

ISSN 2012-922x

SAARC CULTURE



South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

Volume 4 - 2013



**SAARC Cultural Centre
Colombo**

SAARC Culture

Volume 4, 2013

**SAARC Cultural Centre
Colombo**

General Editor

G.L.W. Samarasinghe, Director, SAARC Cultural Centre

Executive Editor

Dr. Sanjay Garg, Deputy Director (Research), SAARC Cultural Centre

Editorial Team

Soundarie David Rodrigo, Deputy Director (Programme), SAARC Cultural Centre

Nirekha De Silva, Research Officer, SAARC Cultural Centre

Apsara Karunaratne, Research Assistant, SAARC Cultural Centre

Nipunika O. Lecamwasam, Intern, SAARC Cultural Centre

Production Team

Ishan Amaraweera, Computer Operations Officer, SAARC Cultural Centre

Rajeev David, Computer Operator, SAARC Cultural Centre

Printing: Vishwa Graphics, Pannipitiya

***SAARC Culture*, Volume 4, 2013**

© SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo 2013

All Rights Reserved. No material in this publication may be reproduced without the written permission of the publisher.

ISSN: 2012-922x

SAARC Culture is an annual research journal of the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo. It seeks to provide a platform to the academics, practitioners, policy makers and other stakeholders of various dimensions of culture of the South Asian region (including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) to present their research findings and to debate on issues of mutual and common interests.

Disclaimer: The views expressed and the information contained in the articles included in this journal is the sole responsibility of the author/s, and do not bear any liability on the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo.

Contents

From the Editor's Desk	1
Folklore and the Museum <i>Firoz Mahmud</i>	3
Through Purdah: Social Criticism in Women's Folksongs from Mithila <i>Dev. N. Pathak</i>	19
The Scintillating Indian Culture: Ethical Underpinnings and Scientific Affiliations <i>Nivedita Maitra and Shruti Dubey</i>	40
Heiroglyphic Nature of Rangoli Art <i>Nayana Tadvalkar</i>	60
Cultural Memory Transmission among Madigas: A Study of <i>Adijambava Mahapuranam</i> <i>D. Sudha Rani</i>	72
Indian Tales in Sogdian Literature and Art <i>Nicholas Sims-Williams</i>	86
Ancient Hydraulic Structures of Kalachuris of Ratanpur: A Brief discussion based on Epigraphic and Archaeological Sources <i>Vishi Upadhyay, Subash Khamari and Shivi Upadhyay</i>	95

Chandora and Shashikala: Daring Heroines of Tagore's Short Fictions 'Punishment' and 'Elder Sister'	112
<i>K.V. Dominic</i>	
Vijay Tendulkar's Exploration of Middle Class Psyche in Post-colonial India	125
<i>Shukla Chatterjee</i>	
Kamila Shamsie's <i>Burnt Shadows</i> : A Plea for Compassion; a Price for Resilience	151
<i>Sanjukta Banerjee</i>	
The Intercultural Imperative in Jhumpa Lahiri's <i>Interpreter of Maladies</i>	169
<i>Sharada Allamneni and N. Usha</i>	
Our Contributors	180
<i>SAARC Culture</i> : Guidelines for the Contributors	185
The SAARC Cultural Centre	193

From the Editor's Desk

Culture, by the most basic functional definition, is a way of life. Cultural identities are constructed based on the commonalities between manifestations of certain ways of life. The South Asian culture, thus, exhibits a number of peculiarities common to the South Asian region that set apart these countries from the world as a distinct identity group. From religion to cuisine, language to music, politics to custom there is that subtle 'vibe' defining South Asia. Home to one fifth of the world's population, the region has given rise to some of the most widely practiced faiths in the world, boasts an extensive range of linguistic assets, and once cradled a thriving ancient civilization. The rich cultural heritage of South Asia that continues to condition civic life in the region and beyond needs to be preserved not only as a salute to the past, but also as a means of broadening the horizons of the 'modern' understanding of the world.

SAARC Culture is an endeavour that attempts to explore, in its capacity, a droplet of the sea of South Asian culture through the academic lens of regional intellectuals. It functions as a forum on which academics, practitioners and policy makers of South Asia contribute their research, analyses and observations towards expanding the regional knowledge corpus on culture.

The first two issues of the journal ran along themes of 'Rituals, Ethics and Societal Stability in the SAARC Region' (Vol. 1: 2010), and 'Diminishing Cultures in the SAARC Region' (Vol. 2: 2011). From the third issue onwards, *SAARC Culture* aims to take a more holistic approach towards discussing regional culture in order that the interests of a wider readership may be entertained. This volume, therefore, is non-

thematic and includes eleven articles spanning a range of subjects including folklore, painting, archaeology, literature and society. It brings to fore many interesting aspects of South Asian society that comprise the rich social fabric of South Asia.

I make this an opportunity to extend my gratitude to all those dedicated individuals without whose hard work and unfailing enthusiasm the publication of this volume would have remained an abstract proposal. I am particularly grateful to all the contributors who shared their ideas and expertise through their papers included in this publication. I sincerely hope that this volume would be warmly received by the readers as a humble effort of the SAARC Cultural Center at celebrating South Asian identity. I also look forward to receiving many more accomplished scholarly works for our future issues.

G.L.W. Samarasinghe,
General Editor, *SAARC Culture* and Director,
SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo.

Folklore and the Museum

Firoz Mahmud

Abstract

Folklore and the museum are intimately related to each other. While folklore is an academic discipline, the museum is an institution. This paper seeks to discuss the historical background of the study of folklore and the historical development of the museum so that the relationship between the two can be easily appreciated. This study reveals that folklore can help create good museums and that the museum can contribute to the study of folklore. This inter-relationship, once appreciated and visualized by both folklorists and museologists, will be of tremendous benefit to the study of folklore as an academic discipline and to the development of more thematic museums throughout the world, especially in the countries where folklore is a dynamic aspect of national life. Moreover, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions will spurt ahead.

Introduction

Folklore is an academic discipline, the subject-matter of which is also called folklore. Although the term 'folkloristics' is currently used to designate the study of folklore, folklore is still widely used to allude to the study. So far as the subject-matter is concerned folklore encompasses the entire gamut of traditionally derived and orally transmitted cultural materials, e.g., literature (all the genres of the oral literary tradition), beliefs and myths, customs and social conventions, and material culture. In other words, folklore refers to such materials as are mostly found in indigenous traditions. We would like to treat

folklore both as a study and as a body of materials in this paper. The materials that folklore is concerned with are both tangible and intangible.

The museum is an institution devoted to the collection, preservation, documentation, exhibition and study of objects of almost any character. It is a highly technical, educational and research-oriented institution of great scientific value and cultural interest. It is, in theory as well as in practice, connected with the enjoyment of anybody who may wish to avail himself/herself of its facilities. Objects that museums acquire fall into two broad categories: cultural property and specimens of nature. Cultural property includes all items that are created by human beings out of things available in or from nature. Specimens of nature are things that human beings find readymade, explore or cultivate. In the past when museums were accumulating objects of various kinds either as artifacts of bygone days (objects left by our ancestors) or as specimens for scientific analysis, all objects were viewed as tangible products. Many museum objects are now considered to be both tangible and intangible. The educational role of a modern museum demands that objects be displayed in such a way as to enable viewers to appreciate not simply the physical aspects of a thing but also an inward condition of the mind of its producer and its user.

Historical Background of Folklore

The term 'folklore' was coined by William John Thoms, a British scholar, in Charles Wentworth Dilke's *Athenaeum* in 1846 (Martha 2005: 23) to study the ways of life characteristic of people living at a pre-industrial stage of social development or at least at a stage in which the pre-industrial patterns of life still persisted. The concept of folklore was, however, fairly

established even before the term ‘folklore’ was coined by the British scholar. This concept was, however, not older than the seventeenth century, and it first arose as a result of social transformation in Europe. As the Industrial Revolution was gaining momentum and shattering the old order of social and economic relationships, scholars felt that the peasant ways of life were at stake in European society. This apprehension aroused an interest in the preservation of both visual and verbal traditions as a repository of a dying cultural heritage. This interest, obviously born out of romanticism, laid the foundation for the study of folklore. Initially such scholars as were studying ruins, ancient monuments, old wives’ tales, legends, fallacies, strange beliefs, superstitions, and quaint customs were known as antiquarians, and their subject-matter was called ‘popular antiquities.’ It was in Germany that a nationalistic impulse, apart from romanticism, motivated scholars like the Grimm brothers to preserve and study household tales. When the term ‘folklore’ came into use, both romanticism and nationalism typified the study of folklore.

Historical Background of the Museum

At its birth the museum was a repository of artifacts. Originally established by Nabonidus (555-538 BCE), the last king of Babylon, the museum is one of the oldest institutions of humanity (Mahmud and Rahman1987: 53). The world’s first museum was devoted to archaeology (Mahmud and Rahman1987: 53). The name of this repository was, however, not the namesake of our museum. We do not know by what name it was then called. The English word ‘museum’ is derived, through Latin, from the Greek word *mousein* meaning ‘the seat of the Muses.’ The functions of a modern museum were not at all times inherent in the word ‘museum’ and were certainly

conspicuous by their absence at the time of its apparent origin in ancient Greece. The *mouseion* was the temple of nine Muses, each of whom was the patron goddess of an art. The Greeks, fond of cultivating the arts and deeply involved in their development, would worship the patron goddesses. The Muses' realm was by no means a place for learning. It was, in fact, a place where the devotees would spend time in a mood of aloofness above everyday affairs. In course of time, however, features of a sacred temple and an educational institution mingled in Greek Schools of Philosophy where the pursuit of knowledge was regarded as a service to the Muses. Thus the Greek word *mouseion* was metaphysically applied to any place where learning was pursued and the arts cultivated. In antiquity the most celebrated institution having the title of the museum was the Hellenistic Museum (the home of the Muses) that sprang up at Alexandria in Egypt in the later part of the third century BCE. The emphasis shifted from the religious and ethical to the intellectual side in this museum, which was actually an integrated institution of a library, a university and a museum. In course of time the museum lost its multitudinous character and became limited to various collections—a wide range of specimens, namely, relics of human life in past periods, objects of art, samples of geology, skeletons of animals, crafts, machines, contemporary products, and so on. So far as the range of specimens is concerned the museum has no threshold. The accumulation of specimens opened up a spirit of critical enquiry in Europe in the fifteenth century and onwards. Since the opening of public museums in different parts of the world in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the institution called the museum has undergone such rapid changes that it is currently a complex phenomenon. Museums are now of numerous kinds or types because of the enormous variety of

their contents. There are either highly specialized museums with objects of fewer kinds or monolithic museums with a variety of combinations of objects. There is also the variety of environment in which objects are displayed—a palatial structure with an array of architectural features, a monumental building with a wealth of decoration, a huge building claiming either robustness or soberness, a moderate building, or a humble abode of a few low-ceilinged rooms.

Basic Questions pertaining to Folklore and the Museum

We may now come to the basic questions: How is folklore related to the museum? Can folklore help create good museums? Can the museum contribute to the study of folklore? To answer these questions adequately, we need to define folklore in its present meaning and the museum in the context of its current use.

Folklore refers to a body of materials, to the science which studies these materials, and to the art which applies these materials and scientific conclusions about them to practical ends (Boggs 2005: 3).

As a body of materials, folklore comprises “the whole body of traditional culture, or conventional modes of human thought and action” (Boggs 2005: 3).

Ralph Steele Boggs (2005: 3) holds that it is

... created informally in a group of persons for themselves, has been accepted widely enough to have attained considerable currency, and over a sufficient period of time to have acquired traditional traits, such as anonymity of authorship and historic-geographic patterns of variants of basic forms.

Dan Ben-Amos (1982: 2-17) is opposed to the idea of defining folklore as a mere collection of materials and asserts that “In its cultural context, folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process—a communicative process, to be exact.” He has defined folklore as ‘artistic communication in small groups.’ Art is one of the broad components of culture, and folklore falls in this category as an artistic process. The folklore process is artistic because the factor of rhythm, as Ben-Amos points out, ‘changes human noise to music, movement and gesture to dance, and object to sculpture.’ Innumerable such examples may be cited to illustrate the artistic nature of folklore. Folklore is a communicative process because it is found in any communicative medium: musical, visual, kinetic, or dramatic. By a small group Ben-Amos has meant “a number of persons who communicate with one another, often over a span of time, and who are few enough so that each person is able to communicate with all others, not at second-hand through other people, but face-to-face.” He adds that “A group could be a family, a street-corner gang, a roomful of factory workers, a village, or even a tribe” (Ben-Amos 1982: 13). For the folkloric act to happen, as Ben-Amos holds, two social conditions are necessary: both the performers and the audience have to be in the same situation in which “people confront each other face to face and relate to each other directly” (Ben-Amos 1982: 13-14). He argues that even when a certain literary theme or musical style is known regionally, nationally, or internationally, its actual existence depends upon such small group situations.

Both Boggs and Ben-Amos, though belonging to two different schools of thought, have to be taken into consideration seriously. According to Boggs (2005: 3), currency and tradition constitute the acid test of folklore. It cannot be denied that tradition and oral transmission are the two key components of

folklore. The people, as in Bangladesh, use tradition in their daily lives and in times of crisis. Folklore explores the dynamics of tradition and creativity in diverse cultural settings. Culture is the totality of socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought. Cultural traditions are “persistent configurations of basic technologies and cultural systems within the context of temporal and geographical continuity.” (Willey and Phillips 1958: 37). On the other hand, Ben-Amos is also right in his assertion when he says that folklore is “artistic communication in small groups.” (1982: 14). By recognizing art as one of the broad components of culture Ben-Amos has expanded the scope of the study of folklore enormously though in small settings.

The museum, as defined by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and as adopted by UNESCO at its 10th General Meeting in 1974, is

a non-profit making, permanent institution in the service of society and of its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates, and exhibits, for purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment (Mahmud 1993: 142).

As already stated, museums may reveal remarkable diversity in form, in content, and even in function, but all museums have as common goals the preservation and interpretation of material aspects of society’s cultural consciousness.

How is then Folklore related to the Museum?

The relationship between folklore and the museum is so apparent that it can be recognized at the very first instance. Just as folklore is a body of materials, so the museum is a repository

of collections. The materials folklore studies are varied in nature. The objects the museum collects are also varied in nature. Communication, which is at the very core of folklore, is one of the fundamental goals of the museum today. It is the communicative process that makes folklore extremely distinctive as an academic discipline. In the museum the object communicates itself directly to the viewers, in a way not possible through other interpretive media. A museum, especially a public museum, apart from being a place of research, is now an aid in general education. An awareness of the museum as a means of general education has dawned with the increasing consciousness of the need for the improvement of existing educational standards. It goes without saying that when the museum becomes an aid in general education its objects have to be presented in such a way as to communicate with the viewers, who benefit from acquaintance with rare and beautiful specimens. The educational role of the museum is further expressed by a developing tendency towards using its collections as an aid in the education of school children. The communicative process is considered so important in the education of school children that many museums make special arrangements for them by exhibiting objects with models and charts, which are likely to appeal to young people. Another effective way of strengthening children's interest in the museum is to allow them to touch certain objects or to lend specimens to schools. In the developing countries, on the whole, efforts at using the museum as a means of communication are still modest. The vigorous contemporary activities of the public museums in the United States exemplify how effective communication could be when education is considered a primary function of the museum. Of course, the choice of objects has to be considered in conjunction with manners of

presentation. We may now safely hold that folklore, an academic study, is closely related to the museum, an institution, both in content and function.

Can the Museum contribute to the study of Folklore?

The answer is in the affirmative. We may explain it by citing the example of material culture, an enormous field of study in folklore. Material culture consists of tangible things made, manipulated, designed, shaped, altered, and used. It is art, craft, architecture, furnishing, clothing, and food. More importantly, it is the totality of these things in the everyday lives of individuals and communities. It is deeply personal and social, mental and physical. It is an embodiment of socially transmitted knowledge and behavior patterns, of practice and creativity, and of production and consumption. It is a visible process that extends ideas and feelings into three-dimensional form.

Given the depth and intricacy of functional and innovative acts inherent in material culture, material culture research is not merely the study of things. It is the interrelation of objects and techniques in social life. It is, at bottom, a study of the cultural integration of people.

A museum may pursue a project for material culture research to cover the following topics: Pottery (), Mat Weaving (*Patishilpa*), Woodwork (*Darushilpa*), and Vernacular Architecture (*Sthaniya Sthapatya*). The geographical area of research for each topic may be the whole of Bangladesh. We are proposing a landmark work on each topic. Based on extensive fieldwork, each work will focus on regional variations of form and style, identifying the geographical/ecological, ethnic, religious, social, technological and all other factors that account for the variations. The artists/ craftspeople will not be

anonymous; they will come to the forefront, for we need to know the creators. An important part of material culture research is to record the observable behaviors of persons making things, of persons receiving objects, of participants in events in which objects are used. Another goal is to understand how symbols are created and changed, how objects function for people, and how designs are conceived and executed. The fundamental premise of material culture in folklore is that objects and actions speak louder than words, and researchers are actively looking at material culture as communication and learning. The data gathered and analyzed will lead to the publication of four volumes. These volumes, besides enriching the contextual display of the museum, will greatly augment folklore research.

Can Folklore help create good Museums?

A folklife museum, a museum of history, and even a museum of art can benefit tremendously from folklore. At first we need to understand these three kinds of museum.

A folklife museum is a very special kind of museum. More than any other museum, it is the most perfect museum in accordance with the ICOM definition because in it ‘material evidence of man and his environment’ is best reflected. A folklife museum consists of houses that are representative examples of folk housing and of workshops that house artifacts which are used by craftspeople to demonstrate folk crafts and activities. These are transferred from their original locations to a common site, and then restored or reconstructed on that site as museum pieces to constitute congruent groups in such a way as to be broadly representative of the time and place that is thematic to the collection—the types of houses or workshops

that originally did form an actual village or other settlement, and that have been validated by historical research. The artifacts in the collection are also historically validated and are consistent with the folk architectural collection in time, place and ethnic tradition. The craftspeople, often appropriately costumed, are skilled in one or more of the traditional crafts and activities, and they engage in demonstrating these skills to visitors on a regularly scheduled basis (Mahmud 1993: 144).

A museum of history generally presents the historical evolution of a country or a region, or it may simply depict a particular period of great national significance. The timeframe may be long or short, depending on what it represents. A national museum of history builds up a coherent and continuous story of the people in different aspects of life in chronological sequence. A museum of history may simply illustrate the people's struggle for liberation from colonial rule.

A museum of art focuses on expressions and techniques of art. It falls into many categories, of which a museum of folk art is more closely related to folklore. To be folk art there must be art that is not folk (Glassie 1989: 92). Folk art is not fine art. The two are studied apart by scholars. A museum of folk art is a very specialized museum containing objects reflecting traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions which have survived through centuries as the spontaneous embodiment of human endeavor and creativity more or less conditioned by a given environment. Museums of folk art may be local, national or international. The Museum of International Folk Art in Santa Fe, New Mexico, United States of America is a good example of the third category (Glassie 1989: 1-276).

In the folklife museum, personnel have to be both museologists and folklorists so that they can achieve a much

higher measure of reality and authenticity in the aspects of presentation than perhaps in any other kind of museum, and in consequence visitors have a feeling of watching and enjoying folklife in its natural context. The folklife museum can be one of the major teaching and educational agencies of the community that it serves. Folklore can contribute substantially to the organization of the folklife museum.

Most scholarship on collections of museums of history has separated objects from their contexts because these museums generally do not collect objects on the methodological considerations of current folklore research. By these methodological considerations are meant the methods of the ethnographer. A museum of history will turn into a very good museum if museologists become interested in the contexts in which objects were produced and used. Therefore, museologists collecting objects for museums of history, especially for a national museum of history, should pursue the methods of the ethnographer. The ethnographer can inscribe social discourse in such a way that he can turn it from a passing event into an account (Geertz 1973: 19).

How does folklore help create good folk art museums? A folk object bears the mark of the culture of the folk. It is made at a particular time and place in response to a specific need, to perform a socially meaningful function, expressing values through design, ornament and creativity which are a part of a definite cultural tradition. The total aesthetic expression of Bengali culture is more typically represented by folk art than by fine art. In fact, the mainstream in the art of Bangladesh has been in the hands of folk artists/craftspeople rather than fine artists, though the latter are often influenced by folk art.

Folklore will really be effective in the creation of good museums if folklorists are employed in museums of folklife, history and art and are trained to become museologists. Folklorists generally pay more attention to the qualitative analysis of material culture (Kenoyer 2003: 391). They must not shy away from the systematic and quantitative study of material culture (Kenoyer 2003: 391) so that they can implement standard methodologies for classification and analysis of various objects (Mahmud 1987: 446-57). They have to work with the following objectives:

- To search and find the roots of the national culture;
- To learn and understand the cultural legacy of the people and to develop respect for it;
- To preserve and integrate the traditional culture and its various creative expressions as a dynamic process;
- To focus on those centers where living masters/tradition-bearers teach skills and techniques of traditional arts or crafts in a non-formal way, that is, orally and with practical demonstrations;
- To conserve and promote the nation's cultural legacy by encouraging and supporting the study and recognition of human cultural resources such as basketmakers, potters, sculptors, painters, woodcarvers, weavers, embroiderers, blacksmiths, bell-metalsmiths, brass-smiths, silversmiths, goldsmiths, braziers, casters, engravers, and other artists/craftspeople;
- To understand the transmission of their skills and techniques to the succeeding generations;

- To develop new arts/ crafts centers, preferably in community or open-air museum settings, where exponents of living arts and crafts can practice and teach their skills and enrich contemporary designs;
- To identify the aspects/ components of traditional art considered important to a cultural community;
- To ensure that these aspects/ components of traditional art are imparted to the young in a manner that they can be perpetuated;
- To realize the mutual relationships between traditional culture and modern culture; and
- To understand the social and cultural aspects of the living traditions.

The benefits of their work will be great in the case of Bangladesh. The results of their research will be relevant in cultural anthropology and folklore with regard to the aesthetic and creative aspects of art and to problems of the alteration in form and content owing to the forces of change; in sociology with regard to the effects of urbanization and industrialization on traditional culture; in art history with regard to problems of the genesis and development of art styles, the multiple determinants of technique, and aesthetic values in their cross-cultural manifestation; and in history with regard to an understanding of the development of our national culture.

Conclusion

While the museum has a history steeped in a past of thousands of years, folklore as a concept for the study of the ways of life in the pre-industrial period is comparatively new, hardly older than

the seventeenth century. In its current meaning both folklore and the museum have a common goal: each serving as a major means of imparting a wealth of information and spiritual enlightenment to people. The visual and tactile three-dimensional object, when observed and studied as a specimen of material culture in context in folklore research or when displayed and enjoyed in the museum, appeals to the intellectual inquisitiveness of people as well as to their emotions and serves as an aid in blending the two together to an experience of spontaneity and creativeness comparable with an artistic one, whatever the character of the object may be. The reality of the object, both in folklore and the museum, invites a scientific approach to accurate observation and self-determining judgment and is thus useful to human knowledge.

References

- Ben-Amos, Dan, 'Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context,' in *Folklore in Context: Essays*, (New Delhi, 1982), pp. 2-19.
- Boggs, Ralph Steele, 'Folklore,' in Alan Dundes (ed.), *Folklore: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 1, (New York, 2005), pp. 1-10.
- Geertz, Clifford, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, (New York, 1973).
- Glassie, Henry, *The Spirit of Folk Art: The Girard Collection at the Museum of International Folk Art*, (New York, 1989).
- Kenoyer, Jonathan Mark, 'Material Culture,' in Margaret A. Mills, Peter J. Claus, and Sarah Diamond (eds.), *South Asian Folklore*, (New York, 2003), pp. 388-393.

Mahmud, Firoz and Habibur Rahman, *The Museums in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka, 1987).

-----, 'Methodologies for the Study of Folk Art of Bangladesh,' in Shamsuzzaman Khan (ed.), *Folklore of Bangladesh*, Vol. 1, (Dhaka, 1987), pp. 446-457.

-----, *Prospects of Material Folk Culture Studies and Folklife Museums in Bangladesh*, (Dhaka, 1993).

Sims, Martha and Martine Stephens, *Living Folklore*. (Utah, 2005).

Wiley, George R. and P. Phillips, *Method and theory in American archaeology*, (Chicago, 1958).

Through Purdah: Social Criticism in Women's Folksongs from Mithila

Dev N. Pathak

Abstract

Women in south Asian cultural context have been imagined as docile and repressed feminine draped in the debilitating Purdah (veil). The latter assumed a metaphorical significance and been employed to underline women's subservience in patrilineal kinship arrangement. But then, the notorious purdah is also an epistemic stalemate in the prevalent mode of understanding women in folk society. This paper attempts to unsettle the epistemological context, which yielded a peculiar image of the folk and their lore, and the purdah draped women. It thereby explores the possibility of reconfiguring women through their songs beyond the nemesis of purdah. To substantiate the arguments on the role of women, in socio-cultural matrix, this paper analytically reads songs and act of singing by women in the context of Mithila. The abiding argument is that women in their songs offer multi-layered social criticism of the dominant social practices. The texts and contexts of the songs sung by Maithili speaking women in the villages of North-East of Bihar in Northern India offer a ground to rethink women in Purdah.

1. Introduction

The popular imagination of women in the social science discourse on *purdah* (veil) is dominated by a sense of women's helpless fate in patriarchal society. Women appear as yoked to stereotypical roles, with controlled sexuality, and befitting the anthropological formulation of 'wife-givers and wife-takers'.

They are also perceived as discharging drudgery of everyday life in the name of labour of love. The only hope of redemption for women is underlined in the attainment of motherhood. This imagination of women in traditional society has been an academic common sense and thus a source of rallying cry to decry *purdah*. This is arguably supported by a selective usage of folklore. Thus, the conclusive image of veiled women singing songs to helplessly vent their frustration rules the roost of discourse. It curiously coincides with the ambivalent attitude of anthropologists and folklorists toward folklore and the folk since the colonial times. The scheme of colonial modernity rendered the folk as the 'other', dwelling 'benighted heathen', and their lore as 'popular antiquarian' or a 'system of belief and superstitions'. The dichotomies of *Emotion* and *Reason* in modern science dimmed a chance for prejudice-free understanding of folklore in south Asia. Women were typified as the embodiment of nature/ emotion/ irrationality. Indological reconstruction of 'glorious India' and the first wave of social reform movements, aiming at women's uplift, were seldom interested in women's social system of cognition. And hence women were imagined merely through the categories of common sense as creatures of nature to be tamed. In this context, *purdah* surfaced as a means of social control to regulate female sexuality for kinship honour. However, researches with folkloristic insights bring forth yet another dimension of women's singing in the veil. Women as an instrumental vehicle of folklore present an alternative perspective through their songs. They underline women's singing as potential of a social criticism of the dominant perspective and practices in patriarchal society. The act of singing and the content of songs may not alter the social structure radically. However, the expression of social critique emerging from the songs of women allures to the

‘possibilities’ in the folk society. It is a possibility with regard to a relation of empathy between men and women in the folk worldview.

This is the backdrop in which this paper attempts to understand women’s songs from the socio-cultural context of Mithila. The provincial-vernacular scholarship on Maithili folklore have acknowledged women’s predominant role in the song culture of Mithila (Henry 1988, Jha 2002). Women, as repository of song culture, initiate social individuals in the rite of the passage, at every juncture of significance in the life cycle. Their role as singing women is as vital as the role of a priest in the Hindu ritual performances. It is witnessed that priests pause and patiently wait for women to sing the songs accompanying ritual events. Without those songs no ritual is complete; without them no rite of the passage is accomplished. These are not only songs to celebrate the significant moments in the life cycle of individuals. They are also songs to articulate social criticism in Mithila. In their private sphere Maithil women render songs intended to reach male audience, lampooning Brahmins, bemoaning their submission to roles and status, criticizing and ridiculing kinship authority. Women from across caste groups sing these songs with stylistic differences. This paper presents analytical readings of the select songs, which suggest that women of Mithila are active agencies in the social structure. Their songs, characterized by melancholia, emotional upheaval, and resignation to the divine are also sources of social criticism of the dominant kinship structure. This paper is divided into two parts beginning with an understanding of the commonplace attitude toward the folk and their lore in the folklore studies and social anthropology. In this part the notion of folklore and the category of purdah are analytically juxtaposed. In the second part, the paper summons to heed the songs of women from

Maithili speaking region of Bihar dovetailed with slices of interpretation. It establishes that women from Mithila create ample scope for criticizing the dominant prejudices despite their location covered with *purdah*. *Purdah* thus, is not a stalemate in the socio-cultural position of women despite its role as a prop in controlling sexuality.

2. Interrogating *Purdah* in Little Tradition

The notion of *purdah* and 'Little tradition' vis-à-vis folk society are intricately intertwined. Little tradition has been conceptualized as tradition of unreflective and illiterate majority, the folk. It is inclusive of the knowledge, practices, beliefs and symbols of the ordinary folk. *Purdah* is not only an object of usage in a 'Little tradition'; it is also a symbolic expression of the folk pride and prejudices. Both, Little tradition and *purdah* are thus metaphorical as well as conceptual markers of an alleged 'backwardness' in the evolutionary scheme of modernity. The notion of backwardness, attached with both, is owing to a pair of conceptual dichotomies. It sets the folk (so-called unreflective) apart from the classical (so-called reflective). It is, in other words, dichotomies of 'Little Tradition' and 'Great Tradition'. These dichotomies are testimonial to, as reflected in the formulation of Redfield (1955), an evolutionary scheme in which tradition has been studied in India. It underpins a hierarchy showing Little Tradition, the taken-for-granted knowledge of the 'unreflective many', as a subordinate of 'Great tradition'. The latter belongs to the 'reflective few', the literate part, which exhibits sophisticated creativity in intellectual and artistic expressions. Befitting the same hierarchical conceptualization is McKim Marriott's (1967) attempt to develop *Ethnosociology* of India. It amounted to a list of cognitive categories stemming from Great Tradition alone, as if

Little Tradition had literally little to offer. This approach in early anthropological study of Indian traditional social structure configures the folk through the categories of the classical-Sanskritic texts. Underpinning this is a prejudice akin to that of the Bengali reformers and the new middle class bourgeois in the colonial South Asia. They were either Anglican or revivalist or both (Kumar 1989). As we know, revivalism was based on the reinterpretation of the classical/ scriptural texts such as the Vedas or the Upanishad etc. The folk women in Bengal, who unabashedly sang their traditional songs, were looked down upon with disdain. It was believed that these songs propagated *wantonness*, *sexual depravity* and sustained women's natural attitude. Reform was sought for these women, along with lower caste folk.

The historical trajectory of folklore research also manifests a similar tendency. Dorsan (1972) informs that the quest of folklore has been that of the forgotten and backward, bound by exoticism, romanticism and evolutionism. In the nineteenth century, the prevalent synonyms of folklore were 'bygones, popular antiquities, and survivals'. All these terms had pejorative connotations about the folk society. Still later, Dorsan suggests that terms such as simple, unspoiled, pastoral, close to nature – viewed them in romantic light. Whether admired or despised, the folk represented a world different from the centres of power, wealth, and progress, industrial, intellectual and political activity in the metropolis. Juxtaposing the aforementioned with attitude in early folklore studies in India reveals a veritable 'archaeology of knowledge' (on/ about) in Indian society. The folklore study in South Asia in general was not free from the evolutionary stance due to manifold vested interests. One of those was to rationally justify colonialism and civilization mission of the empire in the region of south Asia.

Poitevin (2003) calls it an empire theory of folklore that treated the knowledge of tribes, low castes, and also elaborates the rituals of the twice-born as superstitious beliefs and practices. It is in this backdrop that symbols of caste and gender were translated into absolute markers. *Purdah*, in this scheme, assumes an unequivocal significance of backwardness, suppression and helplessness of women, in tandem with the inferiority of the natives in the colony. This determined the scheme of thinking even in the post-independent countries of south Asia, as elucidated above.

