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Editorial

The idea of launching a journal from so new a college and so small a department was just a straw in the wind. When the idea was in the embryo my Good Angel came to deliver a timely 'commandment': "Don't go too near the sun". Thus warned and aided I undertook my middle flight. They say metaphors are lies and hence the image of a motley coat, patched but clean that aptly defines 'our' *Middle Flight*. Exercise, with a pen or without, keeps one warm. It is a survival strategy – therapeutic too. Capacity and commitment never go paired. Fund is a major problem, experience no less. Yet the 'the mind is its own place' and is convinced that some 'work', noble or ignoble, may yet be done. All the papers included here excepting that of Dr. Indranil Acharya , the inclusion of which is the privilege of the editor, has been duly referred to and recommended by our esteemed reviewers. The launching of the fourth volume of *Middle Flight* would hardly be possible without the unstinted support from the Principal, the Editors, the Reviewers, the Executive Members and my beloved students. Thanks to our Principal , Dr. D. K. Bhuniya whose patronage for any academic endeavour has emboldened us. Documentation has not been impeccably uniform. Some of our reviewers accepted some well-written but differently documented papers and it has been our principle to honour their decision. Congrats to all concerned for making the publication of the journal possible.

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Fiction as Autobiography: A Reading of the Representative Fictional Work of a Bangla Dalit Woman Writer

Dr. Indranil Acharya

I

The phenomenal rise in the number of autobiographies by Dalit authors- especially Dalit women writers- is a new phenomenon in the Indian language literatures of the recent times. Many educated and emancipated Dalit women are now making use of this friendly genre to air their grievances and register their protests in an unprecedented manner. In general, 1947 onwards, feminist movement failed to see that a Dalit woman's experience was radically different from the upper caste women's experience. Dalit autobiography contributed a lot to address this issue of non-representation of Dalit women's experiences. Hence, in mainstream feminist writings one finds marginal representation of Dalit women's voices (Shweta Singh, 40). Similar kind of situation prevailed in Australia where the Aboriginal women did not participate in the feminist movements especially of the last two decades of the 20th century. It was primarily because the movement was spearheaded by white feminist women of Australia. They failed to represent the grievances of Black Aboriginal women of different tribes. In the autobiographical writings of Sally Morgan, Alexis Wright, Rita Huggins and Tara June Winch one can find a strong note of dissatisfaction with the role of the so-called progressive white women activists. Larissa Beherendt, a lawyer-turned-author, has specifically dealt with the violation of human rights in the domain of Aboriginal women’s right to self-assertion.

According to Sharmila Rege, "There was thus a masculinization of and a Savarnization of womanhood leading to a classical exclusion of Dalit womanhood" (Rao, 90). Rege argues that even Dalit men's representation of Dalit women is grossly inauthentic as they try to interpolate their own ideal views of a Dalit woman. The upper caste women, on the other hand, love to talk about the general victimization of women. But it unfortunately excludes the most painful reality of a Dalit woman where she is doubly cursed as a woman and as a Dalit. In his essay titled 'Dalit Women Talk Differently', Gopal Guru underscores the need to consider internal (i.e. patriarchal domination within the Dalit society) and external (i.e. non-Dalit forces trying to homogenize Dalit issues) factors shaping Dalit women's consciousness (Guru, 80). Keeping in mind the decidedly disadvantageous state of Dalit women there is an acutely felt need to represent this new reality in the form of autobiography- a medium for unrestricted assertion.

The National Federation of Dalit Women was formed for the first time in 1995 in New Delhi. It was the first major consolidation of Dalit women in India. The Federation in its Draft Declaration criticized and rejected many vicious networks of gender exploitation including the 'Devadasi' system. In fact, the movement of Dalit women was quite similar to the movement of Black American women. There was a charge that the movement against racial discrimination served the interest of only the Black men. Within this larger global context Dalit women's autobiographies began to hit the book market in the 1990s chiefly in Marathi, Tamil and Hindi. Such autobiographies delineated both personal and collective life experiences of the Dalit

women's world. There is greater emphasis on the experiential emotion than the choice of aesthetic vocabulary- a major requirement of Savarna literature. Scholars like Beverley are more willing to term this genre as 'testimonio' instead of 'autobiography'. It is because in the 'testimonio' form the narrating self presents itself in a collective mode (Beverley, 92-93). Dalit life narratives violate the boundaries of 'I' in autobiography- the 'I' that represents the bourgeois individualism. The Dalit life narratives move away from the conventional narratives of women wherein the focus is on women as wives, daughters, mothers etc. Dalit women's role in running the family and earning livelihood is completely absent in Dalit men's narrative. This is selective amnesia, deliberate and calculated. Dalit men's autobiographies are silent on domestic violence- a major issue in Dalit women's narratives. The poignant description of day-to-day private life of Dalit women would invariably lead to the revelation of the dark side of a patriarchal structure. Hence, Dalit men conveniently choose to forget their immoral behaviour to their women at home. Another interesting feature is the absence of any description of the complicit role of the other elderly womenfolk in perpetuating violence upon Dalit women. The subject of Dalit women's autobiographies is thus not 'I' but 'we'. A male Dalit autobiography like 'Joothan' completely silences voices of Dalit women. Here the collective 'we' is the Dalit men folk. There is one reference to the narrator's wife who refused to use the surname 'Valmiki'. Even ‘The Outcaste’ by Sharankumar Limbale refers to the mother and grandmother of the first-person narrator in an appropriating voice- the real feelings of these women remain unknown to the readers at large. But memory and representation create a new dialectic in Dalit women's narrative. However, Dalit movement is precariously balanced on the sandstone of double standards, especially of male and female Dalit narratives (Singh, 46). The literary genre of autobiography has claim of genuine remembrance and retelling; but it also has a counter claim of genuine forgetting and omission. Thus, the narratives assume a political dimension as far as the strategy of representing the gender issue is concerned.

II

The spurt in the writings of Dalit literature in Bengal is a much recent phenomenon, taking off in the 1990s. Here all the various genres of Dalit writings are found- autobiography, literary criticism, story, play, poem, novel etc. Even one notices the rise of a significant number of Dalit women writers. They too are doubly marginalized as targets of caste oppression and gender oppression. Their untouchability has led to their social ostracism as well. One would also notice gender oppression and inequality within Dalit society- an embarrassing feature for male Dalit patriarchs. However, the self-portrayal of some young Dalit female intellectuals gives a completely opposite picture in the context of West Bengal. Authors like Drishadwati Bargi express in a tongue-in-cheek manner the so called progressive nature of Bengali Bhadralok or Bhadramahilas who encourage free mixing, beef-eating and bidi-sharing modern Bengali intellectuals. But this mask of a progressive individual drops when the upper caste teachers and students crack cruel jokes at the surnames of untouchable students. Poor performance in public examinations and poor command over English language are also made fun of particularly in the case of Dalit students. Upper caste male lovers also dare to ditch female Dalit lovers only for this caste consideration. There is a feeling of isolation in the Dalit woman’s mind as the Dalit friends of her own clan grow suspicious of her conduct and maintain an eerie silence over her affairs with the Savarna male lovers. For an emancipated Dalit woman certain questions inevitably surface-

> Should I identify myself as a Dalit? Do I have the right to work on Dalit literature? Do I have the right with 'commodity fetishism'?

Drishadwati makes an explosive remark in this connection- "There are no Dalits in West Bengal because Dalits are not allowed to exist here."(Bargi, 1)

Unless the untouchables surrender to the dictates of the upper caste casteless intellectuals for their much-hyped acculturation, they are not recognized as such as social creatures. However, the new nomenclature, 'dalit' threatens to suspend the popular binary of upper caste emancipators and lower caste 'to be emancipated'. This open challenge to the system of dependence renders the self-styled emancipators redundant. Hence, the brave 'Chhotolok' who rises above the prison house of narrow casteist politics, ultimately arouses the suspicion and jealousy of the so-called 'Bhadralok'. In Bengal, Dalit writers as an organized unit prefer to gloss over the internal mechanism of exploitation in Dalit society. Even the women writers are not vociferous against the inadequate representation of their plight in the writings of male Dalit writers. They often maintain silence over the negative role played by the elderly Dalit women in perpetuating the agonies and sufferings of young Dalit women. It may be inferred that high level of educational attainment coupled with a relatively lesser concern with caste equation in Bengal has inspired the emancipated Dalit women to take up the challenging task of self-representation with gusto. Somewhere the urge to rip through the mask of double standard maintained by the Bhadralok mainstream was so intense that other little realities of internal disharmony did not command immediate attention.

Coming down to the issue of Bengali Dalit autobiography one has to cope with a host of problems- mostly related to availability. Autobiography in the form of socio-biography has found great popularity with Bengali Dalit writers. Even Kalyani Thakur, a leading Dalit woman voice in contemporary Bengal, can feel the oppressive rule of the upper caste intellectuals in the cultural circuit of the state. She has respect for Manju Bala, whose story has been chosen for detailed discussion in this paper. But the construct of a new Dalit woman of the 21st century remains a distant dream in the Bengal context. Unfortunately, no English translation of Bengali women's autobiography is available in the book market. In fact, there is no full-fledged autobiography of any Dalit author in Bengali language as well. In an interview with Santanu Halder on 8th March, 2013, Manohar Mouli Biswas, a leading male Dalit intellectual, announced that he had finished writing his autobiography, *Amar Bhubaney Ami Benche Thaki* (I Live in My World). It has been translated into English in 2015 and published by a relatively lesser known publisher. Manoranjan Byapari, another noted Bengali Dalit writer, has published his autobiography, *Itibritte Chandal Jiban* (2012) in Bengali. But it is not certain if any English rendering of this autobiography is available in printed and published form. However, the first major anthology of Bengali Dalit women's writing, available in English translation, is *The Dalit Lekhika: Poems and Short Stories by Bengali Dalit Women.* It was edited by Kalyani Thakur Charal and other Bengali women writers and published by Stree, New Delhi in 2014. Once again, it is pertinent to mention in this connection that this anthology does not contain any English rendering of any Bengali Dalit woman's autobiography or a fragment of it. The South Indian reality is entirely different. Bama's autobiographical writings have been published by the Oxford University Press at regular intervals.

Negotiating with this dearth of Bengali Dalit women's autobiography, it is rewarding to focus one's attention on the domain of Bengali Dalit women's fictional writings, especially short stories and novellas. It is chiefly because of their intimately autobiographical nature that such fictional texts may well be read as a Dalit woman author's life narrative. One may recall archival resources to justify this approach to Dalit fiction as autobiographical writing. In his preface to 'A Moveable Feast' Ernest Hemingway remarks: "If the reader prefers, this book may be regarded as fiction. But there is always the chance that such a book of fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact." (Flohr, 1) A note to the text on the following page explains that the book "concerns the years 1921 to 1926 in Paris", that is, to be more precise, Hemingway's years in Paris. And, indeed, the first person narrator of the text is Hemingway. However, when we browse through the pages it looks exactly like a novel or a collection of his short stories. So what is 'A Moveable Feast'? Is it an autobiographical text? Is it a fictional text that is invented along the lines of personal memories? Or, to make things more complicated and as Hemingway suggests, a fiction illuminating facts?

Besides, many autobiographical stories are engaged in the idea of rites of passage. Rites of passage are changes we all go through. Although we may not experience them in exactly the same way, in any society there are some experiences that are common to most of its members. These happen periodically, throughout our lives. The important thing about these shared experiences, in terms of short fiction, is not that they happen (because by their nature there's nothing unusual about them), but the psychological changes that happen because of them, which are as different as the people they happen to. They are called rites of passage, a term borrowed from anthropology, because they mark a change from one psychological "place" to the next. In fact, this phenomenon is illustrated in the life narratives of Dalit women writers.

Manju Bala was born in 1954 in Naliakhali village of South 24Parganas district. She was born in an agrarian Namahshudra family. A poet and storyteller by choice, she completed her graduation in the Arts stream. She also edits a literary magazine titled 'Ekhan Takhan'. Her position as a Dalit intellectual, like some of her female compatriots, is unique in terms of shared memories of suffering during her childhood and young adulthood days and a more significant psychological change that liberal education helped to usher in her consciousness. As a result, when she speaks about the miseries and sufferings of Dalit life she grows very serious. Especially when she waxes eloquently on the dead, meaningless rituals and their claustrophobic impact upon Dalit women and widows, she often breaks down in tears. She also advocates strongly against the abominable social system in which little children are trained to believe in the caste hierarchy and the need to sustain this unequal system.

