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SHIKHA VATS

Editorial

We are happy to share this issue of Sahitya, the online journal of the Comparative Literature Association of India (CLAI). It features a wide range of scholarly articles and book reviews that show how the field of comparative literature is growing and changing. The essays and book review published here have gone through a rigorous peer-review process, and we want to thank our anonymous reviewers and editorial board members for their dedication to keeping the journal's academic standards high.

The current issue carries seven research articles and one book review included in the current issue focus on translation theory, geocriticism, reception studies, cultural memory, and temple architecture. They reflect interdisciplinary range and comparative method that are hallmarks of our discipline.

The first essay “Reimagining a Kerala Temple: A Study of Trikkunnappuḷa Śāstā Kṣētram in Ōṇāttukara” examines the Thrikkunnappuzha temple as a “hybrid” sacred site in Kerala, arguing that temple architecture and art reveal early forms of modernity shaped by regional politics, performance traditions, and foreign cultural influences. The next essay titled, “Voices in Print: Mother Language, Nationalism and the Press Discourses of the Nineteenth-Century Bengal (1840-60)” examines how nineteenth-century Bengali newspapers shaped public debate on the language of instruction and helped foster nationalist consciousness by mobilizing readers toward native language and culture under colonial rule. The third article, “Shakespeare in Bengal: The First Hundred Years,” gives a full history of how Shakespeare came to be a part of Bengali culture and literature from about 1780 to 1880. The following paper titled “Cricket: The catalyst of renaissance for the Global South” argues that cricket in the Global South has evolved from a colonial elite game into a powerful site of resistance, cultural identity, economic growth, and postcolonial self-assertion across South Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean. The sixth article in this volume “Navigating the Labyrinth of Otherness: A Postcolonial Intervention and Identity Formation in Hailu's Novel, *The Conscript*,” explores the complex relationship between otherness and identity in Gebreyesus Hailu's compelling narrative set during Italian colonial rule in Eritrea. Our next

contribution titled “The Lands of Dream, Memory and Longing: A Geocritical Approach to Selected Indian Short Stories” leads us into the field of geocriticism. The eighth essay, “Experiencing the Other: An Ethical and Ontological Inquiry into the Characterisation of Yeonghye in Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*,” provides a refreshing perspective on subjectivity, experience, and ethical representation. The last article titled “An Examination of Identity and Colonialism in Tayeb Saleh’s *Season of Migration to the North* through the Lens of Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks: A Comparative Study*” compares Tayeb Salih and Frantz Fanon to show how colonial history produces fractured identities, cultural hybridity, and gendered power imbalances in postcolonial African literature. The issue includes a review of the book *How Are You, Veg?* which deals with current debates about food culture, identity, and ethics in South Asian settings.

We sincerely want to thank the editorial team as well as to the office bearers and executive council members of the Comparative Literature Association of India. We hope that these articles and reviews will spark more conversation, add to the tools that comparative literature uses, and help us understand how literature affects how we think about otherness, memory, place, and moral responsibility in a world where we are all connected. We invite readers to critically engage with these essays, and we welcome their suggestions and comments.

JATINDRA K. NAYAK,

Chief Editor,

Sāhitya.

Reimagining a Kerala Temple:

A Study of Trikkunnappuzha Śāstā Kṣētram in Ōṇāttukara

R. HARIKRISHNAN¹

Abstract:

The rise of regional polities in defining a unified cultural landscape in Kerala was commensurate to the temple societies that came into existence between the 12th and 17th centuries. The Thrikkunnappuzha temple, a focal point of northern Ōṇāttukara, bears clear markers of early modernity in the many art works that adorn the temple complex.

I interrogate the idea of the Hindu temple in Kerala by looking at entities that do not confirm to the standardized features of the Kerala-Dravida style. By formally analyzing the ‘aberrant’ features of the temple complex and reading into the performance tradition of the region at large, one can discern that the temple isn’t a homogeneous entity built solely upon certain śāstric rules but a site that evolves by constant amalgamation and acculturation with alien elements in a process (what M.G.S. Narayanan calls symbiosis). A result of colonial enterprise set in the 14th century and Kerala’s direct exposure to advancements in Europe, foreign influences can be discerned in the miniature wood carvings within the interiors of the Thrikkunnappuzha temple. I argue that in setting stage for such explicit expression in the nuclei of a rather conservative social institution, the tenets of what we have come to understand as modernity were already set in motion in pre-modern societies.

Keywords: Visual culture, art and architecture, early modernity, symbiosis, Kerala Temple.

¹ R. Harikrishnan is presently working as an Assistant Professor at the Department of English and Cultural Studies, CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Delhi NCR. He is a Ph. D candidate in Visual Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He can be reached at hari88krishnan.r@gmail.com.

Introduction:

The period from the 11th to the 17th century C.E. was a period of political unrest throughout the state of Kerala after the decline of the unifying power of the Perumāls.² The entirety of the state became a landmass of feuding chieftains and thus innumerable principalities with local feudal governments arose under several Nāduvāli.³ Ōṇāttukara or Ōdanād too had its inception during this time and as the political unrest settled and solidified, rose to power over the first few centuries as a regional power to reckon, strong enough to support and back other neighbouring powers like Dēśinganād. This warrants a close look at the factors that have contributed to making this regional polity a distinctive entity in comparison to the three major kingdoms that would later come to dominate and set precedence for the later Kerala state- Travancore, Cochin and Malabar.

Ōṇāttukara or Ōdanād was one among several principalities that came into prominence between the 11th and 17th century C.E., after the disintegration of the Cēras of Mahōdayapuram or Makōtai (800 C.E. – 1102 C.E.). It consists of the present-day taluks of Karthikapally and Mavelikkara in Alappuzha district, Karunagappally in Kollam district and a small part of Tiruvalla Taluk in Pathanamthitta district of the state of Kerala. It was bordered on the north by Trikkunnappuzla Swarōpam and Cembakaśseri⁴, on the south by Dēśinganād⁵, on the east by Pandaḷam Dēsa Vaḷi and Tekkumkōr⁶ and on the west by the vast expanse of the Arabian Sea.

Inscriptions in stone, unearthed by historians, from the temple complexes of Kandiyoor and Harippad have thrown light on the erstwhile kingdom of Ōdanād. Of the two Kandiyoor records in Tamil language and scripted in Vatteḷutu, the one related to the Ōdanād dynasty is a decree by Iravi Kerala Varman, King of Vēnādu in 1218 C.E. (K.E.⁷ 393). The Moroccan traveler Ibn Battuta has also mentioned Ōdanād as one among the 12 Nāduvālis in Kerala, in his travel

²M. G. S Narayanan's work *Perumals of Kerala: Brahmin Oligarchy and Ritual Monarchy*, 1996 details the rule of the Chera dynasty over present day Kerala from the 8th to the 11th century C.E.

³The one who rules the land; a chieftain.

⁴The present day Ambalappuzha region.

⁵Probably a corruption of Jayasimha Nadu and present-day Kollam district.

⁶Consisting of the present-day Kottayam, Thriuvalla (in Pathanamthitta district) and Changanassery (Kottayam district).

⁷Kollam Era/ Malayalam Calendar/ Kolla varsham is a Hindu, solar calendar used in Kerala. It is believed to have been begun in 825 C.E. in the present Kollam district in Kerala.

accounts written between 1314 C.E. – 1318 C. E. (Rajesh, 2016). However, the name Ōdanād is first mentioned in the grants by King Veera Raghava (Sasibhooshan, 2001). Astronomical calculations postulate the date of the grant to be either in 1225 C.E. or 1320 C.E. (Rajesh, 2016).

Odanādu was also known as the Ciravā Swarōpam as is mentioned in the Thripunithura records (Sasibhooshan, 2001). Medieval literature of the Champu, Manipravalam and Sandesakavya traditions like *Uṇṇunīlisandēśam* (1341 C.E), *Uṇṇiyādicaritam* (1410 C.E.), *Haryakṣamāsasamarōtsavam* or *Kandiyōr mattom Padappātt* and *Sivavilāsam* (1400 C.E.) gives importance to the region of Odanādu (Sasi, 2007). Rajesh is of the opinion that texts like *Padyaratam* and *Candrōlsavam* also deals with the kingdom of Odanādu in detail (2016).

Though Odanādu was first considered as a feudatory of the Kochi dynasty⁸, its leanings and political relations were towards the Desinganadu royalty of Kollam, than the former. This is attested by the accounts of Duarte Barbosa, the Portuguese traveler who had visited southern Kerala in 1514 C.E. He notes that Kayamkulam was a subsidiary branch of Jayasimhanadu (one of the branches of Venadu) and came to be known in subsequent foreign records as Kolli Quilon.

After the decline of Chirava in the 15th century, the capital of Ōdanād was transferred from Kandiyoor, first to Eruva near Kayamkulam and then finally to Krishnapuram. The Krishnapuram palace had become the military base of the Ōdanād Kings by the end of the century. The long battles of Ōdanād against Venadu between 1731 C.E. and 1746 C.E. were fought from this base. Ever since the transfer of its capital city to Kayamkulam, the Ōdanād kingdom came to be known as the Kayamkulam dynasty.

The 16th and 17th centuries were a period of political unrest and turmoil for Ōdanād. The long battles against Venadu depleted the kingdom of its resources and eventually its sovereignty. Between 1731 C.E. and 1746 C.E. Kayamkulam engaged in 3 major battles with Venadu. As part of his northward expansion, Marthanda Varma first attacked Kayamkulam in 1734 C.E. Though Kayamkulam showed initial resistance to the southern army, successive battles with the Vendau troops had rendered their resistance powerless over the following years. Thus by 1746 C.E.

⁸ Also known as the Perumbadappu Swaroopam.

Kayamkulam had ceased to exist as an independent kingdom and was now the northern frontier of Marthanda Varma's Thiruvithancore kingdom.

Kayamkulam has been described by historians as an ancient port city. Medieval *manipravalam* texts like *Unnuneelisandesham* and *Haryakshamasamarotsavam* contain detailed accounts of the markets and businesses surrounding Kayamkulam. There were Gowda Saraswats, Christians, Ravaris, Eurasians, etc., among the traders at the markets of Kayamkulam (Sasibhooshan, 2001). Though they maintained close ties with both the Portuguese and Dutch traders, in time the Dutch emerged as close allies of the Kayamkulam royalty. The relations were strengthened when the Dutch ambassador, Captain Johan Nieuhof visited Kayamkulam in 1664 C.E. and signed several trade agreements. As per the agreements they were allowed to build warehouses at Cheriyaazheekkal and Thrikkunnappuzha. The agreement also gave the Dutch monopoly over the trade in pepper. In return Kayamkulam acquired advanced machinery in warfare like the Dutch guns and gunpowder. By the 18th century 1/5th of the total 20 lakh pound pepper, that the Dutch bought from Kerala every year, was entirely from Kayamkulam. Though Kayamkulam lacked its own port for maritime trade, pepper was brought in from the eastern hills and the hinterlands via the many rivers and backwaters. There were provisions to transport pepper from Kayamkulam to the ports of Quilon and Purakadu via inland waterways.

It is in this pluralistic setting that I attempt to read into the temple culture of the region as having indelible influence on shaping Ōṇāttukara's cultural contours. A locality prone to interactions with diverse cultural groups inevitably retains some aspects of such foreign influxes. The Temple as an institution was also not free from such exchanges as can be illustrated from the example I have taken up for a detailed study in this paper. However, before we delve into it, it will only be fitting to try and understand the socio-cultural scenario prevalent in this area prior to the medieval period, which had set the stage for the genesis of temples. It is in this context that it becomes pertinent to look at the erstwhile Sramana influences which held sway over the Ōṇāttukara region prior to the 9th century.

Buddhist influence in Ōṇāttukara

Ōṇāttukara harboured its Buddhist remnants prominently even throughout the ninth and the tenth centuries, by which time it was almost totally relinquished in other parts of Kerala. The largest number of Buddha *vigrahas* in Kerala have been unearthed from this region viz. Kandiyoor, Maruthoorkulangara, Bharanikāvu and Pallikal. Narendranath Bhattacharya in his Geographical Dictionary is of the opinion that Bharanikāvu was a Buddhist site.⁹ With the renaissance of the Hindu religion in the 8th century by way of Sankara's Advaita philosophy and the efflorescence of the Bhakthi movement, almost all Buddhist and Jain centres came to be transformed and appropriated into the Hindu fold or depraved as centres of pagan worship and eventually destroyed. Hindu temples rose to prominence as religious centres of worship. Centres of other religions became *Kāvu*. The Buddha *vigraha* found in Kandiyoor was installed underneath a banyan tree in front of the Mavelikkara Srī Kṛṣṇaswami temple in 1923. On the other hand, the Buddha *vigraha* obtained from Maruthoorkulangara was installed in the premises of the Kṛṣṇapuram palace. The *Puthrachan*¹⁰ got from Bharanikāvu has been installed near the Srīkovil of the Durga temple there. The fourth decapitated statue of Buddha, obtained from Pallikal was transported to Thiruvananthapuram and is presently in the collection of the Napier Art Museum, Trivandrum. Researchers and scholars are of the opinion that all the four Buddha statues which are in the *dhyana* pose, were made in the 8th to 9th century period.

Many historians are of the opinion that Srī Mūlavāsam, which was once a thriving centre of Buddhism in Kerala was at Thrikkunnappuzha a place nearby Karthikapally taluk.¹¹ The Chinese traveller Huang Tsang has recorded in his travelogue, that there existed a beautiful Buddha vihara (Srī Mūlavāsam), where Buddhist religious meetings used to be held. This place is likely to have been submerged in a tsunami or claimed by sea eight hundred years hence. The Sanskrit historical work *Mooshikavamsam* (11 C.E) mentions the submerging of Srī Mūlavāsam due to turbulent seas. The Paliyam Cheppedu inscriptions also offer evidence of how King Vikramaditya Varagunan

⁹Buddhist site in Kerala, about five miles south of Mavelikkara in Central Travancore region (P. 93).

¹⁰Puthrachen is the local name given to the Buddha *vigraha* found there.

¹¹As is detailed by Cheravally Sasi in his book *Odanadinte Ulthudippukal* (P. 40) and P.G. Rajendran in his *Kshetra Vinjanakosam* (P. 647).

(885 C.E.-925 C.E.) tried to protect the vihara from being taken by the sea by building a dyke. It is believed that it was the Buddha vigraha obtained from that long lost vihara which is presently consecrated at the Thrikkunapuzha Śāstā temple. It is also popularly believed that Srī Mūlanadhan, the author of such Buddhist Tantric texts as *Manju Srī Mūlathantharam* and *Aryamanju Srīkalpam*, was a chief monk in this monastery. It would only be fitting to consider the different Buddhist statues obtained from around Ōṇāttukara as the historic contribution of Srī Mūlavāsam. Historians like Puthusseri Ramachandran have also pointed to the preponderance of place names ending in the term *palli*¹² as being indicative of the Buddhist influence in this region. In his study Dr. Puthussery, points out that not once in any inscription has he come across the term ‘*Kṣētram*’, ‘*Hindu*’ or ‘*śaivism*’. What comes as a near equivalent to the term *Kṣētram* is *Mukkālvattom*¹³ and even that in very few inscriptions. Prof. Ilamkulam Kunjan Pillai is of the opinion that this term could have been derived from the shape of the religious institutions of the Shramana tradition.¹⁴

Time and again scholars have debated over the possibility of holy sites like Oachira Parabrahma temple and Chettikulangara Devi temple having once been Buddhist centres of worship. This is largely based on the idea that the temple premises were open to people from all sections of society at a time when temple entry was denied to non-Hindus, and the so-called lower castes and Untouchables. Also, drawing comparisons between the cart festivals (*kettu kāḷa* or *tēru*) held in the temple grounds here with ancient Buddhist festivals as is mentioned by Huang Tsang in his account about Pataliputra, scholars have tried to prove the Buddhist history of these temples. For want of any tangible evidence, all these claims can only be considered as mere hypotheses. However, the fact that the largest number of Buddhist statues to be unearthed from across Kerala are solely, from Ōṇāttukara points to an undeniable sramana precedence in its history.

¹² He further cites the Muvattupuzha, Paravoor and Kunnathunadu taluks in Ernakulam district as having had a prevalent Jain tradition at one point in time in history, thus validating many place names there having the term *Palli* in them (P. xciv).

¹³ Dr. Puthusseri opines that this name could have come from the shape of the temples belonging to Shramana tradition. He cites historian Prof. Ilamkulam Kunjan Pillai as having said that the Gajaprishta shape of certain temples in Kerala could have been influenced by similar shaped Buddha-Jaina temples. (Ibid. xcvi)

¹⁴ Kunjan Pillai, Elamkulam. *Keralacharithrathile Irulatanja Edukal*. Kottayam: Sahitya Pravarthaka, 1953.

It is in this context that I try to probe the multiple facets of the reigning deity as well as the architectural features that house that deity in a temple as being manifestations in immanence or transcendence thereby lending a certain religious fervor and through it, certain characteristic features to the cultural landscape that gave rise to these temples. The Temple in the philosophical realm represented 'ideational' space with architectural elements such as the gōpuram and prākāra symbolizing pathways from the external/ physical world to the interior/transcendental. However, eschewing from going in detail into the philosophical understanding of the two terms I have tried to bring out veritable evidences in the form of visual material from the temple taken up for study. Noboru Karashima opines that the geography of the temple corresponded to this categorization, where the [immanent] cult images, chambers, porches, passages, and gateways increased in size, allowing the unmanifest at the centre [transcendent] to permeate and penetrate the embodied manifest structures of the temple (2014).

Trkkunnappuḷa Śāstā temple: A formalistic case study.

Believed to be the site of the fabled Sreemoolavasam, the Thrikkunnappuzha Śāstā temple is considered to be the Hinduised form of an erstwhile Buddhist monastery¹⁵. Atula's (11th century) *Mushikavamsa* mentions the dyke built by King Vikrama Raman to protect Sṛīmūlavāsa from being eroded by the sea. The Paliyam copper plate (929 C.E.) in vattezhuthu of the Ay king Vikramaditya Varaguna also mentions the land grants made to the Buddhist monastery that existed here.¹⁶ The temple most likely came to be constructed after the monastery perished in the 11th century. The complex also has a Muruka temple, which according to local legends, predates the Sastha temple, but which is stylistically similar to the 16th century Harippadu Subrahmanya temple. This temple is located in Thrikkunnappuzha panchayat of Alappuzha district. The present ūrāṇma¹⁷ rests with the Ayyappa Seva Sangham, branch no: 301. Until 1973 this temple was under

¹⁵ According to Narayanan, M. G. S. *Cultural Symbiosis in Kerala*. Trivandrum: Dept. of History, Calicut University, 1972. Print; Kunjan Pillai, Elamkulam P.N. *Studies in Kerala History*. Kottayam: National Book Stall, 1970.

¹⁶ Rao, T. A. Gopinatha. *Travancore Archaeological Series: Vol I*. Thiruvananthapuram: Dept. of Cultural Publications, Govt. of Kerala, 1908. Print

¹⁷ Hereditary temple ownership

the ownership of Edappalli swaroopam. P. G. Rajendran has noted that there is a stone inscription detailing the installation of the mūla dēvata in the main temple as on the 27th of the Mīnam asterix in the Malayalam month of Makaram 931 C.E..¹⁸ However I was not able to trace any stone inscription in the temple's vicinity during my field works.

The chief deity here is unlike any other in Kerala temples. Though worshipped in the sankalpa of śāsta, it does not have the iconographic features usually attributed to the deity. Sculpted in stone and embossed with panchalōha¹⁹ by a process known as vārtu kettuka, the central idol is not a single free-standing image. In fact, it is a cluster of three forms- that of a man and woman in sitting sukhāsna posture and of a child standing between the two, sculpted on a single piece of stone (see fig 1.). Some scholars are of the opinion that the three are śāsta along with his wife Prabha and son Sātyaka, whereas others, who believe that it is a Buddhist image, are of the opinion that it is Buddha along with his wife Yaśōdharā and son Rāhula. The images are situated on a raised stone platform and only the male image is directly visible through the garbhagriha door. The sitting male image and the boy's image have a kirīda. A yōgapatta binds the raised right knee to the stomach of the male image. A yajñopavīta runs along the left shoulder of the image while its right hand holds a lotus in full bloom resting upon the raised right knee and the left hand is placed straight upon the lowered left leg. The body of the image displays elaborate ornamentation with karna kundalas, keyūras, hārās and udara bandha. Folds of a long-pleated dress seem to cover the lower portion of the image. The female image too displays ornamentation on the naked torso with karna kundalas, hārās, keyūrās, udara bandha, tōl vala and pādaswarās. Her left hand holds a full bloom lotus resting upon her raised left knee while the right hand lends support to the stone platform behind the folded right leg. She also sports a fully bloomed lotus to the left side of her long tresses on her head. Folds of pleated fabric clothe her legs. The image of the boy is quite small and is in standing position behind the two seated images. Ornamentation and other iconographical features are indistinct owing to poor visibility. However, this image too seems to be clothed in pleated fabric from its lower torso. This cluster of images facing east has not been

¹⁸ Rajendran, P. G. *Kshetra Vijnanakosam*. Kottayam: D. C Books, 2000. Print

¹⁹ an alloy of gold, silver, copper, zinc, and iron considered to be sacred and used for making temple idols.

consecrated by the rules of śśadādhāra pratiṣṭa and as such poses an interesting problem. Temple treatises dealing with consecration rituals like the *Tantrasamuccaya* and *īśana śiva gurudevapaddhati* underline the importance of śśadādhāra pratiṣṭa of the mūla dēvatā. It will therefore have to be seen as to how a free-standing image came to be placed within the garbhagriha for worship and what necessitated the overlooking of prescriptive texts in the worship of the central deity here.

The temple is located in a square prakāra with opening to all four cardinal directions from the middle of each side thereby conferring to the sarvatōbhadra type of temple plan. The srikovil is not exactly square shaped and is rectangular, keeping in practice with the architectural convention of Śāstā temples in Kerala (see fig 2.). The adisthana in stone has the usual mouldings of padma paduka, paduka, jagati, trippata kumuda, gala, gala patta and vēdī. The prannala in stone is rather simple with a fluted shaft emerging from a little above to the gala patta of the adistāna in the northern side of the srikōvil. It is held over the head by a bhūtagana in tribhanga position standing inside a stone basin. It holds a gada in his right hand while his left hand is held in the vismayamudra. The plain walls made in laterite stone shows limited mouldings like ghanadwārā, prastārās and bhadras. The opening dwāra is devoid of any dwarapālakās. However, stone bhārāvāhak ganās on either side of the doorway suggest the presence of these at some point in time. There is a beautiful mural painting of an ugra Narasimha killing and ripping apart the entrails of a dead Hiranyakaśipu laid on his lap occupying much of the western wall (see fig 3.). This is most probably a late 16th century mural painting. The srikovil has an inner circumambulatory path known as a madhyānādi or an antarāla mandalam, thereby making it a santara temple. The rafters supporting the roof are made of wood and ends in non-ornate brass rafter shoes. Baked tiles are used to cover the roof and the pinnacle is capped by two triple kalaśa tālikakkudams. The srikōvil has a recessed mukhamandapa with a prominent mukhappu or kilivāsal on the roof. This houses a rather elaborate depiction of śāsta seated in sukhāsana on a throne surrounded by attendant deities in wood. This large piece of wood sculpture is intricately carved and has rather large design motifs which are visible from below. The sōpāna balustrade in stone has 5 flights of steps leading upto the mukhamandapa.

A square namaskāra mandapa with adistana in stone showing the usual moulding as the srīkōvil, have four brahmakanda coulms supporting its roof. The samatāla vitana of the roof here is devoid of the usual navakhanda panel. Here it is replaced by a nine panelled floral lotus design (see fig 4). The entablature also has no decorative elements except for small wooden sculptures on elephant heads as bracket figures around the roof. They depict images of gods and semi divine figures from the puranas and epics. The pyramidal roof tiled with baked roof tiles is topped by a single stūpi.

The navakhandam in wood under the roof of the balikkalpura is unique in that all the cardinal deities are represented as women as opposed to the common male deities (see fig 5). The nine deities have clearly defined breasts and are portrayed as emerging out of blooming lotuses. The entablature and rafters in wood here carry motifs of warriors and depict war scenes apart from pālāzhi madhana sequence. It should be noted that some of these warriors have the attire of European mercenary with helmets and armours, though stylistically belonging to the miniature wood work prototype of Kerala (see figs. 6 and 7). The attire is highly reminiscent of Dutch soldiers during the medieval times. As such it is understood to be a visual representation of Dutch soldiers stationed in the area engaged in warfare.

Thus, it is interesting to note how the morphological aspects of a temple complex come to inform the public that it serves with concrete visualisation of not only metaphysical concepts of the divine but also historical markers indicative of quotidian life. Temples that arose as centres of worship to a personalised god or iṣṭadēvatā, naturally took on several other roles during its development into the kind of complexes we see today. As is exemplified in the works of historians like Kesavan Veluthat, Rajan Gurukul²⁰, etc., temples evolved to become judicial and economic institutions that had a huge impact upon the society whose religious needs it took care of. They came to be vested with regal status and came to sanction the power of the royalty in lieu of royal patronage and security. By the medieval times, temples began to be the patrons of not only visual arts, but of performing arts as well as literature and other fine arts. However, the arrival of the

²⁰As is discussed in Veluthat's book *The Early Medieval in South India*, 2009 and Gurukul's book *The Kerala Temple and Early Medieval Agrarian System*, 1992.

colonial forces set in motion entities that permeated even the heart of insulated orthodox religious institutions like temples. The Thrikkunnappuzha temple, a focal point of northern Onāṭṭukara, in this respect bears clear markers of early modernity in the many art works that adorn the temple complex.

