Text, Context and Construction of Identity

Edited by

Rajesh Kumar and Om Prakash

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

About the Contributors vii

Chapter One 1
Introduction
Rajesh Kumar and Om Prakash

Chapter Two 12
Making "Voices" from the Past Relevant in the Present: The Performative Function of English Translations of Sacred Hindu Texts
Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande

Chapter Three 28
Caliban's Verses and Curses: The Dialect(ic)s of Subordination in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*—from Text to Film
Rahul K. Gairola

Chapter Four 43
Dutiful Girls, Defiant Boys: Gendered Literary Imagination in the Works of Nazir Ahmad
Irfanullah Farooqi

Chapter Five 58
Speaking of Gender: Language and Identity in the Poems of Adrienne Rich
Tasneem Shahnaaz

Chapter Six 76
Linguistic Vernacularization in Malayalam Cinema: Urban Kochi Slang and Youth Identity
Jayakrishnan Narayanan and Rajesh Kumar

Chapter Seven 98
Avouching the Silenced Voices: The Inner Conflict of African Americans in Literary Accounts
Manjri Suman and Om Prakash

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Chapter Eight 112
Reasoning with Reason: Understanding the Conflict of Cultural Belief in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*
Sukanya Mondal and Rashmi Gaur

Chapter Nine 121
Multilingualism and Identity: Authorial Identity in Academic Writing
Shagufta Imtiaz

Chapter Ten 136
Identity-Work in Complex Societies
Avinash Pandey

Chapter Eleven 157
Identity and Pronunciation
Shreesh Chaudhary

Chapter Twelve 172
The Social Construction of Identity: A Sociolinguistic Approach
Syed Nadeem Fatmi

Chapter Thirteen 182
Language is Thicker than Blood: A Personal Reflection on Language and Identity in India
S. P. Dhanavel

Chapter Fourteen 191
Language, Stories, and Identity
Deepa Kiran

Chapter Fifteen 205
Discourse and the Problem of Structural Power: A Note on the Missing Story of Human Vulnerability in the Interchange
Hemachandran Karah

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

RAJESH KUMAR AND OM PRAKASH

> *"Language is intrinsic to the expression of culture. Language is a fundamental aspect of cultural identity. It is the means by which we convey our innermost self from generation to generation. It is through language that we transmit and express our culture and its values. Language—both code and content—is a complicated dance between internal and external interpretations of our identity."* (Gibson 2004: 1)

The centrality of language in organizing communities and groups cannot be overstated: our social order has developed alongside our linguistic allegiances, shared narratives, collective memories, and common social history. Here, language is not simply a social object, but rather one that significantly determines our associations and social functions. We derive meaning through it and construct a multi-layered identity that situates us in a given sociocultural space.

Taking the above into account, this book is an attempt to understand the phenomena of identity in the many contexts of literary texts and their interpretations. A text is a re-creation of life in a narrative form and is deeply rooted in sociocultural space and time. Texts seek to capture our insights and create a context for deriving meaning from them. Texts encode our history, our shared understanding, our collective memory and experience, our struggles and triumphs, and our collective quest to discover who we are and how we are connected. Text and context intertwines: we cannot imagine one without the other. The work on semiotics by Ferdinand de Saussure (1916), a Swiss linguist, explains how signs capture and deliver their meaning within the structure of a given text. M. M. Bakhtin (1975), on the other hand, suggests that one can see a continuous dialogue with other texts when interpreting the meaning of any given text. Julia Kristeva (1980) in her work on synthesizing the semiotic theory of Ferdinand De Saussure and the dialogism of M. M. Bakhtin first coined the term 'intertextuality' and

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proposed that the meaning of a text is not transferred from the writer to the reader, but rather multiple codes/texts mediate the process of interpretation. As Davidson puts it:

> *"Language and literacy, in Bakhtin's model, are in continuous motion through the process of dialogization. Dialogization, the ongoing struggle and tension between unifying (centripetal) and disunifying (centrifugal) linguistic forces, permeates every aspect of language, right down to the very word. Utterances are semi-bounded forms of a word or words, where social genre and the individual come together momentarily in a concrete articulation, coalescing as they are concurrently pulled in various directions by the diverse social languages and individual values embedded within them. Speakers and authors interweave their social and individual values and meanings across and through utterances, connecting utterances with utterances and texts with texts creating an intertextual tapestry of language."* (Davidson 1993:11)

'Text' is a loaded term when used for any piece of work that gives us meaning. In our particular context, we are referring to literary texts and the language contained therein to better understand the construction of identity in such texts. Language encodes our inherited knowledge and helps us create meaning out of our everyday experiences. Language is instrumental in constructing meaning and defining associations with our world. As a social phenomenon, it shapes every aspect of our lives and binds us together. It becomes instrumental in asserting the uniqueness and distinct identities of one group against another. Identity includes many elements apart from language, such as class, region, ethnicity, nation, religion, caste, gender, and education. These associations can be both singular and multiple. It is an intertwined system with elements that complement each other. Language is one such element in this system and holds a particular interest because of the mutual influence of language and identity in relation to other social factors.

> *"[I]dentity is never a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality."* (Bhabha 1994: 51)

Drawing on Bhabha, this book is an attempt to explore a wide range of texts and contexts to better understand phenomena of identity. This book contains fourteen chapters, excluding the present one, and covers a variety of themes and notions of identity. The following section presents a brief description of the themes and perspectives dealt with by the contributors. This description in no way restricts the interpretations of readers and endeavours to facilitate a democratic exchange of ideas on the phenomenon of identity.

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The following section briefly describes the central ideas contained in each chapter.

In *Making "Voices" from the Past Relevant in the Present: The Performative Function of English Translations of Sacred Hindu Texts,* **Rajeshwari V. Pandharipande** interprets the rewriting or translation of a source text as a performative act. Her goal is to show that the translator chooses a source text written in the past according to its sociocultural context, which closely resembles/reflects the present context (i.e. the social context of the translation). By translating the source text for a contemporary audience, the translator first locates the source text and its function in its original past moment and then relocates the text and its function into the present context. She indicates a need to examine contextual similarities and responses to translations in terms of the selection of source texts and the formation of identity across diverse cultural and linguistic spaces in the current era of globalization. These include: postcolonial translations; translations in hybrid and/or multilingual cultures and contexts; and translations in diasporas. One may readily ask how translators select source texts to 'localize' cultural identities in the face of globalization.

In *Caliban's Verses and Curses: The Dialect(ic)s of Subordination in Shakespeare's The Tempest—from Text to Film,* **Rahul K. Gairola** fuses a traditional close reading of text with a close reading of film to demonstrate the ways in which the identity of Caliban has varied, while essentially staying the same, over the centuries. The character of Caliban from Shakespeare's play of 1611 to John Gorrie's 1987 BBC film and, finally, to James Mangold's mutant namesake in 2017's *Logan,* seems to consistently occupy the dark side of subjectivity, both linguistically and filmically. While postcolonial discourse has arguably humanized Caliban to the point that he appears a gentle monster when transformed into Mangold's mutant, in his reading Caliban offers a twenty-first century allegory of the abject native in his/her own homeland, racialized and ordered to leave as the function of racialized exploitation comes full circle. Shakespeare's verses are curses on the very people for whom Caliban serves as an allegory, and remains significant today with militant white supremacy and extreme xenophobia haunting the very metropolises to which postcolonial immigrants have fled and where their children have been born. As he demonstrates throughout, the Manichean binary of light/dark cathects particularly well to the different cultural manifestations of Caliban—from the original text of the Elizabethan era to the filmic texts of the neoliberal/millennial eras. Caliban's language, image, and identity dwell together, as he demonstrates throughout his comparative empirical analysis,

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on the underside of respectability as it is represented in the vernacular of spoken and lived existence. With respect to language and identity, we may continue to better understand the challenges of xenophobia and racialized power relations by looking at the familiar ways in which they have operated before, seeking out the ghosts of the past that today shape the monstrosity in textual and filmic language for which Caliban serves as an immortal allegory.

In *Dutiful Girls, Defiant Boys: Gendered Literary Imagination in the Works of Nazir Ahmad*, **Irfanullah Farooqi** engages with the gendered literary imagination of Nazir Ahmad, a renowned Muslim reformist in colonial India who is also considered by many to be a novelist. Through a close reading of two of his celebrated works, *Miratul Uroos* (The Bride's Mirror) and *Taubatun Nusooh* (The Repentance of Nusooh), he looks at how Nazir Ahmad's portrayal of girls and boys is extremely gendered. The progress of Nazir Ahmad's characters in these two literary creations clearly asserts a conventional understanding of domesticity and a host of attributes and traits associated with that realm/sphere. What follows also attempts to question Nazir Ahmad's reformist agenda—one where literature was essentially seen as educational—by outlining the narrowness of his understanding of womanhood. Farooqi observes that a critical engagement with Nazir Ahmad's literary production informs us that in his case writing is anything but an innocent act. It is thoroughly representational. By outlining the essentials of domesticity within the context of a *Sharif* household he simply tries to recast the important practices of *Ashraf* culture. Given that he is upsettingly clear about everything right at the outset, his ideal woman is not a new woman. Through his advice or useful literature, Nazir Ahmad was trying to restore the respectability of the *Ashraf* of Delhi. The *Sharif* woman was the site through which this quest for revival was expressed and therefore much of the expression around roles and responsibilities is heavily gendered. As he ventured more into articulating the essentials of womanhood and manhood within the context of the family, 'feminine' and 'masculine' became further defined and distinguished from each other.

Tasneem Shahnaaz, in her chapter *Speaking of Gender: Language and Identity in the poems of Adrienne Rich*, unravels an underlying preoccupation of Adrienne Rich with the close connection between reality and its linguistic representation. In her discovery of various representational voices in Rich's poetry, she observes that with few linguistic precursors or adequate tools to help her, Rich engaged with the problematic of locating/inventing a language that would have to address, define, and authenticate her pursuit of selfhood. She realized that in this journey there

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is no unitary self that can be described and defined. There exists more than one self and it is the conjunction of these selves that delineate her selfhood. As such, there is an emergence of multiple voices in her poetry. At times she speaks through a persona as a textual 'I' while at others she is the lyric 'I,' the self-reflexive 'I,' the historical 'I,' the bardic 'I,' and even the prophetic 'I.' The pronoun 'I' is seemingly non-gender specific. The poetic 'I' usually denotes the generic 'he.' Rich's conscious decision to speak from a subject position involved "an immense shift from male to female pronouns."

Jayakrishnan Narayanan and **Rajesh Kumar** show how slang and identity have a causal relationship that can work in both directions. Their chapter on *Linguistic Vernacularization in Malayalam Cinema: Urban Kochi Slang and Youth Identity* discusses linguistic vernacularization (Coupland 2014) or de-standardization in Malayalam film through the rise of urban Kochi slang, its construction as a youth identity marker through films, and its acceptance among young audiences as fashionable. By analyzing and categorizing changes in the portrayal of the Kochi dialect in cinema over the years, this paper looks into the bricolage (Levi-Strauss 1966) of the film industry, which has caused a re-ordering and re-contextualization of linguistic and dialectal identities with enhanced social meaning.

The lives of African Americans in the racist society of America have been, and still are, difficult. The treatment of African Americans under slavery was brutal, harsh, and barbaric and reflected the pervasive misconception that blacks were less than human and more like animals and beasts of burden (Taylor 2007). Black women have been described as "outsiders twice over" (Carolyn Heilbrun 1979: 37), excluded from both the mainstream and from the ethnic centers of power. Some of these women were thrice muted through sexism, racism, and a 'tonguelessness' that resulted from oppression and language barriers. In *Avouching the Silenced Voices: The Inner Conflict of African Americans in Literary Accounts*, **Manjri Suman** and **Om Prakash** analyze fictional characters that have described African American experiences through the lens of Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory, which deals with *in-group* and *out-group* racism. People believe themselves to be part of a group and this increases their sense of pride and self-esteem. The male and female characters studied in this chapter break through barriers, search for their own identities, and establish more coherent identities by gaining a voice. Previously silent or ignorant characters go through many hardships, but emerge as strong personalities. They break through language

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barriers, dilute the heavy weight of 'voicelessness,' and start speaking for themselves.

The chapter *Reasoning with Reason: Understanding the Conflict of Cultural Belief in Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason*, by **Sukanya Mondal** and **Rashmi Gaur**, discusses identity and culture as two inextricably intertwined ideas, where a culture contributes significantly to the identity of an individual who belongs to that culture. Although culture informs a specific layer of one's identity, a person cannot be judged solely by the culture s/he belongs to, because a person's identity has too many dimensions to it. One's education, professional ethics, religious beliefs, and political ideology are all determining factors of one's identity. This chapter attempts to examine the relation between reason/rationality and the aforementioned factors of personal identity in the context of a particular situation in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*. The context here is the final episode of the novel where all the major characters assemble in Algeria and discuss the cremation of a dead body. In the course of this debate, different sides of the characters' identities gradually unfold and the process shows us that there are certain human values that question the tyranny of rationalism. What comes out of the debate, as well as the novel, is that the notion of identity has a confining quality. When a person like Dr. Mishra is overly conscious about retaining his carefully constructed identity, he unknowingly submits to the exertion of this binding force. In order to maintain his identity as a rationalist and a practitioner of science, he opposes the cremation of Kulfi's body. In this moment, he deliberately relegates the other layers of his identity—those of being an Indian, a Hindu, and above all, a human being. He forgets that this last part of his identity, that of being a human being, obliges him to honour the dead. Thus, by depicting the conflict among different parts of people's identities, Ghosh finally shows that in spite of cultural specificities, humanity has a universal appeal.

Multilingualism signifies an important aspect of diversity. It suggests the variations and differences that arise due to linguistic and cultural aspects, the differences in terms of the processes in which a writer is engaged, and the outcome in the form of the text that emerges. Multilingual writers cannot be considered to be part of a monolithic whole, but should be viewed as individual writers whose trends cannot be generalized. In her chapter on *Multilingualism and Identity: Authorial Identity in Academic Writing*, **Shagufta Imtiaz** draws on the work of identity theorists, who look at the ways in which race, gender, and class affect the process of language learning and teaching. The reading and writing process is central to second language acquisition and is socially structured. This study was not constructed in a

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classroom setting. Considering that the learners had a medical background, they seemed to be motivated enough to indulge in reading for pleasure. As she observes, they were able to answer the questions related directly and indirectly to identity formation. The learners seemed to be motivated and interested in the practice of reading. The act of reading and writing re-situates and reconstructs their identity positions. The use of *I* as the theme in a sentence revokes this position, not only making the identity position more socially and historically embedded, but also constituting it in and through language.