III

This paper looks closely at a Bengali Dalit short story, "Dwando" (Conflict) by Manju Bala. It was included in the first major attempt at anthologizing Bengali Dalit writings of one hundred years. The anthology is titled *Shatabarsher Bangla Dalit* Sahitya[1] and was first published in 2011. It was edited by Manohar Mouli Biswas and Shyamal Kumar Pramanik. This short story, included in the anthology, is the only story written by a Dalit woman. It was selected for its strong and representative autobiographical flavour- a consistent harping on the humiliations and sufferings of an educated untouchable woman. "Dwando" (Biswas and Pramanik, 233-236) is the story of an educated Dalit woman of metropolis. It is a love story of an upper caste doctor and a

Dalit woman. In the West Bengal scenario such socially unequal affair is not a Utopian dream; rather it is a realistic portrayal of the social equation as class concerns were more important than caste issues during the Marxist regime for more than three decades. The central protagonist of the story Banani manifests the sufferings and miseries of many Dalit women who experience the victim status in a so-called progressive mainstream society masking a brutal patriarchal mindset. No full-length autobiography of Bengali Dalit women writers can be found till date. But this narrative approaches the state of autobiography with a very vivid overlapping of social reality and personal sufferings.

The narrative begins in the middle. Banani lies down with eyes closed in intense grief. Tears roll down her black cheeks. The locality is immersed in impenetrable darkness. Darkness has its terrible implications and it haunts her mind with myriad resonances. Banani has to spend a sleepless night. Her only daughter Tumpa is lost in a profound slumber. She has to stand by the window as sleep evades her eyes. Looking vacantly at the dark firmament she is reminded of her husband, an upper caste doctor. Her husband now sleeps in his mother's room- deserts her deliberately. But theirs had been a love marriage- a very bold decision they could take together. Kalyan's mother Renuka was a senior teacher at a higher secondary school- a so-called progressive upper caste woman. Kalyan was her only son, her only ray of hope. She lost her husband in the heydays of her youth and had to fight against heavy odds to take care of her only son. Kalyan is an established medical practitioner now.

Banani, the central protagonist, narrates her life story in the first person autobiographical mode. She was an inhabitant of the refugee colony. They were introduced to each other in a music school. He was a student of Medical College at that time. It was a love-at-first-sight story. In the first flush of love she forgot that she was a Dalit woman named Banani Mandal. Gradually, she became dissociated from her old ways of life. The cruel struggle for existence seemed to be a closed chapter in her life. One very glaring aspect of such Bengali Dalit narratives is the absence of any graphic description of the miserable plight of the Dalit woman at the time of growing up in her horrid colony life. The stage is set for the conflict, the age-old binary of Dalit and non-Dalit systems.

A slice of open sky peeped into her dark, cloistered caste-ridden existence. Her Dalit friend Swapna warned her of future consequences. But Banani used to laugh away her suggestions. She never tried to look at the affair from a casteist point of view. She thought casteism was a dead issue in a modern progressive society. Moreover, Kalyan was a doctor- a respectable person in society. Kalyan used to visit Banani's house on many occasions. Especially on her birthdays, he used to sing Rabindrasangeet on harmonium and impressed Banani and Swapna. Their developing intimacy became public in the refugee colony of Banani.

After marriage the environment changed radically. As Banani tries to rehearse on her harmonium the mother-in-law rebukes her in a hoarse voice. Her Dalit origin is brutally reminded and it is considered blasphemous for the daughter-in-law. Renuka's relation with Banani gets strained. Kalyan attempts to ease out the tension and pesters Banani to give up music for the sake of domestic peace. Even her dream of completing the M.A. degree from the university is jeopardized as Kalyan disapproves her study in order to appease the irate mother.

Banai's cosy domestic world is shattered. She cannot understand the sea change in her husband's character. Music is in her blood. It was the most significant factor which cemented her bonding

with Kalyan. Her Dalit father was a lyricist and music composer. In their colony of poor people her father's music used to enthrall the luckless subalterns till quite late into the night. One day Banani's mother, a chronic asthma patient, started gasping vigorously for breath. Her condition worsened and she passed away after a few days. The point to note is the absolutely sketchy description of a momentous event- her mother's death. It is as if all other incidents are disposed of as distractions and the only conflict that is sustained with meticulous care is with her upper caste husband and his villainous mother. It is also curious to find why the narrator remains silent on the reactions of Kalyan's mother during their marriage. It seems she approved the marriage but discord began after that. In the case the upper caste mother accepts Banani as her daughter in law doesn't it project her in positive light to some extent? May be the narrator is selectively amnesiac to spare herself of this embarrassing fact.

In an interior monologue Banani exposes the marks of torture all over her body- gifts, she says sardonically, of love from her husband and mother-in-law. She could not give up music as it was her second nature. And it has created a great turmoil in her family. Her husband is a changed person now. He gets crueler when Banani's face wears a frightened look during a spell of physical torture. They have a little daughter- Tumpa. Banani desperately wants her to keep in the custody of her friend Swapna. She is childless. Banani spends her days in sheer terror. She dreams of a future when her daughter will be a greater doctor than her father.

In the concluding paragraph of the story the author moves to the next generation when Tumpa has become a doctor. Her mother is no more. She is left with a photograph to cherish her memories. Another precious record that she has discovered from the room is her mother's diary. She cannot remember her mother's figure properly. Only that ominous day recurs to her memory like an incurable disease. A hush fell on the house that day- all members maintained an eerie silence. Her mother was placed on a cot outside their house, incense sticks burning on the headstand. She burst into inconsolable fits of weeping as she looked at the mangled face of her dead mother. She learnt from a relative that her mother died of an explosion in the kitchen- a gas stove. The injury was so grave that she could not be taken to the hospital. All ended before that. Tumpa really feels delirious when she visualizes that tragic incident- the horrible suffering attached to it. The whole episode comes live before her eyes. Her heart-rending cry pierces the impenetrable silence of the benighted house.

The entire narrative is modelled on the passive suffering of an educated Dalit woman in a perennially hostile social relationship status of a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law. Of course, caste identity has attached a new dimension to the nature of suffering of the hapless Dalit woman. But the whole story raises great curiosity in terms of a near-total absence of any protest by the victim. It is surprising taking into consideration the highly educated profile of the Dalit protagonist Banani. Graphic description of upper caste torture perpetrated upon Dalit individuals is an obvious reality in the narratives of Bama, Urmila Pawar, Sharankumar Limbale and many other Dalit writers in different states of India. But in most such cases the victim women are not educated enough to understand the vicious cycle of torture. They do not have proper knowledge of their rights and privileges in a democratic society. Quite obviously, the reader is confronted with many questions- Is the absence of high decibel protest a unique feature of Bengali Dalit emancipated woman? Is there any influence of mainstreaming that has silenced the rhetoric of protest? Does the conscious political agenda of covering up caste discrimination and foregrounding class conflict contribute to this erasure of retaliation?

The scope of this paper is much larger. Many related issues could be taken up for discussion had there been sufficient number of Bengali Dalit autobiographical fiction available in English translation. To conclude, the observation of the noted Marathi Dalit woman writer Urmila Pawar may capture the mindset of all Dalit women intellectuals in our country-

> I came into this world with the painful baggage of my caste, class and gender. The difficulty of being a woman, particularly a Dalit woman, with all the discriminations I observed made me want to write and express myself. (Biswas, 1)

This act of writing as a cathartic experience gave a unique kind of manifestation of Dalit consciousness in Manju Bala's narrative- autobiographical of all the representative educated Dalit women of Bengal.

Notes

1. The author of this paper is profoundly indebted to Manohar Mouli Biswas and Shyamal Kumar Pramanik, editors of *Shatabarsher Bangla Dalit Sahitya*, for the inclusion of a significant Dalit story by Manju Bala, a woman Dalit writer. Her contribution to the cause of Bengali Dalit literature is quite valuable.
2. Manju Bala's story 'Dwando' is specially acknowledged for providing a basis for this discussion. Hope it will appear in English version in near future for the benefit of researchers.

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Exploring the Socio-Cultural Subconscious: A Reading of Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* in the Light of Dalit Marginalisation

Samit Kumar Maiti

Abstract: Marginalisation is a process in which individuals or an entire community or social groups are systematically denied access to the various rights, opportunities and resources that are usually available to the members of other communities, and which are essential to the social integration within that particular group. It is a multidimensional process of excluding individuals and members of various communities from social relations and institutions on the basis of caste, class, gender, religion, skin-colour etc., and thus forming social ruptures for violating the principle of equality in a democratic and welfare state. Of late, the term has gained currency in the disciplines of education, psychology, sociology, politics, economics and literature. The word had also acquired significant connotations in the post modern and postcolonial literature. Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935) is a social treatise that throws light on the issue of marginalisation of the 'untouchables' or the dalits in a class-segregated Indian society. Through the portrayal of sufferings of Bakha, Anand exposes the latent 'history' of cultural 'politics' of the dominant brahmins/ upper-caste Hindus who introduced the process of social exclusion and perpetuate this practice of social and cultural discrimination. The word 'subconscious' in the title refers to, both in the Freudian and Marxist sense, the 'latent history' of social and cultural exploitation and exclusion that strives to get exposed but fails due to the hegemonic structures of the dominant Hindu class. The objective of this paper is to offer a critique of this hegemonic tendency of the mainstream Hindu community and to spread awareness against this social and cultural marginalisation for actualising the democratic values enshrined in the Indian Constitution, and thus ameliorating the conditions of the dalits, for the betterment of the society as well as the nation.

Keywords: Anand, dalit, marginalisation, social awareness, humanism.

Marginalisation is the systematic process of social exclusion of individuals or the cultural groups from the various opportunities and resources that are normally available to the members of the other communities. Marginalisation involves a complex socio-cultural process, in which the dominant group/s of a state block the access of the individuals or the communities to the social relations and institutions on grounds of class, caste, gender, religion, etc., and throws them to the 'peripheral' state to occupy the 'central' position in a social structure. Though the term is well known in the disciplines of sociology, psychology, politics and economics, it had acquired special importance and currency in postcolonial literature, which happens to be a branch of post modern literature. However, the notion of 'marginality' originates from the binaristic structure of the world view, as Ashcroft et al. argue in their widely influential work *Key Concepts in Post-colonial Studies*:

> The perception and description of experience as 'marginal' is a consequence of the binaristic structure of various kinds of dominant discourses, such as patriarchy, imperialism and ethno-centrism, which imply that certain forms of experience are peripheral. Although the term carries a misleading geometric implication, marginal groups do not necessarily endorse the notion of a fixed centre. Structures of power that are described in terms of 'centre' and 'margin' operate, in reality, in a complex, diffuse and multifaceted way. (135)

In postcolonial literature, the notion of 'marginality' is therefore essentially related to power, domination and hegemony. The quoted statement very aptly identifies that structures of power do not operate in a simplistic manner; rather the workings of power-structure are complicated and multidimensional.

The custom of 'untouchability' was but the outcome of the convention of social exclusion practised by the upper-class Hindu community. Manu, the Hindu law giver, is believed to have perpetuated untouchability through the scripture *Manu Smriti,* which divided the whole Hindu community into four castes—brahmin, kshatriya, vaishya and shudra. Thus, the caste-based differences arose from the 'cultural politics' of the Hindus and they are observed to subdue the fate of those who belong to the lowest rank of the social hierarchy. In course of time, the shudras have been othered and marginalised by the dominant Hindu class. However, the shudras or 'dalits' are known by the various nomenclatures in the Indian society. The term 'dalit', which

became popular during the 1960s, came to denote the social groups which were known as ‘untouchables’ by the brahminical social system. Mahatma Jotirao Phule called them ‘Ati-shudras’, whereas Dr. B. R. Ambedkar referred to them as ‘depressed classes’. Mahatma Gandhi used to call them as ‘harijans’ meaning, children of God. The Indian Constitution has grouped them under the category ‘scheduled castes’.

Mulk Raj Anand’s *Untouchable* (1935) is a touching narration of the activities of a scavenger boy, Bakha, who faces a number of embarrassing episodes in a single day because of his dalit identity. Anand draws a very realistic picture of the dwellings of the dalits in the opening chapter of his novel. The scavengers, the leather-workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters and other outcastes live in a congested colony in their mud-walled houses, as Anand describes with meticulous details:

> The outcastes’ colony was a group of mud-walled houses that clustered together in two rows, under the shadow both of the town and the cantonment, by outside their boundaries and separate from them. There lived the scavengers, the leather-workers, the washermen, the barbers, the water-carriers, the grass-cutters, and other outcaste from Hindu society. (9)

The description clearly shows the big divide between the dalits and the Hindus in the Indian society. Anand is a conscious artist, and novel for him is not merely an instrument of idle speculations. Each and every section of the novel is designed to propagate some messages to the members of the society. The main objective behind the description of the dwellings of the dalits is to show the discriminations in the gross physical level. Marginalisation of the dalits in the Indian society is a thorough process; it is not only a physical phenomenon, it is also the cultural and psychological phenomena.

