

ISSN 2454-3314

# THE INVESTIGATOR

An International Peer-Reviewed Journal of Multidisciplinary Explorations  
(Vol. 2, No. 1) March 2016



**Association for Cultural & Scientific Research**

ISSN 2454-3314

# THE INVESTIGATOR

*An International Refereed Journal of Multidisciplinary Explorations*  
(Vol. 2, No.1) March 2016



**Association for Cultural & Scientific Research**

Thrissur, Kerala, India-680689

[www.acsrinternational.com](http://www.acsrinternational.com)

## **Editorial Board**

### **Editor-in-Chief**

Dr Lison Varghese

### **Associate Editor**

Jitha Gopinath

### **Editors**

Prof.Pamela Clemit, Wolfson College, UK

Prof.Francois Jost, University of Paris. France

Dr Merlin Meadow, HBMS University, Dubai

Dr Ecaterina Patrascu, Spiru Haret University, Romania

Dr. N. Jenny Rappai, SSUS, Kalady

### **Advisory Board**

Dr R. Janatha Kumari , Sree Ayyappa College, Nagercoil

Naveena A. PMT College, Tirunelveli

Annam Ragamalika, Loyola College, Chennai

Suresh Babu G., Palakkad

### **Reviewers**

Dr Preetha M.M, Sree Keralavarma College, Thrissur

Vinshy Rosemary Saban, Rajagiri College, Cochin

Sreeja Nair, Govt Arts & Science College, Calicut

Brindha T. Sachdanandam, University of Madras, Chennai

Sujith Mohan, Mankada Govt. Arts and Science College, Malappuram

*The Investigator – An International Refereed Journal of Multidisciplinary Explorations*

Vol. 2, No.1

Chief Editor: Dr Lison Varghese

Published by:

Association for Cultural & Scientific Research (ACSR) September 2015

Thrissur, Kerala-680689, India

Printed at: educare, Thrissur

Periodicity: Quarterly

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including, photocopy, recording or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

## **Editor's Note**

*The investigator* is an international refereed multidisciplinary journal published quarterly (March, June, September and November), launched under the auspices of the academic community *Association for Cultural & Scientific Research (ACSR)*. Keeping the panoramic scopes of research as a vibrant path, *The Investigator* intends to reflect on the skilled minds attitudinally conjuring from humanities to other disciplines. The journal explores the currents of criticism and unleashes divergent thinking. It welcomes original, scholarly unpublished papers from the researchers, faculty members, students and the diverse aspirants writing in English. It is a peer reviewed journal that brings the scholarship of academicians and practitioners around the world. *The Investigator* hopes and wishes to provide a self assuring means to you for your further accomplishments.

## CONTENTS

<b>Articulating Her Story: A Study of Chitrita Banerji's <i>The Hour of the Goddess</i></b>	<b>1</b>
Annam Ragamalika	
<b>Revisiting the Coffee House: Space, Public Sphere and Nostalgia within the Indian Coffee House</b>	<b>6</b>
Achuth A.	
<b>Gendered Visual Narratives on Food</b>	<b>21</b>
Sabitha S Babu	
<b>Memory of Food Diversity as a Resistance against the Emerging Mono Culture in India</b>	<b>26</b>
Jinan T.K.	
<b>Food as Temptation in Lewis Carroll's <i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i></b>	<b>30</b>
Atheetha K.Unni	
<b>Cooking Narratives: Tracing Food Structures in Folktales through <i>Indira's Rice Noodles and Sweet Balls</i></b>	<b>36</b>
Brindha T. Sachdanandam	
<b>Nature as Ambrosia and Toxin: An Eco critical Study of Pearl S. Buck's <i>The Good Earth</i></b>	<b>42</b>
Iswarya M.	
<b>An Account of Love: A Study of the Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das</b>	<b>49</b>
Babitha B.Nair	
<b>Depiction of Eco Spirituality in Elizabeth Gilbert's <i>The Signature of All Things</i></b>	<b>54</b>
Sabira K. I.	
<b><i>In The Name of Honour: A Promiscuous Inexplicable Violence and Tragic Deprivation of Dignity and Honour</i></b>	<b>59</b>
Sruthi S. Babu	
<b>Contextualizing Food: A Study of Food in Chetan Bhagat's Select Novels</b>	<b>63</b>
Neena P.	

<b>Measuring Shakespeare: Juxtaposing the 20-21<sup>st</sup> century Malayalam Motion Pictures- <i>Kaliyattam, Karmayogi and Kannaki</i></b> Niveditha B. Warriar	66
<b>Feast of Words: Gendered Space in Bulbul Sharma's <i>Eating Women and Telling Tales</i></b> Sneha S.	74
<b>Deconstructing <i>Kaipunyam</i> Food Culture and Muslim Women in Kerala</b> Najda A.	79
<b>Diasporic Veins in Jhumpa Lahiri's <i>The Namesake</i> and Gogol's <i>Journey towards Past</i></b> Deepthy Mohan	82
<b>Diaspora and Fragmentation in Rushdie's <i>Midnight's Children</i></b> Athulya C.	88
<b>The cause of Women advocated in <i>A Doll's House</i></b> Sneha K	94
<b>Decentralization and its impact on Development: A Kerala Model Experience</b> Teeson C.J.	97
<b>Different Readers and Different Attitudes: Reader Response Theory and the View of the Readers</b> Dr Bindu Ann Philip	100
<b>Cultivation of Coconut in Thirunelveli District: An Economic Analysis</b> Dr. S. Baby Thangam	106
<b>Fragmented Selves and Transnational Spaces: A Study of Pico Iyer's <i>The Man within My Head</i></b> Chinmay Murali	112
<b>Food Represents the Culture: A Glimpse on Some Literary Works</b> Jahfar Ayyakath	119

**Annam Ragamalika**

Assistant Professor  
Loyola College, Chennai

**Articulating Her Story: A Study of Chitrta Banerji's  
*The Hour of the Goddess***

Abstract: For centuries women have used food to inform others about their lives. They do so through cookbooks, memoirs, journals, recipes, novels and letters. Some of the early writings record recipes, remedies and interesting anecdotes. It is interesting that these cookbooks, manuscripts inform the reader about the culture, life, traditions of the people through the recipes. The recipe is the representation of food through the written text. Today food historians treat recipes as historical documents and are analysing them closely. The relationship between women and food is significant. Preparing and processing and serving of food are usually done by women only. In some societies, producing and purchasing of food too. The kitchen space enforces positive ideas such as family bonding, mother- daughter relationship, creativity, the role of women in food and economics. The genre of the culinary memoir has vivid descriptions of food preparation, consumption and highlights the sensory pleasure of relishing food with family and friends.

For centuries women have used food to inform others about their lives. They do so through cookbooks, memoirs, journals, recipes, novels and letters. Some of the early writings record recipes, remedies and interesting anecdotes. In the past one of the significant sources of information of the lives of women came from the household book, which recorded personal anecdotes and experiences with interesting recipes. Jill Foulston in her introduction to the edited volume of *The Virago Book of Food: The Joy of Eating* states that the earliest version of the household book in English is from the Middle Ages. It is interesting that these cookbooks, manuscripts informed the reader about the culture, life, traditions of the people through recipes. These books were handed down from mother to daughter and seldom handed out of the family.

The recipe is the representation of food through the written text. Today food historians treat recipes as historical documents and are analysing them closely. The relationship between women and food is significant. Preparing, processing and serving of food are usually done by women only. In some societies, producing and purchasing of food too. The kitchen space enforces positive ideas such as family bonding, mother- daughter relationship, creativity and economics. Thus food helps to define the place of women in family. Different cultures look at cooking differently. In the Indian context, the woman being the Annapoorni, the Goddess of nourishment is strongly engraved in our minds. Our ancient texts like Manusmriti and books on Ayurveda discuss food in relation to good health, prosperity, well-being, a

tradition building and sustaining mechanism and so on. My paper titled “Articulating Her Story: A Study of Chitrita Banerji’s *The Hour of the Goddess*”, analyses the genre of the culinary memoir as an expression of self and society.

### **Memoir as an Expression of Self**

Memoir is a sub category of autobiographical writing or writing about one’s own life experiences. It is a literary nonfiction genre that records memories from the writer’s life told in first person narrative. Unlike an autobiography which is an account of one’s life, a memoir highlights certain crucial anecdotes in the writer’s life. An autobiography is chronologically based and covers the story of the author’s life from birth to the moment of writing the book. It chronicles the writer’s past from childhood to adulthood. Eminent people from public life record their life experiences and this autobiographical recollection of one’s life story is subjective to a great extent. A memoir is also a form of personal life story narrative which focuses on a certain time period of one’s life but is more intense and focused because it enlightens the reader about a slice of life and not the author’s life totally. Since it is a sub-genre of autobiography traits such as lapses in memory, subjective approach, authorial intervention and control applies to memoirs also. The memoir usually has a thematic approach because it explores one aspect of the author’ life only and focuses on a few chapters of his/her life experiences.

### **The Culinary Memoir**

The genre of the culinary memoir has vivid descriptions of food preparation, consumption and highlights the sensory pleasure of relishing food with family and friends. It involves metaphorical representations of food that enhances the delight of reading. Culinary memoirs enlighten the reader about different cultural, social, political, religious, class, caste, racial scenarios. Since they recall pleasant memories spent with family and friends through sharing of food, they encourage the reader to focus on building culinary bridges between kith and kin. By choosing the genre of culinary memoirs to narrate their story, women emphasis on the association they have with food. The author introduces characters, emotions, relevant anecdotes, culinary culture in culinary memoirs. They capture the flavour of the author’s experience and invite the reader to partake in a similar gastronomic treat.

### **Women and the Culinary Memoir**

In an interesting study of memoirs written by women, Vrinda Varma reveals that while writing an autobiography or a memoir a woman is challenged by the “insufficiency of a language where all languages are patriarchal” and so she opines that food can be that language that is used to

“transgress the boundaries of patriarchal discourse that creates institutionalised food identities for women”(1). She opines that women with their unique relationship with food and cooking can recollect and narrate their life stories through food. Traditionally the experience in the kitchen quintessentially belongs to the woman in most societies and this gives a unique flavour to the stories they tell. Therefore it is significant that Chitirita Banerji has chosen the genre of a culinary memoir to tell her story.

### **Diaspora and the Significance of Taste Memory**

Taste memory is a chain of memories that will enable a person to remember people and places through food. Stuart Firestein in his thought provoking lecture on the relationship between taste, smell and memory informs that taste memories are long lasting, have emotional content and need not have informational content. Conditioned taste aversions are also due to taste memory. Culinary memoirs tap on this involuntary memory to depict subjects of life such as family, friends, war, diaspora, ethnicity and a mosaic of emotions. In the case of diasporic communities, this specific food enables them to reconnect with the past, relate to the present and respond to the future. Nostalgia of home through ethnic food is a comfort zone that the diasporic writer captures and records in his or her writing. There is a naïve and at times unrealistic romanticism attached to the glorious, happy past and this marks a significant presence in the culinary memoirs of diasporic writers.

### **Food and Nostalgia**

Chitrita Banerji's *The Hour of the Goddess: Memories of Women, Food and Ritual in Bengal* is a memoir about the narrator's experiences in Calcutta and it captures her society through Bengali food. As in the writing by diasporic writers the work begins with a nostalgic reference to her home town in autumn. As a young student, she is surprised by the dull, quiet autumn in America. She fondly recollects the autumn festival of Durga Puja in Calcutta, the celebration with food and family. To overcome the loneliness, she takes “long distance cooking lessons” (Banerji 5) from her mother and creates her homeland in her kitchen through traditional food.

### **Food and Tradition**

Through food, the writer informs the reader about certain rituals and traditions of her society. She recalls her childhood days of the ritual of *batasha* hunting which ended every *kirtan* session of songs on Krishna and Radha. Through *batasha*, the delicate sweet that Banerji informs the reader of a Bengali Vaishnavite tradition of singing songs in praise of Vishnu and his incarnations. As she observes, “Food and worship have been interconnected in Hindu thinking from ancient times” (Banerji 15). The author enjoyed her



worship sessions with her grandmother because delicious food and lively stories were part of this commune with God. She observes that simple food tasted heavenly as a *prasad*.

Banerji highlights culinary practices of her society in detail such as the grinding of spices by a servant called Patoler Ma (mother of Patol). The thin woman's daily duty was to grind the spices for the family's food. Being a writer from the diaspora, Banerji describes the preparation for the grinding of spices methodically to make the experience seem exotic to a western audience. The drudgery of grinding of masala appears delicate like an artist at work. By this detailed portrayal Banerji informs the reader of the exotic quality of Bengali cuisine and the poverty of some sections in her society. She subtly tells the reader that Patoler Ma had little choice when it came to her difficult work of grinding pungent masalas for her employer's kitchen but seldom used them in her kitchen as she couldn't afford them. The writer poignantly states that she prefers her mechanical grinder to the manual grinding of the poor servant. Banerji highlights the culinary ritual of consuming bitter vegetables to ward off physical ills. She informs that Bengalis despite their fondness for sweets are equally partial to bitter taste. Shukto, a starter served in typical Bengali meals is strongly flavoured by bitter gourd. According to her, neem leaves and bitter gourd have a significant place in Bengali culture and culinary tradition.

The writer throws light on typical Bengali appliance such as *bonti* which is traditionally used to chop and cut vegetables. She discusses the Bengali fascination for milk sweets and refers to the Portugal settlement which followed Vasco da Gama during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *chhana* is like the bandel cheese which is made in Bandel, a town on the banks of Hoogly and was a Portugal settlement. Both the delicacies are made by curdling milk using an acidic substance.

### **Food Differences Manifested Through Region and Religion**

The regional and religious beliefs have an influence on the food consumed by a society. The narrator who belonged to West Bengal distinguishes the people of West Bengal from the East Bengalis by their food habits. The West Bengali ate more of a vegetarian diet with occasional fish, but for the people from East Bengal fish was a staple diet. On the basis of their food preferences the communities stereotype the other. It is later when the writer's mother learnt to cook the delicacies of the East Bengalis that this prejudice reduced in her family. Religious difference plays a vital role in cuisine. Banerji's choice to marry a Bengali Muslim from Bangladesh met with firm disapproval among her relatives. They reminded her of the ugly pages in history of rape, riot and mass killing. The writer reveals that in Bangladesh her staple diet of rice, dal, fish and vegetables tasted very

different. In her home onion and garlic were added to meat only but her Muslim in laws added onions to every vegetarian dish. Over a period of time, she begins to relish the different manifestation of the same dish. Banerji observes that bitter lessons in History have made people prejudiced and suspicious of the differences of other cultures and this can be overcome by learning about the food culture and culinary tradition of others.

When Chitrita Banerji threads the pattern of her life story and the local history through food, we notice that she is emphasizing on the significance of a much neglected art form which is the culinary art. She is apprising the reader on the effort, creativity, time sense, economics and the sheer joy involved in the much neglected culinary art. When most of the master chefs around the world are men, the daily routine of cooking and feeding the family rests with the woman whose efforts are unpaid and unrecognized labour. Through her book Banerji is acknowledging the fact that this knowledge and creativity that women possess is noteworthy. As Certeau and Luce Giard observe, “With their high degree of ritualization and their strong affective investment, culinary activities are for many women of all ages a place of happiness, pleasure and discovery”(67) and it is noteworthy that *The Hour of the Goddess* records this experience.

## References

- Banerji, Chitrita. *The Hour of the Goddess: Memories of Women, Food and Ritual in Bengal*. Seagull: New Delhi. 2006. Print.
- Certeau, Michel de and Luce Giard. “The Nourishing Arts”. .ed .Counihan, Carole and Penny Van Esterik .Routledge: New York.1997.67-76. Print.
- Civetello, Linda. *Cuisine and Culture: A History of Food and People*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed: New Jersey: Wiley, 2011. Print.
- Deshpande, Shashi, ‘Of Kitchens and Goddesses’ *The Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food writing: The Table is Laid*. ed. Thieme John and Ira Raja OUP: New Delhi.:2007. 215-219.Print.
- Firestein, Stuart *Unlocking the Mysterious Connection between Taste, Smell, and Memory*”. Big Think. 22 Sept, 2010. Bigthink.com.03.03.2015.
- Foulston, Jill, ed. *The Joy of Eating: The Virago Book of Food*. Great Britain: Virago, 2009.
- Gill,A.A. *Table Talk: Sweet and Sour, Salt And Bitter*, Phonix: Great Britain, 2007.
- Hosain, Attia. ‘Of Memories and Meals’ . *The Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food writing: The Table is Laid*. ed.Thieme John and Ira Raja OUP: New Delhi.:2007.313-318..Print.
- Procida, Mary A. “No Longer Half –Baked: Food Studies and Women’s History”. *Journal of Women’s History*, 16. 3 (2004):197-205.Project Muse. Web. 29 Dec. 2011.
- Varma, Vrinda. “Constructing Women Identities through Food

**Achuth A.**

Research Scholar

The English & Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

**Revisiting the Coffee House:  
Space, Public Sphere and Nostalgia within the Indian Coffee House**

Abstract: Functioning successfully for over 50 years, the Indian Coffee House has remained one of the most beloved restaurants in Kerala. Drawing from a number of theoretical and literary sources - particularly memoirs - the current paper lays out the history of the Coffee House as a cooperative movement and attempts to critically analyse its success in maintaining a loyal 'regular' clientele. The paper shall also engage with the role of the Coffee House in shaping Kerala's nascent public sphere and its popular imagination through the restaurant chain's continuing appeal through the constructions of memory, nostalgia and belonging among its customers.

The Indian Coffee House has probably been the most loved and successful restaurant chain operating in Kerala. Established as a workers' cooperative in the mid-1950s, following the closure of its restaurants by the incumbent Coffee Board, the Coffee House has not only weathered the storm of the neoliberal corporatization of the industry but has come to be regarded as one of the most exemplary success stories of the cooperative movement across the world.

The success of the Coffee House can be attributed, apart from its effective management, to its maintenance of a loyal clientele even while appealing to a broader spectrum of new patrons. The current paper shall attempt to analyse how the Coffee House maintains its appeal through the construction of a sense of nostalgia among its clientele, who associate the outlets with certain temporal, spatial and socio-political modalities which are increasingly dissipated through the process of neoliberal modernization. The Coffee House restaurants also emerged as openly accessible public spaces where patrons from all walks of life could congregate over a cup of steaming coffee and engage in conversations ranging from the personal and parochial to the political and philosophical. By enabling such diverse discourses within its unassuming interiors, the Coffee House allowed for the development of a vibrant public sphere in postcolonial Kerala. Memoirs and articles written about the Coffee House are replete with fond recollections of such debates and discussions, and remembrances of bonds of camaraderie built with fellow patrons as well as the employees of the restaurants themselves. This paper, through a close reading of literary texts, newspaper articles, personal accounts and interviews, shall attempt to recreate not just a history of one of our most cherished institutions, but also attempt to critically analyse its role in the

development of a public sphere in Kerala. The paper shall also look into the Coffee House's continued appeal well into its sixth decade of functioning, paying close attention to the regulars who continue to *revisit* the establishment to re-enact and relive their experiences, and attempt to understand the memories and nostalgia associated with the restaurants as expressed in many of these writings.

### **Coffee for the Masses to Coffee by the Masses**

Coffee first entered the Malayalee culinary spectrum through Arab traders in the 16th century. Myths still circulate about how the Arab planters closely guarded the valuable commodity, prohibiting the export of raw beans and roasting the beans before trading to prevent cultivating the plant in other climes. Therefore, even though coffee (in the form of bitter *kahwa*) was brewed in a few wealthy Malabar Muslim households as early as the 17th century, a truly public culture of coffee consumption did not emerge until the early part of the 20th century. (Collingham 198)

Coffee cultivation on a commercial basis was introduced by British planters in the early 19th century. Coffee cultivated in India, along the Wyanad and Madikeri hills, was almost exclusively exported to European markets. By 1875, 120000 hectares of land was under coffee cultivation and the country was able to export around 25000 tonnes of beans annually. However, a number of factors - the spread of leaf diseases, competition from global markets (most notably from Brazil) and the loss of foreign markets due to the Great Depression of 1930 and the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 - led to the near collapse of the Indian coffee industry. The area under coffee production dwindled to 74090 hectares and the gross yield fell to 14454 tonnes by 1940-41. Due to disruption of shipping routes during the War, the export of coffee diminished from 9240 tonnes in 1938-39 to 1260 tonnes in 1944-45. (Nanda 509)

The Indian coffee industry, which heavily depended on foreign markets, faced a serious threat to its existence. To undermine and surpass the crisis, the British Government of India formulated the Indian Coffee Market Expansion Board on December 21, 1940 with the sole aim of promoting the consumption of coffee within the largely untapped domestic market. It was fashioned along the lines of the highly successful Tea Cess Committee, which over a period of three decades had turned the beverage from a virtually unknown commodity to what Philip Lutgendorf terms "the proletariat drink par excellence". (2) An intense propaganda process was initiated. Coffee was distributed free of cost from demonstration vans. Demonstration parties were sent to far corners of country to initiate people into the elaborate process of roasting, grinding and brewing coffee. Advertisements were placed in newspapers, posters and cinemas. Coffee powder and liquor were sold at heavily subsidized rates to

inculcate a habit of regular consumption. (Nanda 509) Most significantly, Coffee Houses were established in major cities and towns under the aegis of the Coffee Board. By 1945, it was well-known that “for promoting coffee there could be no better substitute than a good cup of coffee in a Board-run Coffee House”. (ibid. 509) By 1948, the Coffee Board operated 43 Indian Coffee Houses, 2 coffee bars, 1 coffee van and 3 coffee sale depots. By 1956-57, these units employed 1035 Class III and Class IV staff. (ibid. 510)

The Coffee House was, however, to face another turn of fortune very shortly. By the early years of the 1950s, it was felt by the Coffee Board that the Coffee Houses had by then served their purpose of popularizing coffee and that their novelty had worn out. The Board was also instructed by the Government of India to reduce expenses on propaganda purposes. The Coffee Board, during their May 1957 meetings, decided that “propaganda by sale of coffee through Coffee Houses” should be given up the Board should turn its attention to cultivating a more refined taste among coffee drinkers and towards the distribution of pure coffee powder to private coffee shops and restaurants for direct consumption or resale. To this effect, the closure of existing Coffee Houses was initiated, and by July 1957 four Coffee Houses were shut down. Furthermore, retrenchment notices were served to 112 class IV employees. (Nanda 513-514)

The employees of the Coffee House had already galvanized into a union by August 1948. The union decided against “direct action” which would grind the functioning of the restaurants to a halt, and opted for a widespread signature campaign against the closure of Coffee Houses. They found a very adept ally in A. K. Gopalan who pressed upon the incumbent Minister of Commerce and Industry, Moraji Desai, the unwise and apathetic stance taken by the Coffee Board. The union carried out a series of negotiations to postpone the retrenchment, provide alternate employment for the retrenched workers, and finally to hand over the management of the Coffee Houses to cooperative society formed by the Class IV employees. Following much discussions and tribulations, on August 30, 1957, the Government of India agreed to provide support to the workers’ cooperative and instructed the Board to supply raw and powder coffee at the usual concessional rates. By October 1957, the first workers’ Coffee House began functioning at Delhi and a Central Organizing Committee was set up to accelerate the installation of workers’ cooperatives and taking over the closed Coffee Houses in all regions. (Nanda 513-521)

The Coffee House at Swaraj Round in Thrissur was the first to be set up in Kerala on March 8, 1958. There still circulate stories of how the communist leader AKG had led a cadre of workers who stormed into the closed building by force and took over its management. Though this romanticized narrative has become the stuff of legends, the actual events were much more sedate and organized, and the inauguration function was presided by AKG, who without

doubt was instrumental in bringing the much beloved Coffee House to Kerala. A photo still hangs over the cash counter of this very Coffee House commemorating this event, and the continued success of this workers' initiative is perhaps the most fitting tribute to a leader who always stood up for the rights of the workers.

The Indian Coffee House, today, runs over 400 restaurants across India registered under the Indian Coffee Board Workers' Cooperative Society (ICBWCS). Of these, over 57 are located in Kerala. The Thrissur division of the Society maintains 41 restaurants from Thrissur to Thiruvananthapuram. The number of members increased from 1080 to 1760 over the ten years from 1996 to 2006. The sales turnover also saw a windfall, rising 87.71 percent over the same period. (Katookaran 74) The Coffee House has not only weathered the storm of neoliberal corporatization of the industry, but has come to be regarded as one of the most exemplary success stories of the cooperative movement across the world. The success of the Coffee House can be attributed, apart from its effective management, to its maintenance of a loyal clientele even while appealing to a broader spectrum of new patrons. For instance, a 2005 consumer survey conducted by CNBC Awaaz adjudged the Indian Coffee House to be one of the Most Preferred Brands in India, a category in which it contested against various multinational restaurant and coffee chains.

The Coffee House continues to remain a favoured restaurant from people from all walks of life. Apart from the loyal regulars (affectionately called the *iruppu parties* - sitting customers - by the staff), the restaurants are frequented by youngsters, office employees, daily wage workers and families opting to have a meal outside. Various memories abound with descriptions of time leisurely spent, chatting in the company of friends under the groaning fans, seated at a mica-topped table sipping a cup of the distinctly flavoured coffee. Others recollect how the first thing they would ask for when they reach a new city would be: "Where is the nearest Coffee House?" What is most notable in these descriptions - much of which we shall return to later in the paper - is how the clientele of the restaurant have formed an untenable emotional bond with the Coffee House and its workers. To the patrons of the Coffee House, the restaurant of has become an imprint etched in the pages of their life, a space where one gathers for company and communion. In this sense, the spaces of the Coffee House are evocative of certain memories and modalities, and the act of revisiting the Coffee House becomes ingrained with one of recollection, remembrance and re-enactment of a temporal-spatial dimension lost to the debilitating commercialization of neo-liberal market economics. It is a process both affiliative and associative. The current paper shall attempt to analyse how the Coffee House in Kerala, similar to the case in early modern Europe, enabled the development of a nuanced public sphere - an arena of social, political, literary and philosophical exchange - while opening itself up

as a space for homosocial interactions -where different everyday forms of masculinity are enacted - and how these constructions continue to evoke a sense of longing and belonging among its patrons who continue to grace its rustic, red-carpeted halls.

### **Resonances of a Public Sphere**

By the early 20th century, Kerala was already much invested in the crafting of its own modern public sphere. Education in the region had improved much over the past decades due to the efforts of princely rulers in the south and centre and the British government in the north. These efforts were also boosted by the erection of various public institutions like universities, colleges, libraries, museums and reading rooms across the region. The spread of modern knowledge and opinions paved the way for various socio-religious reform movements, as members of the lower castes and minorities demanded greater representation in government employment and legislature. These significant communal movements allowed for the economic mobility of previously disenfranchised communities and for greater access to public spaces. Societal discrimination, in the form of caste taboos of interdining, etc. were challenged. With the spread of cheap and widespread printing technology by the latter half of the 19th century, a literary culture arose, and by the early 20th century, newspapers and periodicals were in popular circulation - their articles commenting on topics ranging from politics to the proper conduct of women, from literary appreciation to public scandal. These developments were to forever shape the politico-cultural outlook of the region which came to be known as Kerala.

This leads us to raise the question: what really is the public sphere? According to Jurgen Habermas, the public sphere as we know it emerged in Europe in the 1700s as a space distinct from the domesticity of the private sphere and the authority of governmental power. This sphere was characterized by a sociability which took place outside the closed confines of home life and beyond the direct control of administrative bodies (the monarch, the clergy, etc.). Within the public sphere, people could come together, share their knowledge and opinions and lead discussions on topics of “common concern”. This allowed the rapid spread of information as well as generation of public opinion and consensus. Thus, the public sphere is that “which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as the bearer of public opinion”. (Habermas 34-37)

Habermas’s 18th century coffee houses were precursors to the development of a modern bourgeois public sphere in Europe. He notes how the emergence of the “webs of social development” which exemplify this domain is closely linked to the development of its infrastructural and organizational base - through improvements in transportation, literacy,

availability of openly accessible public spaces (parks, theatres, museums, etc.), new modes of communication for the dissemination of knowledge (printing presses, libraries, newspapers and periodicals) and most significantly due to the rise of public venues of sociability (taverns, coffee houses, etc.). The *nouveau riche* in Europe, comprised of upwardly mobile civil servants, merchants, etc., were now able to interact in such venues with writers, philosophers and other members of the literary and philosophical disciplines who often read out their treatises in the many coffee houses which dotted European cities during the period. Through such vibrant discourses and discussions, the emergent middle class in Europe was able to keep itself informed and more significantly develop a public consensus (often in critical opposition to the mode of contemporary governmentality) on matters of public interest. (Habermas 37-42) Such political consensus outside the purview of monarchical power lies at the heart of the concept the body politic as prefigured in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, a primal concept in the development of European modernity.

While the coffee houses of early modern Europe were usually frequented by the new gentile, the patronage of such joints was not restricted to any particular class. Instead, as Habermas notes, it was typified by "a kind of social interaction which, far from presupposing equality of status, disregarded status itself." (37) Within the walls of the coffee house, class boundaries were blurred in a flurry of social, literary and intellectual activity in which all who had access to the discourse could engage in.

However exclusive the public might be in any given instance, it could never close itself off entirely and become consolidated as a clique; for it always understood and found itself immersed within a more inclusive public of all private people, persons who - insofar as they were propertied and educated - as readers, listeners and spectators could avail themselves via the market of the objects that were subject to discussion. The issues became 'general' not merely in their significance, but also in their accessibility: everyone had to *be able* to participate. (Habermas 38)

While the 18th century coffee houses of Europe were precursors to its modernity, the same cannot be said of the Coffee Houses of India, which developed as part of the marketing machinery of colonial capitalism. However, some striking similarities remain. Within its stark walls, furnished to a spartan minimum, students, politicians, government employees, labourers, ideologues and filmmakers rubbed shoulders and filled the air, already thickened with cigarette smoke and the aroma of coffee, with dialogues and discussions ranging from the personal and parochial to the political and philosophical. The Indian Coffee House became a site of communion and companionship where one met with and made friends, and interacted with those outside one's social circuit, where one could share their opinion while



listening intently and contribute to the vociferous discussions happening over the next table. In Kerala, during the 1970s and early 80s, the Coffee House emerged as an egalitarian space, which not only offered healthy and hygienic food for a nominal cost, but also permitted the free transmission of ideas and news among its patrons and clients.

Several memoirs of the period look back with fondness at the endless conversations shared over cups of coffee at these restaurants. M. Mukundan recollects, “It was the Indian Coffee House which brought a Western-style coffee culture to Indian cities. A coffee house is not just a place to drink coffee, but a place for friendship and communication... The Indian Coffee House, which gave employment to thousands of workers and which provided cheap food for the middle class customer, became a stage for friendships and discussions.” (88) He remembers how the Coffee House at Connaught Place in Delhi was lit by the presence of artists like B. C. Sanyal, J. Swaminathan and Manjith Bawa, as well as writers of repute like Bhishma Sahni and Nirmal Verma. While recounting his visit of the Coffee House at College Street in Kolkata, he notes how, “like Cafe Flore on the banks of the River Seine in Paris, it has left an indelible mark in Kolkata’s history. A lot of ideas and discourses were produced here. Satyajit Ray sketched several frames of *Pather Panchali* here. Amartya Sen, Mrinal Sen, Sunil Gangopadhyay, were all regulars here.” (88) Another article which appeared in *Madhyamam* goes so far as to call the Coffee House “the den of intellectuals”. (93)

Even in India, ‘Coffee House Intellectuals’ came to being with the opening of the Coffee House. In Kerala, Coffee Houses used to be the den of intellectuals. When radical left movements took root, while hippiedom spread like wildfire and once postmodernist fiction sailed across the seas, the patrons of these flocked to the Coffee House for their mental exercise. The Coffee House at Swaraj Round in Thrissur was a centre of writers... [many of whom] relished the coffee and masala dosa [served there]... (ibid. 93)

Santosh John Thooval, another regular of the Coffee House, recounts how the restaurant at Swaraj Round used to be the site of spirited political and literary discussions. Writers like Thakazhi, Changampuzha and Basheer, as well as politicians including AKG, EMS and Karunakaran graced this venue. Amongst them gathers a host of students from St. Thomas and Keralavarma Colleges, who would have bunked classes in favour of coffee, companionship and conversation. He writes, “The Indian Coffee House had seen the proverbial storm in the tea cup. The incendiary political discussions led by Achyuta Menon and AKG... The soothing literary conferences of Thakazhi and Basheer... Here, everything from the mosquito which bit you the previous day to Benazir’s assassination can become, with same ease, the storm in the tea cup. (113) The Coffee House became a space where the “public” truly

congregated. In the erstwhile Coffee House at Spencer's Junction in Thiruvananthapuram, various groups congregated in different rooms of the restaurant. The carpeted inner room, with cane chairs and glass-topped tables were usually occupied by the "senior" customers - noted intellectuals and literary figures, employees from the nearby AG's Office, etc. The verandah to the right, lined with wooden tables and chairs adjoining the kitchen and the roasting room, was the favourite haunt of students who often skipped classes to spend the afternoon chatting about love and literature. The verandah to the left was a coveted spot in the restaurant. This faced the YWCA Hostel and young men leaned by pillars, singing the latest English tunes, vying to catch the attention of the belles who walked past the building. The various groups who teemed the Coffee House during its heyday of the 80s had their own social circuit (and of course their territorially demarcated tables) where they freely conversed with friends and companions about the vagaries of life. Nevertheless, accounts of the period note the sense of camaraderie which existed amongst all the regulars, irrespective of their class or cadre. Even a humble college student may, on a night, share a table, a few jokes and much information with a filmmaker or a writer lounging in the cane chairs of the central room.

