon limited to a particular society but is a universal concept. The discourses about these conditions mostly rise when a group of women form a physical and emotional cocoon among themselves and share their stories and experiences, while simultaneously analyzing each other's stories. Be it, close acquaintances or mere strangers, these women form a sisterhood on the sole similarity they share, which is that of their feminine identity. This cocoon is Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* and Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* Agency. It is shocking and extremely obvious at the same time how there are so many similarities between these texts. Nair says “women in India dream of the same things that women all over the world do. “Freedom. Security. Dignity. Love. Laughter. Sex. Happiness. Nice clothes. Good Food. Jewelry. Vacations. Miracle cures for grey hair and cellulite. Muscle tone and unwrinkled skin...” and the justification of this statement is what will form the frame of this analysis.” (Nair)

Both *Top Girls* (1982) a play by Caryl Churchill and *Ladies Coupe* (2001) a novel by Anita Nair solely consists of women characters and men are merely minor subjects of conversation among these women and have no active participation in the ongoing plot. *Top Girls* was written at the time of Thatcherism in England and thus, has political importance associated with it. “Thatcher's policy has a great impact in the position of women since the post-feminist conception of the “superwoman” figure is prominent in

displaying a powerful and at the same time egoist women types.” (Erkan 23) Leading to the emergence of new career opportunities for women and the excessive ambitious drive which ultimately resulted in complete negligence of personal life for the sake of professional accomplishments and by trying to become 'pseudo men'. The fact that Churchill's story has close resemblances with *Ladies Coupe* is the fact that these stories bring together women from different socio-economic cultural backgrounds, occupations, ages, and even eras! (Historic characters in *Top Girls*).

Both the story opens by introducing us to five major women characters along with the protagonists. *Top Girls* opens at a restaurant where women from different times and parts of history have come together to celebrate Merlene's promotion. While all the women talk about their stories of loss and suffering, the protagonist Merlene refrains from sharing anything about herself and listens actively and reacts to her companions. The narrative technique used by Nair is very similar as well, Akhiladeswari is familiarised to the reader gradually as the story progresses with unnamed chapters inserted between the chapters concerning the stories of other women. “This technique has been used in the novel to realize her objective of presenting a vivid picture of the protagonist's mind and its interaction with the other characters and the milieu.” (Bhattacharjee 53) The room of the restaurant and the office in Churchill's story is similar to Nair's coupe where women unite and formulate a bond amongst themselves employing their stories. The women undergo a journey, a physical one in *Ladies coupe* but an emotional one, concerning the recognition of self-identity and developing individual perspective of happiness and accomplishment in both the stories.

The theme of motherhood is extremely prominent in the stories of these women. Churchill's Lady Nijo, Dull Gret, Griselda, and Nair's Margaret had to suffer the loss of their children being taken away from them against their wishes. These mothers longed for their children but had to remain silent as demanded by the men in their lives. Some of these women no matter how helpless only became capable enough to raise a voice. When it came to their children, these women were mothers first and women later. Margaret's rage was evident when she said, “all that was good and noble about my life that he had destroyed, the baby that died even before it had a soul, . . .there was nothing left for me to dream of and the words rose to the surface again : I HATE HIM. I HATE HIM.” (Nair) The loss of her child gave her the power to avenge herself which she did by making her husband fat, which bears a close resemblance to Dull Gret's rage, resulting in her violent outbreak and also that of Lady Nijo and the women with her who “hit [the Emperor] with a stick” (Nair). It is extremely interesting to note how both the authors gave the violence of women a comic element.

Speaking of violence, there are characters in both the texts who represent just the opposite; women who blindly accept their fate and do not feel the need to avenge their plight as they think it is completely 'natural' for them to suffer in that manner in the hands of men dominating them. Be it Akhila's mother who says “a woman is not meant to take on a man's role. Or the gods would have made her so” (Nair), or Mrs. Kidd who curses Merlene for getting a promotion instead of her husband and says “You'll end up

miserable and lonely. You are not natural” (Churchill), the women always face criticisms and oppositions. The question of the “neutrality” of a woman being homebound and motherly is a concern raised by both the women authors, the characters seem to accept these notions but one cannot help but think exactly where this idea of neutrality generates from. Daniel Chandler analyses in his book, *Semiotics for Beginners* (1994), “how semiotics helps us to realize that whatever assertions seem to us to be 'obvious', 'natural', universal, given, permanent and incontrovertible are generated by the ways in which sign systems operate in our discourse communities.” (Rashid 479)

Then come women between these extremes, who understand the fact that they are being treated unjustly but accept their fate nonetheless as they are helpless and thus can do nothing about it like Griselda or Janaki who is more like Ibsen's Nora; they are expected to be happy and satisfied because their husbands might not have done anything 'extremely unjust' to them. But these women feel trapped and exploited in their doll's house.

The acceptance reaches a new dimension in stories of some women as they pretend to be 'men' and think of it as the only way they can stay devoid of the suffering inevitable for women. Pope Joan's character embodies this symbolic notion when “she decided to stay a man and devote her life to learning” (Churchill) and even forgetting her true identity of being a woman. Her realization of her body on giving birth reminds her of the unbreakable bond her very being has with ramifications. She accepts, "I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman." (Churchill)

The aspect of being 'pseudo men' is extremely ingrained in these texts and thus, the subject of a career become an important point to ponder upon as the career here, denotes the 'outside world', a place for men, and thus women struggle to take that place to establish for themselves a masculine identity acknowledging the fact that feminine and weak are conjoined twins. Merlene's very source of power and self-sufficiency comes from her professional endowers and accomplishments; she devotes herself completely to her professional persona forgetting her own identity of a human being capable of feeling emotions and forming a bond with her family, she had formed a rigid opinion of these things to be vain and a representation of weakness and defeat. “She represents stereotypical traits associated with male characteristics reinforcing patriarchal ideology.” (Vanlalchami 100) Isabella Bird lived the life of a wanderer throughout her life, despite having a fatal disease because she thought it was 'womanly' to stay inside a home. She said, “I cannot and will not live the life of a lady.. Why should I ?” (Churchill) Akhila though might not seem to be the epitome of a career-driven woman but does remain conscious of the fact that she is the head of the family after her father's death in terms of financial authority. Akhila admits to herself being the 'man' of her family and looking after it. “Akhila looked at the man who carried on his shoulders the burden of other people's dreams. That she knew all about. That she could understand” (Nair)

Margaret is portrayed as a woman passionate about her career who is suppressed by her husband because he considers career-oriented goals to be trivial for a woman. He says to her, “What's the point of

working for a doctorate? Do your B.Ed. So you can become a teacher and then we will always be together.” (Nair) The ambitions of women are time and again proved trivial in these texts and the women rebel against it by taking the disguise of their suppressors, 'the men'. The topic of career, here, brings out the necessity of bringing out the discourse of double marginalization of women, first by their gender and then by their socio-economic cultural background as portrayed by the characters of Marikolutham who had to work as a maid and suffer from severe sexual assault to barely stay alive and Jaya who had to take up prostitution to look after her family. Marginalization is also committed through age or 'lack of being ambitious enough' as showcased by the characters of Louise who is a 46-year-old woman who “had to justify [her] existence every minute” (Churchill) and Jennie who is asked by Marlene not to speak about her desires to get married to get a job respectively.

While some women accepted motherhood and made it a part of their identity and happiness other women in the stories did not consider motherhood as a criterion to make them 'whole'. Marlene and Prabha Devi did not want the responsibility of a child to come in their way of the life they think, is fulfilling which was career-oriented for the former and luxury and fun-focused for the latter. Prabha Devi though later on in her story does devote herself to becoming a mother but it was only to heal the trauma she had gone through. Merlene also might have felt at loss for not being able to be a mother to Angie but it is rather left untold by Churchill and upon the reader to form an opinion. The fact that Angie is constantly drawn towards Merlene despite being repeatedly pushed away and also vocalizing the fact that she is her “aunt's child” that she thinks her “mother's really my [her] aunt” (Churchill) demonstrates and reaffirms the strength that motherhood carries. Marikolunthu completely loathes her child and her son Muthu; “it” like Marlene, she too wasn't capable of feeling any motherly attachment towards her child and thus handed her son over to the care of her mother and Marlene had given away Angie to her sister Joyce, and later sold him for money to his biological father without announcing the secret of his inheritance. But Marikolunthu like Prabha Devi, also devotes herself to becoming the child's mother in the end.

The talk of women's plight is incomplete without bringing in the discussion of sexual exploitation that women go through. “Marikolunthu, who narrates her story of rape, forced motherhood, lesbianism, heterosexuality, etc. strikes the last nail on the coffin of question.” (Kailas 1809) Nair chooses a little girl Sheela to bring to the reader's attention how girls so little as she is, are unsafe and helpless in the patriarchal society. Sheela is inappropriately touched by her friend Hasina's father, and the most she can do to protect herself is not to visit that place again. The dominant power that oppressive patriarchy encompasses is further made clearer by how Hasina and her mother react to the situation; they do nothing to stop Hasina's father but in turn, sympathizes with Sheela. “She [Sheela] saw the hurt in Hasina and her mother's eyes”. (Nair) “Like a typical colonized, gendered subaltern, she had readily accepted and tolerated the place and space reserved for a girl in a patriarchal society” (kumar 42). This incident made her devoid of any motherly instincts towards her flesh and blood. Though no direct instance of sexual oppression is talked about in *Top Girls*, the objectification of women is evident in the play throughout like in Lady Nijo's blind obedience to 'serve' his majesty and different men, according to his wishes.

The endings of both these texts are fairly different. While *Top Girls* ends on a rather gruesome scene where Angie utters the word “frightening”, Nair's *Ladies Coupe* end on a rather positive note on Akhila feeling the wind of freedom hit her face and attempting to make a call to Hari, signifying that she is now hopeful and determined to not care about what others have to think about her and focus entirely on doing the things that make her happy. It is however not a very vague interpretation if we think that *Top Girls* also has an essence of underlying 'hope' in that scene. The gruesomeness Churchill portrays might be a symbol for the final push Marlene requires to give in to her emotions and finally let her feel them. All lives are imperfect and filled with misery, no matter how complete they might seem from the surface. A person can never shield himself/herself from misery and the only way to be at least a bit fulfilled is by giving yourself a chance to feel emotions and let them take charge of your decisions and happiness.

The texts might outwardly seem to be concerning women but as claimed by the respective authors it is a lot more than just that. As Churchill puts it “If someone says 'a socialist playwright' or 'feminist playwright' that can suggest to some people something rather narrow which doesn't cover many things as you might be thinking about” (Jordan 22). Nair also claims “*Ladies Coupe* is not about feminism and nor am I a feminist writer. It is a book of stories about women and how a woman makes her place in society. It is a book about the human condition.” (Nair)

Conclusion :

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* and Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* are stories that showcase a world of women and a world of humans in general. It showcases different sufferings women undergo concerning their individual circumstances though in the end how despite all their differences, their boundaries become blurred as we progress deeper and deeper to establish an understanding of this world they live in, they make. The woman, the life force, thus shows life in its entirety. With the help of this comparative analysis completely neglecting all national borders and genre categories, it has been determined how universal the condition of women is, how inevitable their difficulties are and how these difficulties do not discriminate in engulfing them and only see their feminine identity as reason enough to bring upon them the heavy burden of patriarchy. Finally, barriers are broken down in this 'womanhood' through this 'sisterhood'. As Simone De Beauvoir puts it “We can understand why there should be so many common features in the indictments drawn up against women, from the Greeks to our times. Her condition has remained the same through superficial changes, and it is this condition that determines what is called the 'character' of women”. (Beauvoir 35)

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THE QUINTESSENTIAL MOTHER : COLLOCATION OF KATTRIN AND MOTHER COURAGE IN BRECHT'S "MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN"

Nisha Rajak, *Semester-IV*

Abstract :

In Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* (1939), the rise of the Nazis under Adolf Hitler in the 1930s projects the oppression caused by capitalism and that the defeats and victories in a war, that has been started by the powerful leaders, only affect the common people like Mother Courage who are at the lower strata of the society. Brecht fabricates unpredictable actions of Mother Courage which changes with her economic condition. In this play, Brecht portrays the contrasting pictures of Mother Courage and Katrin in terms of motherhood. This paper aims at analyzing the theme of motherhood presented in the play. While Mother Courage is the biological mother, Katrin possesses the potential to become an ideal mother figure. But it is a misconception that Mother Courage lacks maternal instincts and is only concerned about commercial gain.