Bakha is a victim of not only caste discrimination but also of paternal authority. His dream of going to a school is crushed by his father who informs him that the schools are meant for the babus and not for the underdogs like them, who are scavengers and who belong to the lowest strata of the society. Bakha's resentment towards his father's ways of slavish flattery of the colonial masters is revealed in the following words: "He just goes about getting salaams from everybody. I don't take a moment's rest and yet he abuses me. And if I go to play with the boys

he calls me in middle of the game to come and attend the latrines" (15). Along with this paternal authority, Bakha is to suffer inhuman humiliation of the aristocrat people like Havaldar Charan Singh, who abuses him for delaying to clean the latrines: "Ohe, Bakhya, Ohe Bakhya! One scoundrel of a sweeper's son" (17). Anand takes care to depict the picture of physical humiliation of his protagonist to suggest that the dalits are to face the discrimination and exploitation at every walk of life.

The condition of the dalit women is even worse, as they are marginalised at various level within their society. Firstly, the dalits are marginalised by the mainstream Hindu/ brahmin community. Secondly, the dalit women are exploited and dominated by their male counterparts in a patriarchal framework of society. Thirdly, there is even another layer of exploitation of the dalits in a conventional hierarchical societal structure. There is a hierarchy even within the dalit community itself. For example, in the novel we see Gulaboo, the washerwoman addresses Sohini with abusive words and make her feel the pangs of mental sufferings for belonging to the community of the outcastes: "Think of it! Bitch! Prostitute! Wanton and your mother hardly dead. Think of laughing in my face, laughing at me who is not old enough to be your mother" (28). Thus through the presentation of the plight of Sohini, Anand shows the helpless condition and bottomless misery of the dalit women, who are to tolerate inhuman physical and emotional humiliations for belonging to the dalit community, but cannot articulate them against the members of the aristocrat class.

The hypocrisy and dual nature of the upper caste Hindus are exposed through the behaviour of Pt. Kali Nath, the priest of the temple, who represents the traditional unscrupulous Hindus/ brahmin class. Sohini has to wait for water for hours in the village well as the dalits are not permitted to take water directly from the well. She waits for the mercy of the high-caste Hindus to pour in water in her pot in the form of alms. But the paradox is that, Pt. Kali Nath, who hates the untouchables in general but enjoys the touch of the untouchable girls. Pt. Kali Nath draws water from the well and pours the water into Sohini's pot. He was attracted by her youthfulness, so he asked Sohini to come to her house to clean a courtyard. Unaware of the mischievous scheme of the vicious priest, Sohini goes there and is molested by Kali Nath. She gets scared and starts screaming. Kali Nath also immediately starts shouting "Polluted!" and tries to gather some high-caste people. Kali Nath spreads the rumour that Sohini has polluted him by

touching. Astonishingly, people believe the words of Kali Nath and they did not believe in the words of Sohini. Anand here shows the hypocritical tendency of the upper-class Indian people, who have their blind conviction that the dalits are not only poverty-stricken but also mean-minded, and are capable of performing all sorts of vicious activities. Dalits are thus stereotyped as immoral and prone to vice. They are dehumanised and thrown into the status of the sub-human creatures. Caste-based society seems to establish a norm of value judgement in which the morality of a man would be in commensurate with his monetary power.

Bakha's imitation of the life of the British soldiers or 'Tommies' as he calls them, throws light on Bakha's dream of getting rid of the caste-system and to lead a life of a man with dignity and honour. He stares at them with wonder and astonishment, and aspires for the life of the Tommies, as they are free from the draconian customs of untouchability, caste-division and social stratification. Bakha imitates the fashions of the Tommies—their style of wearing trousers, breeches, coat, boots etc. It may appear that Bakha dreams of rising above his caste by Westernising himself, but Anand does not provide such a solution to the age-old problem of Indian society. He rather suggests the three probable ways of ameliorating the conditions of the untouchables towards the end of the novel. Hence, Bakha's imitation of the Western manners and fashion may be regarded as the childish fascination of a scavenger boy, troubled with poverty and humiliation.

Anand's *Untouchable* is a critique of the caste-system, social discrimination and marginalisation, as practised in the Indian society from the time immemorial. The narrative shows how the untouchables were compelled to live in the periphery of the village and how they were forced to perform all types of dirty manual works for their survival. They were never permitted to mix freely with the members of other classes of the society. A simple accidental touch to the upper-caste Hindu in a public place results in attack of abusive words and physical assault on Bakha: “Dirty dog! Son of a bitch! Offspring of a pig!” (51). Needless to say that these untouchables were never permitted to enter the temples and so-called sacred places, with the apprehensions that their entry may contaminate the sacredness of the religious places, which were specially preserved for the upper-caste brahmins. Thus, the novel offers a scathing criticism of the caste-system, which creates social ruptures by disturbing the constitutional principles of social integration.

Anand is sometimes regarded as a propagandist because of his preoccupations with the communistic and socialistic ideals, as Upendra Prasad Singh comments: “Like British writers of thirties, he shows in his writing the working class. It is owing to his sympathy for the underdog and bitter criticism of social and economic inequalities prevalent in Indian life, Anand is often considered a communist and dubbed as a social propagandist” (2). But one thing must be admitted clearly that, Anand is an artist not a mere propagandist. It is the mastery of Anand that transcends the novel from a mere social document to a finished work of art. He has maintained superb balance between style and content, manner and matter, between sympathy for the underdogs and anger against the social injustice. M. K. Naik’s observations are very pertinent in this context:

> It is this objectivity and balance which, despite a few lapses, save the book from smug sentimentality and dry moralising. There is no tear-mongering here over the bottom-dog and his plight, no tearing of hair over the lot of the downtrodden and the oppressed. The author’s value-judgement are mostly brought home through action and situation, except in the concluding pages where the Poet in his long harangue on the caste-system suddenly seems to become the mouthpiece of the author himself. (28)

The novel is inspired by Anand’s reformative zeal. His mission is to form a society free from class-system, caste-system, social exploitation and the stigma of marginalisation. Hence, the novel, like all other great novels by Anand, is marked by the author’s anger against the social injustices and malpractices. But, as Ravi Nandan Sinha remarks: “Anger, as expressed in his novels, is only a veneer that conceals his love for freedom, justice and peace. It is a natural corollary of his fervent preoccupation with social justice. He is a writer who values human dignity and is against all that which militates against it” (7). Anger is not here a negative human emotion; it has been used in a positive and constructive way to ameliorate the condition of the dalits and to implement the constitutional recommendations for the fulfilment of the objectives of a welfare and socialistic state.

Anand is a socially committed writer who does not believe in writing literature for the sake of pure aesthetic enjoyment at the expense of a writer’s social obligations. Literature for him is a veritable instrument to ameliorate the condition of the human life, to bring about a

drastic change in the social conventions and in the perceptions of the miseries of the downtrodden. He regards literature as the instrument of humanism and reformation, his mission being to write for the betterment of the underdogs of the society. Anand believes, as Ramesh P. Chavan argues:

> ...a truly humanist art is commensurate with the needs of our times, and his humanism results from the consciousness of the need to help raise the untouchables, the peasants, the serfs, the coolies, and the other suppressed members of society, to human dignity and self-awareness in view of the abjectness, apathy and despair in which they are sunk. He is a crusader in the cause of humanity; he writes not for 'art's sake but for the sake of man', for refining and ennobling him, for stirring up the dormant stores of tenderness in him for his fellow human being and for inspiring him into action calculated to achieve the well-being of mankind as a whole. (60)

Anand's humanism was, to a great extent, inspired by the humanistic ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Anand seems to echo the concerns of Gandhi over the plight of the untouchables towards the end of the novel, when Gandhi talks over the issue of untouchability:

> As you all know, while we are asking for freedom from the grip of a foreign nation, we have ourselves, for centuries, trampled underfoot millions of human beings without feeling the slightest remorse for our inequity. For me, the question of these people is moral and religious. When I undertook to fast unto death for their sake, it was in obedience to the call of my conscience. (Anand 162-63)

So, the novel shows that the author's humanistic ideals were greatly shaped by Gandhi and his humanistic philosophy. I. G. Purohit is therefore right when he says that "Anand was influenced by Gandhi's love and sympathy for the untouchables, the suffering and the poor. Andnd's heart melts with pity at the wretched plight of the untouchables" (62). Anand's primary motive was to annihilate the societal discriminations and to build up a society based on the principles of equality, justice, fellow-feelings and the ideals which Indian Constitution proposes to offer to every citizen for the full realisation of its democratic ideals. But it had been observed that mere rules could not change the human behaviour, so the societal discriminations are rampantly

practised still in the twenty-first century despite the Constitutional safeguard. Hence, what is needed is an awareness of the plight of the untouchables and a sincere intention to share their problems and to solve them for full realisation of the humanistic and societal ideals in the largest democracy of the world.

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Women Empowerment in the Autobiographies of Bama and Urmila Pawar: A Study

Anindita Sen

Abstract: The Dalit women are doubly oppressed by a patriarchal and caste tyrannical society. This paper reflects the problems faced by the Dalit women in the family, work, society and religion. The only way to bring empowerment to women is to develop female literacy, create skills and capability among women for enabling them to stand on their own feet and care for themselves and family. Specifically, this article explores the nature and role of education and its relationship to empowerment on rural Dalit women. The emergence of autobiographies by female Dalit writers changed and reshaped the perspective of Dalit women in our society. *Karukku* (1992) and *Sangati* (1994) by eminent Dalit writer Bama, and *Aydan* (2003*)* by Urmila Pawar document the sufferings of and atrocities committed upon Dalit women and how the victims have fought, overcome and survived the traumatic events.

Eminent Dalit writers Bama and Urmila Pawar actively participated in political movements and mobilize their fellow women to unite and fight for their basic rights and freedom. Bama and Urmila Pawar help to inculcate Dalit consciousness and awareness that will inspire Dalit women to fight for their equitable existence. It is this awareness that inspires Dalit women to create a 'room of their own' amidst the traditionally colonized literary horizon.

Key Words: Dalit women, Patriarchy, Autobiography, Bama, Urmila Pawar, Awareness, Education, Rights, Existence

The woman in post-colonial society is doubly colonized. In most cases Dalit women were constructed to support dominant modes of ideology. These women suffer two-fold agony, one as a Dalit and another as a female. Brutal patriarchy, gender disparity and sexual violence are the important causes of this suffering. They face constant threats from all quarters to ensure that they follow the set norms and do not question any atrocity, inequality or discrimination they face. Dalit autobiographies evolved as dynamic expressions of the social worlds of Dalits and their co-relation with the dominant class in society. The autobiographies explore Dalit women's assertion of their rights and their necessity to nurture their intellectual faculties to develop a critique of patriarchy. In my paper, I would like to focus on Bama's autobiographies *Karukku* and *Sangati*

and the autobiography of Urmila Pawar, *The Weave of My Life*. The writings of Bama and Urmila Pawar reveal that the representation of women was sharply divided along caste and class lines, reinforcing not just a caste hierarchy but a female hierarchy among upper caste and Dalit women. In their writings, Bama and Urmila Pawar became more and more involved with the lives and struggles of the unprivileged Dalit women and the atrocities inflicted on them. In fact, these two prolific Dalit writers Bama and Urmila Pawar, perform a necessary role in rendering voice to the women who otherwise remain voiceless. They explore predominantly the issue of discrimination of Dalit women, their marginalization- the intersection of socio-cultural, ethical and gender discrimination. Their writings influence the lives of Dalit women by awakening them and inspiring them for self- realization of their identity as a human being beyond caste and creed. They themselves have been the victims of caste discrimination and they also wanted to record their struggle and suffering. Interestingly, they have chosen autobiography as a form of reconstructing identity and asserting the rights of Dalit women as a whole. Bama and Pawar explore a positive cultural identity for Dalits in general and Dalit women in particular.

Bama, also known as Bama Faustina Soosairaj, is a Tamil novelist. She rose to prominence with her autobiographical novel *Karukku* and *Sangati* which document the joys and sorrows experienced by Dalit Christian women in Tamil Nadu. *Karukku* appeared in the Tamil version in 1992, was translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom in 2000. It explores the life of a Dalit woman and documents the casteism prevailed in Indian society. It is a trenchant critique of Indian civil society- its educational system, the church and the bureaucracy. *Karukku* records the harrowing experiences Bama has undergone as a woman as well as a Dalit nun. Her startling revelation of discrimination in the church left her baffled. In the autobiography Bama critiques the caste-ridden Christian social order that subjugates the Dalit people, especially the Dalit women. Here Bama exhibits different ways to overcome the caste discrimination and self-humiliation.

