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Lights, Camera, Action: Visions of the Mind and their Hacking in 'Inception'

Neenu Kumar



Neenu Kumar

Years ago a question was posited by Plato: 'How exactly can we explain our perceptions of reality?' The answer is yet to be found and like the 'totem' in *Inception* (Nolan 2010), the 'top has not stopped spinning.'

Dreams have fascinated researchers for centuries. Freud was of the opinion that dreams paved the way for the 'unconscious.' He felt that the "sources of dreams include stimuli from the external world, subjective experiences, organic stimuli within the body and mental activities during sleep" (1900: 22). While sleeping, the body might be in a state of rest but the mind never sleeps. It continues to work/ think. Dreams constitute a reality which is separated from the reality of the waking mind. Memories, desires, secrets and fears, which cannot be fulfilled in waking moments, manifest themselves in dreams. They may appear to be strange, bizarre, uncanny or idiosyncratic on awakening but nothing appears to be weird during the dreams. When a person is part of a dream, the most ridiculous thing is believable. The details, if they can be recalled, are not only complex but vivid and very real. Everything is possible in a dream. The clearer the dream, the faster is REM (Rapid Eye Movement). This is the result of the ups and downs faced during the dream.

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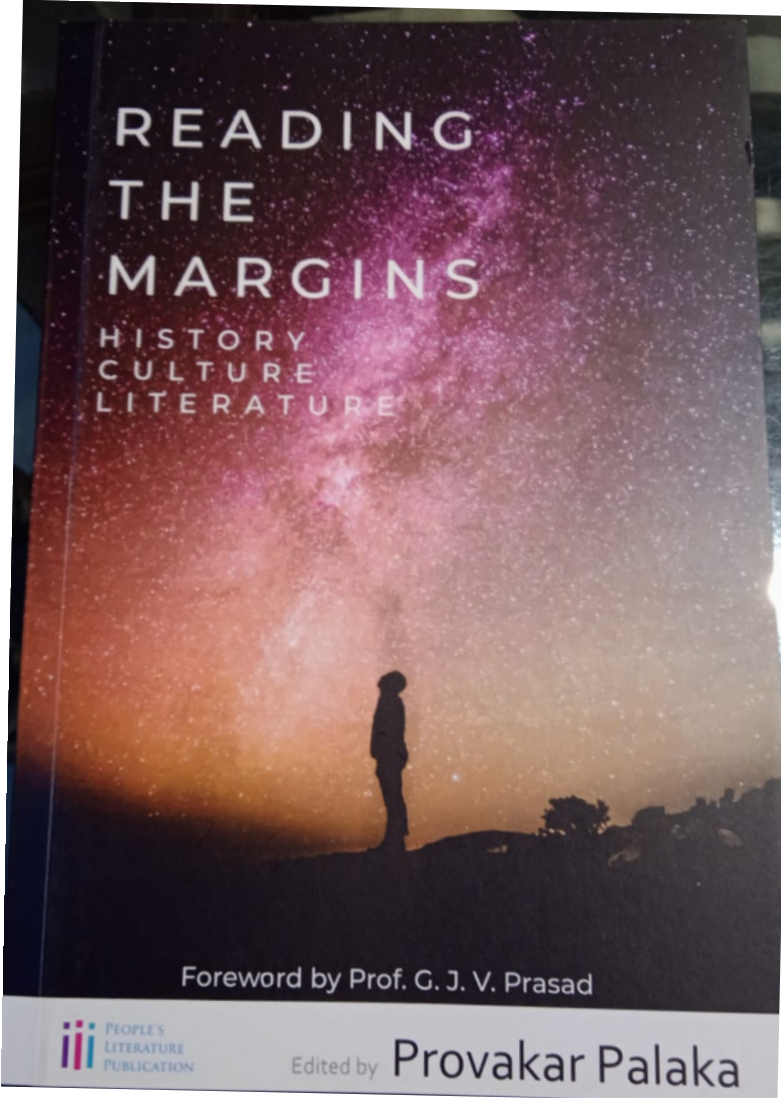
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GENDER AND SPATIAL IDENTITY

THIRD GENDER IN HINDI MOVIES

Neenu Kumar

Society perceives people as they are presented in cinema. At times, these representations are stereotypical. These movies can not only influence the society but also help them ponder upon the conditions of these groups. One such group of people, who have often been misrepresented and marginalized, is the 'third gender.' In every society, people are prejudiced against them. Whether in earlier cinema or the current movies, the clichéd representation of the 'third gender' has resulted in the formulation of a negative mindset in the society. They have been presented as caricatures of their originals and are made fun of and laughed at. They are ridiculed and their struggles are presented in a very light manner, rather the problems faced by them are entirely ignored.

'Third gender' or third sex is a concept in which individuals are categorized, either by themselves or by society, as neither man nor woman. For years, society has identified 'third gender' as either prostitutes or devious people out to take advantage of usually through criminal behaviour. They are dismissed as not belonging to society. They live outside the society and any association with them is not only looked down upon but also considered a taboo. It is such a vicious misrepresentation of the 'third gender' that they bear the brunt of jokes and rebuttals. The pedestrian representation of the 'third gender' merely conforms to their platitudinous status. This is not the misconception of merely an individual. This is the misunderstanding of the society in its entirety as the 'third gender' is presented in a deprecating light in the Hindi cinema (and the visual medium has a far greater impact than any other medium). An emphatic statement is, then, made that there are people like-minded in their thinking that the 'third gender' are not normal; that they live on the outskirts of the society; that they have confusing genitalia; that they dress

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differently or cross-dress; and that they can be laughed at mercilessly. This further cements the notionality of the 'third gender' as not being normal and not be taken seriously or as a very real part of our society.

Hindi cinema in the postmodern times has seen a veritable change from the traditional, fixed and static to a more open and not-so-fixed approach towards many issues. Matters relating to identity, subjectivity as opposed to objectivity, representation of gender-related matters and giving them genuine voice/s have been looked at and dealt with new perspectives. Contentious issues of body and sex are also being talked about in Hindi cinema. However, the 'third gender' continues to be dismissed in mainstream society. They are deprived of their identity. They are neither given true representation nor do they get an authentic voice in the established social and cultural milieu. Since they do not belong to either gender, their plight is often like that of the 'subaltern.' Bollywood has often portrayed the 'third gender' in a biased, insensitive and stereotypical manner. The body is violated and this violence is not merely sexual. It denies voice and identity to a section of society which has, typically, been ignored for centuries. Society has a judgmental attitude towards them resultant from their sexual behaviour. Therefore, they are allocated a gender role and identity which is contradictory to the accepted role and identity of men and women. Anything, which does not conform to the set norms, is ridiculed and so is the 'third gender.'

The 'third gender' has steadily been resisting their portrayal in Hindi cinema and society in general, trying to give voice to their repressed identity. An attempt has been made by some directors to present the 'third gender' authentically and to give them a voice. The attempt has, however, failed to some extent as they have not been able to break the barriers and the taboo associated with this gender. The prevalent attitude of society has constructed their identity. It has been adhered to and regulated so rigidly that it has not been easy to reconstruct it. They are excluded from the conventional. They have no social, economic and cultural life and misery has become their middle name. They are fighting waves of discrimination. Their fears would not exist if they were accurately portrayed. They are

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people who also have hopes, dreams, bad days, good days. They love. They hate. Their cinematic portrayal does not do them justice. Misunderstandings and prejudices about the 'third gender' community are based upon their portrayals in Bollywood. Fairness is not how the characters and scenarios are treated. Are they depicted humorously? How do other characters react to and interact with the 'third gender' characters? These factors are important in ethical cinematic portrayal and can have an influence on the perceptions of uninformed consumers.

Reading the Margins

An ongoing stereotypical process has been responsible for the fixation of the identity of the 'third gender.' This non-gender specific fixity now appears to be in a state of fluctuation. Therefore, the dominance of the heteronormative society over the marginalized 'third gender' community appears to be diminishing. Here may be the danger that the 'body' which has long been made, in Foucault's words a 'site of conflict' for inscribing or 'enacting power' (Foucault 1980a: 80) now seems to be threatening the very basis of power as it is 'resisted' by the 'third gender.' The 'third gender' is excluded from society. Their unusual sexual identity has resulted in preconceived notions. Their gender roles define their sexuality and their sexuality is the construction of their gender roles. Hence, both are directly proportionate to each other. This politics of 'exclusion' has been well described by Foucault in his *The Order of Discourse* (1981):

Rather than seeing discourse as simply a set of statements which have some coherence, we should, rather, think of a discourse as existing because of a complex set of practices which try to keep them in circulation and other practices which try to fence them off from others and keep those other statements out of circulation. (Mills 2005:54)

They are found in every society but are considered an aberration by the hands of God. They carry with them the stigma of being unfortunate and a mistake. They have no support system as the heterosexuals. In every society, the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organized and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, 'formidable materiality' (Foucault 198

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52). In the hierarchy of gender role/s also, they are at the bottom, with very little to no 'voice' at all.