Key words :

Mother Courage, Motherhood, Biological mother, Potential mother, Social conditions, War, Business.

Introduction :

Brecht, in *Mother Courage and Her Children*, plays upon the concept of motherhood through the eponymous character Mother Courage in relation to her children. He breaks the stereotypical notion of an ideal mother who bears unconditional love for her children.

Anna Fierling, known as Mother Courage, is a prudent business-minded woman who earns her living from the war by selling food items and other materials to the soldiers fighting on the battlefield. She is shown to display masculine characteristics as she gives primary importance to her business over her and her children's lives. In fact, the reason she has been named 'Mother Courage' is due to her unwavering determination to save the fifty loaves of bread which were going moldy when she drives her wagon through the bombardments of Riga. She is a calculative woman to such an extent that it ultimately leads to the destruction of her life. Even her lack of sympathy for the Protestant people of the town who were attacked puts her under a negative light when she refuses to provide clothes for treating their wounds.

Background of the play :

The play fulfills a major requirement of the Epic Theatre by presenting a broad historical perspective as suggested by the subtitle of the play. Brecht explores contemporary German society by presenting the

Thirty Years War that took place from 1618 to 1648 between the Catholics and the Protestants. However, only twelve years of this war (1624-1636) is taken into account by Brecht but instead of presenting the actual history, he places it in the background against which his fictitious story is weaved. The place stands as the artistic representation of the common people like Mother Courage, her children and the other characters who remain unrecorded in the chronicles.

Brecht believes that an individual is not an independent character but shaped by the social and political conditions in which one lives. Through the plight of Mother Courage, which represents the grim reality of the poor classes under a capitalistic form of society, Brecht projects his Marxist ideology. To him, war deceives common people like Mother Courage who hope to make profit from the war and wish for its continuation but ultimately lose everything to it. The contradictions within Mother Courage manifest the contradictions that are present in the existing social order.

Mother Courage as a failed mother :

In almost every scene, Mother Courage is shown to be engaged in some kind of business deal when her children are about to get killed. She loses Eilif to the recruiting officer when she is negotiating the price of her belt, and eventually he is executed after a few years. She loses Swiss-Cheese as she haggles too long over the bribe that the Catholic soldiers demand for sparing his life. Again, when Kattrin is shot by the soldiers, her business keeps her away from saving her daughter. At the end of the play, the sergeant's cynical comment in Scene I – “Like the war to nourish you? / Have to feed it something too” – proves true, as all her children are devoured by the war and she is left alone.

Kattrin as a true mother in contrast to Mother Courage :

While Mother Courage is shown to be a failed mother, the only woman character who comes close to be regarded as an ideal mother figure is Mother Courage's dumb daughter, Kattrin. Critics have held Kattrin as an embodiment of the maternal instincts, who risks her life to rescue the peasant's child from the house which is about to collapse. And also, she beats the drum to make the sleeping people of the town aware of the impending attack on them. She is compassionate even for the hedgehog run over by the wagon. Compassion and kindness towards children and people who are under distress together with the traumas of war that she bears on her body make her the most appreciated and sympathized with character in the play. She even goes against her mother and threatens her with a wooden plank when she declines to part with the shirts required to bandage the wounds of the attacked peasants. She is represented as a tragic figure who does not think even for a moment before sacrificing herself for the sake of others.

Kattrin's maternal impulses are contrasted with Mother Courage's persistent commercial interest and her heroic action of self-sacrifice elevates her to the status of the martyr Saint Martin. There are several hints, by Mother Courage herself, suggesting that Kattrin is pure mother material. Kattrin playing with Yvette's red boots and hat portrays her desire for sexual encounter, love and family. To this, Mother Courage states that while Yvette sleeps with men for money, Kattrin would do it for nothing but pleasure.

Mother Courage even mentions that on a previous occasion, Katrin is found to rock a baby while making lullaby noises which shows her as the child's mother. The horror she feels on hearing the chaplain's belief that the war would go on forever reveals that she has been waiting for the war to cease so that she could get married. Throughout the play, Katrin is shown to be weak due to her disability, but she succeeds to reclaim her voice in the end by beating on her drum and refusing to stop when she is threatened. Determined to warn the townspeople, she continues to drum even after being shot and this act of self-sacrifice suggests her revolt against the injustice caused by war. According to Ruby Chatterji, Katrin's role and function in the tragic pattern of the play resembles that of Cordelia's in *King Lear*. She also mentions that their deaths form the core of tragedy.

Mother Courage as the helpless product of society :

However, it has to be admitted that though Katrin is successful in gaining immense appreciation and admiration of the audience, by being a universal mother figure outshining her own mother in terms of courage, humanity and compassion, she fails to dethrone her from the dominant position that she holds throughout the play.

As mentioned earlier, according to Brecht, an individual's character and actions are formed by the social systems one has been born into. Similarly, the exigencies of life force Mother Courage to earn and feed her children and while performing her duties, her maternal instincts, at times, get overpowered by her commercial interests. In the opening scene, Mother Courage is seen protesting against the efforts of the sergeant and the recruiting officer to enlist Eilif in the army. She even threatens to attack them with her knife and also tries to dissuade her sons from joining the army by warning them of the inevitable doom they would face. Though it is true that she haggles too much on the amount of money that has been demanded for saving Swiss-Cheese's life, the pressing fact that she and Katrin would be left penniless without the merchandise and her wagon should be noted as well. Her refusal to acknowledge his dead body with a stony face breaks the conventional image of the mother, but bears a crucial reason behind it; any acquaintance with him would jeopardize Katrin's, the chaplain's and her own life. Ruby Chatterji says that according to George Steiner, the Berliner Ensemble's production of the play presents Mother Courage looking the other way as the body is being carried off and her mouth is torn wide open which reminds the audience of the screaming horse in Picasso's *Guernica*; it is silence which screamed throughout the theatre. Though Katrin is constantly rebuked and ridiculed by Mother Courage for being dumb and kind-hearted, Mother Courage cares for her the most. She advises Katrin never to fall in love with a soldier and rightly fears of her becoming a victim of rape and rubs some ashes on her face to make her look unattractive to the predators. When Katrin is attacked by a drunken soldier, Mother Courage consoles her by saying that the 'wound here is really a piece of luck' (Scene VI), as the scar would protect her from sexual exploitation. Mother Courage's maternal instincts find prominence when she rejects the cook's offer for her to accompany him to Utrecht, where she would be able to lead a comfortable life by abandoning Katrin.

Conclusion :

Bertolt Brecht advocates non-Aristotelian theatre and insists his audience to respond intellectually and not emotionally to his plays in order to stimulate change in the society. His *Mother Courage and Her Children* focuses on making his audience think and ponder upon the situations that Mother Courage faces on the stage instead of associating themselves with her. Although Brecht fails to practice his own dramatic propositions to a greater extent, the value of experimentation is always appreciated more than its success. Brustein states that Mother Courage is not a Niobe figure, rather, the creator of her own devastation. Mother Courage has been called the 'hyena of the battlefield' as she depends on war for her economic stability, but it should be noted that she is reluctant to let her sons join the war and unwittingly loses all her children one-by-one.

Brecht explores the themes of motherhood and war which are closely interlinked with each other through Mother Courage, the biological mother and Kattrin, the potential mother. Although Mother Courage displays negative qualities through her conduct, it would be unjust to hold her responsible for the deaths of her children. Being an intuitive mother, she could foretell the future awaiting her children; time and again she advises them not to take their virtues too seriously and as the play progresses, it is seen that Eilif dies because of his valour, Swiss-Cheese because of his honesty and Kattrin because of her kindness. It is they who fail to master the art of survival. Though Kattrin is regarded as an archetypal mother, it has to be taken into account that if she had been a real mother herself, she would probably not have been too fond of other people's children. The ending of the play remains a much debated issue as after Kattrin's death, Mother Courage is shown to leave with her wagon for conducting business. Though it is said that she learns nothing from her loss and that the audience should feel indignation towards her, the point they need to consider is that Mother Courage's ignorance about Eilif's death gives her the strength to drag her wagon and move on with life.

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RUTH AS ONE OF THE TWO WOMEN ROLES IN PINTER'S THE HOMECOMING

Rajashree Sen, *Semester-IV*

Ruth, the most misunderstood of all Harold Pinter's characters, “often condemned as a licentious woman even nymphomaniac”¹ has been subjected to several critical opinions, often misjudging its truest sense. *The Homecoming* is a one-act play set within the four walls of a London home that enacts a family of four men, Max, the father who takes care of the household; Max's brother, Sam who is a chauffeur in the profession and, the two sons, Lenny and Joey. Later the audience has been introduced to Max's other son, Teddy, a professor and doctorate of philosophy, and his wife, Ruth. Teddy brought Ruth to his father's house to get his blessings after their six long years of marriage. Their conversation often scopes to recollect the memory of their dead mother and Max's wife, Jessie, whose absence has left the household distorted and broken.

Teddy mentions the wall with a door, in the living area that they have knocked down refers to breaking of boundary and widening the scope for an open living area. On the other hand, Max constantly complains about his household duties presenting an image of a weary mother carrying out all domestic chores ironically mirroring Jessie. Hence, Jessie's absence has been the overridden issue that has acted upon the emotion of the family members as well as in identifying Ruth as a newcomer.

However, some critics have considered Ruth to have been involved as a prostitute considering her profession as a photographic model for the body, before her marriage to Teddy. Even promoting the assumptions that “Ruth is indeed coming home to her former self”², which Pinter rejects.

The play surfaces breaches between familial ties through its action and language. Max tries to exert his masculine authority and recognition in front of his son's wife Ruth by showing disregard to his late wife as “She wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made

me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch.” (The Homecoming, I, page-9) Max's statement, "I've never had a whore under this roof before. Ever since your mother died. My word of honor." (I, page-42) apart from the purposeful offense on Ruth as a woman, it further disregards Jessie's character as the “whore” and also hints at his infidelity.

Each member of the family is driven by a strong urge to utilize the new woman to fulfill their interests but was eventually left with endless doubts. The truth about Jessie's secret affair with his friend further triggered his tirade of abuse and doubts. As Max suggests, “Listen, I've got a funny idea, she'll do the dirty on us, and you want to bet ? She'll make use of us. I can tell. I can smell it. You want to bet ?” (I, page-81)

The role of this only woman in the play spread an outrage of doubts and dismal since its inception. Everyone had opined about her future until they realized it was only hers to take the final decision. Ruth neither negates their proposal nor agrees to their business. This can be observed in her use of conditional verbs while confronting the men. Near the end of the play, we hear her saying "I would want at least three rooms and a bathroom” (I, page-76) when Lenny asks her for confirmation she says “Oh, we'll leave it till later” (I, page-79)

As an individual woman, Ruth never showed any recognition of moral outrage at those men rather she gradually acquired a timely control while waiting silently for the best moment to defend herself. She never talks back at Max's verbal attacks like 'pox-ridden slut' (page-42), 'smelly scrubber' (page-41), and many.

Throughout the play we find Ruth being misjudged. When Teddy asks her “tired?” she replies “no” then Teddy replies like “go to bed, I'll show you your room”. Again, when Ruth replied negatively to “are you cold ?” Teddy offers her “something hot to drink.” (Page- 21)

Even Teddy's brother, Lenny referred to as "a pimp" charged her with intentional distortions and deliberate switching of subjects despite her truthful replies as Lenny constantly tries superseding his brother by attempting to redefine Ruth's position as his mistress. Ruth makes use of her wit while repelling and defending herself as the only character retaining Pintersque wit holding on to a certain level of humor and comedy.