Bama's writings become a strategy to bring to the attention of a wider public to the plight and struggles of these marginalized people. Bama belongs to a Tamil Dalit community called Parayas, who are considered to be the lowest of the low in the Indian caste society. In order to liberate themselves from the clutches of casteism, Bama's family members and relations became Christians. However, religious conversion in India has hardly brought any remarkable

improvement in the lives of Dalits. So even after conversion, Bama was looked down upon by upper caste people. The day she discovered that both her grandmothers were regularly given leftovers by the naicker families in return of their hard physical labour she was horrified and protested:

> Both my grandmothers worked as servants for Naicker families. In the case of one of them, when she was working in the fields, even tiny children, born the other day, would call her by her name and order her about, just because they belonged to the Naicker caste. And this grandmother, like all other labourers, would call the little boy Ayya, Master, and run about to do his bidding. It was shameful to see them do this. Even the way they were given their drinking water was disquieting to watch. The Naicker women would pour out the water from a height of four feet, while Patti and the others received and drank it with cupped hands held to their mouths. I always felt terrible when I watched this. (16)

Bama had by then realised that education was the only way for Dalits to improve their degraded conditions. Her immediate examples were her father who was serving in the Indian army and her elder brother Annan who had completed his post-graduation. She was awarded a prize for standing first among all the Harijan pupils of that district who took the government S.S.L.C. exam that year. Bama was jubilant when her name was called out in assembly, and everyone clapped. However, Bama mentions that during her school and college days, she and other lower caste students had to confront caste discrimination at the hands of upper caste teachers without any reason. It was Bama's Annan, her elder brother who inspired her to learn and educate her as much as she can to fight caste discriminations. He once told Bama,

> Because we are born into the Paraya jati, we are never given any honour or dignity or respect. We are stripped of all that. But if we study and make progress, we can throw away these indignities. So study with care, learn all you can. If you are always ahead in your lessons, people will come to you of their own accord and attach themselves to you. Work hard and learn. (17-18)

Bama's tries her best to uplift herself from the realm of caste- ridden society by dint of her education:

> And I studied hard, with all my breath and being, in a frenzy almost. As Annan [elder brother] had urged, I stood first in my class. And because of that, many people became my friends, even though I am a Paraichi. (18)

Through hard work and perseverance she completed her college education. Later, she earned a master's degree in education and took monastic vows in a teaching convent, planning to make education of Catholic Paraya girls her highest priority. Inspired by the life of Jesus Christ, she became a Catholic nun and prepares herself to serve the poor and the destitute. But when she entered into the religious order, she found to her utter horror and dismay that the majority of the church authorities were from the upper caste who deliberately discriminated against people from the lower caste. She was shocked to hear from the Sisters that even though Dalit Christian women successfully completed their course, as prospective nuns, they would be given a separate order and be sent to a backward area. In fact, this happened to Bama as well. When she completed her course she was sent to a remote rural area for teaching. She was in the convent for long seven years. At last when she could not bear the discriminatory system around her any longer, she resigned and came back to her village. The first section of *Karukku* demonstrates her personal experiences as a Dalit woman in a casteist society while the second section is a passionate plea for the Dalit cause, social reform and change. *Karukku* literally means serrated leaves or blades. Paula Richman observes, Bama "uses *Karukku* (serrated leaves, blades) to articulate the notion that pain need not be an ending point; it can spur realization and new growth, as it did for her" (140). It is this progressive and positive attitude that is necessary to eliminate inferiority complex amongst the Dalit women.

Sangati (1994) explores the lives of Dalit women who face the double disadvantages of caste and gender discrimination. In her second book, *Sangati*, Bama moves from recounting a single life to provide an autobiography of a community of Paraya women. Twelve chapters of this book recount stories of female kin, neighbours, and school friends- all but one of them, Parayas. At each chapter's end, Bama articulates how constructions of caste and gender influenced the incidents recounted in the chapter. The Dalit women who have been silenced and subjugated for ages find due space in the domain of literature and articulate their inexplicable suffering in *Sangati.* Even though the stories were not told in a chronological order, which is typical of an autobiographical writings, *Sangati* carries an autobiographical element in its

narrative. It is the autobiography of a whole community. The word *Sangati* means events, and thus the novel through individual stories, anecdotes and memories portrays the event, that takes place in the life of paraya community. Bama says the purpose of writing the book in her acknowledgement:

> My mind is crowded with many anecdotes; stories not only about the sorrows and tears of Dalit women, but also about their lively and rebellious culture, their eagerness not to let life crush or shatter them, but rather to swim vigorously against the tide, about the self-confidence and self-respect that enables them to leap over threatening adversities by laughing and ridiculing them; about their passion to live life with vitality, truth, and enjoyment; about their hard labour. I wanted to shout out these stories. (ix)

Dalit women were relentlessly oppressed on account of their caste as well as gender at home and outside, by upper caste men and Dalit men as well as the family. Even the games that children played were influenced by gender lines. As Bama recalled in *Sangati* "Boys do not let girls play their games. Girls could only play at cooking a meal, play at being married off or even play at getting beaten up by husbands!"(6). The hard life stories of the Dalits who are oppressed by the moneylenders and landlords, aided and abetted by corrupted government officials and political manipulators are described in her autobiographies. The narrator, Bama, records the events witnessed and experienced by her in her journey from girlhood to adolescence. However, the personal elements in these texts are relegated to the background and hence the texts are the authentic documentation of the lives of women. Dalit women can rightly be called the most oppressed and exploited lot in India because of the social, cultural and economic crisis in their lives. The two factors of 'caste and patriarchy' are very much dominant in the lives of Dalit women all over India. In her autobiographies Bama tried to deconstruct the age-old structures of racial and gender discrimination.

Later part of *Sangati* moves away from the state of depression and frustration. Instead it presents a positive identity to dalit women focusing their inner strength and vigour. *Sangati*'s stories about the strength of Paraya women show that they have the resources to achieve such independence. Bama's eleven year old neighbour often cares for six siblings at home while her mother works in the field, the girl also works in a match factory when her mother cannot work. Although Bama laments that the girl misses out on a real childhood, she admires how she

supports her family under difficult circumstances. Bama had reiterated time and again that education was the only way for Dalits to improve their degraded conditions:

> We should educate boys and girls alike, showing no difference between them as they grow into adults. We should give our girls the freedom we give our boys. If we rear our children like this from the time they are babies, women will reveal their strength. Then there will come a day when men and women will live as one, with no difference between them; with equal rights. Then injustices, violence, and inequalities will come to an end, and the saying will come true that 'Women can make and women can break'. (123)

Education for Bama is not limited to formal education. Dalit women, she stressed, have to gain enlightenment in a political sense rather than merely accumulate university degrees. In *Sangati*, Bama urges women to organize themselves and fight for their rights.

> "...why should we hide our own skills and capabilities? We work just as hard as they do. Why, you could even say we actually work harder. Ask them to do all that we do in a day- care for the children, look after the house, and do all the chores. They'll collapse after a single day of it, and that will be the end of their big talk and their fat arses. But they are not going to think of all this easily nor by themselves. It is we who must uphold our rights. We must stand up for ourselves and declare that we too are human beings like everyone else. If we believe that someone else is going to come and uplift us, then we are doomed to remain where we are, forever." (66)

She implores Dalit women to adopt education for self-empowerment and acceptability in society. Bama dreams of a just and humane society where she believes, everyone will be equal. In her Introduction in *Sangati*, Lakshmi Holmstrom writes,

> In the end, it is Bama's admiration for the women of her community, from the little girl Maikkanni who supports her mother and her family by working in a matchbox factory, to the old woman Sammuga Kizhavi who finds ways of ridiculing the upper-caste landlord, that shines through the book. And the ideals Bama admires and applauds in Dalit women are not the traditional Tamil 'feminine' ideals of *accham* (fear), *naanam* (shyness), *madam* (simplicity, innocence), *payirppu* (modesty), but rather courage, fearlessness, independence, and self-esteem. (xix)

Urmila Pawar's autobiography *Aaydan* which was published in the year 2003, was translated as *The Weave of My Life* (2008) by Maya Pandit. Here Urmila Pawar not only shares her tireless effort to overcome caste and gender discrimination but also conveys the excitement of an awakening consciousness during a time of profound political and social changes. Urmila Pawar was born in the Konkan region of Maharashtra where weaving *aaidan*- bamboo baskets and other household items- was the main caste-based occupation of the mahar community. Looking back on her childhood, Pawar sees an intimate connection between the weave of the aaidan that her mother made and her writing.

As a child of parents inspired by the ideas of Babasaheb Ambedkar, Urmila grew up in a family that emphasized education and accorded equal treatment to their son and daughters. Urmila was the youngest of four children of Lakshmi Arjun Pawar and her husband, Arjun Chimaji Pawar. Both parents encouraged their children's educational aspirations. She remembers distinctly that her father wanted all his children to be educated by all means. Her father had studied up to sixth standard and became a teacher in a school for untouchable children on the hill called Sinaltekdi. Her father while teaching at different places in the region convinced others about the importance of education. He died when Urmila was in the third standard and the family had to face a turmoil phase. However, in spite of all difficulties, all the children continued their studies. Pawar narrates one memorable incident in her memoir like this,

> Aye was weaving her baskets as usual. She did not see me when I crossed her and entered the house. Her face looked worried. She was engrossed in her own thoughts and her fingers flew over the basket. Going to her, I told her about the scholarship and held the twelve rupees before her. Suddenly her face lit up with a sunny smile and eyes sparkled. (91)

Urmila passed out her Matriculation in 1964 and got a job in the Public Work Department in the government of Maharashtra. She completed her masters in Marathi. She opined that the Dalits can liberate themselves from the shackles of suppression and subordination through their own effort of education and social activism. However, Pawar also protests vociferously against the masculine failure of responsibility and loyalty. She writes,

> I slogged the whole day in the office, at home, and after an arduous journey was dead tired by the time I reached home. And yet at night, though my body was a mass of aches and pains, I pressed my husband's feet. I was ready to do anything he wanted, just to make him happy. I was ready to die for a smile, a glance from him. But he accused me, 'Leave alone being an ideal wife, you are not even a good one!' Later on he began saying that I was far from being a good mother as well! I failed to understand what exactly he wanted from me and became miserable. Gradually it became clear to me that everything that gave me an independent identity- my writing, which was getting published, my education, my participation in public programmes- irritated Mr. Pawar no end. Gradually, he began to be full of resentment. (246)

She succeeded in confronting oppression of patriarchy, caste and ethnic hierarchies and class exploitation and refused victimhood.

> He felt that he was losing control over his wife fast and had to establish his authority with an iron hand so as to keep her within bounds! But he did not know that my horizons had expanded hugely; that I had seen the outside world and that he did not have the power to keep me confined to the narrow space of home anymore. (247-48)

She resisted the brunt of social oppression and violence with indomitable will and courage. Says Pawar,

> I had realized that I now had a new vision, a new perspective of looking at women. I had lost my fear. The women's movement had given me great strength to perceive every man and woman as an equal individual. It had taught me to relate to them freely, without any prejudice whatsoever! (248)

Urmila Pawar, along with her friends came up with the idea of setting up an organization for women. She realized that there was a great need to organize women. She proposed to establish a literary platform where women can write, speak and share their experiences and write with other women. Pawar decided to float a Dalit Mahila Sahitya Sanghatana (Dalit Women's Literary Organization) to address so many issues concerning the women in her community, such as ignorance, superstitions, casteism, employment and others. Their organization was named Samwadini Dalit Stree Sahitya Manch. 'Samwadini' means a woman who aims at

communication with everyone. It was inaugurated by Eleanor Zelliot, prominent writer on Dalits. Many dalit writers like Babytai Kamble, Shantabai Kamble and Padmashree Daya Pawar were present along with Maxine Bernston, the scholar from Phaltan. The first Dalit Women's Sahitya Sammelana, which they had organized in Vartak Hall in Mumbai in May 1987, was the first of its kind not only in Maharashtra but in the whole country. Urmila Pawar with her friend, Meenakshi Moon, began an ambitious project on the participation and contribution of women in the Ambedkar movement. They interviewed many women, like Lakshmibai Kakde, Geetabai Pawar, Jaibai Chaudhary, Anjanibai Deshbhratar , Shantabai Sarode, Chandrika Ramteka, Babytai Kamble, Shantabai Kamble, Virendrabai Teerthankar, Devki Khandare, Laxmibai Naik, Chandrabhaga Chothmal. These and many such women made history by participating in the Ambedkar movement and became a source of inspiration for women. The book on these women's contribution to the Ambedkarite movement, *Aamhi hi Itihasa Ghadawala* (*We Also Made History*) was released by Dr. Eleanor Zelliot in a ceremony in Mumbai. Urmila Pawar finds out that with education, awareness and income to support, Dalit women have at least started to live with dignity in society. In the concluding paragraphs of *Aaydan*, Urmila Pawar writes, "This aaydan of my life and its weave...what will it have to offer the readers?" She opines, "May be it will remind some of their own lives, help them cast a glance down memory lane...I want them to see that each and every person's life is a social document. If they look at as what I have written as a part of what life is like that would be more than enough for me." (320)

Thus, by delineating the lives of the Dalit women in their autobiographies and stories, Bama and Urmila Pawar reiterate that women should not be passive and submissive and should realize the inner strength and resilience which they possess. They should be aware of their own worth. In fact, they should have firm belief and conviction in their own potential to reshape their lives. Their writings teem with extraordinary larger than life female characters who transcend their circumstances and challenge assumptions about the downtrodden 'other'. These female characters are never merely victims. They were capable of deep friendship and being supportive to each other. As argued by Sharmila Rege in her book, *Writing Caste, Writing Gender: Narrating Dalit Women's Testimonios* (2006), caste identity can be transcended by the larger identity of sisterhood among all women.