Bollywood is the microcosm of the Indian society. It is the cultural repertoire of India in general, catering to the emotional needs of people both in India and abroad. It connects the NRIs to their nation-state, bridging the gap of thousands of miles and giving them a sense of belonging. Over the years, Bollywood has undergone a sea of changes. However, the portrayal of the 'third gender' has remained static. They are (mis)represented/ presented as they were earlier. They have the same stereotypical traits they had aeons ago to cater to the psychological constructs of the Indian masses.

The presentation of the 'third gender' in this manner is for attaining consent of the people in general. The irony is that it includes both those who form the discourse and those who are being brought under that discourse because sexual discourse, like any other discourse, depends on acceptance, consent and regulatory agency. We must conceive of discourse as a violence which we do to things, or in any case as a practice, which we impose on them; and it is in this practice that the events of discourse find the principle of their regularity. (Foucault 1981: 67)

Everything in the society is looked at from the lens of black or white. There are no greys as opposed to what Graham Greene said: "Human nature is not black and white but black and grey" (*The Lost Childhood* 1951).

The society is inhabited by either heterosexuals or non-heterosexuals. All non-heterosexuals are not only looked down upon but are also, in a way, controlled by the heterosexuals. The (mis)representation of the non-heterosexuals has given the heterosexuals power to ill-treat the non-heterosexuals. The heterosexuals are natural and desirable (hence white) and anything which deviates from them is looked at as unnatural and undesirable (hence black). The portrayal of the 'third gender' in the Hindi cinema has done nothing to alleviate their status. In the process, they lose their control over their body, identity, subjectivity. Their body is written and re-written from time to time by dominant discourse and people of

(RE)DEFINING MARGINALITIES

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Redefining Marginalities 2021

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The Peripheral and the Marginalised: Depiction of the Disabled in Hindi Cinema

NEENU KUMAR

The problem is not how to wipe out the differences but how to unite with the differences intact.¹

—Rabindranath Tagore

Cinema, especially Bollywood, has been influencing people through the years. The reel has sometimes portrayed the real effectively, thus leaving a mark while at times, it has made fun of behavioural patterns of people with disabilities, leaving a bad taste in the mouth. The fact cannot be denied that even today people with disabilities are not only marginalized but there is no sensitization and understanding in the common man towards their plight.

As early as 1948, funds were being poured into Hindi cinema 'with the objective of disseminating the ideas of a free Indian nation that possessed its own identity free from Western influences' (Dissanayake 2003; Jaikumar 2006). Effort was being made to portray society as it was. Disability was also part of Hindi cinema at that time but the movies made on disabilities were few and far between.

Even in modern times, disability is not understood clearly. People are insensitive towards those with disabilities. Earlier it used to be thought that a person's disability is the result of *karma*, wherein the disability was a form of punishment for past misdeeds or crimes committed. Science has tried to break the shackles of these stereotypes but the interiors of the country are still affected by these taboos.

Very few people have direct experience with disability. There is also lack of awareness among common people about disability. Hence, cinema can be a powerful medium to portray how people with disabilities feel, behave and experience life. Since 1930s movies on/about disabilities have been made. At times the portrayal has been realistic while most of the times, people with disabilities have merely been made fun of and used as comic relief in the movie with no regard for the rights of the disabled, who form a large section of the

¹ *Disability, Liberation, and Development* by Peter Coleridge, Chapter 13, "Disability and Liberation," UK & Ireland: Oxfam Publication, 1993 rpt. 1996 & 2001, p.21.

He meets with an accident and loses his eyes. He is looked after by his wife. He is remorseful when he comes to know that the woman/ wife he had abandoned due to social taboo, is the one who nurses him back to health. In *Netrikkan* (1981), directed by S. P. Muthuraman, Rajnikant plays the role of a philanderer, who ends up on a wheelchair. This appears to be the apt consequence of the lewd behaviour he portrays throughout the movie, also stressing the desexualisation of the now disabled Rajnikant. In another 1981 movie *Dhanwaan*, directed by Surendra Mohan, Rajesh Khanna, who plays a rich, arrogant atheist, becomes blind. Despite his riches, he cannot buy a new pair of eyes for himself. He gets a kind donor only after he repents and asks for God's forgiveness.

In *Mehboob ki Mehandi* (1971), directed by H. S. Rawail, disability is shown analogous to death. Pradeep Kumar, after finishing his jail sentence, for which he had been wrongly accused, comes to kill Iftikar. Pradeep Kumar finds Iftikar in a wheelchair and decides not to kill him as leaving him to live a life of a disabled would be worse than death. *Haider* (2014), directed by Vishal Bhardwaj, replicates the same emotion, when Shahid Kapoor decides not to kill Kay Kay Menon, his uncle for the murder of his father, as his uncle's legs have been amputated. Thakur's (Sanjeev Kumar) disability in *Sholay* (1975), directed by Ramesh Sippy, is one of the most abiding picturisation of disability as punishment. Thakur's arms are cut off by Gabbar (Amjad Khan), who, then, crushes the arms of Gabbar with spikes towards the end of the movie. Gabbar's punishment is to suffer a similar disability as he gave to Thakur.

In some of the Bollywood movies, people with disabilities have been presented as heroes and super-heroes. In *Dushman* (1998), directed by Tanuja Chandra, Suraj (Sanjay Dutt) plays a visually impaired army veteran, who fights Gokul Pandit (Ashutosh Rana) when Gokul tries to molest Naina (Kajol). Suraj uses his sense of hearing as well as his 'sixth sense' to track Gokul's movements and attack him. Kachra in *Lagaan* (2001), directed by Ashutosh Gowrikar, helps Bhuvan (Aamir Khan) win a cricket match. Kachra, here, is fighting double disability—physical as well as that of belonging to a lower caste, an untouchable. In *Aankhen* (2002), directed by Vipul Amrutlal Shah, three blind men Vishwas (Akshay Kumar), Elias (Paresh Rawal) and Arjun (Arjun Rampal) are forced to rob a bank. They are successful with Vishwas relying primarily on his 'sixth sense.' In these movies, people with disabilities are, no doubt, presented positively wherein their disabilities are not made fun of. However, as mentioned earlier, such portrayals not only misrepresent the real identity of these people but they also do little to nothing to help understand and comprehend the problems they go through. Nair (2015) quotes Rustom Irani, who is more than 60% disabled and is wheelchair bound: "There are a couple of disability tropes that need to disappear from Bollywood... Please don't enhance the other senses and skills of disabled characters to superhuman levels because they lack a particular ability."

...society. Atanu Mohapatra (2012) writes: "Portrayal of disability in films swings primarily between two extremes—pity, fun, caricaturing, sympathy, and awesome heroism are at one end of the spectrum while discrimination, coping-up, emotional swings and aspirations of the human soul are at the other end."

There are many instances in Hindi movies where disability has been used as comic interlude. In *Judaai* (1997), directed by Raj Kanwar, Upasana Singh has a speech disorder which is used to induce laughter among the audience. In *Mujhse Shaadi Karogi* (2004), directed by David Dhawan, Mr. Duggal (Kader Khan) has a different disability every day which is used for comic purposes. In *Tom, Dick and Harry* (2006), directed by Deepak Tijori, the disabilities of the three lead characters are presented in a comic manner for light entertainment.

Tom (Dino Morea) is deaf, Deepak/Dick (Anuj Sawhney) is blind and Harry (Jimmy Shergill) is mute. Their limitations are used for the purpose of comedy. *Pyare Mohan* (2006), directed by Indra Kumar, is made on similar lines. Pyare (Fardeen Khan) is blind and Mohan (Vivek Oberoi) is deaf. They are actors but become disabled after they meet with an accident. Both go through various tribulations and once again their disabilities are used for comic purposes. *Golmaal: Fun Unlimited* (2006), directed by Rohit Shetty, is another movie where the speech disorder of Lucky (Tusshar Kapoor) and the blindness of Paresh Rawal and his wife are used for comic relief. In all these movies, disabilities are exploited as comic interlude. Disability is not the main theme in all these movies. Sadly, they merely fortify the current stereotypes that disabilities are to be laughed at and the directors use them unashamedly to bond with the audience.

Through the years, Hindi cinema has come of age. It has been dealing with many issues with great sensitivity. However, the perplexing fact is that it continues to portray disability irresponsibly. According to Andrade et al. (2010), 'considering the potential for harm in the dissemination of misinformation, film-makers should exhibit a greater sense of ethics when creating impressions that might adversely influence [people]'. On similar lines Dinesh Bhugra (2006) says that "compared with Hollywood's portrayal of psychological ailments, Indian cinema is perhaps less enlightened. The power of the mass media can never be overestimated. Film as a medium should be used to advantage to dispel the stigma associated with psychiatric disorders, and unfortunately, the contrary happens right now."