Ruth and her unique resilience have been displayed through the series of actions beginning with Ruth dancing and engaging in a physical act with Lenny, a sensual tease with Joey leading to the demanding conditions regarding the family's interest in business and finally, Max whimpered coming next to Ruth's chair, portrayed a psychological construct of his absent wife. Not only her role becomes prominent as a nurturing woman figure as she chose to stay back in London but also an absent mother figure as she left behind her sons to be raised by their father alone.

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MISS ADELE'S REALITY BASED ON THE ENDING OF THE SHORT STORY *MISS ADELE AMIDST THE CORSETS*

Rajashree Sen, *Semester-IV*

The twenty-first century avant-gardist, Zadie Smith is well known for the unique plot and characters in her short stories. The genre of hysterical realism is inherent in all her works, directing us to this concise discussion about the short story, “Miss Adele Amidst the Corset” which was published along with other such fragment pieces in *Grand Union*.

The quick tale located in the midst of the diversely populated twentieth century Manhattan, America, with a graphic description of the hustle bustle of the city crowd has been well detected through the eyes of Miss Adele, a middle aged struggling trans-woman who performs as a drag-queen for living, one of the popular cultures of the time. As the story progress, Miss Adele's individualistic mind-set and opinionated comments gives the story a texture of a personal diary. While walking through the daily crowd of the city Miss Adele propagates her an detailed picture of the city, much appreciating the 'high' lifestyle of the West Side of the city.

Initially, we see her and her friends weary and fretful over the broken defected strap of the old corset, which led her to visit a downtown Corset shop. The overall experience inside the shop created a disturbed Miss Adele's confidence and insecurities greatly. She couldn't precisely understand the commotion between the owners but ended up in a ugly argument with them. Moreover, the gradual recurring of past traumas crowded Miss Adele's mind while she was in there. The dubious unclarifying stares and gestures of the people and the random radio program in the shop provoked her wounds to regenerate a new vigour and expression as a result which obviously triggered the frantic ending. Miss Adele's recollections and experiences are given clarity through her interior monologue as she ruminates during her crisis. No doubt one can easily read and enjoy this short story out of pleasure reading because of the brisk, colloquial, local vivid descriptions and authentic elements in it but again, one with a very little information about the background and history of the locale can also identify some of the deep stitched problems outlined by the author.

This Postmodern work can easily indulge a reader to be empathetic towards the social adversities that the characters suffer. It may also raise among the readers the question of possible solutions or the question of good or bad endings. Miss Adele couldn't separate herself from the turbine in her mind created due to the possible surroundings. She explodes with a sudden desperate act of snatching away the

new corset from the shop receptionist and herself getting involved in a quarrel in order to dig out the truth behind the indifferences she could feel in their behaviour towards her as their customer. Thus, the hysterical search for the ultimate reality has been the untimely factor and significance of the story surfacing the question of socioeconomic stability of the Modern populace of the twentieth century revealing the various possibilities and scopes of artistic reality of their lives. Miss Adele's search of intended truth in her final actions can be considered to be unpredictable as well as real.

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TOPIC – CRITICAL APPRECIATION OF WILFRED OWEN'S "SPRING OFFENSIVE"

Vineeta Sardar, *Semester-IV*

Wilfred Owens's poetry for a long time distinctly reflects an anti-romantic attitude towards World War I. His poetry expresses the worst brutalities and atrocities of war. *Spring Offensive* is among Owens's remarkable achievements as a poet dealing with the truth of human experience and marvelously succeeding in discovering a new force and beauty of expression to vent to the dichotomous feeling of horror and pity, of hostility and sacrifice that war generates.

It is a narrative poem charged with high passion and presents a vivid, dramatic picture of the action on the frontier. The word "offensive", as used in the title, is a noun meaning a military attack on the opposition army battalion : but the impression of the poem may have proved "offensive" or objectionable to people who thought that the only kind of war poetry should be what Rupert Brooke wrote. Unlike the early war poets such as Rupert Brooke, Owen does not glorify battle, nor does he celebrate the soldier's courage. Instead, he bitterly criticizes war that turns the soldier into either a victim or a killer. Like the poets of his generation, he expresses an intense disgust for war and a profound sympathy for the soldier. Lines like :

"....No alarms
Of bugles, no high flags, nor clamorous haste—"

Tend to spoil the myth about war, and the final question, "Why speak not they of comrades that went under ?" strongly challenges the validity of the imposition of war on mankind. Thus, the appeal of the poem is thus anti-romantic, in perfect harmony with Owens's conviction, assertive in his fragmentary pre-face intended for his collection of poems that the true poets must be truthful.

A substantial part of the poetic appeal of the piece lies in the way Owen combines the idyllic and the ironic in his treatment of nature. The May breeze "murmerous with wasp and midge" reverberates the fifth stanza of Keats' poem, enriching by this literary association the sense of nature's warmth and plenty as well as the frightening transience of life. Similarly, "the summer oozed into their veins" in line 9 and "hour after hour" in line 13, echoing directly "thou watchest the last oozing hours "of Ode To Autumn, which gives him the confidence to tackle his bewildering new subject of war.

There is perhaps some irony in the use of them, though this is apparent in *Spring Offensive* than in his other poems. His despair is a greater emotion than the melancholy of Keats, which, however, is less trivial than Owens's ironies in his earlier poems might allow, for Keats, melancholy is no mere prose. It is

based on the idea of transience, disease, pain, and premature death set against the glory of nature and the permanence of art.

Owens's response is an entirely new scale but still parallel to Keats' response, for it is undoubtedly based on the horror of death, love of nature, and respect for art. War, however, has distorted events to such an extent that Owen takes an apocalyptic view of the relationship between man and nature. In Owens's poetry of the modern apocalypse, his diction, poetic conversations, and reformist fervor remain firmly rooted in the romantic traditions. At the same time, his images from the war are new and horrifying. In *Spring Offensive*, they are the landscape of French warfare, "the imminent line of grass", "the injected drug", "the new sky of terrifying flashes of mysterious impersonality of grass", and a nature that has become a symbol of hostility. Instead of blandly and directly accusing war as a cause of cruel bloodshed and massacre of humanity, the poet achieves his objective with greater force and artistic effect through the contrasted images of nature due to the outbreak of unnatural war that destroys man's healthy communion with nature.

The success of a narrative poem largely depends on the poet's power of building up the intended atmosphere through appropriate imagery, suggestive phrases, epithets, and the intonation of all that is said. Owen here proved his skill in this to a supreme degree. Here, he draws a contrast between nature, the battles adorned with the beauty of the happy season of spring, and the soldiers marching towards the battlefield. Despite being surrounded by nature, the soldiers appear to be alienated from the elements of nature. When the battle begins, and most of the soldiers are shot, the yellow buttercup flowers receiving the blood of the wounded soldiers become symbols of the Holy Grail. The silent, defiant last stare at the sun "with whom their love is done" is followed by the silent, defiant last stare at the sun". The sudden climax of swift, desperate action and the horrible effect of the fiery explosives hurled at the soldiers are brought alive inappropriately fiery and explosive diction, meter, and stupefying speed of sonorously resounding lines 29 to 36.

The poem has a careful structural pattern, somewhat resembling a tragic drama. It includes a quiet preparatory stage, a rising action, and reversal of fortune, a climax, and a catastrophe in its five parts. Broken rhythm, a ten-syllable line with variations and a mixed iambic-trochaic meter, and irregular rhymes interspersed with couplets produce the necessary tension in the poem.

Owens's diction and imagery in the poem often have a symbolic depth and suggestive richness, but phrases like "the imminent line of grass", by their poetic Upsurge" suggests a hell below as well on the surface, and the phrase "world's verge" in the following line implies the existence of some non-physical region on the other side. The alliterations whether in "murmur with wasp and midge" or in "out finding all its fiends and flames", emphasized the primary waves of emotion. (Poetry Foundation)

Spring Offensive being a representative poem of Owen, we detect echoes of his other characteristic poems here and there in it. The lines on the sun remind us of Owens's *Futility*, where he expresses an

encompassing sense of meaninglessness in the context of the death of a young soldier focusing on the central image of the sun, the poet contemplates the futility of his birth, the growth and the youthful life and dreams of this soldier who is inevitably slaughtered at the altar of war. Similarly, the phrase "crawling slowly back" echoes traces of another characteristic poem, Sendoff, where Owen captures the suspense and fearful silence accompanying the soldiers during the departure from the battlefield. Owen implies regret that no beloved one bids these soldiers farewell.

Finally, Owens's dichotomous view of nature, war, and God, his ironies an oxymoron like "long famous glories", "immemorial shames", and the tremendous complex question characterize the end poem modern without pretending to be so.

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SIR PHILIP SIDNEY'S VIEWS ABOUT THE NATURE AND FUNCTION OF POETRY

Aliah Zafar, *Semester-IV*

In his work *An Apology for Poetry*, Sir Philip Sidney defines poetry as an art of imitation. He defines imitation as representation, whose purpose is to teach and delight. He goes on to divide poetry into three categories : religious poetry (as found within the Bible), philosophical and moral poetry (as produced by ancient poets), and proper poetry (with which Sidney is specifically concerned). Thus, it is the third type of poetry that takes an ingenious approach to life and nature.

As a result, Sidney goes on to elucidate why poetry is an imitation. Although the poet, like other learned men, imitates the objects of nature, but he goes a step ahead and goes beyond nature. Lifted up with the vigor of his own invention, the poet does grow in effect another Nature in making things either better than what Nature brings forth, or quite anew, forms such as there never were in Nature. Thus, the poet goes hand in hand with Nature, not enclosed within the narrow confines of her gifts, but ranging freely 'with the zodiac of his own wit'. Among the ancient Romans a poet was called 'vates', meaning a diviner or a prophet, and also the ancient Greeks gave the title of 'poietes' to poets, which literally means 'maker'. Thus, a maker is a creator in Sidney's eyes. Indeed, the creative talent which is man's highest gift is found within the poet to such a large degree than the other men. As a result, Sidney does not consider imitation to be slavish. His recreation of nature is not a mere replica of what can be seen and discovered in the actual world. The poet soars above the mundane world. As Sidney says, the poet 'transcends Nature'. He thus anticipates both Shakespeare's encomium of the poet as giving, 'to airy nothing a local habitation and a name' and Coleridge's famous proclamation on the poet's 'secondary imagination'.

Sidney argues in support of poetry that poetry was the earliest form of creation throughout, which philosophers of ancient Greece pretended to be poets for a long time, and that historians readily absorbed the poetic manner of writing. In terms of teaching virtue and encouraging people to live virtuously, poetry outperforms both philosophy and history. Unlike the historian who teaches solely by example and the philosopher who teaches only by doctrine, the poet uses both the method of example as well as the method of doctrine. The philosopher expresses virtue in a figurative sense. The poet, on the other hand, expresses virtue through concrete depictions of virtuous persons. As a result, the poet is superior to the philosophers. The historian, on the other hand, describes virtue and wickedness using historical examples, but he must stay true to the facts. The poet has more power than the historian to shape the facts of life in whatever way he wants. History discusses what was actually done, whereas poetry discusses what is appropriate to be said or done based on the law of probability or necessity. Apart from that, history is concerned with the particular, while poetry is concerned with the universal. Sidney exalts poetry, placing it

above not only philosophy and history, but also disciplines such as astronomy and geometry. He considers it to be the most fertile form of knowledge, and so the monarch of all forms of learning.