However, an antithesis to the colonial attitude and early Indian folkloristic prejudices emerged to show the significance of folk and their lore beyond the prevalent notions. A.K. Ramanujan (1991), one of the leading scholars in folklore studies in India, critically targeted exoticism and romanticism and acknowledged the problems of dualistic conceptualization of the feminine space such as inner and outer, private and public. The *akam* (inside the domestic domain) and *puram* (outside the domestic domain) division of genres in the folklore from south India establishes that women narrate stories from *akam* genre. This kind of taxonomic divide between the private and public space however obscures the negotiation of spaces that unfolds in reality. In the spate of fresh thinking multiple images of women surfaced. On the one hand there are literatures depicting women in stereotypical roles, as goddesses and ideal types. On the other hand, there are narratives of struggling women who may destroy the threatening male villains. Gatwood would draw the doubly charged feminine principle in India saying, “an independent fertile and unblushingly erotic female principle may be discerned within the historical and ethnographic complexity of village India...instead, a male controlled, religiously marginal, and morally ambiguous

goddess has become the sole representative of the Hindu female principle” (1985: 1). The dominant view has it that women are eulogized only if they are contained sexuality and eligible to become a good mother. Similarly, if they were benevolent woman, as divine consorts of the gods, they would receive adoration. This dual image of feminine hints at an inflexible notion of *purdah*: women within *purdah* are ‘good’, women without *purdah* are ‘bad’! But then, further development in the field of folklore researches, from women’s perspective, engenders a sense that *purdah* is not the ultimate marker in women’s expressions. It is rather a negotiable category.

Veena Das (1988), for example, discusses women’s expression in the face of ‘double register’: one is the register of law and language, and, the other is of poetry and metalanguage. It is the ‘register of poetry and metalanguage’ in which women articulate their concerns in their folklore. In this register women operate with a sense of liberty and freely express critical concerns irrespective of the presence or absence of *purdah*. The ‘register of law and language’, the mainstay of masculine domination in the patriarchal structure, coexist with women’s expressions. This register is also whereby menfolk enforce the necessity of *purdah* for women. No matter how crucial is this register; it does not dismiss women’s register of critical expressions. It can be argued that in the social dynamics of the two registers *purdah* becomes a negotiable factor. It is precisely due to the negotiable characteristics of *purdah* that women’s songs in north India, as highlighted by Raheja and Gold (2003), present a counterargument to the colonial construct of meek and silent women of rural India. Folksongs of north Indian women highlight the complexity in the patriarchal social structure. This point of view, and rethinking on women’s position in the folk society, marks a discontinuity with the colonial construct of the

folk. It is in this context women, despite *purdah*, are configured as active agent in the social structure. But then when we perceive women through the dualistic conceptualization of space, as *akam* and *puram*, *Purdah* assumes the role of a symbolic tool of violent repression of women's expressions. Chattopadhyay, without mincing words states:

Pardah proved an added factor in depriving woman of any participation in public affairs, any activity in political or social fields. Men, while confining their women folk to dark seclusion and depriving them of cultural or recreational pursuits, created a professional playground for themselves. (1983: 29).

In the same vein Jeffery (2000) analysed the socio-religious structure of the Pirzade Muslim community in Nizamuddin and interpreted *purdah* as a symbolic anchorage for the maintenance of the economic clout of men folk. The social-structural seclusion of women in Hindu society, by the dint of caste system, has been interpreted in the same fashion. *Purdah* or otherwise, women have been controlled by the cultural codes of caste society, in favour of male interest (Allen 1982, Aggarwal 1988, Dubey 1996, Chowdhry 1998, Chakravarty 2006). It is in this context that *purdah* acquires an unrelenting connotation.

In the light of the double-edged significance of *purdah*, and position of women, there emerge two notions of tradition vis-à-vis women. To summarize, therefore:

According to some, the Hindu tradition has no positive ideals for women and cannot be reinterpreted in their interests whereas, according to others, the Hindu tradition does have beneficial qualities and so with care can be restated to the advantage of women" (Robinson 1999: 197).

It is imperative to break the stalemate created by the notion of *purdah* and reconfigure women in the light of their expressions. From behind the *purdah* women offer very many critical notions about the prevalent socio-cultural practices. This is also to be noted that the critical notions are charged with an urge of strategic reconciliation with male folk. It is not at all a linear attack in the social criticism arising from women's assertion in the folk context. Furthermore, the possibility of rethinking women's position warrants a realization of the significance of their stock of knowledge (their belief and practices). In general, feminist scholarship has to be aware of the fundamental proposition Weiner (1976) had offered by studying the Kiriwina women of the Trobriand Islands: power of women has to be noticed in the domain other than political. Socio-cultural domain where women act and express, bring forth the powerful role women play, with as well as without their men folk. The props of feminine performance may or may not have obvious economic or political bearings. But then, they are instrumental in cosmic and transcendental terms, and it is significant to pay attention to their roles.

In this background the following section presents the Maithili speaking women's folksongs in the region of Mithila, in the North-Eastern Bihar in the North of India, not only in the villages but also in the townships like Drabhanga and Madhubani. The selected songs were collected during a yearlong fieldwork in the villages named Beri, Navtol, Fulhara, and Bhindi. The methodological tool in the process of collection included interviews with women folk and observation of the events in the life cycle and everyday life.

3. Song of Women in Mithila

Mithila is conceived as comprising the districts of Darbhanga, Madhubani, Sitamarhi, Muzzafapur, Samastipur, Chamaparan (East and West), Saharsa, Purnia, parts of Mungher and Bhagalpur. The region falls in between 25° 28' and 26° 52' N latitude, and, 84° 56' and 86° 46' E longitude. The social stratification of Mithila presents complex diversity along caste lines, including significant presence of the Muslim community. Women from various caste groups such as *Brahman*, *Kurmi*, *Mallah*, *Dhanuk* and *Nai* sing songs of *samskar* (rite of the passage). These songs have been subject of studies in the Maithili literature, for example Mishra (1951) and Jha (2002). However, the cultural scene of Mithila, in literary as well as social science studies, reflects the dominance of the Maithil Brahmins. Not only the cultural tradition but also the language Maithili was painted as a product of the Brahmanic tradition in Mithila since George Grierson's seminal linguistic survey (1927). In this line, Burghart suggests that culture as well as language of Mithila, connotes pluralism. The language Maithili has been noted for its diversity arising from the classical tradition of chaste Maithili and the folk tradition of rustic Maithili. It is significant to note Burghart:

It cannot be said that rustic Maithili is in any way a simplification of chaste Maithili, for the grammar is equally complex... the difference that emerges is largely one of style as a result of the big and little castes taking different sorts of vocalic and semantic decisions. (1993: 768-69).

Instead of a strong divide, these linguistic variants have to be interpreted as a manifestation of cultural transactions between the classical (Great) tradition and the folk (Little) tradition. Thus

there are songs and folk performances by the lower caste groups along with that of the upper caste in Mithila. The plural scene of folklore in Mithila entails the popular folk performances of lower caste groups such as *Lorikayan* (tales of demigods performed by the Yadav and Ahir caste), *Dinabhadri* (tales of heroic legends performed by Mushar caste), *Raja Salhes* (legend performed by Dusadh caste) etc. Women's articulations through their folksongs have to be read in this complex cultural background. With this generic note on the context of Maithili folklore it is relevant to turn to the renditions of select songs, which suggest of the active agency of women despite the *purdah* and the divide of inside - outside.

Women in the villages of Mithila along with their little babies sit in the courtyard, starting with giggly bantering, as they sing songs. The domain is suggestive of an exclusively gendered space meant for women. But then, men folk are invariably target audience of these renditions. For, *dalan* (the space outside but adjacent to the household, apparently exclusive for men) is not detached from the *angan* (courtyard). And women are often aware that they are being heard. The interplay between inside and outside, amplifies the meanings of the songs. Some select songs, with translation, as per the sequence of events in the life cycle, articulate a support for the key arguments of this paper. The argument is, to reiterate, that Maithili speaking women present social criticism in their folksongs and hence it is hyperbolic to dismiss them as passive agency, despite *purdah*. Songs on the occasion of the birth of a baby, first event in the life cycle of event, not only voice celebration but also reveal the anxiety and concern of female folk. These songs belong to the category called *sohar* and *khelona*.

3.1 On Childbirth

A song, celebrating the birth of son, says:

Lalna re kathi dekhi hanslain horil je baba
Aabe bans badhal he
Hathi dekhi hanslain fallan ke baba
A be b n b d e ...!

Friends, what sight triggered a laughter of the father?
 That now descent moves ahead!
 He saw an elephant and burst smiling
 That now descent moves ahead...

The celebration of the arrival of the new member in the family, especially a male child, also exhibits preference for son in the folk society of Mithila. But then, another *sohar* song critiques the relegated status of female child, and pleads the audience to cultivate a sense of respect for female child,

Jahi kokhiya he Amma
Bhaiya ke janam dehal
Tahi kpkhiya hamaro janam dehal!

The womb that delivered my brother,
 O mother!
 That is where I was nurtured too...

The category of *Sohar* songs also conveys the emotional upheaval of a new mother, who is going through labor, or has just delivered a baby. Such songs underline the paradoxical experience involved in the process of becoming a mother,

Pahil bedan jab uthal angna me mudiya patkal he
Sasu aab nai khelayab he tora beta sang latgenma
S u b n k e y b e ...!

As arose the first pang, I threw my head in *angna*
(courtyard)

No more play of love with your son O! *Sasu* (mother-in-law)

It just made me miserable...

Toward the end, such *Sohar* songs indicate that the only reward of this physical-emotional suffering is the new-born baby. These songs critically argue that only women undergo this duress while men are bystanders in this process. Similar critical tendency can be noted in the songs women sing on the first rite for a male child, *Mundan* (tonsonial rite). While they celebrate the event, they also take the opportunity to criticize some or other social aspects.

3.2 On *Mundan* (Tonsorial Rite)

One particular song underlines the complaint of a child's aunt, his father's sisters,

Kehen kathod bheliye yo bhaiya

Pahile beta ke mudan kelon

B n b d g r b r on yo b y ...

How heartless it is of you O! Brother

On the mudan of your son

You forgot inviting your sister O! Brother...

The song goes on revealing the necessity of compensation for the insensitive injustice done by the brother of not inviting the protagonist of the song, the sisters. Songs of this kind reveal the absence of inheritance rights for women and superiority of male child in the patrilineal descent. Additionally, it also indicates the reminder by women to men folk to be just to the daughters of the household. If not inheritance, they must be given the due regards on such occasional celebrations.

In addition to these songs, fraught with critical sense along gender lines, there are also songs critical of the caste dimension of Maithili society. The tone of criticism is invariably laced with humour and seeks for correction of the social behaviour of the folks from dominant caste. One particular song, often heard on events in rite of the passage, targets the Brahmins who have ritually superior social status in the Maithil society. This is:

*Baklel babhna chura dahi chatay ela hamar angna
Chaur deliyen dail deliyen dhelni angna
Ek R non e k r n c k e k n ...!*

Buffoon Brahmin, greedy for the food, came over our
angna

We gifted you with rice and lentil, you hoarded them away
For a bit of salt you shamelessly crib,
not expected of you...

The song targets greedy Brahmin priests who often end up asking for more and are never content with what has been already given to them. The song with its critical comment evokes a critical sense among the Brahmins to realize the problem in their social behaviour. The expression of social criticism consummates during the ritual event of wedding.

3.3 On Wedding

There are several songs in which women articulate the anxiety of would-be bride's parents. In the process, these songs target social insecurity for women in a patrilineal society. One such song is,

*Hamro Hauri chhathi panche baris ke
Ek so baras ke jamai ge mai
Kona ke Gauri sasur basti
C n e ukum r ge m ...!*

For a tenderly *Gauri* (daughter)
 So old a groom, alas!
 How would Gauri live with him
 She is soft and swave...

The concern for daughters is even more radically articulated in the songs of farewell to a newly wed daughter. These songs are called *Samdaun* and express the sorrow of bidding adieu to a daughter.

Bad re jatan se hum Siya dhiya poslahu
Seho dhiya Ram nene jaay ...!

We brought up our daughter with utmost care and love
 Such a piece of our heart, Ram takes away...

Such songs present a subtle critique of the folk perception of daughter as *paraya dhan* (somebody else's property). In these songs, bride is invariably equated with the mythological character Sita from the epic Ramayana. In addition to these sombre expressions, wedding is also an opportunity to articulate humorous attack on male folk. Women rejoice abusing and teasing the newly wed groom, his male friends, kith and kin. They sing songs abusing the whole *barat* (the entourage accompanying a groom) and men folk listen with rapturous joy,

Nij kul kamaini samdhin chhinro
Sagar nagar eko nahi chholain
Ke k n r ...!

The mother of the groom, the wife of the man in red robe
 Such a beautiful whore she is,
 Bewitching for the whole world

She never distinguishes between her husband and her other lovers.

Such outrageously sexual and abusive songs waft in the air triggering humour, provoking thoughts, and sensitizing the audience. In addition to the songs in rite of the passage, women also sing songs in the everyday situation.

3.4 In Everyday Life

Women in Mithila mix genres to sing as per the prevailing mood while performing daily chores. Mostly these are songs of devotional nature and songs to reminisce the forgone events of life. The element of social criticism surreptitiously enters in some of the songs, such as the following:

*Nahira mei chhai ho bhola ek lakh bhaiya
Aor chhai sawa lakh bhatija
Eke go je amma binu soon he bhola nath
K y r b duk mor ...
Sasura mei chhai ho bhola
Ek lakh bhainsur
Aor sawa lakh diyar
Eke go je amma binu soon
Ho b o n , K y r b duk mor ...*

A million brothers, in my natal home
And quarters more are my nieces
A mere absence of my mother makes all deserted though...
When would my pathos be over?
A million brothers-in-law around
And quarters more are my kith and kin
A mere absence of my mother makes all deserted though...
When would my pathos be over?

Such songs reflect the feminine resignation to the divine for solace as well as a criticism of the social system, which separates women from their mother. Some of the songs also

express a subtle criticism of an unfulfilling husband, such as the following:

*Baisal Gauri mone mone sochthi
 Bhangiya ke sag kona rahbai ge mai
 Baisal bhangiya bhukhale tahal kona karbai ge mai
 Apne t Bhola baba puja par baisthin
 Bhukhle tahal kona karabai ge mai
 Anchar phari phari kagat banayab
 K ek b k b ge m ...!*

Mulls Gauri, sitting quietly
 How do I exist with a pothead husband, O! *Mai*
 Such a laidback, earns nothing
 How do I exist with him, O! *Mai*
 He meditates for hours, and forgets others
 How do I serve him with my empty stomach, O! *Mai*
 Tearing *anchal* (a corner of *saari*) I use for paper
 Endless woes, how do I write them all, O! *Mai*...

Such songs articulate a social criticism of a laidback and insensitive husband in a patriarchal society where men are supposedly the providers. Locked in a stereotypical role of homemaker, women are helpless in dealing with financial and material insufficiency unless their husbands perform the role of breadwinner.

The sum total implications of the selected songs present a peek at the Maithil worldview wherein there is a constant urge to flag critical issues with the dominant mode of thinking. The Maithil folk locate themselves in the emotional socio-cultural framework, engaging with material world and social existence, while also aspiring to transcend the same. They express anxiety arising from stereotypical roles and status, disagreements with

the kinship rules in a patriarchal society. Interestingly enough, these expressions of social criticism seek for empathy of the men folk by appealing them emotionally. These subsume myriad motifs: men are asked to respect a girl child, a son is requested to be respectful to a mother after marriage, a son-in-law is pleaded for tenderness toward a daughter, a daughter is sent with a groom after marriage with heavy hearts, a husband is criticized for being laidback, and even gods would be chided for their mercilessness and so on so forth. The criticism is laced with emotion and humour. Hence women sing songs to wittingly criticize Brahmins, menfolk accompanying a groom, and name it. In sum women present an alternative mode of expression through their folk songs, which transcends the injunctions of Sanskritik-Brahmanic textual tradition. They offer an alternative to the thinking that separates Reason from Emotion, and help the binaries collapse together for larger meanings. Thus women folk are not confined to their exclusive domain and venting ideas of frustration from behind the *pardah*.

4. Conclusion

In a nutshell, this paper attempted to unravel intertwined prejudices toward folk and their lore. In this context it locates the dominant notion of *pardah*, which turns out to be a stalemate in the analytical thinking. *Pardah* and its consequent impact as a means in sexual control fits the evolutionary scheme of thinking on folk society or little tradition. However, this paper invited to engage with an alternative perspective on folklore, and thus double notion of *pardah* emerging from the postcolonial quest of folklore in south Asia. At the confluence of contrasting ideas, this paper placed the songs of women from Mithila. It explored the elements of social criticism in their songs sung on the occasions during rite of the passage. These songs not only

generate social euphoria of celebrating the transition but also offer critical insights. The social criticism emerging from these songs lump together Brahmin priests, patriarchal preferences of male child, and insensitive approach to girls, and so on so forth. However, these songs also emotionally invoke empathy in male folk. Hence it is safe to conclude that women as the repositories of song culture in Mithila tend to be conscience keepers through their melodious social criticism. This is accomplished through plural sense of *purdah*.

References

- Aggarwal, Bina, 'Who Sows? Who Reaps?: Women and Land Rights in India', *Journal of Peasant Studies*, vol. 15.4 (1988), pp. 531-81.
- Allen, Michael, 'The Hindu view of Women', in *Women in India and Nepal*, Michael Allen and S.N. Mukherjee, (eds.), (Canberra, 1982).
- Burghart, Richard. 'A Quarrel in the Language Family: Agency and Representation of Speech in Mithila', *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 27.4 (1993), pp. 761-804.
- Chakravarty, Uma, *Gendering Caste: Through a Feminist Lens*, (Kolkata, 2006).
- Chattopadhyay, Kamladevi, *Indian Women' Battle for Freedom*, (Delhi, 1983).
- Chowdhry, Prem, 'Enforcing Cultural Codes: Gender and Violence in Northern India', in *A Question of Silence: The Sexual Economics of Northern India*, Mary E. Joan and Janaki Nair, (eds.), (New Delhi, 1998).

- Das, Veena, 'Feminity and the Orientation to the Body', in *Socialization, Education and Women: Exploration in Gender Identity*, Karuna Chanana, ed., (Delhi, 1988), pp. 193-207.
- Dorsan, Richard M., (ed.), *Folklore and Folk life: An Introduction*, (Chicago, 1972).
- Dubey, Leela, 'On the construction of Gender: Socialisation of Hindu girls in Patrilineal India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 23 (1996), pp. WS 11- WS 19.
- Gatwood, Lynn E., *Devi and the Spouse Goddess: Women, Sexuality and Marriage in India*, (Delhi, 1985).
- Grierson, G.A., *A Linguistic Survey of India*, vol. V, (Calcutta, 1927).
- Henry, Edward O., 'Maithil Women's songs: Distinctive and Endangered Species', *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 42.3 (1988), pp. 415-40.
- Jeffrey, Patricia, *Frogs in a Well: Indian Women in Purdah*, (Delhi, 2000).
- Jha, Ramdev, *Maithili Loksahitya: Swarup o Saundarya*, (in Hindi) [Maithali Folk-literature: Structure and Beauty], (Darbhanga, 2002).
- Kumar, Radha, *The History of Doing: An Illustrated Account of ovemen for Women' R g and Fem n m n Ind 1800-1990*, (Delhi, 1997).
- Marriott, McKim, (ed.), *Studies in the Little Community*, (Chicago, 1967).
- Misra, Jayakant, *Introduction to the Folk Literature of Mithila*, 2 vols. (Allahabad, 1951).

- Poitevin, Guy, 'People's Traditions, Assets or Liabilities', *New Quest*, vol. 153.1, (2003), pp. 72-98.
- Raheja, Gloria Goodwin and Ann Gold, (ed.), *Songs, Stories, Lives: Gendered Dialogues and Cultural Critique*, (Delhi, 2003).
- Ramanujan, A.K., *Folktale from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-Two Languages*, (Delhi, 1991).
- Redfield, Robert, 'The Social Organization of Tradition', *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 15.1 (1955), pp. 13-21.
- Robinson, Catherine A., *Tradition and Liberation: the Hindu Tradition and in the Indian Women' Movement*, (London, 1999).
- Weiner, Annette B., *Women of Value, Men of Renown: New Perspective in Trobriand Exchange*, (Austin, 1976).

The Scintillating Indian Culture: Ethical Underpinnings and Scientific Affiliations

Nivedita Maitra and Shruti Dubey

Abstract

The religion of any culture can be considered as one of its strongest footholds. At the very heart of it, the religion that has been in practice in India since times immemorial is incorporated with various forms of nature worship. Nature has served as the cradle in which the inception of human civilization and its growth and development occurred. The founders of the Vedic culture seemed to acknowledge this fact as they pledged allegiance to Mother Nature by attributing divinity to her and all her offerings. These founders, although existing in remote past, lacked nowhere in the concept of environmental ethics which is gaining momentum on today's context of dependence on our natural resources along with a fear of its fatal consequences on human civilization. Environmentalism was valued much by the ancestors who framed religion as one of the foundations of life.

The paper analyses how these ancient seers who functioned as the sculptors of religious framework around which the cultural structure evolved, valued the significance of the powers inherent in nature, thereby incorporating nature worship as a part and parcel of their religious rituals. These rituals were tied up with mythological stories so as to ensure their perpetuation. Said rituals are practiced even today by the ladies of virtually every Hindu household who worship plants such as Tulsi (the holy Basil) and Vat-vriksha (Banyan tree) as part of their religious obligations.

One of the major issues in the twenty-first century worldwide is the problem of environmental degradation and pollution. Mother Nature has provided an endless variety of species with apt conditions for survival since the very inception of life on the planet. But with the growth of human civilization, its ability to exhaust the natural resources for its survival and growth has proved fatal for her. The high pace of technological innovations has made today's man forgetful of his position in the cycle of existence as part of nature. Instead he tries to prove himself as its master and controller through his continuous manoeuvring of natural resources as well as his environment. Through such an endeavour, although mankind has reached a peak in the course of development, it has created for itself a host of problems regarding its own surroundings and sustenance. In its report on environmental degradation, the Department of Economics and Social Affairs of the United Nations (2011) has captured the current scenario in the following words:

While humankind has made enormous progress in improving material welfare over the past two centuries, this progress has come at a lasting cost of degradation of our natural environment. About half of the forests that covered the Earth are gone, groundwater resources are being depleted and contaminated, enormous reductions in biodiversity have already taken place and through increased burning of fossil fuels, the stability of planet's climate is being threatened by Global Warming. (World Economic and Social Survey 2011: 5)

The anthropogenic influence on the environment has proved to be detrimental and an in-depth scrutiny of it in recent times has advocated a dire need for environmentalism and environmental ethics. The former may be understood as an ideology that

advocates the preservation, restoration and improvement of environment whereas the latter may be seen as an extension of the traditional ethical domain from the human to include the non-human world as well.

Culture in a general sense can be simply understood as an assimilation of the beliefs, customs, trends, values and ethos of a particular group of people at a given point of time, which has evolved as a result of interaction of humans with external agencies and forms that have significant influence over them which is manifested in institutions such as arts, philosophy, music, language, literature and religion. Culture may be thus regarded as a functional and dynamic aspect of society influencing its basic unit- the person. According to Malinowski (1931):

Culture comprises inherited artifices, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values....Culture is an all-embracing term which includes all significant aspects of man's life beginning from philosophy and religion and ending with social institutions and manners... the vitality of culture springs not only from a man of genius but from uninterrupted flow of generations of men across the centuries. (Malinowski 1931: 621)

In this sense, culture may refer to a human-engineered phenomenon assimilating all aspects of existence that fall outside the domain of genetic inheritance. Culture is invariably related to civilization- a summation of tangible elements of existence of a particular group manifested in its materialistic endeavours and achievements such as architecture, inventions, discoveries, mechanical and technological advancements and even administration. Therefore if culture stands for the intellectual aspect of refinement and growth of life, civilization

represents the materialistic aspect of life as carved out by humans in the form of massive edifices and technological advances that flaunt and are the markers of the level of development and growth achieved up to a specific point of time. In this sense, culture could be understood as the essence of civilization that is both complementary as well as supplementary to it.

As is true with every civilization that came into being, the Vedic civilization witnessed its inception in the very lap of nature, amidst the rich resources offered by it. The Aryans, who are known to be the founders of the central and south Asian civilizations, named themselves such that the word *Arya* signified a tiller of soil- one who is close to nature, and this was considered to be a noble profession. At the inception of this civilization, the founders and architects acknowledged the value and significance of nature in its growth, development and sustenance. As their culture grew with close proximity to nature, they incorporated a feeling of reverence and owed an allegiance to her as a mother and a guardian who was benevolent enough to provide them with apt conditions to survive and flourish. Such feeling was manifested in their rituals that were performed as a regular feature of their day to day life. These ritualistic actions, when performed incessantly by generations, acquired a crystallised form of religion which had its foundation in the hymns and songs of the religious texts, the *Vedas* (the sacred books of *Hindus*) and *Upanishads* (texts offering speculative interpretation of the *Vedas*).

The character of this religion was determined by the kind of life they had been living. At that early stage of their cultural history, the *Vedic* Aryans lived close to nature- as a part of it, rather than apart from it. It was, therefore, the vastness and brilliance of nature, its

blessings and maledictions, and, above all, the inexorable and subtly operating law which regulated all its manifestations, that dominated their religious ideology. (Bary, et al. 1963: 7)

Such rituals gradually got established as part and parcel of the fabric of culture and acquired the name and form of *dharma* - literally translated as religion - derived from the root word *dhr*- meaning an incorporation of values that one holds sacred to oneself.

Dharma then refers to the religio-ethical ideal, which we may translate as ‘virtue’. The basic meaning of *dharma*, a word derived from the root *dhr*, “to sustain”, is the moral law, which sustains the world, human society and the individual.... Though *dharma* generally refers to religiously ordained duty, in other passages it may just mean morality, right conduct, or the rules of conduct (mores, customs, codes or laws) of a group. (Bary, et al 1963: 211)

This *dharma* (religion) also advocated righteousness and just behaviour on the part of humans. The domain of such righteous and just acts was not limited to the human world but was extended to the non-human world that included man’s surroundings - nature, plants, and animals.

The old inclusive term for religion in India was *Arya dharma*. *Dharma* really means something more than religion. It is from a root word which means to hold together; it is the inmost constitution of a thing, the law of its inner being. It is an ethical concept which includes the moral code, righteousness and the whole range of man’s duties and responsibilities. (Nehru 2004:70)

For instance the cow in the Vedic tradition is considered as a divine creature (referred to in mythology as *Kamdhenu*- one that is capable of granting all wishes and desires). As per the Vedic tradition, the presence of a cow in the precincts of a household was considered as a sign of good fortune and thus was made mandatory as the cow was considered to be a representative of benevolence both of nature and divinity. Even birds like the parrot (*shuka-deva*) and eagle (*garuda-deva*) were attributed divinity in the *Vedas* and *Purans*.

Besides representations of fertility symbols which imply the existence of a Mother or Earth Goddess cult, and the divinity reminiscent of *Shiva*, the Indus Civilization also seemed to attach a religious significance to certain animals such as, the tiger, buffalo, crocodile, elephants and even multiheaded monsters and hybrid creatures as well as trees and auspicious symbols such as the swastika. (Bary, et al 1963: 3)

Similarly, many plants have been praised and worshipped as Divine entities in the Vedic Tradition. Major among these are the plant of *Tulsi* or Basil and the Banyan tree or the *Vat – vriksha*. The values thus attached to such natural entities stand as testimony to the great far-sightedness possessed by the founders of the religion because by attaching a religious value to nature they ensured that allegiance and a sense of respect towards nature be maintained and perpetuated through generations which in turn would consequently lead to the preservation of it that would be beneficial for generations to come due to the medicinal as well as environmental significance nature has. The proper looking after and paying obeisance to plants and trees was made an essential part of the practice of *dharma* and observing such rituals was made mandatory.

Erected upon the foundation of religion, these rituals got established so firmly in the structure of day to day life that one finds a strict practicing of these rituals as a part of religious obligations even today.

Plants in India have been used for medicinal purposes since ancient times. The earliest references of the medicinal usage of plants are found in the *Rig-Veda* considered to have been composed between 3500-1600 B.C. Ayurveda is the ancient indigenous system of the study of medicinal values of plants and their usage for the purpose of health and well-being of people. It has been established as the supreme science of good health through natural means. An extensive range of plants have been analysed and described in Ayurveda for their medicinal values.

As has been confirmed through centuries of usage, these plants possess miraculous properties and can prove to be more or less an elixir of life. The founders and clairvoyants of the Indus civilization devised ways in which the preservation, conservation and perpetuation of these plants and their properties can be ensured. Thus they injected descriptions of these plants into various folk-tales which described the context and history of various rituals of religious significance.

Our forefathers, while writing the *Vedas*, being quite aware of the Creator's will and wish, made various efforts to make people imbibe norms related to the day-to-day activities. The norms were obligatory while their impact permeated through the very marrow of life. All the rules framed implied sustenance of ecological balance. The motto was *Jeeved Sharadah Shatam*, "we have to live a life of hundred years". This type of life expectancy obviously needed a peaceful, tension-free environment which could only be maintained as well

as sustained through equilibrium, i.e. ecological balance of flora and fauna. The mythical worship of sacred trees and animals and declarations of making them sacred were to lead a pious life as well as to keep flora and fauna intact. (Singh, et al 1997: 160)

These religious concepts that derived their strength from the belief and faith of the followers enjoy their unchallenged devotion to date. Being either depicted as the personified manifestations of virtues or as the favourites of Gods and Demi-Gods, these plants gradually gained a permanent religious value. Such an attachment and the intermingling of religious values with the plants resulted in the latter's prevalence in the society as an object of reverence. As per Vedic tradition it was mandatory to appease the God a particular tree was associated with in order to invoke his blessings.

It is also observed that forest preserving (hence preservation of both flora and fauna) and pollutant resisting strategies were tagged with religious aspects of life and interwoven with the rituals and ethos of the people only to be disentangled beyond this earthly world. A mosaic of legendary tales, medicinal properties and botanical details give to the ritual-oriented customs a distinctive aura. It seems to be common practice among *Vaidic* Aryans to associate plants with deities and uses in various rituals. As coded in the *Puranas*, the growing of plants with a ritualistic significance merited a reward. The planting of a tree earns for the planter a merit equivalent that of being blessed with ten sons. (Singh, et al 1997:161)

The followers of such religious practices engaged themselves in daily customs which proved beneficial for their lives by purifying their surroundings that resulted in better conditions for

healthy living. In this way a perpetuation of environmentalism and a conservation of plants with medicinal values became an integral part of the daily lives of people, a majority of them not being directly aware of the actual significance of these plants. Practiced by all followers irrespective of their status, educational background or any other yardstick, such customs display a veneration of the ideals of environmental ethics through the agency of religion, and this can be traced as the effect of the great far-sightedness of our ancient seers and forefathers to preserve the environment which, in turn, is interconnected with the preservation and endurance of the human race.

The legends and narratives that have been attached to these rituals have a characteristic feature of personifying certain virtues which resulted in a blessed and virtuous life full of sanctity, serenity and bliss. They seem to invoke and instil in the listener an attitude of following the righteous path and possessing a peaceful disposition and advocate an avoidance of vices and immoralities. The aim of these religious practices is not only to increase the life span, but also to attain bliss and excellence in this life which, when striving towards divinity, may at least transcend crude humanity.

The religious value thus accorded to these plants owed its significance to the mythological legends and anecdotes that gave rise to them. These legends, as they deal with stories that seem very realistic, have a direct psychological influence on the listener. Since they transmit the message that the longevity, well-being and opulence of the family are attached to the proper looking after and caring for these plants, people were led to the preservation and survival of these species which would have vanished otherwise. The plants that enjoyed special religious

significance were those which were conducive to health and beneficial for the environment. The conservation of these species by according them religious significance must have had the preservation and sustenance of the human race as its ultimate purpose. Many herbs and shrubs that have been proved medicinally useful are mentioned in the Vedic texts as religiously important plants. Major among such varieties are the plants of basil and banyan, both being prominent for their medicinal as well as environmental benefits.

The plant of *Tulsi* or the Holy Basil with the botanical name *Ocimum sanctum*, belonging to the family Labiatae, is said to possess a phenolic compound named Eugenol that is present in the oils extracted from various parts of it. It is considered to be consisting of expectorant, analgesic, anti-cancer, anti-asthmatic, anti-emetic, diaphoretic, anti-diabetic, hepatoprotective, hypotensive, hypolipidmic and anti-stress agents.(Prakash and Gupta, pp.125-131). It is also used to treat fever, bronchitis, arthritis, convulsions and other such common ailments.