India has been engulfed by identity politics, of various hues, for several decades now and such endeavours are only gaining in strength. The recent successes, at the political level, of a majoritarian politics based on religion clearly indicates the ascendancy of an identity politics of a particular kind. This rise in the prominence of identity politics has coincided with the advent of the free market economy in India, giving rise to serious debates on the correlation between the two. It is perhaps no coincidence that such a kind of politics is always accompanied by the rhetoric of 'development.' While this kind of politics may have gained prominence in recent times, it is by no means the case that identity politics did not exist before. In fact, the decision to organize parts of India along linguistic lines gave rise to movements based on linguistic sub-nationalism in various parts of the country. Challenging essentialism in identity-work is an important aspect of our attempts to make the path from the undifferentiated whole to a differentiated whole accessible. This challenge involves rethinking our ways of establishing relationships with nature, other people, and the self. We need to develop alternative paradigms of development that do not fragment us, but enable us to attain higher levels of unity. I do not wish to suggest that until we develop alternative paradigms there is nothing to be done. Striving for such paradigms and building upon incremental gains not only provides us with the path ahead, but also the inspiration to overcome the fragmentation imposed upon us. The notion of identity needs to be pragmatized, i.e. we need to talk about identities of situations. If we are able to create special situations (to the extent that it is possible) for the realization of higher identities, then small steps towards this aim can be taken. An awareness of such fragmentation, an understanding of the dynamics behind it, and the steps needed to overcome it (even if only partially) will bring people together and provide them with an environment to overcome the limitations imposed upon them. For example, we have discussed the need for a neutral space where people of different backgrounds can meet and integrate in a meaningful and democratic way. In linguistic terms, this neutral ground would be languages of wider communication. **Avinash**

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Pandey in his chapter on *Identity-Work in Complex Societies* identifies such neutral spaces, which have been encroached upon by languages of the elite. Recovering ground for these languages and enabling their use in the public sphere forms an important part of our attempts to overcome fragmentation. Though this would of course be a long-term strategy, he insists, on a more immediate basis, on making the languages in use for wider communication accessible to marginalized communities. Such a dual strategy, which on the surface seems contradictory, is laced with teething problems and runs the risk of losing out. But then such risks always accompany attempts to deal with real problems and real people—purity is a quality of the abstract and we need to dirty our hands and take risks, he declares.

Shreesh Chaudhary in his chapter *Identity and Pronunciation* highlights a very significant correlation between pronunciation and perceived identity. In this chapter, he first describes how some aspects of speech are crucial to the identity of a speaker and need not necessarily be unlearnt, the features of accent that define regional and ethnic identity, and the relative importance of different features of English phonology for a course in Standard English (SE). Finally, he suggests an approach to the teaching of SE that allows the learner to retain their identity and yet understand and be understood by speakers of standard varieties of English worldwide. He claims that since this approach does not involve any 'unlearning,' it can be used for teaching speaking in any language to any group of learners. It should be obvious to any teacher that no language needs to be spoken exactly alike in all respects by all its learners. Some features of any language must essentially be learnt by all, otherwise their speech may not be normally intelligible, but in some others each learner should have freedom of choice. What is more important is that non-native speakers of all languages are seen and accepted as non-native learners. They are understood and appreciated for the efforts they make in picking up someone else's language. They retain their identity not just in appearance, but also in speech without in any manner incurring an exorbitant cost for doing so. The precious time saved in learning trifling features of a standard language can be better invested in learning more words and idioms and acquiring greater confidence in speaking that language though practice in and outside the classroom. This goal is both achievable and may motivate the learner to speak at any possible and available moment. He observes that pronunciation should promote understanding without degrading the identity of the speaker. As a recent work in this area suggests, let us not produce parrots; rather, let us produce people who retain their identity, but are understood in the wider world.

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In *The Social Construction of Identity: A Sociolinguistic Approach* **Syed Nadeem Fatmi** attempts a sociolinguistic analysis of identity construction. This chapter focuses on the idea that 'identity' refers to either a social category defined by membership rules, attributes, and expected behaviours, or socially distinguishing features that a person takes special pride in. In the latter sense, identity is related to the formulation of dignity, pride, or honour, implicitly linking these to various social categories. He further argues that this provides a better understanding of how identity is socially constructed. Finally, he also argues that sociolinguistic analysis is a valuable tool in the clarification of social science concepts that have strong roots in everyday speech. His discussion of identity and language use in sociological perspective is based on several key premises. It replaces the traditional understanding of language users as unitary, unique, and internally motivated individuals with a view of them as social actors whose identities are multiple, varied, and emergent in their everyday lived experience. Through involvement in their socio-culturally significant activities, individuals take on or inhabit particular social identities and use their understandings of their social roles and relationships with others to mediate their involvement and the involvement of others in their practices. He considers these identities not to be stable or constant across contexts, but rather to be emergent, locally situated, and, at the same time, historically constituted—they are constantly reconstituted in our discourses. While language is a socio-historical product, language is also an instrument for forming and transforming the social order as well as identity. Such a view of language and identity leads us to articulate the relationship between the structures of society on the one hand and the nature of human action on the other. An important focus of study shifts towards the identification of the different ways individuals use the cues available to them in various communicative encounters in the construction of social identities.

Every generation and every individual challenges the dominant discourses of language and identity of their time, attempting to make sense of the socio-political contexts in which they often engage with multiple languages, especially in terms of their livelihood or survival. In *Language is Thicker than Blood: A Personal Reflection on Language and Identity in India*, **S. P. Dhanavel** presents his personal account of being a Tamil speaker who learnt English and chose English as a means of living, not in his native state, but in a different linguistic environment far away from his home, which enabled him to realize the truth of the statement that language is thicker than blood. This account may be considered a self-reflective documentation of a complex interaction between language and identity in a multilingual and multicultural country. This narrative illustrates his linguistic and social

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identity as a Tamil speaker, an English teacher, and an Indian citizen. Primarily, it shows how non-contact with one's mother tongue/native language can be traumatic and destabilize the individual. Additionally, it explains how coming into conflict with a dominant language can cause socio-political problems within a country that can threaten the stability of the country itself. The underlying meaning and message of this narrative is that the linguistic identity that one forms in childhood continues to play a key role in all personal and professional relations and responsibilities. What is needed is a tolerant approach to linguistic diversity, which can create an accommodating environment for speakers of different languages to co-exist, without which the co-existence of human beings will remain a distant dream.

Storytelling is a powerful way of getting a message across to an audience, as there is willingness and openness to receive a story and the message is not shoved down the audience's throats, but travels gently in the story-capsule, into the minds of the listeners, who are biologically programmed to facilitate a narrative framework. In her chapter on *Language, Stories, and Identity*, **Deepa Kiran** demonstrates the art and significance of storytelling and its long cultural history and tradition. She underlines the importance of storytelling, which connects us and breaks down barriers between people—stories help us make meaning in our lives, help make sense of ourselves as part of a community, help us transmit our learning to the next generation, and ensure that important things are well-remembered.

Hemachandran Karah in *Discourse and the Problem of Structural Power: a Note on the Missing Story of Human Vulnerability in the Interchange* uses his personal accounts and experiences to observe that, in an epoch when all things seem relativistic and contextual, one can still spot a score of phenomena that are absolutely universal. Vulnerability is definitely one such phenomenon, for it does not spare anyone, including the most privileged of us. He argues that an overarching system of power, such as patriarchy, may perpetuate itself by hijacking people's personhood, so that the latter becomes a site for dominance. Discourse analysis involves a plethora of frameworks, such as 'subjugation,' 'internalized oppression,' and 'docility' to capture the performance of power. Furthermore, in reviewing a powerplay that seems intangible and yet formidable, discourse-based scholarly enterprises unfold with the conviction that a hijacked personhood is the ultimate manifestation of human vulnerability. At its best, such a conviction is salutary. For example, during moments of enslavement by a harmful discourse, one may become nothing more than an attenuated play of signifiers. That is not all—social contracts run the risk of

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delegitimization when they are upheld by communities who themselves are dispersed from within. While such a critique is almost thorough, it is limited by the worldview that human vulnerability is noticeable only within a social contract situation. After all, is it not true that a failed social contract is a clear symptom of an underlying vulnerability? Although such self-referential questions seem indisputable, there exist myriad narrative themes of vulnerability that slip through the cracks. In gathering together these narrative themes, he makes use of the concept of moral paradox. The idea of moral paradox is not a novel invention. It is very active in other contexts, such as religious texts and philosophical treatises. He deploys moral paradox in a philosophical sense that is fine-tuned to capture less-acknowledged stories of vulnerability. What follows is a fictional narrative that may resemble many such stories of vulnerability that slip between the cracks.

Last but not the least, we firmly believe that this book will trigger a renewed discourse on text, context, and identity. We are humbled by the overwhelming response and unconditional patience extended to us by our colleagues, friends, and contributors during the making of this book. We cannot thank enough Victoria Carruthers, Robert Pomfret, Anthony Wright, Matthew Scott, and Helen Edwards for their continued help and support in bringing this book to light. Finally, we extend our gratitude to the many individuals who have directly and indirectly supported us in our endeavor.

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CHAPTER TWO

MAKING "VOICES" FROM THE PAST RELEVANT IN THE PRESENT: THE PERFORMATIVE FUNCTION OF ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF SACRED HINDU TEXTS[1]

RAJESHWARI V. PANDHARIPANDE

> "The translator is no stand-in or ventriloquist for the author of the source text, but a resourceful imitator who rewrites it to appeal to another audience in a different language and culture and often in a different period" (Venuti 2013: 109).

1. Introduction

Venuti's remark captures the agency of both the source text and the translator operating in different times and different languages. In this paper, I interpret the rewriting or translating of a source text as a performative act. My goal is to show that the translator chooses a source text written in the past according to its sociocultural context, which closely resembles/reflects the present context (i.e. the social context of the translation). By translating the source text for a contemporary audience, the translator first locates the source text and its function in its original past moment and then relocates the text and its function into the present context.

I will discuss three English translations/interpretations of the following sacred texts of Hinduism: *Speaking of Shiva*, Ramanujan's (1973) translations of a twelfth century Virashaiva poetry in Kannada; *Tukaram: Says Tuka*, Chitre's (1991) translation of *Tukaramanchi Gatha*, a seventeenth century

[1] An earlier version of this work was presented as the Keynote talk at the International Conference on "New Spaces in Translation" held at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, April 11, 2015.

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religious text in Marathi; and Prabhupada's (1968) English translation of the third century Sanskrit text, the *Bhagavadgita, Bhagavadgita As it is*. The main goals of this paper are: to show that these English translations of the source texts, in their respective historical social contexts, rejected the 'colonization' or hegemony of 'high' religion, Hinduism and established the religious roots of Hinduism for the common people; b) to point out that through these translations, the translators relocate the past and re-create it in postcolonial, present-time India (where the loss of cultural roots and the need to recreate Indian cultural identity is strongly felt); and c) to re-establish the roots and identity of the self (individually and nationally) by de-colonizing them through translation in postcolonial India (mirroring their effect in the present). It is important to note thatPrabhupada's translation of the *Bhagavadgita* is different from the first two: it relocates the source text in the USA and makes it relevant to twentieth century America by creating a counter-cultural construct different from the mainstream US culture, mirroring the role of the source text in fifteenth century India (when the text was interpreted as resisting 'high' religion).

Finally, I will discuss the relevance of this thesis for the theory of translation. I propose translation to be a performative linguistic act, which performs an additional function of identity construction.

2. The Performative Function of Translation: Identity Construction

Before I proceed to discuss the performative function of translation, it is necessary to briefly describe speech act theory (Austin 1962; Searle 1969), which defines the performative function of language. In this discussion, I will assume the applicability of speech act theory to the translations at hand. According to this theory, language can perform an action as it describes it. The uttering of a performative is, or is part of, the doing of a certain kind of action (Austin later deals with these acts under the name *illocutionary acts*), the performance of which would not normally be described as simply 'saying' or 'describing' something (cf. Austin 1962: 5). For example, when the priest says, 'I declare you man and wife,' he performs the action of marrying a couple. I claim that the translations at hand serve the performative function of making the voices/meaning/function of the original texts in the past relevant to the present. In doing this, the translator creates a new space for translation between the past and the present.

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This discussion addresses an age-old question in translation theory: what is the relationship between the original/source text and its translation? I will assume, but not discuss, the translation theories and approaches of: formal-structural translation; semantic equivalence; translation as transformation; interpretation; transcreation; and adaptation of the original, among others. My approach to conceptualizing the relationship between a source text and a translation in the postcolonial context in India treats translation as a performative action that makes the translation functionally equivalent to the source text. What motivates the translation is the socio-cultural-contextual equivalence of the two—the source and the translation.

My view accords with Vermeer's functional view of translation:

> "Each text is produced for a given purpose and should serve this purpose. The skopos rule thus reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function to the situation in which it is used and with the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function" (Vermeer 1989: 20, translation by Nord in Pym 2010: 204).

Why am I calling this translation a performative act rather than simply a purposive action? The reason is, a performative act, as expressed in the work of Austin and Searle, emphasizes a culturally/conventionally determined correlation between a linguistic structure/construction and its function. It is thus part of the grammar of a culture. The priest's declaration in the wedding is a culturally determined performative, which, when used, expresses an action in a particular culture (and this may not be the case in other cultures). I claim that the translator assumes this conventionalized correlation between the source text and its function in the past. As such, a translator chooses the source text to make its function or 'voice' relevant to the present, with the assumption that the translation will perform a similar function in a new space/time, but in a similar context.

The translation of sacred texts is a well-established tradition in most world religions (Sawyer 2001). While English translations of the sacred texts of Hinduism have been discussed in the context of Indian literature, world literature, philosophy, and psychology, the other important 'performative' function of these translations has not been adequately recognized/analyzed. That is, these translations have been instrumental in constructing Hindu/Indian identity at different points in time.

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3. Postcolonial Translations of Religious Texts: A Return to Vernacular Religion and Decolonizing the 'Self'

First, I will provide a brief description of postcolonial translation in India. In the postcolonial period, after the 1960s, we see a large number of writers and translators unambiguously expressing their anxiety about the loss of national, cultural, and personal identity and the need to reclaim/redefine it through writing and translation. Sacred texts are generally considered an important part of a country's cultural heritage. Therefore, large scale translations of the Hindu sacred texts can be seen as a strategy for re-building lost national and cultural identity. What is interesting is that these translators did not choose the ancient Sanskrit texts (the Vedas or the Upanishads), but rather texts originally written in vernacular regional languages. As Ketkar points out:

> "Earlier on, 'truly Indian meant pan-Indian Sanskrit heritage.' In the case of modernists, Indianness means precolonial heritage in modern Indian languages as well. Translation becomes one of the inevitable and creative strategies of giving oneself a sense of belonging and a nationality. It is a part of re-building national and personal identity" (2004: 3).

In postcolonial India, we find two types of English translations of sacred Hindu texts: those where the source texts are in Sanskrit; and those where the source texts are in regional languages. Notable examples drawing on Sanskrit texts include: Aurobindo's translation of Vidyapati, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavadgita; and P. Lal's English translation of the entire Hindu epic cycle, the Mahabharata, and many other Hindu texts including 21 major Upanishads. The following remarks by translators succinctly underscore the strong motivations that inform the choice of sacred Hindu texts for translation. P. Lal, speaking about the rationale for choosing Sanskrit religious texts as sources for his English translation, says:

> "I soon realized that an excessive absorption in the milieu and tradition of English is divorcing me from the values that I found all around me as an experiencing Indian, so I undertook the translation of Indian in practice mostly Hindu sacred texts in the hope of that the intimacy that only translation can give (I underscore the word 'intimacy') would enable me to know better what the Indian myth was, how it invigorated Indian literature and what values one would pick up from it that would be of use as an 'Indian' human being and as an Indian using a so-called foreign language (English)" (in St. Pierre 1997: 143-144).

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This clearly shows that the motivation for these postcolonial translators was to regain and rebuild their identity in the face of the influence of British cultural hegemony.