The Coffee House, apart from being a space for the circulation of new discourses, also played a vital role in introducing the Malayalee public to new culinary and consumer habits. While the Coffee House was started to popularize coffee consumption among the Indian masses, the variety of continental dishes on the menu also introduced the middle class customers to new tastes and dining practices. During the early years, the sole dish served along with coffee was bread and peanuts. Other items like omelette, mutton omelette, cutlets, toast, etc. made their entrance soon enough. Pothan K. Samuel, a regular for over 50 years, reminisces how he first encountered these seemingly exotic dishes at the Swaraj Round Coffee House for the first time.

We used to find dishes like scrambled eggs on toast and poached eggs on toast in the menu. The first time I heard of these... My curiosity arose... More as an experiment, I tried them out one by one. The novelty... The taste... It became a routine... The taste increased after each try and the novelty never diminished. The vegetable cutlet with sauce was also excellent. (145) For many Malayalees in the 1970s and early 80s hailing from the rural outskirts, a visit to the Coffee House in the nearest town or city was considered a culinary exploration. N. Sukhlal, who first visited the Coffee House at Medical College, Thiruvananthapuram, remembers his curiosity on encountering people using knives, forks and tissue paper, while sipping on aromatic rose milk and cold coffee. This inquisitiveness drove him to visit the Coffee House with increasing frequency. Dr. Savio M. Thelli, a BDS student in Thiruvananthapuram in 1976, recounts how each of these dishes used to have

their own abbreviations. “MD did not stand for Managing Director, but Masala Dosa. VC is not Vice Chancellor, but rather Veg Cutlet. Similarly, MC was Mutton Cutlet, not Master of Ceremony. GD stood for Ghee Dosa.” (145) He counts his bittersweet experience of how perplexed he was when he first had to eat with a knife and fork.

In those days, the most amazing thing was that knife and fork was served with every dish. People like me, who came from villages, found it really hard to master the art of eating with them. For us, it felt like eating with chopsticks. One of the ragging rituals was to eat food using knife and fork. I still remember how morsels of food would drop to the table right when you manage to get it to your mouth. (145)

These evening exchanges in the Coffee House served to inform the youth on contemporary social, cultural, political and even culinary phenomena. M. Harikumar remembers how “college politics, love, Kafka and Sartre” were all discussed during these sessions. (133) The halls of these restaurants became the breeding ground for a new generation of informed youngsters. The discussions and deliberations which took place in these rooms were to play a significant role in shaping the social, cultural, literary and political landscape of Kerala over the years to come.

### **Community, Masculinity and the Atomized Citizenry**

Writings about the Coffee House also abound with narratives reflecting on the closeness one felt to the establishment, fellow visitors and its workers. They appear as fragments of memories coalesced around the spatial domain of the Coffee House. These memoirs are interspersed with tales of friendship and camaraderie, the recollection of which fills the writer with a deepened sense of nostalgia. The Coffee House was a meeting point of people from all walks of life. Around the table here, a web of friendship was formed. Even today, the Coffee House and the evenings spent there fills one with nostalgia. For a large section of people, this was a venue to come together and communicate. (Thomas 153)

The Coffee House is closely associated with the “golden days” of youth, and within its walls that time is encapsulated and preserved for posterity. For some, it was a place to drop by for a cup of coffee before heading home after work. For others, it was a place to unwind with friends, talk about the latest news in campus or the prettiest girl in town. Some others looked forward to the evenings to brighten up their day with philosophical musings and literary debates. Many, like M. Mukundan, experience a profound sense of loss while chasing memories of their days spent there. “The history of the Indian Coffee House cannot be limited to coffee and *uzhunnu vada*. It is the history of the consciousness of an entire era. A time now lost, never to be recovered...” (89)

What makes the Coffee House so nostalgic is its association with youth and companionship. Many patrons state how at the Coffee House one could spend hours talking over a single cup of coffee. These conversations, personal or understatedly public, draw similarities to the *addas* of Kolkata which Dipesh Chakrabarti closely analyses. The Coffee House appears as a stage for communion, a space for male sociability. It is perhaps due to this that the Coffee House, to a good extent, remains a largely gendered domain, with most of the regular patrons being male and middle class. Like the gentlemen's clubs of Victorian Britain, the Coffee House emerged as a space for homosociality where various forms of masculinity could be worked out and performed.

The Coffee House was the favoured hangout for young men studying in colleges and working away from home to socialize and meet up with people. The Swaraj Round Coffee House was frequented by students of Keralavarma College and St. Thomas College, while the Spencer's Coffee House in Thiruvananthapuram drew in youngsters from the nearby University College, Fine Arts College and MG College. M. Harikumar ponders, "Can a history of the University College be written without acknowledging the Coffee House? For students of the College, the Coffee House was part of the College itself. There were those who ardently believed that, even if they didn't go to college, they should mark their attendance at the Coffee House." (131) Sunil Mammen similarly reveals how the Coffee House bore witness to generations of Malayalee youth over a period of five decades.

Over the last five decades, so many generations had passed through these coffee halls. The youth of the sixties who loved inventiveness, the rebellious youth of the seventies, the disenchanted youth of the eighties, the pragmatic youth of the nineties, the new youth of the new century who have taken over globalization and made it their own, have all seen the Coffee House. (146)

The Spencer's Coffee House also offered a further attraction to its young clients. It was adjacent to the YWCA Hostel. The more senior visitors of the Coffee House commented on how the left-side verandah was lined by young men trying to catch the attention of the damsels walking by the road.

Walking past the picture of AKG, one would go to the various sections according to one's standing. Senior citizens, college professors, employees of the AG's Office and the Secretariat and women all headed to the right verandah. However, not all who sat on the left front were communists or revolutionaries. They were not a few who sat beside the YWCA Hostel with dreams of romance and wishes to perhaps receive a small piece of it. (Pillai 110) Cine star Mohanlal similarly has fond memories of his days of youth as a student in MG College, loitering in the Spencer's Coffee House. He often bore

the brunt of sarcastic comments from senior lady employees of the AG's Office when he would peep into the Ladies' Section of the restaurant.

We had spent so many evenings sitting there. Those days, as much as it was a place for brainiacs, it was a place for no-brainers as well. We belonged to the latter category. As the YWCA Hostel was virtually next door, most of our hearts were there. By some chance, at no time was I able to have a lover from YWCA. (142) During the 70s and 80s, the heyday of the Coffee House, youngsters would flock to the Coffee House in search of elusive romance and the more reassuring presence of friends. P. C. Thomas recollects how he used to cut classes to come to the Coffee House at Spencer's. Holidays were often exclusively spent in the restaurant. The topics of discussion were usually humorous anecdotes of their fellow students, popular music, bikes and automobiles. He also fondly recollects the queue of young men who would arrive in fashionable motorcycles by evening, standing beside the YWCA Hostel while humming the latest movie songs to woo the women there. (175-177)

While romance was one aspect of youthful masculinity on display at the Coffee House, there were more serious affairs tabled in these restaurants. The Coffee Houses, where students of all sorts met, was also the centre of political activity in colleges. Students belonging to rival factions would occupy their own tables. The latest agendas and manifestos were discussed and debated within these walls. Many politicians, including M. M. Hassan and P. C. Chacko, tried and tested their mettle in such political discourses at the Coffee House. During the time of elections, tempers would rise and the discussions would break across the invisible proxemic boundaries of the tables. In such instances, the rhetoric of the rival speakers could draw the attention of fellow students seated elsewhere and, very often, decide the fate of the elections themselves. As is often the case with student politics in Kerala, many political disputes were settled through a good old-fashioned brawl. The Coffee House was also a venue where such attacks were planned and attackers recruited. "Searching for ten people for a cricket match or a group brawl? You will find students who are experts in any field there," writes Harikumar. Often enough, after a fight the victors would reconvene at the Coffee House to celebrate and lick their wounds sipping one coffee or rose milk and munching down a mutton omelette.

The sociability of the Coffee House was, however, not restricted to youngsters alone. For government and bank employees, tired after a day of work, the Coffee House offered peaceful recluse - a space to meet and chat with a few friends before heading back home. For a large section of these married men, the restaurant allowed them to escape their sedentary domestic life. The Coffee House was a space where they could exert their masculinity outside the emasculated space of their office and the feminized interiors of the

homes. "Sitting before a hot coffee and banana fry while cracking jokes and engaging in discussions, the Coffee House became a 'third place' outside home and office," comments Reji T. Thomas, another regular visitor of the restaurant. (153)

So what makes the companionship within Coffee Houses so endearing and the conversations there so engaging? While it has much to do with the element of homosociality and male sociability, there is something much deeper at work. There exists certain camaraderie amongst the regulars there and a lasting bond of friendship with the staff of the restaurants. The waiters know the orders of the regulars by heart and often engage in friendly conversations with the patrons. What perhaps makes this relationship special is the familiarity which is built among the regular visitors of the Coffee House. One writer expressed his immense grief when he read about the death of a fellow Coffee House visitor in the newspaper, a person with whom he had never conversed with over 30 years but whom he saw almost every evening sipping a double strong coffee at the restaurant.

I propose that the sense of camaraderie which existed among Coffee House regulars during the 70s and 80s was due to their existence as atomized citizens, away from home, and grew from their longing to build up substantial social relationships within an increasingly nucleated and impassively alienating world. Thus, ironically, while the Coffee House was seen as a homosocial space outside the parochial restrictions of the home, the relationships there were built upon the memory of home and community within the discomfiting unfamiliarity of the urban landscape. The search for company and community in the Coffee House, in a way, served as a substitute for the closeness and intimacy of filial relationships left behind by itinerant students and workers.

It is notable that many of the early visitors of the Coffee House were indeed students who had come to the city for higher education or government employees working away from home. N. Sukhlal, who hailed from a village, remembers how he first visited the Coffee House while he had dropped by to the Medical College in Thiruvananthapuram. (149) Sunil Mammen had the opportunity to dine at Coffee Houses in Thiruvananthapuram, Kochi, Kottayam and Pathanamthitta, first as a student of journalism and later while working for several newspapers. (146-148) Another client, Matthew Joseph visited Coffee Houses in various parts of the country during his travels on official duty. (157)

For all these customers, alone and isolated in a foreign city, the Coffee House promised a semblance of communal life. Meaningful social relationships could be built here, or at least the delightful conversations which lit every evening would drive away the loneliness and isolation felt in a

disorienting city. This almost explains why a large number of customers enquire where the nearest Coffee House was while they were travelling to a new city. Sunil Thomas Samuel, another frequent visitor of the Coffee House, explains, "I am a person who travels frequently. Wherever I go, I enquire about the Coffee House like I am searching for a friend." (165) Matthew Joseph further elucidates this.

During the time we worked, while staying in hostels and lodges, we got together with friends almost exclusively at the Indian Coffee House... Unexpected reunions, catching up with old friends, exchange of personal news, discussions of work-related problems were all carried out along with tea and hot steaming food. The remembrances of these spread like a soothing shadow over my mind. (157)

In every city, the Coffee House provided a tinge of familiarity and the promise of company. Another writer mentions how he inevitably drops by to a Coffee House in any city he visits because he expects people sharing similar views there. He states that most of his friendships during his adult life were forged within these stately restaurants.

### **Remembrances of a Time Past**

It, perhaps, comes as no surprise then that the Coffee Houses are often compared to *taravads* or ancestral houses. Matthew Joseph refers to it as "the kitchen and home during my travels" (157) while Kilabuddin Polayathodu calls it an "*illam* (ancestral home) of culture". Manoj Panikkar, who currently works abroad, makes it a point to visit a Coffee House whenever he returns home. He likens this to a homecoming. (159) V. N. Anil is reminded of "the food served by my mother" every time he visits the hotel. (154)

The feeling of homeliness was also evoked by the aesthetics of the architecture of these buildings. This was particularly true about the erstwhile Spencer's Coffee House, which with its white-painted walls, wide verandahs and tiled, gabled roof resembled a traditional *taravad* house. The aesthetic experience was not lost on its clients either. These were a certain aesthetic beauty to that building. A sense of mystery hung over the quaint building. Time had crystallized there. The hustle and bustle of Ananthapuri never reached the interior here. In the inner rooms, where no light or darkness ever reached, customers sat absent-mindedly in front of their cups. (Mammen 146)

The aesthetics of the restaurant are further emphasized by the starkness of its interior. Coffee Houses across India have maintained their rustic appearance - wooden chairs and mica-topped table, the minimalism of their chinaware and cutlery, the bareness of the walls save the pictures of AKG, Nehru, Gandhi and Indira Gandhi which adorn it. These elements, unchanged

over time, almost make the Coffee House appear asynchronous - a remnant of the past standing up against the brutal homogeneity of neoliberal modernity. It is this intemporality which led Stuart Freedman to name his coffee table photo essay on the Indian Coffee Houses *The Palaces of Memory*.

The Coffee Houses do not merely function by invoking the memory of a lost community among urban settlers. It also reminds one of a socio-political environment which has been lost over a space of time. Visitors to the Coffee House almost unequivocally express their surprise at seeing the framed pictures of AKG, Gandhi, Nehru and Indira Gandhi hanging over the counter. While in other restaurants, the pictures of the guardian deities or the proprietors hold the position of honour, here one is met by leaders who laid the foundation of the modern Indian state. It remains as a reminder of a more secular age - one where the nation, one still in its birth throes, took the centre stage. The pictures of these national leaders invoke in one recollections of a bygone age, when India was guided by the egalitarian concepts of socialism (which lie at the heart of the cooperative movement of which the Coffee House remains a shining example), an age not yet corrupted by the polarizing effects of market capitalism.

There is perhaps no better place to remember the postcolonial and socialist origins of the Indian Union than at the Indian Coffee House - an institution initiated by the British turned over and managed by a cooperative society run by its employees. P. K. Thevan from Panangad is acutely aware of this fact. Usually when you visit a hotel, you do not go there knowing much about its owners or its history. But the Indian Coffee House is not like that. The birth of the Indian Coffee House was no ordinary one. It was one which was established by the Indian Prime Minister [Nehru] and India's most prolific labour leader [AKG] along with a bunch of decrepit and unemployed workers who have passed on the tradition from generation to generation. This is a rare event. It is however not one which has happened long back in the annals of history. Fifty years on, it is still present in front of our eyes. We can still go here and taste the living history which surrounds this place. (163)

The timelessness of the Coffee House is also maintained through the consistency of their dishes. It is commendable that the menu of the Coffee House, except for a few additions, has remained virtually unchanged. The old favourites - coffee, cold coffee, rose milk, cutlets, masala dosa and of course mutton omelette - continue to delight a new generation of patrons. Regular customers often wonder how the strong heady taste of the coffee remains the same over a period of several decades and across different parts of the country. (This, I was confided in, was because the coffee for an entire division is procured from the same source. Besides, the fact that around 90 percent of all Coffee House employees across India are Malayalees helps to maintain uniformity in taste.) People continue to throng the Coffee House for its



beetroot-stuffed masala dosa and its sumptuous mutton omelette. The uniformity of taste over time can perhaps be explained by the fact that all workers in the Coffee House share duties. As a result of this, every employee gets to spend time in the kitchen and learn recipes which have existed over five decades. This subtle, but effective, transfer of culinary secrets has led to the legendary everlasting taste which the Coffee House is reputed for.

Indeed, the most intriguing and eye-catching of the myriad sensations one experiences on entering the Coffee House is that of the turban-clad workers. The uniform of the Coffee House - white-starched shirt and pants adorned with a two-inch belt and topped off with the flowery turban - is indeed a remnant from the British colonial era; albeit one which has gone through much modifications, with the turban and the belt signifying the experience of the waiter. However, this symbol of servitude within the British-run Coffee House has undergone a semantic reversal of sorts. The Coffee House waiters, within the Malayalee imagination, take the position of *rajās*. A popular joke runs thus: A landlord one went to a city and asked directions to the nearest hotel, upon which he was promptly led to the Coffee House there. One seeing the smartly dressed, turban-clad waiter, he jumped onto his feet and prostrated himself saying, "Your majesty needn't have come yourself! You could have merely sent someone else to receive me." This is perhaps the most fitting tribute to a group of workers, running the most beloved of our restaurants, and who certainly deserve the title "the maharajas of taste".

#### References

- Collingham, Lizzie. *Curry: A Tale of Cooks and Conquerors*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006.
- Nanda, A. C. "Union Response to a Crisis." *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 4.4 (1969): 508-22.
- Lutgendorf, Philip. "Chai Why? The Triumph of Tea in India as Documented in the Priya Paul Collection." *Tasveer Ghar: A Digital Archive of South Asian Popular Visual Culture*. 4 February 2015. Web.
- Katookaran, Thomas Paul. "India Coffee Board Workers' Co-operative Society Ltd. No. 4227, Thrissur: Challenges under the Agenda of Economic Reforms." *Indian Coffee House Golden Jubilee Smaranika*. Ed. M. R. Mohandas. Thrissur: ICBWCS, 2009.
- Habermas, Jurgen. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1991.
- Mukundan, M. "Ormakalile Coffee Manam." *Deshabhimani Weekly*. 1 March 2009.
- "Pandu 'Bhuji' kalude Thaavalam." *Indian Coffee House Golden Jubilee Smaranika*. Ed. M. R. Mohandas. Thrissur: ICBWCS, 2009.
- Thooval, Santosh John. "Kaapi @ 50." *Indian Coffee House Golden Jubilee Smaranika*. Ed. M. R. Mohandas. Thrissur: ICBWCS, 2009.

**Sabitha S Babu**

Assistant Professor  
Maharaja's College, Ernakulam

## **Gendered Visual Narratives on Food**

Abstract: Food and its myriads forms are always a reservoir of stimulation for humankind. When it gets narrated through the visual medium, the real appreciation should go to the visual-makers. But a close introspection would prove an implicit presence of gender hierarchy predominant in all kinds of visual narratives on food. The prime reason of this phenomenon is our culturally pervasive society. The compulsory heterosexuality, phallogocentric language, patriarchal ideologies and universal rationality are always immersed in moulding certain stereotypical images for women. The canons are already laid down by the forefathers of patriarchy and they leave no room for complaint for their successors. What follows is a blind adherence of established stereotypes.

People tend to be in the binary system of gender; content to analyse and to decipher a concept purely on the basis of its gender and the main target is to scrutinize the feminine gender as the “other” or an image that lacks or wants something. Gender pertains into the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge. All concepts irrespective of being abstracts or concretes are easily classified under two categories of masculine and feminine genders. Hence is the significance of this study where the attempt is to unveil the hidden patriarchal ideologies implicit in the visual representation of food items.

Human beings have always been keen in maintaining their dominance over other living beings of the environment. Food becomes one of the innovative means of this superiority when it gets mixed up with fire. In the contemporary scenario myriads of food products are available in our markets. So to advertise them in a captive manner is not an activity that can be done at the drop of a hat. “How to impress the audience” is not an open question to the owners. Since we survive in a world of male-dominated ideologies, the picturisation of these advertisements would unveil the gendered binary system prevalent in our society. Analyzing the various methods of visualization any literary sensible person would find the gendered hierarchy and the cultural hegemony implicitly expressed in the visual narratives on food.

Food – a basic necessity- has now becomes a part of luxury. It represents our status-quo. Food becomes a part and parcel of culture which is modern and elite. The low class culture is often termed as derogative and pejorative. Gender specific media advertisements are constructed by the brands. The idea of male superiority or some kinds of food items just aren't for women is

disseminated through these advertisements. Despite women having modern luxuries as jobs, they should be the ones to administer food. They are always condemned to play the role of mother to their uncivilized or knuckle-dragging men folk. Brands are always hailed by themselves as champions of the everyman, facilitators of the macho dream. Some gender stereotypes like men enjoying crap food and women being the ones who have to serve it, are preserved carefully by the advertising agencies. Men being dominant in social situations are always the torchbearers of customs and preservation of culture.

In spite of leaving in a technologically advanced era our society is eager in providing cultural garments to women. Garment whose chief characteristics are patience and silence. Culture would turn a girl into woman. Gendered roles are given. These roles would be witnessed, internalized and standardized by women themselves. They want to be submissive, meek and silent.

“Publicity in women is detestable. Anonymity runs in their blood. The desire to be veiled still possesses them”.( Woolf, chapter 3) In India women’s lives are culturally constructed and a process of socialization of women’s lives has always been taking place. Women are the site on which cultural, religious and patriarchal ideologies are inscribed on and worked out. They come to be treated as the custodians of culture and moral values which showcase sacrifice and self-effacement. The conventional framework where women have to keep themselves is visible in the advertisements especially on food ones. The advertising of food in the world is both lazy and offensive. And, while units are shifted for companies and people are kept in jobs, gender stereotypes are perpetuated in a way that’s probably more significant than we imagine. Unfortunately, there’s probably no solution. We always box girls into specific roles.

Application of Judith Butler’s “Gender Performativity” into visual narratives on food would open new windows into the world of feminist theory. A central concept of the theory is that your gender is constructed through your own repetitive performance of gender. There is no self-preceding or outside a gendered self. Performativity of gender is a stylized repetition of acts, an imitation or miming of the dominant conventions of gender. Biological sex is also a social construction—gender subsumes sex. . What is at stake in gender roles is the ideology of heterosexuality. Performativity of Gender (drag) can be subversive. But subversion through performance isn’t automatic or easy. Gender for her is always performed, and this performance of gender is entirely a social matter with identity manifested in performativity. Judith Butler is an American philosopher and Gender theorist specifically noted for her theory of gender performativity. She argues that the gender identities are a kind of impersonation and approximation...“a kind of imitation for which there is no original” (Undoing Gender,21).

The concept of gender like sex and desire is an effect of specific formation of Power. Foucault termed it as Genealogy. It considers gender as a product of certain institutions, discourses and practices. To decenter such institutions is the aim of genealogical critics. Butler speaks about the normal gender categories which promote gender binary, gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality within a 'masculinist' sexual economy. It is impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is variably produced and maintained. There disseminated a notion that the gender exist only in the 'Third World' or 'Orient' because gender discrimination is the effect of essential non-western barbarism.

Sex appears to have a biological intractability. Gender is neither the result of Sex nor is fixed as sex, but a socially constructed idea noted for its multiple interpretations. There exist a discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Stability in Binary sex assumes a mimetic relation between sex and gender where gender mirrors sex and vice versa. Gender itself is a performance and "Can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier within the domain of corporeal legibility"(Critically Queer, 24).

Gender is "The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again." (Critically Queer, 25) Female body is the medium upon which culture is inscribed by patriarchy. The difference between the male and female gender has biological, linguistic and cultural grounds. The hegemonic cultural discourse and the binary structures disseminated through advertisements are very much to be questioned. The major obstacle in the path of the emancipation of women is phallogentric language itself. The universal rationality activated by male showiness prevents a female writer from creating any path breaking changes. Female body is the curtailment of freedom whereas the male body becomes the synonym for freedom.

The representation of women in visual narratives is one of the most important forms of socialization, since it provides role models of feminine and masculine concepts. The representation (always an operating tool within a political system) of women is always taking place within the pervasive cultural condition to make them politically visible. She is confined within the hegemonic Western cultural Representation. The relation between the masculine and feminine is not represented economically where masculine constitutes a closed circle of signifier and signified. Female subject is a masculinist construction, disgusting and which excludes the structural and semantic possibility of a feminine gender. Food is categorized into high class

food and low class one. The scrutiny of this division would prove the class discrimination existing in food industry. The gender discrimination in the visual narratives on food is visible in the portrayal of gender roles. Almost all curry powder, oil and the other essential kitchen products are advertised by women whereas the energy drinks and the high caloric items can be propagated by macho man only. Women's Horlicks may be regarded as the exception of a vital drink for women. But they don't uphold women as the powerful beings, but the supplement of their product would help her to overcome her exhaustiveness once she crosses thirty.

Women are always shown as taking care of her family, her husband, kids and all. She has a solution for all the problems the family confronts with. But sorry to say if an empowered and wise woman is shown, she will definitely be a housewife who is stuffed within the patriarchal institution of marriage. The case is evident in the advertisements of food oils like Saffola, GoldWinner etc. In the visual narratives of tea powder also the situation is not much better. If a woman changes the custom in BIBA, she is helped by her father. In other words a woman cannot be a factor in creating any soul-stirring moments unless helped by a male member. A coffee for a man is an inspiration to overcome his stammering difficulty and it will be a stimulating force in his paths to glory and fame. On the other hand the same coffee would be an alluring agent for a woman to win over her love. The soft emotions attached with women are noteworthy in casting her as a person supposed to love and to be loved.

Through these advertisements we are prone to believe like new-generation feminists viz. neo-feminists. They are celebrating womanly attributes. So women can eat only low-caloric food and would be pictured in tea advertisements, soft drinks and chocolate visuals. Man being powerful needs more energy and is seen eating high-caloric food. Women are not supposed to eat anything that would affect their diet. She is seen in preparing varieties of food items for the well-being of her family members and consuming very little. Since the beginning of Globalization food products have been experiencing an unseen boundary among themselves.

The upper strata or powerful position is safeguarded by men-folk. If a girl tries to impress her in-laws she would definitely follow food recipes. As a proverb in Hindi highlights the importance of cooking food for girls (patikedilkaraasthauske pet se hokarjaathahai), advertising industry also pursues the same old conventional fabricated myth of patriarchy. That is why Sunny Deol is doing Bagpiper who is famous for his 'dthai kilo ka hath'. Many curry powder companies have taken female celebrities as their ambassadors whereas men control most of the energy drinks.

Laura Mulvey's theory of Gaze can be infiltrated through these visual narratives on food where women are politically visible and physically invisible. They are the objects of men's viewing pleasure rather than the subjects. Some superhuman features are entrusted upon a woman. She is gifted with magical hands to create miracles and convert her kitchen into restaurant. But it is noteworthy that the deplorable situation of low-class women are covered under the luxurious and flamboyant life style of upper class women.

In the present era of scientific advancement and technology social media acts out a crucial role. Its functions can be promoting and demoting. The romantic picture propagated through these kinds of visual narratives should be questioned. General public would interpret these texts following the line of patriarchy. They cannot deviate from the conventional framework. There is no other way out for them. Even the educated youth fall prey to the traditional strategies of these advertising agencies. There reinforces a notion of motherhood and self-effacement. Diverse advertisements prevalent in our society pass on a poisonous script of the concept of gender from one generation to another effortlessly. The universal rationality activated by male showiness is a giant wall to be broken by the blooming, educated youth.

Power functions and shapes our understanding of womanhood not only in our society at large but also within the feminist movement. The very word Gender itself reveals concealments, exclusions and regulations within the hegemonic heterosexual standards of identity. There should not be any connection between sex and gender. One must inculcate the idea of gender as free floating concept and not as an effect of any external factors. Identity is free and flexible and gender is performance. It is a free floating surface where man and masculine can very well identify with female body and female and feminine can be one with male body. In short body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time.

#### References

- Bertens, Hans. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. Routledge, 2001.
- Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer". P.24-25.
- Butler, Judith. *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case. Baltimore: John Hopkins U P, 1990.
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. Routledge, 2004.
- Jones, Amelia, ed. *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001. p.370.
- Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. Moorside Press, 2013.

**Jinan T.K.**

Research Scholar

Farook College, Calicut

## **Memory of Food Diversity as a Resistance against the Emerging Mono Culture in India**

Abstract: Food habits of a place are a telling statement on the cultural landscape of a region. It tastes the psychological geography and smells the economic and social flavours of the place. The present paper is a modest attempt in looking at the present political scenario of a noisy atmosphere of the big talk regarding man's clamour for freedom to eat and the counter voices from the part of an intolerant monoculture shadowing the cultural diversity of India.

In recent years there has been a growing political polarization in India, with richer billionaire capitalists, and more and more hundreds of millions of impoverished workers, farmers, and tribal people. This has led to more frequent rebellions by the people, more widespread and more intense. Often, these rebellions are supported or led by the political parties and other social groups. In reaction to these mass rebellions, the authorities have paid little or no attention to alleviate the poverty, exploitation and oppression on the basis of caste, religion and sex. The revolutionary movements are under the threats of draconian and fascist laws. Today banning has become an essential strategy of the centre to control the periphery. The murders on the basis of caste and food we eat, makes us think about the politics of food in our nation. Thus the inevitable truths behind the food culture from past to present, has a history of resistance to share with us. The present study problematises the different food habits that the different social groups and castes, religions followed in India and how they were indelibly related to their ideology, personal beliefs and myths.

### **Food Culture and Casteism in India**

In the yester decades of India food habits marked cultural divide and it provided ample platform for the divergent culture of the country. When the contemporary political fascism tries to project an ideology that would demand the ban of certain culinary habits it is, perhaps, trying to put the rich past of India under oblivion and delete the memory which is a tool of resistance against it. Rewritings and remoulding of educational systems and cultural codes are a part of the job which helps the powerful, to reshape our schemas and collective consciousness.

As we know, caste is an institution which is truly Indian in character. The Vedic scriptures explain the four divisions of society into Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (cultivators), and Shudras (menial servants) has been created by primeval man 'Purusha'. From Purusha's brain have emerged the Brahmins, from his forearms emerged the Kshatriyas and from his abdomen have emerged the Vaishyas and from his feet have emerged Shudras. The high caste is believed to be those who are baptised by fire and they continue to be the preservers of fire. Fire was then an object of worship and was also used for cooking. Even today, we can see that in Indian weddings or any other social and religious occasions, the cooks are traditionally Brahmins. In some Indian languages, the word for cook is 'Achari' and for scholar 'Acharya'. Thus, Yagna ritual and function of cooking are the two areas Brahmins had come to acquire hereditary monopoly, thus excluding other castes from it.

This Varna system and untouchability (of body and in mind) continued from classical period, medieval period and Mughal - Post Mughal period reaching the British ruling era to its organising as a central mechanism of administration colonial administrator Herbert Hope Risley, the exponent of Race science used the caste and race to divide Indian minds and milieus. But in India, contemporary incidents prove that all these social stratifications and its effects are politically channelised for better achievements and profits.

### **Food Habits and Caste of Food**

The caste system led to the restricted food habits among Indians. Higher castes try maintaining their traditional purity by different food habits. Thus Brahmins will only take 'Satwil' or 'Pure' food. Kshatriya and Vaishya will take 'Royal' Food whereas a Shudra takes Tamsi food. Each individual caste has its own laws which govern the food habits. Even today this cultural divide is seen in the various cultural products like market. We note that when we have "Brahmin's Puttupodi" and Samabar mix, no "Brahmin's Irachimasala" available.