Education was given utmost priority in their agenda with a view that its liberative effects would empower Dalit women and finally bring in social equality in Indian society. Their yearning for an egalitarian society is certainly influenced by the leaders of non-brahmanic movements- Phule and Ambedkar who had the same vision. Both Mahatma Phule (1828-90) and Babasaheb Ambedkar (1891-1956) involved women closely in their struggle for individual rights and social reform. Phule recognized the importance of education and demanded the access of it to all sections. Phule emphasized on the importance of women education and started a separate school for women. Ambedkar gave more importance to educate the Dalits. His clarion call "educate, organize and agitate " made an indelible impression in the minds of Bama and Urmila Pawar. They follow the path of Baby Kamble who is the first dalit woman to have written an autobiography in Marathi. As a staunch follower of Babasaheb Ambedkar's principles, Baby Kamble illustrates in *The Prisons We Broke* how education and self-esteem can redeem the Dalit women from the kind of domestic and social problems that they have to confront. Baby Kamble states in her autobiography how she was moved by Babasaheb Ambedkar's plea for educating Dalit children. She further states that Dr. Ambedkar made the Mahar women to take a different path. Ambedkar asked the Mahar women to educate their children so that they will make the Mahar women aware of their rights. Strong parallel can be drawn with Australian Aboriginal literature which in its agenda to educate and seek justice comes near to the scope of Indian Dalit autobiographical writings. Women in Aboriginal communities have also been subjected to discrimination, oppression, segregation. Australian women writers and activists Sally Morgan, Jackie Huggins who in their autobiographies write not only about the individual self but about their communities as well, urged the oppressed women to educate themselves to elude all forms of oppression.

From just adhering to a social role to having an individual identity is definitely a revolutionary step very much desired by Bama and Urmila Pawar. Essentially, the narratives construct Dalit women as an individual endowed with reason, inherent dignity and human rights. Their works discuss the issue of social, political and economic justice with ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity, awakening in every reader a consciousness of the oppressed people. The very act of writing by these women becomes an act of assertion of identity and empowerment and also a veritable gesture of defiance, subversion and resistance. These writings serve as a tool of restoring lost voices, reclaiming one's identity and asserting human rights in a society which

politically renders them powerless and voiceless. This progressively developing self-confidence and assertiveness will inspire the women to enunciate their racial and social identities as strongly that they would become successful in building a sense of belonging to the land, to their people and to their heritage.

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Looking for Equivalents: A Study of Mahasweta Devi's Story "Arjun" in English Translations

Arun Kumar Pramanik

Abstract: J. C. Catford in his book *A Lingustic Theory of Translation* (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language" (20). He argues that the central problem of translation practice is that of finding the translation equivalents. Due to the linguistic limitations and cultural differences, the exact equivalents of words are not possible to 'replace' or to find out. But in spite of the unavailability of the proper equivalents, translations are needed. There are also some cases where the equivalents are available, but the translation does not sound like Source Text. In those cases, the translator deviates much from the Source Text with the desire of creating a text of his/her own. This paper is an attempt to reflect on this issue through the analysis of the two English translated versions of Mahasweta Devi's Bangla story "Arjun", one by Mridula Nath Chakroborty and another is my own.

Key words: Translation, Equivalence, Politics, Mahasweta Devi.

Translation or the process of translation is, I. A. Richards argues, "the most complex type of event yet produced in the evolution of the cosmos" (Gentzler 17). Translation demands proper knowledge not only of the Source and Target languages, but the cultures too. The central problem of translation practice is that of finding the translation equivalents. Due to the linguistic limitations and cultural differences, the exact equivalents of words are sometimes not available. But in spite of the unavailability of the proper equivalents, translations are needed. There are also

some cases where the equivalents are available, but the translation does not sound like Source Text. In those cases, the translators deviate much from the Source Text with the desire of creating a text of his/her own. This paper is an attempt to reflect on this issue through the analysis of the two English translated versions of Mahasweta Devi's Bangla story "Arjun", one by Mridula Nath Chakroborty and another is my own.

Let me here first reflect on some significant views on the very act of translation. J. C. Catford in his book *A Lingustic Theory of Translation* (1965) defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent material in another language" (20). Eugene Nida in his book *Towards A Science of Translating* (1964) points out:

> Translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source language message first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style (83).

Nida gives much importance on meaning as conveying meaning is the first and foremost liability of a translator. W. Wilss in his *The Science of Translation: Problems and Methods* (1982) defines translation as follows:

> Translation is a transfer process, which aims at optionally equivalent TL text, and which requires the syntactic, the semantic and pragmatic understanding and analytical processing of the SL (3).

But B. Hatim and I. Mason in their well-known book *Translator as Communicator* (1997) consider translation as "an act of communication which attempts to relay, across cultural and linguistic boundaries, another act of communication" (1). Considering translation as a form of cross-cultural communication, S. J. Tianmin in his article "Translation in Context" (2000) asserts

that “translation is simultaneous decontexualization and recontexualization, hence is productive rather than reproductive” (qtd. in Mahmoud Ordudari). To Peter Newmark translation involves some loss of the original meaning and this ‘basic loss of meaning is on a continuum between over translation and under-translation” (qtd. in Pathak). So, after summing up these different definitions of translation it can be said that translation is a skilful literary exercise through which the ideas of an author are transferred from one language into another remaining close as much as possible to the Source Text.

So, translation is not merely the transference of meaning and style also. But it is not as spontaneous as the very act of writing itself. Translating a literary text is almost as difficult as constructing the Tower of Babel. It is because of the linguistic and cultural differences. To quote Edward Sapir from his article “Selected Writing in Language, Culture and Personality” (1949): “No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing same social reality” (qtd. in Steiner, 87). Translation is not just putting the lexical equivalent of the Source Language into the Target Language, but much more. Finding equivalent words in the Target Language sometimes become difficult. Words are loaded with memory, associations and literary echoes. The translators face enormous problems in translating certain culture based words into another language in a different culture. Colloquial expressions, slangs, curse words and proverbs are difficult to translate for there is no one to one correspondence between cultures and languages. Equivalents of some swearing words are hard to find in a different language.

There are several cases when linguistic and cultural equivalents are available, but the translators take much liberty in the act of translation and thereby create a story of their own. Though there may not be much ‘politics’ in their translations as the contemporary translation theorists argued, a substantial amount of ‘omissions’, ‘additions’ and ‘mistranslations’ are found

in the translated texts. One such example is Mridula Nath Chakraborty's English translation of Mahasweta Devi's Bangla story "Arjun".

The Bangla story "Arjun" was first published in the *Dainik Bartaman* in 1984, and later it was included in *Mahasweta Devir Panchasti Galpa*, published from Pratikshan Publication in 1996. The story was first translated into English by Mridula Nath Chakraborty who now teaches in The University of Western Sydney, and published from Katha, New Delhi in an edited volume *The Wordsmith* in 1996 from which a Kannada translation has recently been published in "*Nammanuvada*", a collection of translated stories, from The Mangalore University College, Mangalore. The story was also translated into Hindi by D. Sharma as a children's story, and published from Katha in 1998. My English translation is published in Sahitya Akademi Bi-Monthly Journal *Indian Literature*, in Vol. LVII No. 2, March/April, 2013, No. 274.

Mahasweta Devi's writings are basically about tribals, their sufferings and humiliations at the hands of mainstream society. "Arjun" is a story about the exploitation of the tribals by the local moneylenders. Bishal Mahato and Ram Haldar are the influential people of the society who for their own profit force the Shabars to fell trees, and thereby taken into jail. One day Bishal Mahato calls Ketu Shabar to fell the big Arjun tree, the only surviving relic of the Bandhini jungles from the Zamindari era, on the condition of giving him some money and country liquor. Though Ketu promised to do so with the help of other Shabars, they are reluctant because the Arjun tree is closely associated with their ancestry and culture. They believe the Arjun tree as the manifestation of the divinity. Ketu and his friends Banamali, Diga and Pitambar decide what to do in secret. They are determined to save the tree because the tree is revered by all—the Shabars, Kherias and other tribes. They gather around the Arjun tree and worship it with their dhols and dhamsas. Mahato and Haldar feel afraid after seeing the tribals' gathering. They know the tree and the people, but today they are unable to comprehend them.

They seem like strangers to Bishal Mahato and Ram Haldar. Thus the story depicts the defeat of these exploiters at the hands of the tribals.

Let me now highlight some of the important aspects of the story from the theoretical standpoints of translation. Tense needs to be strategically used by translators. When translating, a translator needs to fix up the strategy of using tense because this is the very backbone of a story and its proper use evokes the message of the Source Text. And here the translator has the liberty because he/she can fix up the strategy keeping in mind the Target Language structure. And the point is that though sometimes it is difficult, yet the translator should try to maintain the strategy till the end. Unlike "Draupadi", Mahasweta devi wrote "Arjun" in simple lucid prose with a linear story-telling method. The whole narration follows in a very straightforward manner without much digression. It spans a few days only. The author has very effectively portrayed Ketu's meeting with Bishal Mahato, his meeting with his neighbours, their promise to Bishal to cut down the Arjun tree for money, and ultimately Bishal's defeat to these tribal folks as their love for the Arjun tree wins at last. And throughout the story Devi has used simple present tense and occasionally past tense. After close reading of the story, I thought to continue the story in present tense and in some cases past tense according to the context of the story. Mridula Chakraborty translated almost the whole narration of the story in past tense, and the dialogues in the present tense. And this is very effectively done. Let me here mention the opening of the story. Mahasweta Devi writes:

> *Aghryān jāi jāi, pous āsbe, ekhono sit temon poṛeni, rode āseni om. Bishāl Māhātor khete dhān kātā hoye gechhe kāl. Kshet gurāni, Tunkurāni, dhānkhedāder sange sārādin Ketu Shabar o dhān kuṛieche. Sandhyār kuāsāi Ketu*

vābchhilo ektu mod kotha theke pāi. Pābe nā tā jāne. Tobu chintāi āmej ki! (Devi 579)

Mridula Chakraborty translates:

> Aghrayan was almost over and the month of Poush was just round the corner. It was not cold enough yet for the sun's warmth to be welcome.
>
> The ripe paddy crop in Bishal Mahato's farm had been harvested the previous day. All day, along with the harvesters and casual grain pickers, Ketu Shabar too had been collecting the leftover grains of paddy in the fields. Now, in the foggy twilight, he needed a little liquor to warm him and to relax his aching body. The desire was sure to remain ungratified, but, he told himself, there was no harm in fantasizing. (Chakraborty 178)

My translation follows:

> The month of *Agrahayana* is coming almost to an end. *Pous* will follow. The weather is not very cold. Yesterday, crops were cut in the paddy fields of Bisal Mahata. Ketu Shabar went with the other grain-collector to collect grains. In the evening, Ketu was thinking how to get a little bit *chullu*, the country liquor. He knows well that he will not get it. Yet he relishes the thought of getting it (Pramanik 68).

Both the translations artistically evoke the spirit of the Source Text though different tenses have been used. My translation is to some extent literal in accordance with Devi's narration of the story, while Chakraborty has deviated a little. It seems to me that this is permissible keeping in mind the linguistic complexities as different languages have different narrative structural patterns.