As such an analysis of these materials is pertinent to our understanding of the various components that formed the totality of what we term today as temple culture, and which played a definitive role in the formation of a feudal society in the 11th to the 17th century C.E. Kerala in general and Ōdanād in particular.

Figures:



Fig 1. Artist's rendition of the mūla dēvatā consecrated at the Trikkunnappuzha temple. (Collected by the author on site)



Fig 2. The rectangular srīkōvil. (Photograph taken by the author, 10 February 2019)



Fig 3. Mural of Ugra Narsimha (Photograph taken by the author, 10 February 2019)



Fig 4. The lotus navakhanda panel of the namaskāra mandapa (Photograph taken by the author, 10 February 2019)



Fig 5. The navakhanda panel with the female aṣṭadikpālakās of the balikkal pura (Photograph taken by the author, 10 February 2019)



Fig 6. Miniature woodwork on entablature of balikkalpuram (Photograph taken by the author, 10 February 2019)



Fig 7. Closeup of Fig. 6 showing details of mercenary on the entablature of the balikkalpuram (Photograph taken by the author, 10 February 2019)

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Voices in Print:**Mother Language, Nationalism and the Press Discourses of the
Nineteenth-Century Bengal (1840-60)**SASWATI SAHA¹***Abstract:***

The print media of the nineteenth-century Bengal was actively capturing and reflecting the sorrow and the delights, the hopes and desires and the frustrations and deprivations of the common man. This paper will concentrate on some important articles published in some of the prominent newspapers of the nineteenth century (1840-60) that concentrated on the contemporary education system. The main focus of the paper will be the discussions published in the newspapers on the language to be used as the medium of instruction in schools and colleges. The paper shows how these discussions played a major role in forming a public opinion and stirring a feeling of nationalism among the common mass. The editors of the major newspapers were learned men who wanted to mobilise the common men towards the learning of the native language, in spite of all the materialistic and short-term benefits offered by the English language, because a nation needs its language and culture as its base to prosper. Thus, this paper, through thorough archival research, shows how the newspapers were channelizing the public common sense towards a colonial modernity by upholding their own language and tradition as a weapon to survive under the colonial rule and emerge with a distinctive national identity.

Keywords: newspaper, education, nineteenth century, Bengali, nationalism, identity.

¹ Dr Saswati Saha is presently working as an Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Sikkim University, Gangtok, Sikkim. She can be reached at ssaha@cus.ac.in.

This paper is a general overview of the debates and discussions that ensued in the renowned newspapers of the nineteenth-century Bengal for two decades between 1840 and 1860 which resulted due to the difference in opinion as to what should be the language in which knowledge should be disseminated among the students of Bengal. Much enthusiasm and debate can be noticed among the native population about what should be the language of education. The leading newspapers of the period like *Sambād Prabhākar*, *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā*, *Bengal Spectator*, *Sambād Bhāskar*, *Somprakāś* had columns that discussed and debated in great detail as to what should be the right decision regarding the choice of language for educational purposes. These discussions, the paper argues, are the ways in which the common opinions were formed regarding nationalism largely based on language. The study brackets the time period between the beginning of English education in Bengal after Macaulay's Minute of 1835 and the change in the government's policy towards education in 1870-71 when it concentrated largely on vernacular language as the medium of instruction.

It is a matter of common knowledge that the Bengalis showed enthusiasm for learning the language of the English rulers which was desirable not only to get acquainted with the European literature, but also to create more government job opportunities for the middle-class Bengalis. The various petitions submitted to the government officials from time to time, the demonstration made by people for the opening of English schools, the story of the crazy boys running behind David Hare's palanquin bears a testimony to their enthusiasm. This gave opportunity to many Englishmen like Sherburne, Martin Bowle, Arratoon Petres and Drummond to establish small English schools in the nooks and corners of the city. A vivid description of these exists in Shibnath Shastri's *Rāmtanu Lāhīrī o Tatkālīn Baṅga Samāj* (1903) where he also elaborates on the method of teaching prevalent in them. These schools—hardly concentrated on the learning of grammar; rather they put stress on increasing the vocabulary of the students. The students were encouraged to repeatedly recite, “Philosopher- *bigñalok*, Plowman-*cāṣā*, Pumpkin- *lāu kumṛo*, Cucumber-*śaśā*” (Shastri, 147). Similar childhood experience has been described by Rajnarayan Basu in his *Atmacarit* (1909) where he says that along with Sanskrit *ślok*, his early lessons included memorizing small English words “God- *īśvar*, Lord- *īśvar*, I- *āmi*, You- *tumi*, Come- *āiso*, Go-

Jāo” (Basu, 25). Instead of going deep into the etymology of a word, the students were taught to match literal words of English with that of Bengali and substitute one for the other. The more a student could rote learn English words, the more he was looked up to as a well-educated person.

This practice of rote repetition and memorization of words were not unknown in India. In fact, Sanskrit grammar and dictionaries were learnt in the same manner.² The practice had its ratification from the ancient Indian linguistic sciences. However, such a way of learning could not actually increase proficiency in the English language. When the British Government took up the responsibility of disseminating knowledge among the native population, they made major changes in the pedagogical structure. The educational minutes of the British Government from 1835 onwards also had a major impact on the vernacular language. In fact, Macaulay’s minute of 1835 marked the defeat of the Orientalists and beginning of the era of the Anglicists, who unhesitatingly dismissed all Indian system of knowledge and took their inferiority for granted and believed that the emancipation of the Hindoos can be brought “through communication with foreigners through imitation and translations.”³ Thus from then onwards the learning of the Indian boys consisted of Western science and logic, mostly in English, which not only led to the incorporation of English culture into the Bengali way of living, but also affected its language and vocabulary.

Minds in the Making: The Cultural and Political Significance of English Education in Colonial India

Soon opinions started pouring in regarding the choice of English as the medium of instruction. The daily newspapers and monthly magazines started debating on the issue and create a public opinion on this. Of course, there were some voices supporting the choice of English as necessary not just for earning a respectable livelihood but also for administrative involvements. An article titled “*Hindu Kalejer Sikṣa Praṇālī*” (The Method of Education in Hindu College) published in

² William Jones was made to learn his Sanskrit in the same manner, quite unknown to him before this.

³ This is a part of Macaulay’s speech delivered in the House of Commons on 10th July 1833. For a detailed discussion about Macaulay and his speech see GJV Prasad’s *Writing India Writing English: Literature, Language, Location* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2011) pp- 3-23.

September, 1850 in the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* begins by criticising the curriculum of the Hindu College but goes on to discuss the importance of learning English language. The article argues that knowledge of English language is essential in a colonized country like India because in order to express explicitly the problems and needs of the nation and to be the representative of the nation to the foreign rulers, one requires proficiency in the English language. The article states:

Āmāder rājā bhinna jātīya, rājpuruṣera bhinna jātīya, rājyer pradhān pradhān karmacārīrāo bhinna jātīya mānuṣya. Pade pade tāhārder nikat manaḥduḥkha byakta karibār ebaṁ tāhārder sahit nānā biṣoye bicār karibār praṣojan upasthit hay. Atayeb e deśīya bidyarthīdiger imrāji bhāṣāybutpanna haoyā sarbatobhābe kartabya. Biṣeṣataḥ katakguli loker e prakār pāradarśī haoyā ucit ye tāhārā svajātīyabarger pratinidhi svarūp haiyā rāj-bicārāgāre bā sabhā biṣeṣe āpanārder abhiprāy prakāś karite pāren, granthe bā prakāśya patra likhiyā svadeśer śubhāśubh ghatita samuday biṣoye bicār karite pāren, uttamattam imrāji sambādpātra prakāś karite pāren, tāunhaler kono kono mahatī sabhāy danḍāyamān haiyā imrājīdiger samakakṣa rūpe bāgyuddhe prabṛtta haiyā svīya pakṣa rakṣā karite pāren, ebaṁ praṣojan haile samudrajāne ārohanpūrbak imland bhūmite uttīrṇa haiyā āpnārdiger marmabedanā gñapan karite pāren. (Ghosh, Vol.2) (Our King is of a different community, rulers are of different community, administrative officials are people of another community. We face the need to express our concerns and to discuss various issues with them regularly. Hence, the students of this country need to gather great proficiency in the English language. Specially, some of them should gain such expertise that they, as representatives of their people, can express their desire and opinion in the administrative forums and assemblies. They should have the capability to write and analyse the everyday events in letters and books and publish in the best English newspapers. They should be capable enough to stand upright in the meetings held at the town hall and debate with the Englishmen in fluent English and in times of need, they should be able to undertake sea voyages to reach England to communicate the causes of national distress to the rulers sitting there.) [my translation]

Although the Minute of 1835 made English the medium of instruction, vernacular language was not completely disregarded. Lord Auckland's Minute of November 1839 declared that "vernacular instruction was to be combined with English, full choice being allowed to pupils to attend whichever institutions they might individually prefer" (Sinha, 440). But the government made it a point that even if the medium of instruction was the vernaculars, the natives must be taught Western scientific and logical thinking in classrooms. This required translation of textbooks that were so far used in the English schools into the vernacular. These translations became indispensable with Wood's Despatch of 1854, popularly known as the Magna Carta of Indian Education. Sir Charles Wood declared that in India the British had to deal with "a race of people slow to change, bound up by religious prejudices and antiquated customs" (Jayapalan, 231). Therefore, certain changes had to be made in the British approach to education in India. Although arts, science and philosophy of Europe were to be diffused through education, English as a medium need not be insisted upon at all stages. The Despatch gave importance to the existing vernacular languages because it was through the medium of vernaculars that European language could filter down to the masses. As such, Charles Wood arranged to get books written in the Indian vernaculars and the Department of Public Instruction that was established soon after this took special care in translating textbooks in the vernaculars that were "original composition of men whose minds have been imbued with the spirit of European advancement" (Viswanathan, 154).

Thus, textbooks and primers began to be translated from the English ones that were already used in the English and Anglo-vernacular schools under government supervision. Lists were made by the government as to which books needed to be translated for the students who approached education through the medium of their mother-tongue like C.B. Clarke's *History of the World* and Lethbridge's *History and Geography of Bengal*. Competitions were held on the translation of these books and awards were announced to encourage more and more participation from among the indigenous men.

From English to Bengali: Cultural Anxiety and the Politics of Translation under Colonial Rule

However, there were dissenting voices within Bengal that did not support the task of translation of textbooks because what they carried were nothing but the wisdom of an alien culture. One such article is known to have been published is *Bengal Harkarā* against which *Sambād Prabhākar* publishes an editorial column. The article states:

E deśe śikṣā bistārer janya sarkār prāmānya imreji granther Bāmla anubād karāibār ceṣṭā karitechen. Bengal Harkarā ei praceṣṭār birodhī. Harkarār mate anubād karā ucit nay kāran anubāde mūler bhāb o gāmbhūrya rakṣā karā jāyñā. (Ghosh, Vol. 1) (The government has taken up the task of translating English texts into Bengali for extending education among the native population. But *Bengal Harkarā* is against any such endeavour. According to *Bengal Harkarā* translation cannot retain the essence and seriousness of the original and hence there is no point in translating). [my translation]

However, translations undertaken all over Bengal, both as a part of government and private enterprise also created suspicion in the minds of a certain section of people. They thought that too much allegiance with the scientific learning brought down by the European educational system will make the Indian students' emotion less and that they will gradually distance themselves from religion. Therefore, suggestions were made regarding the introduction of the moral education as a part of the curriculum. An article in *Bengal Spectator* argued that the quality of moral lessons found in the ancient Indian scriptures are in no way inferior and thus can be effectively used in building the characters of the students. The aim of education was not to make a *munsif* or a collector out of a student but a good human being. Education should have effect on both the intellect and emotion of a learner.⁴ Hence there were sections of people who were anxious about the loss of prosperity and respect of their own tradition. According to these men, excessive translation from English might mean that Bengalis either do not have a tradition that can be brought forth to educate the present generation or that they do not have the capacity enough to produce original works that can serve as classroom materials. There was, therefore, a propensity to revisit

⁴ An Article in *Bengal Spectator* named “*Nīti ebam Byabsāyī śāstra śikṣa*” (Instructions in Ethics and Professional Studies) (published in April 1842. Binoy Ghosh's *Sambad Patre Bāmlār Samājcitra, (tṛtīya khaṇḍa)* (Calcutta: Bengal Publishers Private Limited, 1962).

that ancient texts of India and bring forth Indian heritage that bear testimony of their creative intellect. Many of these texts too got translated into Bengali with the aim of increasing the efficiency of the vernacular so as to make it a fit vehicle for carrying the ancient wisdom, and also to get inspiration from the past that would make possible the building of a proper future. But interestingly, when these men went back to their ancient texts, their view of it did not remain the same, as now they approach their tradition via their knowledge of the West. They now regarded Indian philosophy in comparison with the Western philosophy and evaluated whether they are accurate, acceptable and sufficient in building a modern state.⁵

Nonetheless, some were somewhat forgiving of the idea of translation and recognised its importance in creating high-quality Bengali textbooks as well as improving the language. But for them, this task of translation should be the responsibility of the experienced and educated indigenous intellectuals. An article written in *Sambād Prabhākar* considers Iswarchandra Vidyasagar eligible to carry out such important task. The article states:

Imreji bhāṣā śikṣā karibār phale bhāratbarṣer agñatā dūr haiteche ebaṁ imreji bhāṣār tulonāy bāmlābhāṣā asār pramān haiteche. Kintu ei bhāṣā ke sārbbān kāre tolā sarkārer ebaṁ edeśer śikṣita loker dāyitva... bāmlābhāṣāy upayukta pustak nai. Ei pustak anubāder dāyitva dui bhāṣāy abhigñā kono byektir upar deoyā ucit ebaṁ Isvarcandra Bidyāsāgar⁶ ei kājer upayukta byekti. (Ghosh, Vol. 1) (The education imparted in English language has helped in ousting ignorance but has rendered the Bengali language weak and insubstantial. It is the responsibility of the learned men of the country to bring back the glory of Bengali language... but there is a dearth of suitable books in the language. This task of translating

⁵ Vidyasagar acknowledges in his Notes on the Sanskrit College submitted to the Council of Education on April 12, 1852, that “true it is that the most part of the Hindu system of Philosophy do not tally with the advanced ideas of modern times...” *Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, a Story of His Life and Work*, edited by K. L. Mukhopadhyay, Sahitya Samsad, 1951, pp. 180–205.

⁶ Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) was an educationist and being given the job of Special Inspector of schools by the Public Instruction Department was confronted with the problem of scarcity of textbooks for the students of the vernacular schools. Setting up his own press, he published books that would be fit to guide the young minds. His works include *Bāmlār Itihās Dvītīya Bhāg* (1848), a translation of the last nine chapters of Marshman’s *History of Bengal*, *Jīban Carit* (1849), a translation of Chamber’s *Exemplary Biography*, *Bodhaday* (1851), a collection of various English works translated into Bengali, *Caritābalī* (1856), again a translation from *Exemplary Biography*, *Kathāmālā* (1856), a translation of 74 out of 230 tales of Aesop’s Fables.

books should be vested with people having proficiency in both the languages and Iswarchandra Vidyasagar is one such person) [my translation]

Educating in One's Language: Language, Identity, and Pedagogy in Colonial Bengal

Although, vernacular found a place in the academic curriculum, it was left to the choice of the students and was not yet made compulsory. But there was hardly any Bengali student at that time who seriously regarded Bengali as an option. English, the language of the powerful, with all its glitz and glamour, was far more alluring and could lead to a respectable career. Hence, almost all the students chose English over Bengali. Resultantly, the Bengali curriculum suffered, and little effort was put to prepare books and syllabus in the language. With the increasing popularity of English education in Bengal some of the indigenous intellectuals started lamenting over the fact that the overwhelming presence of English as language of education has turned the youth away from their native tongue rendering it inconsequential. They were of the opinion that no community can thrive without the advancement of their mother tongue. This disregard for their native tongue is the reason why there are so few textbooks available to instruct students in the classroom.

Consequently, the newspaper took to voicing concern regarding this issue. The aim was to create a general awareness among the common mass regarding the improvement of the Bengali language which can only give them a distinct cultural identity. The colonial modernity was a result of formation of a nationalistic fervour that concentrates largely on the development of the indigenous languages, and it will be no exaggeration to deduce that the print media played a major role in it. In an editorial column of 5th April 1848 in the *Sambād Prabhākar*, the writer has expressed much dissatisfaction over the fact that the Bengalis are not serious about the development about their mother-tongue. All other nations in the world strive hard to establish the dignity of their own language but the Bengalis are busy learning the language of the foreigners being least bothered about the future of their own nation. He writes:

Yehetu jāti mātrei apnāpan jātīya bhāṣār prāti yatna karen, ebaṁ biśiṣṭarūpe tā śikṣā karite anurāgī hayen, kintu ki camatkār, ei deśer mānuṣyerā jātīya śikṣā biṣaye kichumātra

manoyog karen nā, imrāji bhāṣā anuśīlanārthe adhik pariśram kariyā thāken. (Ghosh, Vol.1) (Every nation takes due care of its mother-tongue, but how excellent! the people of this country are least bothered about national education and put more hard work in the study of English language.) [my translation]

A certain section of the native population thought that the amount of money spent on the propagation of English education was a complete waste. The dissemination of vernacular education would have flourished if this money had been invested in it. The press too shared the view. An article published in *Sambād Prabhākar* in May 1848 states:

Britiś gavarnment etaddeśe āgamanabdhi ekāl paryanta svadeśīyo bhāṣār bistār janya arthabyay o pariśram karite biśeṣ manoyogī haiyāchen, phalata tāhār suphal siddhir biṣaye sampūrṇa byaghāt haiteche, deśer adhikāṃśa sthāne bidyār ālok bistārṇa hay nāi, prajāṛā agñanatār andhakāre ābrta haiyā atyanta dīn o malin haiyāche. (Ghosh, Vol. 1) (The British Government have invested a lot of money and hard work in extending their own language to the indigenous population; therefore, the fruit of education have not reached them. In most of the places, education have failed to reach and has hence submerged the subjects in the darkness of ignorance) [my translation]

Since the language of study was a matter of choice made by the students, the Hindu college was much criticised for giving full liberty to the students to choose between English and Bengali as the language of study. An editorial published in *Bengal Spectator* on 1st August 1843 on “*Hindu kaleje bāmlā śikṣā*” (The Bengali Education in Hindu College), discusses the importance of learning Bengali in the English schools with special reference to the Hindu College. The author mentions how the junior classes of the college lack good books in Bengali which is the reason for the lack of proficiency among students in the Bengali language and literature. A comparison is made between the students of the Hindu College and the students at the Hooghly College. Whereas in the former, the students lack motivation to study Bengali because they are neither properly evaluated on the subject nor awarded for brilliant performance, in the later the students have emerged quite proficient in Bengali for they are encouraged to study the subject with extraordinary books and rewards. This article shows a general concern about the study of Bengali language which

proves how a group of population wanted proficiency in the mother tongue along with English. Moreover, the author of the article mentions, “*ār bāmlā bhāṣā samprati nitānto niṣprayojanīya nahe yehetu ekṣane rājakīya karme ukta bhāṣā byabhaṛta haiteche*” (of late Bengali language is not as unnecessary since the language is now being used in administrative works as well) [my translation] (Ghosh, Vol. 3, 205-207). The editor concludes the article by saying, “*edeśer lokdigake sabhya karite haile edeśer bhāṣār ālocanā kara ati kartabya ār ei byapār prayojaniya o upakārak atayeb ihāke safal karibār nimitta biśeṣ manoyog kara ābaśyak*” (In order to civilize the population of Bengal, it is obligatory to hold more discussions on the language. This is both necessary and helpful and hence more attention should be paid in making it a success) [my translation] (Ghosh, Vol. 3, 207). In many articles published during this period in the *Bengal Spectator*, the editor and other columnists reiterate the feeling that the Bengali language needs improvement and any advancement towards it should be encouraged and applauded. They were encouraging debates among the common mass regarding the importance of learning and cultivating the local language and thereby influencing the common sense to uphold the cultural distinctiveness that provides a community its identity.

In the same year an article was published on September 16th in *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* which talks about how indigenous language should be used for the general wellbeing of the people in the context of the establishment of the *Tattvabodhinī Pāthśālā* in the Bangshabaati gram on 18th of *Baiśākh* inspired by the thoughts of Akshaykumar Dutt. According to the article, the dharma can be protected only through the spread of Bengali language and this requires establishment of such indigenous *pāthśālās*. The article also expresses doubts regarding the value of English language once the British leaves India as education imparted in English language is affecting the knowledge amassed by the natives and making them reliant on everything English:

Āmrā ār kono biśaye āpanārdiger prati nirbhar karite pārinā. Āmrā parer śasaner adhīn rahitechi, parer bhāṣāy śikṣita haitechi, parer atyācār sahya karitechi, ebaṁ khristān dharmer ye rūp prādurbhāb haiteche tāhāte śaṅkā hay ki jāni parer dharma bā edeśer jātiya dharma hay. (Ghosh, Vol. 2) (It appears that we can no more rely on ourselves regarding anything. We are under the rule of the Other, we are being educated in Other’s

language, we are tolerating the atrocities of the Other, and the way the Christian religion is spreading, we fear that the religion of the Other might as well become the national religion of this country.) [my translation]

The article states that if the Bengalis fail to cultivate their own culture through their own language, then it will be difficult to maintain a distinctive identity of the Bengalis from that of the British:

*ār kiyatkāl gaune imrājdiger sahit āmārdiger kono biṣoye jāṭīya prabhed thākibek nā—
tāhārdiger bhāṣāy edeśer jāṭīya bhāṣā haibek, ebaṁ tāhārdiger dharmay edeśer jāṭīya
dharma haibek, sutorām byakto karite hṛday bidīrṇa hay, ye hindu nām ghuciya āmārdiger
parer nāme bikhyata hoibār sambhābanā dekhitechī.* (Ghosh, Vol. 2) (With the passage of
time, there will hardly be any distinction between the English and us—their language will
be the national language of this country, their religions will be our national religion, hence
it pains to convey that there is chance that someday the Hindoo name will be wiped out,
we will be known by names given by Others) [my translation]

The discussion continues and on 16th January, 1844 a report on the aforementioned *Tattvabodhinī Pāthśālā* appears along with a list of books that are taught in the school in the same newspaper. The article says that the school is teaching physical science and geography in Bengali with two main intentions: firstly, since Bengali is the native language, teaching such subjects in the language will increase knowledge on the language among common people (“*baṅga bhāṣā svadeśīyo bhāṣā, ataṣeb tāhāte ukta śāstra sakal prachalita haile kramaśaḥ tāhār gñan sādharan loker madhye bistārita haite pāribek*”) and secondly, the students are too young and have not acquired the proficiency required in English to understand the complexities of the subjects in the language. When they attain proficiency enough, they may take up books written in English language if such texts are unavailable in Bengali (“*chātrērā ati alpa bayaska, adyāpi imlandīya bhāṣāte erūp suśikṣita hay nāi jāhāte ukta śāstra sakal ukta bhāṣāte adhyāyan karite samartho hay. Yakhan tāhārā suśikṣita haibe takhan baṅga bhāṣāte ukta śāstra sakaler pradhān pradhān grantha aprāpta haile imlandīya bhāṣāte adhyāpan kara jāite pāribek*”) (Ghosh, Vol.2).

To garner support from the common mass regarding the spread of Bengali language and to influence them, the newspapers also alluded to the speech made by English sahibs regarding the

attention that the native tongue needs. True wisdom and prosperity come only by devoting oneself to the mother language. The *sāhibs* understood that well because the prosperity of English language began only when the Britons could come out of the shackles of Latin and Greek. An article titled “*Svadeśiyo Bhāṣāy Bidyābhyas*” (Education in Native Language) published on *Baiśākh* 1849 (1271 *śakābda*) in the *Tattvabodhinī Patrikā* begins with the talk by Beaton *Sāheb* who apparently praised Hindu students because of their sharp intellect and claimed that if they don’t drop out early from education, then they will be regarded the best in the world. The article lauds the comments made by the *Sahib* regarding the importance of education in the indigenous language. Beaton propounds the famous filtration theory of knowledge and opines that those who are studying various subjects in English, it is their duty to spread the same knowledge among the native population in Bengali for it cannot be expected that every single Bengali will gain same skill in a foreign language. It is only by this means that they will be able to repay the Government’s debt which is spending money in educating them: “*eikṣane jāhārā imrāji bhāṣāy bibidha prakār bidyā śikṣā kāritechēn, svadeśiya lokdigake sei samasta bidyār upodeś deyə tāhādiger sarbatabhābe kartabya. Gavarnment tāhādigoke bidyādān kariyā ye mahāpakār karitechēn, ei prakārei tāhār pāriśodh kara ucit.*” (Ghosh, Vol.2) (Those who are at this point engaged in various fields of study in English, it is their duty to disseminate among the native people the same knowledge. It is by this means they will be able to pay the debt of the Government that is helping them to become learned.) [my translation]

However, such a task requires a good knowledge of Bengali and hence it needs to be cultivated and strengthened to carry the wisdom brought down by European enlightenment. Beaton also mentioned that all those young Bengali men who bring their creative writings written in English to him, he has always advised and encouraged them to write in their native language. Only their mother tongue can bring them the success and fame that they are looking for. If they have the potential of creating literary masterpieces, they should do that in their own language or translate English works of excellence into Bengali:

kalikātāy ye samasta yubā byekti imrāji bhāṣāi gadya padya racanā kariye slāghā pūrbak āmār nikaṭ ānāyan karen, āmi tāhārdigake sarbadāi kahi ye baṅgabhāṣā śikṣā karāi

tomārdiger yashaḥprāptir ekmātro upāy. Tāhārdiger racita prastāb samudayer yathopayukto praśamsa kariya pare kahiyaachi, ye yadi tomrā āmār parāmarśa grahan karo, tabe e prakāre pratipatti lābher ceṣṭā pāriyag karo. Yodi tomārdiger granthakartā haibār anurāg o tadupoyogi kṣamata thāke, tabe svakīya bhāśāy grantha racanā karite, athabā imrāji granther uttamattom prostāb anubād karite prabṛtta hau, tāhā haile sthāyītara kṛtti lābh karite pāribe. Yāhārā prathame ei pathābalambi hoiya kṛtakāryo haiben, tāhārdiger nimitta bipul yasaḥ sancita rahiyaḥche. (Ghosh, Vol. 2) (All those young men in Calcutta who come to me with their prose and poetry with great pride, I have always advised them that practicing Bengali language is the only way of attaining fame for them. After praising their composition considerably, I told them if you take my advice, do not ever try to gain success in this manner. If you are really inclined towards and capable of writing books, then compose them in your own language, otherwise engage in translation of exceptional English works. Then your success will be long lasting. Those who will be the first to successfully tread this path, immeasurable fame awaits them.) [my translation]

The article also mentions Herbert Maddock *Sāheb*, who at the time of distributing rewards to the successful candidates of the Hindu College had stressed on the cultivation of their indigenous language. But then the article criticises the *Sāhib* by mentioning that he had stayed in India for the last 35 years and it is only at the time of his return that he encourages indigenous language education and also promises to pay a handsome stipend to the student who writes the best composition in Bengali the next year.