In India, quite often, disability has been looked at as a punishment for past misdeeds. According to Pal (*The Portrayal of Disability in Indian Cinema*: 2012), this has been the most popular representation of disability in our films. The 1936 Bombay Talkies movie *Jeevan Naiya*, directed by Franz Osten, is one of the earliest representations of disability as punishment in Hindi cinema. The movie highlights the problems associated with traditional beliefs which stem from Hindu orthodoxy. The protagonist abandons his wife because she comes from a family of dancers.

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(Re)Defining Marginalities

One of the most important aspects to be looked at is that people with disabilities cannot live independently. It is not only detrimental to their cause but is also a hindrance for them to live a life of dignity. It is typical of Bollywood to present these people in such a manner that they are forced to become objects of pity and lead a dependent life. The 1964 classic movie *Desti*, directed by Satyen Bose, is about two friends Ramu (Sushil Kumar), who is a cripple and Mohan (Sudhir Kumar), who is blind. Both are rejected by the people and no one comes forward to help them. Their disabilities first make them objects of ridicule and then pity. They have to be dependent on others for their basic existence. *Khamoshi* (1996), directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali, also moves on the same lines. Joseph (Nana Patekar) and Flavya (Barganza (Seema Biswas) are a deaf and mute couple. They live in Goa and are totally dependent on their daughter Annie (Manisha Koirala). Their personal and economic dependence on their daughter does not allow them to accept Raj (Salman Khan), the man she falls in love with. The motive is quite selfish as Joseph is certain that they cannot survive without their daughter both personally and economically.

The Hindu Indian classics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* have two disabled characters who play a very important role in the entire scheme of things. Manthara, in *Ramayana*, is a hunchback who influences Kaikeyi to ask King Dashratha for her two boons, one of which was to send Lord Rama to an exile of fourteen years and the other for her son Bharata to become the king of Ayodhya. Shakuni, in *Mahabharata*, has a limp. He is said to be behind all the evil plotting responsible for the sufferings of the *Pandavas*. In both these epics disability is characteristic of social maladjustment and the path to evil. Prem Chopra in *Ram Tera Desh* (1984), directed by Swaroop Kumar, is the crippled brother-in-law, who plots and schemes against the protagonist Vijeyendra Ghatge to fulfil his evil ways. The 1972 movie *Gora aur Kala*, directed by Naresh Kumar, is the story of twin brothers played by Rajendra Kumar. The brothers are separated at birth. The name of the movie is suggestive. One (*Gora*) grows up in the royal family and the other (*Kala*) becomes a bandit. The two terms are indicative of the contrasts—the fair-skinned prince is suave, kind, desirable, whereas the bandit is dark-skinned, cruel, and most importantly, has a paralyzed left arm' (Pal 2012). Then, there is the Tamil thriller *Vaali* (1999), directed by S. J. Surya. One of the twin brothers, played by Ajith Kumar, is deaf. He can read lips. He uses his disability to fulfil his evil plan of scoring with his able brother. He is jealous of his brother and plots and schemes against his brother to get his wife Priya (Simran), for whom he lusts. Once again, the portrayal of the disabled as evil does no justice to them in actual life. The projection of them as wicked in reel life is far removed from their real life.

Despite all this, movies have been made which have portrayed the disabled authentically. *Koshish* (1972), directed by Gulzar, is seen as a milestone in Bollywood for its portrayal of disability. Both Haricharan (Sanjeev Kumar)

THE SAGA OF FOOD

Reflections on
Technology and Culture



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Theme of Food and it's Symbolic Representation in Mrs. Dalloway, The Edible Woman, Bridget Jones's Diary, Chocolat, and Eat Pray Love

Neenu Kumar

“As I ate the oysters with their strong taste of the sea and their faint metallic taste that the cold white wine washed away, leaving only the sea taste and the succulent texture, and as I drank their cold liquid from each shell and washed it down with the crisp taste of wine, I lost the empty feeling and began to be happy and to make plans” (Ernest Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*, 1964).

Eating is one of the primary activities necessary to sustain life. Food is very important for existence and is invariably linked to epistemological and ontological analyses. It plays a significant role in understanding human nature because even though eating is a biological and physical need, it has symbolic importance as well. It is the area of our initial education, socialization, and assimilation of culture. Psychoanalytic theory points out that “food and eating are essential to self-identity and define family, class, ethnicity. These are not vague associations, for eating practices are highly specific: encoded in appetite, taste, ritual and ingestive etiquettes are unwritten

rules and meanings, through which people communicate and are categorized within particular cultural contexts” (Sceats, 2000, p. 1).

The self is always in a dilemma about how much of it is influenced by the world; a sense of self-importance and self-conceit also play their part. People are constantly torn between how they should be, how they want to be, and how the world perceives them. There is a cause-and-effect relationship between food and individuality. When the boundaries between the self and the world begin to widen, the resultant dissonance can give rise to compulsive overeating or non-eating. The pervasiveness of eating disorders clearly demonstrates that people feel insecure about their bodies. Food may be the main source of gratification and joy for some people, while for others, eating may result in exasperation and annoyance. Strong imagery can be evoked through the use of food. It elicits a profusion of connections in the minds of different people. It is recognized not only through the senses of smell and taste but other senses as well. Eating customs often allow a group of people to contemplate and articulate human conduct with their longings and cravings. “Sacred rituals were performed by priests, monarchs were appointed, people suffering from headaches were cured by specialists, women were helped by midwives to bear children... dead relatives, victorious warriors, and luminaries were sent on their onward journey to the underworld [for heaven] with mouth-watering chocolates” (Norton, 2008, p. 43).

Literature had always been replete with references to food and there has been a renewed interest in examining the psychological underpinnings to food-related activities and eating as a universal experience. This essay explores

Women try to lead their lives on their own in their search for individuality. Gilbert (2010) quotes Virginia Woolf, “Across the broad continent of a woman's life falls the shadow of a sword. On the one side of that sword... there lies convention and tradition and order, where ‘all is correct’. But on the other side of that sword, if you're crazy enough to cross it and choose a life that does not follow convention, ‘all is confusion’” (p. 100). Women count on food for emotional support during a spiritual or a philosophical dilemma or when they are uncertain about their own significance. The concerns with self, freedom, and individuality and their lack of these, lead women to develop a tricky relationship with food and either eat too much or not at all. In both cases, the unpredictability of their eating habits affects their lifestyles adversely. They either become emaciated or obese. The desire to gain control over their bodies ends up ruining their lives. Contemporary women authors have recognized and chronicled the correlation of these causes. They have written about the devastating relationships women have had with food in several novels.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* is the story of a woman in search of her individuality. Mrs. Dalloway feels trapped in the role assigned to her by society. She wishes to escape, but, contrarily, she also wishes to go through every experience more intensely. Howard Harper says, “She feels both sheltered and anonymous, useful and trivial, committed and deluded” (1982, p. 112). On these grounds, Clarissa uses food to deliberately validate “an inner disjunction” (Glenny, 1999, p. 117). The dinner party and her mingling with people is her way to shield her existential discord and inner disintegration. Her anorexic outlook towards food can be viewed as “a means of mediating between the artificial polarities of spiritual and sensual

the depiction and issues associated with food and eating disorders in some English novels, *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, *The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood, *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding, *Chocolat* by Joanne Harris, and *Eat Pray Love* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

It is necessary to understand that there is a direct connection between women's independence and control over their lives with the growth of the ‘self.’ Friedan, in her analysis of “feminine mystique,” writes, “It is my thesis that the core of the problem for women today is not sexual but a problem of identity – a stunting or evasion of growth” (Betty Friedan in Cherin, 1985, p. 17). In many cases women cannot determine the boundaries of self as also it is difficult for them to find a space for themselves within the substantial social design, which they can call their own. The conventional, patriarchal society did not give much freedom to women. Consequently, they utilized anything that they could use to negotiate space for themselves; and food was one such thing. This is also one of the ways in which we can regard the gendered nature of food. Caroline Walker Bynum in *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (1987), studies the fasting women of medieval times and points out that food and the negotiations around it are instruments through which “women controlled their social and religious circumstances quite effectively...” (p. 220). something that is very relevant for contemporary women as well. Through food, they controlled themselves and their world. Bodily functions, sensations, fertility, and sexuality; husbands, mothers, fathers, and children; the boundaries of ones' own ‘self’ were all controlled by abstaining from and bestowing food (Bynum, 1987, p. 193-94).

