

# *The NEHU Journal*

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## Editorial

Being a multi-disciplinary journal, we have been receiving quality papers on a wide range of themes. As the journal is a bi-annual, it is difficult to accommodate all submissions. We are helpless that we make the authors wait for over six months, even after we found them worth publishing. To accommodate more submissions, we have increased the total number of pages in this issue, even though the move is not economical. In the present issue, we have included five articles and four book reviews.

Film making is amalgamation of different art forms – literature, drama, dance, music, painting and architecture. Several movies made in India and abroad are adaptations of stories from epics, classical works and modern literature. While making movies, very often the directors, instead of remaining faithful to the original, make changes in the scripts and narrate the story from a different perspective. Reviewing different theories of film adaptations, Devika and Piyush Gupta in their paper, “Studies in Aesthetic Delight (*Permananda*) in Hindi Film Adaptations”, examines different adaptations attempted in bollywood movies and argue that film adaptations in bollywood consciously or unconsciously conform to the Indian classical idea of *Rasa*, as stated in Bharata’s *Natyashastra*. The authors describe how stages of action, characterization, motivations and perspectives in the bollywood movies are geared to confirm to the Hindu view of aesthetic delight (*Parmananda*).

The next paper by Arti Nirmal, “Shadows Speak: A Need to Revive Shadow Theatres of India” presents an account of mythical and historical perspectives on evolution of classical and folk theatre in India. In particular, she highlights shadow theatre, which seeks to tell stories drawn from epics, myths and biographies and stories of divine or semi-divine figures. Focusing on *Ravan Chayya* tradition in Odisha, the author explains the structural, technical, artistic and ethical dimensions of this folk art form. Emphasizing the significance of these folk forms, the authors call for the need to revive the folk art form and decolonize Indian theatre from western influences.

Khasis are among the very few communities in India which still practice matrilineal tradition. In traditional matrilineal societies, man plays an important role in the family not as husband, but as mother’s brother. Familiarizing us with important features of matriliney, Angelica Queenie Lyngdoh and A.K. Nongkynrih in their paper, “Conceptualizing Mother’s Brother”, focus on the status and role of mother’s brother in matrilineal

societies. In the background of pioneering works on matriliney by different anthropologists, the authors focus on the role of mother's brother in Khasi matriliney. The authors give a descriptive account of roles that mother's brother play in mentoring his sister's children and in assisting the sister's family in managing the property and performing different social and religious roles expected of him. The authors, however, point out that because of different socio-economic changes that the Khasi society has been experiencing, the traditional role of mother's brother has been circumscribed to a considerable extent in recent years.

Kashmir question is a very complex issue involving several actors, issues and concerns. It is seen and interpreted from different perspectives. While most writings sympathetic to militancy in Kashmir view the problem through the eyes of the Muslims who constitute the majority in the state, those supporting Indian government tend to view the Kashmir issue from the perspective of the Kashmir Pandits evicted from Kashmir. Somjyoti Mridha in his paper titled, "Memories of Home and Persecution: A Study of Recent Kashmiri Pandit Narratives", focuses on how in their writings some of the Kashmiri Pandit scholars and writers have been narrating their perception of the Kashmir problem. Somjyoti brings to light their memories of persecution, their longing for home, their helplessness and their anger against the secular parties and leaders for ignoring their problems. While sympathizing with their problems, the author points out communal and parochial dimensions of the dominant Kashmiri Pandit perspectives and caution them against becoming a prey to Hindu communal forces.

India has witnessed emotionally surcharged debate in recent years about the success and viability of the UPA's ambitious rural employment guarantee programme, MGNREGA. While the critics argue that the budget allocated for the programme is a colossal waste, many defend them for its achievements in providing safety net for the rural poor. Papiya Datta and Snigdha Chakrabarti's paper, "Gains from Short-term Public Works: A Review of Performance of MGNREGA in Tripura" describes the evolution of different employment guarantee policies and programmes initiated in India and summarizes the positive contribution of MGNREGA. Discussing its performance in the Indian State of Tripura, the authors show how the programme succeeded in guaranteeing employment to the rural poor, especially the SCs, STs and women; helped in alleviation of rural poverty to an extent, created rural assets and empowered the underprivileged. Appreciating the performance of the state government, Papiya and Snigdha argue that although there are loopholes that need to be addressed, it is not advisable to give up the programme that has considerable potentiality to

address the problem of rural poverty.

In addition to the papers, this issue includes review of four books, namely M.P. Grenby's *Children's Literature (Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literatures)*, Colin Leys's, *Market-Driven Politics: Neo-Liberal Democracy and Public Interest*, Lenka Laxminarayan's *Quine's Philosophy: Anti-foundationalism through Indeterminacy and other Theses*, and Bolanath Ghosh's *Empowerment of Women in North-East India*. The books are reviewed respectively by Mankhrawbor Dunai, Suparna Bhattacharjee, Aribam Uttam Sharma and S. Thianlalmuan Ngaihte.

We are pleased to inform you that we have finally come out with a Style-Sheet for *The NEHU Journal*. As we receive submissions from different disciplines which have their own unique styles of foot noting and references, the editorial committee took the decision that the authors can write End Notes in any standard form approved in their disciplines, but while writing References, the authors should follow the Style-Sheet of the journal. The Style-Sheet is included in this issue for your perusal.

**H. Srikanth**  
Editor

## Studies in Aesthetic Delight (*Parmananda*) in Hindi Film Adaptations

DEVIKA\*

&

PIYUSH GUPTA\*\*

### Abstract

*Film adaptations of literary works act as a foreground for contested discussions on evolving parameters to defining and approximating them as adaptations. Film theorists handy with technological aspects of filmmaking examine them from specifications of the cinematic art. Literary theorists take up available treatises from semiotics, psychology or art and dissect a film from subject-centered approaches. As film adaptations strive for a formal identity in the wake of multitude of perceptions, this paper looks at the adaptations in Bollywood from the Hindu concept of rasa. The paper contends that stages of action, characterization, motivations and above all the holy gaze of the audience all contribute to the building up of one prominent sentiment in a performance, the relish of which is experienced as a blissful state (parmananda) by the spectator.*

**Keywords:** Bollywood, Film Adaptation Studies, Sanskrit Tradition, Natyasastra, Permananda

Humans have innumerable thoughts but limited words. At times, the available words fail to convey the meaning. The followers of Buddhism have also acknowledged this truism that words are incapable of rendering the implied or explicit significance of an idea... In a situation where words as tools for conveying information are seen as weak, there the advent of images have posed greater challenge to our understanding of the grammar and language of the films.

Kishore Vasvani, *The Language of Cinema*

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**K**ishore Vasvani, a renowned scholar and film critic in his analysis of dialogues of some of the popular Hindi films, has written about challenges faced by screenplay writers in translating (words) of literature into (images) for cinema. His project on the language of cinema, funded by the National Film Museum and published by Hindi Book Centre in 1998, is a valuable repository of information for a student or a film scholar who intends to undertake a serious research in Indian film studies and wants to develop an avid interest in critically analyzing Hindi films. Vasvani writes that a film has been considered as the seventh art, an amalgamation of the earlier six arts namely painting, architecture, visual art, dance, drama, music and literature. On one hand, films have been analyzed on parameters adopted for performative arts (dance, drama) and representative arts (painting and literature) and on the other they are being evaluated on theories of image, sound and the recording art. Efforts are also on to evolve a new paradigm that looks for commonalties of the performative and representative arts in a film and to appreciate it not as 'medley' or an 'assemblage of arts' but as a pure and an individualistic art. Amidst a welter of propositions, it becomes a challenge for a screenwriter to properly hold a suitable image corresponding to an otherwise seemingly innocuous idea. Giving an example from Bimal Roy's *Devdas* (1955), Vasvani explains the inherent meaning of the dialogues between Devdas and Chandramukhi. The dialogues for the film were written by Navendu Ghosh and Rajender Singh Bedi. In one scene, Devdas visits Chandramukhi's house after a long time and says:

Devdas: *Tumhara yeh bahar ka kamra toh bilkul badal gaya hai* // This outer room of your house has completely changed //

Chandramukhi: *Sirf bahar hi nahi andar bhi (halke viraam ke baad) aao!* // Not **only outer** but **inner as well** (after a short pause) Please come //

Vaswani explains that Chandramukhi hint to Devdas that not only the room but even she has also changed with years have to be strengthened by powerful images (situational and environmental) that speaks volume for this change. Ghosh and Bedi had necessitated the inclusion of a short pause to show behavioral change in the character. Chandramukhi's dress, the manner of her speech, the inner prayer room, the incense sticks and the light sound of flute playing in the background should all attest a massive change in her. This one shot has so many arts, Chandramukhi's dress and manner of speech (dance and drama), the prayer room (architecture), incense sticks (meticulous details as in painting) and the sound of flute playing a classical

note (music). Moreover the *samvad* (dialogue) that happens between the characters can be explained through *abhida* (signification), *vyanjana* (rhetorical suggestion) and *lakshana* (the power of indication) of the mimamsa school of thought. For the overall estimation of the scene, one has to be sensitive of various forces at work in the scene. Earlier screenwriters focused more on writing well meaningful dialogues that lay bare the psyche of the characters. They worked with a variety of men from different fields to compose a piece of art. This is because dialogue writing like drama followed a ‘syncretistic’<sup>1</sup> culture of development and film as an ‘amalgamated product’ was conceived at the script stage itself. These days the image has taken over to depict the change and dialogues have become simpler as if written in the manner of the primary level Hindi books. Conflict appears when the *samvad* stands at odds with the *mise-en-scene*. With the intervention of technology in films, what is trickier for a screenwriter is to convincingly *adapt* the script for modern directors. In a similar vein, Ritwik Ghatak opines that it is difficult to identify all the formal elements that actually make a film as all these come from different forms of representation.<sup>2</sup> In a film, these independent elements meet, influence each other and cultivate a new identity, a proper valuation of which is still pursued as an oracle in colleges and universities.

Translating an idea into a written word is an adaptation in itself. Every situation can be visualized in a different regime of perception and significance. In order to re-imagine a beautiful landscape as the interiors of a city, the script would have to develop the sophistication and urbanity of the city at par with the picturesque beauty of nature. Hence sketching a new typography of the original would warrant immense thinking and altering and at times accommodating what is beyond the scope of the thing imagined. Culture too plays an important role in shaping the identity of an adapted text. When we say ‘accommodating what is beyond’ we mean cultural diversity, social milieu, economic limitations and above all the perception of audience towards the piece of art as *an art*. As films in India have always been a medium of entertainment and knowledge, the theatergoers here have cultivated a *darshanic* (holy) gaze to appreciate the spectacle on the screen. Fallout of actions of the characters can be traced to the moral lessons enshrined in the Vedas. Unlike Shakespearean tragedies, which end in suffering and death, the melodrama in India ends with some sort of an instruction on the code of behavior to be followed that is considered right or acceptable in a particular society. If the principal character had to die, he would die for a cause that should bring happiness in the lives of other. If he

had to die for his sins, his death would look terrible checking people from falling into perverse influences. In dramatic composition our plots are crafted more in the fashion of *Cymbeline* and *Pericles* which have a 'happy ending' and are not classified as tragedies by Shakespearean scholars.

Now-a-days inclusion of the above mentioned particularities (culture, milieu, etc.) together with the formal elements (music, dance) in a script makes it highly vulnerable to criticism from semioticians, psychologists, rhetoricians and such others. In this paper, we would look at few screen adaptations of literary classics in the Indian cinema and see how characters, their motivations, point of view and actions were deliberately made to conform to the Hindu view of life, no matter what changes it sanctioned in the schemata of the film. The paper would argue that these inevitable changes reinforce theory and laws related to dramatic composition as mentioned in the Sanskrit poetics. While adapting a story the Hindu ideology is made to reign supreme irrespective of the form in which it is adapted. The close of the film have to be so drafted that it makes one principal sentiment (love, laughter, grief, anger, enthusiasm, fear, disgust, astonishment or renunciation) supreme which results in *rasa* or the *parmananda* (aesthetic delight) in the spectators.

Film adaptations have been defined in terms such as transpositioning, transcoding and appropriations, but the last of the three terms best defines Indian adaptation. We call it appropriation because the screenwriter adapts the story for specific use. Transpositioning is cosmos/medium oriented, transcoding is linguistic and appropriation is more hermeneutical in scope. Transposition in adaptation studies refers to the formulation of the same story in a different landscape, culture, setting, time-period or even background. For example Shyam Benegal's *Kalyug* (1981) is a modern day adaptation of the century old Indian epic Mahabharata. Though the screenplay and plot are quite different but the characterization and critical events have a striking similarity with the epic. Here a big manufacturing unit replaces the wealthy estate of Hastnapur. Jealousy and ambitions are mixed with plots of intrigues and backstabbing and it leads to the destruction of the two business families. Transcoding deals with the formation of new code to define a text. A code is defined as a minimal set of symbols capable of conveying a meaning. Every language has well defined codes, which helps in meaning formation. Hence, transcoding is the conversion of meaning in one language into a similar meaning in another language. It is different from translation in the sense that it provides more cultural flexibility to an adapter. For example the infant baptism in Catholics can be transcoded as '*mundan*'

(shaving of the hair) or ‘wearing of *janeu* (sacred thread)’ among Hindus. But code also defines how meaning is constructed. The codes of a prose are different from the codes of a verse. Christian Metz acknowledges the presence of grammar and the language of films. Many centuries before Metz, sage Markandeya had written a holy book *Chitrasutkam* where he describes the grammar of the pictures and artwork. This is written in the form of *samvad* (dialogues) between him and King Vajra. A mention of this holy book is also found in the third chapter of *Vishnudharmotarpuranam*, the Hindi translation of which was rendered by Tarinish Jha.<sup>3</sup> When it comes to films, transcoding can also be defined as looking at a meaning offered by minimum set of moving shots per second. An appropriation simply seeks the knowledge/moral or the crux of the text and presents it in a new form.

We have just seen that there has been varying usage of the term ‘film adaptation’ in cinema studies. Richard Dawkins has coined the term ‘*memes*’ to refer to the cultural capital of a project that gets adapted following the process. He has theoretically explained the process of ‘*genes*’ adaptation in plants as similar to film adaptations. Films do not get adapted on their own as plants adapt themselves to the new environment. In case of plants, the internal setup conditions itself in response to an external environment. The continuum of the process runs from acclimatizing, conditioning and accustoming to a final adaptation that comes over with years. But in films an external agency is involved in changing the constitutional setup; the film itself being the product does not resist the change from within. Given this fact, there is no acclimatizing or conditioning but directly accustoming of the original text or production. Moreover, the change is instant as opposed to an incessant yearly activity.

Some critics<sup>4</sup> have argued that with films ‘change’ also comes with years. Rafique has written about the changing face of Mumbai in Indian cinema. From earliest productions like *Shri 420* (Dir. Raj Kapoor 1955) to films like *Bombay* (Dir. Mani Ratnam 1995) the depiction of Mumbai has changed from a city of dreams and fulfillment to a city of crime and disillusionment. If we were to chart the evolutionary history of Mumbai through the lens of cinema all the films with Mumbai as a subject between *Shri 420* and *Bombay* would represent a peculiar phase of Mumbai’s existence. With new developments in cinematography, editing and sound mixing, the film as a product progresses towards maturity and perfection. Various movements in literature and arts exert their influence in establishing a distinct pattern of performance. This change in the script and its evolution over the years in response to external stimuli have to be pursued as

‘augmentation studies’ under the broader umbrella of film studies. These critics contend that scripts too change slowly and steadily configuring itself into a new form. Similarly if *Hamlet* has been made today as *Haider* (Dir. Vishal Bhardwaj 2014) the earlier films like Sohrab Modi’s *Khoon Ka Khoon* (1935) and Kishore Sahu’s *Hamlet* (1954) represent a unique phase of existence in the evolutionary chart of *Hamlet*. Docudramas and war films influences on *Haider* such as *The Battle of Algiers* (Dir. Gillo Pontecorvo 1966) and *The Road to Guantanamo* (Dir. Michael Winterbottom)<sup>5</sup> serve to make it a typical ‘moslemxploitation’<sup>6</sup> film. But the crassly depiction of unrest and violence in the Kashmir valley itself establishes a new convention in *Haider*; a baton that has to be carried forward for further adaptations of *Hamlet*.

Julia Kristeva’s *Intertextuality* (the shaping of text meaning by another text) articulated within ‘augmentation studies’ hints at retaining archetypal representations of characters and situations in an adaptation. This contention seems befitting, as commercialization of the visual entertainment has made directors to play it more defensively. There is no harm in watching the earlier productions to visualize changes in the production in hand. Moreover, it is the director’s choice to determine in which way he wants to *adapt*. He may adapt a work as faithful as he can or may extract the essence of the text and develop it in a new setting. For example if Premchand’s classic *Shatranj Ke Khiladi* had to be adapted to the modern times, plot development should run on similar lines as Satyajit Ray had directed in 1977. This can be shown as the story of two connoisseur industrialists whose businesses are taken over by a multinational company because they neglected it over their passion for playing chess together on the chess board, on computer, internet, mobile application or remote access. Playing of the chess through technology with heightened music, animation and sound effect creates a multisensory visceral interaction (Ryan 2004c: 338) twice more addictive than playing the board game hence justifying the passion towards the game by the players. The point here is that adaptations are guided by situations, circumstances, time, era, culture and the six arts (painting, architecture, etc.) as explained earlier in this paper. If readers/viewers can find a different meaning in a scene as against the one found in the original text, it is their individual perception of the subject and a streak of their appropriation index.

### **Film Adaptation Studies: A Review**

Adaptations are ubiquitous; they are on television channels, at PVR cinemas, at theatres, on the Internet, in novels and comic books, and in the nearest

theme park or video arcade. The popularity of film adaptations can be gauged from the fact that 'Adaptation Studies' has now been recognized as a potential area of cinema and literary studies, with scores of journals inviting scholarly articles on various aspects of this art as *an adaptation*. Deborah Cartmell, Timothy Corrigan and Imelda Whelehan, while defending the exigency of establishing *Adaptation* (published by Oxford Journals in 2008) as a formal playground to address the underrepresented field of literature on screen studies have contended that this journal will bridge the gap between literature and cinema.<sup>7</sup>

We are not new to literature-to-screen adaptations; since our childhood, we have keenly followed them on VCRs to *Doordarshan* and now on private TV channels. We have seen Shakespeare transfer his cultural capital in the form of stories full of hyperbole and melodramatic appurtenance across all media and forms. The ideas, views and opinions travel and cross boundaries; they actuate thinkers, writers and scholars to modify them in new forms and resuscitate a debilitated intellectual activity. In that sense, every writer, be it Goethe or Somdev Bhatt, Aesop or Sheikh Chilli, has narrated the same stories in new forms.

Linda Hutcheon regards adaptation as an acknowledged transposition of other work/s, a creative act of appropriation and an intertextual engagement (Hutcheon 2006: 8). She has suggested the need for a theoretical perspective to view adaptation as a product, a process of creation and reception. This is her description and understanding of adaptations. Murray writes about the descriptive feature of adaptations. 'Adaptation as a freewheeling cultural process: flagrantly transgressing cultural and media hierarchies, wilfully cross-cultural, and more web like than straightforwardly linear in its creative dynamic' (Murray 2012: 2). Here again we have a theory attempting to describe and understand the concept of adaptation.