However, sadly enough, the article laments that the intention of the government seems completely antagonistic to the proposal. In spite of all the protests made by the newspaper editors and the logical arguments presented by other learned men, the Government seems to remain indifferent. The article states, “*Gabharnment haite e paryanta baṅglā bhāśā śikṣār kono upāy hailanā. Sambād-patra-sampādakerā yata citkār karun, ār anya byektii bā ihār kartabyotā pakṣe yata yukti pradān karun, kichutei tāhārā sāchetan hayen nā. Tāhārā badhir haiyā rahiyaḥchen.*” (Ghosh, Vol. 2) (There has been so far no means available from the government regarding the study of Bengali language. How much ever the editors of the newspapers scream, and logical

arguments are presented by learned men, they still remain unperturbed. They have turned a deaf ear.) [my translation]

From Readers to Respondents: The Common Man and the Emergence of Public Opinion in Colonial Bengal

Gradually, the concern for the native language spread well among the common people too. In a letter written to the editor of *Sambād Bhāskar* in the “*Ciṭhipatra*” (correspondences) section on 16th March, 1858, a person signing as a one education enthusiast writes that it is commendable how educationists in Bengal have worked towards the successful spread and cultivation of English education but he is concerned about their indifference in practice and spread of the native tongue. He is of the opinion that the success of this country depends on the cultivation of the native language. He writes, “... *yata dibasa paryanta e pradeśe baṅga bhāṣār anuśīlan nā hay tata dibasa paryanta e deśer saubhāgyodayā haite pāribek nā, e prayukta baṅga bhāṣā bahula pracār pakṣe sarba sadhāraner sarbatabhābe sajatna haoya kartabya...*” (Ghosh, Vol. 3, 429-31) (As long as the study of Bengali language does not begin, fortune of this nation will not rise, that is why it is the duty of every individual to make all efforts towards the promotion of the Bengali language.) [my translation] He agrees with the fact that there is a dearth of good Bengali text books, but in a language which is capable of expressing all emotions, dearth of books indicates nothing but negligence of the learned men and not the fault of the language. However, he is hopeful about the future of Bengali language and literature since some quality books are already being written in the language and books of wisdom from Europe are being translated as well. The writer suggests that it is true that during the British rule, indigenous people are compelled to learn the foreign language for the sake of earning their livelihood but that does not in any way imply ignoring the native language. Subservience towards a foreign language ignoring the mother tongue is a characteristic of the uncivilized. Hence, the letter writer implores the editor to support the cultivation of Bengali language and promote the civilization.

Lingual Dislocation: English Language and the Crisis of Self in Colonial Bengal

The education related articles published in the select journals of the nineteenth century express the nationalistic concerns of the educated middle class. They made the initial effort of bringing into light the need of improvement in the educational structure followed in India. They had been critical not just about the government policies and teaching method adopted in various schools; they also attempted to bring to the notice of the common men the contemporary condition existing in the educational set up. The consequences of the modern education system made them ponder on and discuss matters relating to it in details. For instance, the editor of *Sambād Bhāskar* was a man who encouraged English education and applauded the English for their generosity. He writes, “*āmṛā Bṛtīs jātike asīm dhanyabād pradān kari ihārā gñan gopan karen nā, akapate sarbajāti sādḥāran prajāgan ke gñan pradān karitechēn.*” (Ghosh, Vol 3) (We are immensely thankful to the British people for not hiding their store of knowledge and for frankly disseminating knowledge among all subject communities.) [my translation] But at the same time, the results of blind imitation of the English curriculum on the Bengali society made him anxious. He thinks that the education system has instilled ambition in people of all ranks resulting in the change of social status. People now feel embarrassed regarding their own familial profession and want to become clerics. Works requiring physical labour were gradually looked down upon, making people Macaulay’s ideal clerks. Engulfed in the myriads of false hopes, people became distant from their local cultures. They began ignoring the local rituals, tradition and even the Bengali language. Some took pride in not knowing their mother tongue at all. But not all of them could acquire high proficiency in English language as well. A common concern about such men was that neither were they qualified for jobs that require English language proficiency, nor they have an affinity towards their native language and culture. An editorial of *Sambād Prabhākar* published on 15th January, 1856 laments the fact that Bengalis are least willing to work towards the development of their own language. Their slavery towards English has made them forsake everything that is native. They condemn their parents, mock their deities and have become vehemently iconoclastic (Gosh, Vol 3, 437-38). These groups of people have been mocked at in *Somprakāś* as spineless, pleasure-loving

effeminate imitators and are termed as “Social loafers”.⁷ These people are lazy, carefree, pleasure-seeking people with very little education.

In spite of all the discussion regarding the amendments that the curriculum required in Bengal in the 1840s and 50s, the change in the government educational policy was brought about only in the 1870s but not solely with the intention of improving the native language. Vernacular education received its major boost in 1870-71 when the Department of Public Instruction in Bengal completely diverted its attention towards the development of vernacular education on the pretext that the natives were using English education for their material advancement instead of improving them intellectually. The government aids to the English schools were shrunk as the finance department raised questions about the excessive expenditure incurred on high instruction.⁸ But the discussions that happened regarding education in the Bengali newspapers between 1840 and 1860 and the concerns there of reflected the consciousness regarding the class interest of the middle class which paved the way for nationalism. Although they did not have the power in bringing a change in the government policies, they were effective enough to revolutionise the public opinion towards a national identity that can be built only on the basis of the mother tongue. An article title “*Bāmlābhāṣār Unnatir Prastāb*” (A Proposal for the Development of the Bengali Language) published in *Somprakāś* in 1849 states:

bhāṣār unnati byatireke kakhano kono jātīr unnati haṅnā. bhāṣār unnatii mānuṣer śarīr, man o buddhi prabhṛti jābatīya biṣaṣer unnatir mūl. bhāṣār unnati byatireke dharma, dharmanīti, svadeśānurāg prabhṛti kono guṇi biśuddhi lābh karite pāre nā. bhāṣār ye eto guṇ āche, sādharan loke tāhā bujhite pāren nā. tāhārā apātaphal darśane mohit han. (Ghosh, Vol. 4) (A nation cannot prosper without the development of its language. The growth and development are the key to the development of human body, mind and intellect. Without the proper development of the language the qualities of true religion, ethics and

⁷ This was published in an article in the year 1872 and it has been discussed in details by Binoy Ghosh in the introduction to the third volume of *Sāmbad Patre Bāmlār Samājcitra* (Calcutta: Bengal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1962).

⁸ As is found in a letter from W.S. Atkinson, Director of Public Instruction, to the Secretary to the Government of Bengal, (dated: 10th June 1870), PV July 1870, West Bengal State Archive.

affection for the nation cannot be achieved. But the common people fail to realize the qualities invested in language. They get attracted towards the apparent and immediate results.) [my translation]

The article laments how people fail to understand that building and developing their own language is a long-term necessity for nation building. They only look for satisfying their short-term needs and hence make their children forsake their mother tongue and educate themselves in a foreign language. The article ends with a request to the school inspectors to promote Bengali education among the young students.

The articles published in favour of the use of Bengali as the medium of instruction challenges the popular conception and the monolithic argument that the indigenous population was only interested in English education. In fact, Bengali as the medium of instruction was promoted to naturalize the imitative tendencies that English education prompted among the natives. Moreover, only a developed local language and cultural tradition can pave the way for an effectively progressive future. The promotion of Bengali was also the way through which the press tried to combat the challenges posed by the colonial education which had declared the indigenous method of teaching and learning inauthentic and therefore tried to repair in their own “benevolent” way. To repair the damaged self-esteem created by the colonial rule and the introduction of the Western education, a concerted effort was made by the prominent Bengali newspapers to use their own language and tradition as a weapon to survive under the colonial political economy and to preserve their distinct identity.

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Shakespeare in Bengal: First Hundred Years

AVISHEK RATH¹

Abstract:

This paper traces the early history of Shakespeare in Bengal, arguing that his works entered Calcutta through the East India Company around 1780 and quickly became visible through print, performance, pedagogy, and translation. Beginning with early references in *The Bengal Gazette* and *Calcutta Monthly Journal*, the paper shows how Shakespearean texts circulated in colonial Bengal not only as literary works but also as cultural objects embedded in theatre, education, and public discourse. It then examines how Shakespeare was institutionalized in school and college syllabi, staged in English and Bengali, and adapted through translation into local idioms, musical forms, and theatrical conventions. By mapping these first hundred years of the presence of Shakespeare in Bengal, the paper highlights the creative appropriation and transformation of Shakespearean drama within Bengali literary culture. It ultimately argues that Shakespeare's reception in Bengal was not passive imitation but an active process of pedagogical, performative, and translational negotiation that shaped the emergence of modern Bengali literary and theatrical publics.

Keywords: Translation, Shakespeare, Bengal, Performance, Pedagogy.

¹ Avishek Rath is a Ph. D candidate in the Department of English, University of Calcutta, Kolkata. He can be reached at avishekrath000@gmail.com.

I

Introduction

Most probably, writings of Shakespeare became available to Bengal around 1780. Courtesy: East India Company. In that very year we can find the following description in the 49th issue of *The Bengal Gazette* (dated 23-30 December 1780):

The Managers of the Theatre having generously offered to give a Benefit play to Mr Soubise, towards the completion of his Management, Mr Soubise will appear on that night in the character of Othello...The part of Iago will be attempted by the Author of *The Monitor* and *desdemona* [sic] by H_, a gentleman of doubtful gender.

In that very issue Oliver Goldsmith's "Epitaph on David Garrick Esq" was also printed the last two lines of which were:

Old Shakespeare received him with praise and with love
And Beaumonts and Beaus, be his Kelly's above

The reference to David Garrick is important as he himself advised regarding the direction of plays in The New Playhouse which was established in 1775 (Mukherjee 13). In the 9-16 December 1780 issue of *The Bengal Gazette*, the name of Shakespeare was first used in the editorial column. The title of the editorial was "Description of an Englishman in Othello by Shakespeare" and in this editorial the dialogue between Iago and Casio was printed in detail, which could not be found in the original. Though I have marked the year 1780 as the starting point it may be assumed that even before 1780, the plays of Shakespeare had been performed in Kolkata as in 1751 a playhouse entitled Young Writers of John Company was established in Kolkata where Shakespeare's plays might have been performed ("Calcutta Stage"). Therefore, "we can best conjecture that the Britons of David Garrick's age did not forget their Shakespeare in far Calcutta" (Sengupta 196). In this way the Shakespeariana increased in Calcutta in leaps and bounds. I will give a few more examples of this ever-increasing popularity of Shakespeare in Kolkata and then proceed to the next three sections of this essay where the first hundred eventful years of Shakespeare in Bengal has been summarized. The sections are entitled "Pedagogy", "Performance" and "Translations". In the

Convocation issue of *The Bengal Gazette* (24 February 1785) the editor quoted the following lines while informing the readers of the objectives of the magazine:

To hold the mirror up to nature: to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure.

In 1798, we can find the following description in the April issue of the *Calcutta Monthly Journal*:

A violent fire broke out on Sunday evening, the 25th ultimo in the market known by the name of Shakespeare's bazar at the corner of Durromtollah, which consumed a great number of huts and destroyed considerable property.

Is he the same Shakespeare of Stratford-on-Avon? At least a number of critics think so (Ahmed 5-6).

Bankimchandra in an essay entitled "Sakuntala, Miranda and Desdimona" which was published in 1875 in *Bangadarshan*. In that essay he presented a comparative analysis of the three characters. But he also wrote that "*Shakespearer ei natak sagarbot, Kalidaser natak nondonkanontulyo. Kanone sagore tulona hoyna*" (Chattopadhyay 2: 207). Again in 1878, Haraprasad Shastri wrote in an essay entitled "Kalidas O Sekkhapeare" which was published in the same *Bangadarshan* of *Baisakh* in 1285 *Bongabdo*: "*Shekkhapeare manus sristi korite paren, tumi jemon manus chao, Shekkhapeare temni manus tomay deben. ...Natak Manusyohridoyer chitro loa byasto. Se chitre onek soundorjo kalidas dekhaiachhen. Kintu aro onek baki ache. Seguli Kalidase milibe na. Tahar jonyo Shekkhapearer soron loiter hoibe. Kalidas grothito soundorjo Sekkhopeareo ache.*"

II

Pedagogy

The authorities of the East India Company started establishing some minor educational institutions for the needs of company around the middle of the eighteenth century. For examples, we can name those ones under the supervision of Archer, Fresco, Drammond, Halifax etc. The first of its kind

which is worthy to be mentioned is Free School Society which was established initially for native Christians in 1789. Shakespeare was included in the syllabus of these schools in three forms: First, songs and prose translations of easily understandable parts of Shakespeare's plays; secondly, prosaic introductions for introducing students to the plays of Shakespeare and; thirdly, recitations of selected pieces from original plays of Shakespeare before students. Generally, *Tales from Shakespeare* of Charles and Mary Lamb was followed (Ahmed 8-9). The credit of the first translation of Shakespeare into Bengali goes to Charles Monckton of Fort William College. This feat is recorded in the annals of the College (Roebuck 187). It is important to mention here that this Serampore Mission was established in the year 1800 along with that of the Fort William College. But the study of Shakespeare discouraged by the authorities of Serampore Mission. The reason was simple. The most important objective of Serampore Mission was to work for cause of Christianity and for many Shakespeare was a critic of the institution of church. For example, one may look into the difference of Shakespeare's portrayal of Archbishop and Bishop in *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *King Henry IV*, *King Henry V*, *King Henry VI*, *Henry VIII*. While in Holinshed, Scrup, the Archbishop of York was portrayed as a martyr, in Shakespeare's *King Henry IV*, he was portrayed just the opposite way. This attitude of missionaries towards Shakespeare was pointed out by Reverend Lalbehari Dey in *Recollections of Alexander Duff* (qtd. in Ahmed, p. 9). Shakespeare was formally introduced in the educational system of Bengal after the establishment of the centre for higher education in western literature and science on 20 January 1817. The plays of Shakespeare was there in the syllabus of Hindu College, Hooghly College, Krishnanagar College, Oriental Seminary and Hindu Metropolitan College From 1828 to 1853 (Majumdar 99-101) The plays of Shakespeare were in the syllabus of B.A. of the University of Calcutta, though *Troilus and Cressida*, *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, *Timon of Athens* and Shakespeare's sonnets were not included in that syllabus even within the first fifty years of B.A. (Lahiri 176). On 28 January 1882, the Board of studies in English and Other European Languages was formed to include some selected plays of Shakespeare in the syllabus of M.A. in English literature of the University of Calcutta. In 1858, the question setter and the examiner of B.A. examination was William Grappel. Let us have a look into areas which were to be focused on by the students in the exam:

- i) Rapid sketch, with dates of Shakespeare's life
- ii) Consideration of the possibilities as to the extent of Shakespeare's classical education
- iii) Description of the sources of Macbeth
- iv) Explanation of why the text of Shakespeare was unsatisfactory
- v) Comment on Schelegel's statement that Macbeth is the reverse of Hamlet. (Lahiri176).

Now, let us go back to 1840 when the then council of higher education requested Professor David Lester Richardson of Hindu College to compile an anthology of Shakespeare. The syllabus of the time was confined within the contents of the anthology which has sixteen sonnets, selected portions of *The Passionate Pilgrim* and *The Rape of Lucrece*, complete plays entitled *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and some selected dialogues of Sir John Falstaff and some related scenes from *Henry IV* (Shafi Ahmed, p. 14).

Proper accentuation and emotional recitation of Shakespearean texts by eminent teachers of the time influenced generations of students. Among those influential teachers mentions may be made of David Lester Richardson, H. M. Percival, J. C. Scrimjar, E. M. Wheeler, Row, Web, Prafulla Chandra Ghosh, Rabindranarayan Ghosh, Kunjalal Nag, Lalitkumar Bandyopadhyay, Jitendralal Bandyopadhyay, Taraknath Sen, Mahimohon Basu, Amalendu Basu, Sitangshu Maitra etc. (Majumdar 102-110). Bhudeb Mukhopadhyay wrote about Richardson that "He used to read out in a way which cleared up the meanings of most passages, and the very words which were difficult for his Indian students, he used with a marvellous instinct, inspired by his deep sympathy, to take up for explanation" (qtd. in Shafi Ahmed, p. 11)

III

In Performance

The first hundred years of performance of Shakespeare in Bengal may be divided into two parts. First part spans the period between 1780 and 1850 when "the expatriate British community

enjoyed their social evenings at the playhouses run by resident English companies” (Lal and Chaudhuri 7) and the second part spans the period between 1820 to 1920 when we could find more learned and serious approaches towards the genius of the language of the masters’. Shakespearean roles were played by scholars like Henry Derozio, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Krishnamohan Banerjee, Ramtanu Lahiri, Michael Madhusudan Dutt, Rajendralal Mitra, Keshab Chunder Sen, Rajendra Prasad, Sisir Kumar Bhaduri, Suniti Kumar Chatterjee etc.

One of the earliest records of Shakespeare performance at Calcutta could be found on the pages of 11 November 1784 issue of *Calcutta Gazette*. It wrote:

We hear that the tragedy of Hamlet will be performed in the course of next week: but the managers have thought proper to omit the farce of the “Mock Doctor”.

It proves that the tendency to stage Shakespeare in a native way was always there though in Bengal it seldom achieved the recklessness of Parsi theatre that in the course of adaptation almost changed Shakespeare. On 18 November 1784 *Hamlet*, on 18 October 1784 *The Merchant of Venice* and on 23 October of the same year *Romeo and Juliet* was staged in the new Playhouse. On 31 December 1822, the following lines appeared in The India Gazette:

The English recitations from different authors were extremely meritorious and reflect great credit upon the scholars and teachers. A boy of the name Derozio gave a good conception of Shylock.

A student of Drummond’s Dharomtolla Academy, Henry Derozio was then only thirteen. Years passed by. After five years another very interesting event took place in this time. Let us have a look into what the scholars said:

The following extraordinary event occurred at an entertainment given by Sir Charles Metcalfe on December 2, 1827, to the Right Hon’ble the Governor-General and Countess Amherst. The company amounted to about 400 persons comprising all ranks, beauty and fashion of Calcutta. In the course of the evening, a group of visitors made their appearance in the proper costume of Shakespeare’s plays, led by Prospero, and the rear brought up by Dogberry (Carey 1:124-125).

Though various local schools and companies staged selected portions of plays and complete plays of Shakespeare during this period (Brajendranath 25; Das 1: 13-14), I would like to focus only on those presentations which were in Bengali. Regarding the performance of Shakespeare in Bengali Professor Ananda Lal and Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri could cite only six performances up to 1880:

- i) In 1870 a group from Bantra, Howrah performed *Prabhabati*, which is the adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice*, at Beniatola residence of Kartick chandra Bhattacharya. The translator is unknown.
- ii) Performance of *Bhramakautuk* by an unknown group at an unknown stage in 1873. It was a translation of *The Comedy of Errors* by Benimadhab Ghosh.
- iii) Performance of *Kusumkumari* at National Theater on 17 January 1874 and again on 25 April 1874 at the Bengal Theatre and the Great National Theatre. It was an adaptation of *Cymbelin* by Chandrakali Ghosh.
- iv) The performance of *Rudrapal* on 31 October 1874 at the Great National Theatre. It was an adaptation of *Macbeth* by Haralal Ray.
- v) The performance of *Bhimsinha* on 27 February 1875 at the Bengal Theater. It is a translation of *Othello* by Tarinicharan Pal.

I would like sum up this section with the observation that the main features of acting in translated plays of Shakespeare during the nineteenth century, to say the least, were mixed. There was a reflection of real life, simultaneously with the melodramatic flavor infused from the indigenous *jatra*. Speech in acting was usually emotional and recitative. Translators used poetic meters, but they were quite long and different from the original versions of Shakespeare's plays.

IV

In Translations

In the translation of a drama, the extra linguistic context of the written signs claims more importance than the translation of a novel, a short story, a poem or the text of any genre which is

not meant for performance. In a drama, the dialogues are not only to be read but to be heard from the very mouths of the actors who give it life through their gestures as well. Pauses, rhythms, intonation patterns, pitch, loudness and stage decoration including lighting, sets, costumes and music matter a lot in building the meaning. “The supremacy of the literary text” is the result of the creation of “an artificially created distinction” between the literary text and the performative text (Bassnet 124-125). Confusion regarding the orientation of translation marked most of the early translations of Shakespeare.

If we look into the translations of Shakespeare from 1850 to 1872, we can find that there were three kinds of translations: First, literal translations; second, adaptation and; third, cultural translation (Ahsan 29). The translators changed the original titles at random. They introduced native themes, characters and settings to cater to the need of the audience. Yes, it was the demand of that age. Girish Chandra Ghosh once tried to stage an authentic translated version of Macbeth in 1893 (Rudraprasad Sengupta comments in this regard is significant, qtd. in Shafi Ahmed, p. 66) with greats like Tinkari Dasi as Lady Macbeth and comedian Ardhendu Sekhar Mustafi quintupling as Witch, Porter, First Murderer, Old Man and Doctor. And what was the result? It was a miserable flop show. This translation of Girischandra was published in 1899 from Great Eden Press of Calcutta. In his translation Girischandra added five more songs (Ahsan 34). “Amarendra Dutta learnt the lesson that straightforward translation would not work with Bengali Middle-class audience and adapted Hamlet into Hariraj in 1897 which may regarded as the biggest Shakespearean hit on Calcutta’s popular stage” (Lal and Chaudhuri 9).

Around 1805-1809, Charles Monkton of Fort William College translated *The Tempest* into Bengali. The copy of the Translation could not be found (Long 823). In the minutes of the eighth award presentation ceremony of the college, which was held on 18 February 1809, it was written that “...Mr Monkton has undertaken, and has been able to execute, a translation into Bengalee, of Shakespeare’s tragedy (sic) of *The Tempest*. The difficulty of rendering a work of that peculiar stamp, into the language of a nation whose idiom and manners have so little affinity either to the genius of the author or to the times and people for which he wrote, may be easily appreciated” (Roebuck 187). Kindly note the mention of four factors, namely “language” with its particular

“idiom and manners”, “the genius of the author”, “the times” and “the people for which he wrote”, which determined the nature of translations of Shakespeare from then on. However, this translation may be termed as a “premature” one (Clark 46).

In 1843, Gurudas Hajra translated *Romeo and Juliet* into Bengali and named the translation as *Romeo evam Julietera*. It is an adaptation of *Tales from Shakespeare*. It was revised by Kalinath Sarbobhouma and Ganeshchandra Vidyabagish Bhattacharya.

While in 1852, Jogendrachandra Gupta translated *Hamlet* into Bengali as *Kirtibilas*, Muktaram Vidyabagish’s *Apurbopakhyan (1852)* was a summarized adaptation of *Tales from Shakespeare*. (Ghosh 47-49)

Edward Roer’s *Mahakobi Shakespeare pronito nataker mormanurup kotipoy akhyayika* came out in 1853. It was a prosaic summarized translation into Bengali which was published by Vernacular Literature Committee which was formed to assist the School Book Society. The first book published by the Committee was entitled *Lord Clive*. In its introduction, Harachandra Dutta wrote: “The resources of the Bengali language are unbounded...But much of the literature thus provided for the people is confessedly pernicious in its character... in the programme of the vernacular Literature Committee issued in the Calcutta papers, the object of the association is distinctly stated to be not only to *translate* but to *adapt* English authors into Bengali” (Sen 59).