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Nandini C Sen



Through the Diasporic Lens

Volume II

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Discourse of Resistance in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* and Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*

Necnu Kumar

Abstract

People have always rebelled against domination and oppression in some form or the other. Colonialism and imperialism resulted in suppressing the voices of many. This suppression resulted in discourses of resistance, some of which were organised while others were sporadic and erratic. These discourses of resistance not only revealed the unfair practices of the dominant but also subverted their power. They attempted to establish a place of equality for the common people and their practices. People have resisted due to class, race, gender, caste and postcolonial circumstances. Resistance has been due to social divisions as well which precipitates inequality. The victimised feel powerless and oppressed. However, when the exploited come together and stand against the domineering, their resistance brings about changes in the prevailing structure of the society.

Women have always been given a minority status. They have voiced their grievances against this unequal treatment meted out to them and sought better options for a dignified space. The present paper deals with the resistance of the woman character Piyali who is not suppressed by the patriarchal society; in whom the will power sprouts from within and sails along with the fate; with the never-

give-up attitude, she fights against all odds in the society. The paper also attempts to explore how Ghosh, in *The Hungry Tide*, traces the trajectory of the silence of the subaltern primarily through the character of Fokir as a movement from the act of being silenced to the act of first resisting that silence, then to the act of appropriating that silence and eventually to an ultimate journey of making that silence one's own and transforming it in such a manner that it characterises our way of knowing and being. The paper also deals with Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, which has different resistant narratives running through it. The novel highlights the crisis of the nation and the lived experiences of its characters. It is a harshly realistic novel told almost entirely from the point of view of the subaltern and the trivial, ordinary characters that were thrown together by the means of situations and inevitability. We can see the resistance between the characters and their immediate physical environment.

Keywords: Resistance, subaltern, oppression, women, gender, class, caste.

The big bee flies high,
The little bee makes the honey;
The black folks make the cotton
And the white folks get the money. (Leadbelly)¹

Dissenting voices and rebellions against the structures of domination have always existed in one form or the other (Hsiao and Lim 2010: vii). People have always rebelled against domination and oppression. Colonialism and imperialism resulted in suppressing the voices of many. This suppression resulted in the discourses of resistance, some of which were organised while others were sporadic and erratic. These discourses of resistance not only revealed the unfair practices of the dominant but also subverted their power. They attempted to establish a place of equality for the common people and their practices. People have resisted due to class, race, gender, caste and postcolonial

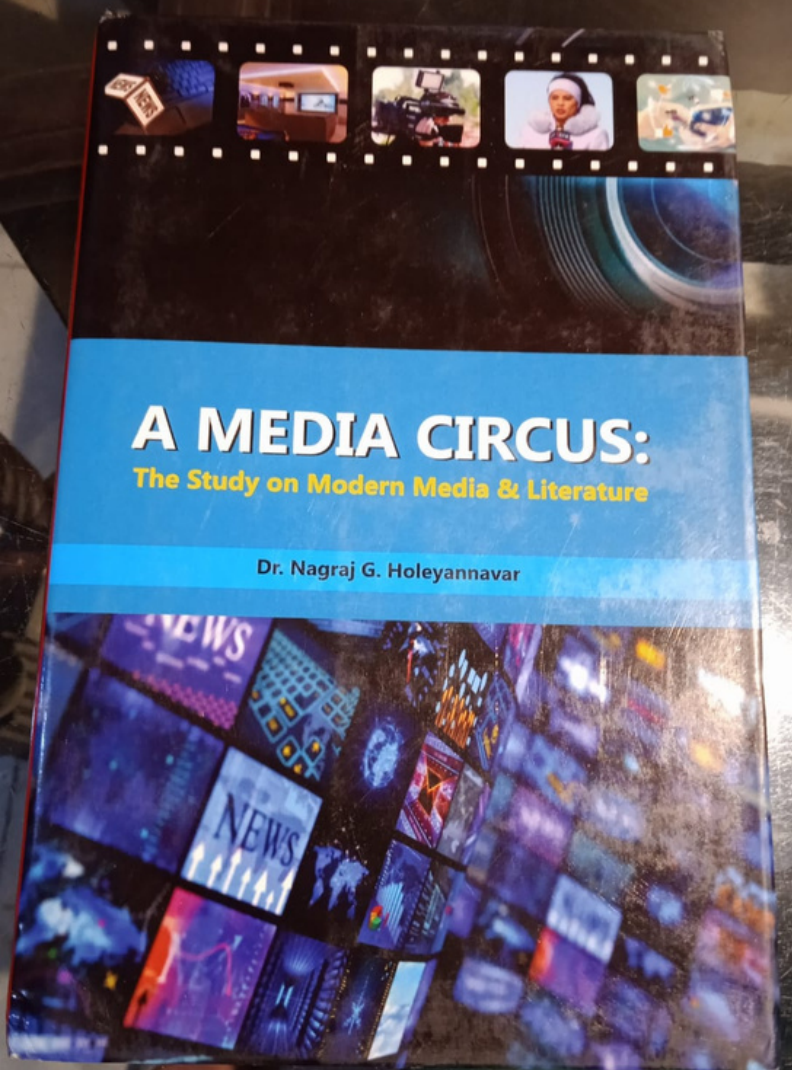
victimised feel powerless and oppressed. However, when the exploited come together and stand against the domineering, their resistance brings about essential changes in the prevailing structure of the society.

In his famous novel *The Hungry Tide*,² Ghosh portrays the life of Dalit refugees from Bangladesh. They are ousted from their home land and come to live in the Sunderban forests, an area comprising of a chain of islands. It is a region inhabited by misfortunes, disasters and tribulations. The novel cleverly portrays the distress of the socially and politically marginalised sector/s of the Indian society. It clearly shows how religious dogmatism/bigotry and projects on environmental conservation affect the lives of the communities of the subaltern people.

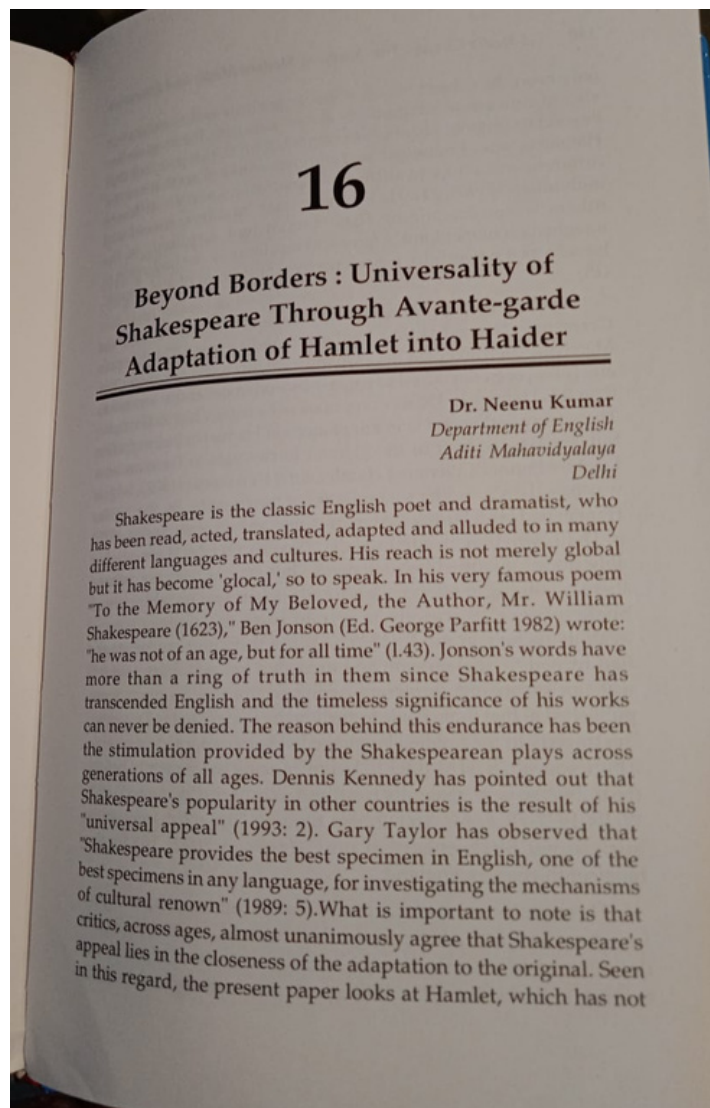
In order to clarify the above statements, it is important to give an introduction about the women characters of *The Hungry Tide*. The main women characters, based on their cultural differences, can be classified as urban or rural. Nilima and Piya are the urban women, who are unacquainted with the law of the land of the Sunderbans. They are neither born into these unfavourable surroundings nor are they aware of the cultural construct of these forests, to which they needed to adapt in order to survive. They belong to that class where they had the advantage of learning and a good upbringing. They give the best and work hard to come to terms with the ruthless reality of village life and also want to acquaint themselves with the way of life. Far away from the comforts of their respective urban lives, both Nilima and Piya make their own networks in order to survive in these harsh surroundings. Both these women show great strength of mind and tenacity to overcome their personal dilemmas.