During the formative years of film adaptation studies, 'Fidelity Criticism' reigned supreme in the academic debates around films especially the ones that have adapted the works of Pushkin or Dante. The degree of proximity to the original text has generated many typologies of the adaptation processes, like Andrew's borrowing/intersection/transformation (1980: 10-12), Wagner's analogy/commentary/transposition (1975: 222-31) or Klein and Parker's literal translation /core narrative structure/ source as raw material (1981: 10). Dudley Andrew explains 'borrowing' by referring to miracle or mystery plays that employed the 'material, idea or form' from stories of The Bible. Vijay Sharma's *Jai Santoshi Maa* (1975) borrows and

expands a sketchy tale printed on inexpensive pamphlets explaining Hindu women how to observe the ritual of *vrat* (fast) to achieve a state goal. Intersection refers to the retaining of the *specificity* of original within the *specificity* of the cinema. Giving the example of Robert Bresson's *Diary of a Country Priest*, Andrew claims that Bresson preserves the literary genre of the novel so that film tends to become a cinematic representation of Bernanos novel itself. Sohrab Modi's 1955 film *Kundan* based on Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* is the finest example of cinematic novel and an example of intersection as defined by Andrew. Transformation is that adaptation that employs all the movie-making conventions in cinema at the same time remaining faithful to the original text. Kishore Sahu's *Hamlet* 1954, an adaptation of Shakespearean text, retains most of the original in dialogues, dress and location at the same time utilizing movie making-conventions (songs etc) of Indian cinema. Geoffrey Wagner's analogy is similar to Andrew's concept of borrowing which is a 'considerable departure for the sake of making another work of art' (1975: 227). Commentary adapts the text (Wagner specifically talks about novels) with new emphasis and structure whereas a transformation follows it closely. Similarly, corresponding to Andrew's nomenclature Klein and Parker propose their terms with more or less same explanation of literal translation, adaptation of the core narrative and source as raw material as simply the occasion for an original work. Now, when film scholars have opened their eyes to other aspects of adaptation studies, like the modification of theme, genre, viewership, advertizing, commercialization etc, Bluestone's theory has been strongly contested against (e.g. McFarlane 1996: 194; Cardwell 2002: 19) with new observations and results.

Our way of looking at an adaptation is of a different kind. It implies that the generation of *rasa* in a performance which in turn generates 'empathy' in a spectator culminating in the generation of same *rasa* in him. This leads to increased *tadatmah* (self-realization) and *parmananda* (delight). This is like making a matchstick glow by bringing it closer to lighted matchstick. The heat generated by the lighted matchstick will cause the other matchstick to explode in light so that there is no difference between the two matchsticks. Fortunately, over the past 30 years, a considerable body of knowledge has emerged to help us understand the reception process – how receivers decode messages. The *darshnic* or the holy gaze of the Hindus interprets the message on *updeshas* (sermons) in Hindu religious texts. By understanding this decoding process, adapters can employ strategies to make the audience work easier and reach an aesthetic delight. The holy gaze of

the audience is the primary concern with the screenwriters throughout the history of film adaptations in India. The most important ingredients in the process of creating an adaptation are the emotions. Just as different spices in a recipe mix to create a particular flavour so, do different emotions play among each other in a performance and generate a characteristic flavour called *rasa*. Sage Bharata enumerates eight permanent, eight involuntary and thirty-three transitory emotions present in the human beings. In a performance, some of these emotions mix with one another and makes one emotion principle and all others dormant. The one emotion, which carries itself as a 'flavour' or *rasa* of the performance, must be one from the permanent emotions only. The *Rasa* theory puts the viewer's needs at the forefront of the adapter's professional commitment. It creates for adapters a clearest possible image and understanding of the audience; the ways they watch the performance; their familiarity with the subject; their role as a spectator; and their attitudes towards subject and performance itself. With such knowledge, an adapter can predict and reduce barriers between a performance and the audience and reach a momentary common ground. This goal is challenging, especially for scriptwriters who adapt their skills and experience to a widely different audience during their carriers. Before we explain how it happens we will have to look at the different elements of the story and see how a meaning is generated when it is dramatized.

### **Story and its Elements**

Cambridge Advance Learner's Dictionary defines a story as a description either true or imagined or mixed of a connect series of events. Sage Bharata uses the terminology of legendary, invented or mixed to refer to events. Every story will have characters (major and minor) and incidents. Incidents revolving around the major character form the principle subject and other incidents involving minor characters are secondary. The secondary incidents may be long running parallel to the main incident like a sub-plot (called Episode) or they can be short (Episodical incident). These incidents good or bad will result from either the character's behavior or his fate. The character's behavior will guide his point of view and motivation for action. With each incident the major character of the story is shown progressing towards an orderly state that is destabilized at some point in the beginning. In other words, series of events make a major character move steadily towards the 'fruit', which seemed lost somewhere at the beginning of the play. For example if the hero loses his love at the beginning of the story, he will get her back towards the end. Here the attainment of his ladylove is the attainment

of the fruit. The various stages of his progression until the attainment of the fruit can be divided into beginning, effort, prospect of success, certainty of success and attainment of the result. Apart from the elements discussed, form, genre and medium are also very important to the story.

Kamilla Elliott makes an interesting observation while studying on adaptations. She opines that that forms can be extracted from ideas – a contention denied in regular aesthetic and semiotic theories (2003: 133). She contends that by merely visualizing the idea of a story, an adapter can think of a suitable form to serve the story better. What Elliot suggests as same content can exist in many different forms. Every story idea is fluid when it is conceived and can be shaped into any form (book, radio play, comic etc) as per the adapter's choice. The elements of the story (events, imagery, world etc) can be considered in isolation by the adapters. It happens when the technical limitations of different media serve to prioritize one aspect of the story over the others (Gaudreault and Marion 1998: 45).

### **Adapting the Theme of the Story**

Of all the elements of the story, the theme is the most usual element taken for an adaption. Short stores often have one theme but as they are stretched longer with more characters, actions and motivations, it begins to reflect more than one theme. That is why novels are generally evaluated on many thematic lines than a short story. Themes carry the central idea of the story but they are not to be confused with moral of the story. Various events of the story will illustrate the theme of the story whereas moral of the story is the lesson, which the director wants the main character (and by extension the audience) learn from his actions/behavior towards other characters. For example in Rajinder Bhatia's *Pavita Paapi* (1970) Kedarnath's actions are motivated by the prick of the conscience so the main theme of the film and of Nanak Singh's novel on which the film was based is acknowledgement of guilt. The moral of the story on the other hand teaches one to sacrifice one's happiness for the good of others. *Bambai Ka Babu* (1960) directed by Raj Khosla and based on O Henry's *The Double Dyed Deceiver*, portrayed the growing moral dilemma and sexual affinity between a posing brother and sister to an extraordinary degree. Had Rajinder Singh Bedi, the writer of the story, cast the character of Maya (played by Suchitra Sen) as Shahji's neighbor, Kundan's love for Maya and his marriage with her would have been a predictable plot. Kundan grew up in Bombay also called *Mayanagri* (City of Illusion). When he meets another Maya (Sen), as his sister, audience

wondered if Maya would ever marry him if he told her that he was a swindler and he was planted as her brother in Shahji's house only to rob them of their money. On the contrary the film ends with Maya's marriage and Kundan performing *kanyadaan* rites<sup>8</sup>. Khosla's treatment of the theme of 'fallacy' and 'deception' was ahead of his times. The moral of the story was that whatever a man may do he will never be able overturn the events of his fate. Thus, themes are the most crucial element of any performative art, as they "reinforce or dimensionalize" the action of the story (Serger 1992: 14).

### Adapting the Characters of the Story

Sage Bharata has devoted the entire chapter XXXIV of *Natyasastra* for explaining the characters. An *uttama* is a superior character who is wise, honest, skilled in arts and *sastras* (Holy verses). A *madhyama* type of character is also well mannered, sweet and courteous but lacking of one or more qualities than the *uttama*. An *adhama* character is harsh, ill mannered and low who takes delight in quarrel and insulting people. Gods, kings royal priests belong to the *uttama* type, commander of an army, businessman and *amatya* (family priest) are of *madhyama* and *shudra* (low caste) rogues and criminals belong to *adhama* type of heroes. Characters can also be *divya* (divine), *adivya* (mortal) or *divyadivya* (incarnation). For example Chandrakant's film *Hari Darshan* (1972) based on the story of Vishnu devotee Prahlad has all the three type of characters. *Brhitharishatakam* defines *uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama* types of hero but in a different way. The poet says in *Bhratharishatakam* that people of the low level do not begin any work because of the fear of failure, of the mid level do begin the work but leave it half done anticipating the failure, but people of the elevated level begin the work and do not leave it until they have accomplished the task.<sup>9</sup> Bharata also enumerates the qualities of female characters as *uttama* (superior, bashful, beauty and nobility), *madhya* (she has some qualities less than *uttama*) and *adhama* (she possesses many qualities of an inferior male character). The principle character can either be *lalita* (wise and pleasure seeking), *datta* (serious and resolute) *dhata* (cunning and scheming) or *shanta* (calm and reclusive). The delineation of characters is based on characterization employed for composing Sanskrit dramas. Since these dramas were romantic and often dealt with love affairs of kings, their queens and concubines, the focal principle on which all these dramas were based was of *Rasa* or sentiment. A *lalita* hero who is carefree and moves around singing and dancing will generate *shringar* (erotic) or *hasya* (laughter) *rasa* in the performance. Similarly a *datta* hero may serve to aid *veer* (heroic) or

*adbhudha* (marvelous) sentiment, a *dhatta* hero would facilitate the development of *raudra* (furious) or *karuna* (pathetic) *rasa*. At times the same character is given different treatments in different adaptations that they lead to different sentiments in the play. For example Ramanand Sagar's treatment of Ravana in television series *Ramayana* aired on *Doordarshan* during 1987-88 was of *dhatta* type. Sanjay Khan changed the fortyish looking pot bellied image of Ravana which people had carried since 80s into well built, young and enthusiastic sage in *Jai Hanuman* also aired on *Doordarshan* as series in 1997. Here Ravana appealed to audience more as a *lalita* than a *dhatta* type of character. Though, different scholars have interpreted the *rasa* theory differently, but all agree on two main goals of any literary piece: to provide aesthetic delight to the reader, hearer or viewer and to remove ignorance (*avidya*).

When independent segments of the story are transmediated just as they exist in abridged versions, as summaries in film magazines or as translations into other languages (Hamon 1977: 264) the process involves irresistible changes to characterization, the scheme of events and their frequency of occurrence in a narrative. Bapu's 1980 film *Hum Paanch* (We five) illustrates this view. As an adaptation of *Mahabharata* set in a rural scenario, the film recreates independent stories from the life of *Pandavas* and *Kauravas* leading upto a legendary battle between the two. Massive changes in the script were done. Five people who stand as one against Vir Pratap Singh are not brothers and *Krishna* (played by Sanjeev Kumar) is one of the victims of Vir Pratap. These changes appeared too disconnected from the main epic *Mahabharata*. These independent stories though strengthened, as a unit look nonetheless a pastiche piece of a script.

At times, there is an omnipresent voice that pervades the scenes and informs the audience about future events or episodes. This voice may or may not bear a physical identity in a performance. This bears much from the Sanskrit tradition where a *Sutradhar* serves to bridge the communication gap between the character and the audience. This *Sutradhar* like a storyteller, is also made to move into or out of the frame at times, as seen in many crime-related serials on air these days (e.g. *Crime Patrol* on Sony Entertainment, which dramatizes real-life crime stories has Anoop Soni serving at times a connecting link between the scenes) but he cannot be called a character unless he is associated with story itself. In Rajkumar Hirani's *Three Idiots* (2009) based on Chetan Bhagat's 'Five Point Someone', the *Sutradhar* Farhan Quereshi (role played by Mahadavan), who unfolds the story to the audience becomes one of the characters of the story. One

might not be able to see the face of this voice in some cases as in the case of Gulzar's *Angoor* (1982) which begins with a background voice claiming Gulzar's work as an adaptation of *Comedy of Errors*.

At times too much on screen time of a character itself changes the message of the film. Scenes around even minor characters are so detailed (especially in television serials) that the entire focus of the serial or shifts seems to a new paradigm or perspective. Ismail Merchant's film *In Custody* has been discussed as an example to support this view. While adapting a popular work some directors change the way an information is to be presented. This results in the shifting of the point of view of the 'author' to the point of view of the 'director' and hence, leading to changed narrative. When Anita Desai wrote the screenplay for the cinematic adaptation of her novel *In Custody* in 1993, her focus was on the fading Urdu language and culture within India and Deven's desire to preserve the rich heritage of poems by interviewing an aged poet, Nur. The film, however, tells Deven's story. It builds up his character as one who is disillusioned about the idealized image of his idol. Poetic verses that are attributed to Nur (used to create an aesthetic ambience) were actually written by an eminent Urdu poet, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, who died in 1984; this further depreciates the cultural capital of the narrative as the verses lose their aura in translation of the film. Anita Desai, in an interview with Magda Costa, expressed her anguish over the film version of her book:

[I was] very shocked because in my imagination it was all very grey, very dark and dirty, and I just couldn't believe my eyes when I saw it in gorgeous Technicolor, and everyone beautifully dressed looking handsome... That's the world of Ismail Merchant; he makes everything look so beautiful, gorgeous. I had to distance myself from it; I had to detach myself and accept that fact that it is his version of the book. He is very happy with it. It is not my vision: I would have preferred it in black and white more in the school of New Realism<sup>10</sup>.

The reason for this changed narrative is because of the greater onscreen time Deven takes in a film or even if he is not there in the video frame, he is being talked about or his importance highlighted in the scene. *In Custody* begins with Deven (Om Prakash) a college teacher who is somehow managing his life in home and office. He likes Urdu poetry and can recite couplets of many famous Urdu poets. When he is contacted by an Editor to interview poet Nur (Sashi Kapoor) he accepts the offer. He regards Nur as one of the few doyens of Urdu poetry and interviewing or recording him

live was something Deven would do at all cost. Unfortunately, he is not able to do that and the film ends with Nur's death and Deven holding a collection of Nur's verses. The film might have given the message (by showing Nur's verses in Deven's custody) that as long as there are zealots of Urdu *shayari* in India, this art will live forever, but the manner in which Ismail Merchant depicts the fading Urdu language and culture in the film, drew criticism from the elite Urdu speaking class. Merchant had thought that a Hindi teacher's fascination for an Urdu poet and poetry would make an interesting project than a commentary on cultural degradation. Thus film makers take the challenge if they deem it fit. At times novelists themselves also allowed changes in the script if they believe that such changes would make the story look more meaningful on screen. Govind Nihlani recalls Mahashweta Devi's response to the modification of scenes in the film adaptation of her novel *Hazar Chaurashir Maa* (1974):

She had no reservations at all about her novel being made into a film. She told me, my novel and play have their place in the literary world, but cinema is a different medium, you do whatever you want to, and I will help any way you want me to. That was good. It made it easy that she realized certain things will have to be changed. For instance, while the novel ends in the seventies, for the film version we have brought the story up to the present time – we did this with her support, her consent and her contribution.<sup>11</sup>

What Nihlani tells us about his film adaptation is not just the change in the time period but also the addition of scenes, voices, sound, music, props etc. So you would see that at times this is done rather deliberately and at times in agreement with the novelist.

### **Adapting the End of the Story**

'All is well that ends well' is a dictum which is followed as a thumb rule to write the concluding or an end scene/s in Bollywood. Care is taken in assembling various stages of the plot that lay scattered throughout the substance of the script. End of a story can be happy, funny, optimistic or dolorous but never sullen or disgusting. Most of the films here have a 'happy ending' where all the characters are made to stand as a group as if posing happily for the last shot and thanking the audience for watching the performance. Films based on religious subjects would generally begin and end on an *arti* (song in praise of a particular God), *bhajan* (devotional song) or a blessing. You would find such words as '*shubham*' (*Bhakt Prahlad*, Dir NC Rao 1967), '*om*' (*Shri Krishna Leela*, Dir. Homi Wadia 1971), *Jai Jai*

*Bajrangbali* (Bajrangbali, Dir. Chandrakant 1976) coming on screen to signal the end of the performance. Films showing *shringar* (love) as the principle sentiment would usually end on a marriage scene (*Aisha*<sup>12</sup> Dir. Rajshree Ojha 2010 or *Two States*<sup>13</sup> Dir Abhishek Varman 2014) or a song usually filmed at a garden, hills or any exotic location where the hero and the heroine celebrate the success of their love. Films ending on *karuna rasa* would end on a sad song (*Godan*<sup>14</sup> Dir. Trilok Jetley 1963, *Kati Patang*<sup>15</sup>, Dir. Shakti Samantha 1970 or *Main Tulsi Tere Angan Ki*<sup>16</sup> Dir Raj Khosla 1978). Prior to making the principle sentiment supreme in the end, *adhbuta rasa* should be employed just before it (in the stage of ‘prospects of success’) to heighten the tension in the story. This is referred to as the ‘climax scene’ where all the forces/prospects of the ‘bad’ match in equal opposition with the might of ‘good’ and no one knows what would happen next. Indian directors usually make it a chase and a fight scene. There is a practice of keeping a scope for a song here. A lyricist is expected to write one happy, one sad, one situational, one climax and one title song for the movie. These days one raunchy/item number is also included in the film especially towards the close of the film, which bears no connection with the story whatsoever. The purpose is to generate the ‘feel happy’ mood among the audience so that they leave the cinema hall with a ‘smile’ and not a ‘frown’.

Directors/scriptwriters following the convention of filmmaking at times offer ‘reorganized’ material; a different construction; an alternative in consonance with one’s own perception of the phenomenon as opposed to the one that the original author had offered. For example, in providing an overly dolorous ending in the film version of RK Narayan’s *The Guide*, Vijay Anand has Raju die, in contrast to his unclear fate when he ‘sagged down’ in the novel. In other words, a metaphysical existence was made to replace the temporal one. Narayan was hurt by this decision

The most outrageous part of it [*Guide* 1965] was the last scene, in which an elaborate funeral and prolonged lamentation were added at short notice in order to placate eleven financiers who saw the final copy of the film tightly clutching the money-bags on their laps, and who would not part with cash unless a satisfactory mourning scene was added<sup>17</sup>

There are other conventions, which are followed by all the directors. A son would never kill his erring father or vice versa. If at all he had to kill he would be gripped with all the tenderly sentiments towards his father and would repent the pulling the trigger on him and the dying father would ask for the forgiveness from God and from whose lives he had destroyed. A

hero can kill his uncle who would die an unrepentant death. This is because ‘uncles’ are used as ‘archetypes’ in film scripts owing to a notion deeply rooted in religious Hindus.<sup>18</sup> Bhardwaj’s *Haider* (2014) an adaptation of Shakespeare classic *Hamlet* does show Haider’s uncle Khurram as an archetype but as a repentant in the end. Haider does not kill him as Khurram is already mortally wounded by the explosion of the grenades. Whether Haider pardons his uncle when he begs him to kill him and ‘liberate his soul’ or whether Haider wants him to suffer the pangs of death is an open question. But, there a similarity between the ending of *Omkara* (2006) and *Haider* (2014). In both the films, the hero does not kill the man who ruins his life. ‘Shoot me in the head and release me’ says Langda Tyagi to Omkara but he does not kill him. Omkara says, ‘Death will only help free your body but your soul will be damned forever’. Pushing him out of the room Omkara shuts the door on him. The *darshnic* gaze reads the message that a conscience smitten man is twice hurt. Killing him will liberate him from the moral turpitude which he must endure through the rest of his life. Similarly, in *Haider*, Khurram is not killed as he must live a handicapped life and reflect on his doings. Killing him now would be like killing him when he was in his prayers and this would take him straightway to God. The actions of the hero is also motivated by the *gambhīrya* (poise) one of the manly qualities of the character as mentioned by Bharata. It means that because of strength of character, no change of demeanor whatsoever is observed (even in very great agitation).

### Conclusions

Film adaptations of literary works have always been a subject of academic research among scholars. Academic discussion on representation of characters and situations in an adaptation has moved away from ‘faithful discourses’ of Bluestone to ‘Intertextuality’ and ‘cultural studies’. Film theorists have taken an array of perspectives to examine an adaptation coining new words to describe a phenomena. Wagner’s, Dudley and Parker’s typology of words do offer significant contribution to our understanding of the process of adaptation. Linda Hutcheon defines adaptations taking up all that has been said before her. This paper has examined adaptations at script writing level. Various elements that make a story were discussed first and then a discussion was done to identify different stages of action. Themes, states of action and ending of the story were carefully analyzed for the generation of aesthetic delight called *rasa*. Sage Bharata view of characters as mentioned in the *Natyasastra* was taken as starting point to understand Indian

adaptations. The motivations and actions of characters (*uttama*, *madhyama* and *adhama*) resulted from their behavior types, which were further discussed as *lalita*, *datta*, *dhatta* and *shanta* types. The examination of film adaptations revolved around strengthening the concept of *rasa* which elevates the audience to a blissful state *parmananda*. An underlying concept of *darshnic* gaze was also followed parallel to our discussion on the sentiment generation. This gaze helps the audience to enjoy the performance and acts as a catalyst to experience the aesthetic delight.