*Tulsi katuka tikta hridoshna dahapitkrit,
Dipani kushtha krichastra parshva ruk kafvatjit.*

(In Ayurveda, *tulsi* is described as anabolic, hypoglycaemic, muscle relaxant, and cardiac depressant). ('Medicinal Plant Holy Basil', <http://www.gits4u.com/agri/agri5b.htm>)

Considered as an important plant that emits oxygen all day round and one that contains nascent oxy molecules that help in the formation of the ozone layer, many *Tulsi* plants have been planted by the Forest Department of Uttar Pradesh around the Taj Mahal to protect its surface from harmful industrial emissions.

Tulsi gives out oxygen for 20 hours and ozone for four hours a day along with the formation of nascent oxygen which absorbs harmful gases like carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and sulphur dioxide from the environment. ('*Tulsi* has Environmental Benefits Too', Times of India 2012)

The plant of *Tulsi* or Basil is of foremost significance in Hinduism. The plant, found practically in every Hindu household, is known for its medicinal as well as religious significance. Considered as a symbol of purity and austerity, the plant is worshipped as a reincarnation of the Goddess *Lakshmi*. Every household, as per Vedic tradition, ought to maintain an altar with the plant in its courtyard and the lady of the house is to offer water and prayer to the plant on a daily basis. The leaves of the plant are offered to lord *Vishnu* as they are considered to be his favourite. The leaves of *Tulsi* are considered one of the main offerings to God while praying to Him and the prayer is considered to be incomplete without these leaves. It is customary to give *Tulsi* leaves to a dying person as it is believed that by doing so the departing soul may be elevated to heaven.

Tulsi (meaning one that cannot be compared), in the Hindu mythology is also named as *Vrinda* (meaning – the Goddess of all plants), *Nandini* (one who gives happiness to all), *Viswapawani* (one that purifies the three worlds) and *Vishnu-priya* (one who is dear to Lord Vishnu). The incarnation of *Tulsi* is considered to be related to the legend of the demon king *Jalandar* (one who was born out of the wrath and anger of Lord Shiva) and his wife *Vrinda*. The legend has it that once Lord Shiva was enraged at the vain acts of *Indra*. Sensing His anger and its fatal consequences, *Indra* accepted his mistake and implored for pity and forgiveness from *Shiva*. He calmed down but something flew away from His head; being asked what it

was, He replied that it was the anger and wrath at *Indra* that parted from Him soon as *Indra* asked for mercy. This wrath was absorbed by the ocean and it took the form of a baby who was fed by ocean waves. This child grew up to be a very powerful warrior and the demons trying to increase their powers enthroned him as their ruler. He was married to *Vrinda*, the daughter of a great Demon king. Marriage to *Vrinda* added to the powers of *Jalandar* as she was one of the greatest devotees of Lord Vishnu and had acquired tremendous yogic powers through her continuous practicing of religious rituals. Owing to his immense powers, *Jalandar* acquired reign over all three worlds and when Lord Shiva was sent to convince him to quit his desire for reigning the whole universe, *Jalandar* insulted him. This resulted in a war between lord Shiva and *Jalandar*, but even *Shiva* was unable to defeat *Jalandar* as his wife *Vrinda*, the greatest devotee of Lord *Vishnu*, prayed for his victory at the battlefield. Pursued by Goddess *Parvati*, *Vishnu* appeared in the guise of *Jalandar* to distract *Vrinda* from her prayers for victory. As she stopped praying and got busy in making preparations to celebrate the return of her husband (Lord *Vishnu* in disguise), the powers of *Jalandar* started declining and he faced defeat and death at the hands of lord Shiva. Sensing that some misfortune has befallen her husband, *Vrinda* suspected the person who appeared to be her husband and enquired about the well-being of her husband. Lord *Vishnu* then manifested himself in his true form and informed her about the defeat and death of her husband. Thus *Vrinda* cursed lord *Vishnu* for betraying her despite the fact that she was His greatest devotee. Lord Vishnu was thus cursed to take the form of a stone (named *Shaligram*) and also to be parted from His wife when He incarnates subsequently as a human on Earth. She collapsed after cursing Him. The plant is said to have arisen out of her and the prayers

to Lord *Vishnu* are considered complete only when the *Tulsi* leaves are offered to Him because they come out of the plant that symbolizes his greatest devotee. As such, it stands for dedication that would bring about opulence for the household.

The *Tulsi puja* is celebrated on the eleventh day of *Karthik* month (the eighth month as per the Hindu lunar calendar) when *Tulsi* is married to *Shaligram*, and this marks the commencement of the season of marriages in the Hindu tradition.

The Banyan tree or the *Vat-vriksh* or *Bargad* in Indian mythology is also known as *Kalpvrksh*, literally meaning a tree that fulfils all wishes. Belonging to the Moraceae family of the genus *Ficus*, the Banyan tree is known by the Botanical name *Ficus benghalensis*, and is also the National tree of India. The bark of the tree is used for tonics that function as astringent and diuretic, and possesses anti-inflammatory and anti-bacterial properties. The fruit of the tree is used in many medicines of the Ayurveda. The roots and fruits of the tree are considered essential for treating skin and digestive disorders, and are also used to heal rheumatism, tooth and gum aches. They can also be taken internally to cure diarrhoea and dysentery. The juice and fruits are externally applied as medicines for cuts, bruises, sores and ulcers (API, Department of Ayush, pp.118-119).

In Indian mythology, the Banyan tree or the *Vat-vriksh* is considered the abode of Lord *Vishnu* and Lord *Shiva*. Since the aerial roots of the tree growing from the branches establish themselves in the ground, the tree is named as *Bahupada* meaning one with many feet. For the same reason, it is considered to be symbolic of immortality. In the *Bhagvad Gita*, the religious scripture believed to be uttered by Lord *Krishna* Himself, He describes the tree as the true manifestation of life,

symbolizing the facets of *maya* or the illusory aspect. The *Ramayan* (the mythological text of Hinduism) also mentions the Banyan tree. *Ram, Sita and Lakshman* resided in a *panchvati* (the place surrounded by five Banyan trees) during the fourteen years of their *vanvaas* (exile in forest). Various deities, demi-gods and spirits are also believed to reside in the branches of the Banyan tree. The tree is considered as the symbolic representation of Lords *Vishnu, Brahma* and *Shiva* and is thus found in the precincts of temples.

The tree symbolises the *Trimurti*. Vishnu is believed to be the bark, Brahma, the roots, and Shiva, the branches.... In iconography, Shiva is visualized as *Dakshinamurti*, he who faces the south, that being the direction of death and change. He sits under the Banyan, the botanical embodiment of the universal soul, facing the terror of death and change stoically, unafraid because of his profound understanding of the world.

(‘Significance of the Banyan’, The Times of India
Nagpur 2011)

The legend of the tree is mentioned in the mythological tale of *Savitri*, the princess considered to be born to goddess *Savitri* and so named after her, and her husband *Satyavan*. *Savitri* was asked by her father to search for her life-partner and she chooses *Satyavan*. It was prophesied that he would die after a year of their marriage, but this did not deter her from the decision. On the last day of the life of *Satyavan* as prophesied, she accompanied him to forest. There *Satyavan* felt terribly weak and was laid to rest under the *Vat* tree where Lord *Yama* took away his spirit. Because of her yogic powers, *Savitri* was able to follow Him. On being asked about the reason for following Him by *Yama*, *Savitri* replied that it is a wife’s duty to follow her

husband and she is fulfilling it. Being impressed by the dutifulness of *Savitri*, *Yama* ordered her to ask for anything except the life of her husband. She asked for the redemption of the lost kingdom of her father-in-law and his lost eyesight and they were granted to her. Even then she continued following Him. When told again to make one wish she requested for a blessing of hundred sons for her father, and even this was granted. But she did not cease to follow *Yama*; finally He demanded her to ask for anything and this time she asked for herself to be blessed with a hundred sons. Here she deftly requested Him to return her husband to her as without her husband she could not fulfil this wish. Lord *Yama* was left with no alternative but to fulfil her request and return the life of *Satyavan*.

The tree is thus considered significant as *Savitri* performed valiant deeds through the transcendental powers acquired by her under its shade and was able to enter into a debate with *Yama* to finally redeem the lost life of her husband along with the boons of longevity, prosperity and well-being of her parents, in-laws as well as her husband. As *Savitri* is considered the epitome of ideal wifehood, the tree is worshipped on the *puṇnima* (the full-moon) of the month of *Jaishtha*, the third month as per the lunar *Hindu* calendar, and it is believed that by paying homage to the tree followers are blessed with the well-being of their families.

The Vedic tradition can thus be considered to have its foundations in environmental ethics which have been side-lined in the modern race toward progress and blind dependence on technology. This has brought about alarming consequences and if not given serious consideration, the continuous degradation of nature and its resources is sure to prove fatal for the existence of human life on earth. Our ancestors seemed to be very well aware

of the fact that if nature could help in the sustenance of life, it is powerful enough to destroy it also. As such, it was attributed divinity. In the course of such attribution, those plants which had miraculous values for the environment as well as individuals were considered divine and were incorporated to mythological legends and anecdotes.

In being attached to mythological stories these plants gained much religious worth which has been perpetuated through generations of veneration. Being practiced neither as a doctrine nor as a philosophy, the Vedic tradition is manifested in the obligatory rituals that at every step emphasize the importance of a mutual co-existence of humanity and other species of nature including plants. Such an attachment of religious value to the environmentally friendly and medically useful plants may be said to have social, scientific as well as cultural significance.

The social aspect is seen in the collective worship of these trees in temples, the many celebrations associated with them, and the preparations they require. They encourage practices of collective existence and societal mingling of people. The concept of *Vasudheva Kutumbakam* (the entire Earth as one family) finds its manifestation in a sort of identification not only with fellow humans but also with other living entities including the flora and fauna existing in one's surroundings, thereby acknowledging the mutual existence of humanity nature in a reciprocal give and take relation. The interconnection of nature and religious practices displays an intermingling of two dynamic bodies for the purpose of enrichment and betterment not only of life, but also of its deep rooted principles, values and ethos that lead to serenity and purity of body and soul.

Glossary

<i>Arya</i>	noble
<i>Bhagvad –Gita</i>	the song of God/ a mythological scripture
<i>Brahma</i>	the deity of creation
<i>Dharma</i>	religion
<i>Garuda</i>	eagle
<i>Indra</i>	the leader of gods/ lord of heaven
<i>Jyeshtha</i>	the third month of the <i>Hindu</i> lunar calendar
<i>Kandhenu</i>	name of a sacred cow/ one that fulfils all wishes
<i>Karthik</i>	the eighth month of the <i>Hindu</i> lunar calendar
<i>Lakshmi</i>	the Goddess of wealth/ the consort of lord <i>Vishnu</i>
<i>Ram/Krishna</i>	incarnations of lord Vishnu
<i>Parvati</i>	spouse of lord <i>Shiva</i>
<i>Puranas</i>	ancient <i>Hindu</i> texts
<i>Purnima</i>	full moon night
<i>Savitri</i>	goddess and also the name of a woman considered epitome of wifehood

<i>Shaligram</i>	name of Lord <i>Vishnu</i> , black ammonite stone, spherical, black coloured fossil stone
<i>Shiva</i>	<i>Hindu</i> deity
<i>Shuka</i>	parrot
<i>Swastika</i>	an auspicious sign associated with prosperity and well-being
<i>Trimurti</i>	the trinity of the <i>Hindu</i> Gods, namely, <i>Shiva</i> , <i>Brahma</i> and <i>Vishnu</i>
<i>Upnishads</i>	also known as <i>Vedanta</i> , text being the foundation of traditional practices of <i>Hindus</i>
<i>Vat-vriksh/ Nyagrodha</i>	banyan tree
<i>Vedas</i>	the oldest scriptures of Hinduism
<i>Vishnu</i>	<i>Hindu</i> deity
<i>Vrinda/tulsi</i>	the Holy Basil

References

- Bary, Theodore de, et.al, *Sources of Indian Tradition*, (Delhi, 1963).
- Basham, A.L., *The Origins and Development of Classical Hinduism*, (Delhi, 1990).
- , *A Cultural History of India*, (Oxford, 1975).
- Datta, K.K., *Socio-Cultural Background of Modern India*, (Meerut, 1972).

Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (UN/DESA), 'The Great Green Technological Transformation' in *World Economic and Social Survey*, (New York, 2011).

Geertz, Richard, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York, 1977).

Malinowsky, B., 'Culture' in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin Johnson eds., (New York, 1931), pp.621-645.

'Medicinal Plant Holy Basil', *Gits4u*, (n.d.) from <http://www.gits4u.com/agri/agri5b.htm> (last accessed 20 July 2013).

Michael, Aloysius, *Radhakrishnan on Hindu Moral Life and Action*, (Delhi, 1979).

Mondal, Shankar, Bijay R. Mirdha and Susil C. Mahapatra, 'The Science Behind Sacredness of Tulsi (*Ocimum Sanctum* Linn)', in *Indian Journal Physiol Pharmacol*, vol. 53 (4), 2009, pp.291–306.

Nehru, J.L., *The Discovery of India*, (New Delhi, 2004).

Prakash, P. and Neelu Gupta, 'Therauptic Uses of *Ocimum Sanctum* Linn(Tulsi) With a Note on Eugenol and its Pharmacological Actions: A Short Review', in *Indian Journal Physiol Pharmacol*, vol. 49 (2), (2005), pp.125-131.

Sharma, B.N., *Festivals of India*, (New Delhi, 1978).

Sharma, O.P., *Indian Culture: Ancient Glory and Present Gloom*, (New Delhi, 1993).

‘Significance of the Banyan’, *The Times of India Nagpur*, (15 June, 2011), from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-08/flora-fauna/31307879_1_saplings-environmental-benefits-plant (last accessed 20 July, 2013).

Singh, Alok Kumar, et al. (eds.), *Strategies in Development Planning: Mohammed Shafi Felicitation Volume*, (New Delhi, 1997).

The Ayurvedic Pharmacopoeia of India, Part 1. Vol.1. Online edn., from <http://www.ayurveda.hu/api/API-Vol-1.pdf> (last accessed on 24 July 2013).

‘Tulsi has Environmental Benefits Too’, *The Times of India Environment*, (8 April 2012), from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2012-04-08/flora-fauna/31307879_1_saplings-environmental-benefits-plant (last accessed 10 July 2013).

‘Tulsi-The Holy Basil’, *The Speaking Tree: Wellness Blog*, (13 September 2012), from <http://www.speakingtree.in/spiritual-blogs/seekers/wellness/tulasi-the-holy-basil> (last accessed 12 July 2013).

‘Vat-Savitri Vrat’, *Indif.com Devotional*, (2005), from http://www.indif.com/nri/kathas/vat_savitri/vat_savitri_vrat.asp (last accessed 23 July 2013).

Wilson, H.H., *The Vishnu Purana*, Ch. XII. Online edn. Sacred-texts, from <http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/vp/vp047.htm> (last accessed 23 July 2013).

Heiroglyphic Nature of Rangoli Art

Nayana Tadvalkar

Abstract

Sand drawings in various parts of the world are a graphic tradition which has developed as a means of communication. These drawings function as mnemonic devices to record and transmit rituals, depict proverbs, fables, riddles, mythological lore and a wealth of oral information about local histories, cosmologies, farming techniques, architectural and craft design, and choreographic patterns. They play an important role in transmitting knowledge and wisdom from one generation to the next. One significant function of these drawings is that they can be 'read' or more of information. The hieroglyphic character of sand drawings is visible in different forms of sand drawings all over the world. To give an example, the people of the Turaga Nation on Pentecost Island of Vanuatu, write using Avoiuli, an alphabet inspired by designs found in their traditional sand drawings.

Similar characteristics are also seen in the rangoli art which is a type of sand drawing from India. An interesting fact about rangoli is that the act of making a rangoli has been traditionally referred to 'writing' and never as drawing or painting, thus indicating its ancient hieroglyphic origin. It can be assumed that rangoli in earlier days must have been a sort of picture-writing and must have preceded the development of actual writing script.

This paper unveils this important aspect of rangoli art which has been forgotten over the years.

The ephemeral tradition of sand drawing in various parts of the world has several functions and layers of meaning. These sand drawings have developed as a means of communication and they can be 'read' as artistic works, repositories of information, illustrations of stories, signatures, or simply messages. The Angolan *sona* drawings from Africa, the sand paintings of the Australian aborigines, the *veve* or *vever* drawings drawn in the Haiti islands near Cuba and the drawings made in the Vanuatu islands in the South Pacific Ocean are few examples of such sand drawings.

Rangoli art which is a type of sand drawing from India is no different in this respect. This living folk art practiced by the women of the country since ancient times, has various meanings attached to it. Besides being a symbol of auspiciousness, the *rangoli* diagrams serve as magical diagrams used in rituals to ward off evil, to invoke the deity, to fulfill the wishes when taking a vow (*vrata*), for meditative purposes, to create a sacred space within the confines of home and more. The geometry of *rangoli* besides its close relation to mathematics and science is also closely linked with the arts in the fields of architecture, crafts, and dance.

An interesting fact about *rangoli* drawings is that traditionally the making of *rangoli* diagrams, all over India, has always been referred to as 'writing' and never as drawing or painting. Thus in Maharashtra it is referred to as '*rangoli lihine*', in Northern parts as '*chowk likhna*', in Kerala as '*kalam ezhuthu*' and so on. This is possibly evidence of its ancient hieroglyphic origin. The hieroglyphic picture script is understood to be the origin of many languages in the world. Some of the existing scripts still in usage support this observation. For instance, Chinese as well as Egyptian scripts

are pictograms, i.e. each alphabet is a pictorial motif illustrating a whole statement or a situation. Similarly in India, a Maithili script called *Mithilakshara* has developed in imitation of the *tantric yantras*. The *rangoli* art of Mithila known as *aripans* or *alimpan* also reflects the prevalence of the *Shakti* cult there and is *tantric* in nature.

Writing in the beginning was ideographic and pictographic (Raphaelian 1957). In ancient times it was considered to be a mysterious and magical art. In the ancient world the fact that most people could not write or read what was written, and those who could were usually priests, earned writing a reputation of great hidden wisdom (Cavendish 1983: 90). It was a common belief that to write down a wish or a curse in symbols automatically gives effect to what is written. Anthologists propound that before man could develop a coherent written language and script, pictorial symbols were the means by which man recorded his thought process. In short, visual symbols were a form of ‘language’ in the early or proto-literate societies. As picture-writing became advanced, the pictures became more abstract. According to Raphaelian, these pictures were put in simple combinations, easy enough for the primitive to understand, although today only the most educated can solve their message (Raphaelian 1957: 2).

Rangoli in earlier days must have been a sort of picture-writing and must have preceded the development of actual writing script. Scholars from Bengal believe that certain forms and motifs in *alpana* drawings are hieroglyphic in character (**Fig. 1**). Abanindranath Tagore in his book *Banglar Brata* writes about the hieroglyphic character of these motifs. He points out that traces of these forms and motifs are frequently found in sketches and pictographic marks of ancient times of

owl, considered in Bengal to be the vehicle of *Lakshmi* is an indispensable part of this *alpana*. The girls cap off the drawings with a *mandala* in which various precious objects that they like to obtain are drawn one by one, each accompanied with the chanting of a magical spell called a *chhada*. The objects range from beautiful *sarees* to gorgeous ornaments to rich paddy fields to modern houses to handsome husbands. By painting these and chanting the *chhada*, they believe the drawn objects and the uttered words would come true as they have the magical power of fulfilling their desires.



Figure 2: Lakshmi vrata alpana.

Source: A. Thakur, p.26

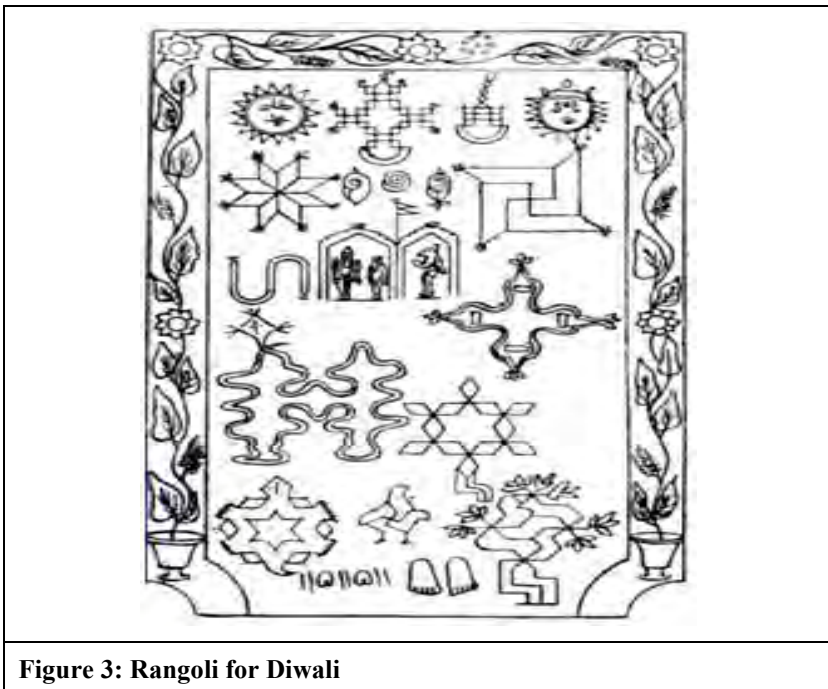


Figure 3: Rangoli for Diwali

A few *rangolis* drawn in Maharashtra also show hieroglyphic characteristics. The traditional *rangoli* for *Diwali* consisting of various auspicious symbols (**Fig. 3**), the *Chaitrangana rangoli* drawn for thirty-three days - thirty of the month of *Chaitra* and three of *Vaishakh* (April-May) - and the *rangoli* drawn on the altar for worship (**Fig. 4**) are a few examples of this. All these *rangolis* depict auspicious symbols like the Sun and Moon, Swastika, lotus, the *tulsi* plant, *bel* leaves, foot-prints of the Goddess, coconut, possessions of the Gods like the *Shankha* (conch shell), *Gada* (mace), *Trishul* (trident), *Chakra* (wheel), and some protective or guardian symbols like the turtle and snake. The elephant and the eagle as symbols of power are also depicted.

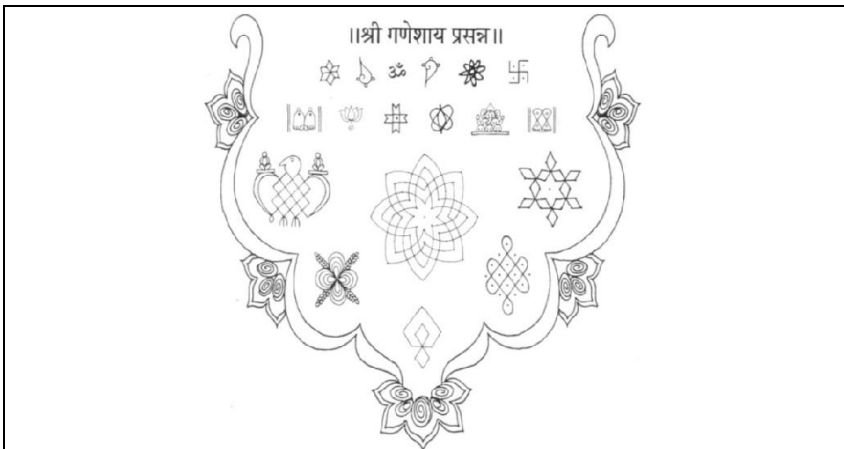


Figure 4: Rangoli drawn at the place of worship

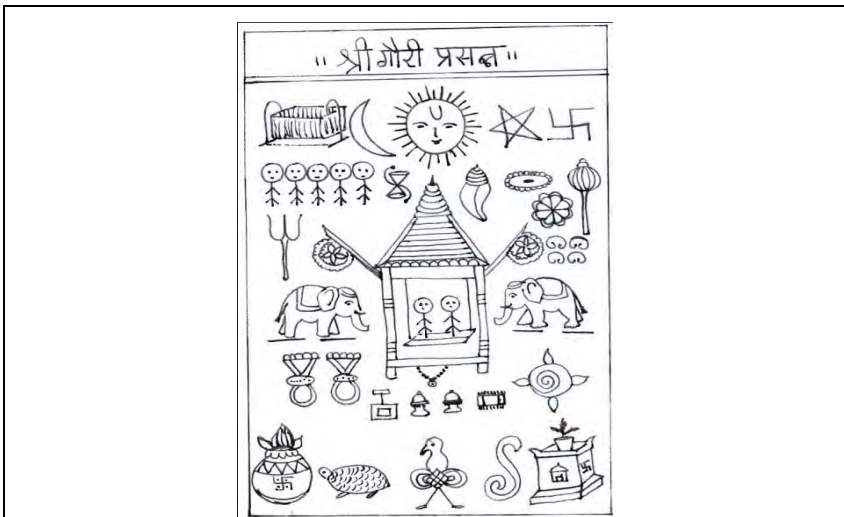


Figure 5: Chaitrangana

The *Chaitrangana rangoli* is similar to the *vrata alpanas* of Bengal. This *rangoli* depicting the stay of the goddess *Chaitra Gauri* at her parental home, also features accessories like a fan, comb, mirror, container of *kumkum* and *halad*, ornaments, saree, and so on. These objects reflect the desire of the women who draw them for the general well-being and prosperity of her house-hold and herself (**Fig. 5**).

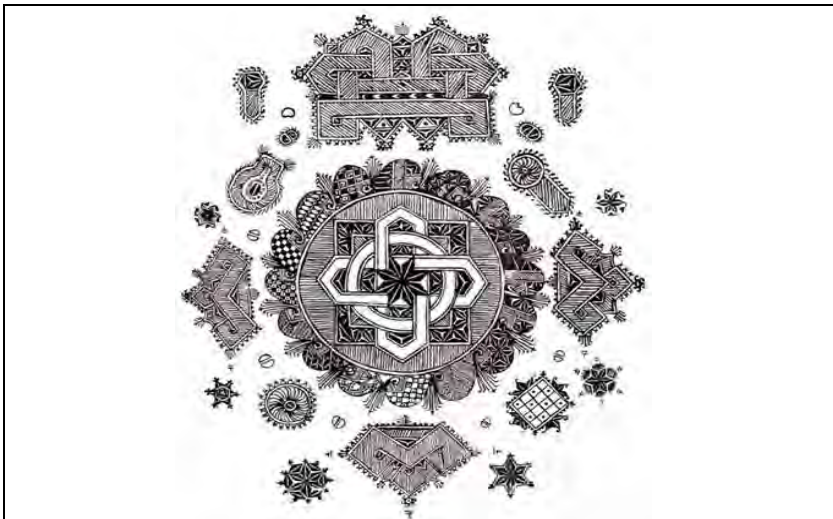


Figure 6a: Deepawali mandana. Source: J. Saksena, p. 41

In the *Deepawali mandana* (**Fig. 6a**) of Rajasthan, the central motif which consists of triangles, hexagons, eight or six-petalled lotus or Swastika, is surrounded by smaller motifs signifying the customs and rituals of the festival, the seasonal crops and so on. These smaller motifs (**Fig. 6b**) consist of a *paglya* (foot-print of the goddess), *papri* (a round sweet and salty preparation of wheat and gram flour which is distributed amongst relatives and friends during *Deepawali*), *bharadi* (the ear of millet which is a pointer to the winter crop that is round the corner) and *Deepak*

(the lamp that indicates the festival of light itself). *Hatri* (a vessel with compartments), *baat* (weights) and *tarazu* (pair of scales) are the motifs covering the trade paraphernalia and are associated with the worship of Goddess *Lakshmi* on the occasion of *Deepawali*. *Divata* (lamp-stand) and *kalamdaan* (pen and ink-stand) are also associated with this worship. *Hir* (a long lamp of unbaked clay) and *santha* (sugarcane) indicate the *hir* giving ceremony performed in the evening after the *Deepawali pooja* is over. Similarly *mori* (head decoration for bullocks) and *khura* (hoofs of cattle) indicates the *Godhan pooja* (worship of cattle) which is performed on the day after *Deepawali*.

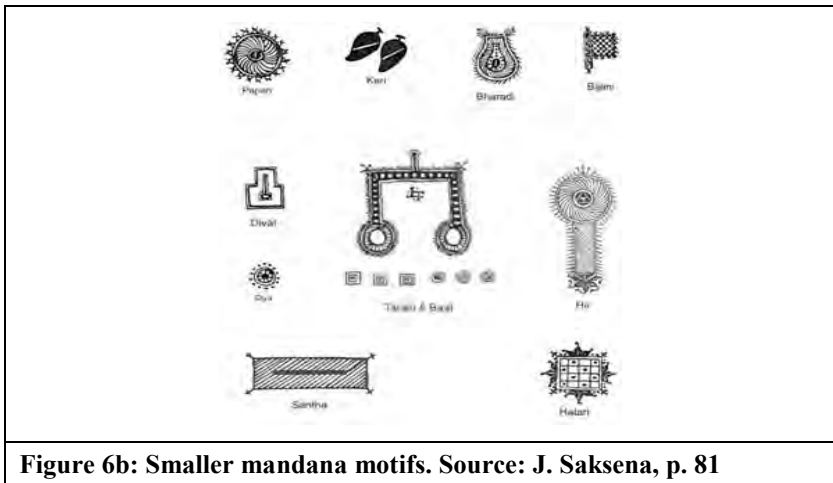


Figure 6b: Smaller mandana motifs. Source: J. Saxena, p. 81

The above mentioned *rangoli* diagrams from different parts of India provide valuable information about the customs and rituals related to the occasions on which these diagrams are made. The meanings of some of these *rangoli* symbols have been lost over the years though they are still drawn in these diagrams.

It is very likely that the floor diagrams in earlier days were made by spreading powder/dust and creating lines on it. The Italian traveler Pietro Della Valle (1623) has left a vivid account of the village schools in South India and the methods of instruction they followed, including the process of learning by rote and the use of fine sand strewn on the floor for writing (Sastri 1966: 321). These methods survived till recent times in the villages of India.

Inscriptions in shell script or *Shankha-lipi* are found in different parts of India and also Indonesia. Shell script is a term coined by British antiquarian James Prinsep for the cursive script he discovered in India, the characters of which bear apparent similarity to the shape of a *Shankha* or conch-shell (Sharma 1990: 19). *Shankha* is a very common motif in *rangoli*. It is very likely that the script has had an impact on *tantric* or folk beliefs.

Sign language (*sanketik bhasha*), verbal and written, has prevailed in India since ancient times (Joshi 1976: 700). As per oral records, *rangoli* was used as a medium of passing on secret messages by spies in olden days. It is mentioned in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya that secret servants were employed in the house of the enemy and certain rules were set for them. Humpbacks, dwarfs, eunuchs, prostitutes (*ganikas*), dumb persons and different types of *Mleccha* races, were employed as spies to live inside the house of the enemy (Kangle 1972: 26). Rules were set for secret servants to transmit information by way of sign-alphabets (*samjnalipibhih*) (Kangle 1972: 25).

The usage of *rangoli* to pass on messages prevailed till recent times. In Southern India, there are references to simple *kolam* motifs drawn on the threshold of houses which were indicative of the fact that a member of the respective family is

suffering from a disease like small-pox. Thus by looking at the *kolam* people avoided entering the house (Mazumdar and Mazumdar 1999: 162).

The above mentioned examples and illustrations give an insight into one important facet of *rangoli* namely its hieroglyphic nature. One can safely conclude that the writing of *rangoli* has far deeper significance than merely being a decorative and auspicious art and one dimension of such significance is its use as a medium of communication, provided one can decipher and read its hidden language of symbols.

References

- Cavendish, Richard, (ed.), *Man, Myth & Magic: The Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Mythology, Religion & the Unknown*, (New York, 1983).
- Joshi, Mahadev Shastri and Padmaja Hodarkar, (eds.), *Bharatiya Sanskrutikosh*, (Pune, 1976).
- Kangle, R.P., (ed.) *The Kautiliya Arthasastra- Part II*, (Mumbai, 1963).
- Mazumdar, Shampa and Sanjoy Mazumdar, 'Women's significant spaces: Religion, space and community,' *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, vol. 19.2, (June, 1999), pp.159-70.
- Raphaelian, Harry, M., (ed.), *Signs of Life: A Pictorial Dictionary of Symbols*, Anatol Sivas publication, (New York, 1957).
- Saksena, Jogendra, *Art of Rajasthan*, Sundeep Prakashan, (Delhi, 1979).