But the problem is that Mridula Chakraborty in certain cases could not adhere to her strategy till the end. As a result the frequent intersection of the present and the past tense is found in her translation. There are several instances in the translation where Mridula Chakraborty has deviated from the original. The opening paragraph as mentioned above clearly shows the difference. The translator has turned Devi's single paragraph into two. There are numerous instances in the translation. It is found that the translator has taken too much liberty in her translation. For instance, let me mention another structural aspect of the story. In the stories like "Draupadi" and "Stanadayni", Mahasweta Devi has clearly mentioned the different sections of the story by numerical numbers as 1, 2, 3 and 4. In some other stories she has used only few spaces to differentiate the narrative flow of her stories. But in "Arjun" there are no such sections as the narration flows spontaneously without any interruption. But Chakraborty in her translation has divided the story into seven sections by inserting spaces between each section. Though no numbers are put, yet the structural innovation is clearly visible in the story.

The most problematic thing that I find in Chakraborty's translation is that in many cases she has reversed the narrative order of the story. Here is an instance from the opening part of the story. Mahasweta Devi writes,

> *Sarkāri bon kātār jannya Ketu jele jāi.*
>
> *Ram Haldar anya Ketuder khnoje.*
>
> *Ketu ār vābte pāre nā. Puruliāte Sabar ghore jonmāle jangale hāt ditei hobe, jeleo jete hobe. E ekebāre niyom.*
>
> *Ketu jele gele Mahani kāj khnojte jābe, niyom.*
>
> *Ei niyomer rājotweo sunnyo kutir jhnepe kuāsha gole pore. Sarir mod chāi. Ektu nesā. Ektu vule thākā*. (Devi 579)

As a translator, Chakraborty has translated the whole idea into two paragraphs without maintaining the narrative order. Her translation follows:

> Ketu does not ever question his predicament. If you are born in the Shabar tribe of Purulia, you had to cut down the trees. And you had to go to jail. It could be no other way. If one Ketu is in jail, and something needed to be done, Haldar could always find another Ketu. Nothing lost – except that, the woman in the house had to go looking for work.
>
> The last time Ketu had been jailed for cutting down the trees of the Forest Department, Mohani had gone out looking for work. And who knows what happened … In spite of the inevitability of the situation, Ketu could not prospect of returning to an empty hut. No wonder the mind and the body demanded liquor. A little intoxication, a little oblivion... (Chakraborty 179)

The comparison between the original story and the translation clearly shows the difference between the two both in theme and style. The translator has, so to say, appropriated the ST to create a story of her own. Several incorporations are made here. The choice of words does not evoke the tribal cultural nuances of the story. The whole atmosphere is exoticized. The use of spaces here is the translator's own. The translator has made a story of her own.

There are several omissions in this short story. Here follows some major omissions. When Ram Haldar left, Ketu went to Diga, Pitambar and Banamali to talk about his predicament. Amongst them, Diga is treated with respect because once he went to learn the alphabet in the Informal Education programme. However, in Diga's house his pregnant wife gives them puffed rice and chilies to eat. This is not mentioned in Chakarborty's translation. Again, here is another important omission. With the puffed rice and chilies, Ketu, Banamali, Diga, and Pitambar are

lost in their thought and liquor. So many memories hover in their minds about the Arjun tree. And immediately after this, Mahasweta Devi writes the real situation of these Shabars. Not only the exploitations of the men of the Forest Department and the police; there is also dispute amongst the Shabars themselves. Devi writes, "*Shabarrā ābār trishanku*" (Devi, 582). These few words evoke the dispute among the different clans of the tribal people which is a major hindrance in their unity to revolt against the exploiters. But the translator has omitted this significant part in her translation. Thus several instances of omission are found in the story. There are numerous incorporations found in the English translation of Chakraborty. Several instances are found at page 181 and also in the rest part of the story. Besides she has transliterated the words like '*hanh*' (179), '*hai* (181), '*gram*-devata' (187) etc. where the equivalent words are easily available. This does not increase the rustic effect of the story. Surprisingly, she has translated '*hanh*' into 'yes' in the later part of the story (pages 182 & 187).

Finally, let me mention the dramatic effect of the story. The story is woven very skillfully with the narration and the interactions amongst the characters. There is suspense in the story also. But Chakaraborty's translation fails to recapture this spirit of the original. Mahasweta Devi writes:

> *Bishal Mahato porājoer bohortā bujhte egie jāi. Ki viṛ, ki viṛ. Ketu dholok nie nie nāchchhe, ghure ghure nāchhe. Bishal keno jeno voi pāi, durbol bodh kore. Ei gāchh, ei mānus, sobāi tār chenā. Eder āj keno achenā mone hochhe? Voi, vison voi* (Devi 583).

Chakraborty translates:

> Bishal stepped forward to taste the full flavor of his defeat.
>
> What a stupendous crowd! Ketu was dancing away like a maniac, going round and round with his dholok.

> Bishal was suddenly afraid. This tree, these people – he knew them all. He knew them very well. And yet, they seemed like strangers.
>
> Fear. An uncomprehending fear gripped him (187).

My translation follows:

> Bisal Mahata goes a few steps forward to realize the depth of his defeat. It is a huge crowd! Ketu is frantically dancing with his dhol. And he is joined by the others. Somehow Bisal is frightened. He feels very weak. This tree! These people! Everything is known to him. But how do they seem so unfamiliar now? He is frightened. Terribly frightened (Pramanik 74).

The structure of Chakraborty's story really indicates the difference between the ST and the TT. She has taken much liberty here. The ending of Chakraborty's translation seems more an adaptation than translation. It fails to evoke the force of Mahasweta Devi's tribal text.

However, here my purpose here is not to undervalue Chakraborty's translation or to establish my translation as 'good'. I've just pointed out the discrepancies that are found between the original and the translation which could have been easily overcome in Mridula Chakraborty's translation of Mahasweta Devi's tribal story "Arjun". If a translation from the Source Text differs so extensively, then the translation done from the translated text in another language would remain far away from the 'original' text. And it would be really an injustice for the readers who cannot go through the Source Text due to the linguistic limitations. A translation should be after all a close equivalent of the Source Text.

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Suppressed Stories, Marginalized Personages: Rewriting the Tale of the *Mahabharata* in Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra*

Sovan Tripathy

Abstract: Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurukshetra* is a collection of three stories, namely, 'The Five Women', 'Kunti and the Nishadin' and 'Souvali'. Using the ancient epic *Mahabharata* as the source and the Kurukshetra war as the central motif, Mahasweta weaves the three stories critiquing the mainstream, patri-centred narrative. Conferring identities as well as voice to some women-folk – all marginalized, dispossessed and dalit – she offers some stories so long unheard, uncared. She exposes social snobbery and discriminatory customs of the royal family, the *rajavritta* people who loath and neglect the *janavritta,* the common people. The five peasant women folk in the story, 'The Five Women', having lost their husbands who were deployed in the Kurukshetra war as the foot-soldiers, sharply criticize the glory and valorization of the *'dharmayuddha'* which to them is a cold-blooded power game that claimed countless lives. Kunti is not a deified queen; rather bleeds within for her act of deserting her unacknowledged son, Karna in the story, 'Kunti and the Nishadin'. She with her five *Pandava* sons is also accountable for killing a *nishadin* woman with her five sons for their own self-interest. The last story in the collection, 'Souvali', shows a *vaisya dasi*'s anguish at being deprived of the minimum dignity as a wife, even though she gives birth to Dhritarashtra's son. She flares up even to perform the last-rites for dead Dhritarashtra – one who used her youth and took no responsibility – after the Kurukshetra war. Instead of observing fast, she eats according to her will and does not care going to hell. She even remains nonchalant as to whether Krishna Dwaipayan Vyas would give her any place in his writing or not. Thus, the present paper discusses how Mahasweta reconstructs the popular Hindu epic to show that even myth is politically controlled and motivated where the dominant class keeps the marginalized subservient, silenced.

Keywords: Marginalized, power-game, reconstruct, myth, dominant class, politically motivated

Mahasweta Devi, a social activist-cum-writer through her vast corpus of writing, champions the cause of the marginalized, subalterns, the proletariat class, majority of whose are tribals and very often, the women. A number of her stories and novella is centered round the women protagonists and *Rudali, Stanadayini, Draupadi, Hajaar Churashir Maa, Douloti, The Hunt* are only a few such examples. She is sometimes labeled as a feminist, which she herself denies in an interview given to Gabrielle Collu. She asserts that she is not a feminist but an activist. Despite feminist readings of her as a champion of the oppressed women, 'her women are an intrinsic part of all dispossessed communities.'(Sen and Yadav, 18)

After Kurukshetra, of Mahasweta is actually a collection of three stories, namely, 'The Five Women', 'Kunti and the Nishadin' and 'Souvali'. With the ancient epic, *Mahabharata* as her source, and the battle of Kurukshetra as a central motif, she weaves three stories in which we visit unexpected alleys and by-lanes of the traditional epic saga, and look at events through the eyes of women — all marginalized, dispossessed and dalit. She reconstructs the epical history as presented in the mainstream brahminical narrative of the Mahabharata by dismantling the so-called glorious *'dharmayuddha'* as the cold-blooded power game that claimed countless human lives.

In the story, 'The Five Women', the sheer snobbery, illusion and the discriminatory practices of the royal household have been exposed through the responses of the five marginalized women, the widowed wives of the foot-soldiers who were deployed at the Kurukshetra war. They were coming to the capital city from the outskirts of the town in search of their husbands' bodies and were appointed to serve not as *'dasis'* but as the companions of pregnant Uttara who has just become widow after the death of Abhimanyu in the same war. Their work is to keep Uttara delighted. To them, Kurukshetra war is not a '*disaster'* as Subhadra, the mother-in-law of Uttara thinks. They ask:

> Was this some natural calamity? So many great kings join in a war between brothers. It wasn't just brother slaughtering brother. We know of quarrels-jealousies-rivalries too. But such a war for just a throne? This, a holy war! A righteous war? Just call it a war of greed! (*After Kurukshetra* 03)

These women are no believers of *'divyalok'*. When Uttara says that all who have sacrificed their lives in the *'dharmayuddha'* are destined to go to heaven, Godhumi, one of the five women criticizes the concept of *'divyalok'*:

> No chariots came down from divyalok. They did not go to heaven. The foot soldiers died fighting in the very same dharmayuddha. But no funeral rites were held for their soldiers. (*After Kurukshetra* 18)

The cultures of those marginalized women folk are coterminous to natural preservation. The very names of those women are given after the names of rivers or grains. They are named Godhumi, Gomati, Yamuna, Vitasta and Vipasha. Mahasweta has set the custom of *'janavritta'* community against those of the 'rajavritta' people and has thus exposed the fallacy in the latter. The peasant women folk believe in natural preservation. As the rain quenches the baked soil – baked probably by the cremation of countless foot soldiers – the five women arrange for returning to their village. Taunting the austere life of the *'rajavritta'* widows - 'white-clad widows float around like shadowy ghosts in the chambers of silence' (*After Kurukshetra* 19) – , Godhumi reflects their own culture:

> Our widows remarry, are respected by their families. They work alongside their husbands cultivating the land, harvesting and storing the crop. They never deny the demands of life in order to exist as mere shadowy ghosts shrouded in silence. Once we had husbands, now we don't. Crying won't bring them back to life. (After Kurukshetra, 26)

Godhumi is clear sighted of the reality of war. She debunks the popular conception of *'dharmayuddha'*:

> This is not our dharmayuddha. Brother kills brother, uncle kills nephew, Shishya kills guru. It may be your idea of dharma, it's not ours. (After Kurukshetra, 26)

Vandana Gupta succinctly points out:

> Mahasweta dismantles the conventional projection and glorification of this war as a battle resulting in the victory of 'Dharma' over 'Adharma'. The legendary battle of Kurukshetra busts into a ruthless power-game played at the cost of innocent, ordinary people in Mahasweta's narratives. She re-writes the legend of Mahabharata through her protagonists for whom the only things this war symbolized were—death, destruction and ruin. (Gupta 70)

The culture of these peasant women folk makes Draupadi conscious of the hollow *'rajavritta'* life that leads her to pray for them:

> They turn to leave. Draupadi speaks in a choked voice, May you find peace, may you find fulfillment, may you return to the world of everyday life. (After Kurukshetra, 26)