In 1853, Harachandra Ghosh’s *Bhanumati Chittabilash* which was an adaptation of *The Merchant of Venice* got published from Purnochandroday Mudran Jantro of Calcutta. Harachandra Ghosh was neither a professional actor nor a playwright. When he was a student of Hindu College, he took an active role in staging many plays of Shakespeare in English. The “influence of *Jatra* in *Bhanumati Chittabilash* is significant for use of music” (Chowdhury33-34). Harachandra Ghosh added a prayer to Goddess Saraswati and a dance sequence written in Payar in the exposition of the play. In places, he changed the contents of the original play, added new characters, added local tone to the language as well as to the characters. The name “Shylock” was translated as “Lakshyopoti” and “Portia” as “Bhanumoti”. Though Reverend Long praised the translation by saying that in this translation Shakespearean themes were presented in Bengali costumes and the presentation is satisfactory (Ahmed126), Sukumar Sen has wrote that “*Natak hisebe boiti ekebare*

byartha ebong pathyo hisebeo sompurno osarthok. Tobe ekotha swikar korte hobe je Harachandra boitike obhinetobyo natak koria lekhen nai, pathyopustok koria likhiachhilen” (qtd. in Shafi Ahmed, p. 126). Harachandra Ghosh himself wrote in the preface of the translation: “I undertook to write in the shape of a Bengali Natuck or drama taking only the plot and underplots of “The Merchant of Venice” with considerable additions and alternations to suit the native taste” (qtd. in Ahmed127).

Harachandra Ghosh’s translation of *Romeo and Juliet* came out in 1864 with the title of “Charumukh Chittahara” (Calcutta: Canning Mudran Jantro). In Satyendranath Thakur’s *Sushila Birsinha Natak* which was the translation of *Cymbelin* was drenched in native hue. It was published in 1868. Another Bengali translation of the same text by Chandrakali Ghosh was published in 1868. In the same year, Hemchandra Bandyopadhyay’s Bengali translation of *The Tempest* came out with the title of “Nalini Basanta”. In 1872, Kantichandra Vidyaratna’ *Sushila Chandraketu* (Bengali translation of *Twelfth Night*) was published. Then in 1873, Benimadhab Ghosh’s Bengali translation of *The Comedy of Errors* got published. It was entitled “Bhramakautuk”. In 1874, Rabindranath Thakur himself translated *Macbeth* into Bengali. Of that translation, only a few scenes are extant. But they are well known and much discussed. Then again Haralal Ray translated *Macbeth* in 1874. He named the translation as “Rudrapal”. In this translation the witches were replaced by Bhairavis who in the first scene enter the stage and utter “Joy Kali, Korlobodonimaa” and place a trident on the soil. There were also various later references to the worship of Kali. The play was popular, and there were performances even ten years later as attested by the following iconic report in *Masic Prabaha*, vol. 10 no. 2, January 1884:

Obhinoyer kotha ar ki bolibo? Sedin amra rongobhumite ki apurbo byapar dekhilam, taha bolia prakash kora osadhya. Dorshokmondolir modhyo hoite protikhhoyone, ‘loudoga’ (louder), ‘bichutiful’ (Beautiful) beshbhai, probhriti utsahosuchok sumodhur sombhash shobdo bikkhipto hoite lagilo, obosheshe dorshokbrinder niyoto onurodhe ordhopothe obhinoyer porisomapti hoiya gelo.

I would simply like to give an example of the translation:

Macbeth: One cried God bless us, and ‘Amen’ the other,

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands,

Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen'

When they did say God bless us...

Now the translation:

Rudrapal: Ekjon ghumie ghumie bole uthlo 'khun'---ekbar chok mele dekhe tinbaar ramnaam kore abar ghumalo --- ami ramnaam korte gelem, jib arie gelo --- ramnaame amar bishesh proyojon, ami ramnaam korte parlem na. (qtd, in Shafi Ahmed, p. 140)

Pramathanath Basu's *Amarsinha* (Bengali translation of *Hamlet*) came out in 1874. Taraknath Mukhopadhyay translated Macbeth in 1875. In 1875, Tarinicharan Pals *Bhimsinha* (Bengali translation of *Othello*) came out. Then again, Bengali translation of *The Winter's Tale* by Biharilal Adhya got published in 1876 under the title "*Madanmanjari*". Piyarilal Mukhopadhyay's *Suralata* (Bengali translation of *The Merchant of Venice*) was published in 1877. In 1878, Jogendranarayan Das Ghosh's *Ajaysinha o Bilasbati* (Bengali translation of *Romeo and Juliet*) got published. Radhamadhab Kar translated *Romeo and Juliet* in Bengali under the title "*Basantakumari Natak*" in 1878 and in 1878, Kedarnath Ganguli's Bengali translation of *The Tempest* came out. These are the translations of Shakespeares's plays which came out within the first hundred years of the first appearance of Shakespeare's works in Bengal.

Before summing up, some significant trends in the nineteenth century translation of Shakespeare may be pointed out in brief: i) use of rhyme or poetry; ii) ambivalence in the selection of language used in the translation; iii) ignorance of the structure and technique of playwriting and iv) use of music. However, it may be noted that these translations provide an insight into the transcreative minds of the Bengali translators which later evolved, along with its predecessors in the line, into the notion of transcreation popularized by P. Lal.

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Cricket:**The Catalyst of Renaissance for the Global South**SAHIL SAPUI¹**Abstract:**

Cricket was initiated in the Global South by the British colonizers. Initially, it was considered to be a game of the elites as it was only played by the British officers & administrators. Later on, the Indigenous people started to take up cricket, establish clubs & start challenging the supremacy of their colonial masters within the cricketing arena. The game of cricket has undergone a lot of changes during the post-colonial era in the global South. The World Cup victories of nations like the West Indies, India, Pakistan, etc. have showcased that the teams from the Global South are capable of reigning in the international arena of cricket. Recent T20 franchise leagues like IPL, PSL and CPL have put the nations of the Global South into the driver's seat. These leagues are bringing in more investments, more attention from the media & broadcasters, etc. which is fostering the development of cricket at the grassroots level, enhancing the level of the game, making the game more entertaining & continuously expanding its audience base. Therefore, it does not require mentioning that cricket has turned out to be more than just a game in the countries of the Global South. It has been profoundly impacting different spheres like politics, culture, economics, technology, employment, etc. in South Asia, Africa & the Caribbean Islands over the last few decades. The journey of cricket in the Global South will remain unexampled if challenges like the impact of climate changes, hectic schedules, over-commercialization of cricket, etc. can be successfully dealt with thus in this paper we are going to discuss in detail how a game that emerged as a source of resistance for the colonized has turned into a mode of cultural embodiment and eventually a significant pillar of the cultural ethos in Global South with time.

Keywords: Cricket, Global South, T20 franchise, climate changes.

¹ Sahil Sapui is working as a UGC Senior Research Fellow at the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. He can be reached at sahilsapui786@gmail.com.

Introduction:

The game of cricket has a long history & is associated with the cultural & social aspects of the countries in the Global South. Cricket was initiated by the British colonists in the Global South. Initially, it was a symbol of colonial pride & the game was only played by British officers & administrators. Later on, indigenous people started inculcating this game & challenging the dominance of the British colonizers within the cricket field. After the independence of the colonies, the journey of cricket in the Global South has become unprecedented.

However, as noted by Guha (2016), cricket in the Global South has gone beyond the umbrella of its colonial legacy in the late 20th & early 21st Century. Today, 90% of the cricket fans of the world are from South Asia. Cricket has become more than just a game in the regions of the Global South. As noted by James (2013), it has been showcasing its potential to drive cultural, social, economic, & political transformations in recent decades. It has been profoundly acting upon the socio-economic aspects of the lives of people in the countries of the Global South. Cricket has been acting as a prime factor behind the upliftment of the societies in the Global South. It has been facilitating economic upliftment by boosting the number of job opportunities, local businesses & entrepreneurship, infrastructural development, etc. On the other hand, cricket has been fostering social mobility, youth engagement, skill development, women's empowerment, etc. According to Featherstone, et al., (2018), as a cultural unifier cricket is creating the scope of cultural diplomacy between nations. This showcases the effectiveness of cricket as a diplomatic & political tool. By inculcating digital innovations of various kinds it is expanding its global audience & entering into new territories. Moreover, it is also promoting inclusion & diversity in the countries of the Global South.

Cricket as a Colonial Import & its Appreciation by the Colonized:

The game of cricket has been one of the most significant imports from Great Britain to the global south. It had been reshaped & appropriated by the colonized people from various countries of Asia

or Africa. The narrative of cricket from being an epitome of the British colonial power to a significant tool of identity formation, national pride & resistance, is a complex one.

According to Majumdar (2002), during the colonial regime, cricket was considered as a tool of the hegemony of British culture, i.e. as a means of declaring the eliteness of the British values & culture. The colonizers wanted to "civilize" the colonized people by teaching them the values of hierarchy, discipline, fair play, etc. to inculcate a sense of obedience & loyalty amidst the colonized "natives" towards their white masters. Initially, cricket was only played by the British upper-class officers & elites in various exclusive clubs. The first club that was established by the British in South Asia was Calcutta Cricket Club which was established in 1792. In the West Indies, India & other colonies the local people were usually not allowed to enter into these elite clubs. Thus, the social & racial hierarchies of the colonial system were carefully enforced.

Over time, the colonized people started to adopt this game. Initially, it was considered as a means of assimilating into the colonial regime but later on, it was taken into account as a tool of subversion. The colonized people decided to challenge British superiority within the cricketing arena by mastering the game of the British rulers. The first step of the appropriation of cricket in the colonies was the establishment of different local cricket clubs along religious, ethnic or regional lines (Guha, 2003). For example- Parsi, Muslim & Hindu cricket clubs were formed in Bombay (nowadays, Mumbai). Oriental Cricket Club was the first Indian cricket club that was established by the Indians. It was founded by the Parsi community in 1848 in erstwhile Bombay (now Mumbai). Colombo Cricket Club was established in modern-day Sri Lanka in 1832. This marked a crucial moment in the localization of cricket. Moreover, it is noteworthy that the Indian princes & local landlords played a crucial role in the incorporation of cricket into Indian society. Princely States of Indore, Baroda, Nawangar, etc. played a crucial role in promoting this game (Guha, 2003). However, cricket was more of a game of royal households & elites then.

On the other hand, cricket was basically a reflection of the racial & social stratification. In the West Indies, the white planters used to dominate this game of cricket. In spite of this, the black players were slowly entering the cricketing arena & appropriating this game. By the 20th century, cricket turned out to be a crucial tool for the identity & pride of the black people.

Gradually, victories over the British masters on the cricket grounds started to be taken into account as defiances against the colonial regime. According to Featherstone, et al., (2018), this act was particularly evident in the West Indies & India where beating the Englishmen was regarded as a symbolic revenge for decades of colonial domination. The game of cricket became part & parcel of the emerging nationalist ideas & consciousness as the anti-colonial movements started to gather strength in the colonies. For instance- prominent players like C.K. Naidu became a symbol of pride for the Indians during the freedom movement. Cricket matches against England were taken into account as events to test nationalist aspirations & pride. In the West Indies, cricket was considered as a means to claim the black excellence & resistance to the colonial regime. Prominent cricketers like Sir Garfield Sobers & Sir Frank Worrell were considered heroes for their cricketing talent as well as their Caribbean identity.

After acquiring independence from colonial rule, the former colonies of England started to take control over cricket institutions apart from redefining the sport on their terms. For instance- the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) gradually attained prominence & eventually became a very powerful organization in world cricket. According to Majumdar (2002), the style of playing cricket also underwent evaluation as the colonized people adopted the sport. Indian cricketers started to emphasize wristy batting & spin bowling. West Indies acquired much reputation for their dominant fast bowling & aggressive mode of playing cricket. Both of these two approaches marked a shift from the conservative English approach of playing this very game.

In the post-colonial period the teams of the global south, such as the West Indies, Pakistan & India started to dominate the arena of international cricket. Their success in the cricket field has symbolized the broader resurgence of the different post-colonial countries in front of the world. This is significant from the point of view of sports, politics & culture. In today's world, the game of cricket is not a tool of colonial hegemony or a recreation of the elites anymore. India has turned cricket into a colossal cultural & economic enterprise. As noted by Guha (2016), the Indian Premier League (IPL) which was initiated in 2008, created new benchmarks for the global outreach & commercialization of the game of cricket. Therefore, the former colonies of Great Britain are now in the driver's seat & are setting the tune for cricket's future.

The transformation of the game of cricket from being a colonial import to a means of resistance & self-expression reflects the macro dynamics of the cultural appropriation of the post-colonial times. This sport was once utilized by the British to reinforce the domination of the colonial regime. However, eventually, it has been reshaped & appropriated by the very colonized people it was meant to dominate & subjugate. Gradually, the game of cricket turned out to be a great source of empowerment, pride & national identity across the Global South.

Cricket as a Tool for Social & Political Changes: A Unifying Force

Cricket has turned out to be a powerful tool for fostering political & social changes in the Global South. The game of cricket has the potential to transcend race, class, & political divides. This has made this game a force of progress & unity, especially in the developing countries of Asia, Africa of the West Indies which are already torn by pre-existing social fractures.

In countries like Pakistan, India and West Indies, cricket has been a great avenue for people from disadvantaged backgrounds to attain social mobility. Players from marginalized or poor communities like Wasim Akram (Pakistan) or M.S. Dhoni (India) have acquired international fame. Their success has highlighted that cricketing success is accessible to all regardless of their socio-economic background. In South Africa, Cricket played a crucial role in dismantling the curse of racism. The success of Makhaya Ntini has showcased that black cricketers can attain much success in the international arena too. Ntini has turned out to be a beacon of the deprived & marginalized people in South Africa, symbolizing progress towards equality & integration of all races.

As noted by Wagg and Gemmell (2012), cricket has been utilized as a tool of diplomacy to bridge the gaps between nations. The "cricket diplomacy" concept between Pakistan & India is noteworthy in this case. The Indian men's cricket team toured Pakistan in 2004 & this eased the political tensions between the two nations to a large extent. Cricket has also been serving as a launchpad for political careers in different countries of the Global South. For instance- Imran Khan, the 1992 World Cup-winning captain of Pakistan has transitioned himself into a political

leader & eventually acquired the seat of the Prime Minister in Pakistan. His success in the cricketing arena has provided him with much credibility aside from a suitable platform from where he could challenge the entrenched powers in the political sphere.

In the West Indies, the game of cricket had become a symbol of resistance against the British colonial power. The success of black cricketers like Garry Sobers, Sir Vivian Richards etc. is to be regarded as a kind of protest against racial subjugation. Victories over England were celebrated as an assertion of black identity, dignity & pride over the former colonial rulers.

Cricket was also an integral part of various social movements in the Global South. During the apartheid era in South Africa, the international boycott of the South African cricket team was part & parcel of the bigger effort to do away with the racial injustice of the apartheid rule. Nelson Mandela used sports including cricket to facilitate reconciliation & unity among the white & black people in South Africa. Similarly, the protest of cricketers from various countries in solidarity with the "Black Lives Matter" movement by wearing black badges during international games was very significant.

According to Guha (2003), the West Indies cricket team has been a representation of cricketers from different island nations highlighting the value of cricket as a regional unifier. Players like Brian Lara or Sir Viv Richards have been pan-Caribbean symbols of excellence & pride. Cricket has been uniting the Caribbean islands that have diverse histories, languages & cultures. The cricket rivalry in the Global South has been very intense. However, the success of one nation's team is usually celebrated across territorial borders. The World Cup victories of Pakistan & India in 1992 & 1983, respectively were significant moments of pride for plenty of people across the region.

Cricket as a common language, has been a great tool for bridging the generational gaps & unifying societies. In many nations, cricket conversations foster the passion for the game & bridge the gap between people from different social, racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. As noted by Wagg and Gemmell (2012), the "World Cup Fever" has been creating a sense of shared celebration in the countries of the Global South. For instance, the 2019 Cricket World Cup Final between England & New Zealand has glued billions of fans from Pakistan, India & the West Indies

to the television or computer screens. This showcases the power of cricket to unite people across the globe.

The Indian Premier League (IPL) highlights the commercialization of the game of cricket aside from showcasing the unifying power of this game. Players from different cricket-playing nations share the same dressing rooms & play for the same franchise teams for more than a month, every year. This symbolizes camaraderie & international collaboration. This tournament brings together players from different countries, including the local players of India. Fans from other nations of the Global South enjoy this tournament, creating a great global community & blurring the territorial borders of countries.

Commercialization of Cricket: Role Played by Media & Broadcasters

Cricket in the Global South has witnessed a transformative commercialisation in recent decades. In the cricket-playing nations of South Asia like Sri Lanka, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh & the Caribbean Islands this has revolutionized both the game & its financial aspects. Broadcasters & media have been playing a pivotal role in this entire procedure. They are shaping the way cricket is being consumed, monetized & marketed in the Global South.

The advent of various T20 Leagues in the countries of the Global South like Pakistan Super League (PSL), Indian Premier League (IPL), Caribbean Premier League (CPL), etc. has paved the way for the commercialization of cricket. According to Featherstone, et al., (2018), these T20 leagues attract colossal investments from sponsors, advertisers & broadcasters. These leagues have become the platforms for celebrity endorsements, corporate branding, global viewership, etc.

Various multinational & transnational companies like the Tata Group, Pepsico, etc. are taking into account these T20 leagues to reach a massive audience, especially in India where cricket is almost regarded as a religion. The top brands aim to leverage this opportunity to market & advertise their names whereas the cricket boards get immense benefit owing to the inclusion of huge amounts of money. Particularly owing to these T20 leagues the salaries of players have skyrocketed. Various franchises owned by business tycoons & heavy investment of different

entertainment companies in players, infrastructure & coaches contribute to this factor significantly. However, this is contributing to a gradual shift from the conservative formats of the game in which the national cricket councils used to exercise extensive control over the cricketers. Commercialization of cricket in the Global South has brought the attention of the global audience to the domestic leagues of these countries where reputed international players are taking part. This has diversified the audience & fanbase of this sport too.

One factor that has contributed massively to the commercialization of cricket is the sale of the right to broadcast the game. As noted by Majumdar (2018), various television companies like Sony, Sky Sports, and ESPN, are paying massive amounts of money to gain broadcasting rights for cricketing events like IPL, bilateral series or ICC World Cups. This revenue has eventually become the primary source of revenue for the cricket boards in the Global South. The media rights auction of IPL in 2022 has raised more than 6 billion USD which highlights the actual value of the televised version of cricket. The advent of various digital platforms like Sony Liv, YouTube, and Hotstar has transformed the broadcasting of this game even further as the fans are relying on their smartphones to stream live matches, increasingly. This has paved the way for new streams of revenue through in-app advertising & subscription models. The media channels have started to provide 24/7 media coverage of cricket including pre-match shows, special programming focusing on the game or post-match analysis. This has been generating ad revenue & viewer interest by constantly keeping cricket in the spotlight in the countries of the Global South.

Social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc. have democratized the consumption of cricket. Fans can follow live player updates, commentary, match highlights etc. This has created the scope of new sponsorship opportunities too. As noted by James (2013), there is the immense popularity of cricket in the countries of the Global South & the advertising companies are targeting to capitalize this popularity. The advertisements before or during cricket matches are bringing in a lot of revenue for the cricket teams & the broadcasters.

Broadcasters have played a crucial role in stretching the reach of leagues like CPL or IPL to the entire world. This is increasing the interest of people from non-traditional cricket-playing nations in cricket too. Media houses often focus on rivalries, controversies, player stories, etc. to

make the game compelling enough for the fans to ensure sustained viewership throughout the tournaments. The advent of the T20 format of the game occurred owing to the increasing demands of the broadcasters for the shorter formats of the game to make it appealing to wider audiences aside from fitting with the TV schedules. As noted by Wagg (2005), this has made cricket more entertainment-driven & fast-paced in the countries of the Global South. Owing to the impact of media, cricket has become a broader kind of entertainment from an out-and-out-competitive sport. The inculcation of live music, cheerleaders, & opening ceremonies in T20 leagues like the IPL showcases the trend.

The commercialization of cricket in the various countries of the Global South has occurred owing to the activities of the broadcasters & media. They have transformed this game into a multi-billion-dollar industry with a huge audience base. Digital streaming, television rights, corporate sponsorships, creation of the aura of global cricketing superstars by media have transformed cricket into a commercial & cultural powerhouse. However, it also brings in the concern about balancing between entertainment & the game as cricket is constantly being reshaped by the demands of the advertisers & broadcasters in the Global South.

Employment Opportunities: The Advent of Franchise Cricket

According to Majumdar (2013), the initiation of franchise cricket in the countries of the Global South has profoundly acted upon employment opportunities. The advent of the Pakistan Super League (PSL), Indian Premier League (IPL), and Caribbean Premier League (CPL) has significantly impacted employment opportunities in a number of ways.

These franchise leagues offer great opportunities for the local players to demonstrate their skills. These leagues usually provide better financial packages than the traditional domestic tournaments. Emerging talents can earn massive amounts of money that can boost their cricketing careers. Especially, the players from underprivileged backgrounds massively benefited because of the financial compensations of these franchise leagues. Nowadays, a lot of skilful players from lesser-known countries or associate nations are being auctioned in these leagues. This enables these

players to enhance their level aside from earning a lot of money which is usually more than whatever they earn in their nations (Majumdar, 2018). With the advent of women's franchise leagues like the Women's IPL popularly known as WPL, the opportunities available for the female cricketers are gradually increasing, in the countries of the Global South. This is creating the base of gender parity in the cricketing field.

As noted by Guha (2016), these franchise leagues have escalated the demands for skilful physios, coaches, fitness trainers, etc. in the global south. The demand for specialist support staff like throw-down specialists, etc. is also going up. The retired ace cricketers often take up the job of coaches. Thus, these franchise leagues are also providing post-playing career opportunities. These leagues are creating the scope of employing a lot of individuals in management & administrative jobs. Organizing tournaments, managing franchise teams, & overseeing logistics require adept professionals who possess excellent skills in the sphere of event management, operations & sports management.

These franchise leagues foster the development of the local economy as well. These tournaments bring in massive investments in the cricket stadiums & associated infrastructure. This escalates the demand for workers in construction jobs & thereby boosting the economic activities at the regional level. The massive influx of media professionals, fans, international visitors, etc. during such tournaments creates a lot of job opportunities in the hospitality sector countries of the Global South. As noted by Wagg (2005), people get employed in transportation services, restaurants, hotels, etc. Moreover, it creates a massive scope of employment in the sphere of media & broadcasting. As meticulous media coverage is required in the case of these tournaments, there comes immense demand for digital content creators, commentators, broadcasters, sports journalists, etc. For the sake of establishing their brand value, the franchises massively rely on media & marketing. This opens up employment opportunities for a lot of individuals in the countries of the Global South. The franchise teams often need dedicated professionals to manage their social media pages adequately to deal with fan engagement and manage social media presence aside from promoting the brand of the franchise all over the world. The popularity of the franchise led teams to the sales of merchandise. This helps in the creation of various types of jobs in the

sphere of production, design, and retail of various types of memorabilia like jerseys, caps, etc. The vendors in the local market immensely benefited by the selling of fan merchandise & other related items during matches in the countries of the Global South.

The franchises in the T20 leagues concentrate on data-driven decision-making procedures. This has massively escalated the demand for technology experts & sports analysts who are capable enough to evaluate & interpret the performance data of various players. With the recent advent of online gaming platforms, fantasy cricket leagues, etc. technology-based employment opportunities have been going up. As noted by James (2013), thus an amalgamation of traditional sports & the digital economy has been made by franchise cricket in the countries of the Global South.

The franchises often focus on the grassroots development of cricket. They invest massively in grassroots programs to find out & nurture future talents. The initiatives that the franchises take into account to bring up future stars of cricket offer a lot of employment, mentoring & coaching opportunities at the local level. Many franchises also take up Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives by standing by the regional communities through health, education, development programs, etc. This creates the opportunity for further employment under the umbrella of these franchise leagues in the countries of the Global South.

Thus, franchise cricket leagues have provided great employment opportunities not only for cricketers but also for professionals who are qualified in areas like media, retail, technology, broadcasting, sports administration, etc. The financial ripple effect of these various franchise tournaments stretches far beyond the cricketing arena in the countries of the Global South. Thus, these leagues contribute significantly to the growth of employment opportunities & the overall economy in the Global South.

The Future Assumptions about Cricket in the Global South

Various factors & trends are likely to shape the future of this game in the countries of the Global South. The franchise leagues are likely going to dominate in the upcoming years as well. T20 franchise tournaments like the IPL, CPL, or PSL are going to keep expanding in terms of their

global reach, viewership & financial clout. These leagues might give more opportunities to more players from non-traditional cricket-playing nations in the upcoming years. This is going to increase the footprint of cricket in the new markets across Southeast Asia & Africa. In the upcoming years, more investments are likely to be poured into women's cricket with the rise of women's franchise leagues like WPL. This is likely to abate the gender disparities in the cricketing arena aside from fostering more opportunities for female cricketers in the countries of the Global South.

According to Majumdar (2013), franchise cricket is gaining the attention of private investors. Big businesspersons & multinational companies are likely to pour more money into facilities, teams, associated infrastructure, etc. This will give the sport a more professionalized outlook aside from enhancing its commercial visibility across the countries of the Global South. The dominance of broadcasting companies & digital streaming platforms is very likely to increase with time. This will provide global access to the franchise cricket leagues that are taking place in the different countries of the Global South. The traditional broadcasters will be pouring more money into acquiring the rights to broadcast these tournaments. On the other hand, the online streaming platforms will be taking into account more innovative measures to ensure the engagement of the fans with this sport, thereby increasing the audience base of cricket across the globe.