Sastri, Nilakanta K.A., *A History of South India*, 1st edn. (Bombay, 1955).

Sharma, R.K., (ed.), *Studies in the Shell Script*, (Delhi, 1990).

Thakur, Abanindranath, *Banglar Brata*, rep. (Calcutta, 1954).

Cultural Memory Transmission among Madigas: A Study of Adijambava Mahapuranam

D. Sudha Rani

Abstract

The present paper delves deep into a unique epic/myth/manuscript of a specific community called as 'd g' n And r Pr de of Sou Ind . T manuscript has been preserved for centuries and has been rewritten recently in case it is putrefied beyond preservation. The epic is supposed to have information on the origin and genealogies of almost all communities of the region except those of the forward castes. This epic acts as a basis for many folk performances of the community that ce ebr e e commun y' den y. A ub c e of d g , namely the Nulakachandais, are entrusted the responsibility of preserving and propagating the document. This paper discusses the epic/myth and the recitation performance of Adijambavapuranam by Nulakachandais as an act of cultural memory transmission and the epic as a tool for this process. The paper also studies the life of this community and the changes accruing in the community which pose a threat to art forms based on Adijambavapuranam.

The relation among various aspects of society like art forms, social beliefs and the memory of the society is well established through the theory of cultural memory propounded by Maurice Halbwachs, a noted sociologist. His contribution to understand and decipher collective and cultural memory is significant. His theory is based on the theory of culture that believes culture to be a unique way of life of a community (Halbwachs 1992: 172-73). Raymond Williams (1983), a prominent culture critic writes that,

Culture is not a body of intellectual and imaginative work; it is also and essentially a whole way of life encompassing ideas, attitudes, languages, practices, institutions, and structures of power and a whole range of cultural practices: artistic forms, texts, canons, architecture, mass-produced commodities, and so forth. (Williams 1983: 57-58)

When a particular community lives in a specific geographical location for a particular period of time, it tends to develop a unique way of life. And this way of life is not created or designed by any one or many people of that society, but is constructed by the cultural memory of that society which is accrued in the minds of each of their members.

The individual identity of a person in the society inevitably has a relationship with the community to which he/she belongs. Halbwachs (1992) states that the collective memory of a community is nothing but individual memories of the members of that society which are formed and shaped by socio-cultural contexts. The framework of society, its events and situations are sources of input to this memory.

Society in turn modifies recollections according to its present needs. Social beliefs are collective recollections and they relate to knowledge of the present. Collective memory adjusts to, and shapes a system of present day beliefs. (Halbwachs 1992: 188)

The individual living in a family acquires and stores memories from the earliest possible age, as he starts comprehending what is going around him. Thus his perceptions are always conditioned by social frames of interpretation. As the individual begins to participate in communicative activities, he is in

connection with the people around him. He would get involved in social activities beginning at the familial level and develop all the way to the national level. In all these activities, he adds input to his memory which gets richer every time he participates in such activities. Memory also gets transformed due to various reasons. It may be broken off if communication stops totally. So communication plays a vital role because its presence forces the memory to be active which otherwise would disappear. If the memory related aspects of the society are not active in the minds of its members, they will most likely disappear from the cultural memory of the community. So it may be deduced that members of a group who participate in group activities continuously distribute and keep alive social knowledge.

Family becomes significant in this process as it provides opportunity for an individual to relate himself to other individuals in the family and further with other individuals and institutions in the society. Then individuals engage in reciprocal memory dissemination which further shapes their memories. Contemporary interests play an important role in shaping the memory. Halbwachs (1992) writes that,

Events can be recalled only if (their mode of narrative) fits within a frame work of contemporary interests. Society, in turn, modifies recollections according to its present needs. Social beliefs are collective recollections and they relate to knowledge of the present. Collective memory adjusts to, and shapes, a system of present day beliefs. (Halbwachs 1992: 188)

This argument leads way to understand ‘tradition’ as deformed memory, certainly ‘organized’ and ‘objective’ in nature. Deformed memory is the result of forgetting what happened

when some disturbance like displacement occurs. Pierre Nora, another sociologist opines that forgetting happens basically because of a loss of the environment in which the experience and recollection took place.

Emile Durkheim, a noted anthropologist believes that the social condition of humans and not individual agency accounts for behavior and beliefs. But one cannot ignore the ‘personal self’ of an individual. This deeply personal self is connected to the social self and thus individual memory always operates in conjunction with other memories. Every person and similarly every generation transmit these memories to the next generation. Each society transmits its social knowledge in a uniquely different way. Victor Turner points out rituals as mechanisms of socio-cultural renewals and transformations. Diana Taylor (2003) identifies performances as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory and sense of identity.

The present paper discusses the unique transmission mechanism established by a particular community in South India more specifically Andhra Pradesh since times immemorial. Since a long time these communities have suffered social inequality and have been restricted to residential colonies away from the village/town/city. However, since the independence movement began in India a remarkable amount of attention for their equal rights has been given by social reformers, political leaders, philosophers, and governmental and non-governmental agencies. Especially the Dalit community’s life has been extremely difficult due to caste discrimination until the freedom movement during which a large number of social reformers under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi attempted to change the Dalit’s social status.

This community does not enjoy equal rights in the society. It is again divided into many sub-castes. 'Madiga' is a prominent caste of the Dalit community that has further sub-castes. According to the well known researcher Syed Sirajul Hassan (1920), this caste has no less than twenty five sub-castes. Later another few sub-castes were identified by researchers and by now at least thirty sub-castes have been identified in total. This paper wishes to study the unique mechanism established by this 'Madiga' community to transmit their social knowledge and collective memory.

The Madiga community does not enjoy the right to participate in important rituals performed by the upper caste Brahmin community which offers ritual services to the rest of the castes in the society. So, a few sub-castes of the 'Madiga' community are entrusted with the special duty of offering ritual services to the Madigas. The transmission of their collective memory holds great importance for this community which is why they arranged these sub-castes. These sub-castes are supposed to visit all the villages in the locality and offer ritual services, and transmit the collective memory and social knowledge of the Madiga community through various folk art forms which are oral in nature. For these services these sub-castes are paid duly by the Madiga community.

Pulikonda Subbachary (2008) who worked extensively on this community writes that

Every caste attempts to preserve its identity, origin, social status and evolution through 'kulapuranas'. This literary armor's basic duty is to propagate the greatness of this community with systematic evidences. This greater responsibility lies on the patronized caste. (Subbachary 2008: 12)

The entire community of 'Madigas' believes that 'Adijambavapuranam', a narrative history of this community, holds secrets of their origin, identity and social status. So they believe that this narrative history is to be known by every individual in the community. The establishment of these sub-castes which are patronized by the 'Madigas' are supposed to narrate this in all those villages which are inhabited by 'Madiga' communities. The entire community of 'Madigas' honour the Jambapurana, which is reconstructed and represented in different art forms by each sub-caste. The selection of different forms clearly indicates that different sub-castes look for the most effective ways of gaining attention in their community. For instance the 'Chindus' (a sub-caste) narrate this in 'chindukatha,' a folk art form where the appearance of actors, use of musical instruments, language, narration, and performative techniques are all unique and very conspicuous.

Another sub-caste namely the Nulakachandais records this story in three folds of long (approximately 30 feet) paper in which the complete 'Adijambavapurananam' is written. For a very long time the 'Madiga' community was not allowed to read and write. But still this sub-caste learnt to read and write. They have been maintaining these folds for more than one hundred years. Pulikonda Subbachary, a researcher writes that the anthropological research he did regarding this specific sub-caste revealed many new things. This community maintains these folds carefully and whenever they are soiled beyond readability, they are allowed to write another copy of it in a specific temple. Prior to the availability of paper, they used palm leaves or copper sheets to preserve their narrative history.

Whenever the performers set out to perform the recitation, they perform a ritual in which the entire community participates.

They first pray to their god and then start the recitation. The recitation performance happens in two shifts of about for four to five hours each. The entire performance goes on for no less than four to five days. So the performance is conducted by three to four *nulakachandais* in a unique recitation model combining speaking orally (from memory) and reading (from the paper folds). Though they are basically supposed to recite the narrative, they also clarify the doubts of the audience and satisfy the audience with all possible information. There is no limit on the number of performances and hence it is performed throughout the year. *Adijambavapurananam* may also be considered as a literary epic and the study of its literary characters related to representatives of memory would be interesting. Birgit Neumann (2009) writing on literary representatives of memory says that,

Memory and processes of remembering have always been an important, indeed a dominant topic in literature. Numerous texts portray how individuals and groups remember their past and construct identities on the basis of the recollected memories. They are concerned with the mnemonic presence of the past in the present, they re-examine the relationship between past and the present, they illuminate the manifold functions that memories fulfill for the constitution of identity. (Neumann 2009: 333)

This literary epic narrates the origin of the universe, starting with the origin of the earth, the gods, the human race and others. It narrates the mythological history of 18 epochs namely, 'Anantha', *Adbhutha*, *Thamanda*, *Tharaja*, *Thandaja*, *Andaja*, *Bhinnayaka*, *Bhinnayakta*, *Avayatha*, *Mahirana*, *Maharana*, *Viswmaya*, *Viswavasana*, *Alankrita*, *Krita*, *Threta*, *Dwapara* and

Kali. As part of the narration on the evolution of the human race, the genesis of the 'Madigas' is also described. According to this mythology, the predecessor of the 'Madiga' community is Adijambawa. In one of the epochs Adijambawa is in deep meditation when one sage named Viswabrahma sent by Parabrahma comes to him. He claims that Adijambawa has been ordered by Parabrahma to get a leather sack for some holy purpose. Being a rightful sage, he did not want to kill any other animal for leather, instead he chose to kill his son Yogamuni who was born with special blessings of the greatest god. Unable to withstand the pain Yogamuni curses his father saying that the entire clan of Adijambawa will remain untouchables for thousand years. Thus the whole community of Dalits is paying penance to the act of Adijambawa and is suffering social inequality and the curse of untouchability. This literary piece combines the real and imaginary in such a way that the reader/audience is impressed with the narration. This can be considered as what Neumann calls 'fictions of memory'. Writing about 'fictions of memory' Neumann (2009) writes that,

They combine the real and the imaginary, the remembered and the forgotten, and, by means of narrative devices, imaginatively explore the workings of memory, thus offering new perspectives on the past. Such imaginative explorations can influence readers' understanding of the past and thus refigure culturally prevailing versions of memory. Literature is therefore never a reflection of preexisting cultural discourses; rather it proactively contributes to the negotiation of cultural memory. (Neumann 2009: 334-35)

This literary epic has developed many literary devices which help preserve it. In terms of the 'plot', the main story of the

evolution of earth and life has a vast number of other stories known as ‘frame stories’ that have periodically spun out of the main plot which help the reader/audience relate to it within his/her contemporary context. They are also instrumental in creating a collective notion of ‘culture’ by describing common origin, common penance, and so on. Additionally this literary epic is used in many different ways to fit into the frameworks of various art forms in order to effectively reach out to the audience. For instance ‘chindukatha’ is in dialogue form to bring the flash back story as a significant influence on the present. It gives details regarding the genealogies of families of different castes. So mythology is combined with reality to make an impact on the psyche of the audience who belong to the same caste to cope with social discrimination. Thus the structure and contents of this narrative are instrumental in serving the purpose of transferring the social knowledge and worldview of this community from one generation to the next.

Each individual in the audience identifies himself as the ‘Adijambava’, their ancestor. The life and cultural identity of the Madigas, their ‘kula dharma’ (responsibility of the caste towards the society) and their social status are discussed in the narrative. This narrative was expected to inculcate coping mechanisms during the crisis of caste discrimination in the society. The audience usually includes individuals of all age groups and the performance helps each age group in a different way. As Wang Qi (2001) points out in his article *Culture Effects on Adults’ Earliest Childhood Recollection and Self-description: Implications for the Relation between Memory and the Self*, children start forming memories as early as six months of age which help them form their own self also simultaneously. This memory of the self includes their social role and status along with other important aspects of self. Thus participation in the

performance of Adijabavapuram helps Madiga children understand and accept their position in society.

The author of this paper intended to watch at least five recitation performances to understand how this influences the audience but failed as it required a lot of time owing to the minimal frequency of the performances. This is only a tradition today and members of the community no longer consider it as their duty to participate in it. The changes in social, political, cultural and economic situations have created a new atmosphere which does not encourage the performance of Adijambavapuram like earlier times. This narrative is not treated equally with mainstream literature and hence the government seldom patronizes it. As the art forms belonging to marginalized sections in this part of the state are not given sufficient prominence, the patronization from both organized and unorganized sectors of the society is negligible. The documentation of an art form gains importance especially when it is waning.

Before independence around 1906 progressive movements like that initiated by Bhagya Reddy Verma in Telangana which was part of the Princely Hyderabad State ruled by the Nizam dynasty, started taking shape against existing social stratifications. The Dalit community was forced to leave their traditional professions along with political and economic changes in the society. Srinivasulu (2002) analysing the Dalit movements in Andhra Pradesh writes that the major focus of the Dalit movements in Telangana was removing economic inequalities. He further observes that the movements were essential in bringing awareness among the people of this community:

It is to the credit of the left-wing agrarian struggle in Telangana that the rigid rules of caste were substantially relaxed or diluted in the pockets where the movement was strong. Yet the movement remained predominantly economic and political. The absence of a clearly articulated social agenda undermined the movement's capacity to sustain the changes. The biggest achievement of the movement nevertheless lies in the removal of oppressive landlordism and customary vetti obligations. (Srinivasulu 2002: 60)

These movements continued to fight against social, cultural, political and economic inequalities. However, the changes they brought forth were neither radical enough nor were those homogeneous throughout Telangana. After independence these movements started to increasingly influence the status of the Dalit community. Srinivasulu (2002) argues that the movement has taken a serious turn with Dalit youth of the region both from rural and urban areas receiving higher education. However, the changes did not penetrate to the lower classes of this community. All of the above factors influence the continuity of traditionally assigned roles of this community and that of maintaining the caste system.

The Nulakachandais, as was discussed earlier, are a sub-caste which, along with a few more sub-castes, was assigned the task of transferring community knowledge. According to Dr. Pulikonda Subbachari, this particular sub-caste enjoyed a very good reputation earlier which was an incentive for the caste to dedicate itself to the duties prescribed for it. Presently, however, the number of families dedicated to this duty is hardly ten in the village called Kolanpaka (around 100kms from Hyderabad). Not everyone among these families is interested in recitation

performances because now they have attractive alternatives, so they have settled in different occupations. Only a few of them are competent in making the recitation performance because it requires a lot of knowledge and dedication. Thus present Nulakachandais do not frequently visit all the villages of the community to perform, which is why the author had trouble coming across them.

Same is the case with other sub-castes which are entrusted with the responsibility of ritual services to the 'Madigas'. In this situation, the continuity of their cultural memory got disturbed. Another major reason for less number of performances is that the audiences are not ready to patronize these art forms owing to more vibrant distractions brought in by television, cinema and other modern forms of entertainment. Along with these reasons, changes in the society in terms of modernization and development have negated the necessity for coping mechanisms as social discrimination is no longer accepted or tolerated by the stake holders of this community. Higher levels of literacy and awareness have positively contributed towards this trend.

The author of this paper has interviewed a sample of members of this community about their awareness and importance of watching this performance. Members in rural parts of the region acknowledged the significance of this text while members of this community in urban areas like Hyderabad did not know anything about it. Members in rural areas in the age group of 14-20 identify this narrative as a text that traces their great origins and therefore consider it as a source of pride. Members of the age group 20-40 understand this narrative as a conspiracy of the forward castes, while members of the age group 50-60 realize that this narrative holds greater secrets about their community and it is their duty to

know them. Many of them did not know that it is used in many folk art forms and they did not know the complete story. So, their exposure to this art form is minimal. But they know it is part of their culture. Thus the performance of this art form has been reduced to a mere deformed memory of this community.

References

- Ames, Dan Ben, and Liliane Weisberg, (eds.), *Cultural Memory and the Construction of Identity* (Michigan, 1999).
- Coser, Lewis A., (ed.), *ur ce H bw c ' s on Collective Memory* (London, 1992).
- Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (London, 1995).
- Neumann, Birgit, 'The Literary Representations of Memory', in *Cultural Memory Studies: An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, Erll, Astrid, Ansgar and Sara B. Young, (eds.), (Berlin, 2009), pp. 333-35.
- Sayed, Sirajul Hassan, 'Madigas', in *The Caste and Tribes of H.E.H the Nz m' Dom n on*, vol. 1.1, (Bombay, 1920), pp. 409-20.
- Srinivasulu, K., *Caste, Class and Social Articulation in Andhra Pradesh: Mapping Differential Regional Trajectories (Working Paper)*, (London, 2002).
- Subbachary, Pulikonda, *Kolanpaka, Nulakachandayyal Adijambava Mahapuram*, (Kuppam, 2008).
- Taylor, Diana, *The Archive and the Repertoire Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas*, (Durham, 2003).

Wang, Q. 'Cultural Effects on Adults' earlier Childhood Recollections and Self-description: Implications for the Relation between Memory and the Self', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 15.4, 2006, pp. 182-87.

Williams, Raymond, *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*, (New York, 1983).

Indian Tales in Sogdian Literature and Art

Nicholas Sims-Williams

Abstract

The Sogdians were very fond of stories, as is clear both from their literature and from their art. Many of these stories come from India, or at least have parallels in the great Sanskrit collections of stories such as the Pañcatantra. A particularly interesting example is a story known from two Sogdian fragments in St Petersburg, a complex story with three distinct episodes, in which an old man overcomes a series of human and animal foes, in each case by sheer luck. This story does not seem to be known from any ancient Indian source, but all three episodes occur in the same order in a South Indian (Tamil and Sinhalese) oral narrative which was written down and published at the end of the nineteenth century.

Sogdian, an Iranian language distantly related to Sanskrit and thus to many of the modern languages of the Indian sub-continent, was originally the language of the area around Samarkand in present-day Uzbekistan, which spread far and wide during the first millennium C.E. as a result of the mercantile enterprise of its speakers, who founded numerous trading colonies along the so-called ‘Silk Road’ to China. The Sogdians were certainly fond of making money—the people of Samarkand, we read in an ancient Chinese text, “have gone wherever profit is to be found” (Pulleyblank 1952: 317)—but they were also very fond of stories, as is clear both from their literature and from their art, such as the wall-paintings of Penjikent, a Sogdian city to the east of Samarkand. Although many tales were no doubt transmitted orally, some at least were

written down, in particular by those Sogdians who adhered to the Manichaean religion, who used tales and fables as parables to illustrate their religious teachings. Ultimately some of these stories come from the west, from Greece or Iran, but many also come from India, or at least have parallels in great Sanskrit collections of stories such as the *Pañcatantra*, the *Kāraṅgar*, or the *Hōdēś*. In this paper I shall concentrate on Sogdian tales and their Indian parallels.

We have written documentation of Sogdian from at least the third to the eleventh century CE, including many Buddhist, Christian, and Manichaean texts as well as a smaller number of secular documents such as letters and contracts. Most of these texts were not found in Sogdiana but further east, especially in the merchant colonies of the Turfan oasis and Dunhuang in western China. The Sogdian merchants travelled not only to China but also to India, as we know from hundreds of Sogdian graffiti on rocks beside the River Indus in the areas of Chilas, Gilgit and Hunza (Sims-Williams 1989, 1992). So there can be no doubt that the Sogdians had direct contact with India, as is indeed confirmed by their art and literature.

The most substantial example of the Manichaean Sogdian use of tales is a parable-book of which more than 200 lines survive. This book, which was published by Werner Sundermann in 1985, contains a sequence of at least three different parables, two of which are quite well-preserved. One is an allegory rather than a story: a comparison of the Manichaean religion with the world-ocean, which are said to resemble one another in ten points. For example, the shore on the far side of the ocean, which no living being has seen, is compared with the Paradise, which only becomes known to the righteous (Sundermann 1985: 23). As Sundermann pointed out in a later

article (1991), this is a Manichaean adaptation of a Buddhist allegory, versions of which are found in many Chinese Buddhist texts as well as in Pali. The second well-preserved story in this book is the Tale of the Two Snakes. One snake is caught in a trap and killed by a hunter; the second escapes with his life, but only by sacrificing his beloved tail. The motifs of this story have parallels in many folk-tales from around the world, but unfortunately no other version of the story as a whole has been identified.

The parable-book is written in Sogdian cursive script on the back of a Chinese scroll. Other Manichaean tales are written in Manichaean script. M 127 is part of a folio from a codex containing a collection of tales and proverbs. One of these tales is the Tale of the Three Fishes. It runs like this in translation: "There was a big pond, and in it there were three fishes. The first fish was One-Thought, the second fish was Hundred-Thoughts, and the third fish was Thousand-Thoughts. One day a fisherman came and cast his net. He caught those two fishes of many thoughts, but he did not catch the fish One-Thought." This story was published long ago by W. B. Henning (Henning 1945: 471) who recognized it as one of the tales of the *Pañcatantra*. In fact there are two such stories in the *Pañcatantra*. In one of them the foolish fish is killed; in the other the two intelligent fishes—*sahasrabuddhi* "Thousand-Thoughts" and *ś b udd* "Hundred-Thoughts"—are caught, while the fool *ekabuddhi* "One-Thought" (a frog rather than a fish according to the *Pañcatantra*) is saved. The first version was translated into Pahlavi and from there found its way into the great Arabic collection of stories, *Kalila wa Dimna*; the Sogdian agrees with the second version, which of course has the exactly opposite moral: the fish who has only one thought acts upon his instinct and escapes, while the fishes with many thoughts spend too long

weighing their options. The Sogdian text is very concise, and only takes up a few lines of this fragment, the two sides of which contain as many as 9 or 10 tales. The whole fragment was recently edited by Enrico Morano (Morano 2009: 175-8). Even more recently, Morano has discovered in the Berlin Turfan collection another small fragment of the same folio which helps complete the text of several tales and makes them more understandable (Morano, to appear). Some of them are mere proverbs rather than stories, for example: “He who holds the tail of a pig is led to dirt and filth” (Morano 2009: 176-7). It seems that this manuscript was a book of summaries of tales, perhaps an aide-memoire for a story-teller¹.

Another aid to a teller of tales would be a narrative in the form of a series of pictures. Such stories in pictures are still used in modern times, e.g. in Rajasthan for recounting the epic of Pabuji. A series of pictures illustrating successive episodes of the story could aid the memory of the story-teller, but they could also be shown and described to an audience. We don’t have any pictorial scrolls of this kind from Sogdiana or from the Sogdian diaspora², but we do have mural paintings which can be identified as illustrations to stories. Most of them come from the excavations at Penjikent, and belong to the period just before the Islamic conquest of the early 8th century. Several of the illustrated tales are of Indian origin, like the one illustrated in **Fig. 1**. Boris Marshak, the excavator of Penjikent, identified this as an illustration to the tale of the jackal, the bull, and the lion, which is found in the 1st book of the *Pañcatantra* (and also in *Kalila wa Dimna*). According to the story, the jackal creates hostility between two friends, the bull and the lion, by warning each that his friend is about to attack him. On the left we see the jackal speaking to the bull and on the right a symmetrical scene with the jackal and the lion. The middle part of the panel

probably shows the fight between the bull and the lion (Marshak 2002:85).

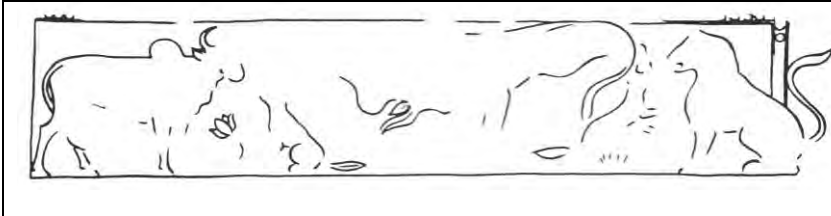


Figure 1: Penjikent, Room 41/VI. The tale of the jackal, the bull, and the lion. After Marshak 2002: 86, fig. 36.

Another mural from Penjikent shows two elephants walking one after another and two dogs facing them. Marshak explains this as an illustration to an Indian proverb: “The dog barks but the elephant walks quietly”(Marshak 2002: 86).

Yet another panel from Penjikent illustrates two stories of Indian origin (**Fig. 2**). On the left we see a seated man, perhaps a blacksmith with his tongs and a monkey who hits him on the head with an axe or hammer. The monkey is probably trying to kill a fly which has settled on his master’s head, though the fly is not visible. There is a version of this tale in the Buddhist *Jā k* stories, where a carpenter’s son tries to kill a fly with an axe. The *Pañcatantra* version involves a king and a monkey, who uses the royal sword to swat a fly on the king’s forehead. The panel to the right illustrates a more complicated tale from the *Pañcatantra*. Three wise men find the bones of a tiger. The first joins the bones together; the second puts flesh on the bones; the third brings the tiger to life, which of course eats him. In the *Pañcatantra* there is a fourth man, who is truly wise, and who escapes by climbing a tree, but there is no sign of him in this painting (Marshak 2002: 130).



Figure 2: Penjikent, Room 1/XXI. The tale of the blacksmith and the monkey (left) and the tale of the wise men and the tiger (right). After Marshak 2002, Pl. 13.

Since the murals from Penjikent show that the Sogdians knew many stories of Indian origin, it is rather surprising that the Tale of the Three Fishes is the only example of a Sogdian written text which clearly tells a tale from the *Pañcatantra*. What I would like to present to you in conclusion is another Sogdian tale which is not found in the *Pañcatantra* or any other Sanskrit collection, but has close parallels in South India and Sri Lanka in Tamil and Sinhala Literature. The Sogdian version is known from two fragments in St. Petersburg. The first fragment is in a very poor state of preservation, with only a few words surviving in most lines, but the second fragment is better preserved, and many lines are complete³.

The text on these two fragments is a folktale of a well-known type, in which an old man overcomes a series of human and animal foes, in each case by sheer luck. Similar tales are known in many collections, for instance in the German fairytales collected by the Grimm brothers. But what is truly remarkable is the close equivalence between the Sogdian version and a folk-tale from South India and Sri Lanka, which appears in Tamil and Sinhala Literature versions published at the end of the nineteenth century (Śāstrī 1884-8: 104-115 and Corea 1885-6). The equivalence is so close that one can use

these versions to reconstruct the plot of the incomplete Sogdian tale.

At the beginning of the Tamil version, the hero sets out on a journey with a parcel of poisoned cakes which his jealous wife has prepared as a gift for her co-wife. A band of robbers eat the cakes while the hero is asleep and he takes credit for killing them and for rescuing a princess whom they had abducted. This seems to be the incident recounted in the first Sogdian fragment: “the thieves ... [fell] upon the cakes ... and when [they] ate the cakes they all died on the spot” (L61, lines 3-5).

The Sogdian version of the next episode is quite well preserved. The hero, having won a reputation as a warrior, is armed with a two-edged sword and sent to kill a troublesome lion. The lion forces him to take refuge in a tree, but fortune smiles on him once again: “The lion ... placed its two (fore) paws on the tree and, (looking) upwards, opened wide its mouth. The old man’s hands trembled from fear and he dropped the sword out of his hands; it fell down and entered the lion’s mouth and throat, and the lion died” (L37, lines 3-8).

A third adventure follows which begins with the old man having himself tied on the back of a horse and setting out to battle. The Sogdian text breaks off at this point, but the outcome is known from the Tamil and Sinhalese versions, which recount how the horse gallops under a branch, the hero finds himself clutching the uprooted tree, and the enemy army retreats in panic at the sight of a tree approaching. In view of the great distance which divides them, it is remarkable that the mediaeval Sogdian and the modern South Indian versions of this tale agree so closely.

End Notes

¹Apart from Henning 1945 and Sundermann 1985, already discussed, the most important publications of Manichaean Sogdian tales are Morano 2009 and Reck 2009.

²A fragmentary scroll in the Berlin Turfan collection (MIK III 520), which used to be interpreted as a story in pictures, has been interpreted differently by Grenet & Pinault 1997.

³The two fragments (L61 and L37) were first published by Ragoza 1980, pp. 43-4 and 30-31 respectively, with photos on pp. 146 and 132. The contents were identified by Sims-Williams 1981, p. 237. See also Yoshida 2001, p. 115 n. 5, who points out that the two fragments can be joined.

References

- Corea, A. E. R., 'Sinhalese Folklore', *The Orientalist*, vol. 2, (1885-6), pp. 102-06.
- Durkin-Meisterernst, D. et al. (eds.), *Literarische Stoffe und ihre Gestaltung in mittelpersischer Zeit. Kolloquium anlässlich des 70. Geburtstags von Prof. Dr. W. Sundermann* (Beiträge zur Iranistik, 31), (Wiesbaden, 2009).
- Grenet, F. and Pinault, G.J., 'Contacts des traditions astrologiques de l'Inde et de l'Iran d'après une peinture des collections de Turfan', *Compte rendu de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, (1997), pp. 1003-61.
- Henning, W.B., 'Sogdian tales', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 11.3, (1945), pp. 465-87.
- Marshak, B., *Legends, Tales, and Fables in the Art of Sogdiana*, (New York, 2002).

- Morano, E., 'Sogdian tales in Manichaean script' in Durkin-Meisterernst *et al.*, (2009), pp. 173-200.
- , 'Una paginá dá uñ libro sogdiano manicheo di storielle, parabole e aforismi', (forthcoming).
- Pulleyblank, E.G., 'A Sogdian colony in Inner Mongolia', *T'oung P'o*, vol. 41, (1952), pp. 317-56.
- Ragoza, A.N., *Sogd j k e fr gme n y cen r 'no z kogo sobranija Instituta Vosto-kovedenija*, (Moscow, 1980).
- Reck, C., 'Soghdische manichäische Parabeln in soghdischer Schrift mit zwei Beispielen: Parabeln mit Hasen' in Durkin-Meisterernst *et al.* 2009, pp. 211-224.
- Śāstrī, S.M. Naṭéśa, *Folklore in Southern India*, (Bombay, 1884-8).
- Sims-Williams, N., 'The Sogdian fragments of Leningrad', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, vol. 44, (1981), pp. 231-40.
- , *Sogdian and other Iranian inscriptions of the Upper Indus*, I-II (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, Part II, Vol. III/II/1-2), (London, 1989, 1992).
- Sundermann, W., *Ein manichäisch-soghdisches Parabelbuch* Berliner Turfantexte, 15, (Berlin, 1985).
- , 'Eine buddhistische Allegorie in manichäischer Überlieferung', (ed. R.E. Emmerick and D. Weber eds.), in *Corolla Iranica. Papers in honour of Prof. Dr. David Neil MacKenzie* (Frankfurt, 1991), pp. 198-206.
- Yoshida, Y., 'On the Sogdian fragments of the St. Petersburg collection', *Contributions to the Studies of Eurasian Languages*, Ser. 3, *Issues in Eurasian Languages* 1, (2001), pp. 105-17.

Ancient Hydraulic Structures of Kalachuris of Ratanpur: A Brief discussion based on Epigraphic and Archaeological Sources

Vishi Upadhyay, Subash Khamari and Shivi Upadhyay

Abstract

Kalachuris of Ratanpur come from Tripuri, and are considered to be a distinguished clan. Their first capital was in Tummān, but after few decades Rāndev shifted his capital to Ratanpur. This new capital developed with many aspects i.e. art and architecture, economy, trade and commerce, irrigation etc. Chhattisgarh is dominated by the monsoonal climate whereby the southwest (advancing) monsoon generally brings rains between June and August and the northeast (retreating) monsoon in September and October. Given the unpredictability of rainfall and relatively dry conditions lasting for long periods, heavy emphasis was placed on the development of water management techniques. Excavations in Ratanpur have revealed many hydraulic structures especially water tanks in different sites of Chhattisgarh, India and details about them are included in inscriptions that were found alongside these structures. The paper is an attempt to compile information about these hydraulic structures and their inscriptional records that testify to the advanced ways of Kalachuris.