In the light of this, we move to the first English translation of Tukaram's poetry. Dilip Chitre's remark on his own English translation of Tukaram is important to understanding its performative function (what it does as opposed to what it says). Chitre repeatedly emphasizes the loss of Indian identity through colonization:

> "Why I felt compelled to translate his [Tukaram was a seventeenth century Hindu poet who wrote his magnum opus in Marathi] poetry as bilingual poet, I had little choice, if any. There were two parts of me, like two linguistic and cultural hemispheres, and as per theory, they were not destined to cohere" (2003: 307)

And

> "I have been working in a haunted workshop rattled and shaken by the spirits of other literatures unknown to my ancestor I have to build a bridge within myself between India and Europe or else, I become a fragmented person" (2003: 311-312).

Ramanujan, who chose the writings of the Vacanas, poems written in Kannada by twelfth century saints, says: "one chooses and translates a part of one's past to make it present to oneself and maybe to others" (in Dharwadkar 1999: 122-123). Translation becomes a strategy to give oneself one's roots. In the above statements of the translators, it is clear that they view translation as part of a strategy of identity-building.

I wish to show that the translators aimed to achieve their goal by making a strong performative statement. The texts were originally composed to overthrow the hegemony of 'high Hinduism' marked by Brahmin-dominated religious texts (in Sanskrit) and ritual practices, which typically excluded the lower castes. The postcolonial social context in India, in which the cultural hegemony of the British is clearly felt, remarkably mirrored this historical context.

3.1 Chitre's Translation of Tukaram

We can begin with Chitre's English translation of Tukaram's sacred Hindu text, Tukaramanchi Gatha, from Marathi, a regional vernacular language of the state of Maharashtra. The original text challenges the high religious conceptualization of religious Hinduism and its practices, and boldly

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articulates the Hindu identity of the common (primarily non-Brahmin) people.

Tukaram is known for his strong rejection of the Brahmin pandits and saints and their preaching of vamashram dharma (caste-based religion), which not only excluded the lower castes from practicing religious rituals, but also ostracized them for their low birth by blaming it on past karma. Tukaram says:

> *Doii vaadhavuunii kesha, bhuute aaNiitii angaas tarii te naahii santa jana |tethe naahii aatmakhuuNa* (Tukaramanchi Gatha 144 verse 776).
>
> "By growing long hair and rubbing ashes all over their body, they do not become true saints. There is no sign in them of the ultimate soul-identity. They ask money for (performing) the worship ritual" (Tukaramanchi Gatha 147 verse 798:2).
>
> *Puujelaagii dravya maage| kaaya saange shishyaate?*
>
> "What can they tell their disciples?"

Tukaram repeatedly articulates the futility of the ritual practices of fasting, renunciation of family ties, and withdrawal to the forest, which were all part of the Hindu tradition. He says that without real devotion-internal purity all of this this is futile:

> *Nako saaNDU anna,nako sevuu vana, chitti naarayaNa sarva bhogii.*
>
> "Don't give up food; don't go to the forest; don't abandon family. What is important is, remember Narayana (God), all the time. That is the real ritual" (Tukaramnchi Gatha 239 verse 13680).

There is a strong rejection of these ascetic religious practices and embedded therein is a discourse reinterpreting Hinduism and one's identity as a Hindu. I mention just one practice that he repeatedly insists as central to Hinduism: the practice of repeating God's name, *naama japa*. Tukaram argued for the superiority of the ritual of *naamasamkirtan* (the ritual repetition of God's name) because it did not discriminate between the castes:

> *hechii maaze tapa hechii maaze daana | hechii amushThaan naama tuze*
>
> "Your name is my austerities, it is my charity, it is my ritual, your name!" (Tukaramanchi Gatha 616 verse 3755).
>
> "The one who takes on God's name, there is no discrimination for him of castes. When it rains, the water goes to the Ganges, all of it! Similarly, all

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castes are the same. They all go to God. When different kinds of wood, may it be sandalwood or any other kind, when placed in the fire, become one and same, everyone who utters God's name goes to God regardless of his caste" (Tukaramanchi Gatha 627 verse 3827).

aamhaa gharii dhana shabdaanchiica ratne|
shabdaanchiica shastre tatna karuu|
shabdachi aamucyaa jiivaance jiivana|
shabde vaaTuu dhana janalokaa|
tukaa mhaNe paahaa shabdachi haa deva|
shabdachi gaurava puujaa karuu||

"Words are the only Jewels I possess;
Words are the only clothes I wear;
Words are the only food that sustains my life;
Words are the only wealth I distribute among people" (Chitre 1991: 1).

Chitre, in his translation of Tukaram, makes Tukaram's voice of overthrowing the hegemony of the Brahmins heard in the present postcolonial moment after British cultural, linguistic, and political hegemony had washed away 'true Indian' identity; Chitre's translation has a performative function in the twentieth century postcolonial period. The translation reconstructs Indian identity against the colonial establishment. Just as Tukaram disowned his caste identity and directly connected with God (through his *naama*), the translator breaks the veil of the colonial structure and reaches out to the roots of his true identity. For Chitre, Tukaram's Brahmin becomes the metaphor for the colonial regime:

"The Brahmin
The *brahmin* who flies into a rage at the touch of a *mahar (person who belongs to low caste)*
 that is no *brahmin*,
The only absolution for such a *brahmin*
Is to die for his own sin.
He who refuses to touch a *chandal (untouchable low-caste person)*
Has a polluted mind.
Says Tuka, a man is only as chaste
As his own belief" (Chitre 1991: 115).

This is a redefinition of social stratification (not on the basis of caste, but on purity and chastity of belief—the purer the belief, the higher the person on the scale). Embedded in this is a redefinition of religion and its practices and, ultimately, a redefinition of one's self. The following quote is taken from Chitre's translation where God is metaphorized as a ghost:

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> "God as Ghost
> The Great Ghost of Pandhari (a town in Maharashtra)
> Pounces upon everyone who passes by.
> That forest is haunted by many spirits,
> Whoever enters it finds it maddening.
> O do not ever go there you!
> Nobody who goes there ever comes back
> Only once did Tuka go to Pandhari,
> He has not been born ever since" (Chitre 1991, 79).

This discourse transfers agency to God himself to liberate the soul from the cycles of rebirth and takes away the hegemonic religious practices that emphasize caste hierarchy and the power of the mediation of the priest over liberation. It also claims agency for oneself to receive god's grace through purity of mind.

3.2 A. K. Ramanujan

The next translator, Ramanujan, a well-known poet, writer, and critic, translated the *Vacanas*, some of the Virashaiva religious poems composed between the tenth and twelfth centuries in Kannada, a Dravidian language. Virashaiva refers to militant or heroic faith in the Hindu god Shiva. All of the *vacanakaras*, the composers of this poetry, speak of Shiva. These saint-poets, similar to Tukaram, belonged to the lower strata of society.

As Ramanujan points out:

> "Pan-Indian Sanskrit, the second language of cultured Indians for centuries, gave way to colloquial Kannada. The strictness of traditional meters, the formality of literary genres, divisions of prose and verse, gave way to the innovation and spontaneity of free verse, a poetry that was not recognizably in verse. The poets were not bards or Pandits in a court, but men and women speaking to men and women. They were of every class, caste, and trade, some were outcastes, some illiterate … they are a religious literature, literary because religious; great voices of a sweeping movement of protest and reform in Hindu society; witnesses to conflict and ecstasy in gifted mystical men. That is our wisdom literature. They have been called Kannada Upanishads" (Ramanujan 1973: 11).

These poets challenged and ridiculed the effectiveness of the High Vedic tradition in offering lamb in Vedic sacrifices:

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Basavanna 129.

"The sacrificial lamb brought for the festival
Ate up the green leaf brought for decoration.
Not knowing a thing about the kill,
It wants only to fill its belly;
Born that day, to die that day.
But tell me; did the killers survive,
O lord of the meeting rivers?"
(Ramanujan 1973:70)

The Virashaiva saints explicitly express their contempt for designating some places as holy and certain specific times as sacred according to high 'learned' Hinduism:

Dasimayya 98

"To the utterly at-one with Shiva,
There is no dawn, no new moon,
No noonday,
Nor equinoxes,
Nor sunsets,
Nor full moons;
His front yard is the true Benaras
O Ramanatha" (Ramanujan 1973: 105).

The Virashaiva poets questioned the legitimacy of the established classical belief system, social customs, rituals, image worship, religious sacrifices, temple building, and temple-going—privileged practices often denied to the poor. The saint-poets placed the highest value on the unmediated/direct experience of the Divine, which formed their 'inner core,' their real identity.

Ramanujan's translation of these *Vacanas* 'sayings' into English locate the original in the context of the hegemonic colonial past of Indian society and then relocated it to twentieth century post-colonial discourse. The voice of the Virashaiva poets is revived through translation and used to decolonize a self that has been caught in the web of British cultural hegemony, in terms of value system, self-definition, linguistic expression (English), and the idiom of life.

Basavanna 820

"The temple and the body
The rich will make temples for Shiva,
What shall I, a poor man do?

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My legs are pillars,
The body the shrine,
The head a cupola
Of gold.
Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,
Things standing shall fall, but the moving ever shall stay" (Ramanujan 1973: 88).

Bsavanna 563

"In a brahmin house
Where they feed the fire
As god.
When the fire goes wild
And burns the house
These men then forget their worship
And scold their fire,
O lord of meeting rivers!" (Ramanujan 1973: 85)

Bsavanna 33

"Like a monkey on a tree
It leaps from branch to branch
How can I believe or trust
This burning thing,
This heart?
It will not let me go
To my father,
My lord of the meeting rivers" (Ramanujan 1973: 68).

In this translation, we see the composer's contempt for the Brahmins, his resistance to their hegemony, the confidence he has in his own strength ("Things standing shall fall, but the moving ever shall stay"), and his strength of faith in his own perception/interpretation of Hinduism, which is different to earlier versions. It is important to note that there is no denial of a Hindu identity of his own, nor is there a rejection of Hinduism; rather, he is reclaiming his Hindu identity on his own terms in the face of Brahminic hegemony.

Ramanujan acknowledged that:

"Everyone's own tradition is not one's birthright; it has to be earned, repossessed. The old bards earned it by apprenticing themselves to the masters. One chooses and translates a part of one's past to make it present to oneself and maybe to others" (in Dharwadkar 1999: 122-123).

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This translation makes the voice of the saints relevant in the present as the poet establishes an equivalence between past and the present contexts to reclaim his roots.

4. Prabhupada's English Translation of the Bhagavadgita

The third twentieth century (1960s) English translation examined here is of the sacred Hindu text of the Bhagavadgita by Prabhupada, an ardent Hindu saint who founded a new sect of Hinduism in the US. The Hare Krishna sect, popularly known as ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness) in the US, interpreted Hinduism in the context of fifteenth-sixteenth century Bengali Vaishnavism (with the belief in devotion to Krishna as the supreme and ultimate Divinity). This sect attracted many young Americans who were looking for an alternative to established Christian church practices, which they perceived to be overly focused on following rules and lacking in developing a personal experience of one's connection with God (see Judah 1970). Prabhupada chose to translate Hindu texts of the past (Puranas, epics, etc.) that primarily focused on Krishna, the God who (as reported in the texts) revolted against established Vedic religious practices, which required the mediation of a priest to connect with the Divine, and emphasized direct/unmediated connection with the Divine. By dancing and singing with Krishna, the God of the cowherds, the common people could connect to the Divine without having to engage with traditional upper-caste dominated religious practices.

Prabhupada interpreted the Bhagavadgita, one of the key classical Sanskrit texts in Hinduism, in terms of worshipping Krishna. In so doing, Prabhupada recreated a previous moment in the history of Hinduism in twentieth century America, mirroring the context of Krishna's revolt against the established rules of religion. In an interview, Professor Harvey Cox, a scholar of Hinduism was asked by Steven Gelberg: "in what way was America ready for his [Prabhupada's] message [of devotion to Krishna]?" (1983: 42). Cox attributed the success of the Hare Krishna movement in the US in the 1970s to the failure of American capitalism to satisfy the needs of young Americans for community engagement, love, and personal value. Cox claimed that "Prabhupada chose the interpretation of the text as the text of devotion as proposed by the 15th century Bengal Vaishnavism of Madhusudana Saraswati and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, who had strongly supported the alternative path to the established Hindu Vedic practices" ibid.). Basham points out that the Chaitanya movement of Krishna worship in Bengal in the sixteenth century was a revolt against the established caste-

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dominated Hindu society with its emphasis on traditional, Brahmanical yajna (sacrificial) rituals (Gelberg 1983). Chaitanya viewed them as unnecessary for salvation and strongly argued for Krishna Bhakti (devotion to Krishna) as the path to salvation. Chaitanya held the Bhagavadgita to be the most sacred scripture of Hinduism and devotion to Krishna to be the path to God for all, regardless of their caste. Chaitanya saw the Bhagavadgita as a scripture of Divine love:

> "As far as its ethical emphasis is concerned, it taught fellowship and brotherhood and the love of man for man with an intensity which many religious movements in India didn't. In Chaitanya's order, all castes were welcome and they lived together in perfect amity and unity" (Basham 1983: 181).

This example supports the view that in twentieth century America, Prabhupada's translation of the Bhagavadgit made the voice of the past relevant to the present in the act of translation.

5. How is a Past Voice Made Relevant?

It is clear that the voice of the relevant source texts is one that rejects the hegemony of high Hindu culture, language, and religious practices. The question remains as to which linguistic devices are used by translators to recreate this voice? The language in the translations is certainly different—the translators have not retained the meters in which the source texts were composed. The translator has to work with two sets of linguistic constraints imposed by two different linguistic systems. To which system should the translator conform? In the three translations analyzed here, the translators do not conform to the syntax or meters of the source texts; rather, they transfer the metaphors, symbols, and imagery into English.

For example, Ramanujan calls these elements—images, symbols, and metaphors—the inner forms of the texts, while the linguistic structure/language is the outer form. Chitre (1973), in his translation of Tukaram, retains some Marathi words to carry over their symbolic meaning into English:

> "The Brahmin
> The ***brahmin*** who flies into a rage at the touch of a ***mahar*** (a person who belongs to a low caste)
> that is no ***brahmin***,
> The only absolution for such a ***brahmin***
> Is to die for his own sin.
> He who refuses to touch a ***chandal*** (an untouchable low-caste person)

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Has a polluted mind.
Says Tuka, a man is only as chaste
As his own belief" (Chitre 1991: 115).

Chitre retains the Marathi words, *chandal* and *mahar* 'low caste, untouchable person,' while Ramanujan retains the metaphor of the sacrificial lamb. Prabhupada foregrounds Krishna as the supreme being (as per its fifteenth-sixteenth century interpretation) in contrast to the ambiguity of the original text of the *Bhagawadgita*, in which Krishna stands for the abstract Divine-*Brahman*, as well as a concrete deity. In Prabhupada's translation, Krishna is the ultimate God. Prabhupada does not interpret Krishna as the abstract *Brahman*, but rather, as a concrete deity with whom the devotee can directly connect and communicate. The following example from Prabhupada's translation clearly illustrates this point.

tameva sharanam gaccha sarvabhaavena bhaarata
"O Bharata surrender unto him utterly!" (18: 62).