The emerging nations in global cricket may showcase a rise in performance & participation. African nations like Uganda, Kenya, Namibia, & Southeast Asian countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, etc. may come up as the new cricketing giants of the world. More bilateral series, tours or franchise leagues can accelerate the growth of cricket in these regions. Countries from the Middle East like Qatar, UAE, etc. have already invested a lot of resources to host cricket tournaments. Owing to their top-notch infrastructure, influx of expat population, etc. these countries can become the new hubs of cricket in the world (Majumdar, 2018).

Technology will play a pivotal role in shaping the game of cricket in the upcoming decades. Data & technology are constantly being utilized to assess the performance of the players & chalk out the strategies before games. Therefore, technology is going to be crucial in team management.

To combat the cricket-playing giants like England, Australia, etc., the less-known cricket-playing nations of the Global South are going to increasingly bank on technology & data analytics. Cricket is going to provide the fans with more immersive experiences for the fans. Various digital apps, and technologies like Augmented Reality (AR), Virtual Reality (VR) etc. are going to be increasingly utilized for enhancing the engagement of the fans with this game. This can attract young people & thereby expand the global fanbase of this sport.

As noted by James (2013), in the upcoming years, formalized partnerships are going to shape up between the national boards & franchise leagues to find out & develop new talents from the regional level. This will bring in more focus & investments in the training facilities, youth academies, junior cricket tournaments, etc. As noted by Wagg (2005), as plenty of players are taking part in the various franchise leagues all over the world, the talent pool is going to expand. Moreover, this will also enhance the competitiveness among the national teams. Some countries of the Global South that have already made their initial strides in the international cricketing arena, like Bangladesh & Afghanistan will immensely benefit from this.

Cricket might turn out to be a crucial tool for fostering social changes in the upcoming years. The CSR approaches of the franchise leagues will benefit the local communities by focusing on the eradication of inequality, poverty, gender discrimination, etc. Amid the cricket-playing countries of the Global South, especially in South Asia, cricket is going to play a significant role in diplomacy. This sport might be increasingly leveraged to facilitate cultural exchange & international diplomacy programs.

However, certain challenges can wreck the unparalleled journey of cricket in the Global South. Climate change can act upon the conditions & cricket schedule in the upcoming years with unpredictable behaviour, increasing temperature & extreme weather events. This can disrupt the training routines & matches of the cricketers shortly. The rapid rise of T20 franchise cricket has raised concerns regarding the future of traditional formats of the game like Test cricket. According to Majumdar (2013), creating a proper balance between the economic allure of the franchise leagues & the preservation of the longer & traditional formats of the game will be quite challenging for the cricket boards in the cricket-playing countries of the Global South. Moreover, excessive

commercialization of the game can isolate the traditional fans of cricket or can give the game away too much corporate outlook. This can massively hamper the cultural identity of cricket in the countries of the Global South.

In recent years, momentum has rapidly increased to include cricket in the Olympics. This can bring in more funding & attention to the sports, especially in the emerging cricket-playing nations of the Global South. The inclusion of cricket in the Olympics can further enhance the popularity of this game. Historically, this sport has always been tied to its colonial legacies in the countries of the Global South. However, the modern evolution of cricket is constantly being shaped by regional identities & local cultures. As the game is going to continue to evolve beyond its colonial heritage, cricket is very likely to reflect more regional symbols, local narratives, & cultural importance in the upcoming years.

Conclusion:

Cricket has been providing different types of opportunities for social mobility, economic upliftment, political diplomacy, cultural unification, etc. in the countries of the Global South. It possesses the potential to facilitate holistic development in the regions of Southeast Asia, Africa, the Caribbean Islands, etc. Thus, cricket has become a tool of renaissance that is paving the way for the resurgence of the Global South in the world.

The future of the game of cricket in the countries of the Global South looks quite promising. This game is acquiring a wider range of global audiences aside from increasing inclusive participation & economic backing. However, there are certain challenges that are required to be addressed adequately. Certain challenges are associated with climate change & these can devastate the schedule of the tournaments in the upcoming years. Moreover, there are challenges in terms of over-commercialization of the game which can disrupt the traditional culture of cricket in the countries of the Global South. Aside from this, the national cricket boards in the Global South will have to figure out adequate measures for balancing the different formats of the game, namely- test cricket, one-day cricket & T20 cricket. This balancing will be very much needed to sustain the

growth of the game in the upcoming years. Various technological innovations ought to be inculcated to enhance the efficiency of the game. More investments have to be poured into grassroots development in order to look for future talents & nurture them properly. A socially conscious approach has to be taken into account in order to redefine the role of cricket in the countries of the Global South in the future.

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**Navigating the Labyrinth of Otherness:
A Postcolonial Intervention and Identity Formation in Hailu's
Novel, *The Conscript***

DESBELE TECKLE TEFAMARIAM¹

Abstract:

This article examines the intricate interplay of Otherness and identity in Hailu's novel, *The Conscript*, focusing on the relationships among various colonized cultural groups and the internal struggles of the protagonist, Tuquabo. Through a postcolonial lens, the study reveals how Otherness manifests within the black community in Port-Sudan, as Ethiopians and Eritreans perceive the Sudanese as inferior, while the Sudanese view the *Askaris* as slaves. The analysis also explores the complexities of self and 'Other' within the conscripted Askaris' experiences as they journey from Eritrea to Libya, encountering different cultures, landscapes, and religious beliefs. Furthermore, the article investigates the role of external factors such as colonization, climate, and cultural differences in shaping perceptions of self and 'Other'. Drawing on Homi Bhabha's concept of identity as a constructed image, the study highlights the transformations and evolving understandings of self and 'Other' among the conscripted *Askaris*. This exploration of Otherness and identity in *The Conscript* deepens our understanding of the impacts of colonialism, the fluid nature of identity, and the need for empathy in bridging divides between self and 'Other'.

Keywords: Labyrinth, Otherness, Postcolonial, Identity, Hailu.

¹ Desbele Teckle Tesfamariam is working as a Lecturer at the Department of Language and Literature, College of Business and Social Sciences (CBSS), Eritrea. He can be reached at desbeleteckle@gmail.com.

Introduction:

In the novel *The Conscript* by Abba Gebreyesus Hailu, readers are transported to the tumultuous era of Italian colonial rule in Eritrea during the early 20th century. This article explores the historical context of Italian colonization in Eritrea and the experiences of the Eritrean people through the lens of Hailu's powerful narrative. With a deep understanding of his people's language and culture, Hailu skillfully captures the struggles and challenges faced by the colonized population. Through the story of the protagonist, Tuquabo, who is forcibly conscripted into the Italian colonial army, Hailu delves into themes of identity, resistance, and the resilience of the Eritrean people. By examining the dynamics of power, oppression, and cultural suppression depicted in the novel, I navigate the complexities of postcolonial societies and their impact on identity formation. The notion of the 'Other' is crucial in postcolonial studies which touches question of identity.

The 'Other' involves justifying the dominance of certain groups to subordinate others. The 'Other' refers to marginalized or subjugated individuals and communities who are considered different or inferior by the dominant culture. Postcolonial theorists like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak argue that the 'Other' is defined in relation to the dominant group and is shaped through discourses of difference and subordination. This concept reveals power dynamics, representation, and identity issues influenced by colonialism. It also explores how colonialism has affected identities, knowledge systems, and cultural practices. Postcolonial works of literature often reflect on the 'Other', and authors like Ngugi Wa Thiongo, Achebe, and Walcott have depicted the historical reality of colonization. In the novel *The Conscript*, the Italian colonizers dominate and dehumanize the Eritrean Askaris, exemplifying the self-mirroring and control dynamics of colonialism. While Hailu's recognition is limited compared to renowned West African authors, his portrayal highlights the dehumanization inherent in colonial domination.

Families and Individuals as the Other in *The Conscript*

The Conscript begins with the sense of uncertainty and vulnerability that Tuquabo feels as he embarks on his journey to a foreign land. “He put down his gun beside him, knelt down before his parents, and asked ‘My mother and father bless me, for I do not know what my fate will be in Tripoli’” (3). The condemnation and questioning from the crowd reveal the societal expectations and judgments placed on individuals who choose to leave their families and engage in conflict. “What a cruel son! How could he leave his old parents behind” (8)? These elements and statements demonstrate the complexities of Otherness, including the emotional distance between Tuquabo and his parents, the collective response to his departure, and the tensions between individual desires and societal expectations.

From a postcolonial perspective, the author in his first chapter of the novel reflects the theme of the influence of colonialism on individuals and communities. Tuquabo's decision to join the army and fight in Libya is evident as a response to the influence of colonial powers and the glorification of war in society. The story portrays the complex dynamics of power and control, as well as the emotional toll that colonialism and war inflict on families and individuals. In this sense, the notion of the ‘Other’ in this chapter refers to those who are marginalized or excluded by the dominant culture or power structure. In this case, Tuquabo and his family is evident as the ‘Other’ within the colonial context.

Tuquabo's parents, as members of a marginalized community, have already experienced the loss of their other children. Their worries and anxieties about Tuquabo's safety in Tripoli reflect the vulnerability and precariousness of their position as the ‘Other’. “His parents were speechless” (3). They are deeply affected by the dominant culture's glorification of war and the pressure for young men to join the military. The narrator tells readers, “Tuquabo was dressed in a gray uniform with a colorful belt that embellished his waist, and from his ankle to his knee was bandaged with a thick strip of cloth that looked like a horse blanket” (3).

Within these family units, individuals may hold differing views on the war based on their personal experiences, beliefs, and values. The Eritrean chiefs beg, “Lord, don't let us be dormant, please bring us war” (7). Some may see themselves as part of the cause or identify with the goals and motivations of one side in the conflict, considering it as a struggle for justice. However, there are those who view the war as detrimental, perhaps due to concerns about the loss of life, destruction, or the potential for further violence and instability. “We feel orphaned. Why do you wish to fight for a foreigner? What use is it for you and your people to arm yourselves and fight overseas?” (8).

This division within families highlights the complexity of identity formation and the negotiation of allegiances in the postcolonial context. It demonstrates that individuals within a shared cultural or societal framework can have divergent perspectives on matters related to politics, power, and conflict. These differing opinions are influenced by factors such as personal experiences, historical legacies, and the interplay between tradition and modernity.

By acknowledging the existence of multiple viewpoints within families, readers can gain insight into the intricacies of identity construction and the diverse ways in which individuals engage with the complexities of postcolonial societies. The recognition of these differences fosters a thorough analysis of power dynamics, social inequalities, and the ongoing struggles for justice and equality that are inherent in postcolonial contexts that is to say the book reflects ‘Other’ and self within the families and individuals. Hailu reflects it plainly:

One person inquired of another why thousands of people were passing by. “It is today that the soldiers are going to Tribuli. Let's go and see.” Another was saying that it is not really appealing to see people wailing in their misery and sadness. Anyone who doesn't feel a pinch in that situation really is devoid of human feeling. (11)

Colonized as the ‘Other’: Unveiling Subtle Forms of Othering by the Colonizers in *The Conscript*

Another important aspect which the paper highlights is that the power dynamics in the relationship between the ruling power and the subjugated population. Tuquabo's desire to fight in Libya is

influenced by the idea of gaining fame; “His ambition may also have been influenced by those *Habesha* chiefs who said they hated to sit idle” (7) and proving his valor, which aligns with the expectations imposed by the colonial power. The community's response, with some condemning Tuquabo's decision while others glorify it, represents the internalized effects of colonial ideologies and the internal divisions that emerge within the colonized community.

The narrator in the book reveals the dire situation of the people within their own capital city and the mistreatment they endure at the hands of the colonizers. The Italians beat “with a whip like a donkey” (12) The Italians are depicted as brutally beating the *Askaris*, referring to them as “weak donkeys” (47) and treating them with utmost cruelty. As in “Self-Representation in the Contact Zone: An Autoethnographic Reading of *The Conscript*” the researcher says “fear and punishment tactics are used to control the *Askari*” (Hughes Waldick 33). The narrator witnesses the dehumanization of the black soldiers, stating that even “dogs fared better; they at least ate their masters' leftovers” (46).

The book also discloses straightforwardly through its narrator's report as the Black soldiers gear up to confront the White Libyans, the Italian commander delivers a speech to the *Askaris*, intending to inspire them. However, the speech primarily revolves around the commander's self-reflection, revealing racial prejudices and depicting the colonized individuals as intimidating beings and formidable entities. In “Whiteness, racism, and identity.” the Otherness has put and has been described as “whiteness is the ideological counterpart of race relations, both of the ways of skirting around the relations of political, social and economic power that have determined the place of”(Fields 9) the colonized *Habesha* in Italian time. In *The Conscript*, the commander says:

black Eritrean *Askari*! Those whom you are now going to fight against are but a bunch of shepherds. You may perhaps be frightened because they are whites. However, they are not like us. (27)

The above quoted highlighting the commander's emphasis on the immense importance and superiority attributed to whiteness. Intricately, the Otherness is mirrored and indelibly etched into the psyche. “Rooted in racism, the dominance –subjugation relationship between the Eritreans and

the Italians represents both an ideological and an active manifestation of domination over somebody who is considered as inferior being” (Hughes Waldick 33).

Though Nir Arielli witnesses “Eritrean troops were the key to crushing the revolt in Cyrenaica” (Arielli 55), in the novel, Hailu portrays them as dehumanized beings. He uses animals such as dogs, donkeys, monkeys, hyenas, vultures, camels, and flies to symbolize the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed. The natives are depicted as being treated no better than animals, subjected to brutalization and dehumanization. Furthermore, the colonized often referred to as animalization or zoological representation. This system of dehumanizing and reducing individuals from colonized communities to the status of animals, reinforcing oppressive power dynamics and perpetuating stereotypes. The translator of *The Conscript* notes “the evils of colonialism-that is, the abuse and misuse of the colonized” (xii) is enormous. This representation reflects the situation of colonized which is purely considering as ‘Other’, “master-slave” (Hughes Waldick 33) relationship.

Portrayal of Self and ‘Other’ in *The Conscript*:

The actions of the colonizers in the novel highlight the dynamics of Selfness and Otherness. The country, which should belong to the natives, becomes an alien world where they are marginalized and estranged. As Frantz Fanon explores in his book *The Wretched of the Earth*, the question of “Who am I in reality?” (Fanon 182), becomes relevant to every conscripted *Askari* in the novel. The weeping and wailing of the crowd indicate a sense of alienation and marginalization. The moments of dehumanization lead to immense confusion and disturbance, exceeding what one can imagine, “the confusion and disturbance were beyond imagining” (12).

The colonizers, following a pattern seen throughout history, implemented discriminatory rules and laws that separated the native population from the settlers. They consistently pursued segregation through means such as education, religion, infrastructure, and other methods aimed at diluting, suppressing, and assimilating the natives. During the imperialism of Italians, “there were at least four areas within which an essential difference between colonizers and colonized was articulated during the Liberal period [...] it is in relation to the issues of Italian citizenship,

intermarriage, education, and penal justice” (Sòrgoni 41) revealing restricted several areas highlighted the essential differences between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Thus, throughout the entire novel, the theme of the oppressor over the colonized population, particularly the Italians over the natives, is consistently depicted. The narrator employs various metaphors that objectify the black natives and their circumstances, such as referring to them as the “black train,” (12) “black tick smoke,” (12) “black track,” (12) and “nine in the evening” (12). These deliberate objectifications serve to reinforce the power dynamics and highlight the stark contrast between the oppressor and the oppressed. As a result, readers witness the colonized individuals crying while the whites maintain control and dominance over them. The narrator enriches the Otherness:

The Italian officers seated themselves on an upper deck apart from the rest. As for the *Habesha*, they were stationed in the open, where there is no shelter from the sun's heat and rain, a place where you put animals. (14)

In *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha discusses “that familiar alignment of colonial subjects – Black/White, Self/Other – is disturbed with one brief pause and the traditional grounds of racial identity are dispersed” (Bhabha 58) leading to a dispersal of those established grounds of racial identity. This disruption of racial identity categories is reflected in *The Conscript*, where both the colonizers and the colonized are incomparable, creating a clear distinction between the Self and the ‘Other’ from the very beginning. The speech of the commander, in *The Conscript*, explicates the several qualities of the self and ‘Other’. The white oppressor says:

We alone are the brave whites; we, Italians, your masters. Hence, beat him (the enemy); do not be afraid of him. If we happen to find goats, camels, cattle, donkeys, or sheep, we will give you some to slaughter and eat. However, woe unto him who finds gold, silver, or any similar item and keeps it for himself. I shall flog his bare bottom with fifty-five lashes of the whip in front of everyone. Now then, have you heard?! I am the owner of all the spoils. I am your master; everything you find you hand it to me. You should feel gratified and privileged for fighting under the Italian banner. We, the Italian government, are great; we have ships, trains, guns, rifles, and airplanes. For this reason, you should fight well for

us.” He finished by stating that they must all repeat as he shouted, “*Viva l'Italia; Viva Emanuele, our king!*” (27-28)

The colonized individuals (referred to as the ‘Other’) are portrayed as subservient and inferior to the Italians, who consider themselves as the brave and superior whites. The Italian commander emphasizes their dominance and ownership over the colonized population, asserting their role as masters. The language used underscores a clear power dynamic, with the commander asserting control over resources and imposing strict punishments for any defiance. The colonized are depicted as reliant on the Italians for sustenance, as indicated by the promise of providing animals for slaughter and consumption. However, the mention of severe consequences for keeping valuable items reflects the perception of the colonized as untrustworthy or prone to theft.

Furthermore, the commander's speech reflects a self-centered perspective, highlighting their authority and entitlement. The repeated emphasis on their ownership of spoils, the reference to Italian government's grandeur, and the boasting of their superior resources (ships, trains, guns, rifles, and airplanes) serve to reinforce their perceived superiority over the colonized population.

The self is reflected in the commander's speech through the affirmation of their power and control, reinforcing the image of the Italians as masters. The speech aims to instill a sense of gratitude and privilege among the colonized for fighting under the Italian banner, further reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed.

Otherness in between Colonized Cultural Groups in *The Conscript*:

Otherness is not limited to the relationship between colonizers and the colonized in Hailu's novel, *The Conscript*. It also reflects the dynamic interactions and relationships between various segments of the black community in Port-Sudan, where Ethiopians and Eritreans, collectively referred to as *Habesha*, have gathered. The Ethiopians view the Sudanese as inferior, proclaiming, “These black people! They could never be superior to us” (16), suggesting their belief in their own superiority. Conversely, the Sudanese describe the *Askaris* (Ethiopian and Eritrean soldiers) as starving individuals who are solely concerned with obtaining bread and money, likening them to “slaves” (16). In this context, the author highlights the emptiness and judgment within people of the same

skin color, as they bitterly critic each other while holding a sense of superiority or inferiority, “they could never be superior to us, both harshly judging each other” (16-17). Despite having a similar skin color, each group regards the other as the ‘Other’. This emphasizes “the inferior position” (Sòrgoni 1) assigned to the colonized people, as Barbara points out. Judging among each-other could not come from nowhere. Fanon, in *The Fact of Black Skin White Mask*, specifically in the section “The Negro and Psychopathology,” demonstrates that “magazines often depict symbols of evil, such as the Wolf, the Devil, the Evil Spirit, the Bad Man, or the Savage, using Negroes or Indians” (Fanon 113). This deliberate representation influences the perceptions ingrained in the minds of various individuals. Moreover, the idea that ‘there is no innocent knowledge’ is often associated with feminist and postcolonial scholars who engage with epistemology, such as Linda Alcoff and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak also encapsulates a broader critique of traditional epistemological frameworks that tend to be biased, limited, and shaped by power structures. It reflects the understanding that knowledge production is influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts, and therefore, it holds significant position to critically examine and challenge dominant knowledge systems. That presentation and portrayal is deliberate. The novelist of *The Conscript* also ridicules the ill-thoughts of these two groups by introducing a dolphin, a sea-animal, to remind them that human love should be sufficient, indirectly mocking their judgments in the novel.

All in all, the encounter between the Ethiopian soldiers and the Sudanese people in Port Sudan illustrates the tensions and prejudices that arise between different colonized groups. Both sides harbor negative stereotypes and prejudices about each other, reflecting the internalized effects of colonization. Postcolonial theorists would examine these dynamics as a result of the divide-and-conquer strategies employed by colonial powers, which perpetuated divisions and hostilities among colonized communities.

The conscripted soldiers in *The Conscript* come from different backgrounds and countries, leading to a sense of one group boasting over the other due to the lack of natural resources. For example, the Ethiopian conscripted *Askaris* come from a “landlocked” (18) country without access to the sea. The narrator describes their sentiments, expressing, “my country is low and

underdeveloped compared to the rest of the world's kingdoms because it lacks the sea, which simultaneously makes people closed off and ignorant” (18). This marginalizes their own identity, making them feel like ‘Others’. However, the *Askaris* from Eritrea, having a long coastline, may not share this feeling of inferiority.

Throughout the novel, this group of people often refers to themselves as ‘Self’ and ‘Other’ when encountering different people and cultures along the way to Libya. For example, unlike the Ethiopians, the group encounters the lands of Egypt and Israel from a distance. Being followers of Christianity, they perceive themselves as superior to others. They have reverence for places mentioned in the Bible, as the narrator states, “An Ethiopian has respect for places named in the Bible” (19). The concept of self and ‘Other’, for this particular group of people in the book, changes based on the similarities and differences in their cultures. Religion, as one aspect of their identity, plays a significant role in shaping their perception of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, especially for the Ethiopian and Eritrean *Askaris*. When they encounter Egypt and the Egyptians, they see it as “the holy city and the home of the Patriarch of the Coptic Church, Patriarch Markos Eskenderia” (20). The familiarity with the many modern cities mentioned in their Bible adds to their sense of identity. They experience immeasurable happiness when they witness the position of the Patriarch, momentarily setting aside any frustrations they may have had with certain religious leaders in their own country who had caused disruptions.

The encounter with significant religious sites and cultural similarities along their journey further reinforces the notion of ‘Self’ and Other for the Ethiopian and Eritrean *Askaris*. The experiences in Egypt and Israel, which hold biblical significance, evoke a deep connection and sense of belonging for them. Their biblical knowledge becomes a tool for identification and validation.

In contrast, the Ethiopian *Askaris* also carry a sense of disappointment and resentment towards certain religious leaders from their own country. They reflect on the troubles caused by some patriarchs who were sent from the same place to Ethiopia, highlighting the discrepancy between the idealized image of their faith and the reality of religious leaders who have caused turmoil. “The wickedness of some of the patriarchs who were sent from that same place to Ethiopia

and gave the people so much trouble” (20). This adds complexity to their perception of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’, as they grapple with conflicting experiences and representations within their own cultural context.

The conscripted Askaris in the novel encounter various groups of people, including Sudanese, Israelis, Egyptians, and Libyans, each embodying the dynamics of ‘Self’ and ‘Other’. The Libyans, who follow the Islamic faith, view the *Habesha* or *Askaris* as mere animals, disregarding their humanity. “Did you see the *Habesha* dog who sold his life for money? Let him be.’ Beware, *Habesha*” (21). However, the anonymous voice and narrator consistently remind them that “the “Arabs are not your enemies” (21). Despite being from the same continent of Africa, no group in the book recognizes their shared identity.

The Protagonist, Tuquabo as ‘Self’ and ‘Other’:

The concept of self and ‘Other’ is explored among the colonizers, colonized, and even within groups of people belonging to the same country or religion. The novel presents the idea that self and ‘Other’ are interconnected and cannot exist independently. Tuquabo, an Eritrean and the main character, isolates himself from the Ethiopian *Askaris* who are singing and celebrating on the ship. While they engage in merriment, Tuquabo is lost in his own thoughts, reminiscing about his parents and homeland. As the ship departs, he feels emotionally stirred, witnessing his native land drifting away.

The narrator depicts the internal struggle of Tuquabo, emphasizing the interconnectedness of self and ‘Other’. The singing and dancing Ethiopians represent the ‘Other’ to Tuquabo, highlighting his sense of detachment and introspection amidst the collective experience. The imagery of the ship sailing and his homeland fading into the distance evokes a deep emotional response, underscoring the significance of one's origins and the sense of belonging in relation to self and ‘Other’. The narrator says:

The ship howled, emitting a sound that created cold shivers in your stomach, and moved slowly. The children of Ethiopia started singing. While one played the *kirar*, a left-handed

boy was pounding a drum, making a deafening noise. Tuquabo was deep in thought, far away from the world of singing and dancing. From the deck of the ship, he looked back towards his land. Thoughts of his mother and father dominated his mind, and Tuquabo saw Massawa running away from him. It is true that at nighttime on a ship it doesn't look like the ship is sailing, it feels like the land is moving away. Tuquabo felt emotionally stirred up when he saw his native land moving away. (12)

Throughout the novel, the notion of self and 'Other' is not limited to external encounters but also exists within the internal world of the characters. It is clear that self and 'Other' are intertwined, and one cannot fully exist without the presence of the other. This implies that one's sense of identity and self-awareness are influenced by their interactions with others.

Tuquabo's detachment from the singing and dancing Ethiopians on the ship reflects his internal journey and the complexity of his self-perception. As he gazes back at his land, thoughts of his parents and the familiarity of Massawa consume his mind. The departure of the ship creates a sense of emotional turmoil within him, as it symbolizes the separation from his roots and the start of a new chapter in his life. In this sense, he may regard himself as the 'Other'.

Tuquabo's experience highlights the intricate interplay between self and 'Other' in light of the surrounding context of colonization. While he shares a common background with the Ethiopian *Askaris*, he feels a sense of distance and alienation from them. This internal division further emphasizes the multilayered nature of identity and the varying ways in which individuals relate to one another.