Today we have started to bother the caste of our food. Eating has become a matter of status and privilege and the boundaries in food habits have visibly reduced too. At the same time food is now a strong tool against the emerging monoculture in India. In history, food was a part of resistance and was a tool against compartmentalisation. The 'Panthibhojanam' recorded in history has the lower class having the food normally eaten by the upper class. Ayyankali and other leaders, had their dining with upper caste men, to prove that caste rigidity should be excluded from such social habits

Food was also used as a resistance, during the colonial period, to make the self confidence of each Indian esteemed and also adopting of the foreign food



habits, as a mode of struggle against their oppression and monopoly. The retrieval of traditional food habits can also be a part of resistance against the corporate invasion with their fast food culture to the Indian scenario.

In the imminent wake of a fascist tone in the contemporary political scene, the choices of our food are certainly restricted. Maharashtra has banned cow-slaughter and the centre is trying to bring similar legislations nationwide. There are raids, riots and murders in the name of food and it questions the future of democracy and our choices. In an article, Navneet Sharma explains, that "The idea of cow- slaughter or eating beef as sacrilegious works like a bewitchment since it is effective at several levels. At one level, it communicates well to a mass which was convinced and annoyed by the idea of their female assets being plundered from them. - a taunt on their masculinity which indeed mobilise people across the country . At another level, It reinforces the food hierarchy which exists in India, as an extension and fortification of the caste hierarchy. This food hierarchy according to Dr. B. R .Ambedkar segregates people into three different identities -those who do not eat flesh (at the top) those who eat non-vegetarian food except beef and those who eat beef [at the bottom]. It works well with the already existent Hindu caste hierarchy, since the upper strata in the caste structure belongs belongs to the top section of the food hierarchy while Dalits and non Hindus [Muslims and Christians] belong to the lowest strata in both cases.

Many Dalit communities have myths, like the Madigas of Andhra Pradesh have Jambava Purana -that trace their origin back to the consumption of cow meat and the stigma of untouchability enforced on them. By banning the beef, it shows how deprivation of a certain food item is the discrimination against the food habits of a certain minorities of the society. Kancha Ilaiah, in his work , " Why I Am Not a Hindu- A Sudra Critique of Hindutva Philosophy , Culture and Political economy" explains , why he opposes the beef ban in India and expose how the banning of certain culinary habits become a part of an attempt to impose upper caste culture on other Hindus. He says," culturally, what is being attempted is to use the state, that too, a democratic state to destroy their food culture, their protein availability and food choice. "Their" stands for Dalits, Muslims, Christians and all those food habit included beef or who want to eat it. Choice is very important in a modern democracy”.

Today, efforts to dispel our ignorance about Indian food habits are controlled by the increasingly powerful thought police. It is to be noted that the backbone of this food hierarchy is the notion of vegetarianism as elitist food habit which in turn draws its power from the traditional concepts of casteism of food. It is to be noted that Dr. B. R Ambedkar wanted Dalits to stop eating dead cattle (their only choice was the dead cows thrown to gettoes by upper castes) and he asked them to have beef as a resistance against the emerging fascist food habits. As Kancha Ilaiah points out, “The aim of the

brahminic forces is simple: the Dalit Bahujans are to be made to live and work for the cause of upper caste education, enjoyment and wealth, but not for themselves. This modern spiritual fascism is more dangerous than the ancient and medieval versions. It operates in many nuanced forms. In the guise of nationalist cultural element, this spiritual fascism is being shoved down the throats of Dalit-Bahujans and indeed many have now swallowed it (Buffalo Nationalism -A Critique of Spiritual Fascism).

Food is thus a strong tool in the hands of oppressed, to protest, to prove, to resist against the increasing intolerance and discriminations on the basis of religion, caste and economy. To regain the power of choice, to rebuild a better scenario of secularism in the society we live in.

### References

- Ambedkar, B.R . The Untouchables : Who Were They and Why They Became Untouchables? Navayana . New Delhi .1948. print.
- Ilaiah ,Kanja . Buffalo Nationalism : A Critique of Spiritual Facsism. Bhatkal & sen. Delhi. 2004
- Navneet Sharma , Pradeep Nair, Harikrishnan .B . “Beef, Buffalo and Brahmanism : The Politics of Food”. Mainstream Weekly . vol. L11 . No 18. April 25, 2015.
- Ray , D. ‘Food Sovereignty’ , Delta Farm Express. August 29 .2003.

**Atheetha K.Unni**

Research Scholar

Sree Kerala Varma College, Thrissur

## **Food as Temptation in Lewis Carroll's**

### ***Alice's Adventures in Wonderland***

Abstract: Although many critics and theorists, including Roland Barthes, have discussed food in literature, little attention has been paid to the food-as-temptation story in children's literature. In Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, food is used as temptation for child protagonists, a tool to lure them into doing evil deeds or being generally mischievous. Some characters, like Alice, act as the tempters as well as the tempted. Food does fuel imagination, especially in children's literature, where picture and chapter books alike are likely to have food fantasy scenes, often with detailed illustrations. Despite its prevalence, studies on food have not been fully embraced by the scholarly world of children's literature—a relatively young field itself—and have only just begun to be discussed within the past couple of decades.

In the introduction to their anthology *Critical Approaches to Food in Children's Literature*, Kara Keeling and Scott Pollard argue that “if food is fundamental to life and a substance upon which civilizations and cultures have built themselves, then food is also fundamental to the imagination and the imaginary arts” (5). Food does fuel imagination, especially in children's literature, where picture and chapter books alike are likely to have food fantasy scenes, often with detailed illustrations. Despite its prevalence, studies on food have not been fully embraced by the scholarly world of children's literature—a relatively young field itself—and have only just begun to be discussed within the past couple of decades. Yet food plays a vital part in many types of children's stories, including fairy tales and canonical children's texts, such as *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Many of these stories feature food as a temptation for the young protagonists, as a tool used to trick them into doing something wicked or mischievous, putting them in danger or dropping them into the clutches of an evil power. Sometimes, this tempting food is magical, offered by a witch or supernatural being. Food is often a weapon in fantasy literature, meant to lure children towards evil.

Carroll's Alice is tempted by a variety of foods and food-related situations, only regaining control at the end of the novel. Although Alice does make many choices during her trip through Wonderland, I argue that she is subject to the uncertainties of the fantasy world and its inhabitants, including the mysterious food that appears throughout Wonderland. Eating and drinking pushes Alice's trip through Wonderland forward, and moves her closer to the climax of the novel: the trial scene.

Food—and particularly sweet food—is mentioned at the very beginning of Alice’s descent down the rabbit hole. As she falls down the dark hole, she sees and reaches for “a jar from one of the shelves as she passed: it was labeled ‘ORANGE MARMALADE,’ but to her great disappointment it was empty” (8). Her encounter with the marmalade does not result in actual consumption, but it does affirm to readers that Alice likes sweet things and food in general, and prepares readers for later encounters with food throughout the novel. Although the marmalade is not an exotic food, or even particularly extravagant, it excites Alice. As Kevin Sweeney points out in “Alice’s Discriminating Palate,” “Our pleasure is the test we use for evaluation: what we ingest is good to the extent that we are pleurably stimulated” (19). A few pages later, when Alice encounters “a little bottle... [with] a paper label, with the words ‘DRINK ME’ beautifully printed on it,” its odd taste does not alarm her (10). She notes that “it had, in fact, a sort of mixed flavour of cherry-tart, custard, pine-apple, roast turkey, toffee, and hot buttered toast—” an unusual selection of flavors that are largely rich or sweet (11).

Robert Hemmings writes that “nostalgia, in its particularly sensory embodiment, works to cover over aspects of childhood distasteful to adult sensibilities,” although it only has “partial success” (54). Alice’s list of tastes are “rich with associations of a privileged middle-class Victorian childhood...exotic fruit, desserts, a roast dripping with holiday associations...nary a vegetable to wrinkle a child’s nose” (Hemmings 62). Even though Alice momentarily hesitates to drink the mysterious concoction, thinking of cautionary tales that featured children accidentally drinking “a bottle marked ‘poison,’” her positive taste-associations overwhelm any negative thoughts and open a new avenue of experimentation and delight (11). Drinking from the bottle shrinks Alice to “ten inches high,” a transformation that begins her tumultuous relationship with size. Alice does not initially know that the drink will not change her size, nor is the drink offered by anyone. No one persuades Alice to take the drink other than herself, and so it is only tempting because it is there, exposed and available. Alice’s change in size is what moves her through Wonderland. Without drinking and eating in the small room, she never would have turned small enough to swim through her own tears and participate in the caucus-race, and she never would have met so many strange inhabitants of Wonderland.

However, aside from plot-progression, Alice’s instinct to consume is important, even when it alarmingly changes her size. Some critics, like Hemmings, believe that the link between food and nostalgia is the primary function of food in children’s literature, and serves to remind readers (especially adult readers) of their own childhoods. Hemmings writes that “the nostalgic taste of childhood ushers in the traumatizing diminishment of self, as Alice shrinks away and becomes powerless” (62). As one of the few humans in Wonderland, Alice might be in a position of power over the mostly animal

inhabitants. Yet instead of controlling the animals, or herself, Alice is physically hindered by the foods she eats, and made as small as the creatures she meets on her journey. Alice is also made large—most notably when she grows within the white rabbit’s house—but her massive size does not give her power. Instead, her giant form is monstrous and frightening to the animal characters and herself (because she does not anticipate her size).

While in the white rabbit’s house, Alice sees a bottle labeled “DRINK ME,” and proceeds to follow its instructions because she is “quite tired of being such a tiny little thing” (28). Her rash decision teaches her a lesson of sorts. After drinking from the bottle, Alice cannot leave the house. She immediately regrets her decision (“I do wish I hadn’t drunk quite so much!”), and reflects that she still has lessons to learn and an adulthood to grow into (28-29). In this scene, Alice expresses a desire to learn lessons, even though lessons (and the boredom that accompanies them) are what send Alice to Wonderland in the first place. Here, food serves as a tool that teaches Alice that being adult is not only about being larger, but also being wiser. Still, the sudden growth makes Alice anxious, and links certain uneasiness to consumption. Although she may want to eat the cakes and drink the bottles labeled so attractively, the end result is uncertain, just like growing up is an uncertain task. Just as drinking wine might have unplanned results in “Wine and Milk,” growing older promises a mysterious and perhaps dangerous future. However, Elaine Ostry argues that ultimately, “growth in Alice is not linked to morality” or power (36). Alice is not a decidedly bad person because she eats mysterious foods, or because she is tempted by particular items (like the tarts during the trial), but she isn’t completely good either. Unlike Edmund and Charlie, who are labelled as firmly bad or good (although Edmund is ultimately forgiven), respectively, Alice doesn’t seem to have a moral alignment. Throughout her journey, Alice is effectively punished for giving in to her temptation, even though there is no evil force that offers (or creates) the food itself.

The eat-me/drink-me food items are alluring to Alice because they give firm commands. Alice, like Hansel and Gretel, wastes food by eating it when she isn’t hungry. Carina Garland writes that in Wonderland “food is eaten constantly and results in bodily changes but is consumed without any explicit hunger (or desire) being expressed. Alice is continually following (the male author’s) instruction” (32). Garland’s claim that the bottles and cakes are from the author himself makes sense. Without a character or force to provide the food, it is possible to view the food as sent directly from the author himself. Considering Carroll’s frequent meta-comments throughout the novel—for instance, Alice’s insistence that there should be a book written about her—and his transformation of common nursery rhymes and children’s poems, it is logical to view the author as a character himself. Biographically, Garland links Lewis’ controlling presence in the novel with his real-life habits. Carroll—a

picky eater himself—“meticulously plann[ed] the times and quantity of his child guests’ food consumption, including treats...in his personal writings, there is much evidence of Carroll’s uneasiness surrounding appetite and consumption” (Garland 25-26). Carroll’s urge to control his child friends extends to the fictional Alice, whose life is also dictated by Victorian conduct norms. Without an evil force or character to serve as the source of Alice’s food, Lewis Carroll himself becomes the tempter, luring Alice deeper and deeper into Wonderland.

There may not be a need to ascribe Alice’s relationship with food to any one source, and it may be sufficient simply to say that Alice is led through Wonderland by a variety of encounters with food. Considering Garland’s view, Carroll might be extending his controlling food habits to Alice and her world, seeking to teach the fictional character (and in turn, readers) to restrain her appetites and learn to be independent.

There are numerous examples of how not to behave throughout Wonderland, which might be Carroll’s way of communicating what behaviour is inappropriate. For example, the wild behaviour of the mad tea party infuriates Alice. The Hatter and the March Hare both waste food by constantly moving around and using food for unnecessary reasons, like buttering a watch (58, 55-56). Alice becomes frustrated with the tea party and declares “I’ll never go there again...It’s the stupidest tea-party I ever was at in all my life!” (61). Alice’s attitude towards the tea party reflects Carroll’s notions of dietary restraint; constantly drinking tea is excessive, and wasting food is a mark of gluttony. Even though Alice learns that she disapproves of such silliness, she continues to eat found food items, which alter her appearance drastically throughout the novel.

Upon meeting the Caterpillar, Alice learns that she can change her size by eating a special mushroom. The Caterpillar tells her that “one side will make [her] grow taller, and the other side will make [her] grow shorter,” but he doesn’t inform her which side does what (41). Alice first eats and grows shorter, which frightens her “a good deal,” and she then eats and grows taller, which makes her giant (41-42). Alice is also frightened by a pigeon that mistakes her for a serpent, and dissatisfied with both heights. She desperately wants to be a normal height, to be her height, but balance remains out of grasp for much of the novel. Alice cannot be her true size at will because she has not learned how to restrain her appetite (and also her curiosity).

In addition to being tempted by food, Alice also acts as a temptress. Although Alice does not completely match the archetype of the original temptress, Eve, by offering food items to other characters, she does frequently bait them with language, luring them into unpleasant conversations. For example, after eating the caterpillar’s mushroom and growing excessively tall,

Alice meets a pigeon in a tree who confuses her for a snake and proceeds to yell, "Serpent!...Serpent, I say again!" in fear. Alice attempts to tell the pigeon that she is not a serpent, but even though she "was beginning to see its meaning,"

Alice excites the bird further (43). When asked if she's trying to get the pigeon's eggs, Alice responds, "I have tasted eggs, certainly...but little girls eat eggs quite as much as serpents do, you know" (43). The pigeon tells Alice that she's unsure of the claim, but that "if they do, why, then they're a kind of serpent" (43). The pigeon's assertion that Alice is a serpent comes as a "new idea" to Alice, perhaps because serpents are associated with biblical evil and Alice does not consider herself evil. By casting Alice as temptress, Carroll does not suggest that Alice is evil, but that she is mischievous, playful, and a bit naïve. Alice does not immediately associate a serpent's taste for eggs with a human's taste for eggs and sees them as separate hungers, but she continues to talk with the pigeon anyway, despite its growing anxiety. Similarly, Wonderland's inhabitants (like the Chesire Cat) play with Alice when she is frustrated. Aside from the bond between serpents and evil, Alice intentionally baits the pigeon by telling her exactly what she doesn't want to hear: that Alice could and would eat her eggs. This sort of antagonistic goading lures character into small arguments with Alice, when Alice might just as easily avoid emotional conversations, like the case of the pigeon. Alice plays with language in Wonderland, sometimes acting as the tempted, sometimes the temptress, changing in appearance along the way. Alice's changes in moods and roles mirror her frustrating changes in size.

Although Alice's height fluctuates throughout the novel due to her consumption of various foods, the final scene of the novel features food in a slightly different role. Instead of being led—by the author or another character—to consume an unknown food, Alice is a participant in a trial focusing on food. The King and Queen of Hearts stage the trial to determine who stole the Queen of Hearts' tarts, yet the courtroom serves as a temptation. There is, "in the very middle of the court...a table, with a large dish of tarts upon it: they looked so good, that it made Alice quite hungry to look at them" (86). Since the tarts "made Alice quite hungry," she "began looking at everything about her to pass away the time," and irritably engages the other members of the court (86). When Alice sees the jurors, who are comprised of various animals she's met on her travels, she calls them "stupid things!" even though she is confused about the nature of jurors herself (86). This agitation progresses into physical change as Alice "felt a very curious sensation...she was beginning to grow larger again" (88). This growth, which has always been incited by food before the trial, leads to Alice's biggest outburst: "'Who cares for you?' said Alice (she had grown to her full size by this time). 'You're nothing but a pack of cards!'" (97). This moment of adult sensibility—adult because she has applied realistic standards to a fantastical world—brings Alice

back to reality, to her sister and life. While previous, food-induced growth resulted in frustration or confusion for Alice, non-food related growth results in anger. Alice's changing size troubles her, but she is not completely powerless throughout her adventures, since she does assert her right to grow up and one day be an adult (162). Still, Alice is not in control of Wonderland, and her decisions cannot immediately right problematic situations, for the most part. The trial scene ends with Alice's removal from the Wonderland completely and her return to the real world and her sister.

By leaving Wonderland, Alice will be allowed to grow up and resist the temptation of forever being a child. When Alice meets Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking-Glass*, he tells her that she should have stopped growing at seven, "but it's too late now" (162). When Alice protests that she cannot choose to stop growing, Humpty Dumpty explains, "One can't, perhaps...but two can. With proper assistance, you might have left off at seven" (162). Although Alice quickly changes the subject, it's clear that Humpty Dumpty sees adulthood as a negative prospect, and that it would be preferable to die at seven than to continue growing. Although Alice does not wish to kill herself, and although she is already past the age of seven anyway, staying a child forever is a temptation for her. Halting progression and remaining in a static state, without ever encountering change tempts Alice, but does not ultimately sway her as food does.

Alice's *Adventures in Wonderland* is frequently cited in food theory articles, but it is structurally different from the typical food-as-temptation story, even though it prominently features food and eating. While other novels (such as those discussed in this paper) operate with two fictional parties—the tempter and the tempted—Alice never encounters the source of the mysterious food she eats. Although one might speculate that the giver of the food is the author himself, there is no real solution to the problem. Food also serves a different function in Carroll's novel. Instead of finding herself in grave danger after eating rich food, Alice continues through Wonderland relatively unharmed, although occasionally frustrated.

#### References

- Bakhtin, Mikhail. *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Cambridge: The M.I.T Press, 1965. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972. Print.
- Bocock, Robert. *Consumption*. New York: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- Carroll, Lewis. *Alice in Wonderland*. Ed. Donald J. Gray. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992. Print.



**Brindha T. Sachdanandam**

Research Scholar  
University of Madras, Chennai

**Dr V. Bharathi Harishankar**

Professor  
University of Madras, Chennai

**Cooking Narratives: Tracing Food Structures in Folktales  
through *Indira's Rice Noodles* and *Sweet Balls***

Abstract: Indian folktales are replete with food references that are made using metaphors, descriptions and imagery. In folk narratives, food often becomes a tool by which complex cultural conventions are conveyed. Using folktales, the study attempts to delineate and understand interactions between individuals facilitated by food structures within a society. The folktales selected for the study are namely, *Sweet Balls* (2002) and *Indira's Rice Noodles* (2007) which were translated into English from Haryanvi and Konkani respectively and published by National Book Trust, India. By employing a Structuralist approach to food, the select folktales bring out gender politics and power equations within the social and domestic spheres. The paper attempts to capture socio-cultural dynamics that govern transactions between individuals belonging to complex societies by viewing food as a structural link. The study defines socio-cultural power structures that are constantly reordered and restructured through food.

Regional Indian Folktales document the socio-cultural background to interactions between various groups within and outside a community. Food is a recurring motif which is used to present social interactions in Folk tales. Tracing the pattern of food consumption, production and distribution, aids in understanding the dynamics of socio-cultural practices of the local region. Food serves as an informant of the various interactions that arise along the intersections of gender, class and community. The study examines food related interactions in select regional Indian folk tales. Deconstructing a 'meal' reveals that food plays a major role in representing several gender and community related issues in a society.

The folk tale *Indira's Rice Noodles* puts forward the condition of a man's obsession for a delicacy prepared by his mother. In the folk tale, the character Mhall Pai often dreams and desires over the 'rice noodles' that his mother used to prepare for him. Indira, his wife, refuses to create the 'rice noodles' that his mother cooked for him. This motivates him to seek the help of his neighbour's wife to 'trick' her into preparing it for him. The folktale reveals how food connects individuals within and outside families. It is often through food that social bonds between individuals are created. *Sweet Balls* is a folk tale that illustrates the various conflicts between a 'Jat boy' and a 'Banjarin' woman using food metaphor. The folk tale brings out gender, class and

community related conflicts using food. The Banjarin attempts to capture a 'Jat' and get her daughter to 'cook' him for her. The 'Jat' boy manages to escape and in turn 'cooks' the Banjarin's lazy daughter to serve the Banjarin a 'meal.' In *Sweet Balls* and *Indira's Rice Noodles* food can be used as structural link to outline several social and familial conflicts.

Food Historians and Ethnographers like K. T. Achaya have identified the role of food in understanding complex societies. Socio-cultural dynamics marked by complex societies of the past are documented in oral narratives. Folk tales are oral narratives. While translating oral folk narratives into English most of the translators rely on 'folk motifs' (Ramanujan) to convey culture specific messages. Food motifs and food metaphors serve as primary motifs that carry the richness of local cultural flavours of the region. The folk tales chosen for the study are *Indira's Rice noodles* (original in Konkani) and *Sweet Balls* (original in Haryanvi) translated by Olivinho Gomes and A. K. Ramanujan respectively.

*Indira's Rice Noodles* explores the relationship between a man and his wife. Mhall Pai takes the help of a woman (his witty neighbor), to negotiate deals with his ill-tempered wife in order to consume a meal that he desires and fantasies over. Food is used as a tool to communicate desires. Food also defines the base for communication. The rice noodles that Mhall Pai craves for is a meal that is constructed using local produce. It brings out the flavor and heritage of the Konkan region. "One day, Mhall Pai recalled his fondness for rice noodles which his mother used to make for him, sprinkled with coconut shredding and jaggery to sweeten them. It was caught in his imagination so hard that there was a heavy weight lodged in the pit of his stomach. The hankering for them grew apace and the lack of them made him wilt and wither" (137). Mhall Pai's mother exercises control over her son through the delicacy that she prepares for him. He sets out to expect the same treatment from his wife. Indira is quite direct in establishing her individuality by not falling in line with her mother-in-law, who unlike her had pampered her husband.

Mhall Pai craves for the meal that his mother had served him. Traditional meals convey strong emotions associated with nostalgia. Taste memory is an important component in folk narratives as it sets out to recreate 'past' within the 'present.' Food practices, similar to folklore, strive to keep a tradition alive. Both the culturally evolved taste preferences, as well as an individual's taste preferences find a place in folk narratives. "...one cannot hope to use the study of individual cultural histories to explain the specifics of what people eat without applying general principles that transcend individual cultures" (Harris and Ross 595).

Food weaves in the diminished and magnified view of relationships between an individual and the culture that he/she belongs to. Even among individuals gender factor contributes to the manner in which food choices are made. Transactions between men and women play a major role in understanding the intricacies of food related social interactions. “Maleness and Femaleness in all cultures are associated with specific foods and rules controlling their consumption... Between men and women, food is a means of differentiation as well as a channel of connection” (Counihan & Kaplan 2). A simple folktale establishes a triangular pattern between characters with food being the medium of transaction. Relationship based on food transactions between the characters Mhall Pai, Indira and his mother falls into a triangular structure. With Mhall Pai at the apex, and his wife and mother at the corners of the triangle’s base, food becomes the structural link that connects them. Indira and Mhall Pai’s mother being the ‘food providers’ take up a parallel position along the base. Mhall Pai replaces his mother with his neighbour’s wife when he consults her to achieve his desire. Apart from being a structural base for this transaction, food also operates as a functional component of this triangle. It is food that drives an interaction between individuals located along the vertices of the culinary triangle. By being at the base, both Indira and Mhall Pai’s mother have a strong control over Mhall Pai’s primal drives and desire. Based on their relationship with Mhall Pai they can be seen as parallels following similar culinary practices.

Women have the traditional culinary knowledge that has been transferred and passed across generations. A man’s labour often ends with the procurement of the raw materials. It is a woman’s labour that transforms raw ingredients into a consumable ‘meal.’ This role offers women certain powers over a man. She becomes the sources of a constructed ‘meal’. Counihan and Kaplan state that, “Women can also exert power over men by refusing to cook, controlling their food, manipulating the status and meaning systems embodied in foods”. In *Indira’s Rice Noodles*, Mhall Pai’s wife exerts power over him by being the creator of his meals.

She flung an angry look at him...Who are you to tell me not to make the rice-noodles? My daughter, Soiru, was telling me the other day that her father-in-law loved eating the rice noodles. I shall make them. You are an idler. You may tell me, make rice-bread, make rice-cakes, do this, do that. You think I am going to listen to you? I will only make a rice noodle, that’s it. (138) Indira is referred as Mhall Pai’s wife only in the title of the folk tale. There is a deliberate emphasis on the role that she is expected to play as Mhall Pai’s wife. Her control over her husband is parodied and mocked at. Food is used to represent power dynamics and man-woman conflict within a family. Food representations in folk tales carry a metaphorical significance. Food metaphors are used to convey emotions and ideas that are culture specific. It also becomes a representative of the person who consumes it. The same ‘meal’

carries and conveys different emotions for different characters in a folktale. Mhall Pai's wife uses food to convey emotions of hatred and anger. "I'll show you, just wait. I'll get the noodles extracted out of you tonight" (140). 'Extracting the rice noodles' is a metaphor that Indira uses to teach Mhall Pai a lesson for tricking her into cooking it for him. It also carries heavy sexual overtones as the act of "extracting the rice noodles" has carnal significations. Mhall Pai is seen as a powerless man trying to outwit his strong wife by employing a trick that is suggested to him by his neighbour's wife. In Indira's Rice Noodle, there is a simple formulation of character as 'actors' and 'actee' (Propp). However, other external figures can also aid the progression of a folk narrative.

The figure of a trickster is a recurrent motif in Folktales. Propp refers to the 'trick' that a trickster employs in a folk tale to outwit his/her opponent, to illustrate the manner by which conflicts are resolved. According to Jungian Psychology, a trickster is also a psychological archetype. The counterpart of a trickster is a wise old man who drives home a moral to others. In the folktales selected for study, food becomes a medium by which the trickster outwits the other person. In the Haryanvi folk tale *Sweet Balls*, a 'Jat' boy and 'Banjarin' woman trick each other. The 'Banjarin' woman tries to cook the boy and eat him. The boy ends up cooking up the Banjarin's daughter and serves her a 'meal'. The social context to the folktale *Sweet Balls* projects that the Banjarin being the wise and aged person of her family expects the daughter to feed her. This understanding is a contrast to the universal understanding of a mother being the 'nurturer' and child being the 'nourished.' It also points to the generational dynamics within a family. This also defines the attitude of a trickster. The cannibalistic cooking becomes a metaphor by which issues related to gender roles can be identified.

She asked her daughter to grind the spices, but she was very lazy. After some time she started cursing her mother, for making her work so hard. The boy heard her and said, "If you free me, I will make all the preparations for you." The girl was only too pleased to hear him. So she untied him and went off to sleep. The boy caught hold of her, cut her to pieces and along with spices cooked her. He dressed up in clothes of the girl and waited for the Banjarin. When she came back he served her the food. The Banjarin ate well and praising the meal tried to pat him thinking him to be her daughter. But when she touched the boy she was alarmed. (46)

A woman who is incapable of providing a meal is 'cooked' and 'consumed' as a meal. The trickster's act of 'cooking' represents the act of conditioning one's mind to accept and abide by gender norms of the society. By preparing a meal the 'Jat boy' also performs the role of a 'domestic cook' which is reserved for the Banjarin's daughter. This adds to the masking of his identity and enhances his role of a trickster. Crowther presents that gender

roles are often demarcated based on food practices. Raw materials are processed to create a meal. When a meal is served, a woman's labour is expected to be masked and not presented at the table for consumption. In *Sweet Balls* the Jat boy's act of 'cooking' the Banjarin's lazy daughter is a metaphor that implies how gender roles are imposed from the patriarchal centre. The 'Jat' boy 'presents' himself in the clothes of the Banjarin's daughter. Through the act of cross-dressing the boy is able to convince the Banjarin that he is her 'daughter.' This instance from the folk tale highlights the similarity between a 'meal' and 'attire' which are used to objectify/define a person and present them for consumption. By 'presenting' a 'meal,' a woman 'offers' herself in the form of the hard labour that goes into the construction of the 'meal.' Through this 'presentation' her hard work and labour are often masked as it becomes 'unfit for consumption.' The masking serves a dual purpose in the folktale *Sweet Balls*. It subverts the labour involved in the preparation of the 'meal' and at the same time adheres to the trickster motif.

Folk tales throw light over subtle conflicts related to communal dynamics in a society. 'Jats' are classified as a peasant community while the term 'Banjarin' refers to a 'gypsy/ nomad'. Being a 'Jat' offers the boy and his mother certain food privileges that may not be accessible to the Banjarin and her daughter. Food also defines roles of a person within the familial/ social boundaries. The Banjarin's role as the 'food obtainer/ collector' suggests that she belongs to a matriarchal set up while the Jat boy, being the 'bread winner' of the family may be part of a patriarchal social condition. Food has the power to control and maintain the structural base of hierarchy in a society. Crowther argues that the one who collects the raw material often finds himself/herself in a position above the one who processes the raw material and constructs it into a 'consumable meal.'

*Sweet Balls* illustrates that gender conflicts arise out of community based interactions. In India, gender roles are community-specific. Certain castes and communities are denied access to basic and shared resources. Caste and class hierarchies in a society lead to inequitable resource distribution. With inequitable resources distribution, the underprivileged are forced to seek alternate means in order to satiate their basic drives such as hunger and thirst. Food becomes a point where communities deviate and stand distinct. However, food gathering and resource sharing also brings together distinctly different communities.

Achaya points out that 'sweet meals' are often exchanged to create and strengthen social bonds. The rice noodles that Indira cooks for her daughter's father-in-law and the sweet balls that the Jat's mother prepares for him are sweet based meals. Sweet based dishes sometimes act as the base for promoting man-women interactions within a family. In the folk tales selected

for study the sweet meals (rice noodles and sweet balls) connote intimacy and desire. It is either the mother or the wife who is expected by the son/husband to prepare the sweet meal that he desires. Hence, through the folk tale a strong oedipal instinct is conveyed subtly to larger audience which would include children and young adults.

As illustrated in the foregoing discussion, folktales connect individuals within a community by illustrating universal conditions that are common to all societies. Food, like oral narratives, is a universal concept and is an important factor in the construction of complex societies. Food reflects the society and at the same time gets re-defined and altered by the changing social conditions. Food serves as a means by which intimate bonds as well as social bonds are created among human beings. In *Indira's Rice Noodles* Mhall Pai attempts to recreate a bond of intimacy with his ill-tempered wife through a delicacy that his mother had prepared for him. Most of the culinary interactions of a society bring out the class, caste and gender conflicts. The process involves stages unfolding right from point at which raw materials are procured, to the distribution of resources, construction of a 'meal' and ends in the process of assimilation. In *Sweet Balls* the 'Jat boy' outwits the Banjarin by 'cooking' her daughter and by serving her a 'meal.' The Banjarin plays the role of 'procurer' who procures raw materials for cooking while her daughter being the cook is expected to process it into a 'meal'. Every member of a family comes together in constructing a 'meal.'

Every stage of the meal construction process plays a vital role in understanding the context in which social issues are raised. In *Indira's rice Noodles* and *Sweet Balls*, man-woman power dynamics, caste and communal politics and generational hierarchies are illustrated. The availability of raw materials and its processing pattern differs based on the region and the community that is involved in the meal construction process. Changes in food culture effects a change in societal norms. By studying the food consumption patterns of the past through folk tales, contemporary food consumption patterns and various politics associated with it can be reviewed.

#### References

- Gomes, Olivinho. J. F. (Trans) *Konkani Folk Tales*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, 2007. Print.
- Ramanujan, A. K. *Folktales from India: A Selection of Oral Tales from Twenty-Two Languages*. USA: Viking Publishing House, 1993. Print.
- Achaya, K. T. *Indian Food: A Historical Companion*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print.
- Counihan, Carole and Steven L. Kaplan (ed). *Food and Gender: Identity and Power*. Amsterdam: Taylor and Francis, 2005.ebook.
- Crowther, Gillian. *Eating Culture: An Anthropological Guide to Food*. Canada: University of Toronto Press Inc, 2013. Print.
- Harris, Marvin and Eric B. Ross. *Food and Evolution: Towards a Theory of Human Food Habits*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987. Print.