Nilima's husband is dedicated Marxist and a poet. His revolutionary enthusiasm and poetic gaze make him view the world in a certain way. He has little or no time for his wife, who has to constantly discover new means to fend for herself. Uprooted from her luxurious life, Nilima faces a different kind of marginalisation – a marginalisation from her well-off middle class life of comfort. She tries to get stability in her life, which has been unsettled after her marriage. She finds her husband's rigid adherence to Marxism unrealistic and has no belief in it. Nilima's way of coping with the Sunderbans leads her to establish the *Mobila Songothon* – the Women's Union – and ultimately the *Badabon Trust*. Her years of diligence and perseverance bear fruit and she is able to bring hope to an otherwise despondent marginalised community, who reside in an area devastated by water.

Nirmal and Nilima are far from being a match made in heaven, with each going his/her way. Nirmal's mellifluous poetry gives him an escape and his Marxist idealistic thoughts keep him occupied. Nilima, on the other hand, is more practical and her zealous efforts pay off. As a medical facility, the *Lusibari* hospital becomes the most sought after. Nirmal's quest for revolutionary equality takes him to Morichjhâpi.³ His wife is, however, aware that his attempts would merely result in his own destruction and take her down with him. She is aware of the predicament of the Morichjhâpi refugees but her non-reactive nature does not allow her to be involved too deeply. She keeps herself and her organisation away from the revolutionary ideas of her husband, which had such a strong-hold on the hapless Morichjhâpi refugees. Nirmal's Marxism and his muse Kusum, the tribal girl, give her, Nilima, a lot of heart-burn but she takes everything in her stride for the greater good of working for the local people. To Nilima "the challenge of making a few little



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Beyond Borders : Universality of Shakespeare Through Avante-garde Adaptation of Hamlet into Haider

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Shakespeare is the classic English poet and dramatist, who has been read, acted, translated, adapted and alluded to in many different languages and cultures. His reach is not merely global but it has become 'glocal,' so to speak. In his very famous poem "To the Memory of My Beloved, the Author, Mr. William Shakespeare (1623)," Ben Jonson (Ed. George Parfitt 1982) wrote: "he was not of an age, but for all time" (L43). Jonson's words have more than a ring of truth in them since Shakespeare has transcended English and the timeless significance of his works can never be denied. The reason behind this endurance has been the stimulation provided by the Shakespearean plays across generations of all ages. Dennis Kennedy has pointed out that Shakespeare's popularity in other countries is the result of his "universal appeal" (1993: 2). Gary Taylor has observed that "Shakespeare provides the best specimen in English, one of the best specimens in any language, for investigating the mechanisms of cultural renown" (1989: 5). What is important to note is that critics, across ages, almost unanimously agree that Shakespeare's appeal lies in the closeness of the adaptation to the original. Seen in this regard, the present paper looks at Hamlet, which has not

only been the subject of considerable analysis and criticism but also of numerous adaptations across cultures. It has gone far beyond its original Elizabethan context. John D. Jump argues that Hamlet is "one of those rich and complex works of art that convey different meanings in different generations and to different individuals" (1968: 11). He continues that "Matthew Arnold and others were recognizing that Hamlet had acquired, in the imagination of mankind, a very special status . . . he had come to be seen as a powerfully representative, or even mythical, figure" (13).

As early as 1781 there was evidence of a "Hamlet fever" in Germany: "Never has any English tragedy—except *The London Merchant*—been accepted in Germany with more acclaim, never has any [play] been devoured so eagerly by audiences and actors alike, than this Hamlet. [...] Now every nook of Germany has its Garrick." There were earlier and later adaptations of Hamlet before and after but, by far, the best of the Hamlet burlesques in German was Joachim Perinet's Viennese Hamlet, *Eine Karrikatur* (1807), which was based on Schröder's adaptation of the tragedy. By the 1830s, Hamlet had been burlesqued many times and an anonymous critic in *The Town*, though admitted that "Poole's Hamlet [Travestie] is ably done," qualified his statement: "but even in his case, where there is nothing to offend, we are still such ardent worshippers of Shakespeare's as scarcely to refrain from exclaiming—'Hence, avaunt! 'tis holy ground'" (1833: 38). The thriving popular stages had turned to Shakespeare and exploited his popularity, which was not surprising: numerous acting editions of his plays were published at that time. Poole argued in the Preface to his *Travestie*: "no tragedy in the English language [is] better adapted to receive a burlesque than 'HAMLET [...]' from its being so frequently before the public, so very generally read, and so continually quoted" (Ed. Wells 1977-78: i, 6). And it also became "the most frequently burlesqued Shakespearean play" (Schoch 2002: 10) in the nineteenth-century England.

Through the centuries, Hamlet has become an iconic figure for whom Vincent Leitch asserts: "If Hamlet has something of the definiteness of a work of art, he has also all the obscurity that belongs to life" (2001: 911). William Hazlitt, writing back in 1817,

drove this point home, "characterising Hamlet's utterances as 'as real as our own thoughts,' and concluding that 'It is we who are Hamlet'" (quoted in Shaughnessy 2011: 191). Harris is right to assert that Shakespeare's writing "repeatedly asks questions of his world. It also asks questions of ours" (2010: 10). Every reader/spectator and adaptor sees his/her own question/s in Hamlet.

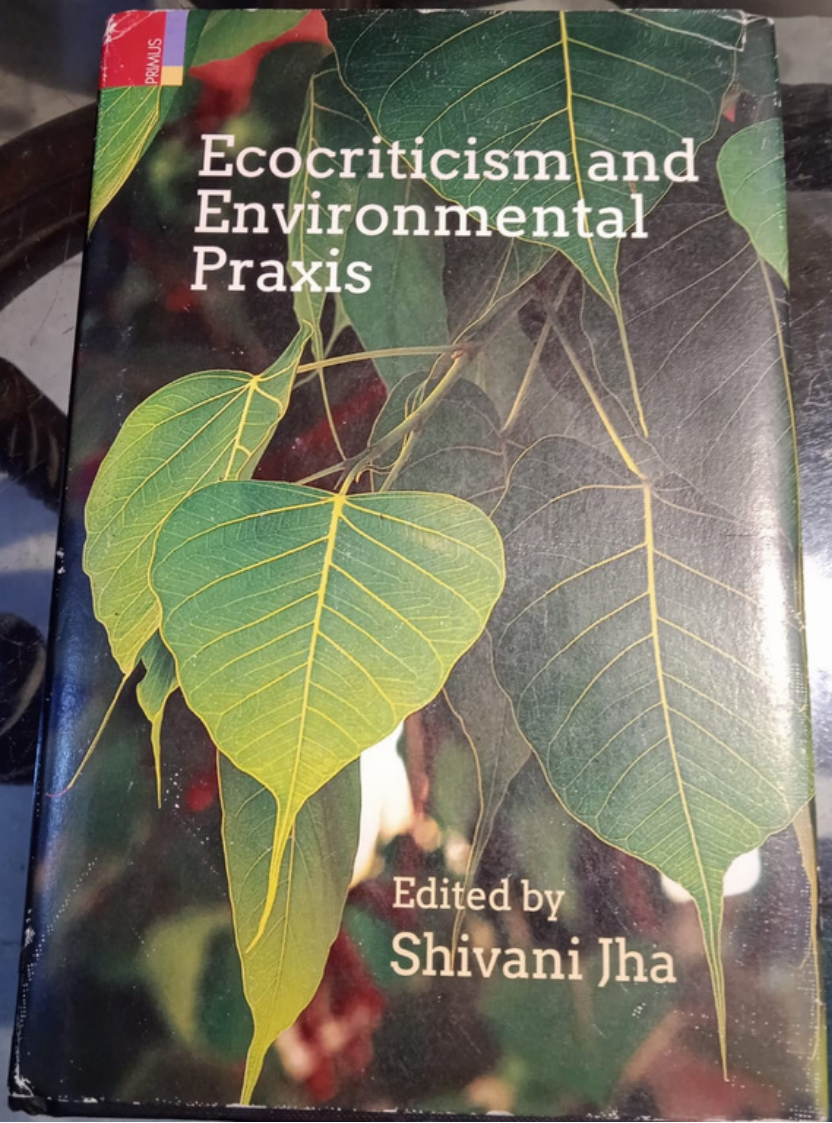
It would be safe to argue that the play not only has timeless appeal of myth but there is also an individuality of life. It is complex and has plurality of levels of meaning that make it into a true work of art. Hence one needs not be surprised that every age has found in Hamlet and in Hamlet, "a uniquely sharp and eloquent image of current conflicts and anxieties" (Shaughnessy 2011: 191). Jan Kott argues that, "Hamlet is a drama of imposed situations, and here lies the key to modern interpretations of the play" (1974: 67). One of the reasons for the numerous adaptations of Hamlet is that the three texts of Hamlet have come down to the readers as an adaptation or acting version: the First Quarto of the tragedy is, according to Hibbard, probably "a very imperfect [...] memorial reconstruction of an abridged version of the Folio text" (377). When a company went on tour, for example to escape the plague, the plays in its repertoire would be adapted to suit the smaller number of actors in the touring troupe. The First Quarto version produced for a small acting company was, in turn, adapted by a troupe of English actors who took the tragedy to Germany. It has come down to the spectators/ readers as *Der bestrafte Brudermord oder: Prinz Hamlet aus Dänemark*.