Water plays a vital role in everyday human life especially in the fields of agriculture, industry, fine arts and economic prosperity. Since time immemorial, water has been one of the primary source materials. Man depends on rivers as well as rain water and rivers in turn depend on the rain. The rains are seasonal and very unpredictable. If there is no rain during a monsoon season,

subsoil water depletes. It further results in poor crops. In order to manage this crisis, man started storing water by artificial methods which enabled him to utilize it whenever needed even if it was off-season or a barren monsoon. Such artificial water storage means took the form of tanks, canals, reservoirs, dams, etc. Enough evidences are at our disposal to substantiate the prevalence and usage of such irrigational constructions since prehistoric times in India (Vasudeven 2010: 539).

Excavations in some of the Harappan sites in India have revealed artificial water storage facilities. According to some scholars irrigation in South India was started by the people of the Megalithic Culture. *Y j u r v e d*, *A r v v e d*, *K u y* ' *Arthasatra*, *Mahabhart*, *Jataka* stories and other literature provide valuable information about the water reservoirs of ancient India. Since early historic times people accorded much importance to irrigation as is evidenced by the many inscriptions of those times. The Junagadh (Gujrat) inscriptions consist of information about the hydraulic architectural features of the *Sudarasana* Lake. This tank was excavated by Vysa Pushyagupta, a provincial governor of Chandragupta Maurya (324-300 BCE) and subsequently it was renovated by a prince. Later on during the time of Mauryan Emperor Asoka, a provincial governor of the area got the silt removed from the tank and repaired the canals and facilitated an easy flow of water through the canals.

Evidences of the existence of tanks during first century BCE are also found in Kalinga and the adjacent area of Bengal. The Hatigumpha inscription informs about the repair and enclosing of a tank in Kalinganagri by Kharvela. The Kalinga ruler Kharvela (2nd century BCE) is credited with the extension of an earlier canal in Orissa (Sircar 1942: 244-48).

Archaeological excavations at Sringeripura near Allahabad have revealed remains of a large water tank of roughly the 200 BCE – 200 CE period. Whether water from the Ganga was brought to this area by a channel for agricultural or non-agricultural purpose is still not clear.

In South India, the Cholas of the Sangam Age who boosted the agrarian order made elaborate irrigational arrangements during the initial years of the Christian era. Satvahana and Ikshvankus, also patronized the irrigation system to a great extent, a fact that is known from archaeological evidences. Subsequent dynasties like the Pallavas, Cholas, Pandyas, Kadambas, Gangas, Chalukyas and Hoysalas continued the same zeal for hydraulic infrastructure. Inscriptions of their period provide us a wealth of information on this aspect. The chandravalli tank of Karnataka, vairamengha tataka of Tamil Nadu and Kavitagunarava tank (Sahstri 1923: 583-84.) of Andhra Pradesh were all well known tanks of the early historic period that are often referred to by scholars. Along with them the hydraulic structures at Udaygiri and Khandgiri are also superb instances of water management of the ancient period (Khamari 2012).

These types of attempts were continued in Chhattisgarh during the Kalachuri period also. Early medieval epigraphic sources indicate that in Chhattisgarh, structural and sculptural activities received both royal and non-royal patronage. Temples, educational centers, and boarding places for ascetics and their pupils were also erected. Apart from these we also find an effective water management system in this period.

The Setting

Dakshina Kosala, roughly corresponding to the boundaries of present day Chhattisgarh, India, is not only famed for an impressive concentration of forts, but also boast an effective and powerful water management system that belongs to the Kalachuri period of the Ratanpur branch (eleventh – thirteenth century CE). Scholarly researches in the region brought to light a prolific number of hydraulic structures. Mention may be made of the temple sites of Ratanpur, Malhar, Arang, Dongargarh, Jajgir-Champa, Bastar, Devabaloda, Bhoramdeva, etc. Mostly hydraulic structures have been concentrated in front of temples. Few Epigraphic evidences also shed light on the water management of Kalchuris in Chhattisgarh namely the Ratanpur stone inscription of Jājalladēva I (year 866), Akaltarā stone inscription of Ratandēva II, Raipur museum stone inscription of Pṛithvidēva II, Kugda stone inscription of Pṛithvidēva II (year 893), Koni inscription of Pṛithvidēva II (year 900), Ratanpur stone inscription of Pṛithvidēva II (year 910), Ratanpur stone inscription of Pṛithvidēva II (Kalachuri) year 915, Shēorinārāyan stone inscription of Jājajalladēva II Chedi year 919, and Kharod stone inscription of Ratandēva III (year 933).

The Kalachuri inscriptions and archaeological records provide elaborate information not only on temples but also allied hydraulic structures attached to the temples namely:

- Water tanks attached with temples;
- Individual water tanks;
- Wells;
- Step- wells interconnected with another well;
- Dams; and
- Canals.

The Climate

Chhattisgarh is dominated by the monsoonal climate whereby the southwest (advancing) monsoon generally brings rains between June and August and the northeast (retreating) monsoon in September and October. Given the unpredictability of rainfall and relatively dry conditions lasting for long periods, heavy emphasis was placed on the development of water management techniques. Apart from this the surface of the land of Chhattisgarh consists of bedrocks due to which rain water cannot be contained for long and hence the soil loses its moisture.

Epigraphic Records

Inscriptions of Kalachuris give out information about their hydraulic structures (**Table 1**). Excavation of a large number of tanks is evidence that the Kalachuris of Chhattisgarh have left their signature mark of an extensive irrigation system on the area. The Ratanpur area alone has 120 reported water tanks built during this period.

King	Place	Hydraulic Structures
Prithvidēva (I)	Ratanpur	Tank
Jājalladēva (I)	Jājallapurā (Jānjgir)	Tank
Ratnadēva II	Kotgarh	Tank (Vallabhsāgar)
Tank	Kotgarh	Tank
Do	Kotgarh	Tank
Do	Ratanpur	Tank
Do	Khādā (karrā)	Dam on lake
Do	Saḍavida	Tank (Ratheshvar sāgar)

Do	Ratanpur	Lake
Do	Vikarnapura (Kotgarh)	Tank
Do	Devparvata (Dalha hill?)	Deep well (step-well)
Do	Rathevaisama	Tank
Do	Bhaua	Tank
Do	Mallāla (Malhār)	Tank
Do	Ratanpur	Step-well and two tanks
Jājalladēva II	Sonthiva (Sonthi) Sarvadēva	Tank
Do	Pandātalāi (Pandariā)	Tank
Rājadeva	Pathariā	Tank
Rambhlla (Queen)	Panjani (Pachri)	Tank
Ratnadeva III	Ratanpur	Tank
Do	Tipuruga (Tipunga)	Tank
Do	Tipuruga(Tipunga)	Tank
Do	Uluvā (Ulvā)	Tank
Do	Senadu (Sonad)	Tank
Table 1: Hydraulic Structures on Epigraphic Records		

a. Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Jajalladeva I (year 866)

In this inscription, it has been mentioned that Prithvīśvara (I) constructed several temples at Tummāna and built a large tank in Ratanpurā. Apart from this Jājalladeva seems to have founded a town named Jājallapura (present Jānjgir), where he constructed a monastery for ascetics, raised a garden, planted a grove of mango trees and built tanks. As for the geographical names in said records, Tummān as shown is identical with Tummān, 26 km north-east of Ratanpur.

Jājallapura, which was evidently founded by Jājalladeva, may be identical with Jānjgir (Mirashi 1955: 409).

b. Akaltarā Stone Inscription of Ratandeva II

This inscription refers to the reign of Ratandēva II of the Kalachuri dynasty of Ratanpur. The object of it is to record the construction of a temple for Rēvanta and the building of a tank at Kōtgadh by Vallabharāja, a feudatory chief of Ratnadēva II. Verse 24 contains an interesting comparison based on double entrances of the tank with the Buddhist doctrine (Saugat-mata) (Mirashi 1955: 430).

c. Raipur Museum Stone Inscription of Prithvidēva II

The object of the inscription was to record the construction of a temple for Śiva by Vallabharāja at Kōtgagh and building of a tank named as Vallabhasāgara (Mirashi 1955:436).

d. Kugda Stone Inscription of Prithvidēva II (year 893)

This inscription mentions the charity of Vallabharāja (feudatory of Prithvidēva II). The town he settled in and the lake built appear to have been described in this inscription (Mirashi, 1955:446).

e. Koni Stone Inscription of Prithvidēva II (year 900)

There is information about the construction of a deep tank at Ratanpura (Mirashi 1955: 436).

f. Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Prithvidēva II (year 910)

Vallabharāja made a lake to the east of Ratanpura, using the range of hills near the village Khādā as a dam. He dug another small tank, raised a grove of three hundred mango trees at the base of the hill near the village sadavida, and created a large lake Rathīśvarasāgara,

named evidently after his earlier suzerain Ratandēva II. On the outskirts of Vikarhapura he made a tank and raised a garden. Another tank was made in a village, the name of which appears to be Rāthēvaisamā. To the east of the town called Bhauda, on the way to hasivadha, he built a tank full of water –lilies (Mirashi 1955: 495).

As for the geographical names occurring in the present inscription, Ratanpurā has already been identified with Ratanpur. The village khādā, near which the lake was formed, is probably identical with Karrā. About a mile and half to the east of Ratanpur there is still the extensive Khārun tank. This Karrā village is presently situated near the Khutāghāt dam. The dam has been constructed on the river Khārun. Most probably the ancient dam might have existed in this area on river Khārun. Vikkarnapura was probably the old name of Kōtgdadh, 1½ miles north of Akaltarā. Hasivadha may be Hasod in the Jānjgir tehsil, about 22 miles east of the Shiōrinarāyana. The hills Dēvaparvata cannot be definitely located.

g. Ratanpur Stone Inscription of Prīthvidēva II (year 915)

In verses (22-39) the benefactions of Brahmadēva are described. He constructed a temple of Dhūrjati (Śiva) at Mallāla along with a tank. He built also a large step well and two tanks, one on the north and the other on the south of the city. Several other religious and charitable works of Brahmadēva are next mentioned, viz. a series of tanks at villages Gōthālī, Bamhanī, charauya and Tējallapura (Mirashi, 1955: 501).

As for the localities mentioned in the present inscription, Mallāla is evidently modern Mallhār, 16 miles south-east of Bilaspur. Varēlāpura or Barēlāpura is Barēla, 10 miles south of Ratanpur. Bamhanī still retains its name. Whereas the former is situated on the Mahānadi in the Raipur district, the latter is 4 miles north east of Akaltarā. Rai Bahadur Hiralal identified Kumarākōta with Kōtgaḍh, but from some other records the old name of the letter appears to have been Vikarnapura. Gōthāli, Charauya and Tējallapura cannot now be traced, but the last of these may have been situated not very far from Shēorinārāyan, for it seems to have been founded by Tējalladēva, a kalachuri prince of a collateral branch who is mentioned on the inscription at Shēorinārāyan.

h. Shēorinārāyan Stone Inscription of Jājajalladēva II (chedi year 919)

The third section of the inscription which begins with verse 35 records the benefactions of the princes of this collateral branch. In the town of Sōnthiva, Sarvadēva they have erected a lofty temple of Śambhu, and built a large tank and raised a garden. In the village of Pandaratalāī, Amanadēva I established a charitable feeding house, planted an orchard and dug a tank. In the village of Patharīa, Rājadēva built a temple for *purabhid* (Śiva), raised a mango grove and constructed a tank. Further a queen named Rāmbhallā made a beautiful tank and also grew a mango-grove in the village Pajanī.

Of the places named in this inscription Sōnthiva is modern Sōnthi in the Bilaspur district, 11 miles north of Akaltarā. Pandaratalāī may be identical with one of the

several villages named Pēndri or Pandriā, of them, the one nearest to Shēorinārāyan is Pendriā, 7 miles to the north-west. Pathariā still retains its name and is situated 6 miles south-east of Mungeli. Pajanī may be Pāchari, 6 miles east of Shēorinārāyan (Mirashi 1955: 519).

i. Kharod Stone Inscription of Ratandeva III (year 933)

This inscription elaborates on the charitable work of Gangādhar, the chief minister of Ratandeva III. To the north of Ratanpura he built a mandapa for Tūntā-Ganpati and had tanks and lotus ponds built in the villages of Tipuruga, Girahulī, Uluvā and Sēnādu.

Of the place names occurring here, Ratanpura has already been identified. Tipuruga is present day Tiprunga, 10 miles south of Kharod, in the former Katgi zamindari. Sēnādu is now Sonada, 15 miles to the east of Kharod in the Jānjgir district. Girahulī may be identical with Guolpālī in the Jānjgir district and Uluvā with Ulbā in the Raipur district (Mirashi 1955:533).

Archaeological Records

In line with evidence produced by Epigraphic sources, various Archaeological sources also testify to the water management abilities of Kalachuries (**Table 2**). At Jānjgir district a temple of Vishnu existed and it was erected by the Jājajalladēva I. Near this Vishnu temple also resides a large tank of the Kalachuri period. Hence this tank can be linked to the Ratanpur stone inscription of (year 860) of Jājajalladēva I in which there is information about the construction of a tank at Jājallapura (Jājgir).

King	Place	Hydraulic Structures
Ratandēva I	Ratanpur (Mahāmāya temple)	Tank
-do-	Ratanpur (Bhairavbaba temple)	Tank
Jajalladeva I	Jānjgir	Tank
Prithvidēva II	Ratanpur (Buddhesvar Mahadeva temple)	Step-well
-do-	Ratanpur (Hāthi Quilā)	Lake (Bairāgvan)
?	Ratanpur-Chaprā highway	Krishnārjuni tank
?	Ratanpur	Lake (Dulharā talav)
Prithvidēva II	Junā Śahar (Near Bādal Mahal)	Step-well and well
-do-	Malhār	Tank
-do-	Kotgarh	Tank
-do-	Karrā	Tank (khārung) (Khutāghāt dam)
?	Pachrāhi	Tank
?	Tummān	Tank
Table 2: Hydraulic Structures on Archaeological Records		



Figure 1: Tank in Mahāmāya Temple

a. Mahāmāyā Temple: Tank

At Ratanpur, Ratandeva I constructed a beautiful temple for Mahāmāyā (**Fig. 1**). On the east direction of this temple a tank exists till now. It is surrounded by so many temples. The tank is a splendid creation of all the right proportions, and offers highly satisfactory bath and drainage arrangements.

b. Hāthi Quilā: Bairāgvan Tank

A few distance from Mahāmāyā temple in the complex of Hāthi Quilā (constructed by Pṛithvidēva II), there is a lake named Bairāgvan (**Fig. 2**). On one bank of this lake there is the Narmadeshwar Mahadeva temple and on the other, the mausoleum of king Rājasingh which is also called Bīsdvārīā. This lake is surrounded by mango groves and might have played a vital role in hydraulic activities during the Kalachuri period.



Figure 2: Bairāgvan Tank

c. Buddhā Mahādeva Temple: Step-well

Perched on the top of the hill Rāmtēkri (Ratanpur) there is an ancient Ram temple in *nc āy n* style. Below this Rāmtēkri, the Buddeshwar Mahadev temple also called the Buddhā Mahādeva temple built by Pṛithvidēva II is situated.



Figure 3: Tank in front of Buddhā Mahādeva Temple

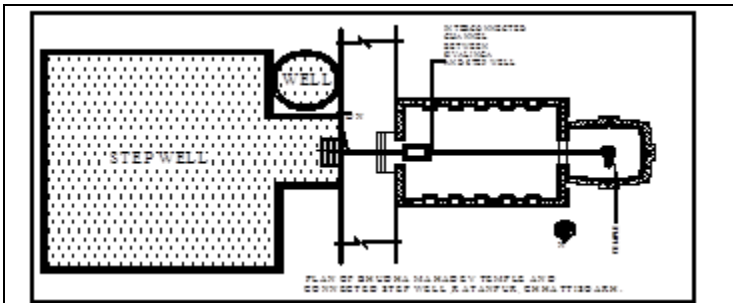


Figure 4: Step Well of Buddhā Mahādeva Temple

A noteworthy feature lying in the east direction of this temple is a properly made Step-well (*Bāv ḍī*) (Fig. 3). The *Śv ṅg* is open from the top and the water level can be seen inside the *ṅg*. The *ṅg* is full of water and even if disciples pour water inside this *ṅg* the water level will not change. We have seen this *ṅg* in two seasons. During the rainy season the water level was high inside the *ṅg* and at that same time the water

level of the step well was also raised. During the summer season when the water level of the step well was low at that same time the water level of the *ñg* also went down. So it would be reasonable to conclude that there is some interconnection between this *Śv ñg* and the step-well. It might have served as a popular religious centre during ancient times (**Fig. 4**).

d. Bādal-Mahal: Step-well

A little ahead of Ratanpur, on the Bilaspur-Korba highway lies the historical city of Junā. It was established by king Rājsimbhā who called it Rājpur. He constructed a seven storied Bādal Mahal for his queen, Kajrādevi. This is a beautiful example of Kalachuri architecture and also locally known as the Satkhandā Mahal. At present only four stories are remaining.

Near this Bādal Mahal a beautiful step-well is situated (**Fig. 5 and 6**). The level of this step well is low from the surface which is why entrance to this structure requires coming down a few steps from the ground level. At the core of this step well there is a pond filled with water. This step-well is interconnected with another well which is situated nearby. A connecting channel can be easily seen at the bottom of this other well. The water levels of both wells are always the same. This well is a source of water for the connecting step well. The impressive step well is an instance of the effective and clever water management of the Kalachuri period. This step-well can be linked to the Ratanpur stone inscription of Prīthvidēva II (year 915), where there is information about a step-well constructed by Brahamadēva near Ratanpur (**Fig. 7**).



Figure 5: Step-Well near Bādal Mahal



Figure 6: Step-Well in Rainy Season

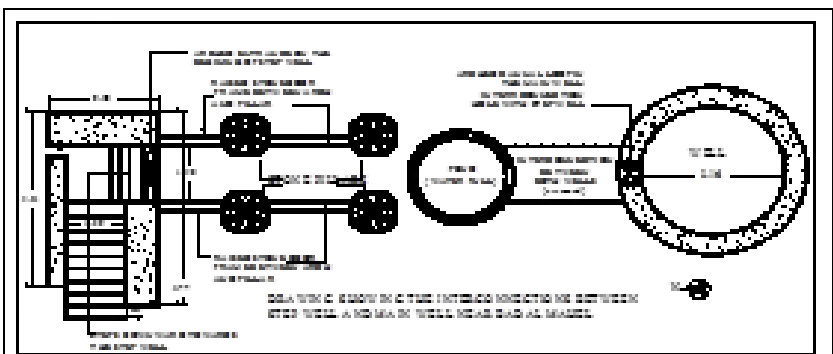


Figure 7: Step- Well near Bādal Mahal

Apart from this is the recently excavated site Pachrāhi located in the district of Kabirdham in Chhattisgarh which also features evidence of Kalachuri architecture. On the front compound of the temple area, towards the east of the temple, there are two large tanks of Kalachuri style which possibly served as the main source of hydraulic activities in this area.

Conclusion

Extensive archeological evidence suggests that the Kalachuris were very concerned about water security and had a flare for hydraulic structures. A staggering 120 water tanks are reported from Ratanpur, and another 130 from Malhār in addition to the vast number of others found in Chhattisgarh. The Kalachuris built not only tanks but also dams, wells, canals, step wells, etc. Kalachuri inscriptions record information about these constructions in detail. According to them, each and every temple accommodated a water tank that was built for public welfare. In conclusion it can be said that the Kalachuri period experienced a dramatic expansion of hydraulic architecture in Chhattisgarh which comprised an outstanding instance of water technology in ancient India.

Illustrations

All Photo Images by: Vishi Upadhyay; All Line Drawings by: Shivi Upadhyay

References

Chakravarti Ranbir (ed.), *The Creation and Expansion of Settlements and Management of Hydraulic Resources in Ancient India: The Environment History and South and Southeast Asia - Nature and the Orient*, (Delhi, 1998).

Khamari S., 'Ancient water structures at Khandgiri and Udaygiri, A Jaina recluse in Odisha', *The Orissa Research Historical Journal*, vol. 53. 1 & 2, (2012), pp. 1-13.

Mirashi, V.V., *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, vol. IV (II), (Delhi, 1955).

Sastri, K.A.N., *The Colas* (Delhi, 1923).

Sircar, D.C., *Selected Inscriptions bearing the Culture and Civilization*, (Delhi, 1942).

Vasudeven, C.S., *Management of Irrigation Tanks during Vijayanagra Period: Recent Researches in Archaeology, History and Culture*, (Delhi, 2010).

Chandora and Sashikala: Daring Heroines of Tagore's Short Fictions 'Punishment' and 'Elder Sister'

K.V. Dominic

Abstract

Tagore has written nearly one hundred short stories during his abundant literary career. In the short stories of Tagore one can find the influence of man, nature and the mysteries of the universe. The Indian woman's requirements of courage, piety, obedience, love and devotion are the themes of many of Tagore's stories. Being an eminent and the supreme romantic poet of Bengal, Tagore understood women in all their joy and sorrow, hope and despair, their yearnings and their dreams. Most of the women protagonists of Tagore's stories are prey to patriarchy. They meet with their tragic ends as a result of torture and cruelty from their husbands or brothers or fathers-in law. There are only a very few short stories of Tagore in which heroines resist oppression and face challenges with valour and will power. Two such short stories are 'Punishment' and 'Elder Sister.'

Rabindranath Tagore, the only Indian to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature, is mainly a poet. But his short stories are world renowned and perhaps more attractive than his poetry. In the words of Asit Bandyopadhyay: 'Lyric and short story, temperamentally, are like twin brothers. So, it is not difficult for a lyricist to write a short story. Whatever may be Rabindranath's position as a novelist there is no doubt that he ranks among the greatest short story writers of the world' (2004:59).

Tagore has written nearly one hundred short stories during his abundant literary career. During the 1890s he wrote a staggering fifty-nine stories. Some fifty or more stories are readily available in English in collections like *Glimpses of Bengal* (1913), *Hungry Stones and Other Stories* (1916), *Mashi and Other Stories* (1918), *Broken Ties* (1925). Some stories were translated from Bengali into English by the poet himself and the others by several qualified translators.

In the short stories of Tagore one can find the influence of man, nature and the mysteries of the supernatural. “The pictures of our rural urban lives, disintegration of the old joint family families, family quarrels, conflict in love and affection, conflict between religious superstitions and humanistic values and the final triumph of humanism provide a pageant of the entire Bengal life” (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 60). The domestic stories of Tagore are treated with an unprecedented realistic approach. Tagore may not have the actual, practical experience with the rural life of his people in the stories. The same is the case with other artists as well. Experience is necessary, but equally important is imagination. Unless the stories are coloured with imagination, they will remain newspaper reports. “Rabindranath’s success as a master short story writer was actually ensured by his essentially lyrical temperament since . . . there is close affinity between a short story and a lyric” (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 62).

Tagore is widely regarded as the innovator of the modern Bengali short story and is credited with introducing colloquial speech into Bengali literature. He has been compared to such masters of short story as Tolstoy, Edgar Allan Poe, Anton Chekhov, and Guy de Maupassant. “Tolstoy is didactic: Maupassant is erotic. Rabindranath combines the good qualities

of both without their excesses. He delved deep into the psychology of man and riddle of existence in his short stories which are universal in their appeal” (Bandyopadhyay 2004: 61-62).

Tagore’s short stories are often set in rural Bengali villages and are peopled by characters from the underprivileged sectors of society. They reflect his commitment to social realism in prose and his ten year experience among such individuals. As a short fiction writer, Tagore was a practitioner of psychological and social realism. His stories depict poignant human relationships within a simple, relatively uneventful plot. Many of Tagore’s short stories also include elements of the supernatural and bizarre. Hariom Prasad is of opinion that, “The phenomenon of the combination of lyricism with realism in his short-stories is unique. We perceive in them a rich emotionalism and at the same time a realistic portrayal of the poor and middle-class people in the villages and small towns” (2004: 211). His short stories do not deal with incidents of life. Hopes and aspirations, disappointments and frustrations, joys and sorrows in human life are what have been depicted through his stories. The famous Indian film director Satyajit Rai has adapted several of Tagore's short stories into movies.

Many of Tagore’s short stories became available in English after he had gained international acclaim as a Nobel Prize winner. Early reviewers in English received Tagore's stories with mixed appraisal; while some applauded his short fiction, others found them of negligible quality. Later critics have commented that these early reviewers were ignorant of the context of Indian culture in which the stories are set. Critics have praised Tagore for his blending of poetic lyricism with social realism, as well as the way in which his unearthly tales

maintain psychological realism within an atmosphere of supernatural occurrences. Scholars frequently praise Tagore's short stories for the deeply human quality of the characters and relationships.

The Indian woman's rare qualities of courage, piety, obedience, love and devotion are the themes of many of Tagore's stories. The treatment of women and their position in society was of serious concern to Rabindranath Tagore. Being a sensitive man and the supreme romantic poet of Bengal, he understood women in all their joy and sorrow, hope and despair, their yearnings and their dreams. Tagore found in the women of his country an immense wealth-their courage against all odds, their power of survival under the worst possible conditions and oppression, their forbearance, their self-sacrifice and gentleness. It pained him to see such colossal waste of so much human treasure.

Violence, both psychological and physical, against women in the Bengali society was a regular occurrence. Its functioning was sometimes blatant but often subtle, insidious and invisible. What was worse was that the society as a whole, even the women, seemed to have got used to this slow poisoning without realizing the effect it cumulatively had on them. There was very little protest and the poison gradually had settled in the 'body-society.' Through his stories and novels Tagore wanted to reshape public opinion, personal beliefs and the society's self-perception in such a way that would bring out into the open, and consciously and critically look at the position of women in our society. He wanted these stories to be the mirror in which men would see themselves and would want to change, for it was necessary to bring about a change in the way men looked at themselves in order to change the lives of women.

Tagore had the unique natural genius to read women's minds and analyze their strange psychological structures through his stories. Even in cruel actions and base thoughts, Tagore brings out noble feelings. Even though 'Suttee' had been a cruel, savage act, the rare passion of women for it was a noble one. Tagore through his brave, chaste heroines proclaim to the readers that this rarest feeling and passion still exist in our country even though 'Suttee' was abolished years back. Tagore tells the world that Indian women are highly sacrificing, loving, obedient, meek, religious and kind. They adore their husbands and love their children deeply.

Women in Tagore's days were highly exploited by the feudal society. The out-dated and cruel feudal customs intensified the miseries and tortures of women. Through his stories Tagore pointed out these injustices. "Simultaneously, he reveals the spiritual richness of Bengali women. The depiction of the cruel exploitation of the helpless women made the critical pathos of the stories of Tagore more intense" (Basu 1985: 58). Tagore was never influenced by patriarchal views. That is why he depicted his heroines as more powerful and brighter than the spineless men. Tagore not only reveals the spirituality of his heroines but also shows their keen practical sense and determination. Tagore's stories confirm the fact that he believed in the progress of women and in their emancipation from feudal bondage. He also believed that, given equal rights and opportunities, they might occupy their rightful place in society side by side with men. Taking these views into consideration one can call Tagore a feminist writer.

When one analyses the Bengali woman's fate, as depicted in Tagore's stories, he/she can find two kinds of intellectuals in Bengali society who played central roles in the stories. The first

category of intelligentsia wanted to preserve feudal customs for their personal gains. They amassed wealth by exploiting the helpless poor. Some of them even held important positions like judicial officers. The second category did not get directly involved in the exploitation of women, but their passive attitude did nothing to lessen the suffering of Bengali women.

Tagore often discussed the pathos of women caused by various situations in the house. Women had to face several problems in their houses. Nirmalkumar Sidhanta opines:

In a few stories we have seen the problems of the wife in a joint family, the conflict of loyalties between what is due to her husband and what she must do for her parent's family. But the conflict becomes more acute when her husband is perhaps a subordinate person, where she may see jealousy or ill will on all sides. Numerous new relationships grow up and she has to adjust herself to these without forgetting her old ties: the relations between the wife and her husband's younger brother (who is an object of affection while the elder brother has to be treated with respect); those between the husband's and the wife's sisters, between the wives of two brothers, between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. If she is unfortunate she may have a co-wife; if she loses her husband she may become a little better than a maid servant tolerated by her 'in-laws.' If she has some responsibility to a brother she may find it difficult to reconcile that with what she owes to her husband's family. (1961:287)

Tagore treated these problems and created examples of womanhood that remained immortal in the minds of the readers.

Most of the women protagonists of Tagore's short stories are prey to patriarchy. They meet with their tragic ends as a result of torture and cruelty from their husbands or brothers or fathers-in law. There are only a very few short stories of Tagore in which heroines resist oppression and face challenges with valour and will power. Two such short stories are "Punishment" and "Elder Sister." Though Feminist movements did not take root in India during Tagore's times, he exhorted to his countrymen through these stories the necessity of female empowerment.

1. 'Punishment' or 'The Sentence'

The story 'Punishment' or 'The Sentence,' published in 1893, depicts the hard life of Bengali peasants. Women had no human rights. Tagore was able to show the spiritual richness of women in peasant families despite their lives in utter poverty and the humiliation they faced on a regular basis. The story is about the lives of two young brothers Dukhiram and Chidam and their wives Radha and Chandora. After a day's heavy work when the brothers return home hungry, the elder brother Dukhiram asks his wife Radha for some food. When only harsh words are returned Dukhiram loses his temper and kills her with his chopper. He is upset and repentant. Then Chidam comes to his rescue. He requests his wife Chandora to take responsibility for the crime. He asks her to tell the court that she had been forced to kill Radha in self-defense during an argument. "Chandora who loved her husband dearly is taken aback by her husband's cruel suggestion and is convinced that her husband had never given any value to her feelings" (Basu 1985: 59). So she decides to end her life as a protest against the humiliating proposal. In the court Chandora tells the judge that she had killed her sister-in-law because she hated her. Chidam understands his mistake

and is ready to take all the blame on himself and save his wife. Dukhiram also tries to save her by telling the court what actually happened. But the judge is convinced that Chandora had committed the murder and he sentences her to be hanged. Sankar Basu continues his analysis of the story thus:

By depicting the bitter life of peasant women, Tagore writes at the end of the story: 'Sometime in the dawn of youth, a very young dark complexioned lively girl, setting aside her dolls, left her parents place to live with her in-laws. But who could imagine that auspicious marriage night, of what would happen today. (1985:60).

Chandora did not want to continue her life since her husband had not valued her intense feeling towards him.

Chidam quarrelled with her and they were not on good terms on the day of murder, and that might have been one reason why he chose his brother over his wife. In a weak moment, not thinking much about its consequences, Chidam tells about the whole lie to Ramlochan, the pillar of the village, who happens to visit their house immediately after the murder. His attachment to his brother was so deep that he wants to save him, but at the same time he wants to save his wife also. He clings to the feet of Ramlochan and asks him how he could save her. Ramlochan says that the way out is by putting the blame on Dukhiram. But again without much thought he says that if he loses his wife he could get another, but if his brother was hanged he could never replace him. This was the reasoning behind his request of his wife to own the crime. But what a deep wound it made in her heart! No balm could cure it. She wanted to protest against it by ending her life. Tagore thus showed through this story that women protested against feudal

oppression. Though their protests might be passive, they resent set norms and customs and are not willing to accept humiliation in a submissive manner. Before the death sentence, at the end of the story, Chandora simply utters the words: 'Oh I want to die.' Sankar Basu opines:

These simple words convey the depth of the offence and grief in the mind of a simple but strong-willed and stable woman, who found that she has been deceived in her love towards her husband. Such laconic, natural and highly impressive endings of Tagore's stories in many ways remind us of the endings of Chekhov's stories. (1985:115)

Nature, too, adds to the gloomy atmosphere of the house. A very refined description of nature before the storm is given here. Here nature not only forms the background of the terrible happening, but also reflects the tense situation in which the hanging would take place. The description of nature in the story runs thus: "There was not a breath of wind. Weeds and scrub round the house had shot up after the rain: the heavy scent of damp vegetation, from these and from the waterlogged jute-fields, formed a solid wall all around. Frogs croaked from the pond behind the cowshed, and the buzz of crickets filled the leaden sky" (Tagore 1994: 125). Tagore thus sets the setting to prepare the readers for the tragic event which would soon befall the poor peasant family.