The novel suggests that self and 'Other' are not fixed categories but rather fluid and influenced by individual perspectives, experiences, and interactions. It raises questions about how individuals define themselves in relation to others and how these perceptions shape their understanding of identity, culture, and belonging.

As the conscripted *Askaris* navigate their journey, encountering different groups and cultures along the way, the novel prompts readers to reflect on the complexities of self and 'Other', both externally and internally. It highlights the importance of recognizing shared humanity and

breaking down the barriers of division and prejudice that perpetuate notions of superiority and inferiority.

In summary, the book emphasizes the interconnectedness of self and ‘Other’ within the conscripted *Askaris*' experiences and explores the internal struggles and reflections of characters like Tuquabo. By delving into these dynamics, the novel invites readers to contemplate the construction of identity, the impact of colonialism, and the need for empathy and understanding in bridging the gaps between self and ‘Other’.

Tuquabo's deep attachment to his homeland and family becomes evident, portraying him as someone with a distinguished background compared to the others. This subtly suggests that he comes from a different upbringing or social standing. The theme of marginalization among the group persists even as they reach Libya, a country associated with harsh conditions akin to “hell” (24).

Habesha* as the ‘Other’ in Libya in *The Conscript

It is in Libya that the entire group, known as the *Habesha*, finally unites as they all hail from the same region. However, this realization only dawns upon them after experiencing bewilderment and perplexity. Tuquabo's question, "Do you think people live in this dry sand" (22)? Indirectly highlights their underestimation of the Libyan land, emphasizing its barrenness and lack of life. In contrast, they hold an appreciation for their own countries.

Their stay in the Libyan Desert reveals to the *Askaris* that they are all marginalized and regarded as ‘Others’. The unbearable climatic conditions in Libya, coupled with the mistreatment inflicted upon them by the Italian commanders, further solidify their subordinate position. The *Askaris* observe how the Italian commanders. The narrator reports:

For the Italian commanders who rode on mules for the whole day, a tent was put up to protect them from night cold and sandstorms. Their beds were prepared, and water was readied for them. And who was taking care of this? The wretched *Habesha*, whose lot is suffering. (25-26)

The above highlights the stark contrast in treatment between the oppressor and the oppressed, self and 'Other'. The novel illustrates the marginalized status of the *Askaris* and their growing awareness of their collective Otherness. Their perception of the Libyan landscape and their own countries reflect the complex interplay between self and 'Other', as well as the impact of external factors such as climate and colonization.

In this sense, the novel portrays how the notions of self and 'Other' are shaped and transformed in varied way; through encounters with different cultures, landscapes, and religious beliefs. The Ethiopian and Eritrean Askaris navigate these encounters with a mix of pride, prejudice, and a desire for affirmation. The dynamics of superiority and inferiority, rooted in cultural, geographical, and religious differences, contribute to the complex fabric of identity and the ever-evolving understanding of self and 'Other' in the narrative on top of the colonizers' assumptions.

According to Homi Bhabha's perspective in *The Location of Culture* the process of identification goes beyond simply affirming a pre-existing identity. He says:

Finally, the question of identification is never the affirmation of a pre-given identity, never a *self*-fulfilling prophecy – it is always the production of an image of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image. The demand of identification – that is, to be *for* an 'Other' – entails the representation of the subject in the differentiating order of Otherness'. (64)

Instead, it involves the construction of a representation of identity and the subsequent transformation of the subject as they adopt that image. This idea can be related to the themes discussed earlier, particularly the notion of self and 'Other' in the particular circumstances of colonialism and the experiences of the conscripted *Askaris*.

Bhabha's notion of identity as a constructed image aligns with the experiences of the characters in the novel. The conscripted Askaris grapple with their identities in relation to their own country, fellow countrymen, the colonizers, and other groups they encounter. Their perception of self and the 'Other' is influenced by a multitude of elements including nationality, ethnicity, religion, and social standing.

As the conscripted Askaris navigate their journey and encounter different cultures and peoples, they undergo transformations in their perception of self and 'Other'. Their interactions with Sudanese, Egyptians, Israelis, and Libyans challenge their preconceived notions and force them to reconsider their identities. These encounters contribute to their evolving understanding of themselves and others.

Bhabha highlights that the demand for identification involves the picture of the subject within the framework of Otherness. This resonates with the experiences of the conscripted Askaris, who find themselves continuously positioned as 'Others' by both the tyrant and the people they encounter. They are subjected to dehumanizing treatment, objectification, and discrimination, which reinforces their marginalized status and perpetuates the distinctions between self and 'Other'.

As the writer of *The Location of Culture* suggests ideas on identity that it is not fixed or static but rather a dynamic and evolving construct. This aligns with the characters' experiences as they navigate through different cultural contexts, confront their prejudices and biases, and reassess their own positions in relation to others. The malleability of identity is demonstrated through the changing perceptions and interactions among the conscripted *Askaris* and the various groups they encounter.

In summary, Bhabha's ideas about identity, representation, and Otherness provide a framework to understand the complexities of identity construction and transformation experienced by the conscripted *Askaris* in the novel. Their encounters with different cultures and peoples challenge their preconceptions, highlight the fluidity of identity, and demonstrate the power dynamics inherent in the process of identification.

Conclusion

In Hailu's novel, *The Conscript*, the concept of Otherness extends beyond the traditional colonizer-colonized relationship. It explores the complexities of identity and the interconnectedness of self and 'Other' among Ethiopian and Eritrean communities in Port-Sudan. The characters' encounters

with different cultures, landscapes, and religious beliefs shape their understanding of self and 'Other.' The novel raises questions about the impact of colonialism, the construction of identity, and the need for empathy in breaking down barriers. It resonates with Homi Bhabha's ideas on identity as a constructed image and emphasizes the continuous positioning of the *Askaris* as 'Others.' *The Conscript* invites readers to reflect on the power dynamics and shared humanity that can bridge the gaps between self and 'Other'.

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**The Lands of Dream, Memory and Longing:
A Geocritical Approach to Selected Indian Short Stories**

AFSANA KHATOON¹

Abstract:

This paper intends to approach Indian regional texts from a geocritical point of view. The aim of this approach is to put the place/ space at the center of discussion, in order to add a new dimension to the meaning of selected short stories. The research paper follows the methods of Bertrand Westphal who pioneered geocriticism as a new critical theory. This paper is modeled on Barbara Piatti's theory of projected place. Literature is as old as speech. It grew out of human need for it, and it has not changed except to become more needed. It represents humans' desire, eternalizes the time and can take us to places that seem beyond one's reach. Such are the ways of literature. This paper, through a geocentric analysis of three Indian short stories, attempts to explore the spaces literature creates that people desire, dream and long for.

Keywords: Geocriticism, Dream, Memory, Longing, Indian literature.

¹ Afsana Khatoon is a Ph. D. Research Scholar at the Department of English, School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, Gujarat. She can be reached at afsana.khatoon@gujaratuniversity.ac.in.

Introduction:

The child in William Blake's poem, "The Land of Dreams" longs for a place where his dreams can come true:

O, what land is the Land of Dreams?

What are its mountains, and what are its streams?

O Father, I saw my Mother there,

Among the lillies by waters fair (Johnson and Grant).

While the boy lives with his father, he passionately yearns for another place, more precisely the land where he can find his mother. In the imagined, fictional worlds (not just literature, but graphic novels, paintings, movies, and even a series of photographs) projected place has a significant role to play. They have characteristics and qualities which are different from the settings of the plot where all the actions take place. The 'Land of Dreams' has belief, safety and affections of a mother to offer while the place where the child lives with his father is a 'land of unbelief and fear' for it is the space called upon or imagined by the characters in the narrative. Situated in certain places, the protagonist, hero and heroine in plays, novels, short stories and novellas reminiscences, longs and dreams of various other places where they had been once or where they would like to be. These places can be ideal, temporary or real ones. The term 'projected place' emerged as a term while Barbara Piatti and Anne-Kathrin Reuschel were working on some project under the title "A Literary Atlas of Europe". In "Mapping Literature: Towards a Geography of Fiction" Piatti describes the term ('projected place') as 'characters are not present there, but are dreaming of, remembering, longing for a specific place' (Cartwright and Gartner). Piatti in another essay, "Dreams, Memories, Longings: the Dimension of Projected Places in Fiction" farther adds that '[p]rojected places follow a specific function and add extra layers of meaning to the geography of a narrated world" (Tally). This paper, adapting the framework of Piatti, offers an in-depth analysis of spatial category of the short stories of Iliyas Ghumman, Surjit Birdi and Veena Verma. It is meant as a study in geocriticism (a geocentric approach to literature, pioneered by Bertrand

Westphal) which ‘probes the human spaces that the mimetic arts arrange through, and in, texts, the image, and cultural interactions related to them’(Westphal).

The Theory of Projected Place:

Piatti presents the theory of the ‘projected place’ as follows:

- a) How and from where is the spatial projection triggered (via a map, a picture, an object, another place, a person, a word, a text, and so on)?
- b) In what way is the projected location left, what dissolves it (the opposite of the triggering moment)?
- c) Is the transition from actual setting to projected location a deliberate process or an unconscious one?
- d) Is the projected location (theoretically) accessible or is it a pure invention, an unlocatable place?
- e) Mode and function change: does the projected place become a setting or has it been a setting before?
- f) Are there legitimate rules of the projected places: do the same rules apply as in settings or does the projected place work according to different rules? For example, are the common rules of our physical world still valid, or can characters move through walls, walk on the ceilings? (Tally)

In the following sections of the paper, I shall try to find the answers to all the questions that Piatti puts on.

Projected Places in Selected Indian Literature:

A literary text has three elements: plot, characters and setting. While the first two elements are widely discussed and analyzed, the place (space/ setting) remains out of focus. Bertrand Westphal in his pioneering volume, “Geocriticism: Real and Fictional Places (2007)” points out how space/ place becomes the centre of interpretation following the Second World War. Westphal’s collection

introduces a new approach to literary texts where the setting of a story is prioritised over all the other elements. He calls this geocentric method of literary interpretation 'geocriticism'. Focused primarily on the relationship between humans and the space/ place they inhabit, come across and aspire to, geocriticism eventually leads to the study of the multiple dimensions of this relationship. Barbara Piatti's concept of human's projection of a particular place is one of them. Piatti in her above mentioned essay talks about the place where the characters are not present but where they would like to be. She terms it 'projected place'(Cartwright and Gartner). The 'projected place' can be real or imaginary. But it is somewhere where people long to be. In the three short stories from Nirupama Dutt's translated volume, "Stories of the Soil", I shall attempt to show how various characters aspire to be there where they themselves could not be. In the first story, Iliyas Ghumman's "Ideal Town" we see the protagonist, Mohammad Wakil Ullah, a civil engineer, popularly known as Vicky Engineer, aspires to provide his clients that which he could not acquire in his life.

He had been born and brought up in a cramped area of the old city. He too loved to play cricket as a boy. Since there was no playing ground, he used to play cricket with his friends in the streets and in the bazaar (Dutt).

The inconveniences of his surroundings cause him his legs. The doctor cuts off his 'smashed legs', the wounds heal but the scars still remain in his life. He compensates for his ill fate by working hard and becoming an engineer. There is this dream of his to make a town with all the amenities and the facilities that the residents whereof might need. Wakil Ullah certainly has designed and planned the construction of such a town, and he is optimistic, hopeful and almost content with the outcome:

The people responded very well to this project. The town was situated a little away from the city and was free of hustle-bustle, speeding traffic and pollution. Not only were the homes spacious, even the roads were wide. The town had a hospital, school, post office and shopping plaza and was well connected to the city. There was a beautiful park for old people with swings for the young and a ground for adolescents to play a game of cricket or

hockey. A big and beautiful mosque was built in the heart of the town. Wakil Ullah had put his soul into the white structure, and it seemed like a blooming flower (Dutt).

The second story is Surjit Birdi's "Flies", wherein an Indian man, sitting in the London pub, on a Friday (amidst the payday merriment) evening views the scene around him while his thoughts go back to the courtyard of his village home where he remembers his old grandmother slurping on ripe mangoes, to his school days where he along with his classmates is being trained for the tug of war by their teacher and to the woman he once loved and still fantasizes about. Despite being successful, he does not appear to be happy in his life. He constantly employs gloomy, sordid and macabre imagery to describe his situation and his surrounding: 'The dustbin is full of my bits and pieces along with the pieces of the love letters written by me and their blood mingles with the torn dreams—what a suffocating mess (Stories of the Soil, "Flies")'. In the final story, Veena Verma's "Shadows" we see Sonia longing for the company and presence of her husband who is in Abroad. Despite being well off and married to a London based NRI engineer Rajesh, she is saddened when she comes across a rather conventional looking, village girl happily married to a middle-class Army official. Soon she realises the difference between the circumstances of her life and that of the girl. These three characters dream, aspire and long for the place and space which seem a distant possibility. All three of these places (the 'ideal town' built on a dreamy utopian model, the 'veranda' of the protagonist's village house, on a hot summer afternoon and Sonia imagining herself and her husband Rajesh who [is] thousands of miles away in London', together), are instances of 'projected places'. These places/ spaces represent the unfulfilled desires of the three characters who are caught up in difficult and unpleasant situations. Embracing life and constantly coping with their circumstances, they carry on until they come face to face with their desires and imagine the places, they would like to be.

The Function of Projected Places within the Narratives

The most important point in the current context is, however, the significant role that projected places play within the three respective stories. With Iliyas Ghumman, the 'Ideal Town' (projected place) is the setting in the beginning of the story. Then – for the one third of the length and until

the protagonist is introduced – it turns out to be the projected place that Wakil Ullah has dreamt of ever since he lost his legs. The making of the ‘Ideal Town’ becomes the central motif of the plot for it has been the ‘missionary zeal’ of Wakil Ullah:

A wheelchair became his constant companion. The long and painful treatment and then the handicap made Wakil Ullah wiser than his years. He resolved that one day he would build an ideal town in which every resident would have the requisite space (Dutt).

The Ideal Town compensates for the cruelty fate shows towards Wakil Ullah. Also, it stands in sharp contrast to the materialistic work of Shamshad sahib, the owner of a leading construction company whose only aim in life is ‘moneymaking’. By placing Wakil Ullah and Shamshad sahib on the same platform, Ghumman underlines the religious ‘politicking’ of the economic oriented manipulative bourgeoisie who used religion as a tool to make the most out of it. In the Birdi’s story the projected place is a reconstruction of the past, of a phase which the protagonist revisits after a decade, amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life: ‘This winter evening in London is ten years after that afternoon with the flies back home’ (Dutt). It is informed that visiting here is his everyday routine. But he does not come here for the fervor of intoxication or the excitement of the night-life. Rather, he hits the club to kill time.

Time is fleeting. It is moving as fast as the wind hissing past my ears. I look at the clock on the wall. First it was six, then seven, then eight, then nine and soon it will be ten. How many moments have been murdered and how many more must bleed to death. The hands of the clock are soaked in blood. The dial is a sea of blood and the digits are black magnetic rocks. My existence rams into these rocks.

He sits here for 3-4 hours each evening and it is here where time runs fast (‘fleeting’). It is as if passing the time becomes an ordeal for him. Everything around him is touched by sordidness and dismay: the fake smile of people, the artificiality of appearances, the lack of joy on a paying Friday all contribute to the futility of his life in London.

The gap between this evening and that afternoon is not ten years but a hundred and it just cannot be bridged. All movement is frozen like the pendulum of the old clock on the church tower.

The reader notices how the gap of ten years, away from his roots, is lengthened by ten times, in the mood of longing. The projected place here offers him an escape from the gloomy reality of his existence. In the final story Verma's "Shadows" the projected place serves as the manifestation of Sonia's heart's desire, her yearning to be with the man she is married to. Living away from Rajesh is not easy for her, yet her circumstances delay her reunion with him. She longs for the love, affection and care she witnesses between a middle-class Indian married couple.

Sonia imagined that she was the girl and the man was her husband Rajesh who was thousands of miles away in London. The bus seemed like an aeroplane, the field outside like an ocean. The hot bus seemed cool and she felt as if she was flying in the air. She felt as if she was at London airport and Rajesh had come to receive her (Dutt).

Triggering

Borrowing an expression from psychology, it can be said that the projected places in the three short stories are "triggered". Piatti writes that 'In the field of trauma-psychology, a trigger signifies a flashback-causing sensation, whereupon recalled scenes seem real and directly experienced. The present, real situation is hereby often completely dismissed. Stimuli in the form of noises, taste sensations, or visual impressions can act as trigger' (Tally). Something stimulates the thought or imagination of these characters who take a refuge having displaced themselves in their imagination. However, in these stories the characters do not suffer from any psychological issues or mental condition. In the case of Wakil Ullah, it is the pathetic situation of Abid and his playmates (who are usurped from their playground) which triggers the protagonist's traumatic memory of his fatal accident. The word 'trigger' can be aptly used for Ghumman's hero, Wakil Ullah who after losing his legs is scarred for life. His life's journey reflects his attempt to overcome his pathological condition. In Verma's story, Sonia is forced to ponder over her situation in life

when she comes across a talkative, village girl who is proudly married to Jagbir Singh Fauji from Borhawal:

‘Behenji, it must be very difficult for you to live thus. So he must be writing lots of letters to you and since you are educated you must be writing back. Jaggu writes very well. He has studied ten classes. I never learned to read and write but I get the school teacher to write my letters.’

Sonia turned towards the window. The girl seemed to have struck a painful chord.

The bonding between this girl and her husband points out the emptiness in Sonia’s relationship. The projected place in “Shadows” is constructed in a complex and multilayered fashion. The protagonist’s fixation with everything macabre originates from the comparison of his life in India and that in England. The images of the place of his birth and childhood are triggered by the fact that his life in London is surrounded by everything superficial. The false teeth of the bar owner, the old painting on the walls with a historical silent and the dysfunctional clock on the church, everything conveys the disruption in his own life. Even the most common and simple expression of smile is enforced and fake. This only reminds him the raw reality of the humble, robust and rural life of his family, friends and loved ones in India. In summary, it can be stated that, at the spatial level, all three stories are constructed according to a bipolar or a multipolar concept. Ideal Town (which Wakil Ullah has designed but it seems to fall apart), the Village-veranda and the open field/ London these projected places are evoked once the characters find themselves in contradictory situations and at places where they do not belong to. Their dream, longing and memories are projected unto the places where they could get what they desire. But these projected places are not always real. Sometimes it is a memory, sometimes an imaginary ideal space and sometimes the expected future.

The characters in these Indian texts aspire for the places which seem either beyond their reach or slipping away from their reach. Wakil Ullah dreams of an ideal town devoid of communal disputes, religious divide or political propaganda. His ideal town is a utopia which is Greek for ‘no

place'. The unnamed unhappy narrator of "Flies" yearns for the space which can be revisited only in memories now, while the woman from an upper-class background in "Shadows" envisions the space she would share in the company of her husband Rajesh, in London when she will be reunited with him, one day. The reader is left as uncertain as the three characters in the end of the stories regarding the possibilities of their destination. The only thing that comes out as a surety is that projected places are the land where all their hearts' desires can be fulfilled. And herein lies the significance of literature for it provides that space and gives expression to such human longings which otherwise would have remained unmanifest and unexpressed.

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Experiencing the ‘Other’: An Ethical and Ontological Inquiry into the Characterization of Yeong-hye in Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*

AYUSH CHAKRABORTY¹ M. JAGADISH BABU²

Abstract:

Any discussion on the concept of ‘difference’ entails within itself the understanding of the subject’s existence in the world through his experience of the ‘other’. What branches out as a result of this encounter is a myriad of possible experiences through which one tries to apprehend the world in which they live. Han Kang’s *The Vegetarian*, published in Korea in 2007, is in her own words, an attempt to contemplate the ‘spectrum’ that is humanity. To do so, the author delves into a deeper inquiry into the ontology of human existence as validated by the perspective of the other. The three-part novel, narrating the perspectives of three different people in their attempts to understand its principal character, Yeong-hye, provides a broader methodological framework for the author’s exegesis. This paper seeks to engage closely with these narratives to probe a further inquiry into the ethics of subjective expression and its consequent effect on the ‘other’.

Keywords: Experience, Plurality, Confucianism, Difference, Dialogue, Self, and the Other.

¹ Ayush Chakraborty is a Research Assistant at The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad. He can be reached at ayushchks99@gmail.com.

² M. Jagadish Babu is a Postdoctoral Research Associate in the Archiving and Translation, Department of History, Goldsmiths, University of London. He can be reached at jb.mjagadishbabu@gmail.com.

Introduction:

Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, which was originally published in Korea in 2007 is, according to its author, a medium that has allowed her to probe into the aspects of "human violence and the (im)possibility of innocence; defining sanity and madness; the (im)possibility of understanding others..." (Patrick 2019). As she has said in most of the interviews, her instigation towards writing the novel stemmed from her experiences of the Gwangju Uprising in the early 1980s. On May 18, 1980, a massive protest was organized in Gwangju by the citizens, mainly the students with the agenda of the reinstatement of democracy after then President Park Chung-hee had been assassinated in 1979. The security forces responded to the protests using extraordinarily brutal means, with security forces arresting, injuring, and killing dozens of people. When more citizens joined the demonstration, martial law was imposed and the city came completely under the military troops resulting in the deaths of over 2,000 people. It was this incident which had forced her to contemplate humanity – "a spectrum that stretches from holiness to horror" (Parker 2016).

Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*

The Vegetarian centers around Yeong-hye, an unremarkable married woman in contemporary South Korea whose sudden decision to give up eating meat, after a dream that terrifies her, ensues a prolonged struggle for individualism and freedom from the much conservative Korean society, albeit resulting in a slow but inevitable breakdown of familial relationships, social structures, and ontological realities. The narrative of this book is divided into three segments, each of which deals with the protagonist herself, but is narrated from the perspectives of those around her – her husband, her brother-in-law, and her sister, the implications of which will be taken up in the later sections.

Mr. Cheong, Yeong-hye's husband and the narrator of the first segment, establishes the character of his wife as utterly "unremarkable in every way" (Kang 3). The basis of their relationship is not some mutual attraction but rather a strict adherence to societal codes which Yeong-hye seems to maintain – waking her husband up in the morning, ironing his shirt, preparing

his breakfast, and not seeking clarifications if he is late from work. This apparently ideal marriage for Mr. Cheong is turned upside down when Yeong-hye decides to become a vegetarian after waking up from a nightmare.

While Mr. Cheong does not bother about his wife's dreams, the readers get to know about them through fragments inserted within Mr. Cheong's narrative – the only instances when Yeong-hye is given a voice of her own where she describes her dreams in her voice. However, these are isolated excerpts featured in the story: the other characters do not have access to these dreams of Yeong-hye but the readers are given the privilege to read them and understand their impact on her. These fragments are important because it is through these fragments that the gap between Yeong-hye's perspective and that of her husband, or the rest of her family, is understood. For Mr. Cheong, and the rest of the family and acquaintances, turning vegetarian is narrow-mindedness and “nothing but sheer obstinacy for a wife to go against her husband” (Kang 14) that can only be justified if it is related to one's health.

However, Yeong-hye's decision to not eat meat is not simply a dietary choice, but a conscious renunciation of the human race which is riddled with the violence inflicted upon each other, upon nature. Yeong-hye's resistance towards the established structure is later highlighted when Mr Cheong takes her to a business dinner where he realizes that his wife has come without a bra. The realization turns into an embarrassment when she declares in front of the table that she doesn't eat meat. This further escalates when Yeong-hye refuses to engage in sex with him as he reeks of meat, crushing his hopes of having a child. Subsequently, Mr. Cheong forces himself upon her against her resistance – an act which becomes quite frequent – justifying his actions for being a man in his “prime” retaliating against a wife who has failed to “comply with [his] physical demands” (Kang 16) for such a long time. The physical violence takes an extreme turn when her own family forces her to eat meat. This culminates with Yeong-hye's father forcefully pushing the meat into her throat while her husband and brother pin her down.

The narrative of the second segment is focalized on Yeong-hye's unnamed brother-in-law, a largely unsuccessful video artist who is stuck with an image of a man and a woman, “their bodies made brilliant with painted flowers, having sex against a background of unutterable

silence” (Kang 95), that he wants to shoot. His obsession rose from the moment he came to know from his wife, In-hye, that Yeong-hye still has her Mongolian mark – a birthmark that babies have on their buttocks that fades away when the child reaches puberty. But for her brother-in-law,

the fact that his sister-in-law still had a Mongolian mark on her buttocks became inexplicably bound up with the image of men and women having sex, their naked bodies completely covered with painted flowers. The causality linking these two things was so clear, so obvious, as to be somehow beyond comprehension, and thus it became etched into his mind (Kang 59).

Han calls the book’s second segment more or less having the “structure of a traditional tragedy,” (Patrick 2019) for although the brother-in-law gets a semblance of Yeong-hye’s gradual transformation – who had by then transcended the culinary notions of ‘vegetarianism’ into a more ontological reality of it – instead of helping her, he works towards the gratification of his impulse. There are instances when the brother-in-law looks at Yeong-hye as a “tree that grows in the wilderness, denuded and solitary” (Kang 64) and as someone “who had passed into a border area between states of being” (Kang 71). Nevertheless, he ends up painting flowers all over her body and brings in one of his friends to stand in for the male counterpart for a ‘video art’, but the latter refuses to be a part despite the lack of resistance from Yeong-hye. So, he gets himself painted with flowers and eventually films himself having sex with her. The second section ends with In-hye, Yeong-hye’s sister, catching her husband red-handed the day after at her sister’s apartment following which he is imprisoned. At the same time, Yeong-hye is admitted to a psychiatric hospital for her treatment.