**Iswarya M.**

Assistant Professor

SCMS School of Technology and Management, Aluva

**Nature as Ambrosia and Toxin: An Eco critical Study of  
Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth***

Abstract: The paper attempts to make an ecocritical analysis of Pearl S. Buck's celebrated novel *The Good Earth*. Pearl S. Buck's *The Good Earth* deals with the life of a Chinese farmer Wang Lu, who begins a simple life and ends up as a rich land lord. The ecocritical perspective of the novel shows how nature acts as the major force behind the fall of the old dynasty of Hwang and the rise of a new one by Wang Lu. The division of the themes into three serves to throw light on the different dimensions of nature-human interaction. Earth, one of the forms of nature, operates silently throughout the novel as a creator, preserver and destroyer and thus shows its power to both harm and heal. Even though the plot, the characters and the actions seem to justify the idea of 'the good earth', the novel also compels the readers to ponder over the idea of 'a bad earth'.

Nature has proved many a time to be the greatest wonder that we come across, sometimes providing the greatest consolation and sometimes bringing immense grief. The relationship between man and nature has always been an inspiration for writers all over the world, especially in the present world which is facing a global environmental crisis. Among the literary critical schools that emerged in the nineteen nineties, the school preaching ecocriticism is unique in the domain that it alone has a positivistic approach. Ecocritics try to find clear, conspicuous or concrete demonstrative facts from literary works. Then, they interpret works. Subjective aspects like literariness, social constructivism and refined language are not their concern.

What is Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism studies literature and environment from an interdisciplinary perspective where all sciences jointly take part in analyzing the environment and put forth possible solutions for the betterment of the contemporary environmental situation. The term ecocriticism was popularized in the mid-1990s with the publication of two literary articles: *The Ecocriticism Reader*, edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination*, by Lawrence Buell. Ecocriticism has now become a major field of concern that is accepted by a stratum of audience on diverse fields of studies like green (cultural) studies, ecopoetics, and environmental literary criticism. Regional literature and the embedded facts from the forest and village lives and their contrast to the city/metropolitan ones come under the purview of ecological literary studies. The reputed American novelist Pearl S Buck's works can be examined using ecocritical measures. Farmers, peasants,

ecological refugees and their relationship to their habitats, farmlands and the ways in which these connections shape their mindscapes often come as subjects in Buck's works.

*The Good Earth* which was published in 1931 brought international fame to Pearl S. Buck and she bagged her Pulitzer Prize and later made her way easy to grab the Nobel Prize. Though the author intended it as a sort of historical fiction, the novel's appeal lies largely in its treatment of a relevant theme that goes beyond any regional color. The title itself strikes a strong note of ecoconsciousness in the mind of readers. It reminds us of the good nature of earth, which remains faithful despite all our mistreatment of it.

The apparent plot of the novel *The Good Earth* deals with the life history of a Chinese farmer Wang Lung, beginning from the day of the poor farmer's marriage to the time of his death as the founder of a powerful dynasty. But the ecocritical reading of it makes the plot mainly deal with the relation of a man and the earth that sustains him and the plot also shows how he makes the land prosper against the ravages of nature and other external factors. Finally the novel ends showing the modern man's neglect of the vitality of nature, here represented in the form of land and reminding him of the impending calamity resulting from such neglect. The novel can be analysed in three divisions based on the major themes of the novel. Generation of three main divisions is possible keeping in mind the ecocritical views.

### **Association of Characters with the Land**

A predominant conception is that life is possible only when the earth in the form of nature, provides us our necessity. The notion that man born from the earth ultimately degenerates into the soil has also been brought into view. Such a concept evolves from the start when Pearl S. Buck pictures Wang Lung and O-lan work and yearn for their land. Their life in every way is depended on and connected to land as they are of the farming class. The farmer Wang Lung is never mentally tired of his heavy labour on the earth which he possesses and is always careful of the minute attentions which his crops need. His wife O-lan who had been a slave in the Great house is not otherwise. She equally shoulders her husband in the fields without much talk or reluctance. "They worked on, moving together-together-producing the fruit of earth-speechless in their movement together." (22). The recurrent image of land appears throughout the novel making it one of the major concern of the characters as well as the novelist. The concern for the land is clearly brought out in the character of Wang Lung who says that "land is one's flesh and blood" (37). In a statement to O-lan, Wang Lung declaims clearly that the children must starve but the fields must not go dry. When Wang Lung's uncle tries to get him to sell his land, he cries out in dissent: "I shall never sell the land! Bit by bit I will dig up the fields and feed the earth itself to the children and when they die I



will bury them in the land, and I and my wife and my old father, even he, we will die on the land that has given us birth.”(61)

Wang Lung's father, like Wang Lung, also cherishes a resolute faith in the land. When Wang Lung yearns for the land, wanting to return to it, the father understands him well. He tells Wang Lung about the times in his life when he also had to leave the land. Wang Lung who promptly reminds his father that he always returned, the old man simply replies that “there was the land, my son.”(83).

The only consolation Wang Lung had when the family moves to south was that he still had the land to return to. The city life gradually becomes unbearable to Wang Lung who constantly yearns for the land. He even thinks seriously about selling his daughter if only it would enable him to return to his land. Wang Lung is not the only character in the book who knows the value of the land. Even Cuckoo, the slave who sells him the Hwang's land, tells him that the reason for the fall of the Hwang family was the family's negligence of the land.

Even the threat of his uncle, who belongs to a group of fierce bandits, does not generate any fear greater than the love for his land. Land is always a retreat for Wang Lung from his worldly sorrows. When the locusts threaten to destroy his crops, Wang Lung works on his land for seven consecutive days. It is exhausting, but healing at the same time. O-lan also acknowledges and respects the earth. On her deathbed, O-lan tells Wang Lung that he must not sell the land in his futile attempts to cure her. She says “my life is not worth so much. A good piece of land can be bought for so much.”(183)

Over the years, Wang Lung ages and changes, but one thing remains within him - his consideration and never failing love for the land. Although he leaves it for a while after having built his fortune, he always returns to the land every spring. In the concluding scene of the book Wang Lung is seenscreaming at his two sons when he overhears them talking about selling the land. Their words infuriate, disappoint and horrify Wang Lung. He reflects that “it is the end of a family-when they begin to sell the land,” (260) and he tells them brokenly: “out of the land we came and into it we must go-and if you will hold your land you can live-no one can rob you of the land.” (260) Wang Lung really appears as a wise farsighted old man who really understands the value of land which is the most precious wealth which a man can safely hold on until the end of his life. His sons mock him behind his back showing the lack of insight which their father possesses. The sons just take the words of the father as trivial advice and in their attitude there is a visible reflection of the new generation lacking interest and faith in the earth. When the novel concludes it appears likely that the fruits of Wang Lung's toils will be squandered by the excesses of his successors.

## **Faith in God**

As a novel which focuses on the relationship between man and nature, it is noteworthy that the novelist gives considerable attention to such factors as God and the mysterious working of nature explicated here in the form of climate change, famine and locust fall. The Earth God and His Lady occasionally referred to in the novel are concrete manifestations of the faith and the fear of the modest farmers. The simple and illiterate farmer Wang Lung implores the earth God and His Lady sometimes with humility and sometimes with anger. The image of the God serves as a connecting link between the explicable and the inexplicable.

As a farmer, Wang Lung and his father know that the earth is the God who shapes their lives and they should entrust their faith upon it. The earth is the reality which teaches us the great truth that we come from the earth and we return to the earth. The earth, which constitutes one of the major elements of nature, is the one that man is most closely related to. So it is natural for a simple farmer like Wang Lung to attribute all the fortunes and misfortunes of his life to the Earth God in whom he believes.

Being a modest farmer, Wang Lung, relies on the good favor of the Earth God and His Lady. After his marriage, O-lan and Wang Lung go to temple to pay respect to Earth God and His Lady. The family suffers during the famines and Wang Lung accuses the Earth God, attributing the misfortunes to His cold-heartedness. Although Wang Lung feels that the gods turned their backs on him, he does not forget to see the Earth God and His Lady upon arrival. The women in the story also rely on the power of Earth God when they come and pray in the fields to chase off the locusts.

As Wang Lung expands his fortunes, he overlooks the power of the Earth God and His Lady. However he pays a visit to the Earth God and His Mistress when the birth of his grandchild draws near. Instead of beseeching, however, he threatens them to give him a grandson. Wang Lung, when learns that his friend Ching is dying, becomes harsh and indignant toward the Earth God. He accuses the Earth God and His mistress of jealousy and for creating mayhem in his life because of giving a new robe to the town goddess.

The Earth God and His Lady come before the readers and the characters as the representatives of nature, who, people think, can influence the lives of them in every sense. They also act as the communicating link between nature and man. The Earth God also suggests the idea of the magical powers of the earthly aspect of nature.

## **The Role of Women**

*The Good Earth* throws much light into the treatment and condition of Chinese women in and around those days when the story takes place. It is important in the context of the ecocritical treatment of this novel as woman characters not only help the author develop the plot, but also act as strong chain in fixing the nature-human bond.

Foot binding was a practice mentioned numerous times throughout the novel. Small bound feet had been considered as beautiful and desirable for females. Thus, when Wang Lung discovers that O-lan's feet are not bound, he is disappointed. O-lan lacks such artificiality just like the unpolished stone. She was unable to attract any, hiding the true worth which even her husband, at first, fails to understand.

O-lan had been a slave in the great house of Hwang and she is not beautiful at all. The land lady's remarks while handing her over to Wang Lung; "she has the strong body and the square cheeks of her kind. She will work for you in the field and drawing water and all else that you wish" (13), gives a picture of O-lan. Again it is O-lan's natural unbound feet that enable her to work with her husband. Her defects only contributed to becoming a perfect partner for Wang Lung and a hard working soul who worked willingly from dawn until midnight. At the end of each day, Wang Lung found his wife's face "wet and brown as the very soil itself." (23) O-lan stood by her husband both at the times of prosperity and adversity. It is her act of stealing the stones unaware of its value helps Wang Lung to buy lands from the Hwang and thus to become a prosperous farmer. Her self-denial of the curing of her deadly disease because of the involvement of a huge sum of money which she opines could be used for buying another piece of land raises her high in our esteem. She realizes the great truth that land is worth more than her transitory life.

Another major character Lotus who enters the life of Wang Lung at a later stage is a complete foil to his wife O-lan. Lotus, as the name suggests is a beautiful young prostitute with pointed face, attractive bound feet and colorfully polished nails. Wang Lung is so enchanted by her beauty that he gives no ear to his wife's words. Lotus is in no way helpful in protecting his fortune but rather extravagantly uses it. Lotus symbolizes the artificial order of things which can only tempt man away from nature and thereby lead him astray.

In order to ward off 'malignant' evil spirits from their firstborn son, O-lan and Wang Lung pretend that their child is an undesirable female with an incurable disease. This practice really neglects the natural law of equality which forms an important part in the ecological system.

The birth of a female child in a family brings misfortune is a belief that reverberates throughout the book. After the first girl child is born, O-lan tells: "It is only a slave this time- not worth mentioning." (46) Upon hearing that the child is a girl this time, Wang Lung is extremely distraught and depressed. The ignorant farmer relates the birth of his own child to an impending adversity.

Girls were considered as commodity or stock, which could be traded in exchange for money. Families sell their daughters in the time of famine in order to survive. O-lan acknowledges that even she was sold by her family to the Hwang's during a very difficult time, and is willing to sell their eldest daughter to get Wang Lung his land back.

As Wang Lung becomes wealthier and has more time to spare, he begins to examine O-lan. Realizing that she is ugly, Wang Lung is annoyed by her appearance, especially by her unbound feet. O-lan, feeling ashamed, promises to bind the feet of her daughter. Female children, a constant burden as pictured in the book, always have been shown being sold as stock by the families in order to rebuild their lives. When the time comes for his eldest daughter-in-law to give birth, Wang Lung desperately wishes for a grandson. He bribes the goddess of mercy with a new robe and even threatens the Earth God to give him a grandson.

A character personifying the good earth is O-lan. The fortunes of Wang Lung prosper after O-lan comes into his life. Bearing all the traits of mother earth, she carries the family on her shoulders in the times of hardship and during the good times. O-lan, though ignorant and reserved, provided much needed care and attention to the family. O-lan with her stoic capabilities and power of endurance emerges as the perfect symbol of the mother earth, who silently suffers without complaints.

*The Good Earth* as the title suggests is all about the good side of the earth we live in. Another pertinent question that may be raised is whether bad earth is possible. The novel tells us the life of a Chinese farmer Wang Lung who considers land as everything. His devotion to the earth provides him with all fortunes and prosperity. Even in extreme adversity, he is reluctant to part with the land which he realizes is his life blood. Pearl S. Buck also provides the readers with instances like the wealthy family of Hwangs who disintegrate and lose all their fortune when they start neglecting the land. The novel builds up the idea that if we respect and love nature it will definitely prove itself as a general benefactor. But when we start acting against nature we are digging our own grave. We, humans only form a minor part of nature. Our lives are completely depended on it directly or indirectly. The earth which we live in provides us with everything we need. But most often we mistreat its offerings

and simply forget its role in our lives. The novel strongly warns us against our callous treatment of the earth and urges us to respect nature.

Pearl S. Buck's treatment of the plot is matter of fact and direct. Set in a completely rural Chinese region; the culture, habits and customs appear strange to a reader from another region. But her way of narration clearly removes all the obscurities and we find ourselves one among the characters. The major characters like Wang Lung and O-lan serve to elucidate the healthy relation between man and nature. Pearl S. Buck's novel is aptly named *The Good Earth* because it is where the entire development process takes place. The earth, which is where one is born, brought up and is buried, provides for the livelihood in every way. Earth is faithful to humans, if we respect and nourish it. Nature is a symbol and a phenomenon that is controlling us. Ecocriticism tells us how to analyze events that occur with respect to nature. An ecocritical reading of *The Good Earth* makes this analysis explicit and attributes a new dimension to nature-human relationship.

#### References

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An introduction to Literary and Critical Theory*. 2nd ed. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002.
- Bassnett, Susan. *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.
- Buck, Pearl S. *The Good Earth*. New York: Pocket Books, 1958.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. New Delhi: Harvard, 1995.
- Cohen, Michael P. 'Blues in Green: Ecocriticism Under Critique.' *Environmental History*. January 2004: 9-36.
- Coupe, Lawrence, ed. *The Green Studies Reader: From Romanticism to Ecocriticism*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Cunningham, Maura. 'Re-Reading Pearl Buck's 'The Good Earth'.' *asiasociety.org*. 18 June 2012. Accessed on 9 August 2015 <<http://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/re-reading-pearl-bucks-good-earth.com>>
- Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm, ed. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens: Georgia UP, 1996.
- Huntley, Stephen Veo. *CliffsNotes on The Good Earth*. Accessed on 06 July 2015 <[/literature/g/the-good-earth/book-summary](http://literature.g/the-good-earth/book-summary)>.
- Kerridge, Richard. 'Environmentalism and Ecocriticism.' *Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide*. Ed. Patricia Waugh. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Merchant, Carolyn, ed. *Key Concepts in Critical Theory*. Jaipur: Rawat, 1996.
- Naess, Arne. 'Deep Ecology.' *Key Concepts in Critical Theory*. Ed. Carolyn Merchant. Jaipur: Rawat, 1996.
- Selvamony, Nirmal. et al. *Essays in Ecocriticism*. Chennai: OSLE- India, 2007.
- Scheese, Don. *Nature writing: The Pastoral impulse in America*. New York: Routledge, 2002.
- Gomides, Camilo. 'Putting a New Definition of Ecocriticism to the Test: The Case of The Burning Season, a film (mal)Adaptation.' *oxfordjournals.org*. 21 Mar 2011. Accessed on 12 October 2015 <<http://isle.oxfordjournals.org/content/13/1/13.html>>
- Rigby, Kate. 'Ecocriticism.' *asle.org*. May 2002. Accessed on 27 August 2015. <<http://www.asle.org/site/resources/ecocritical-library/intro/html>>

**Babitha B. Nair**

Research Scholar  
Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

**Dr Muralikrishnan T. R.**

Research Supervisor  
Bharathiar University, Coimbatore

**An Account of Love: A Study of the Selected  
Poems of Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das**

Abstract: The paper is an attempt to unravel the theme of love exhibited in the poems of Emily Dickinson and Kamala Das. Emily Dickinson confined herself inside the walls of her home and indulged in composing poems of her interest. She is a distinct lyricist with her own style and content. Kamala Das is noted for her frankness and sincerity and her poems portray genuine passion and love. She had always been in search of true love. She explored man-woman relationship and quest for ideal love and affection. Her poems are based on her life and experiences.

Emily Dickinson's love poems do not fall into the category of romanticism. Unlike the romantic poets she talked about the theme of love. So it is really difficult to label her as a love poet. Though she remained a recluse throughout her life subtle feelings do come to her and she dealt with them sincerely. She never tried to conceal her feelings from her readers. Certain romantic features can be identified from her poems. She enjoyed the idea of self, childhood days and beauty of nature. She can never be identified as a nature poet like Wordsworth. Still she worshipped nature and its beauty. Most of her poems are subjective in nature and they deal with her imagination and sensibility.

Most celebrated love lyric of Dickinson is *I cannot live without you*. The language she has employed in constructing it is truly romantic. She uses phrases and words that convey an air of romanticism. As Judith Farr observes:

I Cannot live with You"; "I could not die –with You" ;

"Nor could I rise - with You"- these are inevitably the three experiences the speaker usually imagines sharing with the one she loves, whether that be Master or the beloved woman.(308)

Dickinson writes,

I cannot live with You –  
It would be Life –  
And Life is over there –  
Behind the Shelf (90)

Dickinson's poems show her real life experiences and observations. She presents the fluctuations in love life with originality.

Dickinson's love poem *Wild Nights-Wild Nights* is addressed to her secret lover. She wants to be one with him and spend nights with him.

Wild Nights – Wild Nights!  
Were I with thee  
Wild Nights should be  
Our luxury! (120)

*You left me* is a touching poem that talks about Dickinson's affinity with a person. Her friend Charles Wadsworth left her in 1862 and he could be "you" mentioned in the poem. She was left alone with unending pain. She was attached to him emotionally. She says,

You left me, sweet, two legacies, -  
A legacy of love  
A Heavenly Father would content,  
Had He the offer of;  
  
You left me boundaries of pain  
Capacious as the sea,  
Between eternity and time,  
Your consciousness and me. (64)

Kamala Das is the greatest love poet of Indo-Anglian literature. She has attempted various themes like love, lust, confession, nature, death and so on. The significance of Das is ascribed to her love lyrics. She composed her poems by drawing incidents from her personal life, out of which a number of poems were on the theme of love. Unfulfilled love has always been a dilemma in front of her. She made tremendous commitment to the development of

Indo-Anglian poetry. She attained worldwide recognition through her six volumes of poems. Her poems are noted for frankness and integrity. Though she was in search of ideal love and affection her poems reflect her identity crisis, isolation and vexation. In all her poems she confesses her emotions and feelings.

The theme of love acts as the vital force in her compositions. She opened up her sentiments in front of her readers with sincerity. Her poems reveal her own experiences, sensation, resentment and disappointments that she had to endure after marriage. Sex and physical relations became her central themes in her poems. She tried to expose the plight of traditional Indian women and housewives through her poems.

In Das' autobiographical poem *The Old Playhouse* she opens up her quest for love. Her husband wanted to tame her like a swallow. She lashed against the male dominated society that defined the meaning of love. She was in search of true love and affection that she received from her grandmother. She never wanted any one to curb her freedom and enjoyment in search of love. In her pursuit of ideal love she became more restless and irritated in a way and she opened up her emotions overtly. She writes,

You planned to tame a swallow, to hold her  
In the long summer of your love so that she would forget  
Not the raw seasons alone, and the homes left behind, but  
Also her nature, the urge to fly, and the endless  
Pathways of the sky (1)

*Love* is a lyric which communicates her passion for her lover. She declares her commitment and love for him. Her frenetic love made her to say,

Until I found you,  
I wrote verse, drew pictures,  
And, went out with friends  
For walks...  
Now that I love you,  
Curled like an old mongrel  
My life lies, content,  
In you...(30)



*The Freaks* is a short and subjective poem that communicates her lust to be united with her partner. She shows her aversion towards the nuptial relationship with her spouse. She finds that her husband is not imparting sexual enthusiasm in her. She portrays the failure that she has come across in her life. She is full of lust and energy but her she never receives the same in turn. She tries to create her own identity through her love poems. She says,

... Who can  
Help us who has live so long  
And have failed in love? The heart,  
An empty cistern, waiting  
Through long hours, fills itself  
With coiling snakes of silence ...  
I am freak. It's only  
To save my face, I flaunt, at  
Times, a grand, flamboyant lust.

Radha-Krishna legend is vivid in her poem *The maggots*. She has to perform the duties of a housewife and she has to hide her feelings and love for Krishna now. It reveals her vexation when she is in her husband's hands. She feels frustrated when Krishna leaves her on the bank of river. She considers Krishna as her lover and yearns for his presence. She feels like a corpse on her husband's side.

At sunset, on the river bank, Krishna  
Loved her for the last time and left...  
That night in her husband's arms, Radha felt  
So dead that he asked, what is wrong  
On you mind my kisses, love? And she said,  
No, not at all but thought, what is  
It to the corpse if the maggots nip? (121)

Dickinson is an unconventional poet of love. She portrays the idea of love in the frame of solitude. She was concerned with the trivial things that human mind can perceive. There is a mix of love and relationship in her poems. Many poems are elegiac in tone but reveal love towards her friends and loved ones. She addresses her lover subtly using images drawn from nature and surroundings. Her love poems convey her innate nature and observations. The selection of unusual images depicts her passion and emotions on the whole. Kamala Das is a bard of true love. In her poems, she is in search of an ideal lover who can alleviate pain that she endures throughout her nuptial life. She is in search of emotional gratification but fails to attain it throughout her life. Her love poems bear witness to her own experiences, isolation and unfulfilled love. Though her love lyrics baffle the traditional Indian society now also she remains an unusual poet of Indo-Anglian poetry.

### References

- Das, Kamala. *The Old Playhouse and Other Poems*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman Private Limited.2004. 1.Print.
- Chakravarty ,Joya. *Indian Writing in English: Perspectives*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors. 2003. 121Print.
- Dickinson, Emily. *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Ed. R.W. Franklin. The United States of America: The Harvard University Press, 1998.120 *Print*.
- . *The Works of Emily Dickinson*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 1994. 64.Print.
- Dwivedi, A.N. *Kamala Das and Her Poetry*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors.2006.30 Print.
- Farr,Judith. *The Passion of Emily Dickinson*. United States of America: Harvard University Press.2004. 308.Print.
- Leiter,Sharon. *Critical Companion to Emily Dickinson: A Literary Reference to Her Life and Work*. Newyork: Infobase Publishing.2007. 90.Print.

**Sabira K. I.**

Research scholar

Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady

## **Depiction of Eco Spirituality in Elizabeth Gilbert's *The Signature of All Things***

Abstract: Religions are alternative ways of affording nature various cultural, moral, and spiritual meanings, and defining the place of humans in nature including how they should act towards non-human beings and other phenomena. A religion may be grounded in the idea that nature as a whole is sacred. The paper tries to picture how Elizabeth Gilbert establishes a connection between nature and religion through her novel *The Signature of All Things*. For the purpose of analysis the views of different world religions upon nature are used and the paper tries to justify how these religious views are employed and reflected in the novel. The title of the novel itself is a reflection of Eco spirituality. It is based on the concept of 'the signature of all things' by Jacob Boehme. i.e. God has hidden clues for humanities betterment inside the design of every flower, leaf, fruit and tree on earth. Boehme claimed that the entire natural world is a divine code, containing proof of our Creator's love. Thus, the paper analyses the novel *The Signature of All Things* as an eco-conscious one.

Elizabeth Gilbert's first novel in twelve years is an extraordinary story of botany, exploration and desire, spanning across much of the 19th century. The novel follows the fortunes of the brilliant Alma Whittaker (daughter of a bold and charismatic botanical explorer) as she comes into her own within the world of plants and science. As Alma's careful studies of moss take her deeper into the mysteries of evolution, the man she loves draws her in the opposite direction—into the realm of the spiritual, the divine and the magical. Alma is a clear-minded scientist; Ambrose is a Utopian artist. But what unites this couple is a shared passion for knowing—a desperate need to understand the workings of the world, and the mechanism behind of all life.

*The Signature of All Things* is a big novel, about a big century. Exquisitely researched and told at a galloping pace, this story novel soars across the globe—from London, to Peru, to Philadelphia, to Tahiti, to Amsterdam and beyond. It is written in the bold, questing spirit of that singular time. Alma Whittaker is a witness to history, as well as maker of history herself.

The paper tries to picture how Elizabeth Gilbert establishes a connection between nature and religion through her novel *The Signature of All Things*. Kirman, in his paper titled "Religious and Secularist Views of Nature and the Environment" comments on the place of religions in human existence as follows:

In religious view, it was considered that the world was charged with the grandeur of God, and all creatures were given their purpose by their creator. But in religious view also humans have more special position than all creatures and nature. For example, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the three great faiths are noted for separating humans from the surrounding ecosystems. According to these faiths, humans are separate and special, created in the image of God. In one interpretation, humans are here partially to provide wise stewardship of nature; at the other extreme nature is placed here for the pleasure of humans, to be used and discarded as needed. In other words, great religions are tolerant for the idea that God's command that humans have dominion over all created things has too often been used as an excuse to plunder the earth. (Kirman 268-69)

The title of the novel itself reflects the idea proposed by Kirman. It is based on the concept of 'the signature of all things' by Jacob Boehme.i.e. God has hidden clues for humanities betterment inside the design of every flower, leaf, fruit and tree on earth. Boehme claims that the entire natural world is a divine code, containing proof of our Creator's love. This is why so many medicinal plants resemble the diseases they were meant to cure, or the organs they were able to treat. Basil, with its liver-shaped leaves, is the obvious remedy for ailments of the liver. The celandine herb, which produces a yellow sap, can be used to treat the yellow discoloration brought on by jaundice. Walnuts, shaped like brains, are helpful for headaches. Coltsfoot, which grows near cold streams, can cure the coughs and chills brought on by immersion in ice water. *Polygonum*, with its spattering of blood-red markings on the leaves, cures bleeding wounds of the flesh and so on. The novelist expresses the same idea in different part of the novel. Even though Henry Whittaker, father of the protagonist is not much religious he also expresses his ecospiritual stand in some part of the novel. One day he tells Alma how he became rich with the mermaid's blessing. Thus he believes that the God blessed him through the mermaid.

The famous essay published in *Science* in 1967 by Lynn White, Jr., stands out as condemning the prevailing interpretation of the Bible in Christianity for humans to multiply and dominate the Earth as the primary cause of environmental crises. His analysis generated a major controversy that continued and stimulated the growth of the fields of environmental ethics and ecotheology. Elizabeth Gilbert speaks about the Christian position of creation. She says that "the Christian position was that the God had created all the world's species in one day, and that none of His creations had changed since the dawn of time" (193).

She posits Alma outside this notion. Alma does not believe in the stagnant state of creations. She believes that changes have happened in the world. It shows the deviated thinking of man from religion which is highly scientific and against religion. She depends heavily on science than on religion. As opposed to Alma Whittaker, her husband, Ambrose Pike is very much religious and he finds the presence of God in everything. He believes in the idea of “the signature of all things” by Jacob Boehme.

In Islam, nature, like the *Qur'an*, is God's revelation. Divine truth is inherent in nature. In principle, the sacred is found everywhere, all space is sacred and everything that exists is sacred, given that it is God's creation. The Islamic perspective towards nature can be applied to the activities of Ambrose Pike. When he arrives at White Acre he spruces up the orchid house and when Alma asks about it he replies that “Orchids are holy relics and they need to be treated with reverence” (224). From this one can understand that he finds the presence of God even in an orchid plant. He is a blind follower of Jacob Boehme. Boehme proposes that we can read God's prints if we swing ourselves into fire. When Ambrose knows about it he tries to become the fire. He stops all activities of normal existence and he even stops speaking and eating. He believes that the divine God would help him to survive without food and water. He believes that he could survive on sunlight and rain, the natural resources provided by God to all its creations.

Both Ambrose and Alma wish to be plants. But their intentions behind it are different. Ambrose wishes to be a plant out of his intimacy with religion. He says Alma that “he wished to become a plant. Sometimes he thinks that-just for a very short while, driven by faith-he became a plant. He recalls Isaiah: ‘All flesh is grass...surely the people is grass’” (232). But Alma wishes to be a plant not out of religious intimacy but to gain her father's love and care. She stays home on Sundays without going church as her father did, to work with plants. Apparently, Ambrose enters the wilderness in the hope of meeting the divine. He says that he could see the edicts and stipulations written into the leaves and vines. To Alma, Boehme's writings are full of extinct principles, both opaque and occultist. He is of the old mind. Elizabeth Gilbert also says about another book named *Arboretum sacrum*- whose author, like Boehme, had tried to read sacred messages into all the plants mentioned in the Bible (237).

In his essay, “Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” that has received widespread attention over the years from scientists as well as humanists, Lynn White correctly identifies the dominant strain or core structure of Western theism, and claims that “Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen”, that it “not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature”. The most important source cited to support this is

Genesis 1:28, which call on man to: “Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth”. (Genesis 1:28). White’s influential article asserts that Christianity was to blame for the emerging ecological crisis through using the concept of the “image of God” as a pretext for justifying human exploitation of the world’s resources.

The Koran and the Hadith, Islam’s primary and secondary authorities, gives specific rules about various environmental practices. Koran claims “that nature is not there just by accident, as a result of the process of evolution or chaotic configurations without meaning or purpose”, and that everything in the universe is created by Allah and that the universe is the work and art of Allah (Qtd.in Kirman). It is possible to say that the Koran is replete with references to the precious resources of air, water, and land, and proscribes wastefulness. The Koran also calls for thinking about the nature and its sustainability:

“Behold! In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the water which God sends down from the sky, thereby reviving the earth after its death; in the beasts of all kinds that He scatters through the earth; in the change of the winds, and the clouds subjugated between the sky and earth [here] indeed are signs for a people who thinks.” (Koran 2:164).

People of Tahiti are very much religious and they see God in everything in nature. One of the older sailors, who had lived in the South Seas many years, tells Alma that when the Tahitians pick a star to follow for navigation, they call it their *aveia*-their god of guidance (337). They also believe that the plants are planted by the God.

Elizabeth Gilbert tries to explain through the conversation between Alma and Wallace that Charles Darwin did not approve this theory. Alma asks Wallace: “does Mr. Darwin believe in the supreme intelligence guiding the universe?” Then Wallace tells her that “Darwin did not approve this. He did not like it at all. He was appalled whenever Wallace brought it up. He could not believe”(494). Gilbert says that there had people who supported and opposed Darwin’s theory of evolution. Lord Kevin refused to embrace the theory. There had supporters like George Searle-a prominent Catholic astronomer-wrote that the theory of natural selection seemed to him quite logical, and posed no threat to the Catholic Church. The Anglican parson and novelist Charles Kingsley announced that he too felt comfortable with God “who created primal forms capable of self-development and the theologian Henry Drummond tried to work up a biblical defence of evolution (476-77).

Shortly one can say that persons like Jacob Boehme and Ambrose Pike believed the presence of God in everything in nature. They believed that God has hidden clues inside the design of every flower, every leaves and every fruits of plants. They are made for the advantage of man and to make his life easy. Unlike Boehme and Pike, Wallace believed in the presence of a supreme intelligence in nature but not in God. Unlike them Darwin did not approve not only the presence of God in nature but also the presence of supreme intelligence in the universe. Alma Whittaker has a scientific stand. She does not mix religion or supernatural with nature.