The way in which Tagore portrays the intense, dejected feelings of Chandora is remarkable. When her husband is called to the court she turns away and replies to the questions, covering her face with her hands. Her answer to the judge's question as to whether her husband did not love her is ironic. She answers that he loved her like crazy. In the jail, just before the hanging when

the civil surgeon asks her whether she wanted to see anyone she replies that she would like to see her mother. The doctor then asks her whether he should call her husband since he wanted to see her. Her reply is 'Not him,' with an emphasis on the word 'him.' In the original Bengali story instead of the term 'him' the term 'maran' is used. "Maran" literally means "death." It is a common ironic expression particularly among village-women. The complex implications here include Chandora's rejection of the husband she still loved, the pride [abhimān] that prevents her from backing down and a shy reluctance to show her true marital feelings in public.

2. 'Elder Sister'

In the story 'Elder Sister,' published in 1895, Tagore depicts a brave woman who sacrifices her life for her younger brother. Jaigopal, one of the main characters of the story, is a typical representative of the middle class. He is an idle man who lives at the expense of others. His wife Shashikala is a modest, kind-hearted woman. She loves her husband deeply and obeys whatever is ordered or requested. The smooth married life of Jaigopal comes to an end when Shashi's mother gives birth to a son, who is the sole inheritor of the family property. Jaigopal leaves his wife thinking that he would not inherit anything from her family. His love towards his wife is centered around her wealth. Through him Tagore portrays a class which is greedy, selfish and money-minded. Shashikala's life becomes very hard. In addition to the separation from her husband, her parents also die, leaving the child in her care. Kind-hearted Shashi starts to look after the child. She has great attachment to it. Meanwhile Jaigopal returned to her house with a secret ambition to possess the property of the child. She thus becomes the guardian of the child who is named Nilmani. Shashi starts hating her husband

when she gets to know his malicious intentions. She takes it upon herself to protect her brother from her evil husband. Jaigopal goes back to his house. The middle class, Tagore shows, despite their education were still sticking to old cruel feudal morals. The Deputy Magistrate refuses to help Shashi when she approaches him because she is an unprotected woman. Jaigopal is an acquaintance of the Deputy Magistrate and the latter helped him get hold of Nilman's property. Shashi narrates the whole story to the Magistrate and requests him to look after the orphan. The Magistrate takes the responsibility of the child and promises her that he would reconsider Nilmani's case. Shashi goes back to her husband and starts living with him. When Jaigopal gets to know about what she had done, he kills her. Shashi anticipated her death. Though she was helpless, she took the decisive step to save her brother from the grip of her cruel husband. She thus martyred her life for her brother. Sankar Basu opines:

Her death symbolises the awakening of women. In the character of Soshi a splendid picture of Benagli women has been revealed. Their brave, decisive and kind nature capable of loving intensely and struggling for justice has been reflected in the story. (1985:62).

News of her death spreads next morning as one caused by cholera, and her body is already cremated in the night itself. Nobody comments on that. The neighbour Tara occasionally speaks out what she thinks, but is always silenced by the people around her. The narrator ends the story expressing his doubt that Shashi will be able to fulfill her promise to her brother that he would see her again.

Analyzing Shashi's character, critic Upendranath Bhattacharya writes:

When a woman sees her beloved is helpless, then her love becomes stronger, and then she like a fortress defends her beloved from any blow and attack. When Shashi found that besides her Nilmani had none, she then started through all she might to defend him from the attack of her cruel and egoistic husband. (quoted. in Basu 1985: 62)

Bhattacharya rightly analyzes the deep feeling Shashi has towards her brother. Unlike the helpless heroines in other stories Shashi defeated her husband's malicious motive of stealing her brother's property. One sees in Shashi a representative of the courageous Indian woman who is willing to give up her life for a noble cause.

The lives of Tagore's heroines Chandora and Sashikala thus proved that they were resistant to patriarchy's legacy and exploitation and daringly challenged and faced its oppression. They upheld the Indian women's ideal noble qualities and set models to the women in the country.

References

- Bandyopadhyay, Asit, 'Rabindranath Tagore: Novelist, Short Story Writer and Essayist.' in Ray, Mohit K. (ed.), 2004, Vol. I, pp. 47-70.
- Basu, Sankar., *Chekhov and Tagore: A Comparative Study of their Short Stories*, (New Delhi, 1985).
- Prasad, Hariom, 'Tagore's Short Stories: A Critical Study' in Ray, Mohit K. (ed.), 2004, Vol. II, pp. 211-218. (New Delhi, 2004).
- Ray, Mohit K. (ed.), *Studies on Rabindranath Tagore*, 2 vols. (New Delhi, 2004).

Sidhanta, Nirmalkumar, 'Rabindranath's Short Stories',
Rabindranath Tagore: 1861-1961: A Centenary Volume,
(New Delhi, 1961).

Tagore, Rabindranath, *Broken Ties*, (New Delhi, 2002).

-----, *Glimpses of Bengal*, (New York, 1997).

-----, *Hungry Stones and Other Stories*, (New Delhi, 2004).

-----, *Mashi and Other Stories*, (Whitefish, Montana, 2004).

-----, *Selected Short Stories*. William Radice (trans.),
(London, 1994).

Vijay Tendulkar's Exploration of Middle Class Psyche in Post-colonial India

Shukla Chatterjee

Abstract

Post-colonial literature and its in-depth analysis explicate post-coloniality. A close reading of the development of Indian/Marathi theatre beginning from the 1950s discloses and deconstructs colonialist power structures. Vijay Tendulkar and his whole range of works is no exception. Being one of the pioneers of modern Indian/Marathi Theatre, Tendulkar's work reflects the concept of post-colonialism and primarily the conditions of middle class Indian gentlemen who dominate the country's culture and politics. Various aspects of post-colonialism in the form of everyday patriarchy are the focus in most of his plays. Each of these plays highlight how lower and middle class Indians and especially women are still subjected to a colonial legacy that was itself powerfully patriarchal in all institutional, economic, political and ideological aspects. By discussing briefly the emergence of Middle Class and the importance of studying middle class psyche, this paper analyses Tendulkar's exploration of middle class psyche in post-colonial India through some of his most important plays and discusses their relevance in the 21st century.

Post-colonial literature is a form of cultural criticism and cultural critique. An in-depth analysis of post-colonial literature elucidates post-coloniality and also unveils and deconstructs colonialist power structures. The development of the Indian/Marathi theatre beginning from the 1950s with special reference to Vijay Tendulkar and his whole range of works reflects and explores the concept of post-colonialism and

primarily the conditions of middle class Indian gentlemen who dominate the country's culture and politics. Each of Tendulkar's plays focuses on various aspects of post-colonialism in the form of the social challenge of everyday patriarchy typically supported by its institutional and legal discrimination: of domestic violence, sexual abuse, rape, honour killings, dowry deaths, flesh trade, female infanticide, and child abuse. Further, each of these plays highlights the degree to which lower and middle class Indians and specially women are still working against a colonial legacy that was itself powerfully patriarchal-institutional, economic, political and ideological. The present paper would therefore try to analyze Tendulkar's exploration of the middle class psyche in post-colonial India and its relevance even today for a better understanding of society.

1. Emergence of the Middle class

It is said that a sizeable percentage of India's population is constituted of India's middle classes and the strength of the middle class in India is bigger in size than the entire population of many nations. But who constitutes the Indian middle class is a big question and needs deep deliberation. Different sociologists and economists as well as academicians of different fields have attempted to define 'the middle class'. One such definition, is by Andre Beteille (2001) an eminent sociologist and writer of India:

The Indian middle class, like the middle class anywhere in the world, is differentiated in terms of occupation, income and education. But the peculiarity in India is its diversity in terms of language, religion and caste. It is by any reckoning the most polymorphous middle class in the world.

True to the definition quoted above, the Indian middle class and its peculiarity deserves serious attention because of its great size and diversity. The new middle class we know today began to emerge in India during the middle of the 19th century in the womb of an ancient hierarchical society. The emergence of this middle class was facilitated by education and the consequent work opportunities available in offices set up for commercial, administrative and other purposes by the colonial government. (Beteille 2001) During the colonial period the political boundaries of the Indian middle class rested on mediation between the colonial rulers and colonial subjects. But interestingly it is again this colonial middle class that became a vital progressive element in India's transition from feudalism to an industrially based modern society. This is because with education, the middle class was also introduced to rationality, science and secularism, thus paving the way to lead India out of its traditional superstition and ignorance. Against a backdrop of a growing independence movement, the ever expanding urban educated middle and elite classes took on the leadership in the nationalist struggle. In post-colonial India, the middle class began to be identified as 'Nehruvian civil service-oriented salariat, short on money but long on institutional perks'. (Mazzarella 2003) And in the contemporary period, the 'new' middle class as a social group is depicted as negotiating India's new relationship with the global economy in both cultural (socio symbolic practices of commodity consumption) and economic terms (the beneficiaries of the material benefits of jobs and businesses in India's new liberalised economy). (Fernandes 2000)

While this background accounts for the emergence of the middle class as an important socio-economic group, its diversity can be derived from its roots in the colonial experience. The

society within which it began to take shape was not one of classes, but of castes and communities. The peculiarity of the Indian middle class arises not so much from its intrinsic character as a class as from the social environment within which it has to operate. Even in the contemporary period with enough access to modern education, rationality and liberalization, difference of castes and communities are practiced in the social order.

2. Importance of Studying the Middle Class Psyche

An exploration of the middle class psyche in post-colonial India is important because firstly it will reveal the entire ideology of the Indian state as formatted and customized by the middle class culture. Secondly a reading of a wide variety of values, beliefs and behaviour of this middle class would easily reflect regional, linguistic, gendered, ideological and other pluralities. Finally as the middle class is considered as the class that builds hegemony for the present socio-economic and political arrangements, (Deshpande 2003) an exploration of the middle class psyche would contribute to a wider understanding of and debate over the public sphere, governance and social change.

3. Vijay Tendulkar's Exploration

The prime reason for my choosing the plays of Vijay Tendulkar to explore this middle class psyche in post-colonial India is because he is a playwright, an author in a vernacular language who has been widely translated, and therefore closer to the regional people and their cultures. Vijay Tendulkar's works reflect his searching exploration of human life. His vast literary output¹ itself can be said to be a field of cultural discourse. Each of his works is about society as a whole and the conditions of

‘Man’ within the society. He is the most talked about, most criticized and most controversial dramatist of India whose art has almost shaken Indian Theatre to its foundations. It is for this that his works have been translated not only into English but also into other regional languages including Hindi and Bengali. His translated plays in English are as powerful as the originals and successfully portray the complexities of issues and themes explored in them.

Born to a middle class Marathi family, Vijay Tendulkar began his work as a journalist² but with his passion for writing later turned into one of the leading playwrights of India. His personal nature, surrounding experiences as well as his personal observations instigated in Tendulkar the urge to explore the middle class psyche in post-colonial India through his plays. In all his plays his focus is on showing his concern and reaction towards the several problems of the Indian society and exploring the middle class psyche through the prevailing overt and covert violence and sexuality within said society³.

As an innovative and experimental playwright Tendulkar used theatre not merely as a medium of entertainment but also as a medium to make people aware of the conditions and situations they are living in.

I don't think that theatre is meant only for entertainment. I want people to come to the theatre, I want them to see the play but on my terms and not on their terms... I don't have a political ideology, but I am deeply concerned about the existence of my people, so I am trying to say something about that.
(Tendulkar 1977)

As an experimental dramatist, Tendulkar adopted various forms and techniques and modified to make the best use of them for

his representation of socially controversial themes that jolted the orthodox Marathi Theatre completely. Though most of his plays had censor troubles compelling the producers to go to court, he preferred social realism⁴ and took up real life incidents as plots for his plays. Most of these plays caused severe controversies during production but finally stood earned fame globally. He never shrank from public controversy but rather tore through the barrier of propriety with ruthless yet clinical dispassion, and turned the genre of social realism to focus back on the individual. In most of his plays Tendulkar dealt with living characters who speak their own language in their separate personal style and incidents to depict life in its actual form.

The basic urge (to write) has always been to let out my concerns vis à vis my reality: the human condition as I perceive it. (Tendulkar 2004: x).

He always believed human beings to be complex and multi layered. So his characters too are often composites of contradictory personalities struggling between emotion and intellect; espoused values and conflicting actions; seeking independence and yet submissive, struggling between physical desires and conscience. He always tended to minimize his personal influence on these characters and maximize their personality development. They are in the plays “with their own minds, ways and destinies”, he said. (Tendulkar 1997: 15)

For the close representation of contemporary social conditions and to deal with the living characters more easily, Tendulkar located the plots of his plays within the urban middle class ‘home’ or urban space. Using ‘home’ as the microcosm of society, Tendulkar tried to explore the problems of society by cross examining the crises within a family, thereby trying to expose the middle class and their hypocrisies in general. He

believed that the root cause behind the hypocrisy and social crisis of a society is the basic human instincts of violence and sexuality. Though the Indian society is considered to be a peace loving society, there is enough violence, both physical and psychological within the society. So, finally to explore the middle class psyche in post-colonial India, Tendulkar attempted to explore and validate violence of all forms through his plays. For a detailed understanding of Tendulkar's exploration of the middle class psyche it is necessary to look into some of his important plays.

3.1 Silence! The Court is in Session

Shantata! Court Chalu Ahe (or Silence! The Court is in Session) is one of the most popular of Tendulkar's plays. Written in 1963, it was first produced in 1967 by Rangayan. Silence! brought Tendulkar recognition on a national level as the play was translated into almost sixteen Indian languages as well as English. It was also made into a film and both the play and its film version have received acclaim worldwide. Silence! is primarily a play that is categorized by most critics as a political and social satire on middle class hypocrisy. It is set up as a play within a play, where a travelling amateur theatre group, the Sonar Moti Tenement (Bombay) Progressive Association, makes a stop at a village to perform a mock trial which is supposed to be a rehearsal for the play the actors have come to perform. But as the play unfolds, this second mock trial becomes the centre of the protagonist's consciousness. During this second mock trial, Miss Leela Benare, the protagonist of the play, who is an unmarried cast member who has been sexually exploited twice, is charged of child abortion (Bhroon Hatya). As the charge gets more and more vicious and personal, Miss Benare can't take it any longer and breaks down revealing the

true story behind it all. Her story also reveals in a way the hegemonic attitude and hypocrisy of male cast members, who like their counterparts in society are not blameless themselves, but still find it easy to point fingers at a woman's character. In this mock trial, what is interesting to note is the accusation and the verdict. While the accusation towards Ms Benare is "Prisoner Ms Benare under section No. 302 of the Indian Penal Code, you are accused of the crime of Infanticide"; the verdict passed down at the end of the play is "the court hereby sentences that you shall live. But the child in your womb shall be destroyed." This dual nature of accusation and verdict itself shows the hypocrisy of the middle class people. It brings into forefront the degradation of the judicial system and to what extent judicial pronouncement actually reflects the middle class psychology. During the mock trial the way Ms Benare is cornered by the other members of the group and how satirically her personal life is made public reveals clearly the forceful male supremacy in Indian society and the prejudices against women both working and staying at home. The irony of the mock trial is that Benare is accused in the court without the presence of Prof. Damle, her lover, while the professor himself is allowed to enjoy his married life and is not accused of sexual exploitation and abuse of a woman. I specially mention here housewives because of Mrs. Khasikar's character. She is a housewife and belongs to the group who corners Ms Benare. But at the same time she too is ill-treated, ignored and sometimes silenced by her husband, Mr. Khasikar. With its wide range of characters, the play portrays middle class hypocrisy where people have all the right to pass the judgments while silence is the only alternative left for the victim, in this case a woman.

3.2 *Ghasiram Kotwal*

During the 1970s, along with industrialization, social progress became vital. This progress gave self-confidence but also caused the gradual death of ideals like contributing to social welfare and development. People became more and more self-centered. The hunger for power and prominence in most cases also led to violent acts. So most of Tendulkar's plays written during this period prominently focus on violence of so-called civilized cultured human beings in their struggle for power and prominence. *Ghasiram Kotwal*, written and produced in 1972, is one of them. The play begins with the visit of Ghasiram, a Brahman from Kanauj to Pune where he is falsely accused of theft and slighted by the Pune Brahmans. This arouses anger in Ghasiram and he swears to take revenge. He snares Nana Phadnavis, the Peshwa's chieftain and magistrate of the city, using his young daughter Lalita Gaur and subsequently takes up the office of the Kotwal of the city. As a Kotwal, he is put in charge of law and order of the city by the Nana. He unleashes a reign of terror on the city and its Brahmans without even realizing that the Nana is using him only to keep the Brahmans in check and that he himself will become useless once he has finished the dirty work. In the final scene when Ghasiram understands how he is deceived, it is too late and Nana has already signed his death penalty. Insane with rage, Ghasiram is mobbed by the irate crowd where, semi-crazed, he asks for death. As crowds gather round Ghasiram's lifeless body, Nana appears to herald the end of an age of terror and proposes festivities to mark the purging of the city.

Ghasiram Kotwal is popular for its folk and musical form. But with this form, the depiction of violence as the machinery of power and the effects of oppression becomes even more

prominent. Tendulkar skillfully uses the episode of Nana Phadnavis from history to operate the play at allegorical level thereby commenting acerbically the political situation of the present day India where scores of Ghasirams are made and marred each time the political scene is cast anew. Allegorical representation of the historical episode further shows how the middle class has become the powerful intermediary class regulating the present socio-economic and political arrangements. The tussle between Nana and Ghasiram depicts the rise of political ideology in response to conducive social and economic circumstances, and how the mastermind behind this rise exploits and then disregards people as pawns in the power-game whereas the very treatment of Ghasiram, the Kanauj Brahmin by the Brahmins of Pune reveals that the middle class is not a homogeneous group but fragmented along lines of locality and ideology on the one hand and income and occupation on the other.

3.3 Vultures

Gidhade or *Vultures* is another play by Tendulkar known primarily for its shocking expression of domestic violence. Records say that *Vultures* was written in 1957 but was performed in 1970. Though the play was produced almost fifteen years after it was written, it had a great censor trouble rocking the Marathi Theatre as its shocking representation of open physical violence disturbed certain sensitivities. Much of this notorious censorship controversy can be recalled from Dr. Shriram Lagoo's autobiography *LA' AAN'*. The play pictures a middle class family – the Pitales, where the members are cruel, venal people. They always pine for more and more. Money has so corrupted their minds that they are even ready to hurt one another in order to earn more money. The brothers Ramakant

and Umakant and their sister Manik are against each other because of property issues. Sheer greed forced the brothers to jointly chase the father out of the house. They also chase out their sister after having used her for their purpose. At the end, they even turn against each other.

The only man who escapes this situation is the youngest male member and the illegitimate son Rajaninath. But since he refuses to be one of the vultures of the family, he is driven out of the house and makes himself a room in the garage. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Tendulkar had observed and was therefore conscious of the fragmentation of the family and the individual due to extreme social corruption. Much of his consciousness is seen reflected in *Vultures* as a portrayal of cultural degeneration of human individuals. 'Culture' is the expression of human freedom ordering chaos into cosmos. (Whatever that means) In a broad sense it includes the state, society, arts, science, and technology, all of which are human creations that shape human behaviour and character. But when there is cultural degeneration, people's sensibilities are blunted ultimately leading to violent acts like murder, chaos, genocide, extermination and anarchy. Tendulkar's *Vultures* portrays this phenomenon. In *Vultures* the degeneration is of human individuals belonging to a middle class milieu and as a result the violence practiced between them is exposed through the interaction among the members of a family and their behaviour towards each other. Physical and verbal violence is used in this play as a shock factor to depict the dissatisfaction, the unrest and the repressed anger within every individual of middle class society. It also brings out economic insecurity, alienation and frustration as the outcomes of industrialization during the 1960s.

3.4 *Sakharam Binder*

During the 1970s, after the grand success of Ghasiram Kotwal amidst all protests and controversies, Tendulkar's next hit in the Marathi theatre came with *Sakharam Binder*. Written and produced in 1972, *Sakharam Binder* is a play about Sakharam, a book binder and his lifestyle. Sakharam's character is the mainstay of the plot. He picks up other men's discarded women – cast off wives who would otherwise be homeless, destitute or murdered and takes them in as domestic servants and sex partners. He is full of vices – alcohol, women and abuses, but what sets him apart from the rest is his honesty, the courage to own up his own weaknesses. It is through the delineation of this character that Tendulkar explores the manifestation of physical lust and violence in a human being. Sakharam, as portrayed by Tendulkar is a domineering character and has no moral or social constraints. He indulges in drinking and womanizing with no trace of guilt whatsoever. He even makes hearty digs at the puritan hypocrisy which governs the prevalent codes of ethics. By choosing a low class, crude womanizer like Sakharam as the central character of his play, Tendulkar not only changed drastically the framework of Marathi drama, but also the delineation of life at the core. It is again through this character of Sakharam that Tendulkar studied the nature of physical and verbal violence present within the middle class society. His being honest and constantly claiming that he is a kind person implying an ethical position in a way is a pointer towards the hypocritical society and most middle class men. His truthfulness declares more clearly that everybody in the middle class society is the same, some hide what they are, others do not. At the same time his practice of keeping the deserted wives for satisfying his desire for lust is a challenge to the institution of marriage, the very foundation of middle class society. In Indian middle class

psychology, 'marriage' is the most significant and socially recognized form of man-woman relationship. It is a social institution supported by tradition, custom and social morality. Tendulkar uses the character of Sakharam to critique the institution of marriage which gives the right to husbands to enjoy sexual pleasure as well as desert their wives whenever they wish to. Sakharam is at constant conflict with society due to his complete disregard for social customs and traditions related to the institution of marriage. Through his honesty and frankness, Tendulkar exposes the hypocrisy of the middle class and ridicules its double standards.

3.5 *Kanyadaan*

Another very important play by Tendulkar that bagged him the Saraswati Samman is *Kanyadaan*. Written in 1983, and produced first by the Mumbai National Theatre this is a play charged with an undercurrent of violence, uncertainties and anger and concerns itself with questions that are crucial to all societies. The story of *Kanyadaan* is based on a Marathi family that is politically active and regards itself as progressive. While dealing with the issue of a young daughter's marriage to a socially inferior but talented man and her turning into a wife and a mother, Tendulkar explores the texture of modernity and social change in India.

The play is about a girl born into a political family with progressive views who marries a Dalit man because she sees angst in his poetry, and promises to deliver him from his devilish tendencies. Her fathers' lofty ideals have inculcated in her a spirit which tries to find the good in people, to change them for the better. However, after getting married to him she soon realizes that the devil and the poet are one and the same

person, they cannot be separated, neither can he be cleansed of the vices (drinking, wife-beating) that are a part of his persona. In fact, there is a strange malice in him, a sadistic desire to punish her for the suffering his ancestors have gone through the ages. Finally, the father who taught her the lofty ideals of humanity and socialism is defeated. He finds himself powerless before the predicament of his daughter, and has to praise his son-in-law's autobiography, applause spewing from his mouth and poison dripping from his eyes. His daughter tells him how his great ideals, his hope in human innocence is faulty, and how she is a victim of his faith in this promise.

With this as the outline, the play covers the issue of marriage, a social custom, Dalithood and the plight of untouchables. It provides an opportunity to study communal differences with reference to the Dalit consciousness that take place under the surface of constitutional secularism and the ideology of equal status to all Indians. By using the relationship between the Dalit Arun Atavle and the Brahmin family of Nath Deolalikar, Tendulkar tries to probe deeply into the layers of Indian caste psychology. In spite of economic progress and liberalization, the middle class psychology is still unable to free itself from caste discriminations. This very fact and the outcome of such biasness is portrayed in *Kanyadaan*. It also depicts the differences between the generations of a father and a daughter and represents women as passive carriers of familial ideologies without any political will for change. Like Sakharam, this play again critiques the institution of marriage. As the society itself is patriarchal, it is male chauvinists who exercise their will and construct the cultural, social, economic, moral and political norms of society. Women on the other hand have no position to express their feelings and emotions in the patriarchic society. Thus even in the institution of marriage, where man-woman

relationship is supposed to be such that they stand emotionally for each other, it is the husbands who become the “head of wives and the wives be to their husbands in everything” (Beauvoir 1949)

3.6 *Kamala*

Kamala, written prior to *Kanyadaan* in 1981, is said to be inspired by a real life incident – it is based on journalist Ashwini Sarin’s path-breaking investigative series in 1981 on the flesh trade in Madhya Pradesh. Using this incident as a launching pad, Tendulkar exploited it in dramatic terms to bring up the issue of trafficking of women into discussion and raised certain questions on the value system of the modern, success-oriented generation that is ready to sacrifice human values.

In this play Jaisingh Yadav, a journalist, purchases Kamala from the flesh market in the Luhardaga bazaar in Bihar for a meager Rs. 250/- and brings her to his own family with the intention to present her in a press conference and expose this practice. At the expense of the hapless Kamala, Jaisingh as well as his intimate friend Jain celebrate their triumph against fellow journalists. The crux of the play resides in the conversation between Sarita, Jaisingh’s wife and Kamala the night after the press conference. Sarita becomes aware of her real condition as a mere pawn in Jaisingh’s life when Kamala quite innocently asks her what price Jaisingh has paid for her. Kamala’s question opens Sarita’s eyes and she realizes her husband’s scheming nature. Sarita is now defiant and decides to convene a Press conference at which she intends to declare before the whole world, the real state of affairs at home. As she is about to do it, the news of Jaisingh’s dismissal from his job is revealed. With her mind changed, Sarita moves forward to help Jaisingh in his

despair. The play thus ends with Sarita, looking at the child like face of the sleeping Jaisingh, remarking, "How innocent even the masters look when they are asleep". Her gaze is calm, steadily looking ahead at the future.

The theme of Tendulkar's *Kamala* is how well known journalists seek to capitalize on human trafficking in order to further succeed in their careers without caring in the least for the victims of this nefarious trade in a democratic country like India. With this the play also offers enough opportunity to dwell on the characteristic suffering of the Indian middle class woman perpetrated by selfish, malicious and hypocritical male chauvinists. The man-woman relationship is also deftly touched upon in the complex relationship between Jaisingh and his wife Sarita. Trafficking of women and forcing them into prostitution is a result of difficult economic and social conditions. As a result, many women very often find themselves illegally confined to brothels in slavery in conditions where they are physically abused. It is not only an economic and physical exploitation, but also a sexual one. It is further strange to note that while crimes like trafficking of women and prostitution usually take place within a class of people who are economically deprived, middle class men too practice it under the garb of marriage. In every context, therefore, women are looked upon as mere instruments of physical pleasure judged solely on the basis of the extent to which they satisfy man.

Tendulkar critically handles this important aspect of daily life in this play through the character of Jaisingh. Jaisingh Yadav, who occupies the center of the frame, is portrayed as a dominating male character who treats both Sarita and Kamala as mere objects for his own purpose. He is a true representative of the patriarchal ideology of what it means to be a husband and

his treatment of women in the play provides a completely novel point of view showing that women irrespective of the different physical and social spaces they occupy, are still mere slaves to their male owners in the Indian society during the time of the play.

This is the way of the society and is not only endured but also accepted by women. The dialogue between Sarita and Kamala therefore sensitively helps us to analyze the complex situation of subjugation and discrimination that women face even today in India. Kamala's frank and innocent descriptions not only open up Sarita's consciousness regarding the hypocrisy within the patriarchal system of marriage but also bring into forefront another very complex issue of the traditions on Indian society. The orthodox attitudes and practices in the Indian society, particularly the castigation of females for male sterility and the stigma attached to 'the barren woman' blamed for not upholding male honour and family pride by bearing a child is also developed within the middle class family structure of Tendulkar's *Kamala*. In Indian society, children play an important role in the lives of parents. They are a source of solace and happiness to parents. Such is the condition of the Indian society that a male child is seen as a means of ensuring the continuity of lineage, while for a woman, it is only with motherhood that she makes a place for herself in the family, in the community and in her life circle. Kamala's queries bring out the psychological torture of Sarita to remain only a wife and carry the blame of infertility that she endures. The pain of this torture is felt only when Kamala makes her queries. By focusing on the pain of psychological torture Tendulkar also critiques the concept of companionate marriage and reveals clearly the middle class psyche.

3.7 A Friend's Story

Mitrachi Gostha, or *A Friend's Story* (1981) is widely acknowledged as the first Marathi play (and perhaps even the first Indian play) on same-sex relations. *A Friend's Story* is a coming-out story of Sumitra Dev—a fictional character based on a real woman whose promising acting career was stunted after her affair with a young woman turned into a great scandal. Tendulkar's three-act play fictionalizes the life-changing moments in Mitra's struggle to cope with being "different." As she realizes that she is a lesbian, she also becomes adamant in her decision to like and love Nama. On the other hand she finds in Bapu, the narrator, a true friend and reveals her grievances to him openly. Meanwhile, other male characters like Pande and Dalvi try to expose Mitra's story to the public to ruin her career. Thus while Bapu ultimately comes to represent a homophobic society that keeps its blinders on to naturalize straight relationships as the norm, even if these should lead to a tragic end, the other male characters Pande and Dalvi reveal the deep contradictions inherent in a patriarchal society.

Unable to withstand the mental torture imposed on her by society, Mitra struggles with her own self but ultimately opts for self-destructive acts. The play and its stage history stands as an important documentation of post- Independence India's take on homoeroticism both in life and in fiction. Homosexuality is generally considered taboo by both Indian civil society and the government. Though in recent years the attitudes towards homosexuality has shifted slightly, it was not so in the 1980s. Guided by Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, homosexuality was then strictly considered to be an unnatural act and thus illegal. The law treated homosexuality as a criminal offense punishable up to life imprisonment. All theories and

cultural/political creations treated heterosexuality as the norm as opposed to homosexuality. Compulsory heterosexuality is always examined as an institution that powerfully affects mothering, sex-roles, relationships and societal prescriptions for women. On the other hand homosexuality among women or lesbian existence is usually treated as a marginal or less 'natural' phenomenon. In fact, in almost every country and every culture, homosexuality and more specifically lesbianism is ostracized and hounded by law. They are inhumanly branded as 'queers' and 'aberrations' – precisely what they are not. In actuality homosexuals, whether male or female, are normal human beings. Just because they love their own kind, they are marginalized. Such demarcations continue in the name of tradition and culture. India for the past hundred and fifty years has persistently followed the tradition of the new homophobia. Addressing the social scenario of the 1980s and the condition that laws are supposed to represent socially acceptable do's and don'ts, Tendulkar dealt with the discourse on Indian homosexuality by framing/structuring his play as a social reaction to Mitra's life as a lesbian. Thus what we get from *A Friend's Story* is a sharp remark that the nature of romantic love can be either heterosexual or homosexual.

All the male characters of the play and specially Bapu ultimately come to represent a homophobic society that keeps its blinders on to naturalize straight relationships as the norm, even if these should lead to tragic end. History records that a rich diversity of sexualities and genders has existed in our culture for thousands of years. But instead of respecting this diversity, discrimination of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people have continued within the patriarchal society of India in the recent history. Though since 2009 India as well as many Western countries has legalized the Gay Act, in many

communities including the South Asian, discussions of gay and lesbian lives continue to be dehumanized or marginalized. In spite of legal assurance, ill treatment of lesbians is a burning issue in most communities. So, the fiction of Tendulkar's *A Friend's Story* is still a truth for many lesbians.

4. Relevance of Tendulkar's Study of the Middle Class Psyche

It is a fact that since the late 1960s the Indian middle class – whatever its sociological reality – has become one of the main idioms through which a series of contemporary concerns can be analyzed. In post-colonial India this class has become an important determinant of identity and aspirations of the public. The Indian middle class may be a questionable empirical entity but the 'Indian Middle Class' taken both as functional and discursive space is most decidedly a reality to be reckoned with. The problem, then, is not so much to evaluate the sociological adequacy of speaking about the middle class in contemporary India. What is more interesting is to attempt to understand how the concept structures and enables a certain set of 'imagined Indias' – both utopian and dystopian – to be articulated (Mazarella). This is exactly what Tendulkar's exploration of the middle class psyche attempts to do. In most of Tendulkar's plays we find a close representation of the middle class psyche of post-colonial India. As a social observer and social activist Tendulkar has declared:

I have not written about hypothetical pain or created an imaginary world of sorrow. I am from a middle class family and I have seen the brutal ways of life by keeping my eyes open. My work has come from within me, as an outcome of my observation of the world in which I live. If they want to entertain and

make merry, fine go ahead, but I can't do it, I have to speak the truth (Saxena, 2006).