Prabhupada interprets the above as, "one should surrender to the Supreme personality of Godhead Krishna!" The Ultimate Divine indicated by *tam* is interpreted as Krishna, while *tam* does not unambiguously refer to Krishna but rather, to the Ultimate Divine (the abstract Brahman as well as the concrete Divine-Krishna). Prabhupada's Krishna-consciousness movement was motivated by the contemporary need of people in the US for a religion where the devotee could connect directly with the Divine. Prabhupada saw the situation in fifteenth-sixteenth Bengal as being similar to the US in the twentieth century—ordinary people felt excluded from the mainstream religion of the Christian church and young people felt the need for a religion where the devotees would have direct connection to the Divine and a community that would provide guidance on leading a moral and ethical life, while also retaining the sanctions of a religious tradition. In the sociocultural context of the US, Prabhupada considered the Bengali Vaishnavism of fifteenth-sixteenth century India to be the most appropriate religion and he chose the *Bhagavadgita* to be the primary scripture of what he called ISKCON (International Society of Krishna Consciousness).

5. The Performative Function

The preceding discussion shows that English translations of sacred Hindu texts have a performative function of recreating/re-building the identity of the individuals or communities in contemporary sociocultural contexts that

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are remarkably similar to the contexts of their respective source/original texts. These translations made the voices of their respective original texts relevant to the present, which mirrored their past contexts. The message is, 'it was done then, so it can be done now!' These source texts strongly expressed a rejection by marginalized sections of society of the hegemony of 'powerful' groups. The English translations of these texts in new social contexts—the postcolonial context in India and the church-oriented Christianity of the US in the 1970s—that were similar to those of their respective source texts, performed a twofold function: resisting hegemony and re-building identity.

A question that may be asked here: would not the use of English/non-Indian language belittle the purpose of recreating Indian and/or Hindu identity? It is necessary to refer to the views of the some of the critics of these prominent translators on this issue. In the Indian tradition of translating of sacred texts, the relationship between meaning and form is always changing. Hindu texts have been translated into many languages and these translations have been accepted as legitimate despite structural differences and differences in their metaphors and imagery etc. According to Patankar (1969), Devy (1993), and others, abstracting meaning from these texts and expressing it in another language has always been a part of the Indian tradition. According to Devy (1993), within the Indian philosophy of translation, the soul, i.e. meaning, can move from one linguistic form to another without any problem. The core meaning is maintained across languages. Devy calls this movement of the core meaning its 'metamorphosis' and claims that the 'core meaning' of the text continues to exist through changes in linguistic form. I would like to add to Devy's proposal that the performative function of the original text is maintained in translation. The change in the linguistic form does not necessarily change its performative function.

This explains why these translators chose their original texts. It also defines the relationship between a source text and its translation. In particular, the translation can be functionally equivalent to the source text. For example, postcolonial translations differ in their form/structure, but they share the same function (locating their cultural/religious roots). I propose that the theory of translation should incorporate the notion of contextual and functional equivalence between a source text and its translation.

I would also like to indicate a need to examine contextual similarities and responses to translations in terms of the selection of source texts and identity formation across diverse cultural and linguistic spaces in the current era of globalization, including: postcolonial translations; translations in hybrid

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and/or multilingual cultures and contexts; and translations in diasporas. One may ask how translators select source texts to 'localize' cultural identities in the face of globalization. In other words, how do translators incorporate the grammar of the culture of the original texts into the grammar of their translation?

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CHAPTER THREE

CALIBAN'S VERSES AND CURSES: THE DIALECT(IC)S OF SUBORDINATION IN SHAKESPEARE'S *THE TEMPEST*—FROM TEXT TO FILM

RAHUL K. GAIROLA

"If Caliban is to be regarded as a type of the bestial man, it is desirable that we determine in what his bestiality consists."

John E. Hankins (1947).

"I'm an eye. A mechanical eye. I, the machine, show you a world the way only I can see it. I free myself for today and forever from human immobility. I'm in constant movement. I approach and pull away from objects. I creep under them."

Dziga Vertov, Soviet formalist filmmaker (1923).

Part I. Links between Text, Formalism, Film

In the 2017 popular action film *Logan,* director James Mangold features the character Caliban (Stephen Merchant), an albino mutant, alongside the more popular Wolverine (Hugh Jackman). As one of the X-Men, Caliban is far from handsome or heroic; indeed, his bloodhound powers to detect and track other mutants seem to be magnified by his animalistic appearance. He is a bald albino with gaping, dark patches beneath his eyes whose skin begins to fry when directly exposed to sunlight. Because of this vulnerability, he betrays Wolverine and Professor Charles Xavier (Patrick Stewart) by disclosing their location when he is captured by the sinister agents of the Transgen Corporation. Towards the finale of Mangold's film, Caliban ultimately sacrifices his life for Logan/Wolverine and Laura, a mutant girl who we eventually learn is Logan's 'daughter' due to her mutant genetic make-up. Although this film has only recently been released around the

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globe, it gives literary scholars pause to consider how much Mangold's story borrows from and builds on William Shakespeare's original character.

Indeed, one might say that we *must* return to the abject figure of Caliban in today's global context, one in which walls are being built, immigrants are being deported, religious differences are being demonized, and the poor are socially stigmatized as rightwing conservatism spreads across the globe. Mangold's apocalyptic vision of the world in 2029, the year in which the narrative unfolds, strikes an unsettling chord with its doomsday visions of the past that echo the excruciating shockwaves emitting from Professor Xavier's seizures in *Logan*—similar to the anger experienced by the people of Hiroshima after being obliterated by nuclear warfare as described in Marguerite Duras' *Hiroshima Mon Amor* (1959). Like *Logan*, the film's narrative relies heavily on traumatic memories that erupt into present social relations. In the film, the female protagonist, Nevers, condemns global nuclearization wrought by "the principle of inequality, advanced by certain peoples against other peoples, by certain races against other races, by certain classes against other classes."

This bleak theme seems to underscore the driving motivations for the persecution and execution of socially-transgressive peoples—from the dark-skinned beings of William Shakespeare and the Orientalized fanatics in Duras' film, to Mangold's mutants of the twenty-first century. That is, "the principles of inequality" constitute what we can think of as a social grammar that produces all of these subjects as outsiders in the language of English texts and Western cinema. Whether we are viewing the scorned subjects of Shakespeare or those of Mangold, the abject subjects of darkness and difference have not changed much while, alarmingly, the historical contexts that frame them have. In particular, the self-sacrifice of Mangold's Caliban in *Logan*, I would argue, compels us to excavate the literary and filmic language of days past, which shape this popular character for today's millennials. Thus, the goal of this contribution is to extend the previous chapters by comparing and analyzing the written and filmic language in Shakespeare's original play (1611) and the BBC/Time-Life recording of the play (1987).

The relationship between text and film is especially fascinating since critics are presented with two distinctly different mediums that feature distorting characteristics particular to each form. Although many take the written text to be the 'purer,' less manipulative/manipulated narrative form, its meaning is nonetheless scripted by the constraints of punctuation, capitalization, and an array of other formal techniques, which are analyzed by the New Critics.

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Likewise, yet ultimately quite differently, the language of cinema is completely contrived—a sequential linking of images that render meaning to the viewer solely through the system of sociocultural signs within which he has been raised. If we regard both films and texts as narratives, then we can see that both mediums construct varying identities by utilizing different methods. Perhaps most importantly for our purposes here, both prefigure systems of cultural symbols that operate like a language in conveying identities to readers and viewers.

In "Identity and Narrative," Madan Sarup claims:

> "Identity, in my view, may perhaps be best seen as a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings blend and clash. These writings consist of many quotations from the innumerable centres of culture, ideological state apparatus and practices: parents, family, schools, the workplace, the media, the political parties, the state" (1996: 25).

In *The Tempest*, it may be safe to assume that the narrative in Shakespeare's text and that in the BBC's film are similar, but is it valid to claim that the identities are the same? And if formal elements of language in written texts, like punctuation, capitalization etc., bestow upon critics a methodology for manifesting them, then what formal techniques correspondingly function in films? Though we are meditating here on two different ways of presenting the same narrative, formalism is an innovative heuristic that allows us to explicate both versions of Caliban's identity and lend insight into the character's trans-historical construction—from the language of text to cinema as a neocolonial subject.

As Sarup notes, "the author or storyteller can arrange the incidents in a story in a great many ways. S/he can treat some in detail and barely mention or even omit others. Each arrangement produces a different plot" (1996: 17). A number of literary critics have argued that Caliban is a personified allegory for *post*colonialism (if such a thing exists since 'post' implies a period beyond colonialism), and I do not intend to refute this argument, although the term 'postcolonial' is problematic for me. I will nevertheless use the terms postcolonial and neocolonial interchangeably, since in this case 'post,' referring to the period beyond colonialism, indicates a new type of colonialism. The goal of this essay is threefold: 1) to identify formal, historical, and narrative elements in Shakespeare's text that subordinate Caliban to a *post*colonial status; 2) to identify formal filmic techniques in the BBC/Time Life film version of the play that visually subordinate Caliban; and 3) to synthesize and link these observations to cultural theory.

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I engage in this process because, in Bill Ashcroft's words, "such texts allegorize so well the dynamics of imperial power, they offer a rich site for the consideration of post-colonial issues, and one of these is the future of Caliban's language" (2009: 17). Many postcolonial readings of Caliban have deconstructed Shakespeare's brutish creation, heralding him a symbol of oppressed, indigenous people (de Sousa Santos 2002; Ashcroft 2009; Chand and Chaudhary 2013). Yet, a gap that most of them have fallen into is the privileging of Shakespeare's written play as the 'origin' of the development of the many mutations of the character of Caliban, and his exceptional, subhuman otherness—from text to comic books to television series to the big screen. To hermeneutically curate an insightful reading of both cultural texts, I will unravel the neocolonial narrative by utilizing the tools of formalism, diction, historicization, and theory. These will show the ways in which the language of theatre and cinema offer us a timely history of the past in and through the figure of Caliban as a racialized subaltern.

Part II. Caliban as Colonialist Text

In the written play, Shakespeare socially subordinates Caliban in many ways through the use of language, mirroring Prospero's pathologization of the accursed islander. One such facet is the racism directed towards Caliban by Prospero, Miranda, and the other white Europeans he encounters. In *The Tempest*, as in colonized societies, racism functions as a self-conscious ideology of imperialism that safeguards "the entire system of exploitation of the many by the few in one nation and among nations" (Thiongo 1993: 117). This notion is especially notable when applied to the play—Shakespeare gives no vocal agency to the other oppressed peoples of Caliban's indigenous isle. Sycorax, the powerful and vicious sea witch and mother of Caliban, the children of Caliban, and other natives are literally invisible. We are presented only with the negated character of Caliban, whose very name in the English language may be a reformulation of the word 'cannibal,' or human flesh-eater.

Aside from this monstrous and dark figure, Shakespeare offers up no other native islanders whose testimonies we can hear or whose forms we can evaluate. Caliban is thus reduced to a minority surrounded by 'cultured,' white Europeans in a tableau that looks alarmingly similar to that of Mangold's Caliban in *Logan* and the pathologized figures of the immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker in contemporary discourses of xenophobia. The construction and portrayal of Caliban as a brute was fairly simple to understand for the intended audience of theatre-going Elizabethans in an era

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of British imperialism. To put it simply, Caliban represents a colonized other whose pathology is greatly over-determined by the ongoing abhorrence of dark skin both in and beyond cultural representation today. Though fact-riddled, Roberto Femandez Retamar's "Caliban Speaks Five Hundred Years Later" offers a meticulous historical survey of the European colonization of 'the West' that cites capitalist greed as the primary source for the genocide and enslavement of other peoples, notably those of Africa (1996).

Christopher Columbus' 'great discovery' (which popularly implies nonexistence before Europeans stumbled upon the Americas in their pursuit of wealth) of 'Indians' occurred in 1492, approximately 120 years before *The Tempest* was written. There is no question that Shakespeare failed to draw on the factual conquests of the African people to form the Manichean aesthetics that shape Caliban throughout the narrative kernels of his play. Caliban is described as a "savage and deformed slave" in the list of players; conquest in the narrative is facilitated by crossing oceans; and Ariel and Prospero cite Sycorax's birthplace as Algiers, the capital of the north African nation of Algeria (Bevington 1988). Shakespeare's renowned romantic poetry takes an ugly turn in terms of Caliban: he is referred to with a demeaning myriad of pejoratives that reflect the intense racism projected by Europeans on people of color—"lying slave," "whelp," "hagseed," and "malice" are but a handful of the pejoratives projected onto Caliban by Prospero in Act I (ibid. 17-20).

The narrative of *The Tempest* illustrates hegemonic influence in Act II when Caliban encounters Stephano and Trinculo. This scene in the play is less blatantly racist, but still displays condescension towards Caliban and acts as an allegory of colonized nations. This is evidenced by Trinculo's and Stephano's immediate paralleling of Caliban to a "strange beast" and devil and/or savage, then "a dead Indian," and "the men of Ind" (ibid. 40-1). This gross association immediately echoes the imperialist racism experienced by the so-called darker races of India. Indeed, Caliban seems a model for the native's sexual perversity featured in E. M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* (1924) in which the Indian protagonist is falsely accused of raping a British woman and in the Merchant Ivory film of the same title directed by David Lean in 1984. After this initial comparison, Stephano and Trinculo berate Caliban by calling him "a strange fish," "a monster," "mooncalf," and "a cat" (1988: 40-3). This string of pejoratives used by Shakespeare through Stephano and Trinculo constructs Caliban as an animal rather than a human being.

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Perhaps of greater interest here than the familiar discourse of the European dehumanization of indigenous peoples is the fact that these animals are extraordinary and ethereal, and capable of supernatural, we might even say 'mutant,' powers. This is reflected in the Caliban character featured in Mangold's 2017 film and the ways in which Shakespeare's bigotry persists in the racialization of today's Calibans. This also reflects Retamar's observation that "the term 'race' was forged by the West in the sixteenth century when ... it was borrowed—so it has been said—from zoological terminology" (1996: 165). Though Caliban is presumably Prospero's slave, hegemony is exerted upon him by Stephano too when he gives him the moniker "mooncalf" and later proclaims that he dropped out of the heavens and out of the moon (43-4). To this, Caliban gleefully replies, "I'll show thee every inch o' the island / And I will kiss thy foot. I prithee, be my god" (1988: 44). Caliban's sycophancy is a caricature that persists in Mangold's character, thus plotting a trajectory from Shakespeare to Mangold that traverses centuries of stereotyping as it maps out historical articulations of mimicry and subjectivity.

At this point, I wish to connect the time frames around these historical and textual events: as noted by Retamar, Columbus' 'discovery' of the 'New World' occurred in 1492 following the rampant spread of capitalism throughout Europe (1996). Indeed, in *Logan*, the entire motivation for killing the new and old mutants is for the creation of a profiteering war machine that is driven by the Transgen Corporation. The composition of *The Tempest* a century and a quarter later marked the evolution of hegemonic conquest—Columbus had landed in the Bahamas (where he encountered brown-skinned peoples), termed the area the West Indies (historically and currently definitive though completely misleading) and spread Christianity, while happily accepting gold objects given to him by the indigenous population. The encounter between Caliban and Stephano mimics this exchange, producing the brown other as an object of vile humour and Western disdain just as the mutants in the entire X-Men series are viewed by the US Government.