### Notes

1. From Esha Nyogi De, Modern Shakespeares in popular Bombay Cinema: Translation, Subjectivity and Community. *Screen*. 43 (1) Spring 2002. P 19.
2. Ritwik Ghatak, *Film is a collective Art*, Cinema and I. Ritwik Memorial Trust with support from Federation of Film Societies of India, 1987. p 13.
3. Quoted in Keshav Vasvani's *The Language of Cinema*, Hindi Book Centre, New Delhi 1998. p 35.
4. Rafique Bhagdadi (Film Critic and Historian), Shubhra Gupta (The Indian Express) and M K Raghavendra (Film Critic and a Scholar).
5. Vaibhav Vats, *Bollywood Takes on the Agony of Kashmir*. The New York Times e edition (24 October 2014). Accessed 28 February 2015, [http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/arts/international/in-haider-vishal-bhardwaj-draws-from-hamlet.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/10/28/arts/international/in-haider-vishal-bhardwaj-draws-from-hamlet.html?_r=0)
6. A film genre that shows the exploitation of Muslims especially with regard to stereotypical characterization and glorification of violence. The term emerges from the morphing of the two words 'moslem' and 'exploitation.'
7. Cartmell, Corrigan and Whelehan. *Introduction to Adaption*, Adaptation, Oxford Journals. 2008. P 1
8. Hindu marriage ceremony of offering one's daughter or sister as a charity (*daan*) to the groom.
9. *prarabhya te na khalu vighbabbhayena nichaihi*  
*prarabhya vighna vihata viramanti madhyaha |*  
*vighnai punaha punarapi pratihanyamanaha*  
*prarabdha uttama janaha na parityajanti ||*  
 (Bhartrihari *Neeti Shatakam*: 26)  
 There are three types of men, lower, medium and noble depending upon the three types of actions they do. People, who are mean and inferior, fear the ensuring difficulties and do not work at all, people who are of the medium type start their

work, but if any adversity befalls on them they give up that work. But people who are noble despite adversities before and afterwards work continually and accomplish their work.

10. Desai interviewed on 30 Jan, 2001. Retrieved from [www.sawnet.org](http://www.sawnet.org)
11. The Rediff Special/Govind Nihalani, 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1997.
12. The movie was based on Jane Austen's *Emma*.
13. The movie was based on Chetan Bhagat's novel *Two States*.
14. The movie was based on the Premchand's novel of the same name.
15. *Kati Patang* was based on Gulshan Nanda's adaptation of *I Married a Dead Man* by Cornell Woolrich.
16. This movie was based on the Marathi novel *Aishi Tujhi Preet* by Chandrakant Kakodhar.
17. Quoted in Krishna Sen's *Critical Essays on R K Narayan's The Guide* (Kolkata: Orient Longman 2004).
18. Lord *Krishna* killed his maternal uncle *Kansa*, the ruler of Yadava Kingdom with its capital at Mathura.

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## Shadows Speak: A Need to Revive the Shadow Theatres of India

ARTI NIRMAL<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

*The Shadow Theatre or Shadow Puppetry or 'Chhaya Natak' of India is an ancient yet powerful example of folk theatre. On the basis of available evidences it has been found to be a predecessor of human theatre. This ancient form of leather puppetry in India is surviving through ages but it is sad to note that today in the age of film, television and internet, it is merely alive in few regions in India. Since these 'Shadow Theatres' signify our Indian culture, it becomes our duty to preserve and promote such art forms for generations to come. Against this background, the present paper aims to highlight the significance of shadow theatres in modern India with special reference to 'Ravana Chhaya' of Orissa.*

**Keywords:** Folk Theatre, Shadow Theatre, Leather Puppets, Ravana Chhaya, Liminal Zone.

Shadow Theatre is an ancient form of storytelling and entertainment which uses flat articulate figures to create the impression of moving humans. Shadows might seem transitory and temporary in nature, but they can be a powerful mode of artistic and theatrical representation too, if utilized artistically. Technologically, in Shadow Theatre the articulated figures are illuminated from behind the screen to create an illusion of moving characters. And then this illusion is adjusted skillfully to depict various stories from the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, and the folktales. In this way, they not only enhance our understanding of the Indian cultural tradition but also cast a profound social appeal on the viewers. As Stanley Hochman says, 'it is more than just a performance; it is a social and religious

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event, eliciting the atmosphere of a community ritual' (1984). Here, in this paper, an attempt has been made to study the relevance of such ancient theatres in contemporary India by focusing on the Oriya Shadow Theatre *Ravana Chhaya*. It also purports to understand how the micro-narratives of folk theatres can potentially compete with the meta-narratives of film, media and mainstream theatre.

### **Evolution of Theatre in Ancient India**

It is true that theatre with its live artistic appeal has always been an important medium for the depiction of Indian tradition but as far as its origin is concerned most likely it 'evolved over time as a form of cultural expression and has no specific moment of creation. The need to tell a story, to imitate, to play, and to perform repeated acts that ensure the continuation of a community are so vital to the human psyche that cultures everywhere have developed some form of enactment. Since these activities predate recorded history and leave no tangible trace, their precise origins of theatre are cloaked in mystery' (Felner 2006: 26). Our deeper study about the origin and evolution of theatres in India takes us first to the sage Bharata's *Natyasastra* which presents an organized discussion on Sanskrit Theatres in India. This origin however has a mythical story that Lord Brahma created the fifth Veda *Natyaveda* for the amusement of deities. And on his instruction Bharata composed *Natyasastra* in which he not only codified the art of dramaturgy but also deliberated extensively on the comprehensive and encyclopedic nature of Indian drama. Thus, to be enacted on the celestial stage architected by Vishwakarma, Bharatamuni conceptualizes drama in the following manner: "The combination called Natya is a mixture of *rasa*, *bhavas*, *abhinayas*, *dharmic vrittis*, *provrittis*, *siddhis*, *svaras*, instruments, song and theatre-house" (Gupt 1994 86).

The other wing of cultural scientists informs us that the glorious journey of Indian theatre began with the celebration of ancient rituals and seasonal festivities of the Vedic Aryans later followed by the Sanskrit plays. There are ample references to drama in Patanjali's *Vyakarana* and *Mahabhashya*, *Aagam* literature of Jainis, Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra*, Kautilya's *Arthshastra*, and Panini's *Ashtadhyaya* that prove the origin of Sanskrit drama in remote past. Along with the classical Sanskrit drama, the village or folk theatres have also been an important mode of entertainment in India. It is believed that the village theatres or folk theatres came systematically into being in an attempt to re-assert indigenous values and

ideas among the masses. Inhabited by over a billion diverse racial groups, India presents a colourful panorama of folk theatre variously known as the *Jatra*, *Tamasa*, *Nautanki*, *Bhavai*, *Yakshagana*, *Ramleela* and so on that represent the manners and mores of different regions of India. Undoubtedly, these folk theatres reach to a large cross-section of society by staging the unedited play amidst its pits, galleries and *diyas* that chant the tale of India and its tradition.

### Origin of Shadow Theatre

As far as the genesis of Shadow puppets is concerned, it is one of the most ancient art forms of India. 'It derives its present form from variety of visual art performances like the *Chitra Katha* (Scroll Painting) of the South India; the *Jadano Pat* (rolled painting) of Bengal; the *Chitrakathi* of Maharashtra; *Yampat* of Bihar; and the *Phad* painting of Rajasthan' (Ghosh and Banerjee 2006: 53). Shadow Theatre is somewhat related to the Puppet Theatre of India. But it is different from human and puppet stages in the sense that they are performed through two-dimensional structures. Here, the actor – manipulator presents a projection of his thoughts through shadows and expects the viewer to reassemble and interpret them.

Scholars hold diverse opinion on the subject of the origin of Shadow Theatres. For instance, in view of the Western Indologists such as Pischel, Lueders and Winternitz, the well known Sanskrit Theatre or 'Great Drama' itself evolved out of puppet theatre and Shadow Theatre (*indianetzone.com*). On the basis of available evidences it has also been regarded as the predecessor of human theatre. According to Coomarswamy, Panini, the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C. Sanskrit Grammarian, and Patanjali, the philosopher and author of the *Yogasutras* in 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., alluded to puppets in their works ("Introduction". *Asian Puppets*, 1976). Historically, the tradition of *Chhaya Natak* (Shadow Theatre) is believed to have existed in Gujarat a thousand years ago. William Ridgeway in his *The Dramas and Dramatic Dances* (Reprint 2010) affirms Subhata's *Dutangada*, as *Chhayanatak* or shadow drama presented at a festival in the honor of Kumar Pala Deva, a Chalukya King who ruled in Gujarat during 12<sup>th</sup> century. It appears that later this theatre form migrated from Gujarat to Rajasthan, Maharashtra, the South of India, and finally to the Southeast Asia. *Cilappatikaram*, a Tamil classic too contains mentioning of Shadow Theatres in India (*indianetzone.com*).

We also find evidences which confirm that Shadow Theatres flourished well during the 9-11<sup>th</sup> century Chola dynasty. The most convincing evidence

appears in the *Mahabharata*. For instance, the *Udyog Parv* of Mahabharata clearly mentions wooden dolls manipulated by the strings (Udyog 32.12) and its *Shanti Parv* refers to ‘*rupopajivanam*’ which means a person living by performing shadow plays:

vānījyaṃ pāśupālyaṃ ca tathā śilpopajīvanam |  
śūdrasyāpi vidhīyante yadā vṛttirna jāyate ||

raṅgāvatarāṇaṃ caiva tathā rūpopajīvanam |  
madyamāṃsopajīvyāṃ ca vikrayāṃ lohacarmaṇoḥ ||

(*Shanti Parv* 294.4-5 p.5202)

This certifies that during the *Mahabharata* period both string and shadow puppet shows were in existence. The famous scholar and critic on Indian theatres, Suresh Awasthi estimates its origin to the time of Indus valley civilization from where it is said to have traveled to China, Malaysia, Cambodia, Java, and Indonesia through silk route. These documents indicate that India has a continuous history of Shadow Theatre for about 2000 years.

### Shadow Theatre as Folk Theatre

Performance is the soul of theatre and folk theatres of India enact the realities of Indian life in an unsophisticated manner. They are generally modeled on the stories drawn from epics, *puranas*, myths and biographies of divine or semi-divine figures. It is mainly narrative in form in which the narrator (*sutradhara*) sometimes adds visual art, music and dance too to make it more entertaining. It is usually performed by a group of entertainers who often move from place to place and illustrate the Indian myth, dance, history, song, culture, mores, tradition and beliefs through their performance. Thus, they are not only entertainers but also the preachers of value, philosophical tenets and religious cult. As Hanne M. de Bruin writes, it “helps to confirm cultural practices and values, which are socially and psychologically important to maintain local cohesion, self assurance, pride in one’s own culture, and personal and group identities, in particular during a time of rapid change” (2003 7-8).

Indian folk theatre can be broadly divided into two categories- religious and secular. While the religious folk theatres mainly evolved around the aspects and stories from history, myth and religion; the secular folk theatre emerged as a typical form of entertainment among the mass. Artistically, it

is very rich and it potentially exemplifies all the eight *rasas* mentioned in Bharatamuni's *Natyashastra*. Themes of life, death, love, virtue and vice are effectively presented on these make-shift stages. The stage of folk theatres is usually a colossal empty space which is complemented by the dialogues and symbolic gestures of the actors. It is remarkable to note that there is a direct and continual interaction between the actors and the audience during the course of performance. Elaborate make-up, masks, chorus, loud music and folk dance are few other essential hallmarks of the folk theatres in India.

The unselfconscious, spontaneous and boisterously naïve folk theatres serve as an effective means of mass communication. Whereas the classical Sanskrit theatres aimed at amusing the chosen few, folk theatres amuse the vast community comprising of both literate as well as the illiterate masses. Similarly, if the former creates barriers, the latter removes all the barriers of class, region and religion. Folk theatres present people in their natural habitat by offering a glimpse of regional style of speech, dress, behavior, humor, proverbs, wit and wisdom. Thus, we see that it does not present life in slices but offers a panoramic view of human culture. They are not episodic in nature; instead there is always continuity in theme, structure and presentation. Apart from these the dialogues are delivered in high pitch and there is always a scope for improvisation and incorporation of new references.

The Shadow Theatre or Shadow Puppetry or 'Chayya Natak' of India is an ancient yet powerful example of folk theatre. The philosophy conveyed through Shadow plays is the good overpowering the evil. They have ritualistic relevance too. For instance, they are often held to bring rain, induce fertility to the soil, remove epidemic, and celebrate occasions of life such as birth, marriage and death in the village. Different episodes are played on different themes like *Krishnaleela* (play on Krishna), *Girija Kalyan* (Wedding of Parvati) or *Swargarohana* (ascent to heaven by Pandavas) as befitting the occasion.

### ***Ravan Chayya Tradition in Odisha***

*Ravana Chayya* is a specific name given to the shadow plays of Orissa (present day Odisha). It is a rare form of Shadow Theatre which utilizes flat two dimensional pictures. The traditional performers of *Ravana Chhaya* were from the community of *bhats* who used to receive the patronage of the local Rajas of Pallahara in the form of land grants (Sharma and Singh *Akhyan*: 38). This specifically traditional Shadow theatre is found popular in the Dhenkanal district of Orissa. Kathinandan Dash and Jivan Pani have been

its leading practitioners and preservers in India. Presently, Kolha Charan Sahu, Gourang Das, Dhiren Patnaik and others are making remarkable efforts to maintain this folk dramatic tradition. Shri Kolha Charan Sahu has remarkably kept this tradition alive through the institute 'Ravan-Chhya Natya Sansad'.

For the enactment of shadow play, the two dimensional flat figures (usually made up of deer skin) are lightly pressed against a translucent screen with a strong source of light behind. Estimating the necessity of these figures for the enactment of Shadow plays Mrazek states that "Pictorial representation is an essential element of the Shadow puppet theatre" (2005: 74). The audience sitting on the other side of the screen sees the shadows moving when the figures are manipulated. Amidst the heightened darkness all around, the images are projected on the screen to articulate the stories. Shadow puppet figures, therefore, are pre-requisites to such performances. In terms of its evolution, 'a shadow puppet figure is essentially a cut-out from a narrative picture scroll' (Victor H. Mair 1988, as qtd in Jan Mrazek). Meher Contractor also details the development of shadow puppet figures in these words:

Shadow theatre gradually evolved from picture dramatization to cut-out figures. These were stuck on a length of cloth with thorns, in a sequence of the scenes, and a lantern was passed behind it, moved by the narrative as the story unfolded. Soon these cut-outs were given mobility and the figures came to life on the white curtain with lamp-lights, music, song, narration and even sometimes a dance rhythm" (as quoted in Jan Mrazek 67).

*Ravana Chhaya*, executed in the Dhenkanal district of Orissa, usually delivers the text of *Vichitra Ramayana* by Vishwanath Kuntia, a well known medieval Oriya poet. A single performance of *Ravana Chhaya* needs minimum of 7 nights and almost 700 puppets to perform. The puppets are 6-8 inches tall flat bamboo figures covered with deer skin with no movable parts. The immovable limbs of Shadow puppets in *Ravana Chhaya* are the toughest challenge in the stagecraft of this dramatic form. Stanley Hochman also says that "there is a great variety in size and design of the figures, and the decorative arts and crafts of the region have a strong influence" (1984: 33).

Rama, Sita and Lakshmana departing to the forest (The Ramayana)



Taadaka Demoness - Old and New (The Ramayana)



### Performance, Imagination and Appeal

Performance begins ritually when a coconut is broken and a sacrifice invokes the blessings of the elephant god Ganesha. The leader of the troupe steps to the side of the acting area in view of the audience and offers a prayer to the central deity Rama. Artistically, it begins with the act of singing with loud roar. The *Khanjani* then starts beating furiously and the one line of verse is sung in one go. The soul of the play is music especially the *channda* form which is accompanied by *Khanjani* and *Ginni*. Besides these, a pair of wooden castanets called *Daskatthi* provides percussive support to the singing. Thus the poetic language of the recitation and songs are the matter of important attraction for the spectators. Then the narrator (*sutradhar*) recites the lines mouthed by the local barber puppet known as *Bhandari* and his grandson and thus the play begins. These puppets are treated very piously and once they have outlived their usefulness, they are ritualistically ‘cremated’ and cast into a river.

It is performed mostly in the rural areas of Orissa and is exclusively based on the legends of Lord Rama. It is interesting however to note that the name of this art form is based on Lord Rama’s adversary Ravana. There are two accepted reasons behind this name: one, it is believed that since Rama is divine and luminous being, he cannot have a shadow. Therefore, it is named after Ravana, the evil and shadowed entity. The second reason is that Ravana, assumes a dignified persona in the Jain version of *the Ramayana*, and as there was a considerable impact of this on the state, this theatre form is called *Ravana Chhaya* (Subodh Kapoor: 6069-70).

In Shadow Theatre, clowns play a very seminal role through their performance. They are intermediaries and often remind us of *Vidushak* of Indian Sanskrit theatre. They comment directly, in a highly colloquial language about the social and political issues of the day and force the members of the audience to reflect upon their day to day concerns. This view is reinforced by Hochman who observes that “the shadow puppets include clowns, who provide much desired humor and contribute substantially to the atmosphere of a puppet performance” (1984 33). The well known anthropologist Victor W. Turner considers clown in a Shadow Play as the only performer who can take the liberty to parody the high and the mighty of society. According to him the clowns thus create ‘a liminal zone’. This liminality experienced by the clowns in Shadow Theatre provokes ‘reflexivity’ which is the capability “to stand aside not only from one’s

personal social position but from all social positions” (2008). This proves that these shadow plays are not only a folk means of entertainment but they are a powerful mode of social criticism too.

### **Impact of Modernization on Folk Theatre**

Theatre, unlike television, is often imagistic and metaphorical, so the most important thing to bring to the theatre is audience’s imagination (Felner 2006). But today, the Indian society is changing very fast and so is the cultural taste of its people. In the age of media entertainment, traditional theatres in India have to fight a tough battle for their survival. In the era of multimedia, the consumerist tendencies are overshadowing the cultural system of India which consists of its rich religion, music, painting, costume, literature, handicraft and theatre. These changes have not only challenged the regional and local culture of India but also tried to push its rich folk art to the back stage. Thus, it becomes necessary to prevent these folk traditions from extinction for future generation. It is urgent to revive and reinforce the polyphonic voices of Indian folk culture in order to resist the grand narratives of the modern media culture.

Shadow puppetry is merely alive in few regions of Orissa as *Ravana Chayya*; in Andhra Pradesh as *Tholu Bommalatta*; in Karnataka as *Togalu Gombetta*; in Kerala as *Thol Pava Koothu*; in Tamil Nadu as *Tholu Bommalattam*; and in Maharastra as *Chamdyacha Bahuliya*. The consumerist tendencies reinforcing the glamorization and vulgarization of entertainment sources are not only threatening the very existence of our native art-tradition but also confining theatres at chosen art-conscious canters. We should not forget that they can be a very powerful art medium for social amelioration. As a saga of Indian drama, even today, the folk theatres are efficient enough to break the barriers of orchestra and gleaming DJ lights. In this context, it would be pertinent to quote Martin Esslin’s view who says that the native theatres are the guardians of the individuality of culture:

In an age where the world is flooded by a deluge of cheap commercially motivated material on television, the live theatre, the guardian of traditions and individuality of cultures, threatened by this avalanche of triviality and become more vital to the continued richness and variety of human culture than ever before in the history of mankind. (1989)

Certainly, the Shadow theatres and all other forms of Indian folk theatre are of immense contemporary relevance because they are the repertoires of human cultural civilization. We have a moral responsibility too towards our

cultural heritage therefore we should not let them perish. Revival of our indigenous theatre should be encouraged because they can play an important role in the process of decolonizing Indian stage. The hemlock of cultural colonization is far more lethal than the political colonization because it threatens the entire consciousness of the mass and hampers the growth of human tradition. The need of the hour is to urgently revive our folk theatres so that artistic hegemony can be subverted and multiple folk voices may be strengthened in order to face the challenges of the grand voices of media and commercialized mainstream theatres.