In 'Kunti and the Nishadin', Mahasweta carries out a deconstruction of the character of Kunti, the Queen Mother of the Pandava kings through her confrontation with a low- caste tribal woman, a Nishadin. The story also unfolds the inhuman attitudes of the '*rajavritta'* towards the *'janavritta'*. The narrative begins at a point when Kunti accompanies Dhritarashtra and Gandhari after the Kurukshetra war in the forest, renunciating all earthly pleasures of court life. The tranquil forest atmosphere, the incense-scented breeze calmly lead Kunti to her self-realization. She goes back to her past and observes that her life had been the '*rajavritta'*. She had never spoken to a *'dasi'*, not even with Hidimba, wife of Bhima, one of Kunti's non-Aryan daughters-in-law. As she reflects alone, she interrogates the significance of the *'dharmayuddha'*:

> This war was a battle for power. A war to wipe out the other and establish oneself as all powerful. Did Dharma triumph? Was Adharma vanquished? The heartrending wails of the women at the sight of all those bloodied, savaged corpses was a curse on the word 'war' itself! (After Kurukshetra 31)

Kunti is torn within for her negligence for Karna, the unacknowledged son of her maiden state. She can not pardon herself for her denial of Karna, the only son whose father was chosen by Kunti herself. She is called as the mother of Pandavas, but none of their father was Pandu, her husband, rather they were 'sired' by different Gods. Still they are called Pandavas. Though Karna was sired by the sun, he is called a carpenter's son. She mourns over her guilt not to confess Karna as her son:

> Why did I not have the courage? To cradle Karna's severed head in my lap and say, This is my firstborn?... The son I abandoned for fear of public shame! (After Kurukshetra, 32)

While roaming in the forest, far away from the ashram, Kunti meets one elderly Nishadin who has heard all of Kunti's confessions. She taunts Kunti for her act of deserting Karna:

> The rajavritta folk and the lokavritta folk have different values, different ideas of right and wrong. If a young nishad girl makes love to the boy of her choice and gets pregnant, we celebrate it with a wedding. (After Kurukshetra, 40)

As Kunti can not realize what kind of law is that, the elderly Nishadin says that 'it is Nature's law. Nature abhors waste'. (After Kurukshetra 41)

If the ancient epic, *Mahabharata* does not give enough space to the *'janavritta'* community, Mahasweta's avowed allegiance to them is conspicuously clear when the elderly Nishadin says to Kunti to *'confess the gravest sin'* she with her five sons had committed. As Kunti can not remember, the elderly Nishadin reminds her how Kunti with her five sons used to live in the house of *Iac, Jatugriha* with the full knowledge that this house will be burnt to ashes. As they needed to save themselves giving irrefutable proof that all six of them had been burnt, they invited a certain elderly Nishadin with her five sons to their feast, made them drunk and while they lay senseless, Kunti with her five sons escaped through a secret tunnel. That elderly Nishadin with her five sons was consequently burnt to ashes, giving the impression that Kunti with her five sons had been burnt. That elderly Nishadin was the mother-in-law of the present elderly Nishadin. She asks Kinti:

> You have held feasts for so many Brahmans so many times, Kunti. How often have you invited any Nishad-Kirat-Sabar-Nagavanshi forest tribals? And did you serve wine everytime? (After Kurukshetra 42)

This is the 'gravest sin' in the eyes of the *'lokavritta'* principle, even though, Kunti does not remember because, *'to sacrifice or harm innocents in one's own self-interest is the most unpardonable sin'. (After Kurukshetra,41).* Kunti can not deny that sin and she fears the revenge of the Nishadin woman. But the latter, criticizing the *'rajavritta'* custom of revenge, says:

> No. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, that's the way of the rajavritta. That's what Kurukshetra was all about. The lokavritta's ways are different. (After Kurukshetra 43)

Kunti defies the law of Nature and she will be punished by 'Nature's law'. The elderly Nishadin explains how resin, a highly inflammable seed, causes forest fire and such a fire has already started. There is no escape for Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti. As everybody including the forest animals is leaving away the forest for mountains, streams, referring to Dhritarashtra, Gandhari and Kunti, the elderly Nishadin grins:

> Three blind, weak and infirm people can not make it there. One is blind from birth, another has chosen to be blind, and you, you are the blindest of the three. (After Kurukshetra 43)

The forest fire gradually consumes everything. Dhritarashtra and Gandhari, after the loss of their hundred sons in Kurukshetra war, were waiting patiently for the final fire to consume them. Kunti has also lost all her desires to live. She welcomes death. The authorial comment at the end shows the age-old fallacy of royal culture:

> Burning alive in the flames of a forest fire, will she pray for forgiveness from a certain dead Nishadin?
>
> In the rajavritta, does one beg forgiveness for killing the innocent?
>
> Kunti does not know. (After Kurukshetra 44)

Thus the natural space of the forest gives the subaltern power and agency to rip apart the guise of grandeur of Kunti and hold her accountable for the heinous crime against the low-caste tribals. Says Vandana Gupta:

> Mahasweta, here dislocates the deified status of Kunti and exposes the confused, weak, vulnerable, guilt-ridden woman hidden beneath the grand epical figuration of her. (Gupta 70)

'Souvali', the last story in the collection, *After Kurukshetra*, charts out the heart-felt anguish of a low-caste *'dasi'* after being deprived of the dignity of a wife - wife of Dhritarashtra - though she conceived a child, Yuyutsu by him. The story records how vociferously Sovali, the visya *'dasi'*, refuses to perform any death-rites of Dhritarashtra and unfolds the insensitivity of the royal family for the marginalized that used to serve as the servants. While Gandhari was with a child, a

vaisya 'dasi', souvali was in the service of Dhritarashtra and she bore a child, named Yuyutsu. Souvali, being deprived of the dignity of a wedded-wife, left the royal household and lived at the outskirts of the town while Yuyutsu was taken away from her and was sent to *'gurugriha'*. However, the son was never acknowledged as a *Kaurava*, rather he was ignored, constantly humiliated as a *'dasi-putra',* a *'slave-child'.* After the death of Dhritarashtra, he did the *'tarpan'* and came back to be united with his mother, Souvali. He is not Yuyutsu, but Souvalya in Souvali's house, because the name 'Yuyutsu' reminds Souvali of the irresponsibility of Dhritarashtra. She flares up: *'Give the boy a name and that's the end of all responsibility' (After Kurukshetra 47).* The ignored, unacknowledged son, Souvalya, after performing the death-rites, repents: '*Never went near him, never called him father and today I did the tarpan for him'. (After Kurukshetra 47).* Sovali consoles him:

> You did your duty. Today they had to grant you the first right. You are Dhritarashtra's son. If they left you out, they would have gone against dharma. (After Kurukshetra 47).

Souvali had requested Gandhari to release her from the status of a *'dasi'*, but nothing so occurred. She was aggrieved for Dhritarashtra who had used her youth, took away her child because in *'rajavritta'* the children are brought up not by their mothers but by the wet-nurses. Being united with her son, Souvali says that natural emotions like tenderness, compassion, caring, love are only to be found among the common people, *'janavritta'*. But, in *'rajavritta'*, they keep such natural emotions strictly in check. She vents all her spleen: *'And that's their downfall. It's always been power, greed, arrogance and enmity that's caused the ruin of the rajavritta.' (After Kurukshetra 52)*

Being asked by her son as whether she would perform any death-rites, Souvali says *'I have no such duty' (After Kurukshetra 48)* and later on, she says to Chandra who used to accompany her, that Dhritarashtra was nothing to her. He was her son's father only*: 'I am just a dasi. Was I his wedded wife, that I should undergo the death-rites?' (After Kurukshetra 53).*

Denying all death-rites, Souvali feasts on various delicious foods and goes to sleep peacefully. She is not afraid of going to hell even for denying the dead Dhritarashtra.

> Souvali tells herself, why worry about all that? I'm hungry, so I will eat... Today too I'll let my own dharma tell me what's right… (After Kurukshetra 53)

The authorial comment goes—

> 'It is said that Krishna Dwaipayan Vyas is going to write about this righteous war…So let him! Souvali doesn't want even a mention of her name anywhere.' (After Kurukshetra, 53)

Mahasweta's preoccupation with the marginalized, subaltern class in her writings always falsify the official version of historiography. In case of *After Kurukshetra*, she, through the voice

of some dispossessed, suppressed women, who were denied of voice in the ancient epic, *Mahabharata*, challenges the mainstream brahminical narrative. The three stories focus the age-old power structure as well as social and cultural hierarchy by which the dominant class keep the proletariat subjugated, silenced. Thus, the *Mahabharata* seems to be also a politically motivated narrative, controlled and structured by the powers. In his *Representing Women*, Pankaj K. Sing argues:

> In terms of their conceptualization and function, history, myth and legend share a common platform. In fact, in the Indian context the terms 'myth' and 'history' have often been used interchangeably since even our mythical accounts, such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, are part fiction, part history. Myth, legend and history as used by the power-centers are not natural but politically motivated narratives, controlled and structured by the powers that be to promote and perpetuate their domination and ideology. The subjugated are either silenced or are made complicit. (Pankaj K. Sing 44).

Thus, the ancient tale of the Mahabharata is in the words of Raymond Williams, *'a continual selection and interpretation'* (Williams 432) highlighting only mainstream culture, its value systems which Mahasweta reconstructs in her *After Kurukshetra.*

Notes

1. Nishadins are women of Nishad people, one of the uncivilized races of ancient India chiefly living by hunting; swineherds, fishermen or fowlers by caste.
2. Soon after Kunti's marriage to Pandu, oneday in the forest Pandu's arrow struck a pair of mating deer- actually a sage and his wife. The dying sage- a Brahman- cursed Pandu that any attempt of sexual union with his wife would result in his death. Thus cursed, Pandu informed Kunti of his inability to sire an heir and requested her to choose another as father to her child. Kunti then told him that the sage Durbasa, pleased with her service and devotion, had granted her a boon enabling her to summon any god she liked and thereafter bear his son. Pandu requested her to summon Dharma, or Yamraj and Yudhisthira was born of that union. Subsequently, according to Pandu's desire, Kunti summoned Pavana(the Wind God) who fathered Bhima and Indra (the King of the Gods) who fathered Arjuna. Thus, none of the Pandavas were born of Pandu.

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The Oedipal Tug between Naipaul and India: A Diasporic Phenomenon

Dr. Aloy Chand Biswas

Abstract: The Diaspora in immigrant writers prompts them to look forward to detecting their roots in far away from their adopted lands. Home for them is not actually a quest for spatial identity, but for roots. The dilemma in an expatriate writer is an unending one, for neither they can return to their old idea of home, nor can they find a new one in the adopted land. V.S.Naipaul born of Indian ancestry in Port of Spain was migrated to London in 1950 and settled their still now. Naipaul's settlement in London is due to some compulsion and he knows it better than anybody else that England cannot be his home. He makes his first visit to India in 1962 in search of his roots. But the imaginary homeland of his forefathers gradually fades in his vision, while standing face to face with actual India. But the Oedipal love-hate relationship between Naipaul and India can be best felt if one closely looks at the three books on India. It is natural for an expatriate writer to yearn for his root through the repeated journeys. Naipaul repeats his journey to India one after another after 1962.The bond between Naipaul and India is though not like that of between a son and his mother, but one of between a son and his foster mother, when the actual mother cannot afford the son anything original and permanent. Naipaul's first visit to India in 1962 ends in an anguish to escape to England, but his third book on India which he writes after a good number of subsequent visits to the country presents altogether a new relationship of the author with his rejected past.

Key Words: Diaspora, Roots, Spatial Identity, Home, Immigrant, Oedipal-tug, Anguish.

Journey motif is one of the important phenomena in the writings of the Third World immigrants. The diaspora in such writers prompts them to look forward to detecting their roots in lands far away from their adopted ones. Home for them is not actually a quest for spatial identity, but for roots. On one hand such a quest often involves the process of shaping history of the nations, on the other in most cases the diasporic writers get frustrated at the end of their journey, not as much because they cannot find out their roots, but so much because their homelands fall far short of their ideals in many respects. It is Viney Kirpal who makes a very significant comment in this

context: "…..where journeys frequently represent transition from one mode of being to another, or from a state of innocence to a state of experience, expatriate fiction constitutes the feeling of not quite having arrived" (Kirpal 71). The diasporic writers are truly "international" men who severe their ties with country, city, family. It is they who can look at the world from a safe perch from where impersonal views can be easily expected. At the same time the dilemma in an expatriate writer is an unending one. "He is unable to return to the old idea of home despite its certainties and he is unable to find a new one in the adopted land. His search is without end, entailing countless journeys" (Kirpal 73). A diasporic writer living in expatriation lives a life studded with ever increasing problems. Neither he can observe or rely on his old cultures, not can adjust himself with his homeland, nor can he live peacefully in the adopted land. Such a writer wishes repeatedly to return to his homeland, but ultimately cannot. So his is a search without an end only anticipating for a better day to come in life one day.