According to Sidney, the aim of poetry is not limited to teaching and delighting, but to move the mind and stir the heart. It is by its power to move the minds that it influences the behavior and conduct. The poet impacts the readers more successfully than any other art form by utilizing delight as his instrument. Poem is the most common means to teach morality, as virtue is the most ideal end of all worldly learning. Sidney's perspective on the power of poetry to 'transport' the mind and heart of the reader is quite similar to Longinus'. Poetry not only conveys ethical knowledge but it also moves and inspires to notable actions. It has an elevating influence on the soul. Sidney's views regarding the functions of poetry are more romantic in nature than neo-classicist.

Sidney makes a significant point when he says that rhyme, verse, or meter is not required elements of poetry. He explains in his *Apology* "It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet". The poet is known for the memorable images of virtue and vice that he presents in his writings, which provide both pleasure and wisdom. A poet's work is marked by its delightful teaching. Although Sidney does not regard verse to be the 'essence' of poetry, yet he is conscious of the significance of verse, of the pleasure it brings as an ornament to poetry.

Sidney clearly had been contemplating the problem of the poet's role in society for a long time; perhaps since his earliest education in which he would have come across Plato's famous 'banishment of poets'. What slightly jars our mind is his repeated emphasis on the moral and didactic aim of poetry. Sidney's choices of words 'to teach' and 'to delight' suggest that for him, the didactic purpose is foremost. He seems to go off the mark when he says "I still and utterly deny that there is sprung out of earth a more fruitful knowledge (than poetry)" (Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry*). Poetry deserves its rightful place as an art which instructs and delights, but it cannot be considered as the most fertile source and repository of knowledge. We agree more with what Dryden says in his *Defense of the Essay on Dramatic Poesy* – "Delight is the chief, if not the only end of poesy, instruction can be admitted, but in the second place, for poesy only instructs as it delights".

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GANDHIAN NATIONALISM, *KANTHAPURA* AND ANTI-CASTE POLITICS

Neha Agarwala , Semester IV

Indian literature in English, especially novels, flourished in the decades of the 1930s and the 1940s, where they “played a very important part in imagining and embodying the radical vision of anti-colonial nationalism.” (Mehrotra 190) Writing in English, numerous authors, some from a background of both Indian and European education, were writing novels with “varying degrees of commitment, in the social and political issues which preoccupied the great age of Indian nationalism.” (Ibid) Simultaneously, this was also the decade when Gandhian nationalism led the anti-colonial struggle, and a distinct sub-genre called the 'Mahatma novel' emerged. These decades found a place for many great writers like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, K. S. Venkataramani, Ahmed Ali, Bhabani Bhattacharya, who were writing in English with most of their work revolving around the 'Mahatma theme'. But each one of them was exploring this theme in their unique way. These novels not only focused on the anti-imperialist agenda of Gandhian nationalism but also by and large addressed the socio-economic inequalities pervasive in the Indian society – from the condition of women to the untouchables and the poor – in varying degrees.

These writers formed the face of the Indian novel in English, and each one of them tried to feature Gandhi himself or the Gandhian theme in their novels, whereby an attempt at homogenising the socio-religious and cultural realities of India was also made. But there were a few exceptions too. So, if there were novels like *Murugan, the Tilller* (1927), *Kandan, The Patriot : A Novel of New India in the Making* (1932) by K. S. Venkataraman; *Athavar House* (1937) by K. Nagarajan; *Kanthapura* (1938) by Raja Rao, were explicitly following the Gandhian theme, there were also novels like *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936), and *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) by Mulk Raj Anand that used the central theme of social inequality like caste and class, and Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940) that explored the impact of a colonial encounter with culture.

All these novels, though dealing with various themes, did address the socio-economic injustices that formed the part and parcel of Indian society. The writers, mainly coming from a privileged background – a foreign education, dominant caste, and class – were exploring different social themes from their respective locations in the hierarchy. Exercising a considerable hegemony by claiming to be speakers of all oppressed and marginalised people of the nation, this nationalist literature claimed to be a reflection of a homogeneous territory called 'India'.

This was also the age when another social reform movement was shaping the Indian colonial society in its way. A widespread anti-caste movement characterised by the writings and socio-political efforts for

the emancipation of the oppressed castes and untouchables of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar works of Erode Venkatappa Ramasamy (a.k.a. Periyar) and his self-respect movement launched against untouchability and casteism, and Jotiba Phule who along with his wife Savitri Phule opened schools for the oppressed castes. Although, anti-caste literature hadn't still developed as a genre then, and whatever little discussion on caste existed within literature was by savarna writers like Premchand or Mulk Raj Anand, these three had singlehandedly managed to change the shape of Indian caste society for the next decades to come.

The basic premise of my paper is to critically analyse Gandhi's idea of the emancipation of the untouchables through Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* against the backdrop of the anti-caste movement and literature.

Untouchability, though unconstitutional now, was sanctioned by the caste-Hindu society of India during Gandhi's time. An entire section of society was outcasted, and deemed impure owing to the manual scavenging that they were forced to do. Deeming it to be inhuman, Gandhi had called upon his fellow caste-Hindus and urged them to treat the untouchables kindly, gave them the name Harijan (children of God), and asked them to purify themselves and get rid of their evil habits. “[M]y nationalism, fierce though it is, is not exclusive” (18), claimed Gandhi, and claimed that national liberation could only be achieved through the inclusion of all marginalised categories – untouchables and women. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* very closely follows this aspect of Gandhian nationalism.

Kanthapura, published in 1938, would soon go on to be regarded as a seminal text written during India's freedom struggle. The novel is set in a small, caste-ridden, South Indian village of the same name, and the narrator of the novel is a Brahmin woman, Achakka. The very beginning of the novel pronounces the caste location of the protagonist. She knows the exact number of houses in the Brahmin quarter, to which she belongs, and describes Moorthy, an eligible bachelor according to her, as “Brahmanic”. (Rao 4) But apart from this quarter, she has no credible information about the other ones – the Pariah quarter, the Potters' quarter, Weavers' quarter and the Shudra's quarter. She justifies her ignorance by drawing in the complicity of the reader and stating that it was expected of her to not go to the Pariah quarter and she has only seen it “from the street corner Beadle Timmayya's hut.” (Rao 6) This cements the Brahmanical gaze of the novel, and every recorded incident that Achakka will narrate will come from this privileged gaze, which would extend to the author's own caste location, and his own credibility while recording the attitudes of the characters that belonged to the untouchable caste.

Throughout the novel, Brahmanical religious practices and religious gatherings run parallel to the freedom struggle happening throughout the country. The village has its own Goddess Kenchamma, Moorthy finds a linga in a backyard and they celebrate Sankara-Vijaya, Harikathas were a regular occurrence, and every other Brahmanical festival was celebrated. The Harikatha mythicises Gandhi by comparing him to Siva and divinises him and his politics of freedom. But all of these religious customs and festivals follow the Brahmanical tenets, completely ignoring the rituals and customs followed by the Pariahs.

The first wave of change begins when Moorthy comes back from the city, having been indoctrinated in the Gandhian nationalist movement, and begins speaking about the mixing of the castes that was inevitable in the face of resistance against colonial oppression. The villagers are plagued by the fear of losing their castes and facing the wrath of the gods, and this “confusion of castes” that would lead to “pollution of progeny” is compared with the fatalistic “Kaliyuga floods” that is believed to have swept the country during the apocalyptic age according to Hindu mythology. (Rao 31) The village strongly opposes Moorthy's attempts to throw open the temples to the Pariahs, with Rangamma, clarifying that the Mahatma hasn't approved of this, he “always says let the caste exist, let the separate eating exist, let not one community marry with the other”. This anxiety over being damned forces the villagers to excommunicate Moorthy and “his family and all generations to come” for visiting the Pariah quarter.

But even with all the efforts that Moorthy makes towards the inclusion of the untouchables, the cost he pays, including losing his mother, who dies of the despair on hearing of the ex-communication, this entire project of intermingling is achieved through a patronising, upper-caste gaze. Moorthy only visits the quarter of the Pariahs, teaches them alphabets, and walks beside them on the street, but the moment he has to enter the Pariah house, the theory of inclusion is put to practice. The first time Moorthy actually has to enter a Pariah house, he is tormented with uncertainty and fear. He reluctantly enters Rachanna's house, is sure that “there is a carcass in the backyard” and can smell “the stench of hiding and the stench of pickled pigs”. (Rao 82) He holds on to his holy thread as if trying to hold on to his Brahminism and purity. With trembling hands, and while chanting prayers, he accepts the tumbler of milk that was offered to him, takes one sip, and slips it aside. After leaving the quarters, even the memory of the trivial act of drinking one sip of milk makes his “hair stand(s) on end” and it necessitates drinking of the Ganges water, a bath, and a change of clothes. This event becomes a very telling revelation of the reality of Gandhi's ideas against untouchability and the deep-seated idea of purity that plagued even the best-trained minds of revolutionaries. After all, “a Brahmin is a Brahmin”. (Rao 85)

But what is also revealed in this episode is the patronizing idea that the upper-castes have towards the untouchables. Rachanna's begging of Moorthy to at least touch the milk tumbler “as though it were offered to the gods” and that it would sanctify them showcases the psychological colonisation of the untouchables that the author thinks, plagues them. Calling herself a “poor hussy” and calling Moorthy the “learned master” are other examples of this conditioning of the oppressed, who are made to believe time and again that their 'impure' status is divine providence. (Rao 83)

All in all, this inclusionary politics of Gandhi fails to acknowledge that their idea of inclusion borders across a problematic, upper-caste gaze, that sees itself as a savior, who wants to liberate people but on their own terms. The novel fails to provide them with an agency of their own, and though the novel tries to paint a panacea offered by Gandhian politics to the untouchables—whereby they forget their caste despite it having defined them and their identity for all their life—it fails to check its own inherent biases. They readily accept his call for action without demanding any retribution or affirmative

action and are content with staying in the courtyard of the temple in their own corner, keeping the status quo intact. Contrary to this, Moorthy's mother loses her life, Swami plays all and every trick to keep the Pariahs where they belong, Venkamma is also driven in her actions by her own casteism. All these characters hold on to their caste for dear life, fighting against the inclusion with all their might, but the Pariahs are assumed to be complacent, subjugated people who do as they are told.

The very idea of untouchability is embedded in the binary opposition of purity and impurity where purity is accorded the privileged status. This purity is extended to the Brahmins, while the untouchables, who are excommunicated from this hierarchy itself, are branded impure. Gandhi's thought that "Untouchability is the product, therefore, not of the caste system, but of the distinction of high and low that has crept into Hinduism and is corroding it. The attack on untouchability is thus an attack upon this 'high-and-low'-ness. The moment untouchability goes, the caste system itself will be purified" fails to acknowledge the rigidity of this hierarchy on which the very foundation of Hindu society rests. (3)

Critiquing this simplistic view of eradication of caste-based atrocities and oppression of the untouchables that the Congress had adopted under the Gandhian leadership, Dr. B.R Ambedkar, in his *Annihilation of Caste* (1936) writes that, "The caste system is not merely a division of labourers – which is quite different from division of labour – it is a hierarchy in which the divisions of labourers are graded one above the other." (47) He notes further that no political reform is complete without social reform, and to achieve social reform, this watertight compartmentalisation of people into various occupations coinciding solely on their caste had to be eradicated. That the real problem behind the oppression and marginalisation of the outcastes wasn't just the idea of impurity against them, but the entire caste system that needed to be abolished.

Kanthapura tries to achieve caste solidarity by keeping intact the very institution that marginalises and oppresses them. Throughout the novel, the Pariah remain the Other, who are represented as passive objects who are awed by the caste-Hindus, have no aspirations or dreams of their own, wholeheartedly accept their own subjugation. Beyond these categorisations, they have no voice of their own, and the high-caste gaze fails to acknowledge their lived experiences. They are mere tools for them in order to achieve freedom against colonial rule, and even in this so-called inclusion comes with a set of terms and conditions.