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## Mother's Brother in Matrilineal Societies : A Study of Khasi Matriliny

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### Abstract

*Scholars are of the opinion that Mother's brother is of immense significance in matrilineal societies. His status and role is embedded and intrinsic to matrilineal social structure. As a male member of the matrilineal descent group, he represents the placement of men vis-à-vis women in matriliney. Under the matrilineal social arrangement he holds authority, role and responsibility towards matrilineal descent groups, particularly in matters concerning the affairs of his sister's children. The paper discusses the status and position of mother's brother in Khasi society.*

**Keywords: Mother's Brother, Matrilineal descent group, Kinship, Authority Role, Modernisation.**

A human community in any part of the world has a system of descent, and broadly we can say that there are two kinds of descent system: patrilineal and matrilineal. Schneider explains that, '...kinship defines a number of statuses and interrelationships according to a variety of rules or principles and distinguishes kinsmen from non-kin' (1962:2). According to Schneider and Gough, 'a system which includes the matrilineal principle but does not include the patrilineal principle will be called a matrilineal system' (1962:3). They further elaborate that matrilineal principle has three important elements: (i) children under the care of the woman; (ii) men have authority over women and children; and (iii) the rule of exogamy is followed by the matrilineal community. Focusing on the second element, the paper discusses the significance of men as brothers in the matrilineal system.

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Kinship studies in matrilineal societies have focused their attention, among other things, on the position of mother's brother vis -a- vis sister's children. With regard to the role of men in the matrilineal descent group, Schneider explains that men are assigned roles which are different from that of women, that is, 'the role of men as men is defined as that of having authority over women and children. Positions of the highest authority within the matrilineal descent group, will therefore, ordinarily be vested in statuses occupied by men'. The author also highlights the authority of men in the domestic sphere and in the descent group by explaining that men of the descent group have authority over the women and children of that descent group, and that adult males of the domestic group have authority over the women and children of that particular domestic group (Schneider 1962:1-7). Based on secondary sources, the paper will try to conceptualise the mother's brother in matrilineal and reflect on his place in Khasi matrilineal.

#### **The Position and Role of the Mother's Brother**

To have a proper sociological understanding of mother's brother in matrilineal communities, it is necessary to examine the position and role provided to them in the structure of matrilineal arrangement vis-à-vis women and children. In the opinion of Sweetser (1966), 'three categories seem to be needed to understand the mother's brother's role: the authoritative role (*avunculi potestas*); the indulgent role; and a third, intermediate role, called here the "respected and responsible" role, in which the relationship is freighted with some degree of responsibility and authority on the uncle's side and with obligations and respect on the children's side' (1966:1009). With regard to the role of a man as mother's brother and his role as father of his children, it was also pointed out the degree and nature of authority present in one role would be directly related to that in the other role, but the two different roles cannot have the same rights and obligations. It was also noted that the mother's brother has a distinctive role in the organisation of kinship and that the type of distinctive role for the mother's brother may differ with the conditions of marriage (1966:1010-1012).

In matrilineal societies the mother's brother is a non-authoritarian, indulgent figure, a sort of "male mother", with whom there is "frequent interaction" and "considerable freedom" and that this sentimental attachment is the efficient cause of "matrilateral cross-cousin marriage" (Homans and Schneider 1962:529). It was pointed out and emphasized by Homans and Schneider (1962) that 'the giving of help and advice by the mother's brother,

as distinguished from orders'. It was also brought out that 'the daughters of the mother's brother's, own clan or tribe, are marriageable women from whom a wife may be sought. The customary or most orthodox marriage found in some communities is that which takes place 'between the children of "blood" brother and sister. A man marries his mother's full brother's daughter-he marries back into his mother's clan, into which his father married before him' (Homans and Schneider 1962:530).

On the issue of authority, Homans and Schneider (1962:531) reflect that 'a mother's brother does not normally hold jural authority over his sister's children. He does so only while she is a widow'. The man's sister, as a widow, looks to her brother 'for protection and seeks the shelter of his camp. He is responsible for her and her children until the mourning for her husband is past and she remarries'. It is also stated that 'the mother's brother is something of a male mother to his sister's sons. In giving his daughters in marriage to them he is providing for their future, as well as that of his daughters'.

Some of the ethnographic studies on matrilineal societies provide interesting account of the position and role of the mother's brother. A.R. Radcliffe-Brown writes about the important customs related to the mother's brother-sister's son relationship in the context of South Africa. According to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1996:173), '(i) the uterine nephew all through his career is the object of special care on the part of his uncle, (ii) when the nephew is sick the mother's brother sacrifices on his behalf, (iii) the nephew is permitted to take many liberties with his mother's brother; for example, he may go to his uncle's home and eat up the food that has been prepared for the latter's meal, (iv) the nephew claims some of the property of his mother's brother when the latter dies, and may sometimes claim one of the widows, (v) when the mother's brother offers a sacrifice to his ancestors the sister's son steals and consumes the portion of meat or beer offered to the gods'. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1996:174-177) explains that 'the sister's son is permitted to take many liberties with his mother's brother and to take any of his uncle's possessions that he may desire'. It was also noted that the mother's brother is important and that it was possible to treat him 'as being like a father...'. There is a tendency for sister's son to regard the mother's brother as some sort of a 'male mother'. It should also be noted that 'a man may treat his mother's brother, who is of his own sex, with a degree of familiarity that would not be possible with any woman, even his own mother... The mother's brother is the one relative above all from whom we may expect

indulgence, with whom we may be familiar and take liberties'.

A certain way of behaviour is displayed by the mother's brother when it concerns the sister's son, 'the mother's brother is a personage of vast importance; having the power even of life and death over his nephews and nieces, which no other relations, not even the parents, have; he is to be held in honor even above the father' (Radcliffe-Brown 1996:178). When speaking of the mother's brother, it is customary to use an honorific title given to people who are respected very highly. This indicates that in some societies, the power of the maternal uncle exceeds the power of the father. According to A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1996:179) 'the mother's father and the mother's brother are the objects of very similar behaviour patterns, of which the outstanding feature is the indulgence on the one side and the liberty permitted on the other'.

Evans-Pritchard observes that among the Nuer of Africa a man can rely on his mother's brother for assistance even if the man's own paternal uncles do not come to his aid. The mother's brother to sister's children is said to be 'both father and mother', but more importantly 'the mother'. He is a man's great supporter when he is in trouble'. The relationship between mother's brother and sister's son is one of tenderness. The mother's brother is indulgent and when his own children will trouble his sister's children, he would even 'admonish them to leave his sister's child in peace' (Evans-Pritchard: 1951:163). The sister's son prefers to go and live with his mother's brother than with father's brother when his own father dies and he 'may even marry from the uncle's herd. Also, a youth during his father's lifetime often visits his mother's kinsmen and stays with them for weeks together... has always a second home if his maternal uncle is a full brother to his mother' (Evans-Pritchard 1951) With regard to marriage of sister's children, the mother's brother may give cattle as a form of assistance for his sister's eldest son and makes further contributions towards the marriages of the younger sons of the sister. Evans-Pritchard (1951) noted that a man's mother's full brother receives bride wealth on behalf of sister's daughter at the time of marriage. But he is not obliged to contribute to sister's son's bride wealth. Even if the mother's brother refuses aid, he cannot be deprived of receiving bride wealth on the marriages of sister's daughters.

There are a number of special observances in the mother's brother-sister's son relationship, for example, while the 'blessing of a maternal uncle is desired, his curse is believed to be among the worst, if not the worst ...

for, unlike the father, a maternal uncle may curse a youth's cattle, as well as his crops and fishing and hunting, if he is disobedient or refuses a request or in some other way offends him. The curse may also prevent the nephew from begetting male children' (Evans-Pritchard 1951:164-165). The fear of the mother's brother's curse ensured that the sister's son avoid swearing at their maternal uncles, 'you must not swear at your maternal uncle. You might even think of swearing at your father but never, never, at your maternal uncle' (Evans-Pritchard 1951). The many observances relating to the mother's brother-sister's son relationship are indicative of the important position of the mother's brother in the kinship system. Evans-Pritchard also states that since the mother's brother is a relative through a female he is spoken about as a kind of 'male mother' himself (Evans-Pritchard 1951:166)

Among the Navaho of North Eastern Arizona, there exist three modes of relationship between mother's brother and sister's child: an avuncular role, the clan-mate role and the 'Local Clan' head role. In the case of avuncular role, 'mother's brother disciplines, arranges marriages and is traditionally a source of inheritance for the sister's child' (Aberle 1962:169-171). With regard to clan mate role, it was observed that 'joking between the mother's brother and the sister's son is symmetrical and egalitarian'. In the local clan head role, mother's brother as the senior member mobilises the kin group for ceremonies and in times of disputes. This shows that the mother's brother's role varies from context to context.

The mother's brother ought to help his sister and her children in times of need such as providing food, clothing, education, in payment of claims and in providing bride wealth. The mother's brother also assists in farming activities and in an emergency, he can call upon his sister's daughters to help him in his own household. On the other hand his sister's sons considered as his potential heirs remain attached to his household and also contribute their work to the building of the estate. The role played by the mother's brother in Tonga society has made him a figure of authority and respect, and he has been equated with 'mother' so in him vests the rights that a mother has over her children (Colson 1962:33-95).

In matrilineal societies the mother's brother plays an important role in the life of his sister and sister's children because he acts as their guardian. The sister respects her brother, obeys his commands and regards him as the legal head of her family of procreation. However, the mother's brother does not arrange his sister's daughter's marriage, except if there is a betrothal to

his son. He may be instrumental in getting a child spirit to impregnate his sister's daughter and as a practice she should give birth at the house of her father or mother's brother (Fathauer 1962:234-269).

When it concerns the sister's son, the mother's brother has the 'greatest authority' over him as he may be his uncle's heir. The uncle from whom a man expects to inherit may be the man who instructed and disciplined him from his youth. In some cases the mother's brother responsible for the young man's socialisation may die and be succeeded by his younger brother. This has been seen as problematic for the man as he becomes the heir of a man with whom he had little contact with in his youth. In such circumstances, the mother's brother may be more inclined to favour his own son against his sister's son than would be the case with the uncle who guided him into manhood.

With regard to socialisation of sister's son, Fathauer (1962:252-253) states that, 'a boy does not have much contact in childhood with his mother's brother since they usually live in different villages. As he grows older, his mother's brother begins to exert more influence on him. The uncle tutors his nephew in lineage and sub-clan traditions; he takes his nephew to work with him in the fields to which the youth has a claim. The mother's brother introduces the youth to take pride in his lineage, ambition, and promises of future wealth and prestige. As the boy grows older his mother's brother demands more work of him. The boy goes frequently to his mother's brother's house for ceremonies and feasts involving his own sub-clan'. It was also pointed-out that, the mother's brother also has the right to determine the distribution of his sister's son's harvest and may ask for his contribution towards his payment to the chief. Fathauer (1962) views this relationship between the two as asymmetrical one, characterised by considerable tension and resembles the elder brother -younger brother relationship in many ways.

Among the Ashanti of Ghana, the children live with the mothers or fathers and when they grew older they lived with their mother's brother. The mother's brother's area of 'control over sister's children was extensive - he could pawn his nephews and nieces, his approval was crucial for marriage, and he could demand that divorce be instituted. He could insist upon cross-cousin marriage and a nephew could not refuse, though a daughter might; likewise a niece could be forced to marry her uncle's son' (Basehart 1962:292). However, as Harry W. Basehart points out, considerable ambivalence characterises this asymmetrical relationship, particularly with respect to inheritance and succession (1962).

### **Mother's Brother in Khasi Society**

In the context of Khasi matriliney two persons are kin if they trace descent from a common ancestress or if either of them is descended from the other. The largest division in the society is in terms of *Kur* which is a near equivalent of clan. The *Kur* is an exogamous unit and every member is a kin of every other person of the same *Kur*. Hence every member belonging to the same *Kur* refer to each other collectively as *Shi Kur* or kin belonging to a single *Kur*. The basis of this is that they have all descended from a common ancestress. The *Kur* affiliation becomes a unit of identification and all members belonging to the same generation within the *Kur* accept each other as brothers and sisters on the basis of fictitious consanguinity. This affiliation also becomes a basis of identification when two strangers meet for the first time. The *Kur* comes into being when the female children of Khasi women get married and perpetuate the lineage of their mothers by producing children. Each such married daughter starts what is known as *Ka Kpoh*, which during the course of time develops into a number of lineages which share the same identification name with other lineages of *Ka Kpoh*. The name of *Ka Kpoh* is called *Ka Jait*. Members of different *Kpoh* having different *Jait* names develop a kinship affiliation believing to have ascended from a common female ancestress (Nongkynrih 2002: 33-35).

The most important functional descent unit in the matrilineal kin group is called *Ka Ing*, which is the lowest order of clan segmentation, smaller than *Ka Kpoh* - which may include two or more *Ing*. The central core of *Ka Ing* comprises two persons, one holding the authority and the other owning the property; the role of succession is strictly matrilineal. The authority goes from mother's brother to sister's son while the property is handed down from mother to daughter. A man continues to be a member of the same *Ing* all his life whether he marries or not. A woman if she is not an heiress will branch off after her marriage and though she herself will continue as member of her mother's *Ing* the third generation from her will form an independent *Ing*. As members of *Ka Ing*, men and women have their share of roles and position (Nongkynrih 2002).

In the structure of Khasi matriliney the position of men has been separated into two parts, that is, as *U Kni* (mother's brother) and as *U Kpa* (father). In the view of S. Lyngdoh (1999:42-43) the 'constitutive elements of the Khasi original matrilineal system are the following: (i) the mother's brother as the centre of authority and economy, of discipline and government

of the family; and (ii) the mother's brother's sister with her children as nephews and nieces of the mother's brother'. According to this system, the mother's brother is the 'sole ruler, the provider and the guardian. In his sister's house everyone and everything depends on him and therefore he is totally and eternally committed to his sister and her children'. By virtue of belonging to the same clan and of the same flesh and blood, the mother's brother 'cannot possibly disown his sister and her children and hence in this original form of matrilineal system, there is no danger of a family being broken or deserted'. It is the mother's brother who 'instructs and teaches his nephews and nieces so that the family can prosper' (Synrem: 1994: 28). In the marriage of his brothers or sisters, nephews or nieces, he takes the role of the mediator. The mother's brother has to mediate between the two clans, to enquire properly, to insure that there should be no incest, taboo or sin of sexual relationship among clan members (*ka sang ka ma*), and also to ensure that there are no reasons that forbid marriage alliance (*ka wit ka wai*) between the two clans. The mother's brother also has to perform rituals concerning the living as well as the dead, which gives rise to the Khasi saying; *U Kni*, in life and in death, as it is the mother's brother who shoulders the responsibility on behalf of his clan during these times. For his counseling, advice, and admonition, the brothers, sisters, nephews and nieces of the mother's brother in return give him happiness, gratitude, respect and love.

There are also other views provided by writers from Khasi community (Bairo 2009, Syiem 1983, Lyngdoh 1991, Mawrie 1983, Kharakor 1988, Rynjah 1999) on the mother's brother. According to them the mother's brother performs these roles: (i) he takes the responsibility as the counselor, advisor and guide to his family mother's group or families; (ii) he performs religious rites in the household such as naming ceremony; (iii) he controls property in sister's household; (iv) he is involved in taking decisions on all major family issues; (v) looks after the welfare of his nieces and nephews, and his siblings; (vi) provides care and support particularly in times of crisis; (viii) he assists in management of ancestral property; and (ix) helps in settling disputes. In addition to these, in traditional Khasi matriliney, the mother's brother had a role in conduct of various religious ceremonies and in engagement and marriage of nieces and nephews. The mother's brother shuttled between his mother's *iing* and his wife's *iing* and fulfilled the role of uncle and father with equal responsibility.

However, it was also noted by many writers that the position of the mother's brother is changing, and according to H.O. Mawrie (1983:83-85)

‘the position of the *U Kni* has been undermined from the period of colonial subjugation and the change over in faith has affected adversely the beliefs and practices of Khasi society and as result of which has created chaos and confusion in the family, clan and culture as a whole. In the present day, in many households, the Khasi man has lost his position, role and authority and significance both in his sister’s home and also in his children’s home’.

Similar opinion can be observed on the emerging trends with regard to the family system amongst the Khasi households. The observation of A. Mawlong (1998:80-93) explains that the mother’s brother plays a vital role in the lives of his sister and her children in traditional Khasi society. However, the paper also pointed out that 77.5-80 percent of the respondents in the survey stated that the role of the *Kni* is symbolic; he is now informed of family happenings but he does not take decisions. Only 20-22.5 percent of the respondents said that the mother’s brother continues to be a decisive role in the family. It should be noted that the respondents who affirmed the decisive role of the *Kni* belong to the Khasi indigenous faith. The author further explains that the role of the mother’s brother is also dependent on other factors such as the pattern of residence, property implications and his personality. His role may be dominant only in the natal home, the home where the *Khadduh* (youngest daughter) resides.

Expressing similar thoughts was Rynjah (1999:47) who stated that ‘the maternal uncle/uncles and brothers of the womb, are the managers/executors in respect of the ancestral property and the chief uncle, acted’ like a chairman and he listens to different views and seek for consensus from members of the group including women. The author also pointed out that before the conversion to another faith such as Christianity for example, the mother’s brother’s ‘word is law for that group’ and it was the consecrated duty and right of the maternal uncle to look after the sister’s family, including various aspects related to the role and position as the maternal uncle. However, the author also shared that as a result of change in faith, there came about disorder and confusion in matters of rights and responsibilities of the male and female members of society. The role of parents and the role of the other members of the mother’s group had been misinterpreted and practiced, and has resulted in the weakening of Khasi traditions and customs.

Another scholar, I.M. Syiem (1983:90-93) also observed that ‘the functional control of the mother’s brother is diminishing’ because the father has taken over the role of decision –maker with regard to his own children.

The importance of mother's brother is also determined by the frequency of interaction with his maternal kin indicating that lesser social contact with sister's children leads to 'a simultaneous loss of influence of the maternal male and maternal kin in the family'. However, Juanita War (1988) pointed-out that the *Kni* has lost his power and importance 'due to various reasons such as: (i) the geographical and psychological distance; and (ii) having set-up his own family, hence more concerned with his family's affairs (i.e., his wife and children). The author elaborated that, 'it has often been stated that to play the dual roles as father of his children in his wife's home, and that of an uncle in his niece's home is no longer possible nor feasible'.

There is another dimension which must be highlighted when referring to mother's brother. In the preceding description aspects related with position and role of mother's brother have been given due consideration. However, it should be noted that men in matrilineal descent groups may be considered mother's brothers but not all mother's brothers are given authoritative role. In other words, authority role is given to some mother's brothers in the matrilineal descent groups. On the basis of this factor, male members in matrilineal structure and matrilineal descent groups can be separated into three: the first group of mother's brother are 'those who play authority role and hence required for the current operation of the group; the second group of mother's brothers are those who are likely to succeed to replace the present incumbent when they are incapacitated or die; and the last group of mother's brothers are those who are unlikely to succeed to authority roles' (War 1988). It was observed that in the case of the last category of matrilineal males, the matrilineal descent groups may not have control over them and also the group may not directly depend on them so much as in the case of the first category of males and the second category. Consequently the third category of males may gradually loosen kinship ties from the matrilineal descent groups.