Thus, the paper analyses the novel *The Signature of All Things* as an eco-conscious one. The study reveals Elizabeth Gilbert's scientific and religious attitude towards nature. Some characters in the novel are disturbed and turn to nature for solace and comfort. The ideas and views of different characters about nature are represented through the study.

#### References

- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. Print.
- Bowler, Peter J. *Darwin Deleted*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013. Print.
- Buell, Lawrence. *The Future of Environmental Criticism: Environmental Crisis and Literary Imagination*. Malden: Blackwell, 2005. Print.
- Capra, Fritjof. *The Web of Life: A New Scientific Understanding of Living Systems*. New York: Anchor, 1996. Print.
- Carson, Rachel. *The Silent Spring*. New Delhi: Other India Press, 1985. Print.
- Devall, Bill, and George Sessions. *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered*. Salt Lake City: Gibbs M. Smith, 1985. Print.
- Fern, Richard L. *Nature, God and Humanity: Envisioning an Ethics of Nature*. UK: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.
- Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Gilbert, Elizabeth. *The Signature of All Things*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013. Print.
- Glotfelty, Cheryll and Harold Fromm. Eds. *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. Athens and London: University of Georgia, 1996. Print.
- Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*. New Delhi: OUP, 2000. Print.
- . "Radical Environmentalism: A Third-World Critique." Carolyn Merchant. Ed. *Key Concepts in Critical Theory: Ecology*. Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat, 1996. Print.

**Sruthi S. Babu**

Assistant Professor  
SN Trusts College, Kulappully

### ***In The Name of Honour: A Promiscuous Inexplicable Violence and Tragic Deprivation of Dignity and Honour***

Abstract: It is true that where women are honoured, there god lives. In the past, women had an exalted position in the society where they enjoyed their freedom and developed themselves, socially, morally and intellectually. However this did not remain the same for long. During Muslim and British rule their position was obscured and they were deprived of a wide measure of liberty. They were confined within the four walls of society. They are physically perplexed, emotionally crushed, intellectually hushed up and socially ex-communicated. In June 2002, the world began to hear the name Mukhtar Mai, a Pakistani woman from the impoverished village of Meerwala. She was brutally raped by four members of a local clan known as the Mastoi and it was arranged as a punishment for indiscretions allegedly committed by her brother. In this paper, my attempt is to portray Mukhtar Mai, as a radical feminist.

It is true that where women are honoured, there god lives. In the past, women had an exalted position in the society where they enjoyed their freedom and developed themselves, socially, morally and intellectually. However this did not remain the same for long. During Muslim and British rule their position was obscured and they were deprived of a wide measure of liberty. Pakistan, a Muslim nation which is also a male dominated society was part of India before 1947. We can hardly notice women walking on the streets. The girls are forbidden to talk with boys in their childhood. They are confined within the four walls of life. If they go out on any occasion, they have to veil their head with burqa. Though Urdu is the national language of Pakistan, women cannot speak much as they do not presume outside and mingling with people. It is said that Islam is the only religion which truly honors women because it shield their decorum and tribute from promiscuity. But the tragic violence in the name of honour that took place on 22 June 2002, convey us the real- life story of a Pakistani, Muslim woman, Mukhtaran Bibi. She is a thirty three year old Pakistani peasant woman who lived in Meerwala, a small village in southern Punjab near the border with India. She established a school in the village to impart education to girls, thus ensure them the audacity to learn. It is a society where mothers don't do anything for their children's welfare, especially girls. As far as Pakistan community is concerned, women must do the house hold works, get married to have children, serve their husbands...thus goes their life. To combat against this patriarchal folklore, Mukhtaran Bibi, now Mukhtar Mai, embark such a noble venture.



But what instigated her? A blood-curdling episode ensued in her life exposed the atrocities of male dominated society which exploits and treats women as a possession. Having treated with disrespect, she was submitted to gang-rape which was commanded by a local clan known as Mastoi and was orchestrated as a reprimand for transgression allegedly executed by Shukhur, Mai's brother. They claimed that Shukhur, 12 years old brother of Mai acted with sexual indiscretion towards Salma, 20 years old Mastoi girl and thus harmed their honour. Mai was forced to stand before the village council encircled by Mastoi's rifles and pistols in order to reinstate their self-esteem. Four members of the dictating family (Mastoi); Abdul Khaliq, Gulan Farid, Allah Dita and Mohammed Faiz hauled her into a stable and raped and eventually threw her out half naked in full sight of the entire village. Thus they humiliate Mai's family and the entire Gujar caste.

In Pakistan it is hard for a woman to corroborate that she has been raped. The law says that there should be four male eyewitnesses provided to the crime. Unfortunately the witnesses in Mai's case and her brother's case are the convicts themselves. She has been victimized not only by her attackers but the police and government, only because of her illiteracy. Thus she was mentally muddled up and physically bewildered.

Mai's life opens a window towards Pakistan culture. The only education she obtains is recitation of Quran. It teaches her distrust, obedience, fear, submission and respect for men. She was wedded to a man whom she had never seen until the day of marriage. She got married at the age of eighteen. A Pakistan woman is not free to choose her husband by herself. If a woman begins the proceedings for a divorce in the court, the man's family contemplates it as "disrespect". In Mai's case there was a contract that her husband should live with her family but he broke that and she returned to her house after a month and opt for divorce. She said that the only weapon that women have against men is their stubbornness.

Many women have incurred the wrath of their husbands. Some are killed in the explosion of gas cylinder canister, acids thrown in their faces and so on. Naseem, Mai's friend comments: "Men and Women are equals. We have the same duties". She is the one who gave courage to Mai. She told that for many Muslim women their husbands are their world and that men are taking advantage to dominate women completely. Mai got inspired by Naseem's words and thus bestowed a helping hand to those women who were maltreated by their husbands.

She was not just like ordinary women who try to commit suicide to save her family from disgrace. Rather she got up and fought for justice and finally got triumphed against exceptional odds. Like every other Muslim woman she also didn't know the law and the rights for women. She was taught as; woman

is nothing but a mere “object of exchange from birth to marriage”. But this incident made her to think in a different way. When she was asked to accept the check for half a million rupees, she answered the government minister “I don’t need a check, I need a school”.

Media and several other organizations played a vital role in bringing her ongoing journey towards justice, to society’s attention. Thus her case was under international scrutiny and awarded 8,500 US dollars as compensation. She was well determined and with that money she started a school for girls to give them strong voices. Within months she was transformed from an acquiescent woman to an outspoken one. After a year, over 300 students enrolled in her school, both girls and boys, including the children from Mastoi clan. She got financial assistance from the government as well as from various other organizations. By the end of 2002 she opened her first school.

Money is the sinews of love. This world is scampering behind money. If we have money everyone will be with us to support in any predicament. Same thing happens in Mai’s case also. As she says “some comic relief in tragedy”, an uncle of Mai whom she hasn’t “laid eyes on for the longest time” visited her family. He has a son of her age, already married and has children. While seeing her with the governor and check, he says “a broken branch shouldn’t be thrown away: it must be kept within the family”. Thus he makes an offer of marriage; taking Mai as a second wife to his son.

The dilemmas faced by women are increasing day by day. The biggest problem faced by Mai was her illiteracy other than being raped. However we can see her, changing attitudes towards patriarchy. We can call her a Radical Feminist. Though she is religious, she rebuffed the stereotypical image of the male tradition. Her only motive is to provide better education for the girls. She doesn’t want them to endure as she did. Hence she started a school to offer girls, a strong voice against the society. For her the only way women can show their protest is through education.

While speaking of education, yet another name come into our mind is that Malala Yousafzai, a 14 year old school girl, shot by Taliban. She had not just fought for her school but for her nation. She became a light for everyone. When she was shot, it was not just Malala who got wounded but the whole Malalas. If today is her turn tomorrow it will be some other who is going to field the bullet. Jeopardizes taken by both Malala Yousafzai and Mukhtar Mai are the same. Both fought for education. At the time Mai raises her voice, the uneducated people discouraged her by telling “you will be disgraced, your reputation will be soiled”. But she went ahead by setting her trepidations aside and got on with her goal.

There are many laws but are not acted upon. She faces many threats through out her life. At the time of her case, police took advantage of her illiteracy. They made her to leave a thumb impression on some blank pages. Even the police was in support of the dominating clan. After achieving her goal to start up a school, she countenances some threats from opponents. Though she has requested help from Punjab government, there has been no response. The fault is with the government officials and the police, that they are not enforcing the laws consequently the culprits have ever been punished.

Despite of these struggles she has been running her school in the most reputed way. There are girls who have passed metric. She desires that may be one day or the other they will be in district council, government service or in any other dignified positions. Nevertheless the Islam religion allows girls to get educated; it is a disgruntled fact that no one is ready to accept it. This should be revolutionized. Even if such problems are going on, there are women who are ready to come out of the shackles they are entangled with. They show their faces towards society and screech their pains out.

These days rapes and brutalities against women are common panorama. Anyhow we can't impede but can curtail it by augmenting our voice. There will be no integrity for women until we combat from our pain. Mai supports that one person is really capable of impacting this world. Islam community gives more importance to male 'honour'. But Mai proved that women are not the puppets in men's hands by fighting for justice and thereafter obtaining the 'honour'.

*In The Name of Honour* is a book which is magnificently inspiring rather than viciousness and despair. Mukhtar Mai was not the single woman who becomes the victim of such felony in the name of honour and not the last one. But she leaves with a signature in everyone's mind by "fighting back against a barbarous tradition that almost destroyed her". Though illiterate and feeble, she becomes a symbol for womanhood by accomplishing valor to reclaim her dignity and honour.

#### References

- Abbas, Nosheen. *100 women 2014: raped for punishment in Pakistan*. BBC news online, 29 Oct 2014. Web. 30 Jan 2016.
- Bidani, S.. *Honour killing in India: An in depth study*. Youthkiawaaz, 2010. Web. 29 Jan 2016
- Mai, Mukhtar. *In the name of honour*. Trans. Linda Coverdale and Marie Therese Cuny. London: Washington square, 2007. Print.
- McGirk, Jan. *Women's rights in Pakistan: The woman who dared to cry rape*. Independent, 15 June 2005. Web. 30 Jan 2016.

**Neena P.**

Assistant Professor  
Vimala College, Thrissur

## **Contextualizing Food: A Study of Food in Chetan Bhagat's Select Novels**

Abstract: Culture is the core of any society. In broader sense, culture defines us who we are as people, how we aim to live our lives. Food is an important element in defining culture. Food culture has long been incorporated into religious customs across the globe. Hence religion curtails ones freedom to relish different cuisines to certain extent. Any changes in the food that we eat, in its preparation, the way it is served and consumed diminishes the traditional beliefs of the people. Select novels of Chetan Bhagat are chosen here for a deeper study, with the assistance of Indian culture, going beyond a mere meretricious reading of the text. Analyzing the cosmopolitan life style of different characters, food selection of young Indians are further explored. The younger generation has become advanced and hence tends to make changes with the set up that has been going on through ages. The turning up of Pizza huts, Mocha café and Mac Donalds' as the favorite haunts of youth corroborates the fact that globalization has affected the food habits of Indian youth drastically.

Food is actually a basic need for survival. If we take the history of human diet, it is said that humans were herbivores and later on started eating small amount of meat when plants and seeds became deficit in ice age. Food is something which is always subject to change. Later on food defined one's culture, religion and nationality. Globalization has accredited food with a wider range of definitions-status symbol, personality-one's involvement in global society. This paper tries to corroborate this through the study of select novels of Chetan Bhagat's.

Unlike any other novel *2States* opens with a scene in college mess. The heroine ananya swaminathan is introduced to the readers as an iconoclast in the very first scene. Ananya who hails from a Tamil Brahmin family, argues with the mess worker for serving a not gourmet Sambhar. She refuses to have anything from the mess and takes Krish to Topaz restaurant, where she orders half tandoori chicken with romali rotis.

“Do you have beer?” She asked the waiter.

The waiter shook her head in horror and fear.

‘We are in Gujarat, there is prohibition here,’ I said

‘Why?’

'Gandhiji's birthplace,' I said

'But Gandhiji won us freedom', she is way different from Tamilians. Never forget that.'

'And how exactly are Tamil Brahmins different?'

'Well, for one thing, no meat and no drinking,' she said as she gestured a cross with the chicken leg.

Food is an important element in defining culture. Britannica (2007). "Food is the oldest global carrier of culture." Any changes in the foods that we eat, in its preparation, the way it is served and consumed diminishes the traditional beliefs of the people.

Aanya is quite aware of the strict customs of her religion. But she assails from those traditions to prove herself an iconoclast. Ananya, largely represents the entire global youth of India. Chicken once served as special dish, exclusively reserved for certain occasions, has become the basic amenity like power and water. Moreover, it's food which decides modernity.

*One Night @ Call Centre* is yet another novel which deftly exfoliates the cosmopolitan lifestyle of six call centre trainees. Youth culture of these seemingly powerless characters are depicted indeed by their drinking, dancing, partying at 32milestones, dating at mocha cafe with its Arabian lights and at Pizza Hut at Sahara Mall and going to the night club'bed' for break, the call centre executives may easily be recognized with any young upcoming generation of any ultra modern society. Before joining the call centre, the trainees have to attend 'accent neutralization' class, which is meant to eliminate the 'regional accent'. Thus the regional accent is drilled out and the person is equipped with American accent. Apart from 'Americanization of accent', the novel also depicts the 'Americanization of diet'. The call centre trainees are seen hanging out at recognizable malls, Pizzeria, Mac Donalds. Their menu limits to Pizza, French fries etc. Nobody could even think of an Indian cuisine.

According to Marxist theoreticians Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno particular products are treated as a means of acquiring prestige and pleasure. Culture Industry is a term, coined by Horkiehmer and Adorno, is used to describe mass cultural products. It has changed the individual from thinking and discerning individual to unthinking consumer. Cultural Industry does not want consumer to think but to merely consume. Industry does not literally mean factory, but standardization of cultural products, its value and meaning. Thus social value and prestige become standardized as brands. Just as corruption isstandardized as politicians and patriotism is standardized as hating ones neighbour, food is standardized as pizza, hamburger etc.

There has been a loss of traditional values with the introduction of non traditional food into the culture of foreign countries. Young Indians feel themselves as Americans when they eat American food. By eating American food, people all over the world are beginning to look like Americans at least in one respect. The United States has one of the highest obesity rates of any industrialized nation in the world.

Not only has the content of the diet been an issue but also the way in which food is consumed. As the name implies it is “fast food”, there is a movement away from a family oriented dining to individual dining. American culture focuses on eating as a necessity and towards fast food, other cultures view dining as a social experience with religion playing an important role in its practice. They value group orientation and conformity to facilitate harmony among families whereas American culture has a preference towards individualism and independence from each other.

Every culture has a set of customs and regulations. Especially India is a nation of diverse culture and Indian people are very much fond of their culture and preserving its purity. It is their fondness and attachment to their culture makes them reluctant to the intrusion of other culture. The only exception is their acceptance of English culture to a small extent because they colonized us nearly four centuries. Even though we are independent now, our postcolonial minds still look western people as a higher race and we accept their customs and formalities. In a desperate attempt to become westerns, Indian youth are losing their identity. So we should mould a generation who upholds the tradition of Indian culture, while assimilating the positives of other culture.

#### References

Bhagat, Chetan, *2 States – The Story of My Marriage*. Rupa. 2009. Print

Bhagat Chetan, *One Night @ the call center*, New Delhi, Rupa & Company, 2005, 21-26

Nayar, Pramod K. *Contemporary Literary and Cultural Theory*. New Delhi: Pearson, 2010, Print.

---, *An Introduction to Cultural Studies*. New Delhi: Viva. Print.

**Niveditha B. Warriar**

Post Graduate Student

Little Flower College, Guruvayoor

## **Measuring Shakespeare: Juxtaposing the 20- 21<sup>st</sup> century Malayalam Motion Pictures- *Kaliyattam*, *Karmayogi* and *Kannaki***

Abstract: The study investigates and proves the “identity of Shakespeare” hypothetically by popularizing Shakespearean plays. The study examines the function of adaptations of Shakespearean Tragedies in Malayalam Cinema in the light of the movies ‘*Kaliyattam*’, ‘*Karmayogi*’ and ‘*Kannaki*’. It presents a thorough assessment of how and in what way these tragic plays influenced the Malayalam Culture. The study explains different “Theories of Adaptation”. My research also focuses on how Malayalam Cinema has responded to Shakespearean adaptations. In order to scrutinize the above mentioned factors, it is necessary to inspect the elements- “masculinity” and “gender”, and to an extent the constructs of cast. The research effectively explores these issues that projects out in the above mentioned movies. The play with no ‘women intervention’ falls into the categories of unfinished and unsatisfactory dramas. In order to highlight the idea, I speculate it with the concept of V.T.Bhattathirippad’s “*Adukalayilninnu Arangathilekku*” (1929).

Shakespeare is still alive, particularly in the minds of his admirers. Through reading his texts you can reach him and make him alive. The Malayalam directors Jayaraj and V.K. Prakash, had reached him frequently. The arrival of Shakespearean texts in Kerala reinvented the tradition and culture of the state. And when our directors fortunately contributed the texts on screen, the impact was highly spectacular. The texts were even adapted into ‘Mono Acts’ by many.

### **Researching Shakespeare**

“*To be or not be...that’s not the question*” *The Times of India* on 4<sup>th</sup> November, 2014 circulated their newspaper with the insertion of an article “15th century to 21st, William Shakespeare still relevant in films”. The article commenced with the quote “*To be or not be...that’s not the question*” but the real question Ketakee Gondane raised was “why are people so obsessed with Shakespeare.” His article proved that “Shakespeare is alive even today as a playwright through his texts and still influences the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

Shakespeare (1564-1616), the master writer of tragedies is notable for his plays *Othello*, *Hamlet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*. The adaptations of Shakespeare sound to be a fascinating part to research. William Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon had written his plays beholding the groundling’s state of affairs because he wanted his plot to reach not only to the “aristocratic” spectators but also to the “commoners” of his golden age. His chief aspiration

behind scripting 'plays' was to make the citizens of England aware of what was happening in and around and also to bring to the light - the culture of Elizabethan Renaissance. Queen Elizabeth, who was responsible for the exploration of the New World, was almost a frequent visitor to the playhouse to watch Shakespearean plays. After the demise of Queen Elizabeth, the playhouses were forcibly closed down.

My research points out that Shakespeare still survives in many; especially in Indian minds. To mark the gravity of Shakespearean texts, many Indian film makers like Vishal Bhardwaj, Habib Faisal, Manish Tiwary, Jayaraj and V.K.Prakash reshaped the texts of Shakespeare all the way through screen adaptation. This change of scenario from Text to Screen adaptation had started by the mid of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Film adaptations can be considered as a transformation or the retell of the written texts. Julie Sanders' book *Adaptation and Appropriation* (2005) unerringly explains the process of 'adaptation', the types of adaptation and what it is in general. The book cites Edward Said who believed that people are more focused on 'rewriting' instead of creating new works. He says 'rewriting' is more than imitation as well as an adaptation and a response to a text. He opined that 'a good adaptive text should be able to stand alone' (p1). Adaptation according to him transcends imitation. It adds, supplements, and expands the original.

Linda Hutcheon defined the 'Concepts of Adaptation' in her "A Theory of Adaptation" (2009). She quotes Alfred Uhry "adapting is a bit like redecorating" (p1) and examines the phenomenon of adaptation that continues to be popular on variety of media. Hutcheon presents the use of adaptation and the commonalities of adaptation present in the diverse media such as film, theatre, television, opera, music and amusement parks.

James M. Welsh, in his "*Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*" (2006) states "The book is always better than a movie" (p13). The statement is made viewing just from one side. Thinking the other way round, the impact of visualisation of imagination and fiction corresponds to the lifestyle of the spectators. Some critics say that the image we see through our eyes always persists in our mind for long. In fact when we read, the readers are made to think, realise and imagine the situation which is actually a loss of time. Shakespearean plays could be considered as "performed dramas" because the author wanted his plays to be kept unpublished and staged. When a play is staged the spectators can simultaneously concentrate on characters and the background. Here, the audience is made to sit back and relax. But at the same time, the extinction of Shakespearean texts wouldn't have given a chance to the spectators to watch a movie of Shakespearean adaptation. The concept of "adaptation" aroused in the minds of Malayalam movie makers



because of Shakespeare's literariness of his texts, theme, characterisation, genre and structure.

Quoting the inscribed motto and the crest above the main entrance of the Shakespearean playhouse "*Totus mundus agit histrionem*" (the whole world is a playhouse); a phrase echoed in *As you like it*, "*All worlds' a stage*", I emphatically state that Shakespearean texts survives; even though they are classic. The texts of Shakespeare have been repeatedly used by the Indian film makers in order to make their films more effective. The Malayalam Film maker Jayaraj, who contributed his best to the spectators once, shared his view in an interview with Shobhana Warrier about his 20<sup>th</sup> century movie '*Kaliyattam*.' According to him, the protagonist 'Kannan Perumalayan' is considered as God when he puts the makeup and dresses for *Theyyam*. *Theyyam* or *Thira* is a ritual form of worship which is most popular in the Northern part of Malabar in Kerala. The custom is still followed in the districts like Kannur, Kasarkode, Wayanad, Kozhikode and Koyilandi. The performers of *Theyyam* or *Theyyattam* belonged to the lower community and would be titled as "*Malayanmar*". The people who reside in these areas regard them as God when they dress-up as *Theyyam* and their problems will be put into the picture.

Jayaraj, the multitalented film maker had once claimed that "When the artist dons the make-up, he is assumed as God and when he removes make-up he becomes a man once again." The situation is clearly evident when Thamara's father, who is called as *Thampuran* in the movie, is informed about his daughter's elopement with the pockmarked and uncouth *Perumalayan*. Hearing the news (reported by Paniyan and Unni) and supported by a small crowd he goes to avenge *Perumalayan*. Here, the *Thampuran* who is now the father-in-law of *Perumalayan* finds him as *Theechamundi*. Seeing him perform *Theechamundi* he refuses himself and stops the crowd from wounding the enemy saying "Now he is God, let him remove himself from *Theyyam*." In fact he approaches *Perumalayan*, the *Theechamundi* to find an appropriate solution concerning his daughter's elopement. Jayaraj had undoubtedly expressed the scene to the spectators in a miraculous way. He has succeeded in presenting the situation vividly with the proper consideration of consequences. Malayalam Cinema had responded positively to the adaptations of Shakespeare in an outstanding way. The film industry is fortunate enough to have the movies *Kaliyattam*, *Karmayogi* and *Kannaki* based on the classic storyline. They said the industry is lucky to have the directors like Jayaraj and V.K. Prakash and congratulated the directors for contributing and conveying the beautiful message. These movies were declared as the "standard movies" among the 20-21<sup>st</sup> century movies and fostered discussion in the classrooms where the Shakespearean texts are taught. The teachers differentiate between these movies with the Original texts of Shakespeare. Out of the three movies-

*Kaliyattam*, *Karmayogi* and *Kannagi*, only *Kaliyattam* could receive the best commentaries foregrounding the socio-political background.

### **Discourse of Masculinity and Gender**

The movies *Kaliyattam*, *Karmayogi* and *Kannagi* stresses on the cultural values of social life. The movies focus on the discourse of 'Masculinity' and 'Gender issues'. The term Masculinity; according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary refers to 'the possession of the qualities traditionally associated with men.' In the rendered texts of Shakespeare, women are portrayed as weak and frail. In his *The Tragedy of Othello, the Moor of Venice* which was written and performed in 1604 (based on a tale in Cinthio's Hecatommithi, "Un Capitano Mooro") Shakespeare picturizes the image of women as fragile. According to the Venetian conception, a woman should bow to the wills of her husband and is expected to fulfil her husband's sexual desires. Shakespeare had followed the same concept in his *Othello* by adding 'Women are possessions'. In his text *Othello*, he made Desdemona- *Othello's* wife as a 'possession' completely disregarding her feelings. When the belief is compared to the conception of women in Kerala, *Malayalimanga* are still judged as disloyal and promiscuous.

In the Malayalam movie '*Kaliyattam*' Paniyan (Iago) succeeded into believing Perumalayaan (Othello) that Thamara (Desdemona) is an unfaithful wife. Here, Paniyan became the reason for Perumalayaan's psychic journey. The role of Paniyan is still being contemplated by many critics. The character Paniyan (Iago) was acted by Lal in the movie '*Kaliyattam*.' According to Perumalayaan (Othello), Paniyan is a satisfying character. Critics had pointed out 'Paniyan', a demanding character of *Kaliyattam* as crooked who often acts-out by means of a 'feminine quality'. The expression 'feminine quality' was employed in order to give explanation to his immeasurable tittle-tattle behaviourism. The masculinity is being discussed in the Act IV Scene I where Perumalayaan (Othello) fails to show his masculine power after hearing that his wife – Thamara (Desdemona) has made him a "cuckold." OTHELLO: I will chop her into messes! Cuckold me? (4.1.219) *Othello* is filled with rage at the idea that Desdemona has made him a "cuckold" (a man whose wife has cheated on him). To be a "cuckold" was a shameful thing in Elizabethan society and meant that a husband's masculinity had been destroyed.

In the movie '*Karmayogi*', the director addresses Rudran Gurukkal (Hamlet) as a venerable character. The movie converse the theme of "Gender." In *Hamlet*, the typical Shakespearean tragedy, the son 'Hamlet' questions his mother's sexuality because of her unfaithfulness towards his dead father. Hamlet's attitude towards women as a 'sexist' mirrored towards the entire world. He calls women "breeders of sinners." In Act I Scene II, Hamlet appears as a misogynist who reveals his first soliloquy where he

mourns the death of his late father- King Hamlet and describes Queen Gertrude with immoral lines. "Frailty, thy name is woman!" (1.2.142-146)

He is saddened not only by his father's death but Gertrude's ill-judged marriage to Claudius within one month after the funeral of her deceased husband. Hamlet shows distress and perturbation thinking of his mother's weak and foolish personality.

Satyajit Ray in his essay "*What is wrong with Indian Films*" incorporated in '*Our Films Their Films*' (1976) describes about this pitiable situation. He says "the directors after their failure will blame the technicians and technicians will point out the lack of facilities provided by the producers." The movie *Kannaki* failed to gain appreciation due to its technical quality. But even then, it had set an enthralling tone throughout the movie. In Antony and Cleopatra, Cleopatra; the queen is the most fully developed character sketched by Shakespeare. Their strong sexual relationship gradually made Cleopatra more masculine and Antony more feminine. But in the final scene, the viewers could find the transformation of Cleopatra where she wears the mask of womanhood.

### **V.T. Bhattathirippad's *Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekku***

There was a time when women were not allowed to step out of their residence (especially Namboothiri Women.) They were not even allowed to enter into the courtyard when a stranger arrived. They were always made to sit in the kitchen (*Adukkala*) without knowing what happens around them. Frankly speaking they were perceived as a sexual weapon by the society who often harassed them both mentally and physically. Later, during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the scenario changed and women were treated as Goddess which we could be seen in the Malayalam Movies like *Kaliyattam*.

The farce, "*Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekku*", according to "The Hindu" is 'From the Kitchen to the Stage' which made a huge response to the social condition that underwent before the 20th century. It was produced and staged in 1929 by V.T.Bhattathirippad who brought the practice of *Sammandham* to an end.

My aim here is to connect the title "*Adukkalayilninnu Arangathekku*" with the Shakespearean period. In the Elizabethan era, women roles were acted by the young males because of the forbidden act by the society. Women were not given much liberation to enhance their creative abilities and above that they were parted from participating in the entertainments. The same situation was going on in Kerala before the 20<sup>th</sup> century and if we compare both the situations (the situation before 20<sup>th</sup> century in Kerala with the Shakespearean era), we could find many similarities among each other. In the Shakespearean

era, women were forbidden to act the female roles in the playhouses. They were disallowed to show their faces to the strangers. But now the crux of the point is that “women more in action than men.” They are free to move according to their wishes. They are no longer confined to act in the theatres, movies and short-films. Restrictions do not question them especially in the Malayalam Cinema. Without their intervention, a well written play can easily be changed into unfinished and unsatisfied dramas. In other words ‘no women actors in the play mean it’s deficient.’

### ***Kannaki Turns out Kannagi***

In the Malayalam movie *Kannaki* (one of the adaptation of Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra*) there occurs a situation where the protagonist Kannaki reacts like the Kannagi of the great epic poem entitled “Silapathikaram” written by Ilango Adigal. The movie is set in Chammanampathi, a remote corner located in Palakkad district of Kerala. The place is one of the chief game hubs for arranging Cock-fight ( *Kothu Kozhi* in Malayalam).The cocks are reared with special training and at last it spills blood or get wounded.

The director titled his movie in the name of “Kannaki” (Cleopatra) relates her character to that of Goddess Kannaki to deliver the message that Kannaki (Cleopatra) reacts alike the Goddess Kannaki when her attendant let her know of Manikyan’s (Antony) engagement ceremony that took place before two days. Hearing the news, Kannaki turned out to be the Goddess Kannaki where she curses “let the entire place –Chammanampathi burn.” The greatest epic poem “Silapathikaram” also talks about the “reaction “where the Goddess Kannaki utters a curse that “entire city of Madhurai be burnt.” Jayaraj has homogenized the situation effectively.

### ***Nohdrama’s Involvement in Kaliyattam***

*Noh*; derived from ‘no’ is a classical Japanese musical drama that has been performed till 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was brought from China to Japan around the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> century. The form was developed by Kanami and his son Zeami integrating masks, costumes and varieties of props with dance-based movements. It is performed even today in the places like Tokyo, one of the world’s leading theatrical centres. The actors will begin their training at the age of three. Historically, only males were allowed to perform, but since 1940s the daughters of Noh actors started performing on stage.

The Noh drama uses many musical elements in order to mesmerize the spectators towards the ambience of the story which is narrated. The drama is very closely linked to the traditional art form of Kerala named ‘*Kathakali*’, literally means ‘Story-Play’ where props and masks are used by the actors at

the right time. ‘Kathakali’ is a dramatic dance of southern India based on the Hindu Mythologies.

### **Music**

Noh drama is performed using slow movements and upper-class poetic language of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Noh music is made of two parts; *utai* (Vocal) and *hayashi* (music). *Utai* is performed by the *shite* and members of his school, while the *hayashi* is performed by *hayashi-kata* (musicians). The chorus is also included for the revelation of inner thoughts. One woodwind (a flute) and three percussion instruments (a shoulder drum, a hip-drum and a stick-drum) which are together referred as the “four beat-makers” are used as musical instruments in Noh and Kyogen drama.

### **Kathakali’s Influence on Theyyam or Theechamundi**

The art form called *Theyyam* or *Theechamundi*, the folk dance of Malabar which literally means “the dance of Gods” has been further influenced by Kathakali. They shall be called “twin” due to their identicalness in wearing elaborate costumes and ornaments and in putting a carved wooden headgear known as *kireetam*. The purpose of putting ‘make-up’ on the faces of the dancers is to make them ready to get into the shoes of the characters. The ‘make-up’ will be embellished with varieties of colours such as Red, Green, Black and White and so on to promote the real ambience to the viewers. The art form named Kathakali which presents different deities and demons has influenced the folk dance of Malabar- *Theyyam* and later it became a part of Malabari (Kannur- Payyannur) culture. Jayaraj has brought-out and used this culture as a weapon to justify the Shakespearean concept in *Othello*. The movie *Kaliyattam* directed by Jayaraj is a good example for using *Theyyam* as an instrument to turn out to be greedy.

### **Martial Art in Karmayogi**

The film *Karmayogi* exhibits Martial art named “*Kalaripayattu*” meaning “Practice in the hearts of the battle-fields” had its origin in Kerala and even in Tamil Nadu during 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. It is the actors (Indrajith) debut portrayal of Rudran Gurukkal as a follower of Yogi Community. Rudran is a scholar in Martial arts develops indecisive behaviour in the movie which he explains as “*To be or not to be*” in his first soliloquy revealed after his father’s death. The movie *Karmayogi* scores accolades for the creation of a classic movie by placing cultural milieu of Kerala state.