V. S. Naipaul born in Trinidad of Indian ancestry was migrated to London in 1950 and settled there till now. Naipaul's is a typical problem while detecting his past. He is born of a family migrated to Port of Spain from India long ago. Therefore while living in Trinidad by birth he is brought up in Indian cultures up to the first eighteen years of his life among the migrated Indians living there as indentured labourers. It was actually a mini-India in abroad to Naipaul at his childhood. From his very childhood Naipaul cherishes a dream to see the real India, the homeland of his forefathers. From there he becomes migrated to London for higher studies and ultimately settles there. At the beginning his mind revolted against such settlement in the colonizer's capital. But later he realizes that it is the reality. Like Conrad he comes to realize that he can settle nowhere but in London to get a better future: "It's a very strange relationship with England. I have no English audience because English people don't read my books… It's very strange… The point about being in England in 1950 is: Where else could you think of being a writer if you wrote in English?" (Singh 23). So Naipaul's settlement in England is due to some compulsion and he knows better than anybody else that England cannot be his home. A child always feels unconsciously an attraction towards his mother. The power of attraction is felt stronger in childhood. From his very boyhood days Naipaul felt an attraction towards the land of his forefathers, i.e. India. His attraction grows with his growing age and it ultimately becomes satisfied only in 1962 when he makes his first visit to India. "I had to travel to India because there was no one to tell me what the India my grandparents had come from was like" ("Two

Worlds" 5). But his first sojourn in India is not a very happy experience. His long cherished attraction towards India gradually turns into a kind of repulsion with his movement in the country. *An Area of Darkness* is a record of Naipaul's points of disagreement with the realities in India. The imaginary homeland of his forefathers gradually fades in his vision while standing face to face with actual India. His diasporic search for roots ends in smoke. He leaves the country disheartened. India to Naipaul is an imaginary homeland. Never had he claimed himself as an Indian, neither India is his home. Yet in the subconscious of the author India always glimpses as a land to be explored again and again. He feels a strong bond of relationship with India in his mind, though he never confesses it openly. Home for a migrant author is not a quest for any geographical location, but for greater need- the identity. It is a known fact that an expatriate writer always carries his country with him, yet his mind knows no bound in search of home. It is Salim in *A Bend in the River* who reflects the actual psychology of a diasporic writer:

> I was homesick, had been homesick for months. But home was hardly a place I could return to. Home was something in my head. It was something I had lost. (Naipaul, *A Bend in the River* 123-124).

The oedipal tug of relationship always exists between the expatriate writer and his motherland. India is not the motherland of Naipaul; it is the motherland of his forefathers. Yet India occupies a permanent place in the subconscious of the great writer. The oedipal love-hate relationship between Naipaul and India can be best felt if one considers the author's two expressions very deeply – one at the end of his first visit to the country and the other at the beginning of the second visit. After a deeply frustrated departure from the country in 1962, not even the greatest enemy of Naipaul can anticipate that the author would again feel an attraction for India to return. But it happens and Naipaul without any hesitation makes a second visit in 1975 and even a more fruitful one in 1988. Such an attraction – repulsion relationship between Naipaul and India is no doubt a significant case study for the researchers. How Naipaul gets depressed at the end of his first journey is evident in his own confession:

> Too much had been assumed; I felt overwhelmed; I wished to extricate myself at once. …So it ended in futility and impatience, a gratuitous act of cruelty, self-reproach and flight. (Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* 285-286).

India appears to Naipaul as 'a land of darkness' at his first visit. The attraction for India which was preserved for a long time in the author gets a sudden jolt and a repulsion begins to displace it

: "It was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two" (ibid 289). He feels a sigh of relief after becoming able to reach London after the disgusted tour to the country of his ancestors. But if we look at the opening words of Naipaul's *India: A Wounded Civilization*, the product of his second visit to India in 1975, we wonder at such a great change in the attitude of the author. It is obvious that the author becomes able to realize after a long gap that something was mistaken or 'amiss' in his earlier observations on India.

> India is for me a difficult country. It isn't my home and cannot be my home; and yet I cannot reject it or be indifferent to it; I cannot travel only for the sights. I am at once too close and too far. (Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* X)

This time he cannot reject the Indian realities outright. Rather he confesses the presence of India in him still then:

> And though in India I am a stranger, the starting point of this enquiry – more than might appear in these pages – has been myself. Because in myself, like the split – second images of infancy which some of us carry, there survive, from the family rituals that lasted into my childhood, phantasmal memories of old India which for me outline a whole vanished world. (Naipaul, *India: A Wounded Civilization* XI)

It is natural for an expatriate writer to yearn for his root through the repeated journeys. Naipaul repeats his journey to India one after another after 1962, though he knows it at his heart that India is not his homeland. It is Kirpal's view – "Third World expatriate novelists, unashamedly bring their mothers into their fiction. On the one hand, they wish to depict the powerful bonds between mothers and sons, prevalent in all traditional societies. On the other, mothers become symbols of the beloved land they have deserted" (Kirpal 77). For Naipaul, Trinidad is not so much a prominent feature in his writings, as India is. The bond between Naipaul and India is though not like that of between a son and his mother, but one of between a son and his foster mother when the actual mother cannot afford the son anything original and permanent. Naipaul's Trinidad – life was a life within a mixed community in a colonized country fostering no indigenous culture or ideology. Naipaul never can forsake his Indian nerves, not even after living in his adopted land for so many years. India also responds similarly, the whole India wake up in a jubilant mood at the news of conferring the prestigious Nobel Prize to the author in 2001, though we do not know how many West Indians become proud of their son's such a great achievement. Naipaul can never deny his relationship with India, for it is in his subconscious

state of mind. In 1962 Naipaul not only visits the metropolitan India, he also rushes to the interior village of Uttar Pradesh from where his forefathers were migrated to Port of Spain some one hundred years ago. Entering into the houses of his mother's father in the village of the Dubes, Naipaul is totally lost in a nostalgic sensation: "My mind leapt years, my sense of distance and time was shaken: before me were the very replicas of the images in the prayer room of my grandfather's house" (Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* 277). How can it be explained without labeling the author's such a sensation as his home-sensation? The situation at the village of the Dubes at Naipaul's arrival reminds one of home-coming. For the time being he forgets his rootlessness. At the rest of the time of his first stay in India, the country poses no bright future for Naipaul. At appears only an area of darkness to him. There is often seen a developing belligerence and gloominess in the expatriate's depiction of the reality both of his ancestral country and of the adopted land of his living. The picture of India as portrayed in *An Area of Darkness* and the picture of London as portrayed in *Guerrillas* and *The Mimic Men* are such products. Naipaul feels worried at India's depletion from her historical glory in the other two travelogues — *India: A Wounded Civilization* and *India: A Million Mutinies Now*, neither has he portrayed England in any better light. Jane in *Guerrillas* and Sandra, Stella and the London whore in *The Mimic Men* symbolize the picture of England as negative and belligerent. Naipaul represents the typical migrant. India is not his motherland; neither Trinidad nor London can satisfy his thirst for motherland. The tension in Naipaul like all other expatriate writers is that he cannot find solace in the adopted country; neither can he discard his old country. So a usual tug of war goes on between the old and the new ones.

In 1961 in a London – meet R. K. Narayan, a great emigrant Indian writer tells Naipaul "India will go on" (Naipaul, *India : A Wounded Civilization* 9) in spite of her lots of hurdles. In 1962- visit of Naipaul to India it appears to the migrant author as a great farce. How a country, better say a nation can go on with such intellectual depletion through a prolonged period. He immediately discards the truth of such a saying: "….. the India of Narayan's novels is not the India the visitor sees" (Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* 232). He goes further to make such a comment: "From the railway train and from the dusty roads India appeared to require only pity (Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* 270). But after a deep study of India in his mind for about thirteen to fourteen years, in his second visit in 1975 a realization shapes in his mind : "Sometimes old India, the old, eternal India many Indians like to talk about, does seem just go

on" (Naipaul, *India : A Wounded Civilization* 3). To his boyhood fancy in Trinidad India was everything that Trinidad was not and it had an ancient culture and civilization. India is taken to be the motherland the mother culture by the Trinidad Indians. Naipaul can remember well how the link with India gave their forefathers a sense of pride in Port of Spain. Therefore the experience of a journey to India becomes actually the means of an exploration of self for Naipaul. Naipaul's three travelogues on his Indian experiences are not at all fictional accounts. They are actually the accounts of a writer's self-searching in a land where lies the root of the writer as he believes so. William Walsh penetrates into the writer's private secrets about his first Indian journey: "Naipaul's return to India is as much a research into himself as into another country. He is crawling in sensitive naked feet up through the tunnels of his own self" (Walsh 63). It is also very significant to refer to what D. J. Enright suggests about Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness*: "The book is not exactly about a journey, a country, but largely about himself, a hybrid production, part novel with himself as hero, villain, victim and at times clown" (Enright 210). Even Naipaul himself has confessed about his Indian journeys that these are partly an enquiry into himself : "And though in India I am a stranger, the starting point of this enquiry – more than might appear in these pages – has been myself" (Naipaul, *India : A Wounded Civilization* XI).

Naipaul's first visit to India in 1962 ends in an anguish to escape to England. He titles the last chapter of *An Area of Darkness* -"Flight". He begins to write about the experiences of his second visit to the country in *India: A Wounded Civilization* with a "Foreword" explaining his new position about India. But his third book on India *India: A Million Mutinies Now* which he writes after a good number of subsequent visits to the country presents altogether a new relationship of the author with his rejected past. But he completes his third book with a chapter "The House on the Lake: A Return to India". This time Naipaul is a changed man. Now Naipaul does not hesitate to say that India is a country which possesses many things to be proud of. The usual attraction – repulsion theory of the oedipal tug of relationship between an expatriate writer's present and the past suggests that Naipaul is in a position to forge a new relationship with India. He says— "The India I had gone to in 1962 was like a different country" (*A Million Mutinies Now* 490). He becomes taken aback at the stormy changes in India where he found earlier a kind of intellectual depletion : "It seems to be always there in India : magic, the past, the death of the intellect, spirituality annulling the civilization out of which it issues, India

swallowing its own tail" (*India : A Wounded Civilization* 153). After twenty seven years Naipaul makes a kind of return journey with a new look and a changed attitude. His confession comes like a fresh gust of wind to the Indians who so far kept a sullen attitude towards the author: "India was set on the way of a new kind of intellectual life; it was given new ideas about its history and civilization" (*A Million Mutinies Now* 517). What was hidden in 1962 becomes clear to the author. The million mutinies rising heads in India are good signs that the people of the country have become socially and politically conscious of their individual rights. Naipaul's changed attitude towards India finally silences the voices of the critics against Naipaul's earlier views on India. Naipaul cannot be blamed for finding the Indian civilization wounded, for his own deficient background in Trinidad is like a wound that will never heal. However Naipaul's inquisitive eyes cannot miss ultimately the process of development in India: "But there was in India now what didn't exist 200 years before: a central will, a central intellect, a national idea" (*A Million Mutinies Now* 518)

Another example of Naipaul's subconscious bond of relationship with India is his uncontrolled passion to visit Kashmir again in 1988, not as much for enjoying the scenic beauty of the valley as for meeting with his first Indian guide Aziz. Aziz is a very interesting character in the entire Indian episode of Naipaul's travelling career. Naipaul's hotel-guide Aziz in his 1962 - Kashmir visit is a very amusing man with his typical Indian features. Naipaul's attraction for the Indian Paradise is not so much for the valley's paradisiacal beauties, as for the Kashmiri Aziz whose "work was his life … Service was his world" (*An Area of Darkness* 120). Naipaul would never be able to forget the Aziz-ghora-wallah secret understanding in his visit to Amarnath temple. Even after long 27 years when Naipaul visits India again he rushes to Kashmir and meets with Aziz and his teen-age son Nazir. He notices no change in Aziz, though Aziz's son Nazir presents the modern views of India.

> Twenty seven years after I had got to know him, Aziz had remained more or less the same. It wouldn't be like that with Nazir. Already he had intimations of a world outside…Nazir wouldn't be the same. New ways of seeing and feeling were going to come to him, and he wasn't going to be part of the valley in the way he was now. (*A Million Mutinies Now* 516)

By presenting many such experiences in several pages of his three books on India, Naipaul actually strengthens his bond with India. In fine I am to say that Naipaul's Indian views as reflected in his different books- especially in his Indian trilogy suggest as a whole a diasporic writer's problematic relationship with his motherland.

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