### **Conceptualising Mother's Brother**

The discussion on mother's brother may not have been very exhaustive. Taking into account the available literature, attempt has been made in the paper to throw light on varied aspects related with mother's brother and his position in the matrilineal kinship structure and matrilineal descent groups. Many scholars are of the opinion that the position of mother's brother in matrilineal societies is of immense and immeasurable one. Based on this information and understanding the paper argues that the mother's brother in matrilineality can be seen as follows:

- (i) The mother's brother has a distinct place in matrilineal descent groups and also assumes a position of respect in his group.
- (ii) The mother's brother who is required or given by the matrilineal descent groups to assume and exercise the authority role is the key decision-maker for and behalf of his group.
- (iii) As a member of the matrilineal descent group, the mother's brother bears responsibility for the well being of his sister and his sister's sons and daughters. His presence is sought in the rites-de-passage of his group such as birth and naming ceremony, marriage sickness and death.
- (iv) The mother's brother's relationship with his sister's children is often one of responsibility and authority. The mother's brother is also seen as an indulgent figure providing help and advice to sister's children. The relationship is of mutual respect and warmth.
- (v) In matrilineal descent groups, women care for the children. Mother's brother has the responsibility of socializing his sister's children in etiquette and manners, rules of kinship, transfer of knowledge and skills, and discipline of his nephews and nieces.
- (vi) At the level of the household his authority role deals with matters concerning management of ancestral property, settlement of disputes, performance of religious rites and rituals during socio-religious occasions, and in everyday life in particular concerning the socialization, discipline and marriage of his sister's children.
- (vii) He holds the power of control on his nephews and nieces. He is also responsible in maintenance of property of sister and her children and upholding of the customary practices relating to inheritance of property by sister's daughter; and he has a role in ensuring harmony and co-operation among the members of his sister's household and of his sister's daughter household.
- (viii) Lastly, as the authority role he represents the matrilineal descent group whenever required or needed such as to ensure peace, harmony and cooperation in the matri-lineage and clan; and harmonious relation with other clans of the matrilineal tribe or any other communities.

While writing on the role of mother's brother in the traditional matrilineal society, it is also pointed out that the process of modernisation of human communities in general and matrilineal communities in particular has brought about some changes on the mother's brother position and authority role. The changes have been attributed to the change in faith and the assuming of definite role by the father and less dependence on mother's brother; the change in occupation and mobility of both male and female members of the matrilineal descent group; and males' inability to cope and manage their dual position - their role as mother's brothers and as fathers; and the growing importance of the father overshadowed the importance of the mother's brother. The literature indicates that in the present times the position and authority role of mother's brother is symbolic and his social significance is gradually eroding.

### Conclusion

The subject- matter of mother's brother is crucial for understanding the social world of matrilineal communities. His status and authority is embedded and intrinsic in the matrilineal social structure. As a male member of the matrilineal descent group, he represents the placement of men vis-à-vis women in matrilineal. Traditionally he is entrusted with authority and responsibility for his matrilineal descent groups in general and the affairs of his sister's children in particular. It is noted that matrilineal communities could not remain immune and static to the changes taking place around. They were influenced directly or indirectly by various developments such as modernization, colonization, change in faith and changes in occupation. Such factors seem to be strengthening the authority role of matrilineal men as fathers and weakening the role of matrilineal men as mother's brothers. It is interesting to see whether the matrilineal structure remain intact, when the role of males in matrilineal societies have started changing.

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## Memories of Home and Persecution: A Study of Recent Kashmiri Pandit Narratives

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### Abstract

*This paper primarily engages with Kashmir Pandit narratives that have transpired after the community was evicted from the Kashmir Valley in the 1990's. The outbreak of armed struggle for Azadi in Kashmir in the 1990's led to the complete breakdown of the social fabric of Kashmir. Indiscriminate attacks on prominent Kashmiri Pandits and creation of a general atmosphere of fear and intimidation finally forced the Pandits to leave the valley. Based on select narratives exploring the themes of identity, belonging and exile of the Kashmiri Pandits, this paper proposes to examine the politics of these narratives in the context of the Hindu fundamentalist discourses among the Kashmiri Pandits.*

**Keywords: Kashmiri Pandit, Exile, Homelessness, Communalism, Violence, Minority.**

Your history gets in the way of my memory  
I am everything you lost. You can't forgive me.  
I am everything you lost. Your perfect enemy.  
Your memory gets in the way of my memory

—Agha Shahid Ali

They had to live through this every day. Because we did not share sadness beyond this. Because then the topic always veered towards the events of 1989-90, and that was the point at which our truths became different. For them, the events of 1990 were a rebellion against the Indian state. For me, these same events had led to exile and permanent homelessness.

—Rahul Pandita.

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These two quotations aptly reflect the ambivalent political situation in Kashmir valley in the aftermath of the armed struggle since 1989. The history and memory of the majority community of Kashmiri Muslims and the minority yet influential Pandit community bifurcates at this crucial juncture when the Pandits were forcibly evicted from the valley and became refugees in their own country. This paper shall be focusing on Pandit narratives like *Our Moon Has Blood Clots* by Rahul Pandita, *The Garden of Solitude* by Siddhartha Gigoo, *The Tiger Ladies* by Sudha Koul and a few others, dealing with their persecution and explore the poetics and the politics of the narratives. Some narratives like that of Koul's *Tiger Ladies* and Pandita's *Our Moon has Blood Clots* belong to the genre of memoirs while Gigoo's *The Garden of Solitude* and Nitasha Kauls's *Residue* are novels. Pandit narratives published after their exodus from the Kashmir valley not only describe the socio-cultural consequences of exile on the members of the community but also ideologically condition their experience of persecution and eviction from the valley.

The Pandit community has always been a miniscule minority in Kashmir valley and has always been at the mercy of their rulers. Although the primary focus of all these narratives remains the political situation prior to their exodus in 1990 and their subsequent experience as an exiled community in different parts of the country, the Pandit narratives are also replete with the history of persecution in different historical epochs. The memories of persecution almost always at the hands of their Muslim rulers from outside the valley in the distant past and their own Kashmiri brethren in the recent past seem to bind the Pandit community into a close-knit political entity. The memoirs and fictional rendering of their experience is intended to seek justice from the central government of India and non-Kashmiri Indian citizens. In contrast, the Kashmiri Muslim authors like Basharat Peer and Waheed Mirza and others primarily focus on the Indian military atrocities since 1990's. Yet authors belonging to both the communities employ similar kind of 'poetics of dispossession', a term borrowed from Anaya Jahanara Kabir. There is a characteristic similarity between anti-Azadi narratives of Kashmiri Pandits and pro-Azadi narratives mostly written by Kashmiri Muslims in terms of their idioms, metaphors and politics.

Popular perceptions, especially espoused and disseminated by Indian National Congress and key national leaders like Nehru and Gandhi, visualized Kashmir as the secular heaven free from communal strife that rages in other parts of India. While Congress has its own political agenda to portray Kashmir

as a secular heaven, the discourse of Kashmiriyat, where every Kashmiri irrespective of religion were bound by their affiliation to their homeland was propounded and valorized by Sheikh Abdullah in order to legitimize his ascendancy as the most prominent Kashmiri leader. Irrespective of its politically expedient use by both the Congress at the national level and Sheikh Abdullah's National Conference at the regional level, the discourse of Kashmiriyat did contribute a great deal towards a harmonious co-existence of Pandits, Muslims and Sikhs in the Kashmir valley. History of pre-insurgency Kashmir Valley records a few minor communal skirmishes between the Kashmiri Muslims and the Pandit community<sup>1</sup>, where the Pandit community, although socially and financially privileged, were at the receiving end due to demographic disadvantage. Yet one can say that communal relations in the Kashmir valley was comparatively better than other parts of the Indian nation state which can be validated by the absence of any major communal clashes till the onset of the armed struggle in 1989 when the situation rapidly deteriorated. The efficacy of the discourse of Kashmiriyat is however challenged by many Pandit and pro-Pandit scholars in recent times, for instance, Chitrlekha Zutshi, in her book *Languages of Belonging: Islam, Regional Identity, and The Making of Kashmir* has categorically debunked the notion of Kashmiriyat as a political discourse. In fact, she repeatedly stresses the fact that Sheikh Abdullah's ascendancy was primarily because of his unabashed espousal of Muslim economic interests and successful negotiation for the same with the Dogra state. According to Zutshi:

the narrative on Kashmiriyat ignores the contradiction that forms the substance of the Kashmiri nationalist movement: this movement which supposedly rescued Kashmiriyat from the jaws of the Dogra regime, based its demand squarely on the socio-economic distinctions between the two main religious communities in Kashmir, Pandits and Muslims (Zutshi 47).

The Pandit community's sense of persecution is aggravated by their demographic disadvantage as well as by the erosion of privileges that came by as co-religionists of the Dogra kings. During the Dogra regime, the Pandit community was treated preferentially in all aspects of public life. They were hand in glove with exploitative state machinery. Since the dawn of independence in 1947, the Dogra regime was dismantled and there was a gradual erosion of all the privileges enjoyed by the Pandits. The imperatives of democratic institutions in independent India led to complete overhaul of the system where the Kashmiri Muslims reaped the benefits in proportion to their demographic distribution.

Most of the Pandit narratives tend to interpret their loss of privilege as discrimination against them which in turn contribute to their sense of persecution. The gradual erosion of Pandit dominance in the valley after independence is beautifully expressed by Sudha Koul, “Relieved of the feudal trappings of our monarchy, we resume our lives in our new worlds with some significant changes. Muslims came into prominence everywhere, rapidly gaining control of jobs in proportion to their vast numbers in Kashmir” (Koul 31). Even Dhar complains of educated Muslims getting preferential treatment in appointments for government jobs. While delineating events during the late eighties Koul voices the insecurity of the Pandits,

We are becoming increasingly despondent. All of a sudden we feel we are too few, far too outnumbered, and far too vulnerable. Our lives and dignity have become imperiled in our own homeland. The Indian government is the sworn enemy of the mujahideen primarily because India is a Hindu country. Being Hindus we are suspect in the eyes of the rebels, who are now calling the shots literally and figuratively in Kashmir. The mujahideen only want Muslims in the valley (Koul 141).

One of the major thematic concerns of all the Pandit narrative is the loss of home. In fact the loss of home metonymically symbolizes the loss of the homeland since the Pandits had to flee their homeland. The Pandit home has been portrayed as a site of cultural and religious activity—a sanctified space of intimacy and intellectual engagements. There is a reiterated reference to the presence of books in and around the house which symbolize the intellectual achievement of the Pandit community. The onset of the conflict violates this sanctified space. The community is forced into exile where they labour hard to eke out a precarious existence in alien surroundings and culture. Rahul Pandita’s narrative evokes pathos since the protagonist’s mother, now languishing in extreme penury living inside a makeshift tenement in Jammu, repeatedly states the fact that they owned a spacious house with twenty two rooms in the past. The trauma of losing one’s home has also been dealt with in the Koul’s narrative where she tries to recreate a certain semblance of a Kashmiri Pandit home in US.

It is lovely sight to see the multicoloured versions of Vishnu the Preserver flitting about in the front garden, on the blood red impatiens flowering amid deep green foliage, and in this universal moment I forget where I am. What is missing in my re-created world is what makes it different, the snowline and the mountains, all the relatives and the laughter and the coming and the going (Koul 203).

One of the key features of Pandit narratives is to posit the Kashmiri Muslims not only as the ‘Other’ but also as the enemy of the Hindu community. The armed conflict since 1989 widened the gulf between the communities further but even earlier the notion of Muslims as the enemy appears to be very much a part and parcel of Pandit psyche. In an episode in *The Garden of Solitude*, Gigoo describes a Pandit saying, “Pandits were living on borrowed time. This had to happen one day. There was no trust between the Pandits and the Muslims; only pretence. Exile has been our destiny...” (Gigoo 89). Dhar’s novel exposes an almost rabid Islamophobia which is more or less the case with all the Pandit narratives barring Sudha Koul’s *The Tiger Ladies* and Nitasha Kaul’s *Residue*. This trait of Islamophobia is validated not only in reference to the recent conflict in Kashmir and their subsequent victimization of the Pandits but also while referring to the historical epochs where tyrannical conquerors, who incidentally were mostly Muslims, victimized the Pandits on account of their religion. The Pandits were victimized and targeted during the early nineties primarily because the pro-Azaadi groups deemed them as potential threat to their cause and as collaborators of the India state on account of their religion. Yet the ideological positioning of every Muslim as an enemy of the community definitely exposes a certain kind of communalism. In fact there are a variety of political perspectives within the Kashmiri Muslim community—some want Kashmir to merge with Pakistan, some others aspiring for independence and also many who want Kashmir to stay with India. Recent incidents since 1989 shows characteristic hostility towards the Pandits from the first two categories of Kashmiri Muslims, but the section of Kashmiri Muslim society which wants status-quo is definitely not so hostile to the Pandits. To portray all the Kashmiri Muslims as anti-Pandit apart from a few personal friends is a sweeping generalization and exposes communal sentiments of the authors. The problem lies in looking only at their religious identity and identifying all Kashmiri Muslims as pro-Azaadi and hence anti-Pandit. To put in the words of Amartya Sen, this singular affiliation disregards,

intricacies of plural groups and multiple loyalties [which] are obliterated by seeing each person as firmly embedded in exactly one affiliation...The incitement to ignore all affiliation and loyalties other than those emanating from one restrictive identity can be deeply delusive and also contribute to social tension and violence (Sen 21).

This kind of generalization disregards the severe critique of militancy from the Indian Muslim community such as bureaucrats like Wajahat

Habibullah and journalists like M.J. Akbar as well as the Pandits who provide unflinching support for Azaadi in Kashmir such as Sanjay Kak and the eminent Kashmiri scholar of yore, Prem Nath Bazaz.<sup>2</sup>

Most of the recently published Pandit narratives stresses on the memories of persecution by tyrannical rulers like Sultan Sikandar, the Afghans and others. The recently published Pandit narratives like *Our Moon has Blood Clots* and *The Garden of Solitude* also refer to communal skirmishes directed against the Pandits since the days of Dogra rule. The memory of persecution almost remains a constant refrain in Koul's narrative. She writes,

Having given us the most beautiful place in the world to live in God has evened the score by alternately subjecting us to serfdom and embattlement with the forces of nature on a regular basis. Our history has been under the joint custody of oppressive rulers and an earthly trinity of earthquakes, famines and floods (Koul 18).

Pandita begins his narration with a detailed history of the persecution of the Pandits. He refers to six instances in history when the Pandits either migrated in order to save their lives or was forcibly evicted from the valley in circumstances somewhat similar to the 1990's<sup>33</sup>. Gigoo employs the memories of persecution very evocatively. The protagonist Sridhar says, "If we return, will it be forever this time or to migrate again in some years? One migration after another; there must be an end to this cycle. Let this be the last migration. Let us find new roots elsewhere" (Gigoo 126). There are numerous instances of persecution of the Hindus in various parts of the sub-continent during the medieval ages but the politically expedient use of these memories by equating them with the recent eviction of the community from the valley is very crucial and speaks volumes about the communal nature of the narrative. Gowhar Fazili's review of *Our Moon has Blood Clots* titled as "Our memories come in the way of our histories" states,

the book presents Pandits as politically benign throughout history, while the period post the arrival of Muslims on the scene is spoken of as 'Islamisation', implicitly as though Islam were something essentially vile. It does violence to the community, its intellect and will to presume that they were mostly converted forcibly by the invaders...Such exclusivist reading of history in Kashmir makes for Hindutva-like historiography. Communal historical narratives do persist in the privacy of our homes but any scholarship worth its salt should seek to challenge such naïve accounts of self (Source Kafila blog).<sup>4</sup>

Rahul Pandita's memoir is crucial in understanding the inherent communal bias in the memories of persecution. While he is full of praise for the Hindu rulers of Kashmir like Lalitaditya and Avantivarman, Kashmiri history seems to enter a troubled state only with the advent of Islam in the valley. He devotes a significant portion while describing the ordeals of the Pandits during the Afghan rule while the maltreatment of the Muslims subjects during the Sikhs and Dogra rule is mentioned in a single sentence. In fact the Pandit community got enormous privileges during the Dogra rule since they were the co-religionists of the king and became the oppressors of the Muslim Kashmiris under the tutelage of the Dogra state machinery. The silence about the Sikh and Dogra oppression is very crucial in the context of the relationship between the Pandits and Muslims in Kashmiri society. It is also crucial in the way collective memory resorts to selective appropriation of historical facts and events for record and projection. What is even more crucial is the endorsement of such community centric history/memory by the agents of state authority. Especially if the person endorsing such a communal history is an official like Jagmohan, the controversial Governor of Kashmir during the initial days of armed conflict in Kashmir, then it should be viewed with much skepticism. Having failed to safeguard the Pandit community from the onslaught of the pro-Azaadi militants during the volatile period of 1989-90 which ultimately made them refugees in their homeland, the state representative takes to the politically ambivalent move of recognizing the Pandit version of communal history. Such contradictory moves by state representative speak volumes about the Indian nation state's symbolic patronization and apathy towards the predicament of the Pandit community. It also showcases their antipathy towards the Kashmiri Muslims' fight for self-determination. The patronizing tone of Jagmohan is evident in his description of the Pandits,

Ever since I saw the plight of the Kashmiri pandit community from close quarters in February 1986, I have been pondering over its curious fate. It is a community whose history generates envy at their achievements as well as sorrow at their plight...its long history has been one of triumphs and tragedies—steady and silent triumphs and tumultuous and terrible tragedies. (Jagmohan 497-98)

The discourse of dispossession and persecution of the Pandits at the hands of their religious other makes them convenient target of the Hindu right wing outfits like the RSS and VHP. Unfortunately, these are the only political outfits who voice their anguish and predicament as a persecuted community while the comparatively progressive and secular political

organizations like the Communists and Congress always downplayed the role of religion in any aspect of Indian life interpreted the persecution of the Pandits in a very different manner. Ironically, to them the persecution of the Pandits is a minor issue and burns at the altar of their professed secularism. The fact that the situation in Kashmir represented the exact antithesis of mainland India with a majority Hindu population marginalizing a minority Muslim population is often ignored. Ananya Jahanara Kabir has rightly pointed out in her book, *Territory of Desire: Representing the Valley of Kashmir*:

in the context of south Asia, interlocked subjectivities and histories all too often mean that this re-affirmation of one community is conducted at the expense of designating an “other”. This interlocking is most acutely manifested in Kashmir, where the demographic relationship of “Hindu majority” and “Muslim minority” within postcolonial India stands reversed (Kabir 172).

The communists are severely critiqued by writers like Tej N Dhar and Rahul Pandita. Without mincing words, Dhar writes in *Under the Shadow of Militancy*, “Our Communist friends in New Delhi explain it in purely secular terms. It is no religious war, they say; it is the down trodden rising up against the classes which have been dominating the entire population of the Muslims” (Dhar 97). Pandita points out the petulance of Rajiv Gandhi about meaningless protocol when he arrived at Srinagar during the political and social crisis in Kashmir. When Kashmiri Pandits were threatened out of their homes, politicians were busy with petty politics. Yet, proximity to Hindu right has its seamier side as well. Pandita deals with this aspect in his narration where a group of RSS activists are engaged in hate-mongering among the innocent Pandit youths. As victims of one form of communalism they are being ideologically ingrained into the ruinous communal politics, “We are from the RSS. The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh. We will give direction to your anger,” (Pandita 103). The homeless Pandits demand for Panun Kashmir, which literally means our own Kashmir in Kashmiri, for creating a Pandit homeland within Kashmir by evicting the Muslims residing in those parts of Kashmir, is almost fascist in nature. It is the natural outcome of the Pandits’ dalliance with Hindu right wing parties and organizations.

The Pandit narratives are very crucial since they voice the Pandit version of Kashmir conflict. They portray and record the atrocities perpetrated against the Pandit community which were significantly absent

from the other writings transpiring in the aftermath of the conflict which makes them crucial with respect to politics of representation. Yet, we should be ever weary of the selective appropriation of historical facts and events exposing the subterranean discourse of communalism inherent in them.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The year 1931 is crucial in the context of the history of Kashmir since it marks the onset of Kashmir's struggle for independence from the Dogra regime. While the primary target of the struggle was the Dogra state machinery, there were few instances of attacks against the Pandit community and their property. The Pandit community as the co-religionists of the Dogra ruler was the local representatives of the Dogra state in the valley. But many Pandits were also involved in the struggle against the Dogra state unlike the current situation where the Pandit community is totally alienated in the struggle against the Indian nation-state.

<sup>2</sup>Sanjay Kak's documentary titled *Jashn-e-Azaadi* was the first of its kind and vehemently critiques the atrocities of the Indian military establishment and supports freedom for Kashmir. Prem Nath Bazaz wrote books in favour of an independent Kashmir long before the armed struggle gave voice to Kashmiri nationalist struggle.