The language of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* seems to jump out of the pages of the play with respect to race, history, and cultural hegemony. Columbus, himself Italian, named the isles he found after India; in a reconfigured colonialist mimicry, Stephano and Trinculo suppose Caliban is an Indian. The linguistic binary of "mooncalf" (Caliban) / "man i' the moon" (Stephano) sets up an unequal relationship between the two: Stephano is a god fallen from the heavens while Caliban is his foot-licking worshiper. This non-secular binary ensconced in words is further underscored by the

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infantile condescension of a "mooncalf" as a baby animal that presumably trails behind its authoritarian master, the man in the moon. There is no nourishing mother here to trail behind, but rather a celestial body whose patriarchal reach reconfigures Hegel's master-slave dialectic in the skies. Again, we are here returned to a historical context, for Columbus' conquest of the New World included the violent inscription of Christianity upon the dark hearts of those dark people. Indigenous peoples, for which Shakespeare's Caliban allegorizes, or Mangold's Caliban, which symbolizes alienness on earth, were forced to assimilate to European ideologies and were aggressively coerced to do so.

Shakespeare uses the negative or Manichean connotation of darkness to further antagonize Caliban, for not only is he dark-skinned, but he is dark-souled as well. Mangold's millennial representation of Shakespeare's character in *Logan* literally dissipates when exposed to sunshine, his pale white skin dissolving beneath the fiery star's rays. The point here is not the colour of his skin in this version of Caliban per se, but that skin is the contact zone upon which sunlight can be the guarantor of good and evil. The language of cinema, in other words, visually marks the social transgression of Mangold's Caliban. In Shakespeare's written text, another kind of supernatural battle between good and evil forces surfaces in the language used by the playwright. British critic David L. Hirst notes in *Text & Performance: The Tempest* that while Prospero employs 'white' magic in his control of the isle, "however sympathetic we may feel to the exploited native [Caliban], Shakespeare does not allow us to experience anything but repugnance and fear in considering his birth and the function of his mother's sorcery" (1984: 22).

If we historicize the narrative of the play, there is a deeper implication in Caliban's demonic nature and Sycorax's 'black' magic as it relates to global xenophobia today encoded, as it is, through skin colour. The Elizabethans and Jacobeans greatly feared and savagely hunted witches, and this historical fear was one of the most powerful tools manipulated by Shakespeare to construct Caliban as a hateful wretch (Hirst 1984). Perhaps this is why we too are convinced, and herein currently *unconvinced*, that Caliban is as evil a creature as Shakespeare portrays him to be. In his interpretation of the relationship between culture and hegemony, Dick Hebdige writes, "the objections are lodged, the contradictions displayed (and 'magically resolved') at the profoundly superficial level of appearances: that is, at the level of signs" (Hebdige 1993: 367). Literally, 'white' magic resolves the Europeans' dilemmas while Caliban is debased for his physical appearance, which is muddled by Shakespeare's imperialist,

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racist signs. These signs dominate the depiction of Mangold's Caliban in *Logan* and the adolescent mutants fleeing from the Mexican to the Canadian border in that film. Caliban's pathology in the X-Men film seems to be over-determined to the point that it spills over and into the other characters.

Caliban's system of signs, his perceptions of signifier/signified and self-referential discourse of interpellation, is a function of Prospero's hegemonic imposition of language and learning on him. Even in cursing Prospero, Caliban claims that without his books, Prospero is "but a sot, as I am, nor hath not / One spirit to command" (Bevington 1988: 53). Conversely, Prospero's learning of usurpation is a consequence of having been usurped from his own dukedom in Milan. Prospero 'learns' hegemony as a reproduced process and is successful in conditioning Caliban by legitimizing his control of the isle by 'educating' the slave (Hebdige 1993). On a larger scale, hegemonic influence is reproduced five times in *The Tempest*: 1) by Shakespeare over Elizabethan audiences (simply by writing the play); 2) by Antonio (for usurping Prospero); 3) by Prospero on two different occasions (over Caliban then Ferdinand); and 4) by Stephano (over Caliban). This web of hegemonic influence is resolved at the end of the play for everyone except Caliban and the indigenous people inhabiting the island. Prospero never acknowledges Caliban's freedom, nor does the final scene hold any evidence that the conquering Europeans leave the island (Greenblatt 1988).

The Europeans make amends diplomatically without a second thought of Caliban or the pre-existing social order disrupted by their vendettas and dilemmas. The ability to curse, and to be heard doing so, has little meaning or sway here. These layers of hegemonic influence and facets of neocolonialism render the written text of *The Tempest* a drama, not comedy, revolving around ideologies of power and culture—hegemony is directly connected to the paradigm of social power in the play from an Althusserian viewpoint. Caliban is a metaphor for the oppressed working class (base) that is conquered first by Prospero (the superstructure), then by Stephano when the marooned European uses the historical medium of alcohol (according to Marx) to gain control of and appease the oppressed class (Althusser 1977). Prospero represents the Althusserian Institutional State Apparatus (ISA) and his magic functions as the policing Repressive State Apparatus (RSA); Prospero *is* the superstructure and embodies "the machine of repression" described by Althusser as the perpetuator of social stratification. Through historicization and formalism, it is possible to engage in a close reading of the play in relation to Mangold's film.

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Part III. Visual Articulations of Caliban

By contrast, we must deconstruct the formal elements of the BBC/Time Life film of *The Tempest* by using historicization and visual analysis to deconstruct the brutalization of Caliban. When the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) announced in 1978 that it would partner with the America-based Time Life and televise 36 of Shakespeare's plays, Americans actors were outraged to discover that British Equity refused to hire any American actors (Epstein 1993). Regardless of the American co-sponsor, the BBC claimed their goal was to deliver Shakespeare to a mass market audience in its 'purest' Elizabethan form—no Mel Gibson was to redefine *Hamlet* (1990), nor could Keanu Reeves be in a production of *Much Ado About Nothing* (1993). The result was the BBC/Time Life series, *The Shakespeare Plays*—a fairly conventional series that fails to explore the depths of Shakespeare through avant-gardism and character experimentation, unlike Baz Luhrmann's *William Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet* (1996). In film, the auteur (French for 'author of the film') theory holds that the director is as responsible for the film as the author of the text to convey the narrative. That is, the filmmaker is the 'author' of the film and thus alphabetized language can be likened to semiotic language. This theory is problematic when applied to the Shakespeare series since its narrative and setting clearly reflects Elizabethan perspectives, which curtails the creative license granted to the auteur.

The translation of the written text of *The Tempest* into an 'Elizabethan' filmic style not only elucidates how identity was once looked upon, but also how the subject may have been seen in that era (Berger 1972). The director of the BBC version, John Gorrie, rejects a glamorized Hollywood approach and thus compels us to pay close attention to the formal aspects of the play, including blocking, angles, colours, shots, and mise-en-scêne (the entire composition of a frame), which are instrumental in visually articulating meaning to the viewer. We see this when Caliban is first introduced in the film: Caliban's moving space on the set is the woods, Prospero's is the coast, and Ariel's is the island mist. Viewers are introduced to an ape-like Caliban covered with hair, and as the camera pans across him in a close-up shot, he hobbles into Prospero's moving space, falling in submission. The camera cuts to a shot that subordinates the native into the lower-right hand corner of the frame, where we get our first dose of his introductory, filmic construction: he is a sniveling, crag-clutching, infant-like creature with heavy brows and a dirty face. Bent-over and servile, a dark aberration to both social beings and social order who cowers before those in power,

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Mangold's Caliban in 2017 seems to have been modeled after Gorrie's caricature from 30 years earlier.

A close reading of the filmic techniques used here allows us to survey the language of cinema as it relates to colonial identity and Caliban as an allegory both then and now. Gorrie cross-cuts close-up sequences in this scene with frames of a gown-clad Prospero towering above Caliban on the left-hand side in the mise-en-scêne, holding a staff like a tyrannical specter. Though the camera shifts our gaze between the two characters equally, giving both visual agency, Caliban is brutalized through posture (he is slumped), apparel (he is clad in brown rags), and sound (his voice has a cacophonic tone). Dull colors and low-key lighting cast a tenebrous aura on the character, visually paralleling darkness and dark skin. By contrast, Miranda and her father retain upright postures and are illuminated in high key lighting. The camera switches to a close-up of Caliban squinting as he scornfully exclaims, "You taught me language, and my profit on it is I know how to curse. Red Plague rid you for learning me your language!" Here, in perhaps the most famous lines of the play, a valid discrepancy arises between what Caliban *says* and what we actually *hear*: while the danmed figure's language is that of Prospero, the tone in which he mimics those words is exceptionally brutish.

How is it that Caliban has learned English and eloquent Elizabethan verse, but not European phonology? This element of the film's soundtrack implies that not even the assimilation of the English language can change Caliban's bestial identity, although he can be 'tamed' to fit the narrative even as other European figures debase him with inhuman pejoratives. As Prospero threatens to physically abuse his slave, he menacingly aims a pointing finger at a Caliban still cowering in the lower right of the frame. In response, Caliban holds up a yielding hand in compliance as he exclaims, "No, pray thee!" A visual irony is created in this sequence. Although in this frame Caliban has more visual agency since his image occupies more space on the screen, he is ideologically subordinated through threats of violence. The camera pans across a hunchbacked Caliban as he scurries off into the woods to execute Prospero's bidding, then dissolves into a medium shot of Ariel, translucent and ethereal, singing with gilded skin and voice. This sequence illustrates the drastically different portrayals of Ariel and Caliban, both servants to Prospero. Director John Gorrie does not construct Caliban with the ethereal qualities or golden backlighting that characterize Ariel; in fact, Caliban is not even portrayed as a creature with potential magical powers, 'black' or otherwise.

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Act II of the BBC production utilizes the same techniques to visually portray Caliban's neocolonial status in a different arena. Our gaze is now directed at Caliban collecting wood on the desolate seashore, the frame divided into gray sky and brown beach. When Trinculo and Stephano find each other, Caliban crawls on all fours from beneath his gabardine while proclaiming Stephano is "a brave god with celestial liquor." Here, the ideology of darkness is reconstructed visually as part of the landscape occupied by Caliban—the dreary set is devoid of light or bright colors, emanating an oppressive feeling. In addition, Gorrie's portrayal of Caliban on all fours in this sequence reflects, like his crude tone of voice, inherent bestiality. When the camera gives Caliban cinematic agency (via close-up shots) in this sequence, the effect emphasizes his stupidity; either he is making foolish statements like "Hast thou dropped from Heaven" and "I do adore thee," or he is kissing Stephano's boots. By contrast, Gorrie attributes cinematic agency to Trinculo via close-up shots and through the language of cinema we can clearly hear the court jester berate Caliban.

Throughout the film, the camera distances us from Caliban, approaching him with close-up shots to emphasize his servility, ignorance or anger. Act III.2 opens with him crouched on the forest ground at Stephano's side, and in the ensuing close-up, Caliban asks Stephano, "How does thy honor? Let me lick thy shoe!" Following this demeaning query, Caliban hobbles about on both knees, and subsequent close-ups depict him savagely yelling at Trinculo and plotting against Prospero. His tone is especially harsh in these close shots, his mouth gurgling with furious saliva. In the visual language of cinema, the Europeans are always positioned on higher planes whether due to height differences in the landscape of the woods or Caliban's constant, bent posture. The camera zooms in on Caliban for an instant in the scene, but the potential for visual emphasis is negated: as Caliban plots with Stephano on how to usurp Prospero, he looks wild-eyed into the camera and trails off into a monologue about Miranda's beauty. The scene, however, is not in praise of Miranda—Gorrie constructs the wild-eyed Caliban as rapacious and as one whose dark propensity for sexual abomination with white women echoes scenes from D. W. Griffiths' *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

Here, a curious discrepancy arises in the written text, which throws into question the relationship between language, identity, and sexual proclivity. If Caliban has never seen a woman besides Sycorax (his mother) and Miranda (who he is said to attempt to rape), then how could he people "else / This isle with Calibans?" (Bevington 1988: 22). If Sycorax and Miranda are the only two females on the island, how did *he* procreate? It seems we have caught the renowned bard in a textually-flawed antagonization of

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Caliban where the limitations of language are reconciled by the widespread demonization of tropical peoples who must be conquered and who are happy to serve white masters. This glitch in Shakespeare's text translates into the visual language of Gorrie's film. When Stephano, Trinculo, and Caliban approach Prospero's coastal moving space, both Europeans sit down and Caliban is finally visually dominant on a heightened plane in the upper right hand corner of the frame. Again, his speech is uninspiring—he is plotting against Prospero and given cinematic agency to emphasize the intended murder. When he and Stephano are pulled into the foreground of the scene, Caliban again occupies a lower visual plane in the right side of the frame though it is equally divided vertically. These simulations of linguistic tone and accent in the grammar of cinema demonstrate, I would argue, a persistence in racialized power relations rather than the evolving contours of language over human experiences of time and space.

Gorrie most forcefully depicts Caliban as an uncouth, cursing creature in the final scene in which he is reunited with Prospero; this scene in particular is reminiscent of Mangold's Caliban after he is reunited with Wolverine and Professor Xavier in *Logan* after essentially betraying them. It also echoes Ridley Scott's *1492: The Conquest of Paradise* and other films depicting Columbus' stumbling on the Americas and the immediate sense of exoticism and domination experienced by lofty Europeans in silky robes when initially encountering indigenous peoples. In Gorrie's vision of Shakespeare's play, Ariel summons the drunken trio from the woods: Caliban spots his master/tormentor and the other Europeans with a look of horror on his face as he clutches the nearest tree. In this scene, he remains to the left of the frame, visually unremoved from his moving space of the forest. This scene cuts to a panoramic mise-en-scêne of the Europeans at full shot standing from the left to the right of the frame in silent observation and disbelief at the scene emerging from the woods. Caliban breaks from the duo, scurries to the feet of Prospero and drops in submission with a downcast head.

Gorrie's cinematic language here is very clear: both to the left and the right sides of the framing of this sequence, Europeans tower above Caliban looking down at him as Antonio states, "One of them is a plain fish, and no doubt marketable." The following sequence cross-cuts between Caliban and Prospero in a particularly effective manner of cathecting negative Manichean connotations to the visual language of cinema: when we *hear* Prospero berate Caliban, the camera switches our gaze to Caliban so that we *see* him (rather than Prospero). Thus, viewers relate the string of pejoratives ("misshapen knave," "demidevil" and "bastard one") to the *sight of* Caliban.

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And this sight is not a pretty one at all: the slave is grovelling on his knees, grinding his yellowish teeth and lolling his tongue much to the Europeans' and our disgust. This is the last close-up we see of Caliban before he arises and scurries off at Prospero's bidding. Despite the preceding deconstruction in which we have engaged to challenge the subordinating techniques that Gorrie deploys to frame his rendition of Caliban, the grammar of this representation demonstrates the persistence of Shakespeare's disdain for Caliban across the gulf of 376 years with catastrophic effect in the twenty-first century.

Part IV. Cultural Grammars of Domination

In their book, *Shakespeare's Caliban: A Cultural History,* Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan observe that the character has relatively few lines in the play in comparison to other characters:

> "He [Caliban] has a scant 177 lines of text (compare Prospero's 653 lines), and he appears in only five of the nine scenes, yet Caliban is central to *The Tempest*'s plot and structure and to its dialogue ... Almost as important as his own lines, of course, are the volume and significance of the words spoken to him or about him ... Of all the characters in The Tempest, Caliban is the most enigmatic and the most susceptible to drastic fluctuations in interpretations. He is Shakespeare's changeling" (1993: 7).