My major objective was to introduce the theory of adaptation and the Malayalam Shakespearean Adaptations. In the light of limitations with regard to the data available, I have accomplished my goal of picturizing the identity

of Shakespeare, his relevance of the texts and the instigation of Theatres. As many researches have been done on Akira Kurosowa's adaptations, I certainly dealt with the arena of "Malayalam adaptation" apart from those. The argument I have put forth in my study is "Judge not Shakespeare" nevertheless according to the movie adaptations. The other argument I have tried to explore is his identity (whether he was alive or not) where many of the writers question it. A further limitation of my study was the fact that only the general data and not the analyzed data or innumerable interviews were available. For this reason, based on this study alone; these findings cannot be generalized in a broader way. So, I shall conclude this research quoting Julius Caesar: "This day I breathed first: time is come round, and where I did begin, there shall I end;" - Julius Caesar V, iii

### References

- Hutcheon , Linda . A Theory of Adaptation.. NewYork: Routledge. 2006. Print.  
Mark Thornton ,Burnett. Shakespeare and the World Drama.. US : Cambridge University Press. Print.  
Paul G.S. "A Mirror on Society." The Hindu (2013). Print.  
Shakespeare, William. Antony and Cleopatra. Ed. Richard Medilaine. UK: Cambridge University Press. 1998. Print.  
---,The Tempest. London:1762. Print.  
---,The Tragicall Historie of Hamlet, The Prince Of Denmark.. London: 1869. Print.  
Slanders , Julie. Adaptation and Appropriation. London:. 2006. Print.

**Sneha S.**

Research Scholar

University of Madras, Chennai

## **Feast of Words: Gendered Space in Bulbul Sharma's *Eating Women and Telling Tales***

Abstract: A close reading of literary representation of cooking and eating can provide us with illuminative insights on notions of place, identity and family dynamics. Bulbul Sharma's collection of short stories titled *Eating Women, Telling Tales* – uses culinary images in order to address issues of gendered spaces, alienation and belonging in a foreign land, identity, social class, race and sexuality. This paper seeks to demonstrate through an analysis of a selected short story from this collection, that images of food helps the reader explore the complex relationships of women with the world around them.

In Bulbul Sharma's collection of short narratives told by a gathering of women, who are in the process of preparing a funeral meal for a dead relative, food plays a major role in the unfolding of each tale. This becomes a double feast - a funeral feast which these tales culminate at and as well as a feast of words- of culinary images and notions of identity.

In a culinary space, the unfolding of these tales, some true, some exaggerated – add up to make the space so generated into an agency of catharsis, similar to a therapeutic effect. For instance, in Savitri's story, which is the fourth tale in the anthology, the tale revolves around how “she had cooked the best bhog once.” (45) As the tale opens we find different narrative threads which provide a beginning to many tales – all of which are not told. For instance, as the fourth chapter opens, we find Savitri sorting the rice, “carefully picking out the grains of husk.” (45) Her sorting through the rice to remove husks is a symbolic act of sorting through her memory to pick and choose the parts of her tale as she would like it to be told.

The women who knew that Savitri had once lived in a foreign country pretended they did not know [that only in India rice had husks]. They hoped she would tell them about her late husband and his affair with a white woman. But Savitri wanted to tell them how she had cooked the best bhog once. (45)

It isn't just about narrating a well-preserved memory, it is also what she wishes to remember and/or forget. It then becomes her story, just one of the many threads that the author presents before us readers. As stated in the introduction of *The Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food Writing – The Table is Laid*, “food is a crucial determinant of subjectivity”(xix). And thus begins Savitri's story.

Though experiences of eating, cooking and tasting are subjective experiences, food cannot be removed from its social inscriptions either. “Its discourses are complex semiotic systems or meta-languages that offer vocabularies for commenting on virtually all areas of social expressions” (xix). For Savitri, the social ‘experience’ is that of being alienated in a foreign land, from her culture and also at the point this story unfolds – as being a widowed woman living alone, abroad. But the tale opens not with her, instead with one of the other three women with whom she shares a special memory. It thus becomes the story of Gita, Malti and Savitri as it unfolds.

After her husband’s death, Gita had been living alone, but “she still walked around the house as quiet as a mouse, as she had always done earlier when she was *always* afraid of waking him up” (46). The implication here, that her dead husband continues to extend a kind of over-arching framework of rules for a wife to follow helps us understand the cultural constraints she is placed in – a conventional and tradition-bound husband who doesn’t like his wife going out after dark since, according to him, “a lone woman without a man guarding her is a target for all evil men” (46).

So, when Savitri decides to step outside after dark, defying her husband’s orders, she is taking a step towards a newer version of herself – a gathering up of self-confidence. The reason why she would take this unprecedented step of leaving the safety of her house after dark is in fact due the command of another respectable male figure looming over her life – Purohit Baba, or the priest of the nearby Hindu temple, who when he spoke looked as if “God himself had come down to speak to them” (46). He had asked her to not eat anything, and to come and help prepare the bhog required for the devotees in the evening, on that special day. Savitri had agreed, since she knew she did make a very good bhog, whatever else she was unsure of, this was a definite skill she possessed.

Struggling with her sense of feeling alienated in a foreign land, it is safe to assume that it is through one’s culinary delicacies that you maintain a sense of your much longed for past. She knew that, “[the bhog] would take about four hours to make” (46). The seemingly mundane and ungrateful task would become the source of her withheld sense of power and belonging in a foreign land, as a diasporic Indian.

She felt so proud when he asked her to help this year with the making of the bhogprasad with wheat flour, almonds and fruit which they would serve after the fasting period was over...She was so surprised when Purohit walked up to her last week and asked her to serve the lord this Shivratri. (47)



To share in her unexpected joy, she immediately calls her son in L.A. who is. A successful accountant at a large firm, who is visibly not pleased that she has woken him in the early hours of the morning; he cuts the call before she even gets to tell him the news. Between the spaces of silence constructed by her husband and her son, lies a third space which inevitably provides her with a space to delegate her sense of self-awareness and identity. And this space increases and accommodates her growing self-awareness in small ways. For instance, her walking alone after dark to the temple is a feat which instills a small confidence in her. “Each time she managed to do something on her own she felt she had grown taller and could not stop smiling to herself” (48).

Gradually her new-found independence takes shape before us and the fact that she is a significant member of the religious community and that she is given the charge of making the precious bhog. So, the very aspect that seems to confine the female to her kitchen sphere is what in fact grants her a sense of assurance and faith in who she is and what she is capable of. ..eating habits and meals are heavily gendered and while women’s bodies have been determined by male-dominated food practices (fasting for instance) in most societies in most periods of history, female appetites that resist such hegemonic control, either through indulgence or apparent self-denial, become sites of resistance. In such situations eating is a form of feminist empowerment, associated with desire. (Thiemexxxiii)

The fact is that she would not be cooking the bhog alone – two more women, both widows, would be joining her on that special occasion. Though she feels nervous about it, she realizes later that though they are different, it is that very difference that brings them together and helps them cook together and thus create a deliciously devoted bhog. The process of cooking the bhog is all she can think of as she walks to her destination, unfolding certain close-held culinary secrets on the way.

She would make the Prasad and they could make the rice. Some women had such a heavy hand when it came to seasoning. They just threw the salt or chillies in while talking or thinking of other things. You had to keep your mind quiet, hold your heart still when you added salt to a dish. (49)

As readers we realise a major social implication of her being selected to make the bhog. Her husband was known to be having an affair with a Mem (a foreign lady) when he was alive. It was something everyone knew, including his family and of course her. However, she had never brought it up with him and respected him as her husband. “No one could make fun of him in front of her”(50). Her insistence on preserving his honour extends beyond his death as well. Even though he had allegedly died in a freakish accident, by falling out of a hotel room window, she had insisted that she change that story whenever she told it or would tell it. “Heart attack she would say. No accident or anything

because when a man commits suicide the blame always falls on his wife even if he has left her”(51).

So, when Purohit Baba insists that she herself cooks the bhog, she realizes that in their eyes she is safe; her husband’s death would not hang over the rest of her life. Cooking the bhog had given her the privilege of belonging to an accepted social milieu. Her determination to cook the best bhog ever eaten by the people there gathers momentum when this realisation dawns on her. She would cook such an excellent bhog that people would talk about it for years to come...These people who gossiped about her would from now on only remember her as the best bhog cook who had worked at the temple. (51)

At this juncture, Malti’s story, another widowed Indian lady, weaves itself into the narrative. Malti is living with her son and daughter-in-law and her beloved grandson in a “tiny flat” (52). Though back home she was different – “she herself was a different woman: tall, proud, with flashing eyes. Not a soul dared talk back to her”. But now in this foreign land she feels diminished and unworthy “she was a clumsy old woman, crashing into everything like an old dim-witted servant who could not remember anything”(52).

Malti took pride in the fact that she would be one of the main people who would be in-charge of cooking the bhog on that special occasion since it would then bring her back into prominence, something she longs for in this alien land. She arrives at the temple on the day and gets down working immediately with the other two women. So Malti, Gita and Savitri , each battling their own limited spaces and each understanding the need to cook an extraordinary bhog that day, meet at the temple on Shivratri . “They got down to work as if they had known each other all their lives. Each woman knew instinctively what was needed of her and did not ask the other” (54). Social spaces where meals are prepared together and consumed together become complex sites where dynamics of family and belonging are negotiated. In the diasporic context too, this gains significance as food helps the individuals to explore the gaps between their lived experience as well as the collective memory or nostalgia for home. Thus, as every step of making the bhog gains momentum - the cutting, sorting, chopping, shelling, slicing, so does the emphasis that this is not an insignificant task, each of these steps which could easily be enumerated in a line or two, takes space as do these women in the soldering of their identities.

Their conversation turns to nostalgic longings and forbidden desires which they know each other understand though it may not be permitted in this foreign land. And me, I get up at night and cry sometimes for a bit of chilly and turmeric fried brinjal. Just now I wish I could have one of or rough-skinned potatoes with bits of earth still n it. They taste better no, the skins

fried crisp?(54) The bhog turns out to be richly flavoured and highly delectable. It contained “their intense longing for home....their loneliness....sprinkled their forgotten dreams along with the salt” (55). Through the mingling of their tears of joy and sorrow, the bhog becomes intensely flavoured and becomes a site for their expression and art, which had not found a way to express itself hitherto.

#### References

- Sharma, Bulbul. *Eating Women, Telling Tales*. Zubaan: New Delhi, 2010. Print.  
Thieme, John and Ira Raja eds. *The Table is Laid: The Oxford Anthology of South Asian Food Writing*. OUP: New Delhi, 2009. Print.

**Najda A.**

Research Scholar

Farook College, Calicut

## **Deconstructing *Kaipunyam* Food Culture and Muslim Women in Kerala**

Abstract: Familial responsibilities and cooking are always considered as women's duties. Young girls grow by playing cooking and get readied for marriage by practicing with mothers and aunts. The English proverb "The best way to a man's heart is through stomach" is indeed anti-women and anti-men as well. It indirectly addresses women and generalizes that men can be won by food. This is the extended reading of 'woman should live for others-husbands and children'. No wonder, spokesmen of all religions slogan it unilaterally. It will be after Agricultural Settlement that women started shouldering cooking inside kitchen. The strict patriarchal societies as in India still deny men's entry into kitchen.

*Adukkalayil ninn arangathekk* (From kitchen to stage), as the name of V.T.Bhatathirippad's drama, was once the slogan of women's empowerment movements in Kerala. Though there are a group of feminists today shouting to 'Regain kitchens' (*adukkala thirichpidikkuka*), in this time of gender justice, cooking and kitchen should be shared between the members of the family. Recent decades experience varied changes regarding gender relations and food. There are cookery shows and cookery reality shows where men and women equally take part. In homes in Kerala, but kitchens still does not include men. Even if employed, cooking is the woman's responsibility except those works in IT sector which necessitates men's presence in kitchen as well. Cooking consumes creative time.

Women are confined to kitchens in the name of *Kaipunyam*. Mothers get more appreciated than wives, idolized as the best ever. The attributed 'kaipunyam' (expertise in cooking) to mothers and wives is the result of longer experience in cooking along with the love and devotion as added flavours. Earlier women talking about cooking food is only considered noble. Woman talking about different tastes and eating food is indeed a recent phenomenon. It is indeed the impact of variety cookery shows in TV channels as well as of recipe-rich women's magazines. Malika Maryam in her article "Ente Annanweshana Pareekshanakatha" (My Experiments with food) anecdotes in detail about woman talking about eating food, projecting out the unwritten laws of woman's submission in eating even. Recent trend of going behind ethnic delicacies have succeeded in re-surrecting many tastes buried along the ancestors. Taste is individual.

Unfortunately gender sensitive media advertisements always associate women with kitchen and cooking, and men as the tasters ever. The kid's favourite chocolate brand 'Kinderjoy' has different versions for boys and girls. Homely food or healthy food verses unhealthy junk food is a topic much debated and discussed in Kerala. The ban on popular snack brand Maggie noodles shocked people of Kerala but only for a short while. Still for a great majority in Kerala, health and food is not related. Naturopaths argue for uncooked and raw food over cooked food. Dr. Amira Hyder relates this with today's trend of people going for natural ways and yoga classes because of lifestyle diseases. From younger classes itself it is taught that cooking evaporates vitamins. Prophets, seers and saints cooked less and ate less.

Muslim community is considered and has become a food-bound community. Like in other communities, food culture is associated with many patriarchal formalities among Muslims also. Still there are families in Kerala which believe men should eat first and women wait and eat the rest last. Being a non-vegetarian class helps them experiment different dishes, along with, there developed suitable utensils. Muslim societies in Kerala are famous for non-vegetarian snack varieties. During the annual 'Appavanibhanercha', held at Calicut those having diseases or illness upon any body parts will prepare *appams* (bakes) in the shape of those body organs to be offered to the Sheikh Shamsudhin Alaudhin Alhoms alias Semamu Koya for speedy redress of the affected part.

Occasions of marriage, pregnancy, childbirth etc. are occasions of special foods mostly homemade, thus women-made. K.T.Naseeha says even the all-time all people's favourite and easiest served *biriyani* gets marked also as the identity of the community. The marriage ceremony will be followed by a series of 'satkaram'/virunnu', where the newly wedded couple will be hosted in the houses of relations. These events are made grant with variety of dishes also to showcase the pomp of the family. The earlier serving style of marriages have given way to buffet dines giving ample choice satisfying all tastes.

Muslims celebrate two festivals-Eid-ul fithr and Eid-ul ad'ha. On the occasion of Eid-ul-fithr which marks the end of one month fasting in the month of Ramadan in lunar calendar, it is compulsory upon believers to give a certain quantity of rice (symbolic of food) to the needy around their houses that no one should starve on the day of celebration of Muslims. During Eid-ul-ad'ha which marks the end of annual Hajj performance at the holy pilgrimage center of Muslims situated in Ka'ba in Saudi Arabia, Muslims all over the world slaughter cattle commemorating the event happened in the lives of Prophet Abraham and his son Ismail and distribute in their neighbourhoods. In Kerala, religious organisations like Kerala Nadvathul Mujahideen, Ithihadu Shubbanul Mujahideen, Jama'athe Islami Hind and some Sunni fractions systematically distribute rice/food kits during the occasions of Eid.

It is compulsory upon believing Muslims to observe fasting during the month of Ramadan avoiding food and water from dawn to dusk. They wake up during the last hours of night to eat a lighter meal and observes fasting nearly 13 hours (in Kerala) to break it with the sunset. But today, the one month spiritual obligation has become a feasting season, fasting the day and feasting in night, because of the festive ifthars at homes as well as in public. Ifthar meets conducted in public in the name of social gatherings but exclude women as an extension of denying nights for them. More than that, though religious organisations also competitively conduct Ifthar meets, it is not at all a custom practiced by Prophet Muhammad and is not mentioned in the Holy texts.

Muslim populated Malabar region has many famous food spaces, recently decorated by many Arabian food varieties arrived as a result of gulf migration. 'Shawarma', 'Shawai', 'Al-fahm', 'Manthi', 'Broast' varieties have started an evening food culture in Kerala as the hotels serve them only after 5 PM, for which, recipes, techniques and technology have been imported from Arab countries. Apart from the health concerns, the hotel food culture and related family outings save women's time in kitchen. Cookery shows in TV channels have greater role in reconstructing gender relations and making it masculine as well. Cooking is an art but cannot be sidelined as a woman's only actualization.

#### References

- Hyder, Dr.Amira. Telephone Interview. 20 Jan 2016.  
Maryam V.,Malika. "Ente Annanweshana Pareekshanakatha". *Aramam Monthly* August 2014:50-54.Print.  
Naseeha, K.T. "Paranjutheeratha visheshangal". *Campus Alive*. November 2011:29. Print.  
Salva, K.P. "Kudumbam Maattikurikenda Bhodhyangal" *New Kerala Development Forum Conference Book*. U Shaiju ed.Calicut: Solidarity Youth Movement, 2011:49-55.

**Deepthy Mohan**

Assistant Professor  
St. Mary's College, Thrissur

**Diasporic Veins in Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Namesake*  
and Gogol's *Journey towards Past***

Abstract: Diaspora literature involves an idea of a homeland, a place from where the displacement occurs and narratives of harsh journeys undertaken by the characters. Diaspora is a Greek word meaning 'to disperse'. It signifies a voluntary or forcible movement of the people from the homeland into new regions. It is a journey towards self-realization, self-recognition, self-knowledge and self-definition. Jhumpa Lahiri is famous as the chronicler of the Bengali-immigrant experience. She explores the ideas of alienation and identity in her works. Most of her characters encounter identity crisis. She is considered as one of the most noteworthy authors in the literature of Indian Diaspora. In *The Namesake*, Lahiri reflects on the Indian Diaspora and weaves a narrative that reveals the concept of identity and cultural difference in the space of Diaspora.

The term identity crisis was first used by Eric Erikson, a German psychoanalyst, who considered this type of event one of the most significant conflicts people can face in the development. Erikson described identity crisis as a period of exploring oneself, along with a period of intense analysis. It is the failure to achieve ego identity during adolescence. During adolescence we are faced with physical growth, sexual maturation, and integrating our ideas of ourselves and about what others think of us.

Lahiri deals with in her novel themes of immigrant experience, conflicts of cultures, struggles of assimilation and most importantly the intricate relationship between generations. The protagonist Gogol Ganguli's experience related to the crisis of identity exemplifies the problems faced by every immigrant. The whole novel represents the disturbed psyche of Gogol who feels divided between two identities.

The characters in *Namesake* frequently come across identity crisis as they struggle to reconcile their American identity with their Indian identity. But the struggle is felt mainly by the second generation of the immigrants. Gogol, a representative of second generation, stands suspended between two worlds. *Namesake* narrates the struggles and hardships of a Bengali couple who migrate to the United States. Most of the important characters in the novel experience the strong role of past in moulding their identity and culture. It explores whether one's past has anything to do with one's future.

Gogol's rebellion against his past starts with the struggle against his name. He is named after Nikolai Gogol, the author claimed as a pioneer of a new "naturalist" aesthetic in Russian literature, who is his father's favourite writer. Ashoke, Gogol's father, named him Gogol because he survived a train wreck as a result of Nikolai Gogol's book which he was reading at that time. The rescuers found him lying injured due to the piece of page from the book which he was still clutching in his hands. But Gogol is unaware of all this and he feels no affinity for the name. In fact he saw his name as a burden and his hatred towards the name Gogol seems like a betrayal of his past. The frequent questions that he encounters regarding his unusual name unsettle him. He hates questions pertaining to his name, hates having constantly to explain: "He hates having to tell people that it doesn't mean anything 'in Indian'. He hates having to wear a name tag on his sweater at Model United Nations Day at school. He even hates signing his name at the bottom of his drawings in art class. He hates that his name is both absurd and obscure, that it has nothing to do with who he is, that it is neither Indian nor American but of all things Russian."(*Namesake* 76)

Gogol was not much concerned about his unusual name when he was a young boy. Even though his parents intent that name to be just his 'daaknam' (pet name) it is he who insists to retain the name in his school register when he began his formal education. At that time he was only familiar with that name. Everybody calls him Gogol and the need for 'bhaalonam' (official name) upsets him: "But Gogol doesn't want a new name. He can't understand why he has to answer to anything else. 'Why do I have to have a new name?' he asks his parents, tears springing to his eyes... He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him."(*Namesake* 57)

The peculiarity of his name strikes him one day when he was taken to visit a graveyard on a school field trip of some historical intent. He was then eleven years old. The students are told to rub the surfaces of the gravestones and find out the name written there. Gogol was old enough to know that he himself will be burned, not buried, that his body will occupy no plot of earth and no stone in the country will bear his name beyond life. The odd name that he finds there made him realise that he has never met another Gogol. Until then it has never occurred to him that names die over time and that they perish just as people do.

The unusual nature of his name starts bothering him slowly. Names are closely linked to identity. Issue of identity gains momentum during adolescence. It is during this period that one makes effort to find oneself. It is a stage of discovery or finding themselves. In the case of Gogol also the crisis of identity begins during adolescence. Mr. Lawson's class on Nikolai Gogol which Gogol attended while he was in high school was one of the incidents which intensified his hatred towards his name. The account given by Lawson



about the writer's ill health, his disillusion, failures, depression, melancholia and his pathetic death all made Gogol ashamed of his name. That the writer was a genius did not make an impression on him. Gogol is a child who is born to Indian parents but is brought up in America. The Gangulis wish to raise Gogol and his sister with Bengali culture and values. They attempted as best as they can to stay connected to their Indian roots even though they are far away in America.

During adolescence Gogol desires to blend in the American society. He attempts to eradicate his Indian heritage. Thus he is torn between his Bengali roots and American culture. To crown the confusion he has got a Russian novelist's last name. His hatred towards his name culminates in his change of name to Nikhil which he does shortly before leaving for college. Even though he changes his name officially, he must realise in the course of events that follow that a simple name change cannot alter the fabric of a person. He must learn one day that the past cannot be erased. It is woven into the fabric of our beings.

Gogol tries his level best to uproot himself from his past, his Indian culture and heritage. He attempts to increase the distance between himself and his parents. He goes home rarely, dates American girls and becomes angry when anyone calls him Gogol. He hates to return the phone calls of his parents and does his best to never embrace the culture his parents cherish. It feels easy for him to live as Nikhil in an American culture. He does so happily, detaching himself from his roots, his past, and his family. But he fails to realise that he who wants to leave behind all his connection with past is actually tying knot with his past through the act of changing the name to Nikhil. Nikhil is a perfectly respectable Bengali name and ironically it is a thing that connects him to his culture as the name is artfully connected to the old. He believes that switching his name can erase the complications of his past. But new complications arise as he admits to himself that he does not feel like Nikhil and when his parents who normally call him Gogol referred to him as Nikhil, he feels that he is not related to them at all. Gogol feels helpless unable to find a solution.

It was a shocking revelation to Gogol when at last Ashoke disclosed the reason behind his choosing the name Gogol for his son. From then onwards he started regretting about what he had done. The truth dawned upon him that whatever he called himself, he is still the same inside. He never truly lost the 'Gogol' inside of him. The name he had so detested was the first thing his father had given him. The death of his father intensified his guilt consciousness.

Gogol's inability to shake his own past is most evident in his relationships with women. To Ruth, the girl whom he meets in a train journey, he

introduces as Nikhil. But in their first conversation he talks about India. He tells her about the meals he had eaten on Indian trains at the time he travelled with his parents to Delhi and Agra, about the tea bought through the window from men on the platform. All these reveal that the trips to India, which he resented, had left impressions on his mind unknowingly.

After the failure of relationship with Ruth, he meets Maxine. Gogol tries to adopt her lifestyle; he even lives in Maxine's house all in his effort to build a wall between his present and past. The world of Ratliffs is appealing to him but he starts to realise that it is not his world. He has to accept the reality that they can never fully accept him as one among them, and he can never lose himself in their world forgetting about his own identity. He is shaped by his past, his roots and his culture.

Lahiri takes Gogol back to his family in the last chapter of the book. He begins to think of his past- his childhood days, the trips to India, and the time he spend together with his family. He now wonders how all those trips to Calcutta which he has once resented could have been enough for his parents; how his parents had lived their lives in America leaving their respective families behind, living unconnected in a perpetual state of longing. He admits to himself that he does not possess the stamina of his parents: "He had spent years maintaining distance from his origins, his parents, in bridging that distance as best as they could. And yet, for all his aloofness toward his family in the past, his years at college and then in New York, he has always hovered close to this quiet, ordinary town that had remained, for his mother and father, stubbornly exotic...Only for three months was he separated by more than a few small states from his father, a distance that had not troubled Gogol in the least, until it was too late."(*Namesake* 281)

Gogol struggles to fight all the setbacks in his life. At first a sense of failure and shame persists in him. He feels all alone. His father is dead, he is divorced from Moushumi, Sonia is going to marry Ben, and his mother has sold their house in America and decided to spend six months in India and six months in America. He comes home to his family to celebrate Christmas.

Gogol feels his family-life like a string of accidents; yet these events have formed Gogol, shaped him and determined who he is. His family is the solution to his woes. They are the ones on whom he can rely upon at any time. He will simply cease to exist without them. The name Gogol is not what makes Gogol the man who he is, it is his family, his culture, his roots, his past. He realises that running away from his roots is futile. He is actually bound by a strong thread to Indian culture and accepting all this, he attempts to make peace with his past. The years that he spent resisting his past have made him uncomfortable in the present and it will take some time before he could adjust with the truth. But what is more important is that he is willing to give a try.

For the first time in his life so far he thinks nostalgically about a childhood trip to Cape Code which he had made along with his family. He and his father had walked to the very tip, across the breakwater, a string of giant gray slanted stones and then on the narrow, final inward crescent of sand. Finally they stood by the lighthouse, exhausted, surrounded by water on all sides. Since they had left the camera with Ashima, his father asked him to remember their journey. Gogol, in all his innocence, had then asked him how long he had to remember it. His father laughed aloud and said to him to try to remember it always. Yes, Gogol did remember the journey that he made with his father. Even though he dropped his hold on his father's hands somewhere along the journey of his life, he is now ready to take his father's hands once again and start another journey towards the memories of past.

Alienation and identity crisis looms largely over the life of Gogol. There is an amalgamation of events of past and present and throughout the novel one can experience instances where past becomes the present and the present, past. The novel analyses whether one's past has anything to do with one's life and development of personality. Gogol tries to live neglecting his past and culture completely, but finds himself at the end of the novel as a student of his past. All his earlier attempts to fight his past have made him a stranger to himself. When he at last decides to start reading his father's favourite short story from the collection of *The Short stories of Nikolai Gogol* which he has given him on his fourteenth birthday, he is actually taking the first step towards the journey towards his past:

The spine cracks faintly when he opens it to the title page. *The Short stories of Nikolai Gogol*. 'For Gogol Ganguli', it says on the front endpaper in his father's tranquil hand, in red ballpoint ink, the letters raising gradually, optimistically, on the diagonal toward the upper right-hand corner of the page. 'The man who gave you his name, from the man who gave you your name' is written within quotation marks. Underneath the inscription, which he has never before seen, is his birthday, and the year, 1982. His father had stood in the hallway, just there, an arm's reach from where he sits now. He had left him to discover the inscription on his own, never again asking Gogol what he'd thought of the book, never mentioning the book at all. (*Namesake* 288-89)

Gogol slowly begins to realize that he cannot walk away from who he is. He discovers his identity. Even though he is not moving to India with his mother, he stops resisting his past at least. All the troubles that he faced so far gave him the strength to stand on his own feet. He is no longer ashamed of himself or his Indian culture and identity and is proud of his name and all that it means for him. He cannot ignore the memories of his past— his name, his

parents and his Indian heritage. They have shaped his character and they define him as a human being. The dilemma of name cannot be solved by altering the name on record. The identity of the individual is something one has to discover through a process of reflections and negotiations.

Question of identity is complicated for those who are grown up in two worlds simultaneously. Lahiri sketches the emotions of her characters with excellent penmanship. The novel probes into the psyche of characters and explores the intricacies and complexities of their emotions as they are faced with problems related to cultural dilemmas and sense of identity. This constant struggle of immigrants is portrayed in *Namesake*. The novel is a journey of Gogol through the mazes of cultural tangles and Lahiri traces his path to reach the ever broadening horizon which makes Gogol see his past with love and respect.

#### References

- Aschcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.). *Key Concepts in Post-colonial studies*. London: Routledge, 1998.
- Alcoff, Linda Martin. *Identities: Modern and Post modern*. UK: Blackwell, 2003.
- Dubey, Ashutosh. "Immigrant Experience in Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*". *Journal of Indian writings in English.*" 30.2 pp.22-26
- Lahiri, Jhumpa. *The Namesake*. UttarPradesh: Harper Collins, 2003
- Mcleod, John. *Beginning Post colonialism*. NewYork: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- [http://www.ehow.com/info\\_7736181\\_identity-crisis-during-adolescence.html#ixzz2k5tzg0ib](http://www.ehow.com/info_7736181_identity-crisis-during-adolescence.html#ixzz2k5tzg0ib)
- <http://www.reviewofresearch.net/PublishArticles/35.aspx>

**Athulya C.**

Assistant Professor

Govt Arts & Science College, Kozhinjampara

**Diaspora and Fragmentation in Rushdie's  
*Midnight's Children***

Abstract: Diasporic literature is in reality a longing for the long lost homeland with which natives want to establish a connection. A novel like *Midnight's Children* offered a critique of the 'nation as integrated'. It provides an occasion to reflect on majority discourses and master narratives, - indispensable ingredients of the nation state - and the resulting angst of minorities and others caught in its web. Texts that deal in the imagination of homelands, are in between texts, that cater to the cultural fashions spawned by the migrant's ways of remembering a home left behind, and play on the inside/outside dilemma of the migrant perspective, offering critiques of postcolonial political formations.

Diasporic literature with its presence all over the world is one of the most talked about and discussed tropics in the world literature today. The search for 'home' and the fragmentation of the identities are an integral part of diasporic discussion. When it comes to fiction, diasporic consciousness and fragmentation occurs in language, plot, structure, themes, and imagery. And these will reveal the sense of transformation of identities and an eternal quest for "imaginary homelands" in an individual which will unfold by the narrative strategies the author employs. And here in Salman Rushdie's much celebrated novel "Midnight's Children", he focuses on the theme of identity crisis by presenting a series of characters and objects, both fragmented. The quest for self and wholeness in an institutionalized society pay no attention to the identity and individuality of its citizens.

The novel *Midnight's Children* depicts the protagonist Saleem Sinai's journeys through India, Pakistan and Bangladesh and yet there is no certain place for him to settle down. Thus relocation is the root problem here. The characters of the novel are part of an eternal quest, the quest for some 'imaginary homeland'. Thus we can echo the fact that every diasporic literature is in reality a longing for that long lost homeland with which they want to establish a connection. The myth of wholeness remains confusing as the conception of the term varies according to each individual who perceives it in his own manner. The sense of alienation is felt by the diasporic communities as an extension of the racial, ethnic, social, religious or even gender differences and discriminations. Identity has always been misinterpreted as the way society looks at an individual taking in to consideration various factors be it social, political, economic, racial, or even

religious. But identity or the sense of the self is an attitude maintained by an individual about himself amidst all the differences and discriminations in which he lives in.

Salman Rushdie the Indian born and England bred post modern writer has emerged as a prominent figure in the world literary scene. His novels are rich with abundant social and political commentaries and have received both praise and criticism. His novel "Midnight's Children" published in 1980 sets its path through a less trodden pathway and seeks to explore the world of diasporic consciousness and fragmentation. Though the world he presents before the readers is fictional and the characters are not real, they seem to be authentic and the voice they make genuine because they finally attempt to showcase the third world consciousness.

A novel like *Midnight's Children* offered a critique of the 'nation as integrated' through its metaphors of fragmentation, in that sense an interstitial text standing between the cultural and the political, between the desired and the feared, questioning the choice of a national imaginary and seeing the centrifugal impulse of constituent states that are unsatisfactorily and uncomfortably contained by the national idea. Rushdie's novels always serve as solid proofs to validate this statement. His novels discuss the relationship between individual and the society and the way in which they intact results in the quest for a united identity and wholeness.