It would not be wrong to say that Hamlet is a very individualistic character, whose reactions are totally subjective in nature. He, thus, delineates Descartes' notion of the self perfectly. This is, probably, another reason for the universal appeal of Hamlet. In the modern day, contemporary adaptations of the play, all adaptors traditionally adopt strategies of localization transferring the action, language and setting to a period, milieu and place with which the popular audiences were/ are intimately familiar and could/ can identify. As a result we meet a good deal of topicality and localization. What needs to be argued here is that the interests of the adaptors are different depending on their own

Bakhtin and Sartre argue from their different theoretical premises, a work of art is always addressed to some kind of reader or audience the author has in mind and even the most individual-minded adapter would have to place his work in a socio-cultural matrix, so some kind of cultural mutation is bound to happen in the process of adaptation.

The local particularities strongly influence the process of adaptation. Shakespeare's Hamlet as an adaptation encapsulates local history and particularities. Zimmerman argues that, "Both Hamlet and Hamlet are fictions with localised habitations, and it is the business of the cultural historians to anatomise the transformative methods through which Shakespeare's fictions become 'originals' that, in turn, contribute to the construction of new social discourses" (1998:7). However, critics have long known that "every nation beholds its visage in Shakespeare's mirror," (Litvin 2011: xi) and that Hamlet is "a mirror in which every man has seen his own face" (ibid). The adaptors from different cultures literally see Hamlet in different ways and at the same time, the fluidity of Hamlet's nature enables him to conform to diverse circumstances. Hamlet has been adapted and appropriated into and by various cultural contexts.

Another reason for the widespread popularity and ongoing relevance of the play is that its story is extremely political and many aspects of that story are, accordingly, consonant with a number of political situations around the world. Hamlet is struggling alone against an illegitimate government that is blood-thirsty, unjust and corrupt. Sadly, there has been no dearth of such callous regimes where the leaders have not killed or masterminded coups to get to the top and brutally murdered any dissidents. Hamlet, thus, has a particular resonance in this regard, especially in the social, political and historical contexts of the adaptation focused on in this paper. What is important to note is that Hamlet may be a prince, yet he is a lone man who takes it upon himself to bring down a tyrant even though he has a blood relation with Claudius. Hamlet has to resort to pretend to be insane to save himself from his uncle. Strangely, many leaders across the world have had to pretend to be the same and some had/ have even been imprisoned in mental asylums so as to discredit their ideas and



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The Ecologically Lonely and Bereft World of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

NEENU KUMAR

ECOCRITICISM OR GREEN STUDIES might be loosely defined as an attempt to find new ways of 'studying the concrete conditions of life, space, and *habitus*' (Conley 1997: 2) as they are represented by fictional and non-fictional texts. It has variously been defined as the 'study of the mutually constructing relationship between culture and environment' (Bennett and Teague 1999: 3) or, more specifically, as the 'study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment' (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996: xvii). Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination* was one of the first major attempts to suggest a preliminary approach to ecocritical interpretations of literary texts. Buell suggests that environmental perception has been neglected by literary history and that ecocriticism endeavours to retrace 'the place of nature in the history of Western thought' (1995: 1). In the essay 'The Ecocritical Insurgency', Buell observes that:

although the term was coined twenty years ago,¹ although critical readings of literary texts ... in relation to ideas of nature, wilderness ... and spatial environments of all sorts have been pursued for the better part of a century, only in the last decade has the study of literature in relation to environment begun ... to assume the look of a major critical insurgency. (1999: 699)

In other words, Buell stresses that even though human ideas about nature and landscape have played an important role in literature, the new ecological understanding of the human relation to the non-human environment has encouraged a growing number of scholars to redefine their approach to literary representations of these issues.

Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells assert the importance of the new ecological viewpoint by stating that 'the starting-point for the ecocritic is

determines our understanding of the non-human world. Environmental awareness, in its modernist transfigurations, is of paramount importance for issues concerning alienation and authenticity. In his famous essay, 'Postmodernism', Ihab Hassan talks about 'Dehumanization' and also focuses on the 'Denaturalization of the Planet and the End of Man' (1984: 53).

Hassan alludes to the increasing pessimism that lurks behind the incorporation of urban environments into modern literature. He goes so far as to maintain that the majority of urban literature uses the city as an embodiment of disaster (1981: 108). Regarded as an emblem of environmental degradation, the city may be used to delineate the problematic human interaction with habitat and environment. One of the critics most centrally identified with urban literature, Raymond Williams, has described the influential role of the city in modern fiction as a historically embedded phenomenon in which 'the modern wasteland, and through it a powerful convention of urban imagery, became almost commonplace' (1973: 239). In applying this insight to fictional accounts of 'the ugliness and meanness of industrialism and urbanism', he argues that the city in literature symbolizes 'the cancerous results of an outgrown but still rigid and stupid system' (1985: 230). In short, Williams' line of reasoning associates urban imagery with a critique of a modern form of life, which at a time of urban and industrial transformation started to gain impetus. Accordingly, Williams explains the modernist fascination for the city as: 'Struggle, indifference, loss of purpose, loss of meaning ... have found, in the city, a habitation and a name. For the city is not only, in this vision, a form of modern life; it is the physical embodiment of a decisive modern consciousness' (1985: 239).

Burton Pike points out that the city in literature perfectly mirrors 'man's contradictory feelings—pride, love, anxiety and hatred—toward the civilization he has created and the culture to which he belongs' (1981: 26). It is under the impact of Oswald Spengler that modern authors began to use the city as a metaphor for the degradation of Western civilization. Spengler's theory of the city as a 'Megalopolis' was expounded by Edward Hundert, who points out that the term was used to 'designate the new pattern of our urban life wherein the "city is a world, is the world"' (1968: 107). Spengler's ideas reveal that underlying this preoccupation with metropolitan existence is the insight that this form of human habitat illustrates Western civilization's growing distance from the non-human world. As Ihab Hassan admits, 'the city' has always been a "crime against nature"' (1981: 107). Just as Hassan draws attention to the problematic relation between the city and nature, so ecocritics have theorized that the city reflects modern society's desire to dominate the physical world. Marian Scholtmeijer's analysis of urban imagery, for example, argues for a concept of the city in literature as a symbolical

that there really is an unprecedented global environmental crisis and that this crisis poses some of the great political and cultural questions of our time' (1998: 5). Both ecologists and modern critics condemn Western civilization's negative impact on human and non-human forms of life. They explain that earth's ecological catastrophe is often understood as 'punishment for human transgression; the necessary consequence of going too far' (1998: 4). They further add that 'the real, material ecological crisis, then, is also a cultural crisis, a crisis of representation. The malleability of political cultures to address environmentalism is in part a failure of narrative' (1998: 4). Buell's working hypothesis is based on the premise that the modern environmental crisis necessitates more than a simple redefinition of man's relation to nature. According to him, the current ecological problems should bring about the awareness that this 'environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination, the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imagining nature and humanity's relation to it' (1995: 2).

Modern industrial societies have exploited and polluted the earth to such a degree that the physical reality of this world has been altered. Therefore, the patterns of human perception need to be adapted to the changing environments. Terry Gifford explains the growing ecological consciousness within literary criticism as: 'Ecocriticism may be the frame of our age, informed with a new kind of concern for "environment", rather than "countryside" or "landscape" or the "bucolic" but we cannot pretend that there have not been changes in our knowledge, attitudes and ideology' (1999: 5).

Ecocriticism, in other words, addresses traditional accounts of the human relation to the non-human world from a new point of view. Indeed, as Roy Willis has observed, 'since the mid-1970s, the academic debate about humanity's relation with the natural world has been profoundly influenced by what is generally called ecology' (1990: 6). From the growing evidence that modern technology and industrial growth has allowed human beings to radically change the environment, the fear arises that our modern industrial societies risk disrupting the basic premise of interrelatedness. Ecocritic Robert Harrison Pogue often stresses that 'ecology names far more than the science that studies ecosystems; it names the universal human manner of being in the world'. Hence, he claims that 'we dwell not in nature but in the relation to nature' (1992: 201). Modern society's problematic conceptions of nature have sanctioned the exploitation of the physical world.