In expanding the notion that Caliban is Shakespeare's changeling in and through the ways in which he speaks and is spoken about in the play, I should like to conclude by noting that I have here fused a traditional close reading of text with a close reading of film to demonstrate the ways in which the identity of Caliban has changed, but essentially stayed the same over the centuries. In the evolution of Shakespeare's play from 1611 to John Gorrie's 1987 BBC film and, finally, to James Mangold's mutant namesake in 2017's *Logan,* Caliban seems to consistently occupy the dark side of subjectivity both linguistically and filmically.

While postcolonial discourse has arguably humanized Caliban to the point that he appears a gentle monster when transformed into Mangold's mutant, in my reading, Caliban is the twenty-first century allegory of the abject native in his/her own homeland, racialized and told to leave as the function of racialized exploitation comes full circle. Shakespeare's verses are curses on the very people for whom Caliban serves as allegory, and are as significant today with militant white supremacy and extreme xenophobia haunting the very metropolises to which postcolonial immigrants fled and where their children were born. As I have demonstrated throughout, the

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Manichean binary of light/dark cathects particularly well to the different cultural manifestations of Caliban—from the original text of the Elizabethan era to the filmic texts in the neoliberal/millennial eras. His language, image, and identity dwell together, as I have demonstrated throughout my comparative empirical analysis, on the underside of respectability as it is represented in the vernacular of spoken and lived existence. With respect to language and identity, we may continue to better understand the challenges of xenophobia and racialized power relations by looking at the familiar ways in which they have operated before, seeking out the ghosts of the past that today shape the monstrosity in textual and filmic language for which Caliban serves an immortal allegory.

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CHAPTER FOUR

DUTIFUL GIRLS, DEFIANT BOYS: GENDERED LITERARY IMAGINATION IN THE WORKS OF NAZIR AHMAD

IRFANULLAH FAROOQI

Introduction

The importance of language as a fundamental human activity requires no intellectual endorsement. A body of credible work produced over the past few decades has made us aware of its significance as a carrier of meaning. That said, we have moved far beyond the phase when the vitality of language was solely articulated in relation to communication. Ours is an intellectual milieu where, given the insistence on meaning, language is understood in terms of how it carves out certain kinds of relationships within society. Perhaps this is the reason why Clifford Geertz, a pioneer of symbolic anthropology, described culture as 'essentially semiotic.'[1]

The necessity of literature, in effect, is premised on understanding language as a meaningful human activity. Human beings have to strive to be understood by fellow human beings. That is why the desire to express oneself is inescapable. Our articulations can vary on a scale of literariness, but we are all constantly expressing ourselves with one purpose or another. It is this intent/purpose behind literary expression that takes us to the heart of what goes into the creation of a literary product—literary imagination.

In this chapter, I wish to engage with the gendered literary imagination of Nazir Ahmad (1830-1912), a renowned Muslim reformist in colonial India, also considered by many to be a novelist. On the basis of a close reading of two of his celebrated works, *Miratul Uroos* (The Bride's Mirror) and

[1] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1975), 5.

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Taubatun Nusooh (The Repentance of Nusooh), I aim to look at how Nazir Ahmad's portrayal of girls and boys is extremely gendered. The progress of his characters in these literary creations clearly asserts a conventional understanding of domesticity and a host of attributes and traits associated with that realm/sphere. What follows also attempts to question Nazir Ahmad's reformist agenda—one where literature was essentially seen as educational—by outlining the narrowness of his understanding of womanhood.

Nazir Ahmad: A Brief Sketch

Nazir Ahmad was born in a small village in the district of Bijnor in what was then called the North-Western Provinces. His initial education took place under the supervision of learned and respectable *Maulvis* (highly qualified Islamic scholars) of the region. After being initiated into the essentials of *Ashraf* culture,[2] Nazir Ahmad was sent to Delhi to be educated in a *Madrassah*. By chance he was offered a scholarship to study at Delhi College. Nazir Ahmad's stay at Delhi College was remarkably fruitful.

After his stint at Delhi College, Nazir Ahmad served the government in various capacities. He learned English while he was in service and gradually attained commendable proficiency. His competence in the language is demonstrated by his Urdu translations of the Income Tax Act, the Indian Penal Code, and the Criminal Procedure Code. These special services in relation to detailed texts of law were eventually rewarded with a senior position in the Revenue Department. The nature of his service was such that he was able to read and write alongside accomplishing his assigned tasks. After his retirement, reading and writing became the sole focus of his life.

Nazir Ahmad's case is somewhat unique because his life and works take us beyond the simplistic categorisation of tradition and modernity. He was an ardent supporter of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, but at the same time took pride in Indo-Islamic traditions. The fact that he was critical of some of the ideas promoted by Sir Syed Ahmad Khan—specifically in relation to imitating the West—requires only a passing mention.[3] There were instances when he

[2] I have used the term *Ashraf* as signifying the culture of the nobles or elites, i.e. of people who were always conscious of their culture and dispositions as being decisively different from the lower sections of society.

[3] For a nuanced understanding of Nazir Ahmad's differences with Sir Syed Ahmad Khan see Nazir Ahmad, "Nazir Ahmad's Letter to His Son," trans. Ralph Russell, *Annual of Urdu Studies* 18 (2003): 492-500. Moreover, his literary work *Ibnul Waqt*

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annoyed theologians and there were occasions when he found admirers among them. He took up the pen to respond to his times in his own way. His association with modernists and his occasional support among traditionalists did not define his literary flair.

Nazir Ahmad's Literary Works

Nazir Ahmad was among the pioneers of those reformist writers who wrote for a purely Indian audience. Along with the likes of Sir Syed, Altaf Husain Hali, and Shibli Nomani he made de-Persianized Urdu his language of expression. By the 1860s, Urdu had become a marker of Muslim identity and so it is not surprising that in subsequent years it would become the language of Muslim reformist discourse. This reformist discourse, particularly in light of the writings of Nazir Ahmad and Hali, expressed deep concern about reforming women. Urdu was the language of everyday conversations, which is why it was more accessible for women. Therefore, reformist literature produced for women had to be presented in Urdu.

Nazir Ahmad's literary works brought literature and education together. The educational component of his works is too prominent to be ignored. Most scholars working on Urdu studies, Islam and Muslims in South Asia, or the cultural and literary history of South Asia consider his work didactic. Christina Oesterhald has quite aptly called his literature 'advice literature' where, fundamentally, female characters are advised by elderly male characters.[4] The advice has strong moral foundations. However, what needs to be kept in mind is that there is a class dimension to the moral content of his literary works. This is why scholars using morality in the context of his works do not imply righteousness, but a set of values that has a class-specific character.[5] This morality was the morality of the nobility—a class that was living through its last days.

(Man of the Moment) highlights the problems faced by a man raised in a traditional setting in adopting a Western lifestyle. Another work of his, *Rooya-e-Saadiqah* (True Dreams), is about how a wife reforms her husband who has studied at Aligarh Muslim University and has become irreligious.

[4] See Christina Oesterhald, "Islam in Contemporary South Asia: Urdu and Muslim Women," *Oriente Moderno*, Nuova serie 23, no. 84 (2004): 217-243.

[5] Qamar Rais, "Modern Urdu Fiction and the New Morality," *Indian Literature* 21, no. 5 (September-October 1978): 69.

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Notwithstanding the immense contribution of Nazir Ahmad in relation to Urdu prose, it is difficult to call him a novelist in the true sense of the term.[6] He was certainly a first-rate writer who produced a number of literary texts. However, his priorities were not those of a novelist, nor were his intentions. His characters are flat and one-sided and his narratives disturbingly linear. Of the several works he produced during a significant writing career, only *Taubatun Nusooh* (The Repentance of Nasooh) comes close to being novel. While it remains didactic, just like his other works, the characters of *Taubat* have more layers to them.

The literary works of Nazir Ahmad do not introduce the reader to the many sidedness of fiction. Although he has an extraordinary command of language, his instructive tone dilutes the fictive content of his works: the reformist in Nazir Ahmad always seems to gets the better of the writer in him. Despite being such a gifted writer, it is striking that he never became a full-fledged novelist.

Nazir Ahmad did not become a novelist simply because he did not want to. His "covertly humorous moralism" pushed him away from the aesthetic essentials of his literary works.[7] His characters did not speak their own language. They were hopelessly tied to Nazir Ahmad's reformist bent of mind. The message he wished to preach became so important that the characters simply lost their essence. Regardless of some of these serious shortcomings and issues, Nazir Ahmad's characters spoke a new language and were set in a familiar-yet-new setting. These works gave the language of the *zenana* (the exclusively female part of a house) a breath of fresh air and therefore became not just stories, but trendsetting tales.

Gendered Literary Imagination in *Miratul Uroos* and *Taubatun Nusooh*

Miratul Uroos (The Bride's Mirror, henceforth MU) was published in 1869. For many, it is the first Urdu novel.[8] There are two claims relating to how

[6] For a reasonable discussion on the issue see Christina Oesterhald, "Nazir Ahmad and the Early Urdu Novel: Some Observations," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 16 (2001): 27-42. Another useful resource is M. Asaduddin, "First Urdu Novel: Contesting Claims and Disclaimers," *Annual of Urdu Studies* 16 (2001): 76-97.
[7] Rais, "Modern Urdu Fiction," 71.
[8] In his introduction to the collected works of Nazir Ahmad, Dr. Salim Akhtar has denied it the status of a novel. According to him it should be considered a textbook written to guide women's behaviour in a certain manner [quoted in Rubina Saigol,

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this work came into being. The first one tells us that Nazir Ahmad wrote the book for his daughters since there was no suitable textbook for young girls that could instruct them on how to lead a purposeful and virtuous life. The second explanation informs us that Nazir Ahmad wrote MU in response to a notification issued by the government. In August 1868, the government of the North-Western Provinces announced prizes for books with educational content. According to the announcement, these books were to be written in "one or other of the current dialects, Oordoo or Hindee"; it further specified that "books suitable for women of India will be especially acceptable, and well rewarded."[9] Given the notification's specific directive vis-à-vis educational content for Indian women in accessible language, one is inclined to link it to the publication of MU. Nazir Ahmad, however, denied having written MU in response to the notification. He did not even write it to get published, let alone be rewarded. He held that Matthew Kempson, in whose department he was then employed, accidentally discovered the book, had it published, and subsequently recommended it for the award.[10]

Regardless of what led to the publication of MU, what certainly merits our focus is the immediate attention it received from the government. The government purchased as many as 2,000 copies of the book and recommended its inclusion in school syllabi.[11] It is surprising then that while the government prized MU, there were reviewers who considered it a mediocre piece of work.[12] Following MU, Nazir Ahmad wrote *Banaatun Naash*

The Pakistan Project: A Feminist Perspective on Nation and Identity (New Delhi: Women Limited, 2013), 66].

[9] A fairly detailed exploration of this perspective is to be found in the chapter "Prize-Winning Adab" in C. M. Naim, *Urdu Texts and Contexts* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2004), 120-150.

[10] I have taken this information from Ralph Russell, "The Development of the Modern Novel in Urdu," in *The Novel in India: Its Birth and Development*, ed. T. W. Clark (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), 119. Russell in turn has borrowed this useful information from Iftikhar Alam's *Hayat un Nazir*. According to Iftikhar Ahmad Siddiqi, this explanation given by Nazir Ahmad seems to be rooted in the pleasure he derived in "telling tales" and "adding drama to the events of his life." See Iftikhar Ahmad Siddiqi, *Maulvi Nazir Ahmad Dihlavi: Ahval o Asar* (Lahore: Majlis Taraqqi-e-Adab, 1971), 47.

[11] Naim, *Urdu Texts and Contexts*, 133.

[12] In a review of G. E. Ward's complete roman-script version of the text published in1899 it was held that Ward expended "upon a mediocre work the labour usually devoted to a classic." See J. K, "Reviewed Work: Review of The Bride's Mirror, or Mir-Atu-l Arus of Maulavi Nazir-Ahmad. Edited (in Roman type) by G. E. Ward,"

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(Daughters of the Bier) published in 1872 (awarded Rs. 500); *Taubatun Nusooh* (The Repentance of Nusooh) published in 1874 (awarded Rs. 1000); *Fasaanah-e-Mubtala* (The Tale of Mubtala) published in 1885; *Ibnul Waqt* (Man of the Moment) published in 1888; *Ayyaamah* (Days) published in 1891; and *Rooya-e-Saadiqah* (True Dreams) published in 1892.

MU is the story of two sisters, Akbari Khanam (the elder) and Asghari Khanam (the younger) living in Delhi. Akbari is married to a person named Muhammad Aaqil and Asghari lives with her mother, but is engaged to Aaqil's younger brother, Muhammad Kaamil. Akbari and Asghari's father is employed somewhere far away from Delhi.

MU is simply about a bad Muslim girl and a good Muslim girl and to that end offers myriad descriptions and illustrations that further concretise virtue and piety. Akbari, the elder sister, is the bad girl whereas Asghari is the good girl. The initial chapters of the work are about Akbari and her endless inadequacies. MU opens with the statement *Ek bewaqoof ladki ka biyaah ho gaya tha* (A stupid/irresponsible girl had got married) and what follows is an unending description of her idiocy, senselessness, and follies. She does not contribute to doing household chores at her in-laws' house. She neither treats her elders with respect nor does she love the younger ones in the family. She hangs out with girls of lower status because of which her neighbours say all kinds of things about Aaqil's entire family. Her mother-in-law repeatedly expresses concern by referring to the essentials of *Sharif* culture. Within months Akbari urges her husband to move to a separate house. Though her husband opposes her demands, eventually they move out. Since she does not engage in 'womanly' activities, she is presented as being unable to manage the household. Once, when fast asleep during the day, all the utensils are stolen. On another occasion, she is fooled by an old woman and she loses her jewellery. Because of her tantrums she is called *Mizaajdaar Bahu* (ill-tempered or moody daughter-in-law). Nazir Ahmad even uses the epithet *Makkaar Bahu* (cunning daughter-in-law) because she has a habit of lying repeatedly to get what she wants. All references to her hint at how she constantly displeases her husband and her in-laws.

Asghari is the complete opposite of Akbari. She is an excellent manager. She is exceptionally obedient but at the same time confident enough to take all kinds of initiative as and when needed. She treats her husband's house as her own and that is why nothing can go wrong. Even when she supervises,

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The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, (April 1900), 361.

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her involvement is nothing but astute. Given her sense of ownership she catches out any servant who is cheating her. She loves her younger ones and is respectful towards the elderly, yet she never compromises her dignity. She does not hang out with girls from non-*Sharif* families. She is guarded and controlled. In projecting her as an ideal, Nazir Ahmad has gone to the extent of showing Asghari supervising her husband in matters that strictly fall outside the purview of the 'domestic.' She helps him get promoted, keeps him away from bad company, helps him with his work, gives suggestions as and when needed and so forth. She is the *Tameezdar Bahu* (well-mannered daughter-in-law) of the family.

MU is all about outlining the essentials of an ideal *Sharif* Muslim woman: one who readily adjusts to her husband's house, gets along with everyone in the family, and upholds the honour and dignity of *Sharif* culture.[13] She is someone who thoroughly understands the importance of an extended family and her role in ensuring its stability and togetherness.

The question we might ask ourselves as readers is how there is such a drastic difference between Akbari and Asghari? How is it possible that despite being real sisters they are completely antithetical to each other? Interestingly, Nazir Ahmad does not provide any explanation as to why Akbari and Asghari are the way they are. There are indirect references to *Tarbiyat* (upbringing of children), but nothing concrete can be found in relation to the making of Akbari and Asghari. All we get to know regarding Akbari's hopelessly spoilt character is that she was overly pampered by her grandmother. Asghari, as the tale impresses upon its readers, has been well-mannered and virtuous right from her birth. She is regularly advised by her father Durandesh Khan (Farsighted) who has been posted far away.