The central figure of the novel Saleem Sinai and his inner thoughts depicts the way in which the self and the other is being related in an exceptionally hybrid society. Sinai born at the dawn of Indian independence feels himself as a blend of all the diversities that his nation has in it. The Indian culture is extremely hybrid for it has elements of so many other cultures in it. Moreover Indian Constitution recognizes twenty two official languages and the citizens are free to follow any religion-be it Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Christianity and so on according to the individual's faith in it. Such a cultural hybridism finds resonance in Saleem Sinai's mind too for he considers himself to be a mixture of so many factors and hence there is in him a sense of alienation and a quest for self.

The novel 'Midnight's Children' seeks to portray the interaction between the self and the society and the tension born as a result of the interaction between the two. Rushdie seems to clarify his stand that such an interaction is inevitable for the individual as well as the society for both the entities are interdependent. And it is certain that the cultural hybridism will find its echo on its individuals that will form a part of his identity.

Though the picture of India with its rich diversity in 'Midnight's Children' is presented as a nation that tries to maintain an equilibrium amidst

all the pluralities, at times it stumbles when the protestors clamour for the partition of the country along the religious and linguistic lines. The Midnight's Children's conference that Saleem convenes is actually a symbol of the hybrid nature of India. Even though the nation is built on the pillars of pluralities it is being often shaken when the intolerant sects protest on grounds of politics, religion and language and clamour for singularity. And this intolerance finally leads to a chaotic nation disturbed by the cacophony against diversity which in turn results in a number of fragmented souls who's longing for wholeness remains a dream.

Rushdie says that "the immigrant who loses his roots, language and his social norms is obliged to find new ways of describing himself, new ways of being human". And here I feel like framing my conclusion on identity taking into consideration his sayings of the expressions of individuality. If an individual is disturbed with the conception of self, it is certain that he is in a quest and he might be dreaming of a day in which he could come out of the cocoon and be confident to assert that his self is not fragmented. The quest in him can be equated with the dream that is a spontaneous self portrayal in symbolic form, or else his repressed desire to attain wholeness in an institutionalizing and authoritarian society.

The protagonist in Rushdie's narrative Saleem Sinai says "my inheritance includes this gift, the gift of inventing new parents for myself whenever necessary. The power of giving birth to fathers and mothers: which Ahmed wanted and never had" (Midnight's Children.144-145).Sinai was born at the dawn of India's independence and his biological mother died after his birth and its only later that he was revealed his family in which he lives in is not really his own and he belongs to another parents. He has in him a set of pluralities which makes him feel fragmented inside. Fragmentation is therefore in him even from the moment he is born as his biological parents and their identity remains a secret before him. "As for me as I grew up, I didn't quite accept my mother's explanation, either, but it killed me into a sense of false security, so that even though something of Mary's suspicions had leaked into me, I was still taken by surprise...." (Midnight's Children 168)

Saleem is shocked to hear that the city in which he lives in is bombed and his relatives are dead. He is left in a state of amnesia that he could remember nothing about his previous life. Moreover he loses his human qualities, abilities and manners. He lost his supernatural power of telepathy and gained a sense of smell instead which makes him move into a special army unit that uses dogs to search for rebels. He becomes a man with the status of a dog. He is hollow inside for he lives as a dog-man.

Saleem is a product of many languages, cultures, countries and politics. His identity is also conflicting and contrasting. His body is linked with the

structure of the nation and the cracks and stains on his body are identified in a political dimension. When the protestors clamour for the partition of the country along the religious and linguistic lines, he feels that he is going to be fragmented. During his school days his Geography teacher used to mock him by comparing his face to India's geography. "These stains are, he cries, Pakistan! These birthmark on the right ear is the East Wing; and these horrible stained left cheek, the West! Remember stupid boys, Pakistan is a stain on the face of India" (Midnight's Children.231-232)

Aadam Aziz, Saleem Sinai's grandfather is another character in the narrative living with a fragmented self. He being educated in the west finds it contrasting while he reads his religious holy book Quran in which his learning and its principles cannot fall in line with each other. And therefore he feels broken inside and he continues to live with his broken self. His self confronts a conflict between the east and the west and the principles that influenced him from both the cultures. The strong and established beliefs in Aadam is constantly been questioned by his learning in the west which enabled him to see things in a new light that is not blurred by religion and faith.

As I said earlier at the beginning of the paper, fragmentation as a recurrent theme in the diasporic narratives occurs in the plot, style, characters, events and even in the structure. Rushdie's plot of "Midnight's Children" is itself fragmented and broken. He uses his narrator Saleem Sinai to question the established method of historical discourse and story telling. Though a series of events, stories, situations and secrets are set in front of the readers, it is not done in a linear fashion or in an orderly way. The broken self of the characters make their thoughts also fragmented. And this finds its expression in the structure of the narrative that often resorts to stream of consciousness as a narrative technique to symbolise the broken self of the characters.

*Midnight's Children* opens with Aadam Aziz kneeling to pray hit his nose on the floor and bleeding. He is pained to the core and at that moment he brushed away the blood from his lashes contemptuously and resolved that he will never again kneel in front of anybody be it man or God. This resolution makes a hole in his identity which he feels cannot be covered at all. And here we see the birth of a secular man and the death of a believer. He could no longer stick on to the empty notions of religion and therefore he decides to escape from its dictates and to free himself from all those fetters hoping that he could end the identity crisis in him. But he fails in his attempt and his self is confronted with a hole inside in turn. His soul faces a conflict between religion and secularism.

When meeting his future wife, Naseem, Aadam is taken into a bedchamber where he saw two wrestlers like women holding a bed sheet with a seven inch hole through which he was allowed to see Nazeem. Her father



Ghani, the landowner asks him to observe his future wife which leaves him totally surprised. “You Europe returned chappies forget certain things. Doctor Sahib, my daughter is a descent girl, it goes without saying. She does not flaunt her body under the noses of strange men. You will understand that you will not be permitted to see, her, not in any circumstances; accordingly I have required her to be positioned behind that sheet (Midnight’s Children.23). Aadam falls in love with Naseem though he could not see in full and his image of his future wife is actually a collage made out of the fragments of her body seen through the perforated sheet. Rushdie seems to symbolise the character Naseem as India as he thinks that India could be understood only in fragments.

Rushdie discusses the theme of fragmentation in his novel by emphasizing on fragments and pieces, that fragments united with the concept of diaspora. The perforated sheet through which Aadam sees the body of Naseem acts as a symbol of the torn and fragmented India. Moreover Aadam sees and loves her as fragments or pieces. Their love is woven on these pieces; even the abstract concept of love is broken and fragmented. And so is the love between Mumtaz and Ahmed. She being obsessed by the memories of her former husband fails to love Ahmed in its purity. She is compelled to love him and she does this happen by seeing him as fragments.

The entire family could not stand steadily as it is built on pieces. Aadam’s family itself lacks its true self. The same case of multiple identities happens to Sinai who is also a part of the family .He also possesses a fluid identity even from his birth itself. Sinai, a man of mixed backgrounds becomes a symbol of the fragmented India. Like many of the characters in the novel Sinai also migrate to different countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh but he finds it tough to stick on to a particular nation.”Midnight’s Children” tells the story of the trauma of displacement and rootlessness. There are numerous characters in the novel who seem to be affected by the problem of rootlessness and they are in search of some ‘imaginary homelands’, though their attempts prove to be futile. Saleem, Padma, Parvathi, Shiva- all the midnight’s children sense a kind of fragmented identity and rootlessness. The story of one individual is lost in the mixed voices of the numerous characters that have a story of their own to say.

The India depicted in the novel “Midnight’s Children” is a nation that is highly intrinsic and complex with its pluralities and heterogeneity. Its culture is not singular but hybrid as it has influences of so many other cultures in it. As the protagonist in the novel remarks, the experience of watching a film differs according to a person’s seating position. If we are so close to the screen we can’t just see it well. But if we are positioned at the back we could see it properly. Likewise it is very difficult for a person in India to interpret the nation with all its pluralities and contradictions. Though the Constitution of India states that it is a secular state, there are so many religions and deities that

the citizens follow. Rushdie hints at the abundant possibilities in India and interprets the nation in such a way that no writers have done before. The story is told in a form that resembles the old Indian way of Oral story telling which resembles a collage with a rustic appearance.

The plot goes back and forth and oscillates between the past and the present and is fragmented. The sudden shifts in time can be identified as a narrative strategy that Rushdie follows to depict the theme of multiple identity and fragmentation in the story. It is the diasporic consciousness within him that give rise to various issues like fragmentation and rootlessness in each personality. He, at times sets up a tension in the text by creating a paradoxical conflict between the form and the content of the story.

### References

- Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight's Children*. 1981. London: Pan Books Ltd. 1982
- Rao, Madhsudana. *Salman Rushdie's Fiction: A study*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers Private Limited, 1992. Print.
- Wilson, Keith. "Midnight's Children and Reader Responsibility." *Reading Rushdie: Perspectives on the Fiction of Salman Rushdie*. Ed. M. D. Fletcher. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994. 55-68. Print.
- <http://www.rotten.com/library/bio/authors/salman-rushdie/>, 20060918
- <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/midnightschildren/>, 20060712
- [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian\\_independence\\_movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_independence_movement), 20060414

**Sneha K.**

Research Scholar

P.S.G.R Krishnammal College for Women, Coimbatore

**The cause of Women advocated in *A Doll's House***

Abstract: Ibsen chose for his play *A Doll's House* one of the controversial topics of the day: Woman's place in society. He was perhaps influenced by the movement for the emancipation of women, gathering momentum then. In fact, his sympathetic attitude towards women was a by-product of his belief in human freedom. This conviction made him raise his voice against the discriminatory attitude towards women who were denied the rights and opportunities enjoyed by men-folk in society. A woman, according to Ibsen, cannot be judged by laws framed by men for men.

Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is a problem or a thesis play but it does not offer any solution to the problem with which it deals. The problem is the position of status of a woman with relation to her husband and her home. He shows the sad consequences of the subordination of a wife to the level of suppressing her individuality. The play draws our attention to the conjugal life of a middle class couple; the excessive control exercised on the wife by the husband and how the wife wriggles out of the predicament. Marriage thus becomes the theme of the play and Ibsen seems to be preoccupied with the social reality regarding the position of a married woman in her home.

Nora is treated by Tovarld like a pet, consequently in need of his advice and guidance. His love for her is not open to question, but it is the love of a superior for someone lower in rank. He uses endearing terms like "skylark" and "squirrel" in addressing her, but he always reminds her that he is the master of the house and it is her duty to obey the rules laid down by him. He insists that she should be economical, never borrow money, and never eat sweets because it would spoil her teeth and never have any frivolous ideas about morality. He speaks like a strict moralist.

The woman in this play is a mere "doll" as she herself complains. She has been so in the hands of her father and continues to be so in the hands of her husband. Her father enjoyed playing with her; her husband enjoys displaying her beauty to others and dancing with her much to the envy of the spectators. He is proud of her not because she possesses any intrinsic qualities, but because she can turn the spotlight on herself at any gathering. It is a pleasure to love such an enchanting beauty. When she began to exercise her reasoning power and be herself, she becomes an eye-sore to him. He shuns her mercilessly and considers her unworthy to bring up her children. Evidently she

was only a doll for her children to play with. The dramatist could not have chosen a more suitable title for his play.

Nora is a devoted wife who took her husband to Italy when he was critically ill and brought him back to normal health by borrowing money from Krogstad. She had forged her father's signature on the bond to spare the old man the agony of knowing about Helmer's illness. Of course, she was then unaware of the dire consequences of forgery. She concealed the whole matter from her husband too fearing that his indebtedness to her would hurt his self respect. In her simplicity she believed that Helmer's love for her was no less than hers for him and that he would make any sacrifice for her sake. In fact he had himself declared so.

Eventually Helmer's possessive attitude towards Nora rocks the boat. He regards Nora as his property. After going through Krogstad's letter threatening to expose Nora's fraud, he goes into tantrums. She had expected him to take the whole blame on himself and had even contemplated to prevent it. Helmer's reaction takes her by surprise. More surprising is his reaction on getting Krogstad's second letter. The danger is averted and Helmer returns to his self-complacency and resumes his patronizing attitude towards Nora. The realization bursts on Nora like a bombshell that his love and his moral values were all a hoax.

Nora makes up her mind to leave Helmer forever. Helmer's request to reconsider her decision is side-stepped by her. When she complains of having been treated as a baby-doll by her husband, she hits the nail on the head. Now it dawns upon her that she has a mind of her own and she must establish her own identity. Before performing her duty as a wife and mother she must do her duty to herself.

Ibsen exposes the shallowness of the "well-made play" by giving a tragic ending to *A Doll's House*. The audience is led to assume that Nora's problem will be solved happily, but contrary to our expectation she forsakes her home and husband. The tragic aspect of human life is thus emphasized.

The use of the symbolism also adds to the realistic effect of the play. The warmth of the stove represents the security that Nora longs for. The Christmas tree with its decorations stands for family happiness and stripped of the decorations represents the ill fate that has overtaken the family. Nora's eating macaroons secretly shows her childish tendency to deceive and her pleasure in it indicates her rebelliousness against her husband's authority. The wild dance of the Tarentella heightens the pathos of Nora's predicament. Above all, the play begins with a door opening and ends with a door slamming shut.

The theme of the play is realistic. It presents a married woman whom the husband expects to behave in accordance with his dictates. She accepts the role with hardly a demur until his love for her is put to test. He fails miserably and Nora decides to forsake him for good. There can be no two views about the realistic nature of them, for the problem that Nora faces exists in many countries including our own. The solution adopted may be different, but Ibsen wants only to awaken the social conscience and make women aware of their rights.

Another feature of the play is that it depicts romantic love as an illusion. Helmer speaks to Nora like a romantic lover, expressing his readiness to sacrifice his body and soul for her sake. But when the need comes, she shrinks into the cocoon of his ego. The dramatist portrays the character Mrs Linde as a practical-minded woman with no romantic illusion about love. In her youth she married a wealthy man to support her family and later she marries Krogstad to impart a purpose to her life. Her relationship with Krogstad will endure because it is based on practical consideration unlike Nora's relationship with Helmer.

Through this play Ibsen pleads to the society to treat as a serious person, longing for a share in her husband's sorrows and even a better understanding of her on his part. Nora has made a tremendous sacrifice and expects her husband to appreciate it by making an equally great sacrifice for her sake. Tovarld is incensed by the forgery committed by her love for her husband. The fact that she has been motivated by her love for her husband and that she has committed it to save his life is brushed off too lightly by him. As a punishment he tries to cut her to size by reducing her from a "doll" to a cipher in their house. Nora is taken aback by his response to her deed and for the first time in their married life of eight years, she asserts her authority and decides to leave him forever. There are countless husbands who assume possessive attitude to their wives as Helmer does. The portrayal of Nora also is convincing through many doubt if such a passive and submissive woman can become so defiant and rebelliousness lie dormant until life becomes intolerable to them. The harm done by Tovarld, the man can be redressed only by his realization that a woman is not a "doll", but an intellectual being, one who is entitled to share the joys and sorrows of her husband.

#### References

- Boney, Bradley Gordon. *Before Anything Else, a Human Being: A Director's Approach to Ibsen's A Doll's House*. N.p.: n.p., 1991. Print.
- Harris, Zinnie, and Henrik Ibsen. *Ibsen's A Doll's House*. London: Faber, 2009. Print.

**Teeson C. J.**

Assistant Professor

Le Ment College of Management & Arts, Pattambi

## **Decentralization and its impact on Development: A Kerala Model Experience**

**Abstract:** Decentralization is basically the process of devolving the functions and resources of the state from centre to the elected governments at the lower levels so as to facilitate greater participation by the citizens in governance. It is a delegation of power from a central authority to regional and local authority. Lot of changes has been taken place due to the inception of decentralization. More and more countries are now adopting decentralization policy. Nations are coming forward for tackling issues locally with people's participation. This Decentralization policy was found to be the best policy for reducing poverty to a very extent. Here in this decentralization process, people and their active participation played a vital role in the way of development. The decentralization was actively implemented in our country with 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments during the period of Nara Singha Rao government. This study is to examine the real effectiveness of decentralization in Kerala and how far it influenced Kerala model of development.

Actually the decentralization came into effect with the passage of 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendments. The real test of the effectiveness of the mandate of decentralization depends on the success of those states which took up this task seriously. This policy of decentralization in Kerala made a golden opportunity for social development. We all know that decentralization started in Kerala with the launch of people's plan campaign in 1996 during the period of LDF government. In the beginning of ninth plan, the government of Kerala took a bold decision to devolve 35% of the State development budget down from centralized bureaucracy to local governments where local people could determine their own development priorities under People's plan campaign.

Compared to other States in India, Kerala adopted an exclusive way of development pattern which can be seen in the improvement of social indicators such as life expectancy, basic literacy rate, sex ratio. So Kerala model of development is most popular for highest social development rather than economic development. In the case of social development, she is very much competitive even among highly developed countries. It was thought that People's plan campaign could very much contribute to the social development. Governance in Kerala is highly people centered because people's plan campaign in Kerala was successful in mobilizing the people in the local level planning. Grama Sabas are the good platforms where people's needs were to be assessed and make it in to plan, co-ordinate at block level and approved at

district level. These plans are actually been made at village level through developmental seminars. The decision for developmental activities derived from these seminars and implemented with the help of different working groups. In all these phases, participation of common people is very essential for the effective functioning and achieving its real purpose. Actually the project of people's plan campaign (janakeeya Aasoothranam) became most effective in the sense that common people can directly interfere in the developmental activities in the State. Kudumbashree, ayalkootam, Ashraya are the real examples which highlights the impact of decentralization on the development.

Decentralization of power and administration at grass root level substantially changed the attitude of common people towards developmental activities of the government. This very much helped to improve the living standards of common people and get the freedom of involving in decision making process. Therefore the real benefits of democracy could be realized through the process of decentralization being occurred in its good manner. The campaign had succeeded in deepening the process of decentralization, bringing about qualitative changes in planning and implementation and altering of the mindset about participatory development (Govt of Kerala, 1999). Kerala society, towards economic production and productivity, has changed tremendously after the implementation of People's plan campaign. Previously there was organized resistance against private investment as it was considered as means of exploiting the workers. But an attitudinal change has surfaced on the horizon of Kerala society which is evidenced through widespread promotion of private sector investment. National Rural Employment Guarantee scheme in Palakkad district provides for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in the rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household. Increased literacy rate and maximum number of students in primary level education are the exclusive factors which make our State be distinguished from the other States in India. We can see that the way of implementing decentralization in Kerala is something different from that of other States.

When we consider the Women's participation, they are also playing a pivotal role in the decision making process. Kudumba Shree is the real example for this achievement. Women are actively involved in different kinds of productive activities and their contribution to economic development is very significant. Economically developed States are suffering from the issue of gender inequality and women exploitation. There, in this context role of women should be preferred in such a way that constraint exist among women should be eradicated. Even though they have made a acknowledged and remarkable contribution in achieving basic developmental capabilities as in reducing population growth, enhancing literacy, schooling, child care and life

expectancy, their political visibility remains low in the socially and politically progressive state of Kerala.

Another issue is that lack of political will and state support are the obstacles in the development of justice delivery institutions at grass root level. Kerala has not included any judicial provision in Kerala panchayat raj act, 1994. Grama saba is the participatory structure in the system of panchayat raj. It provides platform to exercise a direct democracy in villages. But these structures are suffering from the lack of citizen participation which has lead to the consequences such as centralization of powers in the hands of few, insufficient funds, functionaries...etc The decision for developmental activities derived from developmental seminars and further procedures taken by task force are subject to lot of issues. Some of them are inadequate number of experts, improper training given to task force members. The highly educated and skilled youths are abstained from grama sabha and their absence in decision making some times lead to inefficient and unproductive activities in panchayats.

Sequential theory of decentralization refers that political decentralization take place at the first stage followed by fiscal decentralization occurring last. This devolution of power leads to high degree of autonomy for the local people. Sajjan Thomas and Jayaseelan Raj outlined the grass root level changes in Kerala associated with the subsequent bottom-up; community based participatory and decentralized approaches to the process of development. There is a transition from old Kerala model which was characterized by socially sustained redistributive policies of democratic state to environmental objectives at the local level and tries to develop synergies between civil societies, legal governmental bodies and the state government.

An adequate and systematic institutional mechanism should be essential for the smooth functioning of governance in panchayats. But absence of sound administrative support created a critical vacuum and often leads to conflict between an inexperienced political executive and an experienced administrative executive. Panchayats should have an adequate freedom to determine and create sufficient infrastructural facilities to the people in time. Delays in decision making and inefficient mechanism in some panchayats made this system of decentralization become ineffective for delivering basic services to the people in time.

## References

- Government of Kerala(1994), Kerala Panchayat raj Act 1994, Government of Kerala Trivandrum  
Government of Kerala(1994), Kerala Municipality Act, 1994, Government of Kerala, Trivandrum  
Isaac T.M. (1997), "Planning for empowerment: People's Campaign for decentralized planning in Kerala", Economic and political Weekly, Jan 4-11



**Dr Bindu Ann Philip**

Assistant Professor  
St. Mary's College, Thrissur

**Different Readers and Different Attitudes:  
Reader Response Theory and the View of the Readers**

Abstract: The term reader-response criticism refers not to a single theory or method but to a range of approaches in which the form of critical attention is on how readers respond to a text. Its development was a reaction against New Criticism and other varieties of Formalism, in which there is an emphasis on the text. It was also a reaction against various biographical approaches in which the author is seen as the ultimate source of meaning. In their analysis of how a reader responds to a text, the reader-response critics have drawn upon a number of theories and interpretive models, notably psychoanalysis, structuralism, and phenomenology.

Reader-response criticism may be traced back to Aristotle and Plato, both of whom based their critical arguments partly on the response of the reader. The immediate sources of the theory can be found in the writings of the French structuralists and the American critics such as Kenneth Burke, Louise Rosenblatt, Walker Gibson and Wayne Booth. Reader-response criticism became recognized as a distinct critical movement only in the 1970s. But much ahead of this movement, the ideas behind a work of art being recreated each time it is read, had held sway. For example, in *Art as Experience* (1959), John Dewey certified that a work of art is “recreated every time it is aesthetically experienced. . . . It is absurd to ask what an artist ‘really’ meant by his product: he himself would find different meanings in it at different days and hours and in different stages of his own development.

In 1938 Louise Rosenblatt published a classic work entitled *Literature as Exploitation* which served as a model for the teaching of literary texts for more than fifty years. An individual reader engaging himself in reading a text is no doubt a private affair. His interpretation of the text has meanings internally experienced in his own consciousness and it need not be necessarily shared. Even if that text is read aloud to others, the reader's meaning-making remains unchanged. But if an informed adult reads aloud to a group, the quality of his reading, his tone, his emphasis, and above all, his enthusiasm and rhythmic variations while reading, may influence those listening to him. When such a group of readers indulge in reading and interpreting a text in a classroom, the group becomes an interpretive community. What happens in this context is the readers' response to a text.

To put it without scholarly jargon, it may be said that when the reading is systematized, the result is a reader-response theory, and when the interpretation is organized it becomes reader-response criticism. The theorist uses all available literary, educational, sociological and communicative knowledge to study the meaning-making situation. The task of the reader-response critic is to develop and maintain the interpretive community. The reader-response theorist will also provide ample time for experiencing the personally felt meanings, and he encourages all individuals to enter into discussion with confidence. But the critic is expected to respect both his own critical meanings and those of others. Thus the process of meaning-making, moves from the private to the public domain. Theorists and their methods vary from person to person: Though the reader-response theorists differ on particular points there are three general principles that distinguish this methodology:

1. Reading is believed to be dynamic and interactive;
2. Meaning emerges from a transaction between readers and texts;
3. Response to texts does not equal interpretation of texts.

In the reader-response critical approach, the primary focus falls on the reader and the process of reading, rather than on the author or the text. The theoretical assumptions regarding the reader-response criticism are:

1. "Literature is a performative art and each reading is a performance, like enacting a drama. Literature exists only when it is read. Therefore meaning is an event. This is in contrast to the New Critical concept of the "affective fallacy."
2. The literary texts do not possess any fixed or final meaning or value. That is, there is no single "correct" meaning. Literary meaning is created by the interaction of the reader and the text.

There are a number of interpretations to the interpretations of the reader-response theory because even subjectivity is based on the way a text is read. As stated in the *Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism*: . . . however subjective a response may be, we all share one indisputable element - a common language. Words, quite simply, mean - and, as a result, we have inter subjective "communities" of readers who may argue about the interpretations of a text, but at least they are objectifying their subjectivity by "naming" their experience of the work under discussion. This idea of language on a lynchpin of objectivity, while allowing individual readers to let their imagination wander, however subjectively, erratically, or idiosyncratically, has found favour with a new generation of reader-response critics and seems to provide a sound basis for the way that we (readers) actually read the text. (922) There is no doubt that the reader-response theory and criticism have produced new waves in literature and criticism but the fact remains that when the jargons are removed, the essence is the same. That is, when a reader reads a text he

understands only what he is able to understand, and what he wants to understand. The way in which he understands or how far he understands is different from another reader's understanding. To quote the Encyclopedia of Literary Critics and Criticism once again: "Since no one can ever tell exactly what goes on in someone else's mind during the reading process, let alone his or her own, it is clear that the problematic raised by reader-response theory will be with us for some time to come" (922).

The readers are divided into three categories: (1) the interested reader, that is, one who is immersed in the novel, and enjoys reading it and is therefore keen on finding out the details of the characters with excitement, (2) the disinterested reader, a reader who is impartial in judgment, that is, one who is neither keenly interested nor uninterested in the novel. (3) The uninterested reader, that is, a casual reader who has no special interest in the novel.

The analysis of readers and their attitudes are done through a thorough study of Arun Joshy's characters in some of his famous novels. One of the most persuasive contemporary Indian novelists in Indo- Anglican Literature, Joshi is noted for his concern for fellow human beings, and for his profound insights into human nature. His novels probe deep into the dark and innermost recesses of the human mind and illuminate the hidden corners of the physical and mental make-up of the characters. His characters, most of whom are contemporary Indians, indulge in a quest for the essence of life. In search of the quintessence of human living, the novelist focuses not simply on man but on his identity. As a novelist exposing the human predicament, Joshi visualizes the inner crisis of the modern man and finds out that the most besetting problem that man faces today is the problem of rootlessness. This problem is aggravated by technological advancements, the economic situations and the inhuman demands of the society. The problem is so pervasive that it threatens to eat into every sphere of human activity. As a result, man fails to discern the very purpose behind life, and the relevance of his existence in a hostile world.

The *Foreigner*, Joshi's maiden novel, portrays some of the possible routes of the rootless especially the path from indifference to involvement. Cut-off from his cultural and emotional attachments, Sindi Oberoi of *The Foreigner* finds himself in the predicament of a foreigner wherever he goes. He drifts from one end of the globe to the other in search of peace and emotional stability. He cannot reach out to the world for fear of pain and he seeks refuge in the thought of detachment, which he misconstrues as inaction and withdrawal from life. But his detachment or indifference turns into a kind of delusion because he cannot free himself from self-engrossment. His selfish desires make him drift from crisis to crisis; sucking on its way the lives of two innocent persons he loves most, Babu and June. The tragedy shakes Oberoi out of his self-complacency and reorients his life. Through sincere self-

examination he learns that true detachment does not mean inaction and withdrawal from life. On the other hand, it is proper action without desire for its fruit. He also understands that involvement with the world around is the real attitude to life and living.

The response of the readers to *The Foreigner* varies from person to person, group to group. The interested reader is silently surprised as he travels with Oberoi through the transitional stages of his life. The reader's interest helps him to experience the pain of Oberoi's indifference and detachment especially with regard to June. The reader's heart also beats as fast as Oberoi's when he sees June dead in the end. The reader moves swiftly to the scene with the same pace and momentum to confront Oberoi and comfort him in his dramatic sense of indifference. The disinterested reader, no doubt, sweeps along the ups and downs of Oberoi's life and stands still, trying to winnow the right and the wrong in his actions. The impartiality in the reader supports Oberoi to an extent, taking into consideration his rootless past but he is slightly confused at Oberoi's remorseless action of leaving June just for the cause of detachment. The uninterested reader, on the other hand, responds in a negative manner, criticizing Oberoi for his cruel and inhumane actions. The indifference in the reader makes him ignore Oberoi's past and his resultant character and the consequent actions. The principle of detachment is also outside the purview of the uninterested reader because he has no interest in Oberoi and therefore no feelings for his thought-content.

The route from sophistication to simplicity is also shown in *The Foreigner* in which Oberoi finds America, "a place for well-fed automations rubbing about in automatic cars" (87). He notices the hypocrisy and fabrication of the modern society in America and he gets boggled and totally uncomfortable with his life in the mechanized world. It is a place where "strangers parted on the doorsteps, promising to meet again" (26). His busy, meaningless and sophisticated life makes him yearn for the primitive land. With the sudden death of June and Babu, Oberoi is forced to leave that fast society behind. He comes to India and embraces a peaceful life in Khemka's group of industry. Though work-wise Oberoi does not find any difference between the two countries, he notices the mental peace in the lives of the factory workers. As he decides to be one among them to fight for their rights, he faces his own much sought-after being. Thus he enjoys living and working for the betterment of others.

Obviously he transforms his life into a successful existence. The interested reader fully understands Oberoi and rejoices with him for forsaking the sophisticated norms in America and for accepting the simplicity of his land. If Oberoi is able to delve into his roots, the greatest dream of a foreigner is fulfilled. On the other hand, the disinterested reader is not so eager about Oberoi's return. In fact he is unconcerned about Oberoi's choice because he

believes it is the person and not the place that matters in life. On the contrary, the uninterested reader accuses Oberoi for preferring the primitive to the sophisticated.

The path from crime to confession in the life of Oberoi is clearly depicted in the novel. Oberoi who willfully whirled in worldly pleasures, including illegal sexual relationships with Anna and Kathy, was haunted by a call within. Though he got more involved in worldly pleasures after his encounter with June, his intensely passionate affair with her, breaks off all the principles he had held up, until then: "Sindi lives in a strange world of intense pleasure" (82). The relationship between June and Babu ends in a tragedy. An episode in which he contemplates on a relationship with a Catholic priest is also mentioned. Yet the novel concludes on the note that when Oberoi stands as a fortress for the factory workers, his self-realization paves the way for his glory.

The interested reader is pleased with Oberoi's route from sin to confession, and his decision to turn to the religious door. The disinterested reader is surprised at Oberoi's turning point and wonders whether he would succeed in living a life with the gates of his lurid life completely closed. The uninterested reader does not find any fancy in Oberoi shunning himself from the public gaze. He believes that Oberoi should maintain a balance between worldly pleasures and spiritual purification.

The Foreigner also traces the route from the labyrinth to the light. Oberoi's wild experiences of life drag him to the realization of truth. The novel describes his childhood that leads to his wanton desires in the later stages of his life. The darkness of his life is more darkened by the contemplation of suicide. His sadness is noticed by Sheila who says: "You are the saddest man I have ever known" (140). Nevertheless, the novel ends with a hope that it will not be long before Oberoi will find a loving wife in Babu's sister, Sheila. Clear indications are given of a growing mutual tenderness that promises a closer relationship.

The interested reader is startled at Oberoi's route through labyrinthine paths. But finally he is relieved when Oberoi attains self-knowledge and the light of truth. The disinterested reader is not sure whether he should justify Oberoi or not, for he is not convinced about Oberoi's detachment or indifference. The uninterested reader, on the other hand, does not agree with the opinion that Oberoi has ever achieved anything in his life.

The route from fantasy to fact is also delineated in *The Foreigner*. Oberoi is a true hero of the fantasy world with his belief in the principle of indifference. June, Sheila and Babu remind him that his concept of detachment is only a fantasy. It is his fantasy that shatters the lives of June and Babu.

Oberoi realizes the drastic effect of his fantasy and decides to face the facts of life. Only through Muthu's words, "Sometimes detachment lies in actually getting involved" Oberoi gets down to the world of reality in order to serve his fellow beings (188).