A critical reading of most of his plays, in original as well as in translations reveal the conditions of middle class people in general and specifically middle class women. The reality of the middle class that appears in Tendulkar's plays is that the middle class is the 'unhappy' class, the 'complaining' class, and the 'hypocritical' class that practices violence of all sorts over each other to vent out their feelings instead of finding any solution to the social problems they confront. Again in the case of middle class women, middle class social conditions always hold women as the weaker sex and treat them more as a property of their male counterparts rather than as independent individuals. Tendulkar's women and the violence they endure represent this truth of the social structure.

It can be argued that Tendulkar's plays project middle class conditions in general and specifically of women of the then society that Tendulkar belonged to. In fact, these depictions hold true even today. Even today, middle class people complain about the corruption of politicians but benefit disproportionately from the prevailing system. They will loudly insist on their rights but accept few social responsibilities. They fulminate against reservations but do their best to avail the benefit of reservations to get their children into universities and jobs. Even today, though some women are allowed education and even freedom to carve their own identity, the situation for most women has not changed. Again in middle class psyche, marriage is a social institution which dictates the condition of the woman to a large extent. Before marriage, a woman is the property of her father; once married, she becomes the property of her husband. Married women have to obey their husbands and are

expected to be chaste, obedient, pleasant, gentle, submissive, and unless sweet spoken, silent.

In most of his plays, Tendulkar tries to analyze this institution of marriage and the condition of women within it. Thus is the outcome of characters like Jyoti, Kamala, Sarita, Laxmi or even Champa. In spite of realizing their plight they finally surrender themselves to social customs. Any woman, like Benare, Manik or perhaps even Mitra, who by their own courage dare to break through such social customs and exercise their own will become victims of the patriarchal society and are cornered, suppressed and in most cases are left totally shattered. This helpless condition of middle class women had always been and continues to be true. This condition is so naturalized that enduring violence has now almost become a part of womanhood itself. Tendulkar, through his study of the middle class psyche for the first time becomes a voice for the women of the middle class. As a realist he did not sketch his women figures rebelling against their condition. Rather he portrayed their actual condition to perhaps make his audience realize and feel for women and their situation within the patriarchal society. As a proto-feminist he created an awareness and prepared the ground for contemporary feminists to bring some hope for Indian women.

It is therefore clear that through his explorations Tendulkar has confronted the problems of his time and accepted the challenges of his subject material by becoming a “new voice” not only in the theatre world but also in the society he belonged to in general. The theatre during his time was mainly meant for Indian ‘gentlemen’ with conservative attitudes – the *bhadralok* (well-mannered person), so to say. So the real depiction of their spicy lives naturally resulted in severe controversies. But now,

with the advent of critical examination in philosophy, social history and other related fields, the intelligentsia has become more open to candid and honest appreciation and critiques of life. Hence in the twenty-first century, the honesty in Tendulkar is better appreciated.

With the spread of urbanization, Tendulkar's plays have become even more relevant today. With unending problems raised by communal forces, political conditions, fundamentalism and the lack of efficient administration, the anger within the common man has built up to a point of eruption. Tendulkar's works can be used in this context to gain insights into the corrupt, unjust and exploitative system and perhaps point the way to a future society that will order itself on gender justice, class equality, political stability and spiritual tolerance.

Endnotes

¹Tendulkar's literary output includes thirty full-length plays and twenty three one-act plays, literary essays, film scripts, and novels which explore the Indian culture thoroughly. His plays, both full-length and one-act, have dealt with themes historical and real, and have worked with a variety of techniques including the folk form of drama. His extended literary output has focused on society and culture in the post-independence Maharashtra/India through the lens of a social historian and activist. His whole body of work can be considered as the icon of modern Indian/ Marathi theatre.

²Tendulkar's experience as a journalist broadened his perspective and gave him the opportunity to observe many events from the center and yet not be part of it. He was a journalist and worked as an assistant editor in dailies like *Navbharat*, *Maratha* and *Loksatta*. From these places he began

to notice many things that lay beyond his personal life. In an interview for a documentary Tendulkar mentioned to Makarand Sathe that “This larger world crashed in on me. Fortunately I did not turn my back on it. I took it in. That gave me a perspective. I saw that what I had considered mine alone, was not so. What I had considered another’s was mine too”

³His very experience at home sowed a seed in Tendulkar to explore violence as human nature and all these observations entered his plays in different ways. From then on he started observing people, “scratching the surface, particularly when they appear proper, clean and pious.” In an unpublished diary entry collected from National Council for Performing Arts (NCPA), Mumbai he mentions,

There are some incidents happening around me which have led to certain realizations on various layers of life. I feel that in my case, as a writer, I used to write about violence from the beginning. This too was not intentional. May be my own little experiences in my life were responsible for this, like treachery in the service place etc. My father’s death too has affected me to some extent. (Translated by S. Chatterjee from the original Marathi diary entry with the guidance of Prof. Veena Alase)

⁴Social Realism is a genre of literature where authors draw attention to everyday conditions of the working class and the poor, and who are critical of the social structures that maintain these conditions. In the case of Vijay Tendulkar, most of his plays took up this genre of Social realism to bring into light the everyday conditions of the middle class people of India within the framework of a serious critique.

References

- Beauvoir, de Simone, *The Second Sex*, (1949), from <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/2ndsex/introduction.htm> (last accessed 1 September 2013).
- Beteille, Andre, 'The Indian Middle Class', *The Hindu* (5 February 2001), from <http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/02/05/stories/05052523.html> (last accessed 1 September 2013).
- Chatterjee, Shukla, 'Representing Violence in the Plays of Vijay Tendulkar', Ph. D Dissertation, Visva-Bharati University, 2012.
- Deshpande, Satish, 'The Centrality of the Middle Class', in *Contemporary India: A Sociological View*, (New Delhi; 2003), pp.125-50.
- Fernandes, Leela, 'Restructuring the New Middle Class in Liberalizing India', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*. vol. 20.1-2, (2000), pp. 88-104.
- Mazzarella, William, 'Middle Class', Department of Anthropology, University of Chicago, from <http://www.soas.ac.uk/csasfiles/keywords/Mazzarella-middleclass.pdf> (last accessed 1 September 2013).
- Mehta, Harish, 'Talking to Tendulkar', *Times of India*, Bombay, 15 May 1977.
- Saxena, Sumit, 'A Conversation with Sir Vijay Tendulkar', *Passion for Cinema*, 20 December 2006, from <http://passionforcinema.com/a-conversation-with-sir-vijay-tendulkar> (last accessed 1 September 2013).

- Pethe, Atul (Dir.) *Tendulkar and Violence: Then and Now*, Conceptualised by Atul Pethe and Makarand Sathe., (California Arts Association, 2007).
- Tendulkar, Vijay., *Collected Plays in Translation*, Shanta Gokhale, Jayant Karve, Kumud Mehta, Gowri Ramnarayan, Ellioner Zelliott, Priya Adarkar (trans.), (Delhi: 2003).
- , *Five Plays*, Kumud Mehta, Shanta Gokhale, Priya Adarkar (trans.), 6th impression, (New Delhi: 2004).
- , *Ghasiram Kotwal*, Jayant Karve, Elleanor Zelliott (trans.), 2nd Rev.edn., (Kolkata: 2002).
- , *Kanyadaan*, Gowri Ramnarayan (trans.), 2nd Impression, (New Delhi: 2003).
- , *Mitrachi Goshta A Friend's Story*, Gowri Ramnarayan (trans.), (Delhi: 2001).
- , *Silence! the Court is in Session*, Priya Adarkar (trans.), 14th impression, (New Delhi: 2003).
- , *The Play is the Thing*, Shriram Memorial Lecture no.10., (New Delhi: 1997).
- , 'The Vultures (Gidhade)', Priya Adarkar (trans.), in *Modern Indian Drama*, G.P. Deshpande (ed.), 1st edition., (New Delhi: 2000), pp 55-124.
- , 'Violence', Notebook, Mumbai: National Centre for Performing Arts, n.d. MS.

Kamila Shamsie's *Burnt Shadows*: A Plea for Compassion; a Price for Resilience

Sanjukta Banerjee

Abstract

*Heroic battles and wars had been a major theme in almost all popular epics throughout the world. War fiction, which developed in the nineteenth century, featured tales of important battles and their horrors, often including a commentary on the nature of heroism and morality associated with wars. Evolving further, postmodern war fiction focused on the creator's emotional order and estrangement as the outcome of wartime experiences. Majority of contemporary war novelists have been examining the way memories and elusiveness of individual insight mould the implications of war. Taking a similar retropective to World War II, India's Partition, and other socio political issues; *Burnt Shadows* by Pakistani Novelist Kamila Shamsie, comes across as a modern novel on human suffering, to come to terms with its past and present, apart from anticipating their effects on its future. The present article is an attempt to read this novel by Shamsie as a heartrending account of a war-torn world from human and non-war elements weaves cautiously into the narrative, blending it with history.*

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world...
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
- 'The Second Coming' by W.B. Yeats (1919)

The tone of lamentation employed by Yeats in the poem to portray the atmosphere in post-war Europe resonates throughout

Burnt Shadow; the latest novel by the Pakistani novelist Kamila Shamsie. Shamsie has aspired to convey her dream to the world through recurring themes of the reality of war, the consequences of inconsiderate decisions by various governments, and the predicament of innocent victims. In depicting the personal loss of the characters in the novel, Shamsie actually attempts to relate the fatalities to larger global disasters and politically assess some major events in world history.

The theme of war has occupied modern fiction not only in the conventional sense, but also through the delineation of characters whose emotional ordeal and estrangement are direct effects of wartime experiences. In an era when bureaucracy often substitutes direct warfare, the majority of war novelists has focused on how the connotations and understanding of war are shaped by reminiscences and the ambiguities of individual perception. Taking a similar retrospective approach to World War II, events before and following India's Partition, the cold war, oppression in Afghanistan and other socio political issues, *Burnt Shadows* is a postmodern inquiry into humanity's struggle to come to terms with its distressed past and present as well as its anticipation of their effects on its future. Shamsie carefully presents a poignant account of the war-torn world not from any specific national standpoint but from humanity's perspective by means of a wonderful blend of history and fiction bringing about an amazingly compelling result.

Moira Gatens (2009) examines the objective and responsibility of the artist-writer and admits that writers play a vital role in shaping public opinion. Gatens captures George Eliot's guiding principle quoting her statement from *Letters*, II, 86 - "If art does not enlarge men's sympathies, it does nothing morally". It seems that Shamsie, too, believes in fiction's power

in bridging the rift between people of diverse experiences, beliefs and cultural backgrounds, thereby encouraging mutual understanding and compassion. Draping her message in allegory, she also effectively infuses her existing anxiety and sense of dislocation into the world. It is deftly done in the prologue through the persona of the anonymous captive who is disrobed in a prison cell, where we find him wondering: 'How did it come to this?' The enormity of the question is a challenge to which this meticulously handled novel evolves in an unanticipated manner. The ambiguous personality of the convict is difficult to be related to the events in the narrative until the forceful denouement is reached and the vital but implicit connection between Nagasaki and Guantanamo are apparent. As if offering an answer to the captive's musing in the prologue, a good deal of the tarnished history of the past sixty-five years is crammed into the scope of *Burnt Shadows*. The narrative carries the reader from Nagasaki to Delhi, Karachi, the Pakistani-Afghan frontier, New York, Canada and Cuba spanning the 1945 bombing of Nagasaki to Indian Independence and Partition, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the 9/11 attacks, the defeat of the Taliban and America's ensuing War on Terror.

The histories of various characters of entirely different nationalities and communities are intricately intertwined and such knotted threads are held together by the protagonist Hiroko Tanaka, a woman of Japanese origin born in Nagasaki. When she is left with nothing except her own life after the Nagasaki bombing which killed her father and her German fiancé Konrad, she feels suffocated and strangely uprooted from her very own place. In looking for ways to survive, Hiroko flees to Konrad's half-sister, Ilse Weiss, and her English husband, James Burton, in Delhi where she falls in love with Burton's Indian Muslim employee Sajjad Ashraf and marries him eventually. Destiny

has different plans for the Ashrafs and they have to leave India during partition riots that separate Sajjad from Delhi as appallingly as Nagasaki was lost to Hiroko; this time Sajjad is rendered a sharp sense of dislocation. They move to Pakistan and raise their son Raza, all the while struggling to survive by ignoring their personal losses. Another unanticipated chapter in their destiny opens up when their son Raza, a Pakistani national, becomes lethally entangled with anti-Soviet Mujahideen², the Taliban and the CIA³, via James and Ilse's son Henry, now Americanized as Harry. Hiroko, initially identified by the bird-shaped marks - the "burnt shadows" - on her back, survives all these due to her enthusiasm for languages, readiness to assume new identities, reluctance to evaluate others on their roots and above all, her resilience. But then, the story of Hiroko's life poses the overwhelming question how long is she required to keep paying for resilience, if that is supposed to be the ideal?

Shamsie's vast design unfolds as in the very beginning she compares the green and brown leaves scattered in Konrad's back porch with "soldiers of warring armies...caring for nothing in death but proximity" (2009:5) indicating the futility of the sacrifices of precious lives. Later we meet young Hiroko who is apprehensive about her future thinking - "When will the war end? It cannot happen quickly enough" (16), as she dreams of a beautiful life ahead to be lived fully "as soon as the war ends"(16). Till then she has to continue with the painful and hateful job at the munitions factory, a byproduct of war. Evidently unhappy over her condition, she unconsciously blames it on wars which would gift her "Charred silk, seared flesh" (27). It is bureaucracy which has labeled Hiroko's father as 'the traitor' for his "outbursts against the military and the emperor"(13). He is ultimately reduced to a 'reptile', as we find Hiroko recollecting the heart wrenching scene seconds before

her father's death - "in the last seconds of his life...something unhuman. He was covered in scales... no one in the world should ever have to see their father covered in scales" (99). Such a deeply haunting image is created by Shamsie as a stark reality of war where innocent lives are sacrificed at the altar of clash among powerful forces in which they have practically no role to play, except serving as means to fulfill the power lust of members of their respective governments. The author uses Hiroko to voice the opinion of common men who do not understand how and why governments function and why should they suffer not once but sometimes repeatedly for their decisions - "And the thing is, I still don't understand. Why did they have to do it? Why a second bomb?" (99).

Shamsie also points out how the power mongers fail to learn a lesson from the fatal outcome of their whimsical decisions. Hiroko perceives her life and her suffering through the experience of 'Hibakusha'⁴ and finds no answers to her lifelong search. From that infamous day through 9/11, the whole world is involved in conflicts resulting in brutal violence, forcing individuals to search for identity and meaning. The vanity and absurdity associated with war are reminders enough that war is definitely about sorrow, pain and loss and the forced changes experienced before and after. Everything and everyone touched by war is transformed, sometimes beyond recognition. The face of Japan after mushroom clouds, scenes in India in the aftermath of Partition, fields in Afghanistan with landmines, and the spectacle of Ground Zero after 9/11 all make it impossible for a stranger to imagine the sight as it would have been before. Shamsie's agony is palpable as Sajjad voices her opinion where he "wished simply to find a way of indicating that such sorrow should not come to anyone in the world" (75). This earth, the home of humanity has "disgorged hell" (27); the spectacular

Urakami valley with its “ocean of liquid leaves” (19) is turned into the “Valley of Death... smelt of burning” (77) with “strangely angled trees above the melted stone” (77). She purposely leaves page numbers 24 and 25 blank as a powerful symbol of emptiness to suggest the wiping out of human lives as well as values of humanity. Empathy gives way to suspicion and misunderstanding; compassion is replaced by betrayal.

The chaotic frenzy of war delivers individuals onto the strangest and most unanticipated places when the war-weary heart aches to be at home. Konrad misses his “once-beloved country he long ago gave up on trying to fight for or against” (18). For Sajjad “the idea that anything could cut him off from Dilli was not just absurd but insulting” (52). Ilse admits that the British Empire made her feel so ‘German’. Henry, the young boy, longs to return “home, in India” (57). Raza appears to be “uncertain about [his] place in the world” (163). Abdullah laments for “lost homelands” and “the impossibility of return” (313). And then there is Hiroko who has no idea that in trying to escape her fate when she would settle down. Young Hiroko cannot endure any more “sense of temporariness” (69) and envies the British when they get ready to leave India because they have “the most extraordinary privilege - to have forewarning of a swerve in history, to prepare for how your life would curve around that bend” (58). It is the one in power who is privileged and not the common man who does not know what he would have to undergo; that too, not for the decision he makes but for a decision someone in a powerful position has taken. Between the lines, Hiroko and her countrymen’s pain can be felt when the delay in their emperor’s decision-making triggered rival superpowers to take those fatal decisions.

The common man, though, does not “hold anyone responsible” (62) as he does not understand power politics. Rather, he accuses the object “the bomb was so...it seemed beyond anything human” (62). He fails to comprehend that it is the human will that exploits the object for better or for worse. This mesmerizing story of love and war allows the reader to understand the effects of history on human relationships. Each of the four parts of the novel narrates known historical facts; but what most of us overlook is how history defines individual as well as collective judgment. It is this affected judgment that renders Konrad Weiss a ‘fugitive’, Matsushi Tanaka a ‘traitor’, Sajjad a ‘muhajir’ (immigrant), Hiroko a ‘hibakusha’, Abdullah a ‘mujahid’ and Raza a ‘terrorist’. Even friendship, the commonest ground of human bonding cannot remain unaffected. Yoshi Watanabe, the ‘Jap’ and Konrad’s harmless friendship cannot stand the test of time-“It was one of those friendships which quickly came to seem inevitable, and unbreakable. And then in a conversation of less than a minute, it ended” (12).

Shamsie drops subtle hints on how discourse influences popular perception. In the Tokyo hospital the American doctor “with the gentle face said the bomb was a terrible thing, but it had to be done to save American lives” (62). Kim denies being a bigot and vehemently asserts so because she has been made aware that “it wasn’t Buddhists flying those planes, there is no video footage of Jews celebrating the deaths of three thousand Americans, it wasn’t a catholic who shot my father” (361). She is very generous by nature and can trust a Muslim like Raza or Hiroko but her prejudice against Afghans makes her “too scared and too angry to make a judgment” (361). Hiroko does not find Harry Truman in Kim’s face because she never wanted to. But there are only a handful of people who think this way; the

judgment of the rest of the world is governed by its immediate chauvinistic society.

The narrative reveals the thirst for power that was glaringly present in the hungry politicians of pre-Independence India. The common man represented by Sajjad believes that there was “no place for nations in the brotherhood of Muslims” (53), but Muslim League supporters doubted whether they would be given any ‘power’ and position to ‘dominate’. In such a situation Sajjad thinks of scattering seeds as the only way to invite pigeons who could stop such vicious thoughts with a “tumult of feathers” (54). Shamsie’s longing for peace is apparent in the image of the pigeon, the messenger of peace. But she indicates how wars set ablaze the birds and obliges those who survive to carry their burnt shadows throughout their lives.

The horrific partition riots, a direct outcome of religious intolerance and political parties’ strategies to capitalize on it, upset Sajjad utterly. He analyses the nature of violence by recollecting James Burton’s opinion about violence that “It is the most contagious of all madnesses” (125). He would hardly believe that probably some of his “childhood friends have become murderers” (125). Being away from home “feels like betrayal” (125) but he cannot digest such atrocities in the name of religion.

An undertone of disapproval over religious skepticism is apparent in Shamsie and she is found advocating humanity and compassion as true religions. Hiroko, the most human of her characters, rises high above linguistic, national and religious barriers and dismisses her friends’ anxiety over “new wave of aggressive religion” (142) among youth. She compares the youthful fervor for rigidity with that of her Urakami students who dreamt of Kamikaze flights⁵. Her son Raza, too, though an

intelligent boy with a promising career ahead, fails to understand the utility and meaning of customs and rituals of religion and announces his true feelings in his Islamic Studies exam paper - "There are no intermediaries in Islam. Allah knows what is in my heart" (144). Shamsie believes faith to be essentially personal and expresses her disgust through Hiroko's views: "Devotion as a public event, as national requirement" (145). It brings to mind the ridiculous practices of her own nation during the war. Sajjad curses "the government which kept trying to force religion into everything public" (147). Shamsie uses the character of Sajjad's mother whom she assigns a very small yet significant role to convey her belief in religion. Khadija Ashraf who calls herself a woman with a "strong will" (52), does not hesitate in accusing Allah for all the problems in life. Sajjad recalls

His mother, with her most intimate relationship with Allah, would have personally knocked on the door of Army House and told the President, he should have more shame than to ask all the citizens to conduct their love affairs with the Almighty in the open. (142)

Shamsie openly questions the practicality of religion, which according to her should be about tolerance and compassion and not a burden which may render literature and enlightenment as 'un-Islamic'.

Raza, the highly sensitive boy, is unable to digest his failure, "a disgrace" (145), and gets disillusioned, thereupon sowing the seeds of his own downfall. Hiroko is intelligent enough to perceive the politics and its impact on simple people like her son Raza.

It made no sense to her. 'Islamisation' was a word everyone recognised as a political tool of a dictator and yet they still allowed their lives to be changed by it. She didn't worry for herself but Raza was still so unformed that it troubled her to think what the confusion of a still forming nation might do to him. (182)

Raza, the vulnerable youth, steps into unintentional traps and we helplessly sigh upon observing the talent first wasted then abused. His life transforms into an accumulation of guilt and failure. One after another hamartia follows and when he tries to atone for his sins, he realizes that "it was too late to stop" (197). He feels guilty for cheating on his friend Abdullah and blames himself for his father's death and his mother's yet another irreparable loss. Raza the 'Polyglot' commits the gravest mistake in deciding his career which would finally land him up in Guantanamo Bay⁶.

The confusion of the postmodern individual⁷ is apparent in the critical life choices made by beautifully nuanced characters like Raza and Harry. The individual decisions shaped by the tangled web of nationalism and identity crisis facilitate our understanding of the evolution of world politics. The narrative is an evidence of how an individual can be riveted and even warped by an idea. Harry Burton's excitement overpowers his idealism as he decides to join the CIA for:

... he believed fervently that communism has to be crushed so that the US could be the world's only superpower. It was not the notion of power itself that interested Harry, but the idea of it concentrated in a nation of migrants...a single democratic country in power, whose citizens were connected to every nation in the world. (172)

It is interesting to note the way Shamsie highlights America's hegemonic position and tactics to control the world. The rooted "terror of nuclear war" (178) is the reason that makes Harry join the CIA in the hope that it "could only be eliminated by conclusively ending the battle between America and Russia" (178). He further finds Raza as a perfect prey with abundant potential for his purposes.

Harry looked across the dreamy-eyed young man with a gift for language, an ache for something to believe in, and features that would go unnoticed in many Central Asian states and parts of Afghanistan, too, and a thought flickered across his mind. (186)

He rejoices at the thought of "a map of the world with countries appearing as mere outlines, waiting to be shaded in with stripes of red, white and blue...in which no one else claimed a part" (203). Harry, once sorry for his uncle Konrad's fate and leaving his "home, in India" (57) is now satisfied with the turn of events - "Here was internationalism, powered by capitalism" (204).

Shamsie makes us realize that in the process of nurturing itself the superpowers destroy and then ignore the existence of affected nations. They take them as "Expendable" (362) whether it is World War, violence in Afghanistan or a terrorist attack. They easily "put them in a little corner of the big picture" (362) without scruples and assume everything to be fine.

The literary canon dominated mostly by American veterans romanticizing and glorifying war gets its response in *Burnt Shadows* that vents the experiences of the 'other'⁸ i. e. the 'enemy'. Abdullah's country, the victim of the old hegemonic structure views war from an altogether different angle:

War is like disease. Until you've had it, you don't know it. But no. That's a bad comparison. At least with disease everyone thinks it might happen to them one day. You have a pain here, swelling there, a cold which stays and stays. You start to think maybe this is something really bad. But war – countries like yours they always fight wars, but always somewhere else. The disease always happens somewhere else. It's why you fight more wars than anyone else; because you understand war least of all. You need to understand it better. (344)

The novelist seems to empathize with South Asian countries that have borne the ripple effects of the mayhem caused in the name of wars. In this context, Salman Rushdie's comment on Shamsie's perfect understanding of how the "world's tragedies shape one another and about how human beings can try to avoid being crushed by their fate and discover humanity" can be quoted from the front inside cover page of *Burnt Shadows*. In this three-generational chronicle of white oppression, two families from East and West try to co-exist even when circumstances compel them to feel it impossible to live outside history; shared history providing the power to sustain relationships when misunderstandings make them crumble. The characters struggle to endure the worst situations keeping their humanity intact even when their fates press hard to crush them. Hiroko and Sajjad, "world's greatest forward movers" (146) keep moving on. Sajjad comes as Hiroko's "Ghum-khaur – grief eater" (77) who reciprocate as her 'rescuer'. As if to fulfill the dying mother's wish for Sajjad to "keep on living" (102), he fights with fate and tries to overcome the loss of family and home just like his spouse. He himself points out to Harry that it was the loss in their lives that resulted in sympathy making them

perfectly compatible. It makes Harry exclaim that “human beings can overcome everything” (181) which to some length the narrative also seems to preach.

But demands of this resilience are never ending. Hiroko knows “everything can disappear in a flash of light. [but] That doesn’t make it any less valuable” (180). This attitude helps her to keep moving forward. She loses her father, home and a dream of future, but dares to fight her fate and gets Sajjad. She experiences another nightmare as she loses her unborn daughter. Hiroko is deeply disturbed when India and Pakistan test their nuclear weapons. She has “no interest in belonging to anything as contradictorily insubstantial and damaging as a nation” (204) and, happy just to be human, she flees to New York. She simply wishes “the world to stop being a terrible place” (292). Her hopes are focused on Raza when she experiences the other unanticipated blow through Sajjad’s sudden murder. But the price she pays at the end of the novel comes as the greatest shock when along with her we, too, realize that there shall not be any more forward movement though “Outside, at least, the world went on.” (363). We pause here and remember that Hiroko never wanted to be “haunted by the past” (179). But now, she is left with neither dreams nor nightmares for future, what remains with her is only a poignant past.

In response to the narrative, the reader is stirred to ask himself to weigh the amount of resilience one is capable of. The reverberations of power politics are transforming the world into a more treacherous and more sinister place to inhabit. There are people like little Abdullah and his brothers who could have been more than happy “to plant crops and harvest them” (320). But the condition of their motherland forces them to lift arms in their tender little arms and driven by the desire to seek justice for

their people, they become part of the malicious cycle by committing sins like the 9/11 attacks. Their '*jihad*'⁹ is countered by the 'war on terror'¹⁰ and the wars go on and on.

The dilemma of the postmodern individual manifest in '*Burnt Shadows*' is also mirrored in the character of Ayla in Shamsie's short story *Our Dead, Your Dead* who resembles Hiroko and feels sorry for whoever is victimized. She thinks the attack on the Twin Towers to be 'singular' and 'exceptional' but is outraged at a friend's comment about suicide attacks in Pakistan. The obvious question in the story "If you don't mourn our dead why should we mourn yours?" is imprecise and hence a thought-provoking one. Can there be such notions like your dead and our dead, your sorrow and our sorrow, your loss and our loss? How fully are mourning and loss understood if it provokes one to seek revenge and cause the same loss to others? How can we justify a war if it is the outcome of another war? When we trace the reasons for which a war is waged, we find its roots in the previous war which again, could be justified as an answer to a preceding one. In that case, nuclear bombing on Japan can be said to be answer to Unit 731¹¹ or the Pearl Harbour Massacre which was 'a preventive action in order to keep the U. S. Pacific Fleet from interfering with the military actions the Empire of Japan was planning'¹². But then there would be no way out to end this vicious cycle.

Can we justify war, saying it is waged to fight evil and injustice? Whether the nation declaring war formulates its own rules or consults '*jus ad bellum*'¹³, no war is just if the result is manslaughter and destruction. Whatever war we may recall, ruthless wrongdoing and war crimes flash before the mind's eye, proving international laws to be mockery and manipulation. These negative impressions elicit emotions of hatred and

revenge, and provide groundwork for the next confrontation. With a yearning to edify future generations, *Burnt Shadows* surfaces as a peace novel, pleading for a moment of reflection about the consequences of thoughtless hatred and loss of compassion.

Endnotes

¹A person engaged in *jihad* is called as a *mujahid*. *Mujahideen* is the plural form of *mujahid*. A *mujahid* considers *jihad* to be his religious duty i.e. to combat against the non-believers of Allah as the way to attain salvation.

²The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) is the only independent United States federal government agency responsible for providing national security intelligence to senior United States policymakers. Its employees operate from United States embassies and many other locations around the world. Its traditional major activities are gathering information about foreign governments, corporations and individuals; analyzing that information and providing assessment to senior United States policymakers.

³The surviving atom bomb victims of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki are called *hibakusha*, which is a Japanese word that literally means ‘explosion-affected people’. It is also used to refer to people who were exposed to radiation from the bombings.

⁴A Japanese word literally meaning ‘Divine wind.’ This is used to refer to intentional suicide attacks by Japanese military aviators. These were used to destroy warships of the Allied forces during World War II. *Kamikaze* aircrafts were essentially pilot-guided explosive missiles designed to crash into enemy

ships laden with explosives. It boasted better accuracy than a conventional attack. These attacks, which began in October 1944, were followed by several critical military defeats for the Japanese. The Japanese government expressed its reluctance to surrender. The tradition of death instead of defeat, capture, and perceived shame was deeply ingrained in the Japanese military culture.

⁵The Guantanamo Bay detention camp, also known as G-Bay or GITMO, is the controversial United States military prison located within Guantanamo Bay Naval Base in Cuba. Established in January 2002, the prison camp serves to detain and interrogate extraordinarily dangerous prisoners and prosecute them for war crimes. War captives of the War on Terror, mostly from Afghanistan and other Southeast Asian nations as well as the Horn of Africa were transported here. As of August 2013, the number of detainees at Guantanamo is 164.

⁶The confusion of an individual in the post modern era is primarily by the cultural unsteadiness resulting from rapid social changes. Established values are eroded, life is based on delusions and uncertainty about future reigns, all of which leave the postmodern individual wondering whether the universe can be explained through reason and science alone.

⁷The Other, an important concept in continental philosophy, has been used in the Social Sciences to refer to the practice whereby biased societies or factions isolate 'Others' whom they consider as unworthy company. A crucial concept in forming or deforming national identities, it involves dehumanization of the inferior Other. It was made popular by Edward Said in his famous book *Orientalism*. 'Other'ing has social, economic, political as well as psychological repercussions.

⁸*Jihad* is an Arabic word for ‘holy war’ meaning ‘to struggle in the name of Allah’. Though the *Shia* sect of Islam interprets it as their religious duty to combat against the non-believers of Allah, *jihad* has deeper connotations.

⁹Following the 9/11 terrorist attack on the US an international military campaign started to eliminate al-Qaeda and other militant organizations. Still commonly used in the media, the phrase ‘War on Terror’ was first used by US President George W. Bush and came to signify a global military, political and lawful struggle against terrorist organizations and regimes accused of supporting them.

¹⁰During the second Sino-Japanese war and World War II, Unit 731 was operative as a special underground biological and chemical warfare research and development unit of the Japanese Imperial Army. It was notorious for carrying out certain deleterious practices like human experimentation.

¹¹The attack on Pearl Harbour was a decisive event in World War II which led to the hitherto neutral America to enter the war. On the morning of December 7, 1941 (December 8 in Japan), the Imperial Japanese Navy launched a surprise attack against the United States Naval Base at Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The Empire of Japan had planned the attack as a preventive action to keep the United States Pacific Fleet from interfering with their military actions. Deeply shocked, the United States declared war on Japan the very next day.

¹²A Latin phrase meaning ‘right to war’. It refers to a set of criteria to be consulted before engaging in war. It concerns an agreement limiting the number of justifiable reasons for a country to declare war by assessing whether a war is ‘just’ and entering into it is permissible.

References

Gatens, Moira, 'The ethical responsibility of the writer', *Living Ethics*, 77, 2009 from <http://www.ethics.org.au/living-ethics/ethical-responsibility-writer> (last accessed 20 August 2013).

Shamsie, Kamila, *Burnt Shadows* (London, 2009).

Shamsie, Kamila, 'Our dead, Your dead', *The Guardian*, series 9/11 stories, 6 September 2011 from <http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2011/sep/06/9-11-stories-kamila-shamsie> (last accessed 16 August 2013).

Yeats, William Butler, 'The Second Coming', PotW.org, PotW#351 from <http://www.potw.org/archive/potw351> (last accessed 27 January 2014).