Upon her marriage, Asghari receives a detailed letter from her father in which he outlines the role of a woman as a wife and mother. The letter clearly mentions that the creation of woman was to ensure the happiness of man.[14] It states that "it is obligatory for a woman to ensure her husband's

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[13] A very important study in this respect is by Kumkum Sangari who has highlighted how male reformers divided women by insisting that reformed women should not unnecessarily associate themselves with women belonging to the lower rungs of society. See Kumkum Sangari, *Politics of the Possible: Essays on Gender, History, Narratives, Colonial English* (New Delhi: Anthem, 2002), 184-278.

[14] Ruby Lal has rightly called the letter a manual for Asghari, one she is to refer to on a regular basis to evaluate her daily conduct; the bride's mirror. The bride's mirror is a strikingly intelligent metaphor because it is the most immediate object/article at the disposal of the bride that helps her to evaluate herself. See Ruby

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happiness" and that "God made man superior to woman because he is physically stronger and more enlightened."[15] The letter also outlines how quarrels between family members of an extended family can make life hell and how a good wife or informed mother can play an instrumental role in checking such aberrations.[16] The reverence towards motherhood is also traced back to Islam where, strictly in relation to the upbringing of children and the stability of the household, the religiosity and virtuousness of the mother is ruled to be much more important than that of the father.

The tale of Akbari and Asghari revolves around *hunar* (skill or talent) and *mizaaj* (temperament or mood). On the one hand, we have Akbari who is *Behunar* (unskilled and talentless) and *Badmizaaj* (ill-tempered); on the other hand we have Asghari who is *Baahunar* (skilled) and *Khushmizaaj* (good-natured or amiable). Such a disturbingly neat distinction pushes a significantly gendered understanding of family roles. Given that Nazir Ahmad is talking about daughters-in-law in particular, the husband's family becomes the reference point and, in a broader context, women's virtue is strictly understood in relation to men.

Another important frame in MU that makes a case for its gendered literary imagination is one where respectability is pitted against discourteousness. It is in this respect that the ideals of womanhood are placed before the readers. Through frequent references to nature, temperament, disposition, thoughts, habits, beliefs, and attitudes, these are further strengthened. Interestingly, Nazir Ahmad emphasises the refinement of these in light of the fundamental teachings of Islam.[17] Needless to say, such an emphasis brings to the fore a series of instructions dealing with how *Sharif* women ought to conduct themselves. In this respect, women (essentially wives) were educated in housekeeping and management solely because it was their responsibility to manage their husband's house. Additionally, in matters of conduct vis-à-vis daily life, education was to be understood through a different vantage point. As Ruby Lal convincingly argues in relation to Nazir Ahmad's reformist literature, everyday encounters in life become

Lal, "Gender and Sharafat: Re-reading Nazir Ahmad," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series 18, no. 1 (Jan., 2008): 27.

[15] Nazir Ahmad, *Miratul Uroos* (New Delhi: Kitaabi Duniya, 2003), 54.

[16] An entire chapter is dedicated to the letter. See chapter 10, 53-58.

[17] Nazir Ahmad points out that as per the basic teachings of Islam, refinement of these aspects is obligatory for women. This uncommon stress on the everyday dealings of women brings to the fore the idea of conduct, something that paves the way for foregrounding a subtle patriarchal proposition vis-à-vis womanhood.

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"sites of education."[18] Instances from a girl's daily life became avenues for gaining and applying education. Not hanging out with girls from poor or low status families is one instance of demonstrating education or, for a *Sharif* woman, the repercussions of mixing with girls from families of lower status becomes a source of education.[19]

In light of the arguments made, MU is not to be understood as anything more than a text depicting 'domestic life in Delhi.'[20] Its literary merit lies in its language and style. While the form offers new possibilities, the content is controlled by Nazir Ahmad. All the instructions essentially boil down to the need for good educated Muslim mothers who can produce and raise well-mannered boys. The virtue of the dutiful *Sharif* girl was not to be found inside her.

Taubatun Nusooh (henceforth TN) was published in 1874 and was awarded the maximum prize money (1,000 rupees) by the government. Compared to the other literary works of Nazir Ahmad, it remains the most accomplished. Its characters are more mature and, although didactic, the conversations between the characters are livelier. The story is set in Delhi in the middle of a cholera epidemic. The protagonist, Nusooh, has lost his father, aunt, and family nurse in the epidemic. Having fallen ill himself, Nusooh dreams while he is sedated. In his dream he meets his father who is facing serious charges in God's Court of Divine Justice. Nusooh's father is guilty of a series of sins and he asks Nusooh to pray for his forgiveness. His father also instructs him at length about the importance of living an informed and meaningful life in adherence to God's commandments. This dream—qualifying more as a vision—becomes the reader's entry into TN as everything that happens later is in response to it. The story revolves around Nusooh's family, comprising his wife Fahmeedah, their sons Kaleem, Aleem and, Saleem, and their daughters Naeemah, and Hameedah. There is a brief reference to Fahmeedah's niece Salihah, and an even briefer one to Nusooh's cousin, Fitrat. The dream inculcates a sense of guilt in Nusooh in relation to the way he has raised his children. The dream turns Nusooh into

[18] Lal, "Gender and Sharafat," 19.

[19] For instance, in the case of Asghari it was her education that kept her away from lower status family girls. However, in the case of Akbari, the consequences of mixing up with girls from lower status families are strictly educational for other *Sharif* girls.

[20] The title to the 1903 English translation by G. E. Ward is *The Bride's Mirror: A Tale of Domestic Life in Delhi Forty Years Ago*. Moreover, the translator's note calls it a textbook for students in Hindustani whose importance lies in the authentic portrayal of the social and domestic life of Indian fellow-subjects.

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a conscientious father burdened with the moral responsibility of reforming the younger generation. In that respect, TN becomes a text centred on the notion of *Tarbiyat* (upbringing) in the context of children.

After the dream,[21] Nusooh shares his concerns with his wife, Fahmeedah, and after acknowledging their grievous sin of not raising their children in the correct manner, they decide to reform them. Following the parents' resolve there are chapters documenting the unsettling ease with which Fahmeedah reforms their six year old daughter, Hameedah, and Nusooh reforms their younger sons, Saleem and Aleem. Interestingly, these three characters, through one source or another, already have the required sensibility, which is why they instantly agree to Fahmeedah and Nusooh proposals. Fahmeedah has a tough time persuading her eldest daughter, Naeemah. Naeemah is married and has a son, but, thanks to her temperament and refusal to adjust, stays with her parents. Since Fahmeedah carmothandle Naeemah's oddities she calls her niece Salihah (a close friend of Naeemah) for assistance and gradually Naeemah is reformed. She acquires the required calm and composure and becomes tender, affectionate and understanding. She seeks forgiveness from her mother and is eventually received by her husband and his family. The eldest son, Kaleem, turns out to be the toughest nut to crack. He leaves the house to wander aimlessly, confronting the superficiality and shallowness of his circle of friends. He is duped by Nusooh's cousin, Fitrat, gets badly wounded while controlling a rebellion and returns to his old home where he dies after confessing his transgressions and seeking forgiveness from Nusooh. Kaleem's death marks the end of the novel, with passing references to Aleem's and Saleem's success in their worldly pursuits.

At the heart of TN is the idea of *Islaah* (reform) of the younger generation as the only possible source of redemption for the elderly or the generation in control of things. This is projected as some kind of moral responsibility the burden of which is to be borne by elderly *Ashraf* if they are to sustain their culture and, in some way, lead the rest of community in times of great change and deep crisis.

The gendered basis of TN's literary imagination is not very difficult to underline. The male characters demonstrate their agency much more than the female characters. While both Kaleem and Naeemah are rebellious, Kaleem is more inquisitive and reflective. His character is layered and,

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[21] This is discussed in the second chapter and Kempson has quite beautifully translated the title as *Nussooh's Awakening*.

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occasionally, accommodates contradictory sentiments. He is always reflective and his sense of agency throughout the tale is hard to miss. Even on his deathbed there is something profoundly inviting about the way he confesses his transgressions. Naeemah, on the other hand, is argumentative but not inquisitive. Her thinking does not match her rebellious self. She is more sentimental and her inquiries are of an immediate kind. Her confrontation with Fahmeedah hints at her shallowness whereas her conversations with Salihah imply immaturity. Unlike Kaleem, she seldom holds her ground and when she does, the foundations are not very strong. Not once does the reader get the feeling that she thinks before she speaks. Her spontaneity overshadows her criticality. Even in relation to characters who do not pose any challenge to Nusooh and Fahmeedah, there is an unsettling divide. For instance, both Aleem and Saleem explain at length their 'journeys' of realization. Aleem's conversation with Nusooh informs the reader of his inquisitive mind, openness to learning, sensibilities vis-à-vis other religions, informed understanding of suffering and misery, and an astute understanding of his *Sharif* connection. Similarly, ten year old Saleem is more perceptive than his age would suggest. He has already understood the difference between the son of a lowly man and the son of a respectable man.[22]

While both Nusooh and Fahmeedah undertake the daunting task of reforming their children, the wife is simply an assistant. In their conversation after Nusooh's awakening, referring to his resolve to reform his children, he says, "But I cannot succeed without your assistance" to which she replies "I am here to help you with all my heart."[23] It is Nusooh who initiates things and Fahmeedah simply follows. As an aide to her husband she has no independent agency. It should also be highlighted that there are several occasions in the narrative where she approaches Nusooh to express her helplessness. For the most part she is not able to think on her own and is spoonfed by Nusooh. In that respect, there is not much of a difference between her and MU's Asghari.

The gendered sketching of male and female characters is also to be understood in terms of the flatness of the female characters. There is simply no engagement with their piety or naivety. Whether good or bad, women characters in this work simply do not evolve the way they should in a literary creation. Women do not interpret or challenge, for they are not provided any opportunity to choose. They are disconcertingly presented only in terms of

[22] Nazir Ahmad, *Taubatun Nusooh* (New Delhi: Maktaba Jamia, 2010), 83.
[23] Ahmad, *Taubatun Nusooh*, 66-67.

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their attributes. Their paths are already laid out before them and the projection of right and wrong before them is devoid of any layers or folds. Women's experiences are denied their due. Their learning is on-the-spot. In the case of men, however, experiential learning is critical. Whether we refer to the obedient sons, Saleem and Aleem, or the rebellious Kaleem, experiential learning is well documented in their cases. Kaleem's return to his parents' house is no ordinary return. He returns from a point of no return. Therefore, with him returns the hope of a dying culture. More than calling it the climax of the narrative I would rather assert that Kaleem's moment of return is when TN gets closest to a novel for it introduces readers to the complexities of the human condition.

The pondering and reflection available to men is not available to women. Not once do the women characters engage in informed self-reflection or an assessment of their location. Ruby Lal is absolutely right in asking "would the repentance of Nasuh (or of Kalim) be available to a woman as well?"[24] Could Fahmeedah have been the character to have the vision and Nusooh be asked to assist her? Could Naeemah have been offered the scope to interpret? In the gendered literary imagination of Nazir Ahmad, unfortunately, this is an impossibility.

An important distinguishing feature is the element of religion, which pervades the entire narrative of TN. In his preface, written in 1884 for the English translation by M. Kempson, Sir William Muir maintains that the "pervading influence" of religion is a novel theme for the *Moslem book*.[25] This religiosity further strengthens the gender divisions presented by explaining womanhood. For instance, right at the beginning when Nusooh shares his dream with Fahmeedah it is mentioned that women are more readily influenced by religious instruction because their hearts and minds are softer.[26]

A significant aspect that demands our attention is that in both MU and TN there is a clear tilt towards the younger generation. Conventionally speaking, the elderly are supposed to guide and lead younger ones by setting worthy examples. In these two works we have Durandesh Khan and Nusooh (men, as the guiding light for women). When it comes to other characters, the younger ones are shown to be more agreeable vis-à-vis a reformed and meaningful existence. In MU, Asghari is the younger sister and is naturally

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[24] Lal, "Gender and Sharafat," 30.
[25] Sir William Muir, Preface, xiii. Emphasis added.
[26] Ahmad, *Taubatun Nusooh*, 57.

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good and well-mannered whereas Akbari is moody and ill-mannered. In TN, Hameedah, the youngest daughter is an angel; the youngest son, Saleem, is also tellingly inclined towards living an informed and meaningful life; the second son, Aleem, is concerned about his studies and even has an informed opinion on the spoiled character of his elder brother, Kaleem, and his friends. The eldest son and daughter, Kaleem and Naeemah, rebel against the reformist agenda of their parents and their gender determines their trajectories as characters. More importantly, in MU Akbari's spoiled character is attributed to her being excessively pampered by her maternal grandmother. When Akbari insists that she and her husband Aaqil should stay in a separate house, her own mother—nameless throughout the tale—tries to convince Aaqil that they should do so. This of course, hints at two possible interpretations: firstly, the influence of uneducated women proves damaging when raising younger generations; secondly, the older the generation, the riskier the manner of upbringing. Therefore, it can be argued that Nazir Ahmad simultaneously wanted to draw his reader's attention to the grave consequences of neglect on the part of the elder generation and the potential found in the younger generation—as articulated by Ruby Lal, "the making of a new respectability through nurturing of the sharif family."[27]

Conclusion

A critical engagement with Nazir Ahmad's literary production informs us that in his case writing is anything but an innocent act. It is thoroughly representational. By outlining the essentials of domesticity within the context of a *Sharif* household he simply tries to recast the important practices of *Ashraf* culture. Given that he is upsettingly clear about everything right at the outset, his ideal woman is not a new woman.

Nazir Ahmad's literary imagination cannot be distanced from the patriarchal and feudal mind set of the latter part of nineteenth century colonial India. While the Mughal nobility was in its death throes, it had a deep urge to somehow revive itself in the changing circumstances. Nazir Ahmad voiced that deep urge through his reformist literature and pushed this agenda through the roles of women. He was interested in reviving the *Sharif* culture and not giving a new meaning to womanhood per se. The woman was simply the site through which the project was promoted. This is the reason why existential depth is missing in his female characters. His

[27] Lal, "Gender and Sharafat," 27.

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form determined the content to such an extent that the characters are merely representational and devoid of any layers. The ideal woman is endlessly performing for others. Her individuality is completely missing. Her aspirations and credibility have nothing to do with her own self. She understands her needs through men and she evaluates herself according to markers set by them. The extraordinary attention his works received has to do with the environment in which they were written and the ready audience that was oscillating between hope and despair.

In addition to the times in which he lived and the challenges he confronted, the gendered literary imagination of Nazir Ahmad is also a result of his engagement with his craft of writing. His writing was not really a process of inquiry for him. Everything was well-formulated and defined in his mind as he set it out with his pen. There is an unusually linear progression, which is why there is an unsettling flatness to his characters, especially the female ones. The pain and learning involved in understanding is missing, except in the case of Kaleem in TN.

Through his advice or useful literature, Nazir Ahmad was trying to restore the respectability of the *Ashraf* of Delhi. The *Sharif* woman was the site through which this quest for revival was expressed and therefore much of the expression around roles and responsibilities is heavily gendered. As he ventured more into articulating the essentials of womanhood and manhood within the context of the family, 'feminine' and 'masculine' became further defined and distinguished from each other.