In divinising the Gandhian nationalism, according to him the status of the supernatural, who has the power to unite everyone within a period, Raja Rao tries to paint a very homogenised picture of nationalism. Years and centuries of oppression and marginalisation faced by the untouchables are eradicated by the mere presence and visitation of Moorthy. The novel portrays Gandhi without any flaws and it suggests that conformity to Gandhian texts is the only legitimate path to nationalism. (Sethi 100) This idea of nationalism goes entirely unchallenged in the novel except from the three Brahmin characters who are driven by their Brahmanic ideas of purity/impurity and their own greed—Venkamma, Bhatta, and Swami. This unanimous acceptance of exclusionary nationalism was yet another attempt at

homogenising the entire country into one single nation-state. In this form of nationalism, the “subaltern cannot speak” and has no rights. (Spivak 104)

Just three years before *Kanthapura*, Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) was published. Anand dedicated his entire novel to an untouchable boy Bakha and follows a day in his life. Unlike the Pariahs of *Kanthapura*, Bakha is not a mere prop that the author uses. Bakha, although engaged in the menial job of cleaning human waste, goes through pangs of humiliation at the hands of the dominant caste men and women. He feels enraged at the treatment that is meted out to him but the inferior social status prevents him from speaking up. He has his dreams and aspirations and hates the work that he is engaged in. He wants to improve his social status and has a sense of self-respect. Although even Anand's authorial position is often challenged given his own caste location, unlike Rao's portrayal of the marginalised, Anand's character at least thinks and feels. Anand constantly challenges the Gandhian concept of emancipation of the untouchables by presenting characters who are sympathetic to Bakha to some extent, but who fail to alleviate his position. Although Anand touches upon the redundancy of the Gandhian ideology towards untouchability, he does not provide any viable solution to this oppression which Rao tries to do through religion. Anand, writing from a privileged caste location, seems to be leaving it upon the oppressed to chart out their own way against this dehumanisation and marginalisation, which Rao fails to consider.

Highlighting this attempt at homogenising Indian nationalism, Partha Chatterjee records in *Nation and its Fragments* that Indian nationalism was synonymous with Hindu nationalism, which tried to posit itself as an umbrella term for all diverse religions and castes. According to this India was a “generic entity, with fixed territorial definitions, that act as the permanent arena for the history of jati.” (110) This nationalist project that sweeps under the carpet the systematic oppression sanctioned by the caste system proves to be a very reductionist approach towards nationalism and true liberation. Gandhi and Rao, by trying to create a unified 'Us' opposing the colonial 'other', fails to listen to the marginalised voices, provide them adequate representation, basic human rights – education, clean drinking water, shelter – and emancipate them in their truest sense.

To conclude, the nationalist project that is highlighted in *Kanthapura*, written by a Caste-Hindu author, spoke for and on behalf of the diverse voices that existed within the national boundaries, appropriating their silence, painting them in the lens that he deemed fit, and presenting a very biased picture of homogeneity to the reader. Lived experiences of the oppressed are done away with and religion is shown to be the binding element between the oppressor and the oppressed. Opposed to this passivity, agitating for the abolition of the caste system and fighting for the rights of the oppressed castes and the untouchables, Dr. Ambedkar claimed that, social reform would only happen in this country if the caste system is annihilated, because “turn in any direction you like, caste is the monster that crosses your path. You cannot have political reform, you cannot have economic reform unless you kill this monster. (Ambedkar 47)

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SHAKESPEARE'S WOMEN AND MARLOWE'S WOMEN

(A Comparative Study)

Rhea Chatterjee, *Semester-II*

If we consider the position of women in the Elizabethan era, it is indeed interesting. On one hand, there was an unmarried woman on the throne of Elizabethan England but on the other hand, the society was supremely patriarchal. The people in the Elizabethan era had a very clear stereotype of men and women, the gender roles were rigidly defined. The men were expected to be the breadwinners and the leaders, the women were expected to be housewives devoted to husbands and children. Women were considered to be the subordinate sex, not merely considering the physical parameter. Women were supposed to follow, while men were supposed to lead. Although the Elizabethan age is directly related to the Renaissance and the overall enlightenment, the impact was not very significant if we consider the aspect of the gender role. ("Feminism History")

When we consider the aspect of drama, it is a reflection of contemporary society. Prevalent worldwide playwrights do not really work in a vacuum; they are almost like a mirror upholding and reflecting the problems of contemporary society. The English Renaissance theater or the Elizabethan theater refers to the theater of England between the time frame of 1558 and 1642. The two most prominent names when it comes to the Elizabethan Drama are that of William Shakespeare and Christopher Marlowe. Although there are several speculations in the contemporary literary world as to whether these two people are two different individuals or one, there have been several controversies considering the aspect of authorship. However, that is not something that we are concerned with. Here, we take two of these playwrights as different individuals with their respective sets of works. Coming back to the previous point, drama mirrors the society, arises a poignant question, if the Elizabethan society was patriarchal, how were the women portrayed in the Elizabethan plays?

The answer to the following question is extremely interesting; because if we consider the plays of Christopher Marlowe, he adhered to the Elizabethan notion in his representation of the female characters. But on the other hand, Shakespeare presents a diverse range of women characters. Shakespeare presents some of the strongest female characters but in doing so he does not deviate from the norms that pertained to the age. What we witness throughout the plays of Shakespeare is an insight into the female character as perceived by the existing Elizabethan culture. On deeper scrutiny, we can extrapolate that Shakespeare's female characters reflect the image of the 'Elizabethan women' with uncontested realism. The women characters in the plays of William Shakespeare were mostly virtuous

and obedient. When they were not, they were undesirable and sometimes even evil. Some critics are of the opinion that Shakespeare is a misogynist while another school believes that Shakespeare subtly supported women and their rights. In my opinion, Shakespeare was simply a playwright whose purpose was to entertain the audience through his plays. He drew his source from the real and the society around him and some of his plays and their characters got inspired by history as well. We need to keep in mind that he was writing in an age where the emancipation of women was an unacceptable societal notion. However, we come across a wide range of women characters, and in my opinion, each one of them had exercised emancipation in some way or the other. It was inevitable that the courage or the emancipation witnessed in the female characters were definitely not as stark as the male characters. However, it cannot be disregarded that Shakespeare had portrayed some of the strongest female characters that we find in the overall fraternity of the English drama.

If we consider the characters of Ophelia and Desdemona in

Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Hamlet* respectively, represent the “docile and the innocent” women adhering to the Elizabethan norms. The roles of these characters provide a sense of complete faithfulness to the leading figures in the play. In both plays, these women meet a tragic death due to a false rejection of love. On one hand, Othello kills Desdemona presuming that her love is false and she is infidel, on the other hand, Ophelia dies because she reads Hamlet's mask of madness as rejection.

Let us consider these lines from Hamlet, which is spoken by Ophelia :-

“Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword,
Th' expectation and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mold of form,
Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite down!” (*Hamlet*, Act III, scene i)

Here, it is evident that Ophelia is aware of Hamlet's downfall which she mourns. These lines trace her own decadency to insanity.

Now let us consider the following quote from Desdemona :-

“I do perceive here a divided duty” (Othello, Act I scene iii).

Here she is torn between her father and her husband. Here, she makes it clear that her duty is divided. Her loyalty is now divided.

Ophelia and Desdemona are presented as the standard virtuous women adhering to the image of the Elizabethan women. These two women are submissive and devoted to the leading male figures. But at the same time, we have a figure like Juliet, in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* who seems to be very naïve at the beginning of the play; however, she turns out to be extremely strong when it comes to her love for Romeo. In William Shakespeare's play, *King Lear*, we have the character of Cordelia who is the youngest

daughter of King Lear. She shows emancipation and is thoroughly misunderstood for the same. It is only at the end that the protagonist realizes his folly and understands her worth. All of these characters presented above are diverse if we consider their appearance or their nature, but one thing that is common for all of these women is their emancipation when it comes to love. All of these women had the strongest feeling when it came to love. Ophelia and Desdemona and Juliet in a way sacrificed their life for the one they loved. Cordelia, despite her father's initial rejection of her honesty, continued being the ideal daughter. Therefore, it will be wrong to disregard the emancipation that these women had exercised.

When we are analyzing the female characters of the Shakespearean tragedies, one of the most unparalleled and frightening characters is that of Lady Macbeth in Shakespeare's play, *Macbeth*.

“Come you spirits, That tends on mortal thoughts, unsex me here.”

(*Macbeth* Act I, Scene V.).

It is through this character Shakespeare allows us to access a deeper insight into the concept of the 'Elizabethan women'. On one hand, the Elizabethan women were portrayed as the symbol of unadulterated love, perseverance, and unfaltering devotion; on the other hand, they were also represented as essentially evil characters. Lady Macbeth is one of the most prominent examples; she is the one who acts as the primary instrument in the murder of Duncan. Although in the latter part of the play, her moral conscience drives her to insanity which makes it inevitable that she had a feminine and docile side to her but she is predominantly evil.

Her feminine and compassionate side clearly finds an elucidation in the following quote where she clearly explicates her guilt.

“What's done cannot be undone.”

(*Macbeth*, Act V, scene I).

Apart from that, there is Gertrude from *Hamlet*. Gertrude is not necessarily evil; she is driven by emotions rather than introspection. It is her impulsive self that brings her to a more negative side. However, Gertrude is furnished with many good qualities. It is just that she is not conspicuously intelligent. If we consider the characters of Goneril and Regan from *King Lear*, perhaps they embody evil in the truest sense. They are pretentious and cold-blooded. Therefore, starting from women like Ophelia and Desdemona to women like Goneril and Regan, Shakespeare in his tragedies has explicated remarkable diversification. In most cases, the strong and the strong-willed women are furnished with negative shades, adhering to the norms of the prevalent society. The crux of the matter is if a playwright deviates from the existing norms, he could not succeed or receive patronage given the concerned society. But in my opinion, Shakespeare's heroines have a strong presence and each of them exercises emancipation in some way or the other.

When we consider the role of women, it becomes poignant when it comes to Shakespearean comedies. While on one hand, Shakespeare is criticized when it comes to the representation of the Dark

lady in his sonnets or the portrayal of a character like Lady Macbeth, similarly he is considered to be a prodigy when it comes to the roles of women like Portia, Rosalind in his plays *Merchant of Venice* and *As You Like It*. We have many notable characters like Beatrice, in *Much Ado About Nothing*, Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, we have the character of Viola in his play *Twelfth Night*. All of these women exercise emancipation more explicitly compared to the heroines of the tragedy.

"My father had a daughter loved a man
As it might be, perhaps, were I a woman,
I should your Lordship"

(*Twelfth Night*, Act II, Scene iv).

These lines are spoken by Viola disguised as Cesario to Orsino. The dialogues of the comedy heroines and the tragedy heroines contrast the characters of these women. The heroines from Shakespearean comedies are intelligent and spontaneous in their demeanor.

When we consider powerful women in Shakespearean comedies, the first example that comes to our minds is Portia from *The Merchant of Venice*. Portia is wealthy, quick-witted, and beautiful. It is she who ultimately emerges as the antidote to Shylock's malice. Although she remains confined to her father's wish to choose her suitor, she ultimately chooses the man that she loves, Bassanio. Here, we do not see a heroine who is helpless and merely pines for her love but witness a heroine who at the end of the play, in the disguise of a man becomes instrumental in saving the male protagonist of the play. Now let us consider the character of Viola in *Twelfth Night*, she remains disguised as a man for the major part of the play, therefore she is perturbed by an identity crisis. She has to cater to her role in disguise, she takes the disguise of a man and calls herself Cesario. However, in the play *Twelfth Night*, all the characters have fickle affections. Embodying the Shakespearean ideal, the love and passion that Viola nurtures for Orsino are unadulterated.

("Shakespeare's Women")

Similarly, the character of Rosalind dominates the plot of *As You Like It*. She is furnished with the complexity of emotions and subtlety of thought. Rosalind is one of the favourite characters of feminist critics. The reason is her ability to subvert the limitations that society would impose upon her as a woman. She has both a gentle side as well as an emancipated side. Following the convention of the Shakespearean plays, even Rosalind disguises herself as a man in order to woo the man she is in love with. Further, she instructs Orlando, her prospective lover tutoring him how to become more accomplished as a lover. If we consider Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*, the character of Beatrice is another strong woman character. She is feisty, cynical, intelligent, and sharp. She is furnished with a good amount of witty dialogues which is a delightful aspect of the play.