The third segment is focused on In-hye relaying the events following her sister’s intercourse with her husband. From the point of the narrative, it is an interesting choice since In-hye, through the course of her visit to the psychiatric hospital where her sister is admitted, slowly starts acknowledging her sister’s decision to become a vegetarian despite her own inhibitions resulting in a conflict that seems far from a resolution. Belonging to the same family, In-hye is forced to reconsider her position in it, and this is further triggered by her husband’s recent

betrayal. She realizes that her sister has destroyed the equilibrium of her family that stood on faulty and violent foundations, and this has subsequently resurfaced the feelings that she had repressed and chosen to live in denial. The complexity of this perspective lies in the fact that In-hye has always presented herself according to the norms of society.

Even as a child, In-hye possessed the innate strength of character necessary to make one's own way in life. As a daughter, as an older sister, as a wife and as a mother, as the owner of a shop, and even as an underground passenger on the briefest of journeys, she had always done her best. Through the sheer inertia of a life lived in this way, she would have been able to conquer everything, even time (Kang 139).

As a result, she always remains in a dilemma where, on the one hand, she empathizes with Yeong-hye's reaction while, on the other hand, she still blames her sister for the consequences she is suffering because of her drastic action. However, she does allow herself to see the burden that she and Yeong-hye have been putting up with – the hefty weight of violence inflicted upon them, and how she had kept quiet throughout. As a result, when the carers try to forcibly tranquilize Yeong-hye and put a tube for her to breathe which becomes hindrances to her spiritual transformation into a plant, In-hye finally starts shouting and screaming, requesting them not to continue with the procedure, ultimately biting the hand of the head nurse. The segment, and thus the novel, ends with Yeong-hye being transferred to another hospital while her sister accompanies her.

Two Ideologies at Conflict: A Study of Ethics

As mentioned earlier, when Han Kang talks about contemplating the spectrum of humanity that “stretches from holiness to horror”, the very use of the term ‘spectrum’ implies the absence of singularity for it points to the coexistence of a pluralistic world. The idea of plurality negates unidimensional thinking that kills the possibility of more than one perception and understanding, and, subsequently, the essence of being that is continuous and changing. Therefore, plurality upholds the possibility of more than one experience of a subject for a subject in the form of an ‘I’

that can perceive and relate to the existence of subjects that are not him – an ‘other’ – and come to an understanding of the world through his experience of this encounter with the other. This understanding of the being of the world is an outcome of a single encounter of the ‘I’ with the ‘other’ and such encounters will produce endless possible experiences by foregrounding ‘differences’ concerning each other. Merleau-Ponty says, “The experience that I make out of my hold on the world is what makes me capable of perceiving another myself...” (137), whereby ‘myself’ he refers to the presence of another being whose body is “a replica of myself, a wandering double which haunts my surroundings more than it appears in them” (Ponty 134). This notion of the ‘other’ brings up a fundamental aspect of the self’s relation with the other – that the self always manifests itself and its experiences about its world in the other and that the other is, therefore, always the object of the self’s perception. This point is perhaps most evident in the very narratological structure of Kang’s work where the narrative follows the perception of Yeong-hye’s husband, Mr Cheong, in the first section; her brother-in-law in the second; and In-hye in the third section, thereby making Yeong-hye the object of their own respective perception.

Perhaps an even better elucidation of the same rises out of careful consideration of the text’s setting vis-a-vis the philosophy of Confucianism that still permeates through a large cross-section of South Korean society. Kim Sungmoon, an eminent political theorist from Hong Kong, dubs South Korea a “Confucian democratic civil society” that still holds highly in its core the philosophy of Confucianism. For instance, the parallels between contemporary Korean society and the old Joseon period - also referred to as the golden age of Confucianism - in terms of their linguistic similarities in reference and deference, have developed from the tenets of the five ‘proper’ human relationships of Confucianism – that of the “affection between father and son, righteousness between ruler and minister, the proper divisions between husband and wife, the precedence of elder and younger, and the faithfulness of friends” (Eno 60). The philosophy, therefore, significantly influenced the experiences of and expectations of the people of South Korea, primarily the conservatives. This acquired and understood convention of looking at experiences based on the dominant ideology is what Raymond Williams has referred to as the ‘structure of feeling’. So, when we look at the characters of Mr. Cheong or Yeong-hye’s father,

we have to understand their ideas and beliefs are shaped by the structures of feeling.

Gender roles in South Korea, though they have substantially improved in terms of healthcare and education, are still by and large the product of a deep-rooted patriarchal worldview mostly because Confucianism promotes the establishment of a hierarchical structure to create a balanced and harmonious society. As Martina Dulcher explains, under this philosophy, the “education of women was indoctrination. Its purpose was to instill in women, through the weight of China’s classic literature, the ideals of a male-oriented society and to motivate them for the tasks of married life” (258). Mr. Cheong, as it turns out, is quite a conventional man himself, never doing anything more than the bare minimum necessary to sustain in society; his life, as he puts it, has always followed a ‘middle course’ and for someone who has followed the most traditionally set path of life, the ordinariness of his wife makes this an ideal marriage for Mr. Cheong. Dulcher writes, “the pattern of behavior developed by the Confucians had the rigidity of a stereotype which did not allow for individual variations, so that Confucian society acclaimed particular women not for their individuality, but for the degree of perfection with which they were able to mimic the stereotype” (258). Thus, what makes Yeong-hye “unusual” is her habit of not wearing a bra. To her husband, it was “laziness, or just a sheer lack of concern”. He goes on to say, “I would have preferred her to go around wearing one that was thickly padded so that I could save face in front of my acquaintances” (Kang 6). He would lecture her and reproach her and ignore her justification of how it made her feel uncomfortable, taking it for hypersensitivity.

Coming to the more immediate context of the text, it has been testified in some accounts that there is a very thin understanding of vegetarianism in South Korea. South Korean cuisine demands, rather necessitates, flavoring of vegetables with fish or shrimp, or even meat. Even those dishes which are still considered ‘vegetarian’ contain less meat than usual standards. Vegetarianism is only understood by Koreans in the context of some form of a religious vow, generally, a Buddhist one, where it is seen as some sort of spiritual act of sacrifice or self-denial from what is otherwise a "normal" diet. In Korean culture, ethical vegetarianism, which is founded on resistance to animal cruelty and the brutality of slaughtering animals, is nearly unintelligible. Thus, one can very well guess his reaction upon finding out that his wife has thrown away all the

non-vegetarian items and has decided to become a vegetarian after she has had a nightmare. The passive and 'unremarkable' housewife is immediately labeled 'crazy', 'unreasonable', and 'self-centered'. Yeong-hye's subjectivity is never considered by her husband; her dream becomes the basis for the voiceless resistance that she puts up against her husband. Let us take up Yeong-hye's dreams for consideration here – the only instance where the readers get a semblance of her perspective:

Dark woods. No people. The sharp-pointed leaves on the trees, my torn feet. This place, almost remembered, but I'm lost now. Frightened. Cold. Across the frozen ravine, a red barn-like building. Straw matting flapping limp across the door. Roll it up and I'm inside, it's inside. A long bamboo stick strung with great blood-red gashes of meat, blood still dripping down. Try to push past but the meat, there's no end to the meat, and no exit. Blood in my mouth and blood-soaked clothes sucked onto my skin.

Somehow a way out. Running, running through the valley, then suddenly the woods open out. Trees thick with leaves, springtime's green light. Families picnicking, little children running about, and that smell, that delicious smell. Almost painfully vivid. The babbling stream, people spreading out rush mats to sit on, snacking on kimbap. Barbecuing meat, the sounds of singing and happy laughter.

But the fear. My clothes still wet with blood. Hide, hide behind the trees. Crouch down, don't let anybody see. My bloody hands. My bloody mouth. In that barn, what had I done? Pushed that red raw mass into my mouth, and felt it squish against my gums, the roof of my mouth, slick with crimson blood.

Chewing on something that felt so real, but couldn't have been, it couldn't. My face, the look in my eyes...my face, undoubtedly, but never seen before. Or no, not mine, but so familiar...nothing makes sense. Familiar and yet not...that vivid, strange, horribly uncanny feeling. (Kang 12)

For Yeong-hye, it is not simply a dietary choice, but a renunciation of the violence which she has started to associate with non-vegetarianism. This is further exemplified when she remembers an

incident where her father had tied a dog to a motorcycle and driven it in a circle until its mouth had started frothing and the rope had begun to choke its throat resulting in blood coming out of it. They had later eaten the same dog for dinner. The violence she associates with non-vegetarianism slowly transcends into all the violence she has witnessed around her, suppressing the “intolerable loathing” she felt towards the people responsible for this. But now, as she says, “the mask is coming off” (Kang 28).

Yeong-hye’s experiences, which have shaped her perspective, have culminated in her decision to renounce meat altogether, but this fact is completely negated by her husband, and later on by her family as well, especially her father. Her father, a military man, whose stance is pretty clear considering his treatment of the dog, further slaps her and shoves meat into her mouth despite strong resistance from her. Thus, Yeong-hye is treated as the ‘other’ with no will of her own. Rather, the choice of the dominant structure of feeling that permeates through people like Mr. Cheong or Yeong-hye’s father is imposed on her. The objectification of Yeong-hye, perhaps, takes an even more violent turn when Yeong-hye stops engaging in sex with her husband because of the smell of meat that his body exudes. For Mr Cheong, however, it means the breakdown of his dream of having kids which ultimately leads to him sexually assaulting her despite her initial resistance and then frequenting this act over the coming days. As rightly pointed out by Kim Min-seo, this entire ordeal reflects the “dark side of Korean culture which has been dominated by the Confucian idea of filial [and marital] authority.”

The second segment, which is focalized on the perspective of the brother-in-law, takes this idea of subjectivity to an even more complex level mostly because we do not get to know much about the brother-in-law from the text apart from the fact that he is obsessed with his video art and struggles to produce a work following an image that has for long haunted him – that of two people, completely naked and engaging in intercourse, with their bodies painted with flowers. This is, for him, something “quieter, deeper, [and] more private” (Kang 56). He comes off as quite a sensitive individual, and his struggles and subsequent failures also make him a character who readers can sympathize with. He also appears to empathize with Yeong-hye and shows kindness and compassion towards her, which separates him from the likes of Mr. Cheong or Yeong-hye’s father.

Moreover, his self-awareness of his negligence towards his family, because he was obsessed with his work, anticipates the tragic dimensions of his character.

That being said, it does not make the way he deals with the situation an ethical one from the perspective of the societal structure that he belongs to, and this point can be further confirmed when he starts getting attracted to her sister-in-law in an intensely sexual manner. His perspective towards Yeong-hye shifts drastically when he comes to know about her Mongolian mark and immediately perceives it to be “a blue flower on a woman’s buttocks, its petals opening outward. In his mind, the fact that his sister-in-law still had a Mongolian mark on her buttocks became inexplicably bound up with the image of men and women having sex, their naked bodies completely covered with painted flowers” (Kang 59). He immediately associates her with the woman in his video art, and he starts associating himself with the man in the same video while the two of them are engaged in sex with their naked bodies covered with paintings of flowers. Before knowing about the Mongolian mark, Yeong-hye was for him “nothing more than an object of pity” (Kang 69), but now she becomes an object of his sexual fantasy.

Considering this in another way, the brother-in-law himself is a conflicted individual mostly because he goes against the codified set of structures that defines the society he belongs to: he is not the breadwinner of the family. Instead, his wife works in a cosmetics shop and takes up that position; his sensitivity goes against the very patriarchal set-up which is substantiated by the difference in his response towards Yeong-hye’s plight from the other members of the family. Thus, in the brother-in-law, one finds, in some sense, a semblance of a rebellion of which Yeong-hye too is a part – both of them aspire to become something else from their beings that have been shaped by society. That explains the conflict: he knows that having sexual fantasies about his sister-in-law does not make him an ethical human being in the society he lives in – he questions, “Was he a normal human being? More than that, a moral human being?” (Kang 61) but is unable to conclude.

Yeong-hye doesn’t show any resistance towards modeling the erotic scene because, firstly, she was to be covered with flowers painted all over her naked body, and the person she had to shoot the scene with was also to be covered with painted flowers. Her perspective further becomes

clearer when the brother-in-law gives into his fantasies and tries to have sex with her which she vehemently resists. However, he paints his body with flowers and eventually engages in sex with his sister-in-law with no resistance from her end whatsoever. One could probably, therefore, say that the idea of vegetarianism, for Yeong-hye, was transcending its immediate culinary connotations: her decision to become a vegetarian can be, as explored in the previous section, a conscious renunciation of violence that she associates with humanity. But in this section, it intensifies because, through this entire ordeal of shooting the video and the way she responds to the different situations, one can say that she is slowly on the verge of rejecting humanity altogether and turning into a plant herself. This act eases this process of transformation – a rather spiritual one – into a plant. The next morning she goes to the veranda, “thrust her glittering golden breasts over the veranda railing. Her legs were covered with scattered orange petals, and she spread them wide as if though she wanted to make love to the sunlight, the wind” (Kang 118). On the other hand, her brother-in-law's response to his impulses is ethically wrong from the societal point of view, exemplified by his wife's reaction when she finds out what her husband had done. She calls both of them mentally sick and in need of medical treatment. However, from his perspective, it can also be the commonality with which he associates with his sister-in-law that he ultimately gives in to his desire.

If Yeong-hye, from her subjective position, has started perceiving herself as a part of nature, the ethics which usually determine the functioning of a society can not be applied here as nature cannot be codified into laws since dialogue is not possible with nature. Ethics are a human creation to hold an understanding of what is ‘good’ and ‘bad,’ and language is an important instrument through which such ethics and other human conventions are defined and prescribed to follow. Based on our understanding of Yeong-hye's transformation into a being closer to nature, we can say that her dreams have an inexplicable influence on her actions. Her dreams are a reminiscence of her past experiences and her actions are a response to how she wants to change her ways around the matters of nature. So, perhaps, there seems to be an unspoken communication or relation between the dreams in which she sees the horrors committed against nature and her changing ways around food and people. And, there is no way a person inherently functioning under

the ethics and conventions of society understands the ways of nature since there is no common ground for dialogue between nature and man-created ethics. It is impossible to have that dialogue because human subjects are not in a place to find a common ground for perceivable ‘language’ of sorts with a particular meaning mutually attached to the signs. An example that immediately comes to mind is this particular species of primates called the bonobos who are considered to be the ‘most promiscuous animals after humans’ because of their inclination towards a more polygamous sexual relationship, especially among the females of the species, other males, females, members of the family and even children. So, this way of looking at the relationship between the brother-in-law and Yeong Hye becomes even more complicated for it can neither be rendered ethical nor unethical.

Coming to the third section of the story which is focused on the perspective of In-hye, we come to know that after the events of the previous section, her sister has been admitted to a psychiatric hospital while her husband has absconded after serving a few months in prison. In this section, In-hye tries reliving her entire life up until that point and reconsiders a lot of ways in which she had perceived her relationship with people around her. As for her husband, she remembers the first time she had seen him, where “[s]omething in his defenseless state had drawn her to him” (Kang 131). She had wanted to look after him ever since, allowing him to rest, but in vain, since he perpetually remained in that state of exhaustion. It is at present that she reconsiders her entire perception as she realizes that maybe it was herself that wanted a respite from the exhaustion – that of carving out her own identity amidst the indestructible structures of her society. Maybe it was this exhaustion she had noticed in his face that drew her closer to him. This reconsideration brings to mind R.D. Laing’s idea of ‘you-as-I-experience-you’ in *The Politics of Experience*, based on which we can substantiate that it is In-hye’s own experiences that she manifests in her to-be husband then. This idea can also be used to look at the terms in which the brother-in-law himself had experienced Yeong-hye. However, what is absent in both these cases is a dialogue between the two subjects that would have created a space for what Sayed A. Sayeed calls ‘inter-subjectivity’. It is possible only when the ‘I’ and the ‘other’ engage in a conversation as two subjects to understand each other solely through the words of the subjects themselves, and

not by objectifying or drawing conclusions from one's interpretation of the experience of the 'other,' which might not represent the nature and the experience of the other as they truly are. Therefore, 'I' can only understand and relate to the experience of the other from the dialogue we had but can neither define the other nor understand the other fully. However, while it renders the dynamics between the brother-in-law and Yeong-hye too complicated to call it ethical or unethical from either of their subjective positions as mentioned in the previous section, in the case of In-hye, her husband ends up not being ethical to her, to her subjectivity, due to the failure of inter-subjectivity. As for her sister, In-hye begins to look at the life that both of them had been subjected to and how that shaped their respective states of being:

Yeong-hye had been the only victim of their father's beatings. Such violence wouldn't have bothered their brother Yeong-ho so much, a boy who went around doling out his rough justice to the village children. As the eldest daughter, In-hye had been the one who took over from their exhausted mother and made a broth for her father to wash the liquor down, and so he'd always taken a certain care in his dealings with her. Only Yeong-hye, docile and naive, had been unable to deflect their father's temper or put up any form of resistance. Instead, she had merely absorbed all her suffering inside her, deep into the marrow of her bones. (Kang 157)

This explains the 'intolerable loathing' of Yeong-hye as mentioned in an earlier section and the significance, at least from her perspective, of rejecting humanity altogether. It also explains on In-hye's part the submission to the dominant patriarchal set-up which she had initially considered to be a sign of maturity but only now does she correct it as an act of cowardice, "a survival tactic" (Kang 158).

But once again, we have to understand that what In-hye does here is also along the lines of 'you-as-I-experience-you': she associates her experience with that of Yeong-hye to understand her sister, mostly because both of them were subjected to the same atrocities of their father. So, it is only on this basis that In-hye tries to understand her sister's actions. But the inter-subjectivity is still not developed, for Yeong-hye has never opened up about her feelings as far as her sister remembers – not when she was being subjected to her father's or her husband's atrocities, and of

course not when she began to undergo the process of her transformation into a plant. This is why, when she visits her sister, who is now completely emaciated, with her weight reduced to less than 30 kgs and has completely rejected all kinds of food but only asks for water and sunlight for her sustenance, she calls her 'insane': "Perhaps, it's simpler than I thought ... You're crazy, and so..." (Kang 167). This is once again a response shaped by the social construct. That being said, the fact that she tries to understand Yeong-hye's actions based on their experiences formed under a common structure of feeling shows that she does try to ethically engage with the otherness of her sister even though it falls short in certain aspects. This can be better substantiated by how she reacts to the carer by biting his hands when he forcefully tries to tranquilize Yeong-hye.

The section, and thus the novel, ends with Yeong-hye being transported to another facility in an ambulance, and it is where In-hye's conflict is brought out explicitly when she tells her sister, "Perhaps this is all a kind of a dream...I have dreams too, you know. Dreams...and I could not let myself dissolve into them, let them take me over...but surely the dream isn't all there is? We have to wake up at some point, don't we? Because...because then..." (Kang 131). The 'dreams' that In-hye talks about are her aspirations of what she could have become – an identity not determined by the male figures present in her life – which have been suppressed by the tenets of the social structure. This is why she is not able to complete her sentence because waking up from the dream would be waking up to the same old objectification that has suppressed her throughout her life.

Conclusion:

Coming back to the narratological structure of *The Vegetarian*, we now see how it reflects the inability of Yeong-hye to engage in a dialogue with the people around her to confirm her subjectivity. Rather, we are left to interpret her character through the perspectives of three people around her, and how each of them engages with her otherness in their respective different ways. One is made aware of Yeong-hye's spiritual transformation into a plant, which is never explicitly stated, through whatever implicit instances are present in the story but there too lies the problem of engaging with her character: like the people around her, we do not get to engage with Yeong-

hye for even us to understand her perspective, and naturally different assumptions are bound to rise. It is not necessary that as readers we have to stick to one perspective to attain a proper resolution. From our engagement with texts and the characters in them, it is only ethical to acknowledge the differences that arise out of the text, and contemplate them rather than assert them. In our attempt to ontologically understand the characterization of Yeong-hye, we could study the functions of human societies and the impact of their created cultures on the 'other' only by foregrounding the possibility of plurality and ethically establishing a relation with the help of limited information we have about the 'other.' Such a framework of comparative study will only unleash immense possibilities for studying texts and subjects where a much simpler yet complex depiction of the nature of 'beings' is understood.

Thus, for some, as in the case of the doctors of the psychiatric institution that she is admitted to, Yeong-hye might be schizophrenic, echoing the parameters listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (5th ed.) which lists "delusions", "hallucinations", "disorganized speech" and "catatonic behaviour" as some of its marked symptoms, and anorexic, going by the DSM-V definition, "[r]estriction of energy intake relative to requirements, leading to a significantly low body weight in the context of the age, sex, developmental trajectory, and physical health". For others, like Dominic O'Key, a literary critic, the novel's "strict narrative focalization and weighting of realism over and above the fantastic" (1265) itself does not allow the protagonist to attain the liberation that she seeks through her renouncement of human life.

Such viewpoints, while standing true to their respective viewpoints, can restrict the essence of this literary masterpiece by defining the boundaries of the literary imagination. As explored by Hans Robert Jauss discusses in his work 'Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory,' these boundaries to literary imagination are a result of the 'familiar experience' of cultured readers, whose structure of feeling of literature is confined by the prevailing ideology. The acquired taste for literature conforms to accepted forms of literature produced within a particular space and time, known as the horizon of expectations. When such readers encounter a text or literary form that invalidates their familiar experience, it becomes difficult for them to embrace it due to the aesthetic distance - the distance between their familiar experience or the horizon of their expectations and

the horizon of change a new text offers. Therefore, readers can allow boundless literary imagination to flourish and embrace diverse viewpoints only when they acknowledge the eternal presence of aesthetic distance that is unique to every reader. And, it is crucial to recognise the value inherent in these perspectives because as Ponty says, “the highest point of truth is still only perspective” (Ponty 132).

At the same time, we cannot negate the protagonist’s perspective about her transformation towards the end as she acknowledges her atrophy: “I don’t need to eat, not now. I can live without it. All I need is sunlight [...] Soon now, words and thoughts will all disappear” (Kang 153). Even if she has both physical and psychological issues, it is also true that from her subjective point of view, she has more or less attained what she had aspired for. It, therefore, widens the possibility to experience and understand *The Vegetarian* and Yeong-hye in various ways even if it is by the same reader, for each reading of a text is a singular event that takes place in a particular space and time formulating a unique experience with every subsequent reading. Han Kang, through her tripartite narratological structure, contemplates the human condition and embraces the concept of plurality because it is indeed a work in progress towards a more ethical and responsible relationship with the differences of the world.

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**An Examination of Identity and Colonialism in Tayeb Saleh's
Season of Migration to the North through the Lens of Frantz
Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*: A Comparative Study**

ADAMA BAH¹

Abstract:

In the exploration of post-colonial literature, Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* and Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* emerge as pivotal works that intricately dissect the complex interplay between identity and colonialism. Both authors delve into the psychological ramifications of colonial histories on individual identities, unraveling the multifaceted layers of the post-colonial experience. The themes of identity and colonialism in Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* through the lens of Frantz Fanon's seminal work, "Black Skin, White Masks." By examining the experiences of the protagonist, Mustafa Sa'eed, who returns to Sudan after studying in England, the essay delves into the complex ways in which colonial encounters shape individual identity. Drawing on Fanon's theories, particularly the concepts of double consciousness and the psychological effects of colonization, the analysis sheds light on the psychological and cultural impact of the colonial experience on Sa'eed and other characters in the novel. This article investigates the idea of cultural hybridity and the ambivalence that arises from navigating multiple cultural influences. Moreover, it explores the gender dynamics present in both works, emphasizing the power imbalances and objectification of women within the colonial context. Through a comparative analysis, the article seeks to highlight the characters' struggles for authentic selfhood and the broader implications of their experiences in a post-colonial world. Ultimately, this exploration provides insights into the enduring relevance of these themes and the intricate interplay between identity and colonialism in literature. The present article seeks to examine the nuanced ways in which Saleh's narrative and Fanon's psychoanalytic insights intersect, offering a profound understanding of

¹ Adama Bah is a PhD Scholar at The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad. He can be reached at adamakairois@gmail.com.

the profound impact of colonialism on the construction and negotiation of identity in a post-colonial world.

Tayeb Salih's novel, *Season of Migration to the North*, delves into the intricate relationships that exist between colonialism and identity in post-colonial Sudan. In close resemblance to Frantz Fanon's groundbreaking work *Black Skin, White Masks*, the article explores the novel's complex concerns of identity building, cultural hybridity, and the psychological effects of colonialism in African literature. By their audacious writings, Fanon and Salih both transformed the postcolonial African landscape. Using a postcolonial perspective, this study investigates how the story's characters navigate their cultural heritage and sense of self in the years after colonial domination.

Keywords: Postcolonial, Fanon, Saleh, comparative.

Introduction:

Season of Migration to the North and *Black Skin, White Masks* are two literary works that critique the lives of colonized people and the impact of colonialism. They encourage readers to critically assess the legacy of colonialism and resist its oppressive institutions by challenging dominant narratives and providing alternative viewpoints. Both Fanon and Salih emphasize the value of understanding the various repercussions of colonialism and participating in the ongoing battle for liberation and self-determination through their postcolonial counter-narratives.

Fanon's text highlights the perversion of a post-enlightenment man, who is tethered to the shadow of the colonized man, which distorts his presence, distorts his outline, breaches his boundaries, and repeats his actions at a distance. This ambivalent identification of the racist world turns on the idea of Man as an alienated image, not Self and Other but the 'Otherness' of the self-inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity.