<sup>3</sup> There is a controversy regarding the recent Pandit migration from the valley. The Pandits were definitely victimized and terrorized by the insurgents during the initial phase of armed conflict yet there is a theory that the then Governor of Kashmir, Jagmohan induced the Pandits to flee Kashmir valley. Although it seems unlikely that a government representative will initiate the process of mass migration of a particular community from one part of the country to another but it can be definitely said that Jagmohan facilitated their travel from Srinagar to Jammu. In his own accounts of the Kashmir events, *My Frozen Turbulence in Kashmir*, he speaks of his desperation to help the hapless Pandits who were being threatened out of their homes.

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## Gains from Short-term Public Works: A Review of Performance of MGNREGA in Tripura

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### Abstract

*This paper attempts to evaluate the performance of the rural public works programme MGNREGA in Tripura. MGNREGA is not only a basic income guarantee scheme for rural households, particularly during lean agricultural season, it is also a mechanism of income transfer through infrastructure development and promotion of rural markets of production and consumption. Tripura, the third smallest State of India has been consistently a good performer in terms of man-days of employment generated. This paper presents a brief review of the major performance indicators of MGNREGA in Tripura, particularly in terms of employment generation (the primary objective of the Act) and its possible dynamic impact on the basis of secondary data available on government websites and reports. Attempts have also been made to gain some preliminary insights from a pilot survey conducted in 2012 over 48 households in Girania Block in the district of West Tripura.*

**Keywords:** MGNREGA, Tripura, Employment, Multiplier-accelerator Interaction, Agricultural Productivity.

### 1. Introduction

Since independence, the issue of poverty has always been a major concern of the policymakers in India. About 70%<sup>1</sup> of India's population live in rural areas and about 26%<sup>2</sup> of rural population belongs to the BPL category. The incidence of poverty in our country is highest among the

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wage-dependent families (Mazumdar, 2010). The majority of the rural poor in India consists of landless agricultural labourers and small and marginal farmers who are also forced to work as agricultural labourers (Radhakrishna, 2006). Moreover, since India is a vast and diverse country, the outreach of economic growth and many of the mainstream poverty alleviation programmes often fail to reach certain geographical pockets. These regions are generally perceived to be remote and inaccessible due to their topography, poor transport infrastructure, lower levels of urbanization and distances from the state capital and growth centres. The farm dependent rural population in these regions are more likely to be marginalized in the process of national development. Any initiative that benefits these sections of people is a landmark step towards inclusive growth and development. Tripura situated in the far northeast of India is inhabited by a significant section of tribal population. This paper explores the consequences of MGNREGA in Tripura mainly on the basis of secondary data available in official websites and reports; attempts have also been made to gain some preliminary insights from a pilot survey conducted in 2012 over 48 households in Girania Block in the district of West Tripura.

## **2. Rural Public Works in India**

### **2.1 The Background**

Elimination of poverty and attainment of self-reliance were the main objectives of India's Fifth Five Year Plan. The Approach Paper to the Fifth Five Year Plan diagnosed unemployment, under-employment and low resource base particularly in agriculture as the main cause of 'abject poverty' in the country.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently it was realized that the focus of planning should be employment-oriented rather than being production-oriented – as echoed by S. Chakravarty (1987) – “The solution to the problem of rural poverty will require that small farmers must also be given access to land-augmenting innovation along with a program of well-conceived public works.....many of the specific tasks will need to be done on a decentralized basis.”

Public works programmes in various forms have been in practice in many countries across the world with State playing the role of the 'employer of the last resort (ELR)'. Generally, in the form of non-farm employment, they provide a way for helping the poorer classes to tide over their times of difficulty (such as droughts etc.). Many of the labour-intensive poverty alleviation programmes undertaken in post-independent India are of the same nature.

On recommendation of the Bhagwati Committee (1973), the Government of India, has from time to time implemented various self-employment schemes as well as short-term wage-employment programmes in form of labour-intensive rural public work-fares such as: Employment Guarantee Scheme (1972); Food for Work Programme (1977); National Rural Employment Programme (1980); Integrated Rural Development Programme (1980); Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (1983); Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (1989); Employment Assurance Scheme (1993); National Food for Work Programme (2000); Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (2001) and so on. Unfortunately the critical reviews of these programmes suggest that the achievements always fell short of targets due to the reasons such as failure to reach the target-group, little community participation, corruption in handling of funds, low female participation, bureaucratic 'red tapism' etc. Another notable lacuna was that these programmes were not based on 'right to work'- they were just additional employment opportunities provided by the state as and when the resources were available.

## **2.2 Right to Work**

The Constitution of India does not include the right to work under the Fundamental Rights but refers to it under the "directive principles of state policy". Article 39 states that the State should ensure that "the citizens, men and women equally, have the right to an adequate means to livelihood" and that "there is equal pay for equal work for both men and women". Article 41 emphasizes that "the state, shall within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing right to work..." This should be interpreted in conjunction with Article 21 which provides the 'Fundamental Right to life'. In 1978 the Supreme Court of India ruled that 'life' under Article 21 implies not merely 'animal existence', but would include right to live with human dignity and all other aspects which made life 'meaningful, complete and worth living'. In other words, it was felt that recognition of 'right to work' is necessary to ensure protection of life and personal liberty guaranteed by Article 21 of our Constitution.

The first step towards recognizing people's right to work in India was found in the 'Employment Guarantee Scheme' (EGS) launched by the Government of Maharashtra in 1979. Article 3 of Maharashtra's EGS states that "Every adult person in the rural areas in Maharashtra shall have the right to get guaranteed employment for doing unskilled manual work and to

receive wages thereof weekly, or in any case, not later than a fortnight". Numerous studies indicate that EGS had an impressive impact on employment in the state of Maharashtra compared to other anti-poverty programmes in India. Taking cue from Maharashtra's experience, many civil society groups and human rights activists during the late 1980s and early 1990s, advocated for the introduction of a nation-wide legally binding employment guarantee programme.

The Common Minimum Programme of the United Progressive Alliance Government that came to power in 2004 promised to enact a National Employment Guarantee Act for the poor and lower middle-class households in rural areas. Finally the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) was passed by the Parliament on August 25, 2005. NREGA found priority policy attention for the Eleventh Plan Period (2007-2012) under a broader objective of 'Bharat Nirman' aiming for resurgence in rural areas. This flagship programme of the government of India was finally launched in February 2, 2006. It is looked upon as a multifarious strategy for inclusive growth – a mechanism of income transfer through development of rural infrastructure and promoting rural markets of production and consumption.<sup>4</sup>

This demand-driven labour-intensive rural work-fare was renamed as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) on October 2, 2009. It provides legal guarantee for 100 days of employment in every financial year to the adult members of any rural household willing to participate in unskilled manual job at a statutory minimum wage rate. It also maintains that one-third of the stipulated workforce must be women. MGNREGA aims at generation of productive assets, empowerment of rural women, reduction of rural-urban migration, fostering social equity and environmental protection among others. It also focuses on infusing transparency and accountability in governance through people's participation in planning and social audit.<sup>5</sup> The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) play the pivotal role in planning, monitoring and the implementation of MGNREGA.

Ever since its implementation, MGNREGA has become a subject of research for a number of scholars. It also appears from the literatures that wherever implemented successfully, the scheme has made a difference in the lives of the beneficiaries (Khera 2009; Ravi 2009; Dutta 2012). But most of the studies are carried out over the major states of the country and

the north eastern states comprising a significant proportion of tribal population and backward classes have been paid little attention to despite performing consistently under the scheme. Nonetheless, the available literatures on northeast subscribe to similar views (Panda, Dutta and Prusty 2009; Rahman and Sheereen 2013; Borah and Bordoloi 2014). Despite wide variation in the performance levels across the districts of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram, the Act, if implemented efficiently, has been found to make significant positive impact on the lives of the beneficiaries: it led to the improvement of rural physical infrastructure, social and economic empowerment of the vulnerable section particularly the women, creation of supplementary income, enhancement of food security, improvement in standard of living including health status of the women, reduction in rural-urban migration and even school drop-out cases. The difficult terrain and topography of the land in this part of the country has been identified as one of the major constraints towards effective implementation of the Act besides the factors such as lack of awareness and perception about the Act, misuse of funds, delay in payments, unavailability of worksite facilities, irregular flow of funds, etc.

### **2.3 A Brief National Overview of the Performance of MGNREGA**

The MGNREGA has potential of eliminating poverty in the long run and broad-base the growth process via multiplier-accelerator interaction (Shah 2009). The additional purchasing power in the rural sector would stimulate investment by generating additional consumption demand. This however requires convergence of MGNREGA with other developmental programmes for rural livelihoods so that the wage employment programme in effect becomes a source of sustainable livelihoods by facilitating self-employment. In other words, the assets to be created shall be productive so as to generate indirect employment opportunities in turn. Thus, the sustenance of the success of MGNREGA in long run largely depends on the magnitude of the scheme's multiplier effects.

Items		Financial Year							
		2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Person-days generated(%)	SC	25	27	29	30	31	22	22	23
	ST	36	29	25	21	21	18	18	17
	Women	40	43	48	48	48	47	53	53
Person-days per household		43	42	48	54	47	42	46	44
Budget outlay (in Rs. crores)		11300	12000	30000	39100	40100	40000	33000	33000
Funds spent(percentage of total available fund)		73	82	73	76	73	78	86	87

Source: Report to the People, 2011-12, [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

It can be observed from Table-1 that during the initial years a significant proportion of employment has been generated for the vulnerable groups though the trend declined after 2010-11; the person-days generated per household increased till 2009-10 but fell thereafter. Percentage of available funds spent however has shown a considerable increase in FY 2012-13 yet the budget allocation for the programme remains unchanged for the FY 2013-14. Kumaraswamy (2012) and other critics of the MGNREGA however, point out that there is no evidence to support employment multiplier effect due to the scheme; instead of being a source for generating additional income during the lean season for farmers and labourers in rural areas, the scheme has rather encouraged many to leave their traditional jobs to work under the Act. Hence net increase in employment has not been remarkable and the levels of consumption have not altered for the better (Jagannathan 2012).

### 3. The State of Tripura

Tripura, the third smallest state of India is situated in north eastern part of the country and is surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides. The state shares its eastern border with Assam and Meghalaya. Geographically isolated from the rest of the mainland (Roy 2010), Tripura was once a princely state which became a part of independent India on October 15, 1949 (as a group C category state). It was given the status of a Union Territory in 1963 and was recognized as a state only in 1972.<sup>6</sup> Its geographical isolation, demographic changes, socio-economic backwardness and the once rampant insurgency-

can be attributed to the partition of British India.

The Partition of Bengal in 1947 had led to heavy influx of impoverished Bengalee refugees into the essentially tribal society of Tripura. It also isolated the state from the rest of India leaving the Siliguri corridor as the only route to access the states in the rest of the country. The rail-heads towards the north, south and west were rendered useless as they fell into East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) after the Partition; with no water transport system and only recent rail and road connectivity by the metre gauge and NH-44, the state has suffered economically due to its isolation.<sup>7</sup> Tripura is rich in forest resources, with almost 60% of the land covered by forests. It is also the second largest producer of natural rubber in the country. The state has natural gas reserves which are largely unexploited as is the case with the forest resources and rubber plantations.<sup>8</sup> Only 27% of the total state area is available for cultivation with the average land-holding size of only 0.97 hectare (Roy 2010). The state had four districts viz. West Tripura, North Tripura, South Tripura and Dhalai. For the purpose of further administrative decentralisation, 4 new districts viz. Unokoti, Khowai, Sipahijala and Gomati were created with effect from January 2012 taking the total number of districts to eight. Himanshu (2005) observed that from 1987-88 to 1999-2000, the tribal population was excluded from the benefits of growth and development experienced by the other social groups in the state (including the Scheduled Castes). According to Census 2001, the average literacy rate in Tripura was 73.66%, well above the national average of 65.38%.<sup>9</sup> It rose to 87.75% as compared to the national average of 74.04% as per Census 2011. The birth rate, death rate and infant mortality rate in Tripura is lower compared to the national average (vide Table-2); it has also scored better in terms of different development indices in comparison to the national scenario –but parts of the state suffer from acute poverty and high incidence of unemployment. The process of capital formation has been slow and the per capita income is less than all India (which was only 75% of the national average in 1980-81 but steadily rose to 93.71% by 2006-07).<sup>10</sup> For a state grappling with poor infrastructure the immediate need was to construct roads, provide clean water, electricity and better housing facilities. This need was accommodated by the introduction of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in the state.

Indicators	Tripura	India
Per capita Income at current prices in 2011-12(in Rs.)	50750	61564
Percentage of total Population living below Poverty Line (using Tendulkar Methodology)	14.05	21.92
Rural Population(as percentage of total population)	73.83	68.85
Percentage of small and marginal operational holdings in Agriculture (Agriculture Census 2005-06)	96	83
Literacy Rate(in percentage)	87.75	74.04
Female Literacy Rate(in percentage)	82.73	64.64
Crude Birth Rate (per '000)	14.3	21.8
Crude Death Rate (per '000)	5.0	7.1
Infant Mortality Rate	29	44
Health Index(as in 2006)	0.643	0.577
Education Index(as in 2006)	0.611	0.506
Human Development Index(2006)	0.663	0.605
Gender Development Index(2006)	0.626	0.590

Source: Census 2011, Planning Commission of India, July, 3013, Agriculture Census 2011-12

#### 4. Gains from MGNREGA in Tripura:

##### 4.1. Employment generation and inclusions

In its first phase of implementation in February 2006, the scheme was introduced in the Dhalai district of Tripura as a part of the 200 most backward districts in the country. By 2008, the scheme was gradually extended to other districts in the state (Roy 2010). The work was mainly related to rural connectivity, water conservation, land development, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, irrigation and maintenance of the assets created under the Act.<sup>11</sup> In the very first year, within six months of its implementation in Dhalai (from February 2006 to August 2006), 90 per cent of families in the district got themselves registered under the Act and around 46 days of employment was provided to each registered job card holder.<sup>12</sup> In 2006-07, Tripura generated highest person-days of employment per household among all states in the country and a remarkable women participation (75% of total man-days) too which was described as “an unprecedented achievement in the history of social security in India” (Dreze & Oldiges 2007).

Table-3 below shows the performance of the MGNREGA in Tripura from 2006-07 to 2013-14 in terms of employment generated.

Year	Total Number of		Percentage of Household provided employment	Employment Generated				
	Household demanded employment	Household provided employment		Total Man-days (in lakhs)	Average Man-days per Household	SC (%)	ST (%)	Women (%)
2006-07	74800	74335	99.38	50.13	67	16	62	75
2007-08	425299	423724	99.63	181.05	43	21	42	45
2008-09	549145	549022	99.98	351.12	64	23	45	51
2009-10	577540	576487	99.82	460.23	80	18	41	41
2010-11	557413	557055	99.94	374.51	67	18	43	39
2011-12	567129	566793	99.94	490.12	86	18	42	39
2012-13	597430	596530	99.85	518.51	87	18	43	41
2013-14	604943	597767	98.81	521.60	88	17	43	47

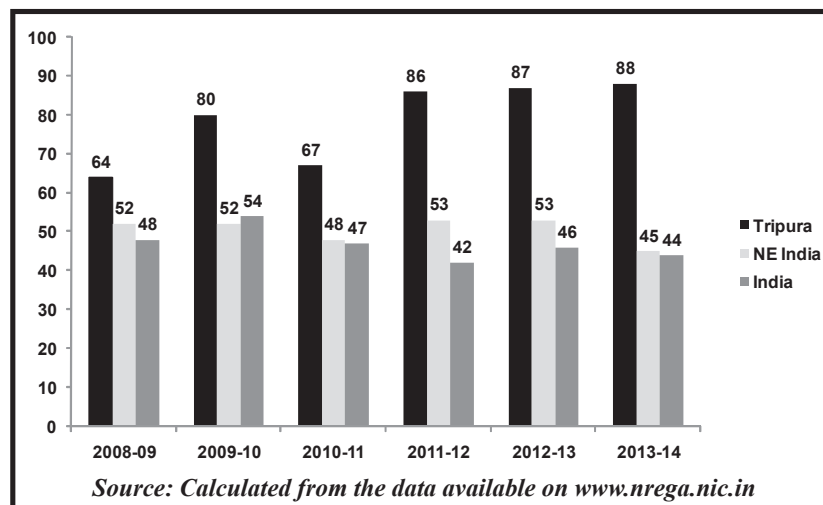
Source: Calculated from the data provided on [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Table-3 clearly indicates that the schemes under MGNREGA have been successful in providing employment to the marginalized communities like the SCs and STs as about 60% of total man-days generated accrued to this group. Women also form an important part of the work force and the proportion of willing non-participants has been negligible. Person-days of employment generated per household in 2012-13 and 2013-14 have been close to the target of 100 man-days per household.

Graph 1 shows that Tripura has always remained quite above the national level with regard to man-days generated per household. It can also be noted that during the last three financial years Tripura has more or less maintained the average man-days per household while Northeast India as a whole experienced a declining trend – poor performance by Assam, Manipur and Nagaland being the major factors.

According to the MIS report for the FY 2013-14, Tripura recorded the highest number of average person-days generated per household (88 days) in the country which is way above that in Rajasthan (49 days), Andhra Pradesh (48 days), Maharashtra (44days) and Himachal Pradesh (52 days) – the states that previously had a good performance record in MGNREGA.

Graph 1: Average Man-days in Tripura, North-East India and India



Moreover, the data also indicate that among the north eastern states, Tripura was neck to neck with Mizoram who topped the list in 2012-13 with regard to average person-days generated per household, leaving others way behind although in respect of total number of person-days generated Tripura is far ahead of others followed by Assam. During the last fiscal year (2013-14) however Tripura has topped the list with an average employment of 88 man-days per household.

A comparative study of average employment under MGNREGA for all north eastern states over the period from 2008-09 to 2013-14 shows upward trend only for Tripura, Sikkim and Meghalaya. For all the five remaining states a declining trend is observed. It is clear from Table 3 that the percentage of man-days generated through participation of SCs in Tripura remained the same from 2009-10 to 2012-13, only to fall marginally in 2013-14, though has always been less compared to the national level (vide Table 1). More or less a similar trend could be observed for the STs in Tripura which always remained higher than the national level. This trend however is not unlikely in view of the fact that about 57% of rural population in Tripura belongs to the socially marginalised categories.<sup>13</sup>

Year	Non SC-ST households	ST households	SC households
2011-12	82	92	84
2012-13	82	94	84
2013-14	84	94	85

Source: Calculated from data available on [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

Nevertheless, given the category-wise share of rural population in the state vis-a-vis average employment of the respective categories indicate that the Act has been able to reach out to the socially marginalised section in this state (vide Table 4). Moreover, the data provided in the MIS reports indicate that participation of these groups under the Scheme have improved over the years though a sharp decline in employment under the Act in general, was experienced in FY 2010-11 by most of the states including Tripura.

Another important feature of the Act is the mandate of 33% female labourer in the workforce. With the creation of jobs in the form of construction of roads, water conservation and so on, women could find work in their villages and avoid walking large distances. For the tribal women in the state particularly, it has become a major source of livelihood; with agriculture being dominated by men, women had few opportunities to earn before the implementation of the MGNREGA (Talukdar, 2008). Participation of women in Tripura has improved significantly after 2012-13 (Table 3) though has always been less than the national average of 53% except in FY 2006-07 (Table 1).

According to The Economic Survey 2012, Tripura is the only state to enjoy increased allocation by the Centre for the fiscal year 2012-13 as Rs.1146 crores (Rs.104 crores higher than 2011-12) was allotted to the state.

## 4.2 Poverty Alleviation

The term poverty is used to encapsulate the simultaneous occurrence of malnutrition or under-nutrition, low income levels, poor access to health facilities, illiteracy, and improper housing conditions among other inadequacies. On the basis of the NSS data in 1999-2000, the BPL population in Tripura was estimated to be 34.44% - the sixth highest among all the states and Union Territories in the country.<sup>14</sup> Reports suggest that the poverty levels of the Scheduled Tribes were almost twice that of the other social groups (Himanshu, 2005). According to the Department of Rural Development, STs and SCs accounted for 55% of the BPL families in rural areas in 2007. A majority of the BPL families are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood and agricultural wage labour is the main source of income for 44% or approximately 170,000 families.<sup>15</sup> With 83%<sup>16</sup> (as per Census 2001) of the population living in the rural areas addressing the concerns of the rural population becomes one of the primary concerns of the state government. Here arise the question of an alternative and viable employment option for the majority of those living in rural Tripura.