Ecocriticism analyses the shortcomings of past and present conceptions of nature, while at the same time it endeavours to rediscover alternative apprehensions of nature that are part of our cultural tradition. From an ecocritical point of view, it is important to stress that the 'nature-culture distinction is both a distorting and a necessary lens' (Buell 2001: 5) that

realm, which reflects Western civilization's increasingly conflictual relation with the physical world. Scholtmeijer, therefore, reminds us that underlying the extraordinary variety of urban settings in modern fiction, there is a desire to use the city as an 'expression of antipathy to the civilizing process' (1993: 143). Invoking the city to express a critique of enculturation suggests that the city is a crime against non-human and human nature. Hence, Scholtmeijer reminds us that cities have been 'erected in opposition to nature' (1993: 144). An immediate implication is that the city in literature may be used to express a fear that 'humans are alienated from the natural world by virtue of their enculturation' (Phillips 2003: vii). Scholtmeijer argues that 'the cities we have built to shut out the world seem not to free but to oppress us' and that, as a consequence, 'identity scrambles to find a foothold in the city' (1993: 143). Her ecocritical analysis of urban contexts suggests that it is man's negation of nature, which creates this sense of alienation because it denies that human beings, as natural organisms, are dependent on the physical world as a healthy and meaningful habitat. Cities, thus, exemplify the self-destructive impact of Western culture's domination of nature. Especially the modern metropolis then, reflects how 'the ultimate in human domination of nature ... escapes human control and puts to exile vital aspects of the psyche' (Scholtmeijer 1993: 145).

As pointed out by Lawrence Buell, the 'rhetoric of apocalypticism implies that the fate of the world hinges on the arousal of the imagination to a sense of crisis' (1995: 285). Buell, who stresses the literary tradition of apocalypticism, sees *The Waste Land* as largely focused on such a sense of crisis. He has even gone so far as to maintain that T.S. Eliot has written 'one of the first canonical works of modern Anglo-American literature to envision a dying society' (1995: 288). This sense of apocalypticism is heightened by the city, which in turn breeds alienation.² There is a desperation underlying the modern human experience as also a particularly pessimistic undertone of powerlessness and incoherence, which is generated by alienation. Notions of an established order with nature being the provider have been undermined and human beings themselves have become the plunderers of the very nature they were to preserve. This can be seen through the lives of T.S. Eliot's characters, who bear overtones of anxiety and there is a concrete relation between the notion of crisis and a socio-historical sense of alienation. There is a sense of anguish about their own culture which verges on self-destruction. This collapse of a reassuring order results in a high degree of pessimism that is extremely destabilizing. The discord with the harmonious old order gives birth to the grotesque and the monstrous, a world which is full of chaos. Eliot places his readers at the heart of this crisis and depicts a dismal picture of the modern world as a menacing totality. He voices what Miller exclaims: 'we're all dead, or dying, or about to die' (1993: 46). The anxiety 'is in the

Income Generation: Challenges and Opportunities

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Income Generation Challenges and Opportunities 2017

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27. EMPLOYING THE UNEMPLOYED ON THE GANDHIAN PRINCIPLE OF SWADESHI

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi enjoyed the stature of a person who had unique integrity, truthfulness, reliability and compassion. He was a man of deeds. His thoughts influenced all sectors of society: social, educational, cultural, economic, political. He was not an economist but his economic vision holds immense relevance for the modern times. His vision of *Sarvodya*, his call for *Swadeshi*, full employment, use of country's own resources, preservation of ecology, equality in income distribution and employment opportunities, where everyone is given right to earn according to his capacity, are of great importance in today's world as well. This paper aims to bring these factors to the fore-front in order to deal with the never-ending problem of unemployment faced by the Indian population.

Keywords: Gandhi, *Sarvodya*, *Swadeshi*, economy, unemployment, self-reliance, twenty first century.

India faces persistent unemployment, poverty and inequality despite burgeoning growth. Between 1988 and 2005 the country's GDP almost tripled but its poverty rate

only decreased by 30 percent, underscoring the need for poverty reduction policies. The factors responsible for this are many: foremost being increase in population at a rate which is beyond the growth rate and the GDP of the country and illiteracy. To combat these problems, effective measures are required which provide added employment opportunities not only for the urban poor and/ or middle class but also for the rural poor. The fact cannot be denied that India's "institutional setting"⁵ is weak. Hence the need of the hour is to find new ways of doing business. Ambitious projects need to be set up to involve not only the urban rich but also the rural poor. Transparency should be followed by institutions to make information available to all. Communities across India need to be involved in creating and managing projects in order for this evil of unemployment to be eradicated.

Another factor responsible for the rise in unemployment is the setting up of large-scale industries where the owners have been following "monopolistic pattern of ownership of means of production at the national and international levels.⁶ This has created glaring economic inequalities between the rich and the poor, between those who live in the villages and in the cities. The result is exploitation and oppression. Modern industrialization, with its non-renewable resources, has created miseries in slums and villages. Vast amounts of money are undisclosed, which has been given the popular term of 'black money.' This has resulted in creating "islands of immoral and luxurious life [styles] in urban centers.⁷ The farmers and agricultural laborers are marginalized and exploited with little relief.

The Importance of Gandhi's Economic Ideas

"It should be remembered that the synthesis of the ideas of Gandhi with the ideas of modern world will create a more

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...istic and integrated society. It will deliver more happiness,
...generate more altruistic economic surplus and being about
...a more egalitarian society than what is now available to
...us.⁸ We, the current generation, need to understand that
...economics cannot be separated from the total philosophy
...of life posited by Gandhi. His philosophy was based on
...truth, *ahimsa* and service to society, particularly the poor
...and downtrodden. "I know you have not taken to *khadi*,
...not because you are perverse, but because you lack the
...conviction that there is anything like the stupendous
...problem of poverty and unemployment, whose existence I
...have been declaring from the housetops. The King of Siam
...refused to believe Lord Curzon when he said to him that
...he was coming from a country where rivers were frozen
...for a part of the year. I assure you I am describing to you
...conditions I have seen with my own eyes when I say that
...30 million people in our land have to go without a decent
...meal a day."⁹

Individual dignity and welfare of the poor formed the basis of his economic philosophy. He opined that the economic system should be organized to provide employment for everyone. He was against mass production and industrialization which destroyed local industry, impoverished villages and reduced man to a mere cog in the machine, doing the same monotonous work day in day out.

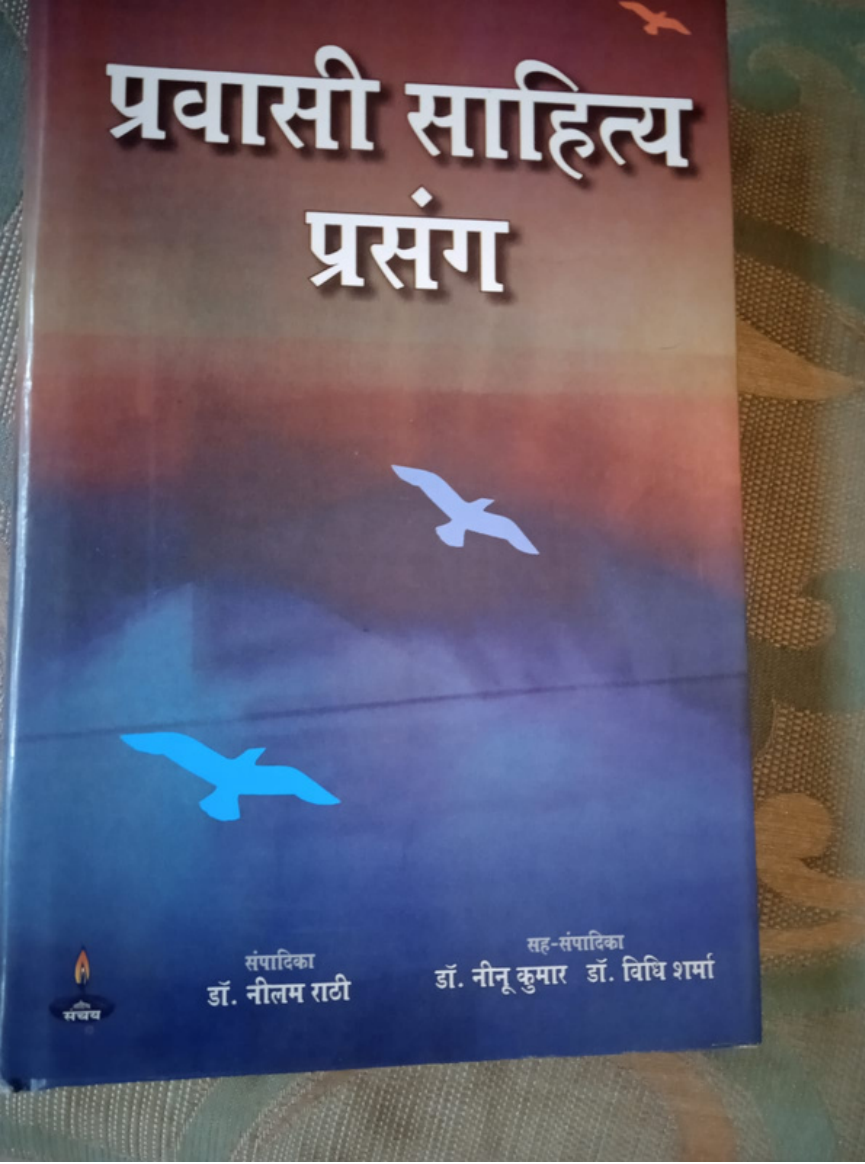
He was never for India aping the west. He said, "India's destiny lies not along the bloody way of the West, of which she shows signs of tiredness, but along the bloodless way of peace that comes from a simple and godly life. India is in danger of losing her soul. She cannot lose it and live. She must not, therefore, lazily and helplessly say, 'I cannot escape the onrush from the West.' She must be strong enough to resist it for its own sake and that of the