The response of the readers to the route from fantasy to reality is varied. The interested reader observes closely Oberoi's fanciful thoughts and deeds and perceives the beauty of the turning point in Oberoi's life, wherein he begins to assess life through a realistic perspective. The disinterested reader watches Oberoi's detachment and then his attachment to June, but he does not agree to the story-ending where things go wrong for Oberoi. According to the uninterested reader, Oberoi is not capable of starting a new life with Sheila. He is also not ready to accept the fact that Oberoi is capable of living outside the world of fantasy and accepting the facts of life. The different themes evoke different feelings in the different types of readers and their reactions vary accordingly. It becomes all the more important to seriously inquire about the relevance of the author centered outlook and the reader centered outlook.

#### References

- Amur, G.S. (ed.), Prasad, V.R.N. *Indian Readings in Commonwealth Literature*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1985.
- Baker, Ernest A. *The History of the English Novel*. Vol.I New York: Barnes Noble, Inc., 1936
- Bhatnagar, O.P. "The Art and Vision of Arun Joshi".
- ed. N. Radha Krishnan. *Arun Joshi - A Study of His Fiction* Gandhigram: Scholar Critic Pub.,
- McManus, F. Barbara. *Reader - Response Criticism. Readings and Assignments*, October 1998. <https://www.cnr.edu/home/bmcmanus/readercrit.html>.
- Peter, J.Rabinowtz. *Reader-Response Theory and Criticism*. The John Hopkins University Press. 1997.
- Singh, R. K. *Existential Characters of Arun Joshi and Anita Desai*. Bareilly: Prakash Books, 1991.

**Dr S. Baby Thangam**

Assistant Professor  
Pasumpon Muthuramalinga Thevar College  
Melaneelithanallur

**Cultivation of Coconut in Thirunelveli District:  
An Economic Analysis**

**Abstract:** Coconut is a traditional plantation crop grown in India for the last 3000 years and it has the longest history in the country. The country-wide demand for coconut for both edible uses triggers interest among the people to grow at least two or three saplings in their homesteads. No ritual or ceremony is performed without coconut and coconut palm products in the country. The significance of the palm, therefore, lies more in the fact that it satisfies the social and cultural needs of the people. Hence, it deserves a planned and continuous attention from the various stakeholders. The present study has brought out the profitability involved in the cultivation and economic aspects of coconut.

Coconut palm, botanically known as *cocos nucifera*, belongs to the family of *palmae* is a major crop of many nations and considered as the tree of life. It is an important member of monocotyledons. The coconut palm is widely distributed throughout Asia, Africa, America and the pacific region. In India, coconut is mostly grown along the coastal region of the country and it is a symbol of piety and prestige. India is the global leader in coconut production and productivity, with third position in area under coconut cultivation. We produce 21665 million coconuts annually from an area of 2.14 million hectare with a productivity of 10122 nuts per hectare. (2013-2014)

In beauty and utility, coconut crop surpasses all other crops. The crop is gaining world wide acceptance not only as a food, beverage and oil seed crop but also as a renewable source of raw material for diversified uses. Coconut industry in the country at present is on a revival path for product diversification and value addition. The coconut has been a growing success since the time it was first discovered and to this day this very diverse plant is showing great potential. "Our thanks to the Divine Providence which made this tree well worthy of the title of the king of vegetable, with its sap, its fruits, its leaves, its stem, its roots and all its parts, to feed, appease, shelter, cure and carry mankind.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem.**

Profitability of any agricultural products is not only based on that productivity of the products but also production and marketing cost involved directly and indirectly. Production cost can able to reduce by proper implementation of production technology and proper utilization of resources, which is used for production. Marketing cost can able to reduce by selecting appropriate marketing channels, but due to lack of production and marketing knowledge now a days young grower now hesitating to cultivate agricultural produces. In connection with these problems, a study about the cost and return of coconut cultivation in Thirunelveli is needed for exhibit many facts relating to cost involved in coconut production and returns involved in coconut marketing in the study area.

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

- To study cost of production of coconut per acre
- To compute average annual return and unit cost of production

## **1.4 Scope for Coconut Cultivation**

It is true in India Coconut is a traditional plantation crop grown in India for the last 3000 years and it has the longest history in the country. The country-wide demand for coconut for both edible uses triggers interest among the people to grow at least two or three saplings in their homesteads. No ritual or ceremony is performed without coconut and coconut palm products in the country. The significance of the palm, therefore, lies more in the fact that it satisfies the social and cultural needs of the people.

The crop assumes considerable significance in the national economy in view of the employment and income it generates. Coconut industry contributes over 8500 cores /year to the Gross Domestic Product of India and it earns foreign exchange to the value of 850crores from (April-Oct2015 )by way of export of coir and coir products.

## **1.5 Collection of Data**

A pilot study was conducted to develop comprehension of the process and activities involved in coconut cultivation in the study area. Based on the information gathered from farm level, a detailed interview schedule was drafted, pre tested and it used. The main source of secondary data is directorate of agricultural marketing statistics yearbook, books, journals and internet.



### **1.6 Sampling:**

150 coconut growers were selected by using multi stage random sampling technique.

### **1.7 Findings**

1. The life span of coconut tree in an average is 75 years Total cost of establishment for the first five years Rs176193 per acre and its annual share was Rs2349.24
2. coconut palm yielded only after five years of cultivation
3. Cost of maintenance ranged from Rs27709 onwards
4. Profit from cultivation ranged from Rs 10000 and reached Rs75912 at the end of 12<sup>th</sup> year
5. Cost of production per nut was Rs 6.59 and decreased gradually to Rs4.67
6. Profit from cultivation of a coconut ranged from Rs 2.4 and reached Rs10.33 at the end of 12<sup>th</sup> year

### **1.8 Suggestions**

Create awareness about coconut development board scheme, especially city coconut scheme establishment of new plantation scheme for expansion of area under coconut. Improved and hybrid varieties of coconuts, which are pest-resistant and drought-tolerant should be supplied to the small, medium and large farmers, through the coconut farms or nurseries owned by the Government, at a subsidized rate or even free of cost. In order to develop drought and pest resistant coconut varieties, the latest bio-technologies like Genetic engineering, Tissue culture and Vermi culture may be applied which will achieve the maximum level of productivity. Deejay Hybrid variety which yields of 250 plus nuts per annum and flower's after 2 years with a copra content of 200 grms per net and oil content of 68%.Deejay hybrid variety are Deejay sampoorana, Deejay pushkala, and Deejay vishwas. Use kisan call centre. Educated young farmers need to be, supported because 500 good yielding well maintaining coconut palm equal to one office job in government.1000 good yielding coconut palm equal to deputy commissioner. 2000 good yielding coconut palm equal to chief secretary. Equipping sufficient labour force through friends of coconut tree training programme to be used for coconut harvesting. Formation of coconut clusters and registering them under Society Act.

## 1.9 Conclusion

Coconut play a vital role in offering more employment opportunities to the rural people and it is a profitable venture for all categories of farmers in spite of their high initial investment and the fluctuating nature of nut price. Hence, it deserves a planned and continuous attention from the various stakeholders. The present study has brought out the profitability involved in the cultivation and economic aspects of coconut. The suggestions made in the study are of immense use for the policy makers to make appropriate decision for mitigating the problems faced by the coconut growers.

## References

- Beri, G.C., Marketing Research, the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi, Fourth Edition, 2008. Khan, M.Y., and Jain, P.K., Basic Financial Management, The McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi, Third Reprint, 2007.
- Lokeshwar, R.R., Handbook of Agriculture, Indian Council for Agricultural Research, New Delhi, 1997.
- Journals Adinya.I.B, "Analysis of Costs>Returns profitability in groundnut marketing in bekwarra local Government area cross river state, Nigeria" The Journal of Animal 7 Plant Sciences 19(4): 2009, Pages: 212-216.
- Godwin Anjeinu Abu, "Analysis of Cost & Return for Sesame Production in Nasarawa State: Implication for Sustainable Development in Nigeria", Journal of Sustainable development in Africa (Volume 13, No.3. 2011).

TABLE 1  
TECHNO ECONOMIC PARAMETER

Spacing	25 feet* 25feet
No of trees per acre	70
Planting material	Rs 3500
Labour/Rs/Mman/day	Rs400
Urea/kg	Rs5.7
DAP	Rs25
Potash	Rs16
BHC	Rs40
Salt	Rs10
No of nuts /tree/year	60-156

TABLE 2  
COST OF ESTABLISHMENT OF COCONUT PER ACRE (AMOUNT IN.RS)

Sl. no	Item of expenditure	Year				
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Planting		-	-	-	-
	Ploughing 3000		3000	3000-	3000-	3000
	Seedling 3500		-	-	-	-
	Digging 4800		-	-	-	-
	Planting 700		-	-	-	-
	Dust 400	12400	-	-	-	-
2	Manures	-	3000	4500	6000	7500
3	Fertilizers	1249	2499	3749	4998	4998
	Plant protection	1500	1000	1000	800	800
4	Weeding	2400	2400	2400	2400	2000
5	Ship penning	2000	2000	1500	1500	800
6	Labour charges					
7	Pesticide application	1000	1000	800	600	600
8	Irrigation	36000	20800	10400	10400	7200
	Total (rounded off)	56549	35699	27349	29698	26898

TABLE 3  
INCOME –EXPENDITURE STATEMENT

	Items	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Nut yield per tree(no)	60	75	85	90	97	102	105
2	Nut yield per acre(no)	4200	5250	5950	6300	6790	7140	7350
3	Income	37800	52500	65450	75600	88270	99960	110250
	Expenditure							
1	Ploughing	3000	3000	3000	4000	4000	4000	5000
2	Manures	6000	5000	5000	5000	5750	5750	6250
3	Fertilizer	3749	3749	4998	4998	4998	5408	5408

4	Plant protection	600	600	1200	1200	1300	1400	1400
5	Weeding	2000	2000	2500	2500	2800	2800	3000
6	Ship penning	1000	1000	1500	1500	2000	2000	2000
7	Pesticide application	800	800	600	600	400	400	400
8	Irrigation	7200	7200	6000	6000	5000	5000	5000
9	Intercultural operations							
10	Harvesting	2100	3150	2975	3150	3395	3570	3675
11	Collection & Handling	1260	1890	1785	1890	2037	2142	2205
12	Total Expenditure	27709	28389	29558	30838	31680	32470	34338
	Surplus	10091	24111	35892	44762	56590	67490	75912

**Chinmay Murali**

Research Scholar

Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady

**Fragmented Selves and Transnational Spaces:  
A Study of Pico Iyer's *The Man within My Head***

Abstract: In this era of globalisation, some age old notions such as home, nationality and ethnicity are highly problematic. The world has become a global village where boundaries get blurred in many respects. Globalization is characterized by an unprecedented rate of global movement. People living in countries not their own, numbers close to two hundred and twenty million; it will be the fifth largest 'nation' on earth (Quaysan 23). This new reality forces us to re-define our sense of nationality and identity and in turn, the very idea of home itself. Transnationalism and Diaspora are two key concepts by which to organise our understanding of nation, home and identity in today's 'globalised' world.

Against the stress on boundaries, transnationalism examines their permeability, transcendence or irrelevance. It upholds a freely created, cosmopolitan cultural identity based on notions of 'Global Citizenship' (25). Transnationalism envisages the creation of a community, which can be best described as a group of "cosmopolitan patriots"; a community where people say, quoting Getrude Stein's words, "I am American and Paris is my hometown"! (qtd. in Chrisman 159). The concept of diaspora, on the other hand, perceives this movement of people through a radically different perspective. For it, their movement results in a 'loss' of home and the values associated with it. According to Stephen Gill, the renowned diaspora writer of Indian origin in Canada, the term 'diaspora' includes the element of alienation, loss, forced migration, memories of the past and a dream to return to the land of birth. It may also include the unwilling acceptance of the host country (Kumar 464).

In fact, diaspora and transnationalism are concepts which contradict each other. While diaspora views 'home' with nostalgia, transnationalism stresses at its irrelevance. In theorising intercultural mixing and migratory identities, writers like Stuart Hall have used the homophone 'roots/routes' to describe two different negotiations of cultural identity. While 'roots' refers to visions of common origin, homogenous tradition and bounded culture, 'routes' implies forms of diffusion, intellectual movement and global identity (Hall 179). When transnationalism stands for the 'routes', the concept of diaspora is located in 'roots'. Salman Rushdie reflects on the nuance of migrant imagination in his *Imaginary Homelands* (1992) thus:

The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new type of human being: people who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things; people who have been obliged to define themselves-because they are so defined by others- by their 'Otherness'; people whose deepest selves strange fusions occur, unprecedented unions between what they were and where they find themselves... (Rushdie 37)

Rushdie clearly emphasizes the experience of being the 'Other'. The 'Otherness' forces him to an ambivalent existence as a migrant. He begins his 'Imaginary Homelands' by writing about the longing for his homeland and how terribly he misses it and ends up making a plea to the world by quoting from *The Dean's December*, "For God's sake, open the universe a little more".(21) It is evident that migrants like Rushdie find themselves in an ambivalent situation where they nurture their nostalgia of home and at the same time dream about a world order in which they are accepted as 'citizens of the world', irrespective of their national, racial and ethnic identities. So the status of such migrant's cultural identification is an ambivalent one. They find it difficult to locate themselves to any of this diasporic and transnational cultural identification. This result in the creation of what Rushdie called as "a radically different type of human beings" (37); their ambivalent status forces us to call them as 'Transnational, diasporic hybrid subjects'.

Pico Iyer, the author of *The Man within My Head* (2012), falls into the category of 'Transnational, diasporic hybrid subjects'. He is one of the most distinguished travel writers of our times. In every sense, Iyer is a man without a land. He is hundred percent Indian in blood and ancestry, but he was born and brought up in England; he has lived the last forty-eight years in U.S.A, he has spent as much time as possible in Japan with his Japanese wife Hiroko. People like Iyer have one place they associate with their parents, another with their partners, a third with a place they happen to be at the moment, and fourth with a place they dream of being (Iyer *Speech*). They are forced to re-invent their sense of home with their rootless identity. For them, the notion of home is something scattered. They often fail to concretise the abstractions of home inherent in them. It often leads to a situation where one fails to identify himself and their whole life turns out to be an attempt to find their selves in people, places and ideas.

Iyer projects himself as a champion of transnationalism; a 'Global Soul' as the title of one of his books suggests. He has written extensively on crossing cultures. He became one of the first writers to take the international airport itself as his subject. Referring to his state of being homeless, Iyer observes:

I am a multinational soul on a multinational globe on which more and more countries are as polyglot and restless as airports...our whole life is going to be spent taking pieces of many different places and putting them together in a stained glass whole. Your home becomes a work in progress. You may never complete your home and definitely know where you are from (*Speech*). He tries to define his sense of home through the journeys he makes. Transnationalism approaches the act of travel itself as a socially emancipatory process: good for the worldly soul and good for the soul of the world (Chrisman 179).

When Iyer celebrates his transnational identity, saying his travels earned him a sense of liberation from the black and white divisions of the society, it raises several questions. It is beyond questioning that people like Iyer enjoy an 'elite migrant' status abroad. But even then the question that how a man of Indian (third world) origin like Iyer could enjoy this sense of liberation from black and white divisions abroad, holds ground. Chinua Achebe in his *Home and Exile* (2000) speaks about the contrasting meanings of travel for white and black people. While the children of the west roamed the world with the confidence of authority, people with a 'black' background cannot enjoy it as something worth remembering with all the prejudices of race and colour that he would encounter in his voyage (93-94). Derek Walcott describes his own experience as an emigrant in America thus: "I'm not sure which world I'm in, I don't know who I'm. But perhaps to an American living in such an atmosphere as black-is- black and the-white-is- white and never-the-twain-shall-meet, a mixed person like myself has to be seen as a mixed-up person" (qtd. in Graham 112).

For critics like Achebe, transnational perspectives are ultimately present-day expressions of the old 'Pax Britannia': the liberal story that empires like to tell about themselves. Many look at 'the citizen of the world' status as a floating, unsubstantial identity. In his defense of nationalism, Benjamin Barber claims that our attachments start parochially and only then grow outward. To bypass them in favor of transnationalism is to risk ending up nowhere—"feeling at home neither at home, nor in the world" (qtd. in Graham 95). There is some truth in this argument when Iyer observes "movement is a fantastic privilege. But it ultimately has meaning if you have a home to go back to" (*Speech*). So the very notion of a transnational identity makes sense only when it is rooted in the notion of home!

In *The Man within My Head*, Iyer adopts Graham Greene as his father figure. For Iyer, this memoir is a "counter biography", which deals with the life and writings of his "counter father" Greene- the first words of whose first novel began with the telling epigraph "there is another man within me" (qtd. in Iyer 164). His attempt is to identify the man within him, whom he never knew. He hopes that by identifying the man within his head, he would be able to

identify himself. He had a strong conviction that “It was only through another that you could see yourself with clarity” (63). Iyer attempts to locate himself in his patriarchs, his father Ragavan Iyer and his chosen father Graham Greene. These two father figures stand for his ambivalent cultural identification with the man with the ‘roots’, his father and the man with the ‘routes’, his counter father. In this way, this memoir becomes a testimony of transnational, diasporic hybrid subject’s cultural crisis.

It is not the son’s prerogative to choose his father. He is destined to be the son of his father. Likewise, it is not our prerogative to choose our fatherlands (motherland/home). We are destined to be the offsprings of our homeland. But Iyer dares to break these two related notions. He wants him to be a ‘global soul’; he is not ready to limit himself to the inherent feeling for roots. He disowns his own father and invents a counter-father to serve his purpose. He prefers ‘routes’ over the ‘roots’.

Iyer elaborates the benefits of having an adopted parent as “the whole point of an adopted parent, I’d often thought, is that you can have him to yourself. He’s a figment of your imagination, in a sense, someone you have created to satisfy certain needs” (52). For Iyer when someone says you look like your father, you wince and recoil. But, when someone says that you sound like that eminent novelist, you are flattered. Iyer’s intention becomes clear here. Choosing an English man, an eminent writer, as his counter father adds to his dream status of a transnational. When someone says he looks like his father, he recoils because it bestows upon him the identity of having an origin in a ‘black’ third world homeland of his father. After all, his enterprise is to become a citizen of the world, thereby finding a way out of his ambivalent hybrid existence.

Starting from its cover page, the image of home burning down is a recurrent one in *The Man within My Head*. The Californian wildfire had swallowed his house in Santa Barbara when Iyer was thirty-three, only to repeat itself some years later (46). Iyer recounts a similar incident when Mount Calvary, a hermitage which he considered as his ‘secret home’ was going up in flames; he could do nothing except watching it turn into ashes (118). He makes an interesting observation about Greene in this regard. All his life, Greene had an obscure fear of seeing his house burn down. Then, when Greene was thirty-seven, his home really did go up in flames and he took the opportunity to leave his family behind and never really lived in a domestic setting again (46). Iyer feels the same liberation when he says that having a house burn down was ultimately for the best. He perceives home as something which limits our freedom. This notion contradicts to the commonly held perception of home.



For Avatar Brah, home is a “mystic place of desire”; a place of lived experience and a metaphorical space of personal attachment and identification. She further convincingly suggests that home is about “the subjective experience of process of inclusion and exclusion which operates on personal and political levels” (20). Heidi Armbruster suggests that home is also “a universe of moral strength”. It is a memory of a place and an imagination of a space where proper value and functioning of social relationships can be found (23). Iyer fails to understand the multiple possibilities that the idea of home proposes.

Iyer projects Greene as a typical global citizen, in spite of his typical English background. One title Greene had proposed for his autobiography was 110 airports. Greene’s habit of mobility, which Iyer adores, gave him a sense of how much wider the world is than our minds and how much the truths and certainties of London look like folly when you are sitting in Havana or vice versa (121). Greene’s theme was foreignness and displacedness. Iyer writes:

I’d found this theme echoed in every page of Greene: the foreigner, precisely going to another country, brings a whiff of a different world into the lives of the locals he meets”. He quotes from Green’s *Our Man in Havana*, “would the world be in the mess it is, if we were loyal to love and not to countries? (146).

He lauds Greene as a fierce critic of the empire. He is an author who transcends the frontiers of race and colour. Greene’s archetypal novel *The Quiet American* (1955) celebrates the fall of the empire, hence Iyer’s most favorite work by his ‘adopted father’ (19). Having schooled in privilege at the Dragon and Eton, along with white children of the elite English families, Iyer knew the role played by such institutions in strengthening the empire. These schools were a training ground for the empire. Referring to Greene’s school days at Dragon, Iyer comments that when his peers were learning strength and how to go out and administer the empire, Greene was learning the opposite: how to take power apart, how to do justice to its victims, on both sides of the fence. As class mates set about making the official history of their people, he began picking at its secret life, its tremblings, and its wounds (21-23).

This memoir also contains an extensive discussion of Greene’s compassion and identification with the ‘Other’. Greene had long been fascinated by a poem of Edward Thomas’, ‘The Other’, about a man shadowing someone like himself (37). Greene ends his memoir, *Ways of Escape*, with an enigmatic epilogue called ‘The Other’, in which he describes how relentlessly shadowed he had long been by a man who travelled the world and seeming to slip into his identity. The first novel Greene ever wrote, never published, was the story of a black boy born unhappily to white parents in England, who struggles with his Otherness in English society (96).

Iyer labors-consciously or unconsciously-to establish a link or closeness between Greene and India, his chosen father and his land of origin/roots. He speaks about Greene's generosity towards Indians by citing his playing the role of 'literary Godfather' or "unpaid agent" of R.K. Narayan (157). Somerset Maugham, Greene's most obvious precedent, had expressed his fascination with India and his wish to study Sankara. Christofer Isherwood, Greene's distant cousin, had also talked about how he'd decided to devote his literary energies to the Indian swami he met. Iyer, much to his satisfaction, also discovers that Greene was born on second October, the day India's 'chosen father' Gandhi was born. He also adds that like Greene for him, Gandhi was his father's 'chosen father' (160-174). Iyer's attempt to link his counter father with the land of his origin, clearly illustrates Iyer's own unidentified longing for his roots. By bringing Greene close to India, Iyer unconsciously brings himself towards the land of his origin. Moreover, the factors by which Iyer finds himself close to Greene include Greene's rejection of the empire and his identification with the 'Other'. This signals to the fact that Iyer's motive behind selecting Greene as his father figure is nothing other than finding some solace for his black or third world or 'Oriental' identity. No matter how cunningly a 'transnational aspirant' like Iyer denies his roots, still it remains to be a haunting desire in him to search for his roots.

In *The Man within My Head*, Iyer also shows how Greene influenced him in his writings. He recollects his experience of writing a story about a young man in Italy who becomes a priest. After finishing his story which he had written upon an unknown impulse, Iyer realises with wonder and alarm that his story was just a version of a similar story written by Greene, years ago. He confesses, "it wasn't a story I'd taken consciously- or unconsciously-from anyone. But isn't it just a version of Graham Greene?" (7). Here, Iyer experiences what Harold Bloom called as 'anxiety of influence'; the influence of Greene who mirrored his life and sensibilities. For Iyer, Greene is a father who has become a man within his head. He recalls his desperate attempts, of course in vain, to get rid of Greene (32-33). But he has become a domineering figure in Iyer's life and writings. In this sense Iyer develops an Oedipal relationship with Greene, his counter father.

Though Iyer celebrates his status as a global citizen by drawing parallel from Greene's life and writings, he is still haunted by his sense of being homeless. When he lost his passport in Bolivia, he suddenly felt, "losing my identity" (213). Every time he arrived at the airport in Japan, he was strip-searched because of his skin colour. He laments at it saying, "they are foreign to me and I am foreign to them" (234). This is the point where he realises what it means to be 'foreign'. He feels the pointless nature of his transnationality unless having a home. This forces him to look back to his roots. He goes back to the man whom he disowned for a more glamorous identity, his father. Iyer

sees in his father a reflection of his own longing for home. His father had grown up in the unglamorous outskirts of Bombay. When Iyer was visiting his parent's homeland at the age of seventeen, he could not imagine how anyone could study in so cramped a space. Ironically, his father had won India's only Rhodes scholarship in 1950, and at Oxford he became the president of the Oxford union. Iyer also recollects his father telling him stories of Sita and Ravana from the Ramayana mixed with all that he got from Tennyson and Shakespeare. He feels that his father is someone who could perhaps join east and west (235-260).

Though lately, Iyer begins to understand how his father's choices helped him to have a transnational dream. His father gave him a name which is a combination of Buddha's name and the name of the Florentine neo-Platonist thinker Pico Della Muaidola, a perfect combination of cultures. It is rooted in home but also has a global dimension. Though Ragavan Iyer was someone with a Global status, he was a man with roots. He lived a major part of his life in Oxford and California, teaching English Literature. But, he was a Gandhian and a vocal socialist who held Indian spirituality to his core. Iyer remembers his father reading his writer son's first book; there was only one marking he had made in all its 378 pages. It was a sentence Iyer had cited from Proust, "the real paradises are the paradises lost" (240).

"Our interest is in the dangerous edge of things/ The honest thief, the tender murderer/ The superstitious atheist," (qtd. in Cronin) writes Robert Browning. Pico Iyer's cultural identity is something in the "dangerous edge of things"; He is a 'diasporic transnational hybrid subject'. His life becomes a search for his place between 'roots' and 'routes'. His sense of home lies between these to extreme notions. Home can be both where one comes from and where one travels to; it can also be a tension between the two (Brah 45). The tension between the notions of home and homelessness, father and counter father, roots and routes, constitutes Iyer's ambivalent cultural identity.

#### References

- Achebe, Chinua. *Home and Exile*. New York: Oxford U.P, 2000. Print.  
Adorno, Theodor. *Minima Moralia: Reflections on a Damaged Life*. Trans. E.F.N Jephcott. London: Verso, 2006. Web.  
Armbruster, Heidi. "Home in Crisis: Syrian Orthodox Christians in Troy and Germany". *New Approaches to Migration?*. Ed. Nadjé Al-Ali and Khalid Koser. London: Routledge, 2004. 17-33. Print.  
Bloom, Harold. *The Anxiety of Influence*. New York: Oxford U.P, 1997. Web.  
Brah, A. *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*. London: Routledge, 1996. Web.  
Chrisman, Laura. *Postcolonial Contraventions*. Manchester: Manchester U.P, 2003. Web.

**Jahfar Ayyakath**

Research Scholar

SreeSankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady

**Food Represents the Culture:  
A Glimpse on Some Literary Works**

Abstract: Eating is the fundamental human activity and also according to the Psycho-analytical studies, it can be used for identifying one's identity, culture, etc. Therefore, 'food' is used as metaphor for categorizing the people and their status in the society. In the works like, *Harvest* by Manjula Padmanabhan, *Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare, *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe, *The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood, and *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquirel, it can be seen that 'food' or 'preparing it' represents either as a tool to protest against or to reveal the existing condition of life. In *Harvest* Manjula Padmanabhan says, how the coloniser holds a clutch on the colonised by compelling what to eat. *Merchant of Venice* reveals how far there is a distinction between a Christian and Jew.

We know “food is very much related to life as marriage to family”. MassinoMontanari, a well known culinary historian, in the book *Food is Culture*, says, whatever we do with food- its capture, cultivation, preparation and consumption represent a cultural act. Food, water, oxygen, shelter are the basic needs of the human beings, but the prominence goes to food. Because it defines who we are and where we belong to, and also our culture, history, identity, gender, race, ethnicity, tradition and life are all intertwined with it.

Anyhow when we look into literature, it can also be seen that there is a presence of food representing a particular culture or shows some sort of ideas to be highlighted. Literature is a mirror of life; for getting it reflected effectively, one needs the happy condition of whatever he needs for that. So what type of food one eats and what culture it represents are actually presented by using any means of language in literature. According to psycho-analytical studies, food is used as a ‘metaphor’ for categorizing the people and their status in the society.

If we take the present cultural scenario, food is used as a mode of ‘power’ in order to suppress or protest against the other. Say for example, “Beef Fest” conducted by some people as a form of protest against the Dadri incident. “Pork Fest” conducted by some other against the “Beef Fest”.

*Harvest* speaks how the first world organizes their clutches on the third world. It is a future dystopian play. Om Prakash, the protagonist, has signed

on the paper to donate his body organs to Ginni, in the first world. According to her the food being taken by Om will not make his body fit and healthy. So, she sends some food pills and pellets to eat. So here it can be understood that the case of Om Prakash, it is not he who decides what to eat and drink, but the first world. Based on this, there is an already created notion by the first world against the third world that their food is not good for the healthy condition of the body, especially if that is to be offered to the first world. So, Ginni, the receiver from the first world thinks, it is her duty or burden to make the body of Om very healthy. (As Rudyard Kipling said it is 'white man's burden')

Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, even though it is not saying much about food and eating, he reveals one thing that the Christians and Jews will be ready for co-operating with anything, but not for eating. So the rivalry mainly sticks on the eating of pork that Jews do not agree with. Shylock denies the offer of Bassanio to dine together. He says, "...I will buy with you, sell with you, talk with you, walk with you, and so following. But I will not eat with you, drink with you..."(I.iii 28- 33) So, according to Shylock to eat a "pig" is equal to eat a "devil".

In many literary pieces of African literature, we see there will be a mentioning of "Yam Festival", it indicates how far the cultures of communities like "Yoruba" and "Igbo" related to this sort of festival. Say for example, *Arrow of God* by Chinua Achebe, there is an incident in the novel that how far the colonizers won their attempt to spread their religion and culture in Africa by simply making an artificial famine there, that Ezeulu, is the in charge to conduct the festival, but he is imprisoned by the colonizer. So according to traditional belief of Igbo, they cannot harvest the yams without the leader. So all yams became rot. This condition is used as a proper grounding by Good Country, the white, for spreading their culture, and gives much promise.

Margaret Atwood in *Edible Woman* use the food and eating disorders to address the issues of gender, sexual politics, social dislocations, etc., Marian, the protagonist begins endowing food with human qualities that cause her identity with it, she finds herself unable to eat. Her problems with food begins when she finds herself empathizing with a steak that Peter is eating, and imagining it knocked on the head as it stood in a queue, like someone waiting for street car, and after this she is unable to eat meat. Another incident that when Len reveals his childhood fear of eggs, and from that point Marian can no longer face her soft boiled egg in the morning. Shortly thereafter, she is unable to eat vegetables or cake. This sort of refusal to food spreads to other foods also, leaving her unable to eat many of the things she used to enjoy.

*Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel, is revolved with the life of the protagonist Tita de la Garza, who considered the duty of women to prepare

food as a “Vehicle for Creativity”. She is having an affair with Pedro, according to the traditional customs, she being the youngest girl in the family, should not get married. Instead, she should be virgin until the death of her mother. So, she is confined always inside the four walls of the house created by tradition, but she cops up with it by finding a scope for enhancing her own creative ability, preparing different sorts of delicious foods. So, in the case of Tita, it can be seen that there is a mild protest against the shackles and restrictions created by the tradition, in the form of enjoying cooking by self and makes the kitchen as primary step to demolish all the traditional taboos.

### References

- Achebe, Chinua. *Arrow of God*. United States: Heinemann London, 1964.Print.  
Atwood, Margaret. *Edible Woman*. Canada: McClelland and Stewart, 1969.Print.  
Esquivel, Laura. *Like Water for Chocolate*. Mexico: Double Day, 1989.Print.  
Montanari, Massimo. *Food is Culture*. Columbia University Press, 2006.Print.  
Nayar, Pramod. K. *An Introduction to Cultural Studies*. 2011.Print.  
Padmanabhan, Manjula. *Harvest. Kali for Women*, 1998.Print.  
Shakespeare, William. *The Merchant of Venice*. 1600.Print.

### **Submission of Papers**

**The Investigator** is published quarterly (March, June, September and December) It welcomes original, scholarly unpublished papers from the researchers, faculty members, students and the diverse aspirants writing in English. All contributions should follow the methodology of a research paper. The cover page of your paper should contain the title of your paper, author name, designation, official address, email address etc. Contributors should adhere strict academic ethics. Papers can be submitted throughout the year. You are advised to submit your papers online with a brief abstract of the paper to the following email address:

investigatorjournal@gmail.com  
acsrinternational@gmail.com

### **For Subscription & Enquiries**

Mobile: +919947116804, +919946138576

Email: investigatorjournal@gmail.com

acsrinternational@gmail.com

www.acsrinternational.com