According to the Planning Commission of India the poverty ratio in rural Tripura was 22% as measured in the year 2004-05.<sup>17</sup> In this official estimates of the incidence of poverty released by the Planning Commission of India the poverty line as well as measures of poverty and inequality for all the north eastern states including Tripura were not calculated separately. This data was arrived at based on the head count ratio of Assam for the Uniform Recall Period (URP) used for consumption distribution data of National Sample Survey in its 61<sup>st</sup> Round Report in 2004-05. According to the state report however, 55%<sup>18</sup> of the population were below the poverty line in the rural areas in 2002.

One of the most important impacts that the MGNREGA has had is on the level of poverty in the state. For the five year period from 2004-05 to 2009-10, 52.5 million people in the country progressed to income levels above the poverty line. As Jagannathan (2012) notes, this figure is “uncannily” close to the 52.53 million households that were provided employment through the MGNREGA in 2009-10. It was in these five years that Tripura recorded a fall in poverty of over 15% (Jagannathan, 2012). According to the press note (dated March 19, 2012) released by Planning Commission of India, the poverty in Tripura dipped by almost 25% - from 44.5% in 2004-05 to 19.8% in 2009-2010 when calculated as per Tendulkar

Method using implicit price indices (Fisher price index).

It must be mentioned here that MGNREGA has possibly been a major factor though not the sole reason of decline in the poverty ratio in the state. The official data indicates that ever since its inception, more than 90% of the families in the respective districts of Tripura get to work under the scheme for considerable number of days every year: out of 6 lakhs rural households 5.7 lakhs, i.e. nearly 95% of the rural households, were covered under the Act by 2009-10 each enjoying the provision of additional income for 80 days on an average (vide Table 3) during this year.

#### **4.3 Impact of assets creation under MGNREGA**

Rural Public Works Programmes (RPWPs) are primarily conditional cash transfer programmes that provide work and wages to the unskilled labourers for creating rural infrastructure. Success of the RPWPs therefore largely depends on the creation of durable productive assets so as to derive dynamic gains and care should be taken not to build the roads that would be 'washed away with the first rain' (Basu, 1981). In other words choice of projects and planning should take care of fulfilling the objectives of productivity-enhancement as well as environmental protection of the economy.

Since its inception in Tripura the Scheme has diversified to include flood control measures, water conservation and harvesting, drought proofing, micro irrigation, land development and allied activities (Roy, 2010). Table-5 indicates that improving rural connectivity was of highest importance initially though works related to water conservation drew almost equal attention. The works related to flood control and land development also increased significantly from 2010-11 onwards; schemes to promote irrigation facilities are also on the rise gradually.

Year	Water conservation and harvesting; Drought proofing; Renovation of traditional water bodies	Flood control and Protection; Land development	Micro-irrigation and other irrigation facilities	Rural connectivity; Projects taken up by MoRD; Bharat Nirman Rajiv Gandhi Sewakendra Scheme
2008-09	25.2	23.5	16.9	34.4
2009-10	37.8	22.7	8.8	30.7
2010-11	31	24.2	9.5	35.4
2011-12	33.3	27.3	9.7	29.7
2012-13	27.4	34.6	9.9	28.2
2013-14	27.1	37.1	10.6	25.2

Source: calculated from the data in [www.nrega.nic.in](http://www.nrega.nic.in)

The data provided by the MGNREGA website indicate that the rate of work completion has been quite impressive; over a period of 5 years (i.e. FY 2009-10 to FY 2013-14), the average rate of completion of work in Tripura has been 83.9%. The rate of work-completion in the state was highest in 2010-11– more than 99% of works undertaken has been completed. Rate of work completion however started to decline thereafter and recorded the worst ever performance (38%) in 2013-14 which is dichotomous as the state generated highest number of man-days (88days) in the country in this year. Data also reveals that a huge number of projects that have been approved remain shelved which calls for more thoughtful planning and capacity building initiatives on part of the Gram Panchayats.

Reports<sup>19</sup> indicate that convergence of the activities related to agriculture under the MGNREGA in conjunction with specific policy implementations (e.g. Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, 2007) have enhanced agricultural productivity in the state. More than 10 hectares of barren land has been made cultivable in Lankamura Gram Panchayat under West Tripura District through land levelling efforts. Renovation of water bodies has given a much needed boost to the pisciculture in the state. Land reclamation and micro irrigation have benefitted agriculture (Roy, 2010). Digging of Contour Trenches and ditches along the hillside with the help of unskilled labourers increased the productivity of Jhum cultivation practised by the tribals. Tea plantation has also been undertaken under the Scheme on tilla lands owned by the villagers.

#### 4.4 A Brief Summary of the findings from a Pilot survey

A pilot survey conducted in March, 2012 on 48 households from Girania Bloc in the district of West Tripura, revealed that the villagers were indeed enthusiastic about working under MGNREGA. This however did not seem to cause a distortion in the labour market (as is often alleged by the critics of the Act) as the market wage rates of both agricultural and non-agriculture labourer in Girania were found to be greater than the MGNREGA wage rate. With male members mostly opting for non-NREGA works, women got the opportunity to participate in the programme. Only 1 out of 48 households belonged to General category – the remaining households were from SC, ST and other backward classes. Participation rate of women found to be more than double compared to men. 22 out of 51 female workers said that they would otherwise have not worked at all had there been no NREGA. When asked about the benefits they derived from the Programme, quite a few female workers mentioned of sending their children for private tuitions apart from buying durable goods such as almirah, chairs etc. even vehicles e.g. bicycles. For a few women this scheme proved to be particularly useful and if there were no NREGS work they had to walk down to forest for collecting wood which they would sell in the local market for a meagre earning. Some women however said that they would not have worked elsewhere had there been no MGNREGA work in their village. It has also made it easier for the children to attend at the Anganwadi centres.

Two non-participant households found withdrawn from the Programme during the survey year as they moved on to self-employment (poultry farming) with the help of the additional income earned during previous years. This corroborates the contention regarding MGNREGA's potential of eliminating poverty in the long run through multiplier-accelerator synergy – a dynamic impact of the wage-employment programme to promote self employment. Construction of village roads has resulted in greater mobility of the villagers who are mostly daily wage earners living below the poverty line and virtually have had no assured or sustainable source of income before introduction of the Act, more so during the rainy season; it was interesting to find out that the state initiated convergence of MGNREGA with other schemes in agriculture and horticulture which would in effect enhance agricultural productivity. The Scheme also facilitated marketing of agricultural and forest produce, fish, tea leaves etc. and thus enhanced self-reliance among the villagers.

Another laudable achievement of this scheme is the payment of wages to the labourers through either banks or post offices preventing the involvement of middlemen which ensured the spread of the postal and banking network into the interiors of rural India (Roy 2010), promoting financial inclusion thereof. No complaint was received about irregularities in wage payment or delayed payments. Social audits were in place but there has been no effort to create awareness among people about their 'right to work'. The villagers put forward their requisite demand for work-projects in the 'gramsabha' after being informed about the scheme and available funds. Hence the Programme could be thought as more of supply-determined (aimed at utilizing the fund) than of 'demand-driven'. It cannot be claimed that there has not been any corruption in the process; but by and large this scheme has reached the poor and the vulnerable section of the society. Incidence of migration was found to be negligible. The villages have become more reliant with more and more women participating in generating income for the family and making decisions at home although it still remains a matter of research whether it has empowered the women in the true sense.

### **5. Concluding Remarks**

In general it can be said that the NREGA has had manifold tangible and intangible impacts on the participants. Nevertheless it should be kept in mind that extent of success of the wage-employment programmes also depends on various region-specific factors. There has been a visible improvement in rural employment generation under the Act in Tripura over the years particularly for the marginalised class though much remains to be achieved with respect to women's participation as compared to Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. Compared to West Bengal, a state with socio-cultural similarity on the other hand, Tripura scored remarkable success in implementing the scheme in terms of the major performance indicators.

Summary of observations from a pilot survey conducted in March, 2012 on 48 households in Girania Bloc in the district of West Tripura, indicate that working under MGNREGA provided villagers, particularly women, opportunities to get employment and increase earning without distorting the labour market. Incidences of mothers spending the additional income over private tuitions for children, participants of previous years discontinuing participation in the programme and shifting to self-employment activities with the help of the additional income earned during previous years etc., are

reflective of the potential of the Act to create further employment opportunities and eliminate poverty in the long run. Enhanced agricultural productivity and environmental benefits through creation of sustainable assets is also an important objective of the Act. To assess the magnitude of such dynamic gains periodic time-series monitoring of the projects is required – single point surveys would fail to serve the purpose.

Ever since its inception in the year 2006, MGNREGA has been the largest public works programme in the world in terms of the number of households covered. It has been spread over 646 districts and more than 6500 blocks all across the country. The new Union Government of India that took to office in May, 2014, has however decided to confine the Programme in the 200 most backward districts of the country; the state governments have been accordingly asked to identify the poorest blocks in their respective states. This has given rise to a great controversy among the economists. From the national perspective, the overall performance of the Act does call for reforming it. But care should be taken that people's 'right to work' does not get diluted. This would require a careful study of the factors contributing to the success as well as failures of the Programme. For example, a flexible wage-material ratio could actually enable the Act to provide more work under certain conditions: semi-skilled projects using machineries does widen the scope of work in the hilly areas.

It may be concluded that in Tripura the Programme has been able to deliver. The Act has certainly reduced the intensity of poverty among the beneficiaries in the state through its direct impact i.e. person-days generated. Nevertheless capacity building of the Gram Panchayats are essential for proper planning, designing and effective implementation of projects under the Programme so that it can create productive and durable assets to generate other employment avenues and eliminate poverty in the long run. Only then the demand for work under the Act will reduce over time otherwise this workfare will remain as a permanent drain on the public exchequer.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> *Business Standard*, July 15, 2011.
- <sup>2</sup> Press Note released by Planning Commission on *India Poverty Estimates, 2011-12*, July 2013.
- <sup>3</sup> *Rural Poverty in India*, Booklet no. 378, Agricultural & Rural Development: ARDS-1.
- <sup>4</sup> *NREGA Operational Guidelines 2005*.
- <sup>5</sup> *MGNREGA Report to the People, 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb.2006 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Feb.2010*.
- <sup>6</sup> *Economic Review of Tripura 2010–11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department.
- <sup>7</sup> *Economic Review of Tripura 2010–11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>13</sup> According to Census Report 2011, the proportion of ST and SC in rural Tripura are 41 and 16.1 percent respectively.
- <sup>14</sup> Tripurainfo dated December 03, 2013.
- <sup>15</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup> *Economic review of Tripura 2010–11*, Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Planning (Statistics) Department.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>18</sup> “Tripura: Poverty in Rural Areas”, Tripura.info.
- <sup>19</sup> *Tripura towards Prosperity: Government of Tripura, Department of Agriculture, 2011*.

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## *Book Reviews*

**M.O. Grenby, *Children's Literature (Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literature)*, Second Edition, Edinburgh University Press, 2014. Pp. 264. ISBN 978 0 7486 4902 0, Price Rs. 1,840.79.**

The mention of children immediately carries with it certain expectations. One such expectation is that we are dealing with a topic that is not to be taken as seriously as more 'mature' musings regarding the human experience. In short, anything related to the child is easily dismissed as being simple or unchallenging. Recently however, this notion has been contested and the recent discourses regarding children and their place in society have shown that issues concerning children are anything but a straightforward dialogue. Looking at the sweeping popularity of books like the *Harry Potter* series by J. K. Rowling or the *Narnia* series by C.S. Lewis or the novels of J. R. R. Tolkien relating to the fantasy realm of 'Middle-Earth', we are confronted by a phenomenon that has swept the imagination of not merely children but adults alike. To dismiss literature for children as merely a simplistic endeavour would risk simplifying a force that can spawn a cultural phenomenon. The Hollywood rendition of the Marvel Comics and their hotly anticipated movie releases also bear testimony to this power to capture the cultural imagination and societies' interest with the fantastical highlighting the alluring impact that this literature has over its captive audience.

M.O. Grenby has written extensively on the topic of children's literature publishing many books and articles relating to children's literature. This book is the second edition of *Children's Literature (Edinburgh Critical Guides to Literature)* which is reflective of his expertise in this particular field. As Grenby himself admits, the book's main aim is to 'deepen understanding of individual children's books, and of children's literature as a whole'. Given the misconceptions that have persisted regarding this subject, it becomes necessary to trace the origins of children's literature. This the book helps to showcase the evolution that this genre has experienced through the years. This becomes especially insightful as it focuses on the changing approaches employed in relation to the education of a child. What is a child and what's best for him/her? The ideas that have been imposed on children therefore become ideological positions. The literature they are exposed to then becomes a powerful means of ideological identification.

Children's stories attempt to teach important and valuable lessons about the world around them. It is no surprise then that fables formed one of the earliest forms of children's literature and Grenby showcases the allegorical nature of these tales and their ability to be easily relatable to children owing to their engaging characters. Through the ages, different fables have been constantly reworked in order to 'suit changing cultural and political values' and this medium of instruction therefore has served as a vehicle for this ideological exchange.

When addressing the child, various literary models have been employed to entertain as well as teach the child. Poetry is one such medium that had been widely used in the pre-modern culture. But it is to be noted that children's poetry is not a static genre. It has changed owing to the changes in the conceptions regarding the child and childhood. Peter Hunt, a renowned critic of children's literature, critically comments that there is no such thing as a continuity regarding the idea of a child as each generation differs dramatically from the other. Though his argument is premised on the idea that childhood now is different from childhood in earlier times, this assertion, however, has generated indignation from many other critics. Seeing how things are inter-related and follow from some historical background, dismissing the contributions of the past is likely to miss the bridge that helps to link the present to the past.

Didacticism has been a key element in children's literature and its representation has been found in the Moral Tales and Problem Novels. This genre however began to exhibit changes in the way the stories were presented to the child. The morality that was very directly expressed began to wane and a more subtle approach was evolved. Grenby notes this changing trend by underlining the fact that there was the belief that lessons ought to be 'intuited rather than imposed.' This approach however is not free from faults as it raises questions of what the 'intuition' may lead to. This appeal is essentially prompted by the idea that there exists some universally accepted response to life situations though the very notion of the universal raises issues in a postmodern world that has progressively privileged the celebration of the particular over the universal.

To further highlight the continuity found in the genre of children's literature, we look at some of the thematic elements used during earlier periods which have been successfully employed in modern day children's literature. The *Harry Potter* series is one such example of a book that has

used the model of the school story to great success. The thematic elements found in the genre of the School Story focuses on the central theme which is 'the balance between submission and defiance, authority and autonomy.' The power politics that exist within a school setup become an interesting area of discourse raising questions of identity and the child's place in social institutions and structures.

When we speak of institutions, one of the fundamental institutions in societies is the family unit. It is no surprise then that the genre of 'The Family Story' found in children's literature tries to tackle with the many intricacies involved within a family setup. It may portray disorder or dysfunction but in the end the focus is generally on the reconstruction of the family unit. The importance of this institution in society cannot be understated and its portrayal in children's literature attempts to emphasise this point to the young readers.

The quest for identity and purpose are fundamental objectives of the human experience. But why should this quest be confined only to the adult? Children are as much in need to find their footing in the world and so Fantasy affords this platform for their quest for identity and purpose. Fantasies often involve alternate realities bound by certain rules but the main element found in the fantasy genre is according to Grenby 'the process of self-discovery and questions of identity remaining fixed despite external change.' Closely related to the Fantasy genre of children's literature is the Adventure Story genre. The politics of identity and power once again become key elements in this genre as it highlights the desire of the children to be of consequence while at the same time there is yearning for protection and supervision. This genre provides a fantasy of empowerment for children according to Grenby as it describes a heroism which has the potentialities to make their real-life powerlessness rather appealing.

Another misconception that exists when reading children's literature is the simplification of the genre in terms of Illustrations and Picture books. Grenby points out that the concept of a book with pictures does not necessarily make the reading process easier. In fact it makes different demands of readers and this in turn, according to Grenby, 'offers different rewards.' The relationship between the images and the words may either be complementary or stand in opposition to one another. The possibility of physical and intellectual interaction with images that this genre affords its readers complements the reading experience so that image and text 'works to intensify and expand the other.'

The book admits to its limitations as it cannot give a complete account of children's literature as that would be too vast an endeavour to take up within the limit of the current book. The texts that are primarily focused are books from Britain and North America. Though the author admits that books from other world literatures were not included because of the brevity of the book, perhaps it be of greater significance a further edition of the book can include within its ambit the European and Asian literatures which would help immensely in the universal discourse of children's literature. Considering the fact that Grenby is an experienced critic of children's literature, his critical analysis of the literature for children in these other world literatures will perhaps reveal interesting insights into this genre. Despite this shortcoming, the book provides ample resources for an introduction to the study of children's literature and its notes and references offer us useful pathways by which readers may take in order to pursue and further explore this literary genre for a more in-depth and critical enquiry.

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**Colin Leys, *Market-Driven Politics: Neo-Liberal Democracy and Public Interest*, Verso, London, 2003. Pp. 280. ISBN: 1859844979 Price \$ 14.64 (paperback)**

Ever since the term globalisation was first used to make sense of large scale changes primarily in economic domain, scholars have debated its meaning and consequences. As the term became a buzzword, it served to crystallise the debate regarding its impact on a nation's political, cultural and social spheres. As globalisation paves the way for market to play a decisive role in economic domain, both proponents and opponents of globalisation are equally vocal and up against each other in counting the merits and demerits of market in restructuring the present world order. In that context, the book provides a stimulating and well researched account of the sweeping changes that took place in British politics from 1975-2000 under the impact of neo-liberal policies. Neo-liberal policies were first embraced by Mrs Margaret

Thatcher with her famous slogan ‘there is no alternative’ (TINA). Later, same was endorsed by the so called ‘New Labour’ in a subtle way to be in the electoral fray. The process culminated in restructuring state institutions within the parameter of global economy and in erosion of non-market domain with disastrous consequences for social democracy.

The book is a searching analysis of the ways global market forces operate to bring desired structural changes in economy and how that results in narrowing the scope of democratic politics in nations to the detriment of public interest. Neo-liberal democracy which is an oft repeated but little understood political notion, gets a comprehensive treatment in the book. This is an empirical work backed by detailed case studies of commodification of two fundamentally important spheres of public life in Britain- the National health and television broadcasting services. Though the book exclusively draws on British politics, the experience can easily be contextualised in case of any nation to understand the long term impact of market economy on national politics. Very few studies have examined with such precision the extent to which politics and policies of a country is conditioned and even determined by global economic forces. The book offers an incisive account of invasion of public spheres by market and demonstrates how the incursion was assisted by ruling regimes in Britain. The work throws a challenge to those protagonists of the ‘new wave’ within the labour party who supported the neo-liberal reforms under the garb of ‘third way orientation’.

The book is divided into seven chapters; each chapter revealing a new dimension of market driven politics. Introduction (Chapter 1) provides a brief sketch of the work. The readers are introduced to the central argument of the book i.e. all policies everywhere are now tailor-made to suit market sentiment and the regulatory demands of TNCs. The profound statement of the author that *politics everywhere are now market driven (p1)* provides an outline of the content of the book. How the present phase of global economy by its sheer scale of spatial expands, wider choice of locations for capital investment and omnipresence of TNCs is impacting the states is what the author has explored in the chapter. Set in the context of British politics, this section demonstrates how state institutions in Britain have gradually remodelled its internal operation to serve business interests without exposing the Government to political pressure either from the electorate or from the anti-globalisation forces.

Chapter 2 is a narrative of the expansion of global economy in post Bretton Woods era. How the present phase of global economy came into being, how the market forces operate, who the chief actors in it are and how the forces tend to determine national policies of states and in that process how those forces shape and reshape social structures and relations in nations are certain issues which have been addressed by the author in this chapter. Post -Bretton Woods phase is marked by certain distinct features which place it in an altogether different plane in the history of global economic expansion. The author has analysed how trans-border capital mobility- a distinguishing feature of capitalist expansion has led to 'the political dimension of shift of power from voters to capital (P.6). The chapter offers a powerful insight to the forces that are shaping the world economy and provide a prelude to the next chapters in which readers are exposed to the changing dimension of international political economy and simultaneous transformation in domestic arena attuning to the demand of market.