Salih and Fanon enable readers to critically engage with the intricate interaction between identity and colonialism through their literary studies, inspiring them to oppose the structures that uphold these power dynamics in their own communities. The only solution to distorted social

relations and xenophobic understanding of the other is to orient oneself to a future-oriented and pluralistic self through the cultivation of intercultural, interreligious dialogue between communities.

Intercultural dialogue is an ethical space, as it involves listening to the words of the other and speaking with the other, treating them as human beings and not objects. Acknowledging violence towards the other and acknowledging that the other can never be fully understood forms the condition for authentic knowledge of the other as the other. Our attitude towards the other is not that of trying to understand or comprehend the other, but rather that of listening: the other is my master.

Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Saleh is a seminal work of postcolonial literature that intricately explores the themes of identity and colonialism. Set in Sudan, the novel follows the story of a young Sudanese man who returns to his homeland after acquiring a Western education and living in the North. This article aims to delve into the profound exploration of identity and colonialism in the *Season of Migration to the North*, particularly in connection with the influential ideas of Frantz Fanon. By analyzing the multifaceted nature of identity, the impact of colonialism, and the protagonist's experiences in the North, we will uncover the profound insights offered by Saleh's work and the resonance of Fanon's theories in understanding the themes presented.

Colonialism significantly impacted the identity formation of Africans, leading to the marginalization of indigenous languages, cultures, and traditions. This led to the disruption of indigenous practices and ways of life. The arbitrary border-making and resource extraction further weakened regional economies and social systems, resulting in injustice, poverty, and political instability. Postcolonial literature emerged as a response to the legacy of colonialism and the struggle for independence in many African countries during the 20th century. It includes writings by authors from formerly colonized countries that explore issues such as cultural identity, colonial effects, self-determination struggles, and the challenges of nation-building after colonization. Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* is a powerful and thought-provoking novel that explores themes of identity and colonialism. Set in the postcolonial era, the story follows the

journey of the unnamed narrator, who returns to Sudan after spending years studying and living in England. As the narrator encounters Mustafa Sa'eed, a mysterious and enigmatic figure with a complex past, the novel delves into the complexities of identity in a postcolonial context. Frantz Fanon, a prominent postcolonial theorist, has a significant influence on the Season of Migration to the North. Fanon's work, particularly his book "Black Skin, White Masks," explores the psychological impact of colonialism on colonized individuals and the struggle for self-identity. Saleh draws inspiration from Fanon's ideas and incorporates them into the novel, creating a narrative that critically examines the effects of colonialism on personal and cultural identities.

Postcolonial Theory and Psychoanalysis:

Postcolonial Theory and Psychoanalysis is a critical approach to understanding colonialism and race. It emphasizes the need for decolonization of the mind, as it can cripple entire civilizations and lead to hegemony. Hegemony is a social condition where the majorities self-approved willingness to promote dominant ideas and perspectives leads to uncontested power. This hegemony results in a politico-psychological illness called "hubris" among the ruling order, which makes them forget their place and generates self-righteous rhetoric.

The focus is on uprooting the scars of colonialism from memory to decolonize the mind. Once the mind is decolonized, individuals can better understand how colonial functions discourse, and their strategies, power hierarchy, and hatred systems become clear. Decolonization of the mind allows individuals to take control of their culture and history, producing an original historical account of their struggle.

Mrinalini Greedharry deconstructs the relationship between postcolonial studies and psychoanalysis, focusing on Frantz Fanon's psychoanalytic reading of the colonized black man. Fanon uses psychoanalysis to comprehend more than just psychological processes by considering social, political, and economic circumstances in the French Antilles. Fanon's work explores the effects of colonialism on the minds of natives, influencing the cultural, social, and political history of a landscape.

Aijaz Ahmed argues that the West has needed to constitute the Orient as its Other to constitute itself and its subject position. This idea of constituting Identity through Difference points to the primacy of representation over all other human activities, but why must representation also interiorize the Other?

In Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* the intersection of postcolonial theory and psychoanalysis can be examined through the lens of Frantz Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks." Both texts explore the psychological impact of colonialism on individuals and societies, delving into the complexities of identity formation and the internalization of racial hierarchies. By applying Fanon's ideas on the effects of colonization on the psyche, Saleh's novel sheds light on the ways in which individuals navigate their identities in a postcolonial world. Saleh's characters grapple with the tension between their African heritage and the influences of Western culture, highlighting the challenges of cultural hybridity and the search for a sense of belonging. The novel ultimately invites readers to question the lasting effects of colonialism on personal and collective identities, urging us to critically examine power dynamics and the construction of racial hierarchies in society.

Season of Migration to the North by Tayeb Salih and Frantz Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks" both explore themes related to identity, colonialism, and the impact of cultural encounters. While these two works are distinct in their narratives and contexts, some interesting parallels and connections can be drawn between them.

Colonialism and Its Effects on Identity:

In Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North*, the protagonist Mustafa Sa'eed grapples with the complex effects of colonialism on his own identity. Through Frantz Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks," we can further understand the psychological impact of colonization on individuals who are caught between two cultures. Fanon's analysis sheds light on how Mustafa's struggle with his Arab and European identities is a direct result of the oppressive colonial system that sought to erase and de humanize the colonized population. Fanon argues that colonization not only

physically subjugates the colonized, but also deeply affects their psyche, leading to a fragmented sense of self and internalized racism. Mustafa's experiences mirror this, as he grapples with feelings of cultural alienation and a constant search for identity in a society that views him as an outsider. The psychological impact of colonization on individuals like Mustafa underscores the long-lasting and pervasive effects of colonialism on personal identity and self-worth. This internalized racism can manifest in self-doubt, low self-esteem, and a constant questioning of one's worthiness and belonging. Furthermore, the erasure of indigenous cultures and traditions by the colonial system leaves individuals like Mustafa feeling disconnected from their roots and struggling to find a sense of belonging in their own land. These psychological wounds inflicted by colonization continue to shape personal identity and self-perception long after the physical presence of colonialism has ended.

In *Season of Migration to the North* the protagonist, Mustafa Sa'eed, returns to Sudan after studying in England. His experiences in the colonial metropolis shape his identity in complex ways. He becomes a symbol of the clash between cultures, embodying the struggle between the colonizer and the colonized. Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks" delves into the psychological effects of colonization on the individual. Fanon discusses how the colonized person internalizes the colonial discourse and adopts the values and norms of the colonizer, leading to a fractured and conflicted sense of self.

Cultural Hybridity and Ambiguity:

In Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* the theme of cultural hybridity is explored in relation to Frantz Fanon's "Black Skin, White Masks." Both works delve into the complexities of identity and the effects of colonialism on individuals. Saleh's novel portrays the protagonist's struggle with his dual cultural heritage and the resulting ambiguity that arises from navigating between two worlds. Similarly, Fanon's work examines the psychological impact of colonization on individuals, highlighting how it can lead to a fractured sense of self and the internalization of racist ideologies. Both authors shed light on the challenges faced by individuals who are caught between their native culture and the dominant culture imposed by colonial powers. The characters

in both works grapple with conflicting expectations and find themselves torn between embracing their heritage and assimilating into the colonizer's culture. This exploration of dual identity and the pressures it brings adds depth to the themes of cultural hybridity and colonialism in both texts. In "The Color Purple," Alice Walker delves into the complexities of identity through the character of Celie, an African American woman living in the early 20th century.

Celie's experiences of racism and sexism not only fracture her sense of self but also force her to internalize oppressive ideologies. Similarly, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Okonkwo struggles with his dual identity as an Igbo man living under British colonial rule. As he tries to navigate between his traditional Igbo culture and the influence of the colonizers, Okonkwo grapples with the conflicting expectations and values placed upon him. This internal struggle highlights the impact of colonialism on individual identity and raises questions about the preservation of cultural heritage in the face of external pressures.

Both works explore the notion of cultural hybridity, where individuals navigate between multiple cultural influences. Mustafa Sa'eed, for instance, embodies a hybrid identity as a Sudanese man educated in England, leading to a complex and sometimes contradictory self. Fanon's concept of "double consciousness" is reflected in the characters of Mustafa Sa'eed and others in "Season of Migration to the North." This double consciousness arises from the tension between one's native culture and the imposed colonial culture.

Resistance and Repudiation of Colonial Influence:

In Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* the characters' resistance against colonial influence is evident through their rejection of Western cultural norms and values. This can be seen in the protagonist's refusal to conform to the expectations placed upon him by the colonizers, as well as his rejection of their language and education system. Furthermore, Saleh explores the psychological impact of colonialism on the characters, paralleling Frantz Fanon's ideas in "Black Skin, White Masks." The novel also delves into the characters' internal struggles as they grapple with their own identity and sense of belonging in a post-colonial world. Saleh highlights the compl

ex emotions and conflicts that arise from living in a society where one's cultural heritage is constantly being overshadowed by Western ideals. Through his vivid portrayal of the characters' experiences, Saleh sheds light on the lasting effects of colonialism on individuals and communities alike. These effects can be seen in the characters' constant struggle to reconcile their own cultural traditions with the dominant Western values imposed upon them. Additionally, Saleh explores the ways in which colonialism has shaped power dynamics within society, leading to a sense of alienation and marginalization for those who do not conform to Western norms. Mustafa Sa'eed's character can be seen as a form of resistance against colonialism, yet he also perpetuates certain stereotypes and engages in destructive behavior. This complexity mirrors Fanon's exploration of the internalized racism and violence within the colonized subject. Fanon argues for the necessity of repudiating the colonizer's influence and reclaiming an authentic identity. In the context of *Season of Migration to the North* this might involve a rejection of the colonial legacy and the establishment of a post-colonial identity rooted in the characters' cultural heritage.

Gender and Colonialism:

Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* explores the complex intersections of gender and colonialism in postcolonial Sudan. Through the lens of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, the novel delves into the psychological and social effects of colonialism on both men and women, highlighting how the legacy of colonisation perpetuates gender inequalities and power dynamics. Saleh's protagonist, Mustafa Sa'eed, embodies the contradictions and tensions that arise from navigating a society that is caught between traditional values and the influence of Western colonialism. As a Sudanese man who has been educated in Europe, Mustafa struggles to reconcile his own desires and ambitions with the expectations placed on him by his community. The novel ultimately presents a complex portrayal of gender and power, showing how colonialism not only impacts the lives of individuals but also shapes societal structures and norms. Mustafa's character also highlights the complexities of masculinity within this context as he grapples with societal expectations of male dominance and control. His relationships with women, particularly his wife and lover, further illustrate the ways in which gender inequalities are perpetuated and challenged

in this post-colonial society. Overall, the novel offers a nuanced exploration of the intersections between gender, power, and cultural identity in a changing world. The novel delves into the psychological effects of colonialism on individuals, as Mustafa's character struggles with his own identity and sense of self-worth in a society that values Western ideals. Additionally, the novel examines how colonialism has shaped societal structures and norms, such as the patriarchal system that perpetuates gender inequalities. Through Mustafa's relationships with women, the author highlights the complexities of navigating traditional gender roles in a post-colonial society striving for equality. Both works touch upon gender dynamics in the context of colonialism. Mustafa Sa'eed's relationships with women, including his mysterious wives, reflect power imbalances and the objectification of women within the colonial framework. Fanon's analysis of race and gender in "Black Skin, White Masks" can provide a theoretical lens to understand the intersectionality of identity and how colonialism impacts not only racial identity but also gender relations.

The protagonist's complex identity

The novel *Season of Migration to the North* explores the protagonist's struggle with his dual cultural identity as an educated Sudanese man who has lived in both Sudan and England. This complexity is further examined through the lens of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, which delves into the psychological effects of colonialism and racism on individuals from colonized countries. Fanon's theories provide a framework for understanding the protagonist's internal conflicts and the ways in which he navigates between his African roots and Western influences. The novel also highlights the impact of historical and political events, such as Sudan's struggle for independence, on the protagonist's sense of belonging and identity. These layers of cultural, psychological, and historical complexities make *Season of Migration to the North* a rich exploration of the challenges faced by individuals caught between different worlds. Through the protagonist's experiences, the novel sheds light on the complexities of postcolonial identity and the lasting effects of colonization on individuals. It delves into the protagonist's struggle to reconcile his African heritage with the Western values and norms that have been imposed upon him. Additionally, the novel raises important questions about power dynamics and the ways in

which colonialism continues to shape relationships between colonizer and colonized even after independence is achieved. The protagonist's journey also highlights the internal conflict he faces as he navigates between his cultural roots and the pressures to assimilate into a dominant Western society. Furthermore, the novel explores the psychological impact of colonization, illustrating how it can lead to feelings of displacement, alienation, and a sense of not fully belonging in either world. Moreover, the novel delves into the complexities of identity formation and the struggle to reconcile one's heritage with the expectations of a modern, globalized world. It portrays the protagonist's constant negotiation between preserving his cultural traditions and embracing the opportunities and privileges offered by Western society.

This internal conflict resonates with readers who may also grapple with similar dilemmas in their own lives, fostering a deeper understanding of the universal human experience. The unnamed narrator of *Season of Migration to the North* grapples with a complex sense of identity throughout the novel. Raised in the village of Wad Hamid, he is torn between his Sudanese heritage and the Westernized education he received in England. This internal conflict reflects the broader struggle faced by many postcolonial individuals, torn between traditional values and the allure of Western ideals. Saleh also explores the role of gender in shaping identity in the *Season of Migration to the North*. The female characters in the novel, such as Hosna Bint Mahmoud and Jean Morris, face unique challenges and navigate complex power dynamics within a patriarchal society. Through their experiences, Saleh highlights the intersections of gender and postcolonial identity, shedding light on the complexities of identity formation.

The portrayal and impact of colonialism in the novels

Season of Migration to the North offers a complex and nuanced exploration of the psychological and cultural effects of colonialism on both the colonized and the colonizer. The novel delves into the intricate power dynamics between the East and the West, shedding light on how colonialism not only shapes individual identities but also perpetuates a cycle of violence and exploitation. Through Saleh's vivid storytelling and Fanon's theories on racial identity, readers are prompted to critically examine the lasting legacy of colonialism and its profound impact on the human psyche.

The novel challenges the notion of a clear dichotomy between the colonized and the colonizer, presenting characters who navigate a complex web of power dynamics and cultural hybridity. By exploring the psychological consequences of colonialism, Saleh invites readers to question their own complicity in systems of oppression and reflect on the potential for resistance and liberation. The novel also highlights the role of language as a tool of control and resistance, as characters grapple with the imposition of a foreign language and the loss of their native tongues. Saleh's portrayal of language as both a means of communication and a form of power further underscores the complexity of colonial relationships. Ultimately, through its exploration of colonialism's psychological effects and its examination of power dynamics, *Season of Migration to the North* encourages readers to critically engage with the legacy of imperialism and envision alternative futures that prioritize equality and cultural autonomy. By challenging the dominant narratives of colonialism, the novel prompts readers to question the systems of power that continue to shape our world today. Through its thought-provoking themes and vivid storytelling, *Season of Migration to the North* serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of understanding and confronting the lasting impacts of imperialism. The novel delves into the complexities of identity and the ways in which individuals navigate their own cultural heritage within a post-colonial world. It highlights the struggles faced by those caught between two worlds and emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of history in order to move towards a more inclusive and equitable future.

Depiction of colonial rule and its effects on identity

Saleh delves into the economic and cultural aspects of colonialism in *Season of Migration to the North*. The novel examines the exploitation of Sudan's resources by colonial powers and the erasure of Sudanese cultural heritage. This exploration reflects the broader impact of colonialism on postcolonial. The protagonist's encounters in the North, particularly in England, reveal both the allure and disillusionment of Western society. Initially drawn to the North by the promise of knowledge and advancement, the narrator faces the harsh realities of racism and cultural alienation. These experiences force him to confront his own identity and question the ideals he once idolized. As the protagonist navigates his experiences in the North, conflicting identities emerge. He must

confront the stereotypes and prejudices imposed on him as a postcolonial individual while also grappling with his own desires for assimilation and acceptance. This internal struggle exemplifies the complexities faced by individuals caught between two worlds, ultimately challenging conventional notions of a singular and fixed identity.

When diving into Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North*, it's impossible to ignore the weight of history that permeates the narrative. Set against the backdrop of postcolonial Sudan, the novel explores how historical events shape both individual and collective identities. From the British colonization of Sudan to the struggle for independence, these historical events play a significant role in shaping the characters' experiences and perceptions. The characters in the *Season of Migration to the North* are deeply influenced by the legacy of past events. The protagonist, Mustafa Sa'eed, for example, embodies the complex intersection of identities. As a Sudanese man who has lived in England, he straddles the line between east and west, colonial subject and colonizer. Mustafa grapples with his own identity as he navigates the cultural and societal expectations imposed upon him by both Sudan and England.

Similarly, other characters in the novel also carry the weight of their history. Whether it's Wad Rayyes, a wealthy Sudanese landowner, or Hosna, a young woman torn between tradition and modernity, their identities are moulded by the historical context in which they exist. The lasting impact of colonialism and the struggle for independence reverberate through their lives, shaping their choices, relationships, and understanding of self.

To truly understand the themes of identity and colonialism in *Season of Migration to the North*, it is essential to explore the influence of Frantz Fanon's ideas. Fanon, a prominent thinker on colonialism and decolonization, provides a framework through which we can analyze the characters' struggles with identity.

Fanon's ideas serve as a lens for understanding the characters' perceptions of identity and colonialism. His concepts of the "colonial gaze" and the psychological effects of colonization are particularly relevant. The characters in Saleh's novel grapple with the gaze of the colonizer, constantly aware of how they are perceived and judged. This preoccupation with the colonizer's gaze shapes their understanding of self and contributes to a complex interplay of power dynamics.

Season of Migration to the North delves into the intricate power dynamics between the colonizer and the colonized. Saleh skilfully exposes the unequal power structures that underpin colonial relationships. Through his characters, he highlights how colonialism perpetuates hierarchies and reinforces the dominance of the colonizer.

The power dynamics explored in the novel have profound effects on the characters' sense of identity. The colonized characters grapple with the internalized narratives of inferiority imposed upon them by the colonizer. This constant negotiation of power shapes their understanding of self and perpetuates a cycle of subjugation. Saleh's exploration of power and its impact on identity provides a thought-provoking examination of the lasting effects of colonialism.

In *Season of Migration to the North*, Tayeb Saleh masterfully weaves together themes of identity and colonialism through an engaging narrative. By examining the legacy of the past, the influence of Frantz Fanon's ideas, and the power dynamics at play, the novel offers a powerful exploration of the complex interplay between history, identity, and colonialism.

Conclusion

Tayeb Saleh's *Season of Migration to the North* provides a thought-provoking exploration of identity and colonialism, drawing attention to the complex interplay between personal and societal influences. Through the lens of Frantz Fanon's theories, the novel offers profound insights into how colonialism shapes individual and collective identities. By grappling with themes of power, history, and resistance, Saleh prompts readers to critically examine the lasting impact of colonialism and the ongoing quest for self-discovery and liberation. *Season of Migration to the North* serves as a powerful testament to the enduring relevance of these themes and invites us to reflect on the intricacies of identity and the consequences of colonialism in our contemporary world. *Season of Migration to the North* offers a powerful critique of colonialism and its lasting effects on both the colonized and the colonizer. Through the lens of Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, it becomes evident that Saleh's novel delves into the psychological complexities of identity and the internalized racism that arises from colonial domination. The conclusion

ultimately highlights the urgent need for decolonization and self-liberation, as well as the destructive consequences of perpetuating oppressive systems. By examining the characters' experiences and their struggles with cultural assimilation, Saleh exposes the damaging impact of colonialism on individuals' sense of self and their ability to form authentic connections.

Moreover, the novel's exploration of power dynamics between the colonized and the colonizer underscores the dehumanizing effects of colonial rule, emphasizing the necessity of dismantling such structures in order to achieve true equality and freedom. Through the characters' journeys, Saleh also highlights the resilience and resistance of marginalized communities in the face of colonial oppression. The novel showcases how individuals reclaim their cultural identities and challenge dominant narratives, ultimately advocating for a more inclusive and just society. By shedding light on the complexities of decolonization, Saleh prompts readers to critically examine their own roles in dismantling oppressive systems and actively participating in the pursuit of liberation for all.

In conclusion, *Season of Migration to the North* masterfully explores the themes of identity and colonialism through the lens of a postcolonial Sudanese narrative. Influenced by Frantz Fanon's ideas, Tayeb Saleh weaves a captivating and poignant tale that delves into the multifaceted nature of identity and the far-reaching impacts of colonialism. Through the protagonist's journey and encounters in both the North and Sudan, the novel prompts readers to reflect on their understanding of identity and the enduring legacies of colonialism. A comparative analysis of *Season of Migration to the North* and *Black Skin, White Masks* reveals the complexities of identity formation in the context of colonialism. Both works contribute to a broader understanding of the psychological and social effects of colonial encounters and the ongoing struggle for authentic selfhood in a post-colonial world.

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Recuperating Narratives of Untouchable Mothers and Sisters: Stories on Food, Purity, and Taboos

Book Review:

***How Are You Veg? Dalit Stories from Telegu* by Joopaka Subhadra,
translated by Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar, published by Stree (2021)**

SHIKHA VATS¹

The translated volume under review is a timely addition to the growing body of contemporary Dalit women's writing in Telegu. Such literature, necessarily wrestling with the nexus of caste, class, gender, and religious identities, offers a distinct political perspective. By bringing the intersection of Dalit and feminist movements to the forefront, Joopaka Subhadra's book highlights the double negation of the Dakkali and Madiga women, considered the lowest of the low castes. In such a work, intersectionality does not remain a merely theoretical approach: instead, it is embodied in the lived tales of explicit and implicit discrimination, bias, and injustice.

Most of the stories in the collection are narrated in the first person. The writing makes no attempts at sketching out an *other* narrator or protagonist whose voice may be set apart from the author's. By dropping the veneer of an overtly fictional mould and retaining her identity as the author-narrator, Subhadra furnishes the stories with a *real*, political context and purpose. They no longer remain stories but become emphatic testimonies and alternative histories in the neglected archives of writings on and by Dalit women. Therefore, these largely autobiographical stories are framed as fragments of a memoir or micro-histories in their own right.

In one of the stories titled 'Mother Bereft of Traces', Subhadra foregrounds the total and deliberate erasure of Dalit women within the framework of the bureaucratic state. While these

¹ Dr. Shikha Vats teaches at the Department of Basic Sciences and Humanities, IIT Bhubaneswar. She can be reached at shikha.vats91@gmail.com.

countless women in numerous villages of the country toil day and night to eke out a living, they remain nameless and faceless because no such official, written, or in other words, legal proof exists that may validate their existence. When Subhadra begins applying for a passport, she struggles to find her mother's actual legal name because, in the absence of any identity proof, as she says, "the history of my living mother was not there" (220). When she finally finds her name on the voters' list, she feels as though one written word, her name, had resurrected her mother. The story poignantly highlights the deep impact that the materiality and tangibility of the written word has on memory and political action. The story also expresses how the burden of the proof of citizenship falls so heavily and unjustly upon the most disenfranchised, that is, the Dalit women, in the state's unqualified insistence on providing documents in the recent bills such as CAA and NRC. Subhadra questions how one may find identity proofs of such "bonded labour mothers" and "earthy mothers" whose very names have no traces whatsoever except in collective oral memories. Thus, the stories question the absolute reliance on the official recorded history by exposing its shortcomings through its lopsided confrontation with the songs and stories of countless Dalit women.

Another story titled 'Must Purify' narrates the author's distressing ordeal for finding rented accommodation in a rural town where she secures a college lecturer's position. Subhadra recollects how despite education and her erstwhile residence in the city, the caste lines in the villages remain as strictly drawn as in the olden days. After a few days of being offered a room for rent, she and her friend are evicted from the premises when the landlords learn of their caste and decide to "purify" the house. Such a brazen encounter of caste discrimination reminds the author of the inhuman exploitation of her ancestors, who had to carry pots and palm leaf brooms around their necks to mitigate the "pollution" caused by their presence. By foregrounding this unforgiving image, the author reinstates the modern state's failure, where even education and employment fail to override the taboo of caste-based untouchability.

The stories on food and its associated (im)purity reveal the sinuous trails of casteism that goes all the way from the kitchen and the household into the offices and the seemingly neutral public spaces. The titular story 'How are You Veg?' is narrated in plain literary prose with a pithy, crisp, satirical, yet nuanced tone. The result of such a direct approach to language is an extremely

evocative and powerfully stirring mode of storytelling. The title, phrased as a provocative question, “How Are You Veg?” makes the readers think about their own dietary preferences and the set of social, economic, and cultural privileges that *enable* such a preference. Another story titled ‘The Favourite Curry’ recounts how an increasingly intolerant atmosphere towards beef consumption taints the author’s childhood memories and poses a fatal threat to their lives for something as inconspicuous as eating food. While the former story is about covert untouchability practised by the other upper-caste women in the author’s office, the latter reveals the violent and forceful segregation of Dalits through the modern-day state-sanctioned mechanism of food bans and their implementation by the vanguards of upper-caste morality. The politics of food reveals the power dynamic of who decides the simple fact of what one may eat and what must be prohibited.

The translated prose is limpid and flows smoothly, retaining the indispensable emotional surcharge that accompanies each of the short-yet-impactful stories in the collection. The ‘Afterword’ by the translators Alladi Uma and M. Sridhar locates Subhadra’s contribution within the critical history of the Dalit and feminist writings in Telugu.