On one hand, Shakespeare has presented some of the most emancipated women characters; but there is one common theme that a woman had to take the disguise of a man to subvert the imposed limitations. Therefore, the aspect of women's empowerment still remains ambiguous when we considered the play of

Shakespeare. Some critics believe that Shakespeare was on the side of the women while others consider him to be somewhat misogynistic. From the perspective of the playwright, it is not easy to subvert the conventions of contemporary society. If a playwright would go completely against the conventions of the prevalent society neither would he receive patronage nor would his play remain relevant to the contemporary audience. However, within the boundaries of the societal protocols, Shakespeare had realistically portrayed emancipated women relevant to his times. This is something inevitable.

When we consider the aspect of Elizabethan drama, as stated, another important name would be that of Christopher Marlowe. If we consider the women in the oeuvre of Marlowe, they do not have a very significant role. These women do not have any individual existence, they are outside the patriarchal framework of the play. In the plays of Marlowe, the focus is always on the Renaissance man. If we consider the plays like *Tamburlaine* or even *Dr. Faustus* or even *Edward II*, what is it that we find when we come down to the character analysis? We generally find a male protagonist with vaulting ambition which eventually acts as the subsequent hamartia. The women hardly find any proper representation.

The only play where we find an emancipated female protagonist if we consider Marlowe is his lesser-known play, *Dido the Queen of Carthage*. She is the only strong female protagonist who possesses heroic dimensions. In the play, she's represented as Aeneas's equal and feminine counterpart. However, even if we analyze the character of Dido, she becomes manipulated and appears impulsive that eventually leads to her tragic downfall. Considering the fact that Marlow has only composed tragedies, the character of Dido is romantic as well as tragic. Despite her weaknesses, she is an emancipated character.

("About Christopher Marlowe")

If we come to his play *Dr. Faustus*, the play is devoid of any female representation. If we consider *Edward II*, the character of Isabella is one that is worth scrutiny. Isabella attempts to trace her way into power and politics however ultimately she is imprisoned and is inevitably tragic. If we consider *Tamburlaine*, we have the characters of Zenocrate and Zabina. The character of Zenocrate although appears pompous on a surface level, more so during her verbal combat with Zabina, the captured wife of Bajazeth, she seems extremely cold and cruel. However, her emancipation makes no impact on *Tamburlaine*. Zabina too remains extremely vulnerable and meets a tragic end. If we consider *The Jew of Malta*, we have the character of Abigail. Another play that finds females is *The Massacre at Paris*. Even in this play, Queen of Navarre does not really have a big role although it is significant to a certain extent.

It will be false to assert that the women in the plays of Christopher Marlowe have no significance at all, they do contribute to the progression of the plot. However, the contribution of the women characters in the plays of Marlowe is very limited. The majority of the critics have considered Marlowe to be a misogynist. Whether Marlowe wanted to conform to the Elizabethan standards or was he actually biased towards men is a completely different area that can be debated and analyzed. The fact that remains prominent is Marlowe's representation of the women characters is definitely not as vivid as that of Shakespeare's.

Shakespeare's heroines yield a different impact altogether if we consider his plots. In many of his plays, it is actually the heroine who drives the plot and dominates over it. Marlowe's women characters on the other hand definitely contribute to the plot but their significance is extremely limited. If we consider the plays of Marlowe, we do not really find memorable female characters. On the other hand, Shakespeare's plays consist of some of the most memorable female characters in the entire history of English drama. Shakespearean heroines exude various personalities, they do follow a subtle pattern but they are all very different from each other. We come across innocent and sentimental women such as Desdemona and Ophelia, we come across strong characters with negative shades such as Lady Macbeth, Gertrude. We come across intelligent and sensible characters such as Portia and Viola. Shakespearean heroines whether tragic or comic give us a wide range of personalities. On the other hand, Marlowe's heroines are definitely different from one another but their traits are more or less very similar. Even if we consider the character of Dido or Isabella, they do not offer the level of contrast that Shakespeare has to offer.

Both the dramatists in consideration are prodigious in their ways however when it comes to the aspect of representing women, Shakespeare definitely ranks over Marlowe. Shakespeare will be forever known to have created some of the most outstanding female characters and showing their conflict with the culture they dwell in. Although many critics highlight the element of misogyny prevailing in his plays, according to me there is a subtle sense of feministic fervour in his plays. He portrays women characters with unparalleled realism with regards to his time. This is something that will preserve his relevance in the contemporary literary scenario. Further, both Shakespeare and Marlowe have immense contributions in the field of English drama, however, Shakespeare will always remain a class apart when it comes to the aspect of representing women.

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WHO IS CINDERELLA : REVISITING THE FAIRY TALE THROUGH LENS OF FEMINISM

Upasana Chatterjee, *Semester-II*

Abstract :

This paper aims to take a look at the classic fairy tale and folklore, the story of Cinderella, to highlight how the tale and the character, Cinderella herself has been analysed and mis-interpreted by many critics over the ages and also aims to provide a fresh perspective upon the character and her story while highlighting how there's more depth and nuance to it than what meets the eyes of the audience and readers at the first glance; it aims at justifying why Cinderella does not necessarily deserve the hate and grievance that she has received over the ages and why it's time we stop blaming the victim.

Key words : Cinderella, Feminism, Victim, Disney, Fairy tale

The popular fairy tale and folklore 'Cinderella' owes its roots to the French author, Charles Perrault's novel *Cendrillon* which was published in the year 1697. Though the tale was mostly popularized by Walt Disney Studio's version of the same, released in 1950, which bears much resemblance to the original story written by Perrault. Since then the tale has been told multiple times by different adapters and filmmakers. The tale has gotten a lot of despise and grief in recent years and the years that followed them. Critics have often considered the character to be a weak role model for young girls to follow, setting roots for the hatred over Disney's princess culture. Many pop-culture celebrities in recent years have criticized the tale for being anti-feminist while talking about breaking the glass slipper. However, this hatred is not something that Cinderella has not faced before. Moreover, the French writer, Simone de Beauvoir, who has significant influence on both feminist existentialism and feminist theory, has went far enough to say that "Everything still encourages the young girls to expect fortune and happiness from some Prince Charming, rather than to attempt by herself their difficult and uncertain conquest." (Beauvoir 126)¹

The ancient tale, often read as and assumed to be a story about a weak passive woman who has to be rescued by Prince Charming to escape her abusive household and finally become a rich happy princess, is anything but that. Her perseverance, optimism and courage have often been neglected by audience and critics as pure dumb luck which along with her pretty face has made her the face of Disney Princess Franchise and this has become a straw man for the argument that Disney princesses are weak and even toxic role model for young girls. The pop-culture celebrity moms have went on to pledge, at least in front of the media, that they will keep their daughters far away from Disney princesses. There are multiple books and articles which have even vilified Cinderella for being the passive dreamer and some have gone

as far as to consider her a gold-digger with no personality or strength of her own. The self-help book by Colette Dowling *The Cinderella Complex: Women's Hidden Fear of Independence* and another book of the same genre by Peggy Orenstein, *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*, are based on a misreading of the original tale. A closer look at the original tale will help one to understand that not only is Cinderella a feminist and quite strong a role model for young girls, but also that these interpretations of the tale which claim to establish the root for girl power and feminism are actually quite sexist and reinforce the masculine stereotypes of what it means to be strong and powerful. Although the Barbie and princess culture as a whole indeed sets unhealthy and toxic standards for young girls to grow up with, but placing so much of the blame upon this one story goes nowhere close to making sense. Critics probably feel that they are highlighting and rejecting the damaging idea that the happy ending for a girl is to be rescued by a Prince Charming, but the story does not try to highlight that idea at all to begin with.

Painting Cinderella as no more than a Damsel in distress will be a rejection of the condition that she has had to face since a very young age; ignoring the context of her livelihood and wrongfully blaming the victim of emotional and physical abuse for not being able to escape her situation. This somewhat pre-conceived and biased view on the part of the critic somehow cheapens the depth, nuance and what is actually an empowering message at the heart of the tale of Cinderella. A closer look will also, very clearly reveal that the story is not about a prince stepping in to save the helpless princess, neither of a magical creature helping out a shattered child, but rather it is a tale of a very strong woman, who in the face of adversity, violence and slavery chooses hope, optimism and kindness, even when it's extremely difficult for her to do so, and uses her power of creativity, imagination, quick wit and inner strength to rescue herself from the unfavourable circumstances. The story of Cinderella is so well known and familiar to people that it is easy to assume that everything that has to be observed and understood about it, as the story unfolds, is already known to one. In recent years even Disney itself played into the Cinderella fallacy; the new retelling of Cinderella through Walt Disney Studios in the movie named *Enchanted* parodies the tale. The modern day filmmakers from Walt Disney seem to have made an adaptation and parody of the original without bothering themselves to look into the message that the original tale provides. This criticism, like most done before and after it, focuses on the popular culture of the shared notion of Cinderella and not on what the character actually says or does as the tale progresses.

Linda Pershing says of *Enchanted* that “Enchanted appropriates and reworks folk and fairy tale motifs to support a conventional Euro-North American world view that both obfuscates and reinforces patriarchal ideologies in this film, the female protagonist seeks personal fulfillment through romance.” (Pershing 137-138)²

As pointed out earlier, the adaptation completely lacks the noteworthy point that the original Cinderella did not seek personal fulfillment through romance. In fact, one key point which the criticizing Cinderella culture misses out on is that Cinderella's dreams never revolved around a man or a prince but around a hope and a vision of future happiness and freedom from her abusers. In an era where vision

boards and positive thinking are encouraged and prioritized, Cinderella can actually be considered as an excellent role model for not only young girls but for anyone who feels stuck in a situation be it a job or toxic relationships with family or oneself. In the original tale or the original Disney movie the prince is never for once seen in her dreams, all she dreams of is an escape and hope for a better future. In the retelling, *Enchanted*, Cinderella passively claims that she dreams, but the “dream” of the original Cinderella is a retreat to her own imagination just to stay sane. It is much more than passive day dreams and to her it is something on which no one has any power, as in the movie she claims that her stepmother cannot order her to stop dreaming. Furthermore, it is Cinderella's resilience and a subtext of her inner strength to keep her dreams alive, even after being forced to become a servant in her own house with no seeming way of escaping Lady Tremaine's torments, as she keeps reassuring herself and the audience that if one believes in ones dreams, they will come true someday.

The chief personality traits of her character- her kindness, hopefulness, and optimism- are considered stereotypically feminine and with the evolution of the strong girl trope, women fighting back actively, these traits are not considered any more than submissive. The more current Disney princesses such as Mulan, Moana, Elsa and even Rapunzel actively fight back or try to escape the situation at least. Considering these stereotypical masculine traits as the only signs of bravery and strength while neglecting the stereotypical feminine characteristics as passive behaviour is a quite damaging idea in itself, and not a very positive idea to induce in the young minds of next generations either. Labeling Cinderella as a damsel in distress when she is not able to hold back her tears just reinforces the old saying “men don't cry”. Writing off Cinderella's traits of kindness and perseverance as weak devalues femininity while reinforcing the patriarchal standards of strength and weakness. Since the audience is so prone to receive the tale or watch the movie passively, critics often tend to wilfully ignore the context of Cinderella's livelihood, her upbringing and even the position of women in the era when Cinderella was born and she lived. The opening lines of the movie literally state: “Cinderella was abused, humiliated and finally forced to become a servant in her own house.” And originally belonging to the era of mid 1600s, Cinderella or any other woman did not have much choice but to look for a suitable groom to acquire a respectable position in the society and any novel, written during that time period and much after it, reflected the same.