The Intercultural Imperative in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*

Sharada Allamneni and N. Usha

Abstract

Highlighting the imperative for an aesthetic education in an era of globalization, Gayatri Spivak argues for the social urgency of the humanities with the ardent hope that “every citizen do something.” Understanding, Spivak speaks of the need for the privileged class, especially in multicultural western societies, to give up its cultural chauvinism and change its habits of thinking. Read in the grain of this ‘humanistic’ and ideal social aesthetic of cosmopolitanism advocated by postcolonial intellectuals like Homi Bhaba and Spivak, Jhumpa Lahiri’s work echoes out of order to resist all hegemonic and homogenizing impulses unleashed by the pervasive forces of cultural globalization. Though the immigrant experience centres her work, Lahiri’s preoccupation is essentially with the human condition. Vignettes from Bengali experiences on alien soil provide occasions to explore the ‘middle’ common to humanity. Her oeuvre therefore can be seen as a sincere endeavour to record the ‘Other’. I contribute to our cosmopolitan understanding of other people as well as our own selves.

An Imperative for Intercultural Dialogue

Speaking of the self in relation to the epoch and place, Immanuel Kant presciently observed that the planet we inhabit is a sphere. We all are confined to stay and move on its surface, we have nowhere else to go and so are bound to live forever in

each other's neighbourhood and company. Soon, Kant warned, there will not be a scrap of empty space left where those of us who have found the already populated places too cramped or too inhospitable could turn for shelter. And so Nature commands us to view hospitality as the supreme precept to be embraced in order to live harmoniously on this planet.

More recently, Robert Putnam (2000) in his much celebrated book *Bowling Alone* laments the decline of social capital in contemporary America. He suggests two possible solutions for reviving the community life; one, by creating and utilizing "bonding capital", i.e., by cementing relationships with those who are most like us and the other, through the creation of "bridging capital", i.e., by exploring diverse relationships, that lie beyond our immediate social networks. For building social cohesion, Putnam maintains, "we need the sort of bridging social capital that is toughest to create" (p. 363), but it is essential to cope with the growing cultural and ethnic diversity of the American society.

The post-9/11 rhetoric brought in seemingly dichotomous discourses and highlighted further the imperative for an intercultural dialogue within the realm of USA's national imagination. Led by the imperative for an intercultural dialogue, Americans today are seeking genuine ways to engage with the 'other' i.e., those with different beliefs and ways of life. It is in relation to humanist missions like these that Jhumpa Lahiri, an American writer of Indian origin, becomes relevant.

Lahiri's Works: Gateways for Cross-culturalism

Writing in America to a predominantly Caucasian society, Lahiri's narratives evoke the microcosm of immigrant Bengali life in U.S.A. Her stories exercise enormous power over her

readers. Poignantly narrated stories about the quotidian lives of immigrant families not only offer an empathetic insight into immigrant sensitivities but also urge mainstream America to reconsider its assumptions about people of other ethnic origin. By defamiliarising the banal she attempts 'to create a special perception of the object' (Shklovsky 1998: 20). Her stories thus offer a relational space, a Gadamerian "fusion of horizons," in which "the reader's world becomes re-woven" (Gadamer 1997:302). It is finally this re-weaving of the reader's self that alters the reader's interaction with the world.

Lahiri's parents were first generation immigrants to U.S.A. with strong connections to India. The immigrant experiences of her parents combined with her own experiences from her trips to India give her the advantage of having dual perspectives when writing about India and Indian migrants to the West. As explained by Jaydeep Sarangi (2002), "Jhumpa Lahiri's stories are gateways into the large submerged territory of 'cross-culturalism'. It is a metaphor to share cultures ... something that will allow them/us to share, instead of dividing, what is on either side" (117).

Author Judith Caesar (2005) reasons that, "Americans can learn about themselves and create a richer system of values as a result of encountering other foreign customs and ways of thinking of the Indian characters -sometimes without even fully realizing what they have come to understand or the opportunity they have missed" (90). But in some ways Lahiri herself is on the cusp. In one of her interviews she says: "I'm lucky that I'm between two worlds . . . I don't really know what a distinct South Asian identity means. I don't think about that when I write, I just try to bring a person to life" (Tsering 2003: B1). The

people whom Lahiri creates are real and nuanced. She does not resort to stereotypes.

Lahiri's characters while navigating their lives in the new world are found reflecting on a whole plethora of issues related to personal beliefs and values. The story 'Blessed House' from the book *Interpreter of Maladies* is an illuminating story that underscores the point that it is not religious identity which gives fulfillment to a person but the sense of affinity and involuntary affection that exists between people, even among strangers that makes life worth living. Ultimately, it is the finer feelings that make up human relationships. The story is open ended, and the reader is left to draw his/her own conclusion without being pushed to embrace any particular view that may be inconsistent with his/her own conviction.

Sanjay, the protagonist of the story, at a social get-together is brought to question his beliefs. He feels unsettled when he realizes that there is a change in his thinking. Unlike his wife, Twinkle, who is more sociable and liberal minded, he is overcome by anxiety when he begins to leave the solid ground of his old ways of thinking. He considers it an "act of betrayal" to family, peers, himself, or even his God. Twinkle, with her cosmopolitan outlook seems to suggest that while both bonding and bridging serve important purposes, bridging is vital for the smoother functioning of a diverse society. When birds of different feathers flock together, they need to trust one another.

Knowing the Other

Lahiri's stories with subtle undertones urge the readers to introspect and critically examine their cultural prejudices. In 'Mrs. Sen', another heartwarming story about immigrant experience, we witness a wonderful companionship between

two entirely different persons, Mrs. Sen, the wife of a university professor and a small boy, Eliot whom the former offers to babysit. Despite the age difference, young Eliot develops empathy for Mrs. Sen, as he listens to her sharing memories of her Calcutta life, while ruefully expressing to him her deep loneliness in U.S.A. It appears that the two countries and two cultures are jostling for primacy in Mrs. Sen's mind.

Through interaction with the Bengali woman, Eliot glimpses a whole new world and an understanding of another culture. He learns to appreciate Mrs. Sen's religion, food and her colourful clothes, which evolves her into a warm human being. When Eliot stops coming to Mrs. Sen's place because his mother thinks he is now a big boy, he misses her company. At another level, Eliot and Mrs. Sen's story brings home to us the existential notion that we are all strangers in strange lands and perhaps part of an overwhelming and incomprehensible web of historio-cultural circumstances.

Lahiri's narratives evoke the inexplicable emotional attachment that people have to a place. James Clifford (1986), speaking of ethnographic writing observes that the 'familiar is made strange ... and the quotidian exotic' (203) because it is situated between powerful systems of meaning. As a chronicler of the Indian immigrant experience, Lahiri represents with great fidelity the felt experience of the displaced individuals who bereft of their cultural moorings struggle to anchor themselves in the new land.

The narratives of the immigrants are framed by memory and distance and motivated by a desire to construct their own reality in a foreign land. Lilia's parents make efforts to keep intact their connection with India and the subcontinent. By cultivating kinship with people from their region and through

sharing of cultural commonalities, they seek to nurture their roots with the homeland. Though they have become American, they don't cease to be Indian. Mr. Pirzada is an immigrant of Dacca who comes to U.S.A on a research grant to study foliage in new England during the civil war of 1971, when Bangladesh was fighting for its independence. The young narrator Lilia, on learning that Mr. Pirzada is not an Indian, begins to study him with extra care, to try to figure out what made him different:

I decided that the pocket watch was one of those things. When I saw it that night, as he wound it and arranged it on the coffee table, an uneasiness possessed me; life, I realized, was being lived in Dacca first. I imagined Mr. Pirzada's daughters rising from sleep, tying ribbons in their hair, anticipating breakfast, preparing for school. Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there, a lagging ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged (Lahiri 1999:14).

Though Lilia's father expresses his disgruntlement that his daughter's American school does not teach his daughter anything about the current events of the Indian subcontinent, specifically the war between India and Pakistan taking place at the time, he appears unconcerned with his daughter's cultural habits. In fact, she seems very much the American child, going off in strange costumes with her friends to celebrate Halloween (Lahiri 1999: 68). As Homi Bhabha says, the second generation occupies the liminal, they learn to enunciate the third space of cultural hybridity within the dialectics of the two cultures, one at home and the other outside home. Thus this specific "betweenness" of the ethnic or immigrant subjectivity is a process of inter-reference between two or more cultural

traditions, and it is this intercultural knowledge that provides opportunities for renewing humane values (Bhaba 1994: 2).

Initial encounters with people from new cultures can be very strange and sometimes scary as Miranda in the story 'Sexy' finds out. Miranda's childhood fear towards the culturally different Indian neighbours, the Dixits borders on xenophobia. Through gradual familiarization, she begins to see them for the individuals they were. An adult Miranda not only makes Indian friends, but also falls in love with a married Indian man, Dev. Familiarity with people of other cultures trains her to interact hospitably with them. Lahiri, however, does not attempt to sweep differences under the rug. Miranda's attempt to understand Dev and his ambivalent attitude towards their love affair leads her to bafflement and alienation from him. She is startled at Rohin's perceptive interpretation of the word, 'sexy' (a compliment Dev pays to her). Rohin, the son of her Indian friend's cousin says that the term means loving someone you don't know. Miranda realizes that is precisely what she did and so gives up her relationship with Dev.

However, it is Dev and not her friend Laxmi who widens Miranda's horizons and leads her to think more about the larger world in which she lives. After meeting Dev, Miranda begins to feel ashamed of her own racism and the racism of the community she lived in as a nine year old girl. Still, Miranda's newfound openness to other cultures has some limitation. Even as she becomes more cosmopolitan, her image of Dev continues to be stereotypical. "Now, when she and Dev made love, Miranda closed her eyes and saw deserts and elephants, and marble pavilions floating on lakes beneath a full moon" (Lahiri 1999: 82).

In the title story 'Interpreter of Maladies,' Mr. Kapasi considers himself a cosmopolitan, an "interpreter between nations" (Lahiri 1999: 74). He longs for a correspondence between himself and an Indian-American woman, Mrs. Das, who like himself has an unhappy marriage. As their tour guide, Mr. Kapasi takes the Das family to Konarak, where he shows them the three bronze statues of Surya, the sun god. When Mrs. Das asks Mr. Kapasi about the third avatar of the sun god, Astachala-Surya, Mr. Kapasi imagines a cosmopolitan correspondence between them. In his youth, Mr. Kapasi had dreamt of becoming an interpreter for diplomats and dignitaries. As a scholar of foreign languages, he possessed an impressive collection of dictionaries. In a series of notebooks, he would list out common etymologies of words. He was confident of conversing in English, French, Russian, Portuguese, and Italian, not to mention Hindi, Bengali, Orissi, and Gujarati. (Lahiri 1999: 72). Unlike Miranda, whose interest in other languages and cultures began with her affair with Dev, Mr. Kapasi's interest in other languages had begun early in his youth. His desire to interpret finally led him to a job in a doctor's office where he was called upon to interpret the maladies of the Gujarati-speaking patients for the doctor who couldn't speak Gujarati. For Mr. Kapasi, cosmopolitanism is a way of understanding and getting past differences towards the attainment of universal grounding.

However, both Miranda and Mr. Kapasi are portrayed as failed cosmopolitans while the unnamed narrator of 'The Third and Final Continent' – the collection's closing story, is portrayed as a successful cosmopolitan. He is depicted as a character that develops a capacity to understand cultural differences, and engage with others despite differences of values and beliefs. Lahiri reasons that a sincere endeavour must be made to bridge

differences because only then would it become possible to recognize the essential humaneness of each individual that one encounters. The narrator of the closing story tells us of his immigration first to Great Britain and then to the United States, focusing on the six-week period after his arrival in America before his Indian wife joins him.

The story speaks of the reciprocal and transformative encounter between two strangers, the narrator and his elderly landlady Mrs. Croft. Though the ancient lady who lived beyond a century never spoke more than a few words to him at a time, most of which she repeats, the young tenant is able to sense her loneliness. He develops a fondness for her and her nature of acceptance of the inevitable. The narrator also experiences an intercultural encounter, an occasion to reflect on differences in behaviour, life style and expression across different continents, i.e. India, Britain and the U.S.A. Despite their differences in age, gender, and culture, Judith Caesar argues, the narrator of 'The Third and Final Continent' and his landlady develop an important connection in the story. His cosmopolitan outlook is demonstrated at the end:

Whenever he is discouraged, I tell him that if I can survive on three continents, then there is no obstacle he cannot conquer. While the astronauts, heroes forever, spent mere hours on the moon, I have remained in this new world for nearly thirty years. I know that my achievement is quite ordinary. I am not the only man to seek his fortune far from home, and certainly I am not the first. Still, there are times I am bewildered by each mile I have travelled, each meal I have eaten, each person I have known, each room in which I have slept. As ordinary as it all appears, there

are times when it is beyond my imagination (Lahiri 1999: 173-97).

Conclusion

Jhumpa Lahiri thus acts as a bridge and a cultural translator among humanity's diverse codes: between our codes and the codes of the Other. As Gayathri Spivak argues, ethics are never founded on mere knowledge, they are formed through relationships. 'To be born human is to be born angled towards another'. To engage in an intercultural exchange, trust must be cultivated. Trust, as Werbner says, is a necessary component of personal relationships. It helps to keep us connected and sustain a "generalized reciprocity," towards the Other. Thus Lahiri's narratives when viewed from a cosmopolitan perspective can be seen as cultural productions; objects that are part of an affiliative network connecting texts to the author, society and culture.

References

- Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994).
- Caesar, Judith, 'American Spaces in the Fiction of Jhumpa Lahiri', *English Studies in Canada*, vol.31, (2005), pp. 50-68.
- Clifford, James and George E. Marcus. (eds.), *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, (Berkeley, 1986).
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg, *Truth and Method* (New York, 1997).
- Kant, Immanuel., 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose'. In Reiss, H. S. *Kant. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought* (2nd Ed.), (Cambridge, 1991), pp.41-53.

Lahiri, Jhumpa., *Interpreter of Maladies*, (Boston, 1999).

Putnam, Robert D., *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York, 2000).

Said, Edward., *Orientalism* (New York, 1979).

Sarangi, Jaydeep., 'The Enigma of Cultural Multiplicity: a Study of Interpreter of Maladies', *Jhumpa Lahiri, the Master Storyteller: A Critical Response to Interpreter of Maladies*, Suman Bala (ed.), (New Delhi, 2002), pp.116-21.

Shklovsky, Viktor, 'Art as Technique', *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (eds.), (Malden, 1998), pp.15-21.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty., *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalisation: A Work of Critical Theory* (Cambridge, 2012).

Tsering, Lisa., 'The Essence of Identity; Jhumpa Lahiri Straddles Two Worlds in The Namesake', *India – West*, 2003, pp. 12 from <http://www.indiawest.com> (last accessed 30 July 2013).

Werbner, Pnina (ed.), *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: Rooted, Feminist and Vernacular Perspectives*, (Oxford, 2008).

Our Contributors

Ms. Sharada ALLAMNENI

is a doctoral research scholar in the Department of English, Krishna University. She has worked as faculty in English, Department of Sciences and Humanities, Vignan University, Vadlamudi, Andhra Pradesh-INDIA.

Ms. Sanjukta BANERJEE

has done her Post-graduate studies in English and Education. Currently she is working as an Assistant Professor of Communicative English in Durgapur Society of Management Science, West Bengal. Her area of interest is South Asian English Literature and she has published academic papers in referred international journals.

Dr. Shukla CHATTERJEE

is presently working as an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Dr. B.C. Roy College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences, Durgapur, India. In 2012 she obtained her Ph.D from Visva-Bharati University, India. She has published on Indian English Drama with special reference to Vijay Tendulkar in journals such as Indian Literature and The Commonwealth Review. Her current research interests include Indian English Drama, Translation Studies and South Asian Diaspora Literature. She is presently editing a book on Vijay Tendulkar.

Dr. K.V. DOMINIC

is an English poet, short story writer, critic and editor. He retired as Associate Professor of English, Newman College, Thodupuzha, Kerala, India. The author of 22 books, he is currently the Secretary, Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors

and Critics (GIEWEC) and Publisher and Editor of Writers Editors Critics (WEC) and International Journal on Multicultural Literature (IJML).

Ms. Shruti DUBEY

is pursuing her Ph.D under the guidance of Dr. Nivedita Maitra at the Department of English and Other European Languages, Dr. H.S. Gour Central University, Sagar with a focus on social transformations in the twentieth century with reference to the women authors of South Asia. She received her M.Phil under the guidance of the same mentor on the works of the Nobel laureate Pearl S. Buck.

Dr. Subash KHAMARI (Deceased)

completed his P.G. from Utkal University, Odisha, P.G. Diploma from Institute of Archaeology, Delhi, M.Phil and Ph.D from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India. In 1999 he joined NSCB Govt. Lady College, Sambalpur, Odisha as a lecturer in History and severed there until May 2005. Thereupon, he joined the Archaeological Survey of India in 2005 and was posted in Excavation branch- IV, Regional Director, Kolkata. He joined Nagpur Excavation branch-I as Superintending Archaeologist in 2012. Dr. Khamari has contributed more than fifty research articles for different archaeological journals and has authored a book titled Archaeology of Orissan temples: Spatial context, patronage and Survivals (New Delhi, 2012).

Dr. Firoz MAHMUD

is a renowned historian, folklorist and museologist of Bangladesh. Medieval India and Ancient and Medieval Bengal form his special area of interest in history. As a folklorist he studies material culture and conducts fieldwork extensively in

Bangladesh. He is a museologist with a high degree of visionary excellence and professional expertise. He has contributed enormously to the development of museums in Bangladesh. His scholarship is reflected in a wide range of publications including eleven books and numerous research papers.

Dr. Nivedita MAITRA

is an Associate Professor in the Department of English and Other European Languages, Dr. H.S. Gour Central University, Sagar. Her research focuses on Indian Writings in English. She has 25 years of teaching experience and has successfully guided 10 research scholars. She has several research papers and articles to her credit and has authored two books.

Dr. Dev N. PATHAK

currently teaches Sociology at South Asian University, New Delhi, India. His doctoral research comprised a study of folklore of India and was awarded a doctorate by Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. His research interests consist of folklore studies, ethnomusicology and art and culture. He has published in Journal of South Asian Studies, Contemporary Sociology (Journal of American Sociological Association), The Book Review, Sociological Bulletin and International Journal of Humanistic Ideology. In Summer 2013, he was a visiting fellow at the Brown International Advanced Research Institutes of Brown University.

Dr. D. Sudha RANI

completed her Ph.D in English Literature at Osmania University. Her research focus on studying Indian English plays through a cultural performance perspective. She has over 21 years of extensive teaching experience in English language, literature, business communication and communication skills.

Apart from teaching, she has also been involved in designing course modules and curricula. As an active scholar, she has published extensively and has organized theatre activities and conducted theatre workshops.

Dr. Nicholas SIMS-WILLIAMS

is Research Professor of Iranian and Central Asian Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He joined the staff at University of London in 1976 after studying Sanskrit and Iranian languages at Cambridge. He has published widely on Middle Iranian languages and culture, in particular on texts in Sogdian and Bactrian, taking an equal interest in the languages themselves, with their Indo-European roots, and in their Central Asian setting, with its stimulating mixture of languages, cultures, and religions. A Fellow of the British, French, Austrian and European Academies, he has also received several prestigious awards including a 'Book of the Year Prize' of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 2009.

Dr. Nayana TADVALKAR

is a Textile Designer, Masters in Fine Arts, a Museologist and a Researcher of Cultural History. Her Doctoral research was on the topic of 'Rangavali Art of India'. She is the recipient of various prestigious fellowships and research grants including Justice K.T. Telang Fellowship (2009-10) of the Asiatic Society of Mumbai, the Small Study and Research grant of the Nehru Trust for the Indian Collections at the Victoria and Albert (2010-11) and the Indian Council for Historical Research (ICHR) Research Grant (2013-14). Currently she is affiliated to the Indian Numismatical, Historical and Cultural Research Foundation, Mumbai as a Research Fellow and is engaged in research and documentation of Folk and Tribal art of various parts of India.

Ms. Shivi UPADHYAY

is an Architect and teaches at Dignity College of Architecture, Chhattisgarh, India. She is a member of Indian History Congress and International Association for Asian Heritage, Sri Lanka. She has done documentation work on temple architecture of Chhattisgarh.

Dr. Vishi UPADHYAY

completed her P.G. and Ph.D from RTM Nagpur University Maharashtra, India and P.G. Diploma in Archaeology from Institute of Archaeology, Delhi (Archaeological Survey of India), India. In 2012, she was selected as a Deputy Superintending Archaeologist in the Archaeological Survey of India. She is a member of Epigraphic Society of India, Indian History Congress and International Association for Asian Heritage, Sri Lanka.

Dr. N. USHA

is Head and Associate Professor at the Department of English, Krishna University, Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh, India. She completed her studies at Pondicherry Central University and has presented research papers in 34 National/ International conferences. She has published 2 books and 16 research papers.

SAARC Cultural Centre **Guidelines for Contributors**

SAARC Culture invites contributions in the form of research papers or book reviews on any aspect of Culture of South Asia. Manuscripts and all correspondence should be addressed to: The Editor, *SAARC Culture*, SAARC Cultural Centre, 224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo 7, Sri Lanka. (journal-scc@sltnet.lk or sccpublications@gmail.com)

1. Submissions should contain:
 - a. Author's name, affiliation, postal address, e-mail, phone numbers;
 - b. Brief biographical entry, in c. 100 words;
 - c. Abstract/ Summary (for articles only), in c. 100-150 words;
 - d. Keywords (articles only), up to five keywords, for indexing and abstracting;
 - e. Title and the text (based on the given guidelines);
 - f. Acknowledgements (if applicable);
 - g. Endnotes (if any);
 - h. References (Bibliography, film, videography, etc).
2. Manuscript would be accepted for publication on the understanding that these are original unpublished contributions. For this purpose, a declaration (in the format given below) should accompany each contribution.

"I, declare that the article/ book review has not been previously published or has been

submitted/ accepted for publication in any other publication.”

Signature.....

Date.....

3. Articles should be typed on one side of the paper (preferably A4) and double-spaced throughout (not only the text but also displayed quotations, notes, references and all other matter). Please provide one hard copy and an exact electronic copy in MS Word, preferably as an e-mail attachment or on a CD/ DVD.
4. Please use English spellings throughout; universal ‘s’ in ‘-ise’ and ‘-isation’ words.
5. Normally all abbreviations should be expanded in the text, e.g. ‘Department’ and not ‘Deptt.’. For specific nomenclatures to be used frequently in the text full version may be given at the first appearance with an indication of the abbreviation used subsequently, e.g. ‘South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (henceforth SAARC).’
6. All non-English terms may be italicised. Please use standard fonts only. For ascertaining the non-English words please refer to The Oxford English Dictionary. All italicised words can have diacritics as required. For Arabo-Persian vocabulary, please follow F. Steingass, A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary. For Dravidian languages, the Madras University Tamil Lexicon, or some standard equivalent, may be used. For other languages, the system used should be clearly specified early in the paper. Where diacritical marks are not used, the word should be spelt phonetically, e.g., Badshah and not Baadshah or Baadshaah

- (unless in a quotation, where the original spelling should be used).
7. English translation of all non-English terms used in the text must be given in brackets immediately after the word, e.g. 'Faujdarī Adalat (Court of Criminal Justice).' If the number of non-English terms exceeds 20 a Glossary may be appended with the article.
 8. Full details of work cited in the text should appear in 'References.' (Please see number 9 below). Only the author's name, year of publication and page number should appear in the main body text, viz.:
 - a. If the author's name is part of the sentence:
As Ranabir Samaddar (2010) points out ...
 - b. If the author's name is mentioned at the end of the sentence:
(Samaddar 2010: 110-12).
 - c. If a study is referred to in the text:
A recent study (Samaddar 2010: 95-100) in South Asia demonstrates that ...
 - d. If more than two authors:
(Perera, et al 2007: 34).
 9. A consolidated alphabetical list of all books, articles, essays and theses referred to (including any referred to in the tables and figures) should be provided. It should be typed in double-spacing and printed at the end of the article. All articles, books and theses should be listed in alphabetical order of author, giving the author's surname first followed by the first name or initials. If more than one publication by the same author is listed, the items should be given in

chronological order. Newspapers and unpublished manuscripts (including working papers and research papers) should not be listed. Detailed style of referencing is as follows:

a. *Published Works*

i. Books:

Das, *Veena*, *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Culture and Society*, (London, 2010).

(Note: Publishers' names are not to be cited. If a book is published simultaneously at different places, one or at most two of them may be cited.)

ii. Edited Volumes:

Bhattacharjee, J.B., (ed.), *Studies in the History of North East India* (Shillong, 1986). OrBlusse, L and F. Gaastra, (eds.), *Companies and Trade: Essays on Overseas Trading Companies during the Ancient Regime*, (Leiden, 1981).

iii. Articles in Journals:

Gopal, Surendra. 'A Note on Archival Material in Russia on Russo-Indian Relations', *The Indian Archives*, vol. 35 (2), 1986, pp. 29-36.

iv. Articles in Edited Volumes:

Bayly, C.A., 'Pre-Colonial Indian Merchant and Rationality', in *India's Colonial Encounter: Essays in Memory of Eric Stokes*, Mushirul Hasan and Narayani Gupta eds., 2nd revised and enlarged edn., (New Delhi, 2004), pp. 39-60.

v. Material from Websites:

Complete reference of the material used along with full URL of the website together with the date it was last accessed must be given, viz.,

The Clemency of Canning', Punch, No. 33 (24 October 1857), p. 171 from

<http://www.victorianweb.org/periodicals/punch/57.html> (last accessed 8 March 2011).

b. Unpublished Works

i. Theses and dissertations:

Ghosh, Utpal, 'The Communist Party of India and India's freedom struggle, 1937-1947', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Department of Political Science, University of Burdwan, West Bengal, 1991.

Vijoo Krishnan, 'Transition from Feudalism to Capitalism in Pakistani Punjab, 1947-1977', unpublished M.Phil. Dissertation, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, 1997.

ii. Manuscripts and Archival Material:

Please mention the name of the library or the archival repository, its location, including the town and, if necessary, the country. Please retain the original names of library/ archives but also translate them into English, for example, Rigsarkivet (National Archives). This may be followed by the major series used. Names of

repository and major series should be accompanied by the abbreviations used to refer to them in subsequent citations, viz.

National Archives of India, New Delhi (hereafter NAI), Foreign Department, Political Branch, Original Consultation (hereafter OC), 11 February 1831, Nos. 72-73.

Bodleian Library, Oxford, UK (hereafter BL), Tabakat-i Nasiri by Minhaj ud-Din Siraj, (Persian Ms), Acc. No. 16, folio(s) 17a (18a and 18b).

In case of materials in a private collection, the name and location of the collection should be mentioned. Where recorded oral materials stored in audio archives are used, the location of the recordings should be specified.

10. All Notes and References should be consecutively numbered and presented at the end of the article. Please do NOT use ‘insert footnote/ endnote’ option available in MS Word or similar softwares. Complete references with the precise page reference if applicable should be given.
11. An acknowledgement or statement about the background of the article, if any, may be given immediately after the main text of the article under a separate heading, viz. ‘Acknowledgement(s).’
12. All Figures and Tables should be presented on separate sheets at the end of the article and should NOT be inserted in the text. Only a mention of each figure or table in the text is to be given, viz. ‘as shown in Figure 2’. Please

distinguish between Figures (diagrams) and Tables (statistical material) and number them in separate sequences, i.e., 'Figure 8', and 'Table 8'. Please use short and crisp titles and headings for each Figure or Table, citing source where applicable. The units used and the sources should be stated at the foot of the table. Notes relating to the table should be placed after the source.

13. Illustrations should be of sufficient quality to be reproduced in the journal. If they are larger than the print area of the journal, please ensure that all details and text in the artworks are sufficiently large so that they remain legible when reduced to the actual size of the journal. Photographs should be black and white prints on matt paper. Digital pictures should be in .tiff format of not less than 300 dpi resolution. Please use short and crisp titles and headings for each Illustration, citing source where applicable. Please obtain permission to reproduce any figures or photographs that are not your own copyright. Similarly, permission may be required for quotations beyond the limits of 'fair dealing'.
14. Book reviews must contain name of author and book reviewed, place of publication and publisher, year of publication, number of pages and price (if available).
15. All contributors (authors and book reviewers) shall receive complementary copies of the *SAARC Culture* after its publication.

For any other detail or clarification please write to:

The Editor,
SAARC Culture,
SAARC Cultural Centre,
224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha,
Colombo 7,
Sri Lanka.

E-mail: journal-scc@sltnet.lk or
sccpublications@gmail.com

Tel.: 0094-11-2584453

Fax: 0094-11-2584452

SAARC Cultural Centre

The SAARC Cultural Centre is a regional centre established on 25 March 2009 in Colombo, Sri Lanka, to recognise and promote the profound cultural continuum of South Asia in order to sustain harmonious relations among South Asian people and to contribute towards holistic development in the region.

The Centre, successfully completed programmes that promoted cultural exchange of ideas and knowledge-sharing. Various programmes and publications of the Centre also showcased the cultural experiences of the SAARC Member States.

SAARC Cultural Centre Programmes for 2014

Programmes to be implemented in 2014 will focus on:

- **Establishing Linkages between culture and other sectors-** As part of promoting Cultural Cooperation, the SAARC Cultural Centre will celebrate SAARC Non-Violence Day and SAARC Charter Day. The Centre also proposes to designate a city amongst the SAARC Member Countries as the SAARC CULTURAL CAPITAL for a year during which it will organize a series of year-long cultural events with a national but with an overall South Asian dimension.
- **Promoting SAARC Culture Online-** The SAARC Cultural Centre has an active website, a SAARC Cultural Portal and an active facebook social media page. Through such online connections, the SAARC Cultural Centre will connect with the rest of the world, as well as link with other organizations to promote their

programmes on virtual media. Furthermore, the Centre is in the process of developing a Resource Network on SAARC Culture (RNSC) and an online Resource Centre to reflect and promote the essence of cultural heritage of the SAARC Member States.

- **Promoting Cultural Festivals in the Region-** For 2014, the SAARC Cultural Centre proposes to have a Cultural Festival on Traditional Dance featuring dancers from the entire region.
- **Developing Archaeology, Architecture and Archives-** The SAARC Cultural Centre will organise a three-day conference entitled ‘SAARC International Conference on South Asian Museums’ with the objective of introducing better management mechanisms for the museums in the SAARC region. It will also organize a workshop on ‘Preparation of Proposals of New Sites for Inclusion in the UNESCO’s World Heritage List’ for six days with a view to building capacity of Member States in developong said proposals.
- **Developing Cultrural Industries-** In 2012, the SAARC Cultural Centre focused on Traditional Handloom, with an Exhibition and Design Workshop, titled “The Wheel of Life” in Delhi. In 2013, the Centre organised a similar programme modeled on the earlier one, but with a focus on Handicrafts in Dhaka. In 2014, the Centre will have a similar programme once again promoting Handicrafts in the region, but with more emphasis on training of artisans, in preserving the art as well as developing new designs and products attractive to the demands of the new world market.

- **Developing Literature in South Asia-** The SAARC Cultural Centre will continue its Translation Programme i.e. a programme for the translation of classical literature of South Asia into English as well as other national languages of the Member States. Furthermore, two anthologies on Poems and Contemporary Short Stories in the Region for 2013 will be launched in 2014. The Centre will also organize a Literary Festival on Children's Literature in South Asia.
- **Promoting Visual and Performing Arts in the SAARC Region-** The SAARC Film Festival, Workshop on Issues related to the Film Industry, Artist Camp and Exhibition of Paintings and Photographic Competition and Exhibition.
- **Research Programme-** Research Project on Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Sustainable Development in South Asia will be implemented in 2014.
- **SAARC Publication Programme-** At the conclusion of all workshops, seminars, symposiums and conferences conducted by the SAARC Cultural Centre, monographs will be published using deliberations for reference for scholars and others, in addition to publishing online. Newsletters, brochures and other promotional material will be published/ printed on a regular basis.

SAARC Cultural Journal- *SAARC Culture* (vol. 5), the annual research journal of the SAARC Cultural Centre will be published in 2014. Contributions from scholars are invited for this issue. For details please contact sccpublications@gmail.com