world."¹⁰ He worked for *Gram-Swarajya*. He said, "I have believed and repeated times without number that India is to be found not in its cities but in its 700000 villages. But in its town-dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and villagers were created to minister our needs. The cities with their insolent tort are constant menaces to the life and liberty of the villages."¹¹

Gandhi proposed that economic development must start form the grass root level—the lowest rung of the society. He said, "Economics that hurt the moral well-being of an individual or a nation are immoral and, therefore, sinful."¹² As everyone is aware, most of the Indians live in villages, so the initial development must begin from there. Small scale industries and the handicrafts needed to be developed for the communities to become self sufficient. Weaving, pottery, handicraft, food production, bee-keeping, handloom, shoe making, clothes manufacturing were some of the village industries that could be developed for the upliftment of the rural poor.

The development of handicrafts, handlooms and *swadeshi* goods could bring with it many advantages. "The creation of additional income and employment [would] reduce disguised unemployment, overt underemployment, and seasonal unemployment and surplus labor. Gandhi wanted each rural family to have maximum levels of output, which were possible by extending employment to all eligible family laborers until the marginal productivity of labor becomes zero. This principle is not applicable to a profit maximizing farm; but to Gandhi, it seemed to be justifiable because at the point of zero marginal productivity of labor, average productivity is still higher than marginal productivity, and the total productivity is maximum."¹³

What is to be noted is that family laborers are seldom paid any wages, thus constituting a huge section of overt



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**My Home, My Space : Quest for Identity in
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Queen of
Dreams* (2004)**

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Abstract

A person leaves her/ his homeland, goes to another country in search of livelihood but is forever tied to her/ his roots. The adopted country does not give the same sense of security as the homeland. Rootlessness, discontentment and alienation become part of everyday existence. The love for parent country and the insecurity in the adopted country brings about a crisis of identity. The mythic memory fades with time and there is constant protest against re-adjustment, discrimination and marginalization in the adopted country. The chasm between the home and culture of origin and the foreign land and its culture remains unbridgeable. The boundaries remain in conflict as does the dual identity. The migrated person continues to undergo an existentialist identity crisis wherein the inner personal identity is in constant disagreement with the external colonial, modernist reality.

The Queen of Dreams is a novel about the quest for identity. Mrs. Gupta, the dream-teller, has not lost her Indian roots despite having migrated to America. Her daughter Rakhi, however, has been born in America. Mrs. Gupta leaves India to escape from the gift she has been blessed with and to experience passion and motherhood. The gift of dream-telling proves to be inescapable. She helps many people but her extraordinary gift takes her farther

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away from her husband and daughter. Rakhi finds her identity after the death of her mother.

Keywords : anchoring, attachment, belonging, home, becoming, homelessness, roots.

Home is a notion that only nations of the homeless fully appreciate and only the uprooted comprehend.¹

Dreams would not come to me in California because it was too new a place. Its people had settled there only a few hundred years ago, and neither its air nor its earth, the elements from which we most draw sustenance, was weighted yet with dreams. Yes, there had been old inhabitants, but they had been driven from the land, and in going had taken with them, along with their hopes, their ways of dreaming. (*QOD* 2004 : 177)²

The words of Mrs. Gupta amply summarize the concealed, longstanding despair and angst of a dislocated person. A displaced person is uprooted from her/ his native place and decides to settle in a foreign land, which she/he adopts as her/ his own. The process of dislocation is complex and has a far-reaching effect on the identity of the person, related both to her/ hisself as well as the nation. Displacement also has a resounding effect on the self-perception of the person. An uprooted person can neither forget the parent country nor adopt the foreign land fully. The dilemma, thus, causes a sense of dissatisfaction in the dislocated person. Oliver Blackwell explains the process of displacement and migration: "Both migration and displacement can be understood as processes which bring about changes in people's physical locations as a result transform economic, social and political relationships" (quoted in Koser 2011: 19).

There is no doubt that the characters in the novels of Divakaruni are dislocated but they also get relocated in a new land which offers them new opportunities and challenges. Despite that, there is a sense of alienation in this new world. The vacancy and

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the emptiness cannot be fulfilled by the country of adoption. Though the characters move from one country to another, the memories of the homeland become a torture for living in a new land. The dilemma of the people who migrate is that, though they change their place, the heart remains in the things of the past. The geographical and physical distance changes everyday existence but the imminent experiences help to change everything into comforting assurances of being able to live an encouraging life. 'Past' and memories of the past also have a positive effect. They motivate Divakaruni's characters to redevelop and change the present to their liking despite the constant tussle between expectations and longings and tradition and modernity. Memory, according to Le Goff, refers to: "the capacity for conserving certain information or a group of psychic functions that allow us to actualize past impressions or information that we represent to ourselves as past" (*History and Memory* 1992 : 51). Here diaspora does not only remain singular in being. Evolution becomes fluid as the characters embrace and integrate differences and disconnectedness. Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan's concept of "home" as "imaginary geographies,"³ Zhang's as "process of becoming"⁴ and Rey Chow's "homelessness"⁵ as the only home, finds a reflection in the novels of Chitra Banerjee where adhering to remembrances and memories gives a more telescopic view of home which is distant but near. Youth, teenagers, adults and members of older generation, all are brought together on one platform that has its own shades of anxieties, tension, apprehensions and concerns. The resolve to adjust and accommodate can be seen but underneath it lurks a hidden desire which they find it difficult to understand. Safran writes that Divakaruni's characters "maintain a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland ... the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by this continuing relationship with the homeland" (*Diasporas in Modern Societies* 2013 : 83-84).

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The novels of Chitra Banerjee exhibit migration, adaptability and diaspora in its multifarious forms. The reason for settling abroad also differs. It probes into the intrinsic challenges in adjusting to a new land but it also brings about with it cognizance about the land of birth, which has been left behind. The characters actively remember each and every aspect in all its neutrality. Movement, travel, journey and mobility do not merely characterize diaspora but they are also the integral components of memory. Marie-Aude Baronian writes: "Displacement is seen as a semantic intersection of diaspora and memory ... Just as Diasporas can transcend local boundaries, memories can travel, be adapted and integrated into new contexts without becoming placeless" (*Diaspora and Memory* 2007 : 13-14). Divakaruni, in the words of Zoppi, has represented: "Binary opposition between reality and imagination ... these find a meeting point ... thus giving a voice to the unthinkable, and unspoken, or to those 'living on the margins' (*Coterminous Worlds* 1999 : 151).

Many immigrants try to stick to their past life by sticking to the things which belong to their country and by following the very old routine of customs and superstitions. N. Jayaram, a sociologist, has talked about the, "the socio-cultural baggage" which the people tend to carry with them when they migrate and "find in their culture a defense mechanism against a sense of insecurity in alien settings" (*The Indian Diaspora* 2004 : 49) because of which they try to cling on to the things related to their home and nation. Literature in her case tends to memorialize the experiences of diaspora. The tastes, smells and sounds tend to re-make India's sense-scapes. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni seems to suggest, "One has to be able to throw that trans-cultural switch, as it were, in one's mind on a private and personal level before one can actually implement one's chosen trans-cultural strategies in the public spaces of the new host society" (*Oju Shared, Waters : Surroundings in post-colonial*

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