Throughout the original movie by Walt Disney, Cinderella's stepmother Lady Tremaine is lit up in a way which resembles the settings and jump scares of a horror movie, this makes it clear to the viewers that Cinderella has no power in the dynamic and moreover, has no choice but to obey her. As the movie reaches its climax the viewers witness a truly disturbing scene of abuse where Cinderella's stepsisters rip off her clothes from her body as Lady Tremaine watches with satisfaction. The scene is bound to leave the audience with the feeling that they have just witnessed a violent assault. The blackening of the background as Anastasia and Drizella rip off her dress frames and amplifies the terror in Cinderella's eyes. The fact that the dress belonged to her late mother makes the scene much more terrifying to witness. Not only is she brutally attacked and humiliated but also had lost the only belonging she had of her mother. The beginning scene of the movie vaguely hints that Lady Tremaine might be responsible

for the death of her husband; this scene symbolically represents that Cinderella's stepfamily killed her mother one more time after she had already lost her. They leave Cinderella feeling destroyed, violated and her dress in tatters.

It was then that her fairy god mother appears, when Cinderella almost loses all hope, and needed it the most. The fairy god mother appears as the physical manifestation of Cinderella's imagination, optimism and belief. It is when she believes that she has hit the rock bottom, her dreams and optimism materializes in a physical form. The viewers are once again reminded of Cinderella's hopefulness and dreams as a reprise of "Dream is a wish that your heart makes" plays in the background and it also intends to tell the viewers that fairy god mother is an embodiment of Cinderella's dream and her heartfelt wishes. Also, as just in the previous scene her mother's last belongings and her warmth have been taken away from Cinderella, fairy god mother might also be an embodiment of Cinderella's desire for a loving mother figure as well as a wish to mother herself. The fairy god mother works upon magic, creativity and resourcefulness, the qualities that Cinderella has relied on for survival. The fairy god mother's magic works upon the potential that Cinderella already has in herself; as she turns a pumpkin into a carriage, the mice into horses and Cinderella's horse into a coachman. The transformation of Gus is of much importance as it reinforces the idea of what imagination and hope can do for one. For only after being turned into a horse he is able to fight back Lucifer the cat.

Cinderella's ability to remain positive in the face of adversities and her attitude of never giving up on dreams turns her fantasy of freedom into reality. And even her going to the ball has gotten nothing to do with her aspiration of finding the prince. It is a fight for her own right as she hears that every eligible woman has been invited to it. When she reaches the palace and the prince notices her for the first time, she does not even care to notice him and rather looks around exploring the palace, a place which she would probably not get to see otherwise. It is also a much needed break from the abuse that she has to go through on daily basis. When she is shown to be dancing with the prince, she does not even realize that she is dancing with the royalty and falls in love with a man of her choice. This unforeseen circumstance of falling in love serves as a justice as she has a warm heart that is capable of loving someone whereas her stepsisters who are painted as cruel and petty lack a heart that can truly love someone; both the sisters and Lady Tremaine are mostly focused upon the eligibility of the prince and try their best to gain his attention.

The evening that Cinderella spends in the ball again tends to send the message that imagination, creativity and positive thinking can make one powerful enough to build one's own reality. Her dreams are not mere idle daydreams that the later adaptations and many others have taken them for.

Her ultimate triumph over her destiny and the creation of her own path come when Lady Tremaine shatters the glass slipper that Cinderella was about to try on, but she brings out the other one she had with herself. The shattering of the glass slipper by Lady Tremaine is symbolic of her attempt to shatter Cinderella's dreams again, but these dreams can not be shattered as the fragile glass slipper itself is the key to her freedom which is a very fantastical otherworldly, almost imaginary accessory to fulfill her dreams.

The pop culture reference on “shatter the glass slipper, break the glass ceiling” rings quite ignorant as it is through fitting in the glass slipper, Cinderella shatters Lady Tremaine's glass ceiling.

Another reason that Cinderella has gotten so much hatred over the ages might be because it was not released much before the beginning of second wave of feminism. Women trying to break patriarchy, fighting for equal pay might have rejected and criticized the notion of a fragile princess needing a prince to save her. In fact, the onset of second wave of feminism saw a retelling of much powerful Cinderella, the 1998 film *Ever After : A Cinderella Story* , of which Christy Williams says “... is a delightful retelling of Cinderella for a contemporary audience... unlike other popular literary and cinematic Cinderellas who need the help of birds, mice or fairies to accomplish chores and prove themselves worthy of respect and love, Danielle wins the affection and esteem of her prince by being smart, caring, strong and assertive.”(99)³

The key point that this interpretation misses is that the original Cinderella has these same qualities. Moreover, she teaches that real kindness is active, not passive. The act of rescuing her animal friends from this abusive household is heroic and brave. She clothes and feeds the animals which again shows her compassion. She understands how far she can revolt and what might lead to something fatal and ruin her hope for a beautiful future, and thus acts accordingly, but at the same time she is not a pushover.

The term 'Cinderella story' has often been used in instances when someone comes and saves the day with no foreseen predictions but the original Cinderella has not been served everything on the plate; she has fought her own battle with bravery and resilience and is rewarded at the end. In her ultimate triumph, no screen time is given to the prince, and he is not even present in her dreams either. Cinderella hoped for a better future and saved herself. Belonging to the mid 1600s, the tale does conform to some of the values of its own day, as Cinderella's only way to a better future is marrying a man, and one cannot argue that it is the prince who steps in to save her.

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COMMUNISM – AN ESTABLISHMENT OF ORDER OR A PATH TO ANARCHY

Silpa Shukla, *Semester-II*

“The onslaught of Capitalism can be checked only if it is under constant threat of being routed by its antidote – Marxism, popularly known as Communism.” (Ghosh). Capitalism, if allowed to grow unchecked to its extreme will result into the rise of another extreme. To be more specific, the brand of Communism that we have seen in China, Russia, Cambodia, North Korea and many other countries is the very result of the progression of Capitalism. However, the effects of Capitalism or the sustainability of such a type of economy remains to be questioned.

Karl Marx and His *Communist Manifesto*

In 1847, Marx had joined the League of Just at the time of one of the worst economic-crises marked by crop failure and business fall. Marx and his follower, Friedrich Engels, jointly composed a manifesto to displace the old Utopian Socialist ideologies of thinkers like Mont Blanc of France and John Stuart Mill of England and initiated a Class War and called for a world-wide revolution. The shift in purpose was from 'All men are brothers' to 'forcible overthrow of whole existing social order'. The new manifesto stated that history was nothing but the history of class struggles. The advancement of science and technology made huge progress possible in the field of productions and human labor was mostly turning redundant. The new class, the Bourgeoisie, grew out of the owners who turned out to be the industrial, commercial and financial Capitalists. This class of people ruthlessly exploited the wage-slave or the Proletariats who did not own the means of productions. The Capitalists in turn, used their capital to influence the state machinery to more vigorously exploit the wage workers as they had nothing to sell but their labor. Marx was of the belief that due to excessive exploitation the Proletariats shall be pushed to a situation where they will have nothing to lose and will thus overthrow their oppressors.

The Marxist Theory postulated the following :

- i) Democracy is a fraud as the Parliamentary Government is controlled by the Capitalists.
- ii) The workers of the world are one; they have no national loyalties since they work on common interests.
- iii) In the struggle between the Capitalists and the Proletariats the latter shall win and will bring about a world revolution.
- iv) The Proletariats will dethrone the Capitalists and establish a dictatorship of the proletariat.
- v) Finally, the state shall wither away since everyone will be satisfied as they are properly paid.

- vi) The workers have nothing to lose but their own chains. They have a world to win and the new slogan was 'Workers of all the countries unite'.

The Communist Manifesto summarizes the theories of Marx and Engels concerning the nature of society and politics, that is, in their own words, “the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” It also brings forth their ideas of how the Capitalist society of that time would eventually be replaced by Socialism. In the last paragraph of this manifesto, the authors call for a “forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions” (Kuromiya), which served as a call for Communist revolutions all over the world. *The Communist Manifesto* first appeared in the year 1848 in London. Though it did not gather much attention at the time it was formed but within two decades it became a subject matter of heated discussions of all growing nations. Within the next hundred years it was the official creed of half the countries all-round the globe. Let us now dwell into countries where Marxism was applied and what results it gave.

The First Communist Rule under Lenin

According to Karl Marx, the Proletarian state was not the final stage. It was a prelude to a classless society. However, in Lenin's scheme this prelude shall continue for an indefinite amount of time and will wither away with time. Marx did not give a route of governance that should be followed after a stateless society emerges. It was thought that the power will be mobilized by a single party who shall represent the Proletariat and all other opposition parties shall be liquidated.

It was proposed by Marx that this transformation from oppressive capitalist order to classless society will take some time to consolidate. The bourgeoisie shall not give in that easily and therefore a class war shall ensue. To end this class-struggle all parties should reduce themselves to one party and thus the Totalitarian dictatorship of the single party reduced to a central committee will culminate in an abstruse dictatorship with total disregard for any dissension with the party or the dictator. Here we again find the same voice of intolerance that can be found in Hitler's regime. Dictatorship as a form of Government can never actually succeed as it ignores some basic truth about human nature that is complex and unpredictable. This path where all men are forced to pursue the same thing and routine is both morally and ethically wrong as all men cannot be driven to follow the same path however lofty the ideals may be. And in trying to do so they have to adopt extreme coercive measures and in turn they become their own “grave-diggers”. (Ghosh)

The Bolshevik Party had usurped power from the Constituent Assembly in 1918 that was dissolved. Land and industry were collectivized and Lenin had declined to pay off foreign debts incurred by the old regime. To implement their Communist agenda Red Guard or Communist Militia was raised to silence the rival groups. He contended that both war and revolution cannot continue simultaneously. He ceded a large part of Russia to Germany to buy peace. To maintain the army he had to seize food and other

products by force not only from the surplus of the rich but also from the poor peasants and more than it was necessary. The peasants revolted and stopped cultivation and even factories shut down due to non-availability of raw materials. Terrible famine occurred in 1920. In three years from 1920-1923 instead of bringing about material improvement the new system produced a situation that was worse than that during the worst year of the Tsarist war against Germany.

The policy was reversed owing to the worsening situation and with the war of interventionist state withheld, many soldiers were dismissed from service and took to banditry. Soon after another fierce famine followed in 1920-1921. Private profit was thus allowed to control trade, commerce and industry over collective ownership. By the time of Lenin's death in 1924, the Communist Party had took over the state machinery and large scale economic planning was introduced with the experience of Germany. As per the new economic policy, private profits were allowed to domestic traders and peasants. However agricultural productivity did not grow as it could only be done by extensive mechanization.

In 1929, Stalin decreed that all agricultural land should be brought under collective or community farming. The rich peasants were driven out of their land, and tens and thousands of people were killed; while others were sent to concentration camps in Siberia. The rigor and the brutality of these executions stunned everybody. It shall be seen how the extreme outrage of humanity and utter violations of human rights was committed during the Communist regime in Russia and other Communist countries.

Russia under Stalin

The first scar on the Communist regime is its extremely regressive measure; one of whose manifestations is the formation of prison labor camps under Lenin. Stalin further extended these camps on large scale for the labor-cum-prisoners with devastating results. He undertook a massive project to build prison camp system which were noticeably different from the ones that were found during the Civil Wars. "In Communist countries these camps had a two-fold purpose : 1. To eliminate political opponents by thrusting on them exhausting work and poor living conditions , 2. To achieve higher productivity to show the strength and justifiability of Authoritarian means." (Ghosh)

Recent research has revealed that a good camp leader was identified by his ability to extract as much work as possible with as less amount of food and clothing as optimal. Trotsky introduced the method of killing in 1918 and Stalin in 1928 initiated extermination through grueling labor in Gulag Archipelago. It was very prevalent in the Communist rule. Millions of prisoners were killed by excruciating workload, extreme cold and starvation and in some cases default in performance or non-performance by directly shooting them. In Kolyma, northern Siberia, the punitive measures were directed towards total elimination of political dissidents of which the mastermind was Stalin. He did not just kill people by confining them in gas chambers, but he forced them to work in sadistic way in White Sea Baltic Canal, quarries, railways, roads and other heavy construction work. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his novel *The Gulag Archipelago II* described the atrocities committed by the Communist regime under Stalin.