The flashpoint of the next two chapters is the gradual shift of power from state to market. How the public domain in Britain was under siege and pushed open for private openings day by day, week by week in a span of twenty five years, forms the core of these chapters. The chapters demonstrate how a small opening inexorably leads to greater opportunities for private interests to make deeper inroads to society.

In Chapter 3 the author has explored the evolving relationship between the state and politics in Britain during 1975 -2000. The chapter is a brilliant exposition of the author's observation on the deep impact of global market forces on British politics, society, culture, state, state institutions, political parties and other participants in politics. The chapter unravels the extent of transformation of these institutions within the neo-liberal parameter. In a non-judgemental way the author has unfolded the subordination of national policies to the demands of mores of market. In this chapter, Colin Leys has analysed in detail the ways the political institutions in Britain have initiated, adapted and adjusted policies to the requirement of the global economy. The analysis of national policies framed in Britain during the period reflects the underlying succinct changes in socio-political and economic structures.

In Chapter 4 the author has explored the core theme of the book i.e. the fall out of marketisation on society. It narrates how market completes its invasion by initiating and accelerating the commodification of public services. It is a process which aims at converting non- commodified services

to commodities leading to the pernicious consequences of displacing social democratic values. It is a telling account of how commercial interests lobby to secure the supports of the leaders of major political parties to have a bigger take on non-market domain. Non-market domain primarily caters to the needs of mass and thereby becomes the target of commodification because of its huge commercial potentials and revenue returns. Such sectors are seen as the last barrier to marketisation.

Using this framework the author, has explored in Chapters 5 and 6 the social ramification of capitalist competitions in non-market domain in Britain. Two sectors British broadcasting (BBC) and National Health Care Service (NHS) were selected by the author as case studies to drive home his points. The chapters mirror the dangers inherent in increasing commodification of public spheres and unravel the process through which the television and health care in Britain became a field of capital accumulation. Both BBC (a free to air service) and NHS –a public utility service offered excellent services to people at minimal costs. The chapters recount how in a gradual and incremental manner, these two sectors were subjected to de-regulation and the re-regulation by the state in a span of twenty five years to fulfil the demand of market. Committees were established, policies were drafted to give a shape to the intended transition. Neither the public nor the parliament was ever told in detail what was intended through the policies. The whole project of privatisation was thus kept out of public radar. Though the transition was orchestrated by the non-state regulatory agencies, it had the tacit or explicit permission of the state. The author has mentioned that the process was greatly assisted by various governments in Britain. The chapter is a powerful interrogation of the ways the successive Governments in Britain have worked for creating space for penetration and subsequent proliferation of market in every spheres of life. It did not make any differences whether the governments were of Tories or of the Labour. While analysing the transition of BBC television network services, the author lamented that the approaches of the authority has changed the ethics of broadcasting. The earlier approach of what ought to be transmitted to the society for larger good was replaced by ‘What could be sold to public and how could be sold has for more revenues’ (p42). The fear was expressed by the author that with the proliferation of private channels, the service is less likely to remain a medium of delivering collective good rather it will turn into a commodity to be individually consumed. Going through the chapter, anyone could relate to somewhat similar experience in

our country. It reminds us how viewing television has changed from free to air service (Doordarshan) to cable network and latest to pay channels (DTH) system and how purchasing set top box was made compulsory in metro cities, thereby laying the foundation of the demise of free to air services.

NHS was a big challenge to the neo-liberal project. Health care sector was not only the biggest source of employment in Britain; it was regarded as an elaborate and comprehensive health care system in the world, being financed out of general taxation. Such a sector with an array of services like medicines, equipments, machines, human resources and other auxiliary medical supplies offered a major spheres of capital accumulations from which capital was excluded. The chapter unfolds the ways the privatisation was pushed incrementally in this sector. Starting with Thatcher's small step of introducing private health insurance, the sector eventually turned out to be a wholesome privatisation project. First target was the ancillary services like cleaning, catering, pathology tests which were followed by the appointments of new set of managers to supplant the doctors' decision making power and increase the power of private hands. The final blow came with 'outsourcing' essential services, budget cut, reduction in workforce and removal of dental care from public sector domain. At each stage the corporate interest was better served by shortening the interval of next reform. Thus 'health care' became a commodity to be sold under the new management system to be bought by the patients, at times paying for unnecessary tests which are offered as a package and requirement for treatment. The statement of the author that such language of buyer and seller, producer and consumer does not belong to public domain (p 24) reflects the transformation in this sector and its resultant consequences for the larger society.

In the last chapter (Chapter 7) the author addresses two significant issues-(a) whether it matters if politics are allowed to be driven by market? (b) Why there was so little resistance to market driven politics in Britain? The author answers to the first issue by way of recapitulating the danger of commodification of public spheres which is inherent to market driven politics. To the author, reduced public domain leads to the narrowing of democratic politics which is the biggest fall out of the process.

To Colin Leys, the second issue has more to do with globalisation which brings changes to class and caste identities, class relations and class structure by sorting people out into two categories-those with power and those with little or none. The mention of caste identities is interesting though

it has no relevance in case of Britain. Probably it was mentioned to refer the erosion of working class solidarity and the weakening of class resistance to globalisation in the wake of the rise in disproportionate income, minoritisation of poverty and weakening of trade union movements which are endemic to globalisation. The chapter further brings into focus the unwillingness of the Labour Party to back the resistance movements of the working class which placed all other anti-globalisation forces into disadvantageous positions. The book is a powerful insight to the Labour Party's abandonment of its traditional base and historical role of supporting, defending and educating the working class. Further, the commercialisations of everyday life and increased mediatisation of market driven politics made people to accept the penetration of market as natural and inevitable.

The book is an absorbing window to understand the agenda of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation and the means and ways market determines designs and delivers its agenda. It is an inside look at what goes on behind the doors of market driven politics.

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**Lenka Laxminarayan, Quine's Philosophy: Anti-foundationalism through Indeterminacy and Other Theses, Northern Book Centre, 2014. 206 Pp. ISBN 81-7211-330-7. Price: 600.**

This book situates Willard Van Orman Quine's philosophy in contemporary epistemology in which theories of justification play a major role. A philosopher sympathetic to empiricism and pragmatism, and a logician of the highest order, Quine's enduring legacy would be his challenge to the *apriori* status of Philosophy, an outlook that took root and flourished since the inception of the subject.

In this book, the author, Laxminarayan Lenka makes the claim that Quine's philosophy understood as an integration of his four major theses

namely, 1. Refutation of Analytic-Synthetic distinction, 2. Indeterminacy of Translation, 3. Ontological Relativity and 4. Naturalized Epistemology, is an anti-foundationalism. Through the advancement of this claim the author makes explicit these theses as facets of the one thing, namely, anti-foundationalism, which Quine has tried to represent through his four famous theses. The author in situating Quine's philosophy has brought in his own arguments to fill in gaps in Quine's position. Aligning his arguments with Quine's philosophy, he critiques what he identifies as some representative theories of foundationalism. The book could be seen at one level as an attempt to interpret Quine's theses as anti-foundationalistic, and hence discern a holism in these theses. At another level, the author uses these theses as springboards to construct his own argument against foundationalism. The book is therefore not just an exposition of Quine's theses but is an appropriation of them to forge a novel critique of foundationalism.

The first worry for the author is the delineation of foundationalism. To separate foundationalism as completely severed from naturalism would be to commit to the core of foundationalism, to have fallen in the ploy of foundationalism – that there is a distinction between these two methods from a position above these two methods. Foundationalism as a pursuit for knowledge, and Naturalism too as an investigation towards knowledge, do not conflict as long as they are in search of the same thing - Truth. Another point of contact which makes it difficult to put foundationalism and naturalism poles apart is that there are different varieties of these two epistemological positions, some of which admit of a continuity. But the author on the ground of a core and irresolvable difference which he insinuates to be on the camp of the foundationalistic theory finds a foothold to distinguish the two positions. Thus, he convincingly enough pits naturalism against foundationalism as anti-foundationalism, which is not to mean a position against foundationalism *per se*, but naturalism as anti-foundationalism in its irresolvable difference with some of the representative foundationalistic principles. The author identifies some of these as the analytic-synthetic distinction, determinacy of meaning, method of intension or absolute reference in terms of semantics or linguistic analysis. The anti-foundationalism of Quine, therefore, consists in the philosopher's refutation of these theses identified with foundationalism.

In the above spading, the author comes to the observation that 'ought', which stands as a conceptual representation of foundationalism, is not

completely independent of 'is' though 'is' represents naturalism. In this observation which he crosses over too soon enough, I find there to be an important ground upon which if delved deeper would come to the 'ought' of prescription and 'is' of description converging in the nature of the epistemic subject. They converge at the very conditions which makes a subject epistemic with the capacity to be in sync with the world both within and without. For the foundationalist one can argue that there are certain 'is' which one cannot but follow, hence these 'is' become normative by default. The naturalist need not balk at the prospect of uncovering transcendentals in these conditions, for these principles are descriptions of the principles that make knowledge possible. Yet, they are foundational descriptions.

The author makes another framing, this time to situate Quine's philosophy as against Justology. Towards that end he assimilates foundationalism and coherentism as strange bed fellows. The author makes use of Kornblith's argument on paper thesis which standardizes and characterizes the accounts provided by foundationalists and coherentists into an apsychological account. He defends Kornblith's argument against Audi's serious critique by taking the lynchpin out of Audi's critique i.e., his idea of conceptual naturalism. This, according to the author, is an untenable proposition which is not short of being based on a dogma.

The author through Quine's refutation of the Analytic-Synthetic division (ASD) opens up the project of uncovering the anti-foundationalistic character of Quine's philosophy. He achieves this in his claim that Quine's refutation of the ASD leads to the refutation of a kind of foundationalism that presupposes the validity of the ASD. He takes two variations on the same theme of the *apriori* - an epistemic concept that necessitates the foundation, transcendental or linguistic, that renders the distinctiveness of epistemic norms. These two variations are the Kantian foundationalism in his *apriori* categories, and the Carnapian linguistic *apriori*. Kant's synthetic *apriori* rests upon a synthetic-analytic distinction. This synthetic *apriori* is a foundationalism as far as it tries to stem the Cartesian doubt and the regress it generates, the Cartesian rot. The Carnapian enterprise to logically construct the world from sense experience also assumes the synthetic-analytic distinction. The Carnapian enterprise is also a reaction to the Cartesian doubt and hence a foundationalism. Quine's refutation of the ASD, therefore, the author argues, is a refutation of the grounds of foundationalism in the above two philosophers.

Having established an argument to this conclusion, the author defends this thesis of Quine against the well-known rebuttals of Quine's thesis from

Grice and Strawson (GS). To each line of their multi-pronged rebuttal, a respective counter argument is given by the author. To GS's contention that Quine's standard of intelligibility of the terms that he analyses are too exacting and high, the author maintains that GS's point of argument misses the point because they have misunderstood the concept of synonymy to be common place understanding of the concept whereas Quine's uses of the term is a technical usage introduced in an extended sense with certain epistemological interest. This is a fair enough point but when he says that the illusion of playing a game does not entail the existence of the game, there is the feeling that the author is going for overkill. For one can understand it to be saying that not even the common understanding of synonymy of linguistic terms is available in reality.

The author then makes an exposition of Quine's indeterminacy thesis (IT) with an orientation against foundationalistic semantics. Its underlying objective is to argue in favour of a naturalized semantics (analogous to naturalized epistemology). In the project of the book, the author's treatment of the indeterminacy thesis is one strand that binds epistemology naturalized. The other strand would be the thesis of ontological relativity. These two theses for the author are two sides of the same coin – the coin of naturalized epistemology. The philosophical insight that the author recovers from Quine's indeterminacy thesis is that no manual of translation can, in principle, be said to be *the* correct one. To say there is a correct manual would be to give a foundational reference point. Thus, the author brings out the anti-foundationalism of IT. There are no incorrigible truths, at least as a consequence of IT. This is something that is reached via the refutation of ASD. This conclusion in a different formulation would be the denial of truth solely on consideration of meaning. Whether this could be accepted without any controversy is doubtful. One can at least say that the game is still on, on the matter. In this chapter, on IT, the author embarks on clarifying, piggybacking on Dummett's observation, how Quine's holism is different from Duhemian holism. In this chapter one finds a clear clue to the author's problem in identifying Quine's philosophy as anti-foundationalism *per se*. This is because the author is convinced, on good grounds, that Quine's philosophy could be characterized as modest foundationalism as far as there are defeasible foundations in the hierarchy of what is at the periphery and what is inside in the structure of the web of our beliefs.

Ontological relativity (OR), which is a refutation of absolute determination of ontology is understood as a condition of 'reciprocal

containment' between epistemology and ontology which is an important aspect of Quine's naturalized epistemology. The author claims that "Quine's scientific realism retains reality without entering into the 'metaphysical jungle of Aristotelian essentialism' or adhering to Carnapian linguistic absolutism". This observation is towards the claim that this thesis is anti-foundationalistic vis-à-vis the foundationalistic theses especially the Carnapian kind. Foundationalism, according to the author, is deep-rooted in Carnap's emphasis on the division of ontological questions to internal and external questions. This division is in line with the trajectory of analytic philosophy from Wittgenstein to Carnap in its endeavour to map a logical space that accommodates world and language; the proper logic or grammar of our language as to determine reality in an absolute manner. One would tend to agree with the author's observation that Quine's philosophy is tangential to that arc. In his words Quine's philosophy is beyond Analytic Philosophy. This escape trajectory puts him in the camp of naturalists. Yet, here again he is different from the others.

The author draws a place for Quine's naturalism regarding epistemology, within the matrix of Naturalized Epistemology (NE). The author divides Naturalized epistemology *sans* Quine's Naturalized Epistemology (QNE) into two broad groups – one which harks for annihilation of the age old epistemological questions, the other which tries to encapsulate epistemology within natural science without reciprocity. QNE is different from these two kinds in its accent on the 'reciprocal containment' between epistemology and natural science. They are to inform one another without conceding a privilege position to anyone. One can find arguments for QNE against the other two broad categories given representation to Rorty and Goldman, respectively. The significance of QNE according to the author is that it investigates the old epistemological problems differently. The question that makes it different is on the relation between the 'meagre input' of stimulus on the basis of which we come to know the world through the 'torrential output' of beliefs. Unlike Carnap and others who gave apriority to the relation between the meager inputs of sensation and the torrential, for Quine, this relation is also part of the world and therefore, subject to natural investigation. There is a problem with this idea and its corollary which is expressed as, 'In QNE, logical truth is after all a convention and, thereby, it is not immune to revision'. If logic is to be understood as another theory of ours, then there is no problem. But, if logic is understood as the pre-thereotic 'something' through which we get understanding to start with, then I find

that neither Quine nor the author has explained enough how this pre-theoretic logicity could be revised. The author strengthens QNE by examining Barry Stroud's challenge against it, but the author summarily neutralises the challenges by pointing out that Stroud's challenge is damaging so far as Epistemology is delinked from Ontology.

Laxminarayan Lenka, in his understanding of Quine's philosophy has successfully brought the unity of thought in the latter's theses. The book is recommended for a rewarding study in its clear yet in-depth analysis of Quine's philosophy.

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**Bhola Nath Ghosh, *Empowerment of Women in North-East India*, published by Concept Publishing House Company Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi, 2015. 182 Pp. ISBN no. 93-5125-104-7, Price: Rs. 650.**

The concept of gender equality has been one of the cardinal principles enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The Preamble to the Constitution resolved to secure to all its citizens- social, economic and political justice, liberty, equality and fraternity, irrespective of one's gender. To help realise this ambitions, the Constitution guaranteed fundamental rights and freedom to the Citizens of India (Part III of the Indian Constitution). Women and men, and girls and boys are supposed to be the equal beneficiaries of these rights. However, the reality is that, far from achieving equality between the genders, the status and position of women and girls in India has alarmingly worsened. The Government of India's 1974 "Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India", titled "Towards Equality" was not only an eye opening to the real status and situation of Indian women. The Report injected a new thinking and the need to reconceptualise hitherto gender discourse in India. The goal towards gender equality can be addressed or approached from different perspectives. In the process, there is always the possibility of "equality" taking a secondary importance. Maithreyi Krishnaraj

noted,

“We have moved away from the notion of the “Towards Equality” report to empowerment. One wonders how this transition took place. Is it more threatening to talk of equality of men and women? Is it that women claim they are different?” (Maithreyi Krishnaraj, “Is ‘Gender’ Easy to Study? Some Reflections”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, October 21, 2006, 41(42): 4442).

There is in substance Krishnaraj’s view. There can be different means of addressing gender inequality. But there can be only one end, and that end is “gender equality”. Empowerment is just one of the means, and it cannot be an end in itself.

The book under review is organised into eight chapters. In the introductory chapter, the author briefly talks about “empowerment of women” and the means for achieving it. To quote the book, empowerment of women is

“the questioning of the social, economic and political discrepancies and distortions, in terms of gender. As an enabling concept for women, it pertains to challenging her own subjugation and thereafter gaining control over the resources of every conceivable sphere, in the process transforming radically the structural, systematic and institutional inequalities through her own participation, priorities and perspectives... a process where women can gain access, have space and scope to examine and extricate their lives and gender relations critically and collectively” (p. 2).

The titles of the subsequent chapters are “Objectives and Aims of the Study”, “Justification of the Study”, “Literature Review”, “Research Methodology”, “Data: Observations and Findings”, and “Conclusion and Policy Implications”. The specific aims of the book is “to identify the aspiration and analyse the performance of different sections of women in the villages, to examine the process of empowerment of women in terms of social, cultural, economic, political, religious, legal, health and environmental aspects; and to identify the limitations and successes of the women who has set their goals in terms of empowerment”. The author has chosen four villages in the North-East as the universe of his study- two villages in Meghalaya, located under the East Khasi Hill district of Mawlyngknang block. The other two villages are in Tripura located under the Paschim Noabadi Gram Panchayat of Jirania block, West Tripura district. The author has selected these villages due to the following reasons,

- i) 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment : The provisions of this Constitutional amendment has been implemented in Tripura, while that was not the case in Meghalaya;
- ii) Ethnic composition of the villages: The two villages in Tripura are multi-ethnic, while that of Meghalaya is not but inhabited by the Khasi community.
- iii) The society in the two villages in Meghalaya followed matrilineal system, while that of Tripura is basically patrilineal.

The author gives equal weightage to the views and opinions of both women and men, which is very much prerequisite for understanding the level of one's awareness and attitude, and the overall gender atmosphere of a given context/situation. The book provides insights into the level of awareness and empowerment enjoyed by the women in the economic, political, social, cultural, and psychological aspects. It also gives insight into the attitude of men towards their women counterparts on some fundamental issues/indicators which are basic to gender equality. One interesting findings of the book is on the issues of child preference by sex where male and female children are treated alike in the villages. Another interesting thing is on "psychological empowerment" of women, which is about one's attitude, perception and understandings. A large proportion of the women in the villages did not think their status and position vis-à-vis men. Instead, they profess that women need not depend on their male counterpart. Men folks in the two villages of Meghalaya also subscribe to the idea of the equality of men and women. However, an overwhelming number of men in Tripura see women as subservient and dependant on them.

The first six chapters can be a part of the introductory chapter. Some of the variables identified by the author and/or his interpretation/analysis appear to have no relevance for understanding the process and level of empowerment enjoyed by women. There is inconsistency in the statements made, generalisation done without much theoretical position. One simple example that can be cited is the universe of the study. The focus of the study is supposed to be on the four villages. However, one gets the impression that the author is studying Meghalaya and Tripura. Related to this is Chapter 3, where one expect to get general background of the "Area of the Study". The author has failed here. Only eight lines talks about the villages while the rest is all about Tripura and Meghalaya.

Though the book has limitations, its merit lies in its ability to give grassroots information on issues necessary for understanding the prevailing status and position of women in the select villages. Overall, what the book attempts to address and understand is an interesting and relevant issue that concerns all human beings.

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