China under Mao Zedong

It was 1948 when Mao put forward his Great Leap Theory to develop both agriculture and industry so that they would be complementary to each other. To implement this plan China was converted into communes which generally contained 5000 families each. People sacrificed their private ownership of land, tools and animals and everything was jointly owned by the commune. Thus, China became a Communist country. People worked for the commune and it controlled every aspect of their lives. Schools and hospitals were run by the commune. Even there were old age homes where the elderly were sent and taken care of so that the young people could work without having to worry about their parents. The promptness of implementation of the plan was remarkable though it cannot be surely said that this success was due to Mao's leadership or the commitment of the people.

The difference between China and Russia was that Mao laid more emphasis on agriculture whereas Stalin focused more on the infrastructural project. The Great Leap Forward also patronized communes to set up back yard production plants the most famous of which were 600,000 backyard furnaces which produced steel for the communes. Huge amount of steel was produced along with coal, chemicals, timbre and cement and also had a significant increase in the production of grain and cotton. Mao said, "...it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever."

However, in 1959 the condition worsened, the political leaders imposed extremely harsh decisions that made no sense and communes were asked to perform tasks that were nearly impossible. If any commune leader complained about the situation, he was imprisoned. Thousands of workers were injured due to long hours of work and no food. Poor quality steel began to be produced which could not even support buildings, machineries started to break down and thus complete chaos followed. Mao realized that this Great Leap Forward was a failure but only after witnessing a huge loss of life.

Mao had inspired revolution in many countries and in India, in the state of West Bengal, the Naxalite Movement had spread in the Darjeeling district in 1967 and gradually spread all over the country under the direct name of Mao. The entire state of Bengal was flooded with posters and messages of Mao and the state passed through the bloodiest period of the Post- Independence era especially viewed as killings of the ordinary citizens.

Communism, on the whole may seem a very attractive form of Government where people enjoy a classless society which is achieved through a revolution, more specifically an armed revolution. Apparently, it may even seem to be the best form of Government where no person is superior and each and every one works to his or her full potential and no one is discriminated on the basis of their social status. But is it really the truth? Do people actually like being forced into labor that they do not want to perform? Or is Communism actually beneficial in the long run? Can it be applied in a diverse country like India? Some questions never have the answer no matter how much they are debated upon. The freedom to think and develop upon those ideas can never be achieved in a Communist regime, for an individual as

according to Stalin, the Communists believe in the motto, "...you are with me or against me". There is no room for dissent or even a slight room for disappointment. Initially, a Communist regime may turn out to be successful but ultimately it is bound to fall as we see in cases of the two of the greatest nations debated in the paper. In the present day scenario, Russia is no longer a Communist regime. The case is different for China. It is a Communist country and is on the run for being a world super power. But the citizens there are not free citizens, they do not have the option to show dissent against the Government, they have no privacy of their own and no freedom of their own. The commoners in China are not even allowed to interact with the outer world freely as the Government decides the words that its citizens are to blurt out. They may be a highly developed nation, but is such development worth it where citizens are forced to live in a way that some other person deems suitable for them?

Therefore, Communism, just like any other form of Government has its own merits and demerits. But as history has shown us that in a Communist regime, the innumerable deaths of innocent people are inevitable. So, though it may seem that it is a way to establish proper order in a society, it actually is a path to utter chaos and anarchy.

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A STUDY OF FEMINISM IN "IF THOU MUST LOVE ME" A LOVE POEM BY ELIZABETH BARRET BROWNING

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on feminism in a love sonnet named "IF THOU MUST LOVE ME" by a very famous Victorian poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning. The information is collected by the textual analysis of the poem. After seeing it from a feminist perspective it is evident that Miss Barrett was a bold poetess who believed that women were also people and they should have the power to choose how they should be treated. We also see how she shatters the trend of objectifying women which male poets were doing for ages. She showed them the perspective of a woman when it comes to a sensitive topic like love. We see a fierce Victorian spirit who is ready to take all her rights in the guise of Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

ABOUT THE AGE

Queen's victorious reign after whom the Victorian period is named spans from 1837 to 1901. The Victorian age was a great age of economic development and the industrial revolution. There was a huge growth of population in the era and the people were looking forward to being a part of a fancy society. Improvement of technologies changed people's lifestyles. People became rational. As the saying goes "Every coin has two sides" here also, even after seeing so much progress Britain had to see many devastating effects of industrialization. In the race to earn money poor people were treated like robots which degraded the whole society. The people of the period were obsessed with their duties, they were critical about their personalities. Moral earnestness was a major quality of the Victorian era. Charles Darwin's theory shook the whole of mankind, old beliefs were now rejected. According to Darwin's theory, millions of species were evolved from a common ancestor over a billion years. There was a clash between faith and reason as people were dealing with both science and religion. The era led to the saying that the "sun never sets in British Empire" as Britain had expanded its empire all over the world.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Even after being a minor writer, Elizabeth Barrett Browning holds a special position in English literature. She was born at Coxhoe Hall, near Durham, in 1806. She spent her childhood in Malvern hills. We also know her as the wife of Sir Robert Browning but she was much more than being a lovely wife. First, literary reputation was gained by her by the publication of "The Seraphim and the Other Poems (1838)". She was shocked by the tragic death of her brother which led her to be confined in her room for

six years. Her major area of literary interest were social problems and love. She was ill due to spinal injury and during that period she received a letter from Sir Robert Browning which said: "I love your verses with all my heart, dear Miss Barrett". It is suspected that a reference to Browning, in 'Lady Geraldine's Courtship' had let Robert Browning write to Miss Barrett, in 1845. Soon they were head over heels in love with each other and Miss Barrett married Sir Robert Browning against the wishes of her father. For the next fifteen years, Mrs. Browning lived a happy life in Italy. She died in 1861 and then Robert Browning moved to England again.

She was hesitant to publish her most famous work *Sonnets from the Portuguese* as they were personal love poems but on the insistence of Sir Robert Browning, she published it. We can see the reflection of the Victorian age as well as her individuality in her literary works.

INTRODUCTION

"IF THOU MUST LOVE ME" or "Sonnet No 14" is a poem from the collection named *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. It was written around 1845-1846 and published in 1850. It is a collection of 44 love sonnets which are claimed to be the most romantic sonnets of all the time which were written for her husband Sir Robert Browning. Mrs. Browning was hesitant to publish the sonnets as they were personal love poems. But on the insistence of Sir Robert Browning, she published them in disguise as if they were just translation of sonnets from Portuguese. The reason for choosing 'Portuguese' in the title was that Sir Robert Browning used to call her 'little miss Portuguese'. It is like 'nature' for Wordsworth as it is like 'romantic love' for Elizabeth Browning. The collection helps us to understand her feeling of love and how pure love made her feel like a complete person.

FEMINISM IN THE POEM

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say,
"I love her for her smile – her look – her way
Of speaking gently, – for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day" –
For these things in themselves, Belovèd, may
Be changed, or change for thee – and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry:
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou mayst love on, through love's eternity.

The poem is about the kind of love a woman wants to receive from her lover. During the Victorian era, women were suffering for basic rights, they were considered inferior to men. Here, the poetess rejects the idea of being loved as her man wants. She has her own opinion which she presents very elegantly. The poem focuses on the idea of gender equality and gives importance to the expectation of a woman.

In this sonnet the poetess is directly addressing her lover, she is not talking about him but she is talking to him. At the beginning of the poem, she makes it very clear that she wants to be loved just for the sake of love. She doesn't want to be loved for her features like her smile, her behavior, or the way she thinks. These things can change with time and as a result, love may also change. Later, she expresses her fear of losing her lover once she is happy. This can happen when her lover is in love with her tears or the idea, that he makes her forget all her pains. She says that any creature who gets much love can forget to cry and hence, can lose the love of her life. In the end, the poetess again reminds her lover to love her just for the sake of love. She wants love to be constant, even when she will change as a person. Mrs. Browning stresses the idea of true love where time changes everything but love remains constant throughout the lifetime.

Though the boldness to make demands by the poetess may seem very obvious to the present-day readers but it needed a lot of courage to have an opinion on a delicate topic like love in the Victorian era. In the 19th century, women were struggling for their basic rights, Mrs. Browning makes it evident that women are people despite their gender and they too have their rights and opinions. She speaks with an authentic Victorian voice on the behalf of all the women in the era.

Her powerful poetry is sufficient to change our thoughts and focus on the beauty of love. Her individuality and the knowledge of the rights she had placed her in the category of feminist. We see the fire in her of changing the world as a poet. She wrote out of the necessity to show the world through her eyes. Her poems are a unique blend of real emotions like love, care, expectation, fear of losing, and grief. Love and pain are often juxtaposed in her poetry as Mrs. Browning found them to be in life. We can see rebelliousness in the poem and the willfulness to be loved on her terms. She challenges the male-dominated society and keeps her perspective of life. However, Elizabeth Barret Browning was the first poetess who dominated the men's sphere of love poetry. For ages men were personalizing the emotion of love and objectifying women.

They always wrote about the effect that women's physical appearance had on them. Her poems are not like the traditional love poems which are written for the beloved but it is written to the beloved. She places her lover in an equal position as hers. She sticks to her decision to be loved on her terms and is not ready to be loved because of her physical features. According to Mrs. Barret Browning, the equality of souls is very important. Her lover should have no problem treating her as his equal. For her, the union of marriage is very sacred. It should not mean joining two halves to make one, instead, the bond should

consist of two whole individuals who first complete themselves and can treat their partner with love and care and also consider them as equal humans who have their individuality. They should also complement each other's behaviors which will add happiness to their lives. For Elizabeth Barrett Browning unconditional love should be the pillar of marriage. Love is the necessity and an utmost important feeling needed to exist. In her view, love should not only fulfill an emotional need but should also help a human to develop their talents and grow as an individual. She doesn't want her partner to restrict or control her. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's idea on marriage remained constant throughout her life. An actual marriage with a loving spouse brought more confidence in her beliefs. While going through her poems, we can see that she was always looking for a serious relationship, she was looking to be someone's wife and not just a mere mistress. She wishes her partner to be modern and throw the patriarchy aside. She also wants him to be mature and give equal importance to women in his life. When she was supported by a loving spouse, she started observing her surroundings. Her literary works focused on the social and political problems which her adopted country was facing. As an ideal feminist, she voiced her own opinion in the very field where she thought it was needed. Her basic and simple beliefs ruled her thought and action. She was idealistic who believed that women deserve nothing less than a man and women should have the opportunity and freedom to develop their individuality. She reflected a feminist point of view in almost all her works, whether it was personal or political. The basis of feminism is always humanism, that is to treat an individual irrespective of their gender. The poets always considered bringing a woman into full humanity. Elizabeth Barrett Browning's feminist perspective on women's issues is very basic, she just wanted an equal position for women and wanted men to be to recognize women as an individual. Maybe we can see her as a moderate feminist if we go through her ideologies in the 21st century, but she was certainly a bold feminist if we see her as a poetess of the Victorian era.

CONCLUSION:

Elizabeth Barrett Browning is a unique poetess because when the whole world was arguing for the rights which women should get, then she was the first who gave an idea to treat women equally in every field. Women should have the right to make decisions for themselves even in the sensitive topic which a man was always made and in charge of. In a society where the inferiority of a woman is penetrated in the mind of people, there we need more rebellious women like Mrs. Browning.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning's feminist views point out that the power to control a woman's life should be in her own hands. She should have personal independence and shouldn't wait for a man's order to fulfill the needs of her life. A fierce desire to maintain her individuality and take a charge of her feelings makes her a feminist poetess.

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