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CHAPTER FIVE

SPEAKING OF GENDER: LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN THE POEMS OF ADRIENNE RICH

TASNEEM SHAHNAAZ

I open with the premise that the materiality of patriarchal ideology has arguably thrust upon women the position of a non-being, an outsider, or the 'other.' The awakening of the feminist spirit towards asking the 'woman's question,' which some hegemonic discourses have tried to erase, can be understood in terms of dialectical materialism. Marx and Engels see dialectical materialism as more than an outlook; it is a philosophy of motion and subsequent action. Seen in a historical Marxist perspective, the exploited class in its fight for a new society needs to challenge the dominant outlook of its own oppressor—the capitalist class—which, for women, constitutes the patriarchal order. Of course, the ruling class consciously justifies its system of exploitation as the *most natural form of society* through its demagogic control of the mass media, the press, the school, the university, the pulpit, and, most importantly, cultural values and norms. History and current global trends are witness to this assumption of power. Historical materialism (an extension or application of the principles of dialectical materialism to the study of society and the course of history) thus sees positive changes occurring in the material world through the 'struggle of opposites' leading to growth, change, and development.

Adrienne Rich's poetry tries to envisage and realize the humanly possible and patriarchally unacceptable journey of gender equality for women in global societies. This essay attempts to locate the poetry of the American feminist, Adrienne Rich, in a sociocultural and historical context premised on a 'struggle of opposites' and resulting in a 'philosophy of action' and recognition of her 'self' and the community at large. Her writings reflect the journey of thought and ideology in the history of feminism. A poet who had

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adopted the New Critical mode as a literary tool was actually able to discard it for a less formal, looser style, through which she could incorporate and articulate her growing feminism. In contrast, Simone de Beauvoir analyzed the scripted roles of women in society and Sylvia Plath repudiated her gender as being responsible for life's tragedies.

The contradictions inherent in Rich's position as a feminist and writer of poetry and prose, in the doubts she had regarding her thoughts and feelings, and in the tensions of her shaken faith in the prevailing social norms regarding women, are woven and worked into the fabric of her text. Her growth as an artist and her increasing consciousness of herself as a lesbian, eventually falling into an interracial partnership with the Jamaican-American poet Michelle Cliff, are expressively anticipated in the progress of her writings from *A Change of the World*, published in 1951; to *Fox* and *Arts of the Possible* published in 2001; and finally *Tonight No Poetry Will Serve* (Poems 2007-2010). Rich's gender is central to her poetic development. This provides her not only with the thematic substance for her poetry, but also lends her a poetic voice to express her rage and angst. In the following pages, I shall examine multiple aspects of the author's work that reflect her growing concern with the 'woman's question.'

I. Gender and Genre

In a statement at a Poetry Reading in 1964, Rich offered a surrealistic and cognitive mode of writing, she "let the unconscious offer its materials, to listen to more than one voice of a single idea."[1] Instead of "poems *about* experiences," she began writing "poems that *are* experiences."[2] Rich writes not just about women in general, but rather she *is* the woman in her poems. It is as if her gender has become her genre and the political has become personal. Her womanhood (not in the patriarchal sense) and her identification with it enable her work and invest her with the poetic power to focus and thematize her writings. In doing so, she challenges conventional assumptions about the pre-scripted roles of women in social formations. She successfully transcends notions of how women are supposed to think, feel, and act. Her poetry is experimental (without

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[1]Barbara Charlesworth Gelpi and Albert Gelpi, eds., *Adrienne Rich's Poetry and Prose: Poems, Prose, Reviews and Criticism,* New York: Norton, 1993, 165. (Hereafter referred to as *ARPP).*
[2] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 165.

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posturing) and a delightful reading experience. Her views of her 'self' and women are non-conformist, unconventional, frank, and self-assessing.

As a result, Rich's confrontation "with the naked and unabashed failure of patriarchal politics and patriarchal civilization"[3] has made her sound strident and didactic. This reflects the act of the poet in becoming consciously opposed to the established order:

> Every act of becoming conscious
> (it says here in this book)
> is an unnatural act.[4]

Rich attempts to locate an answer to the question raised by Virginia Woolf regarding patriarchy in *Three Guineas*: "Where in short is it leading us, the procession of the sons of educated men?"[5] Her negotiations with her 'womarness,' family, and society help to redefine herself as a woman and an artist. She speaks not only for herself, but also for other women. She puts forward her idea of a woman-centered, woman-oriented, woman-created world or civilization, which like "the sea is another story" and "not a question of power."[6] The advocacy of such separatism and confrontational stances obviously causes intense pain and loneliness. This, in turn, twists through her verse and prose essays. She feels "signified by pain"[7] and wonders how to live:

> the rest of my life
> not under conditions of my choosing
> wired into pain.[8]

Rich's deepening subjectivity meant a more searching engagement with the outside world. She had become an active participant in the women's movement in America during the sixties and seventies. The growing realization that the personal is not only "in here," i.e. within herself or the

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[3] Adrienne Rich, *Poems: Selected and New 1950-1974*, New York: Norton, 1975, xv.
[4] Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck: Poems 1971-1972*, New York: Norton, 1973, 33.
[5] Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, New York: Harcourt, 1966, 1st published by Hogarth Press, 1938, 63.
[6] Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, 23.
[7] Rich, *Your Native Land, Your Life*, New York: Norton, 89.
[8] Rich, *Your Native Land, Your Life*, 89.

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home, but also "out there" in the social, political and economic milieu around her, transformed her into a radical feminist. She writes:

> *The moment when a feeling enters the body*
> is political. This touch is political[9] (*CEP* 372).

This change does not make her withdraw into isolation like Emily Dickinson, who chose to lead life on her "own premises" both literally and metaphorically. Nor does she seek success in social acceptance by assenting to prevailing patriarchal mores, as her contemporary Sylvia Plath did. In Plath's case, the contradiction between the claims of her vocation and her gender became so unbearable that it resulted in severe depression and finally suicide. However, Rich was made of sterner stuff. She too was subjected to fears and depressing anxiety about being caught in this paradoxical situation, which Susan Juhasz describes as the double bind of the woman poet. Ultimately, her involvement with feminism emerges as a self-empowering way of life and poetics that transforms and defines her; and that illuminates her writing as well.

It is Rich's purpose to develop a female aesthetic that will bring forth the "radical change in human sensibility"[10] that Auden wrote about in his foreword to *A Change of World*. This kind of "woman-centered poetic tradition"[11] will validate woman's art and experiences. For the poet, the movement towards change will rewrite the genre of gender and its complex ramifications. Her later poetry brings the realization that Rich has de-linked herself from the poetic principles of revered, canonical poets such as Emerson, Eliot, Stevens, and Frost, and emerged as a political poet. For her the personal becomes political. What she desires is the "breaking down [of] the artificial barriers between private and public, between Vietnam and the lover's bed."[12]

The notion that women create art through work, which is largely devalued and ignored by society, is perhaps, related to the female tradition of silence, of unspoken thoughts, and of intuition and feelings. The reference to Queen Mathilde (in "Mathilde in Normandy"), wife of William the Conqueror and

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[9] Rich, *Collected Early Poems: 1950-1970*, New York: Norton, 1993, 372. Hereafter referred to as *CEP*.
[10] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 277.
[11] Claire Keyes, *The Aesthetics of Power: The Poetry of Adrienne Rich,* Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1986, 10.
[12] Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, back cover.

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maker of the Bayeux Tapestry, portrays her weaving scenes of the Norman Conquest of England. Engaged in the past-time of "long-sleeved ladies"[13] while their lords are away at war, Mathilde's art is a silent testimony of her desire to participate in those events from which women have been, time and again, assiduously excluded. When her personal emotions intrude upon her work, knots occur in her weaving and spoil its perfection. At this phase of her career, Rich probably agreed with her poetic fathers that the intrusion of personal feelings destroyed the perfection of art. Later, her awareness as a woman and as an artist allowed her to expand her consciousness and include the handiwork of the woman who quietly walks away from argument and jargon and begins to put together bits of yarn, calico, and velvet scraps along with objects from nature such as "small rainbow-colored shells," "skeins of milkweed," "dark blue petal of the petunia," "the finch's yellow feather" etc. into a patchwork of creative beauty.

This creation or "composition has nothing to do with eternity, / the striving for greatness, brilliance"[14]; rather, it brings her thoughts to the shore, "pulling the tenets of a life together / with no mere will to mastery."[15] It appears that the "fragmented world is mended here."[16] According to Elaine Hedges, this "piecing together of salvaged fragments to create a new pattern of connection, and integrated whole … provides the elements … for a new transformative vision."[17] Marge Piercy in her poem "Looking at Quilts" and Joyce Carol Oates in "Celestial Timepiece" see images of women's lives and history in such handiwork. Rich's "Natural Resources" perceives these "scraps" or humble "things by women saved" as having "the power to reconstitute the world."[18] Thus, "this imagery of common thread in American women's quilts offers Rich a model for her 'dream of a common language' of women."[19] There is also a sense of community feeling among the women engaged in such activities that helped to forge bonds between them. The reference to piecing and quilting could be a metaphorical hint at Rich's future vision of a utopian community of women.

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[13] Rich, *CEP*, 29.
[14] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language: Poems 1974–1977*, New York: Norton, 1978, 77.
[15] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, 77.
[16] Rich, *CEP*, 41.
[17] Quoted in Elaine Showalter, *Sister's Choice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991, 162.
[18] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, 67.
[19] Showalter, *Sister's Choice*, 162-163.

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In *A Dream of a Common Language* (1978), Rich can proclaim that it is from these materials we witness "a whole new poetry beginning here,"[20] a poetry that "makes an effort to remember, reconstruct and remake,"[21] a poetry which bridges the gulf between the domestic and the artistic life. It is an ironic and sad fact of patriarchy and narrow culturalism that the creative activity of women has been pitted against patriarchal restrictions and posited as a separate, transgressive space where individual problems are privately resolved. These resolutions, though worthy of attention and respect, seem to preclude any individual or "collective confrontation with power structures."[22] The distinction of the private and the public as discrete domains by the patriarchy is a complicit ideology, which relegates women, their work and issues, to the realms of non-entity and erasure. In practice, the public and private intersect in various ways and display different levels of articulation. It is becoming possible now to determine the implication and intervention of the state in family-oriented ideology; in the definition and valuation of labor; in marriage; in property and inheritance; and in other fields consenting to such divisions of public and private.

The second section of this volume contains the "Twenty-One Love Poems," which constitute Adrienne Rich's "poetics of transgression."[23] They permit her to be truthful to herself and others in opposition to the lies she has to utter and face in a heterosexual culture. Prohibitive social norms have made liars of women and "drowned in silence the erotic feelings between women"[24]—that is why "[n]o one has imagined us"[25] in a lesbian relationship, one over which a perpetual veil of silence has been drawn. Against this tradition of silence, she tries to create an alternative poetics based on a lesbian paradigm. The fact that she can name her own experiences as well as those outside her, is her method of rewriting and creating a new literary female tradition. Her radical feminism, which rejects

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[20] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, 77.
[21] Showalter, *Sister's Choice*, 162.
[22] Kumkum, Sangari, "Consent and agency: aspects of feminist historiography" in *Women in Indian History: Social, Economic, Political and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Kiran Pawar, New Delhi: Vision and Venture, 1996, 14.
[23] Joanne Feit Diehl on "Twenty-One Love Poems." Accessed 17April 2017 <http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/m_r/rich/21love.htm>
[24] Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence: Selected Prose 1966–1978*, New York: Norton, 1979, 190.
[25] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, 25.

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patriarchal authority over a woman's sexuality, finds expression in her rather frank revelation of her lesbian relationship:

> we were two lovers of one gender
> we were two women of one generation.[26]

The "Twenty-One Love Poems" transcend the sexual aspect of this relationship as well as the poet's temptation to cherish her suffering and "make a career of pain."[27]

In the essay "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" (1980), Rich is critical of "heterosexuality as a political institution which disempowers women,"[28] since sexual power is located in the male. Socially, both women and men recognize that male sex drive is paramount and accountable to no one, except possibly itself. This behavior is validated not only by cultural and social norms regarded as normal, but also by scientific discoveries.[29] Whereas females are required to consider themselves as innately heterosexual, and any departure from the prescriptive ideas of normal behavior (such as a lesbian relationship) is "written out of history, or catalogued under disease."[30] Rich clarifies the use of the term "lesbian existence" and "lesbian continuum" to include "woman-identified experience," which is not simply a woman's sexual preference for another woman, but "many more forms of primary intensity between and among women, including the sharing of a

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[26] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language*, 31.
[27] Rich, *The Dream of a Common Language,* 29.
[28] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 203.
[29] A news item "Male Brain answers Nagging Questions," in a national daily, *The Hindustan Times*, Delhi edition, October 3 (2003):1, informed readers that social philosopher Michael Gurian has presented a "new vision of the male psyche." According to him, the male brain secretes less of the bonding chemical oxytocin and the calming chemical serotonin than the female brain. That is why males are less inclined to attach importance and personal identity to the home. Male hormones such as vasopressin and testosterone induce the male brain to "seek competitive, hierarchical groups in its constant quest to prove self-worth and identity." This "vision" will promote better understanding of men and reverse the assumption of radical feminism that men have become redundant. Hence, nature and biology are the determiners of action and not the rational man, as he cannot control the grip of hormones over his brain. Thus, science is utilized for serving male interests by maintaining the inferior position of women in society.
[30] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 216.

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rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, and the giving and receiving of practical and political support."[31]

Rich's keen and piercing scrutiny of heterosexuality and lesbian life has also critiqued the unwillingness of cultural feminists to examine heterosexuality as an institution and the neglect of lesbian scholarship and writing. She sees "a *nascent* feminist political content in the choosing of a woman lover or life partner in the face of institutionalized heterosexuality."[32] A major theme of the essay then becomes resistance to the exploitative and illegitimate masculine control of female existence. Rich's rewriting of gender through poetry and prose can also be termed a 'poetics of resistance.' At the same time, she also forces the reader/listener to re-vision social connotations of behavior and arrive at new and powerful meanings and conclusions. However, she did not take racial and class differences into account when presenting an all-woman definition. A third-world woman may not prefer a lesbian relationship with a white woman mainly because of the past history of oppression at the hands of whites. She would perhaps rather join hands with third-world men in protest against racial violence.

II. Language and Identity

Culture is a collage of several elements including those drawn from literature, history, ideology, and attitudes etc. Its manifestation takes place in and through actions or rituals, or through the use of language in both written and oral forms. The latter is the medium of communication and connection between individuals belonging to a group. It is also a repository of ideas, perpetuating them from one generation to the next either through their acknowledgement by repetition or through their rejection by reacting against them with new ones. At the same time, sociolinguistic analysis sees it as a 'social product' or a reflection of social reality. Dale Spender in *Man Made Language* regards language as "not merely a vehicle which carries ideas," but that it "is itself a shaper of ideas."[33] She comments on its paradoxical nature: "it is both a creative and an inhibiting vehicle" as "it offers immense freedom" to "create the world we live in" and yet "we are restricted by that creation, limited to its confines."[34] She hypothesizes that

[31] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 217.
[32] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 223.
[33] Deborah Cameron, ed., *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, London: Routledge, 1990, 103.
[34] Cameron, *The Feminist Critique of Language: A Reader*, 105.

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"[i]t is language which determines the limits of our world, which constructs our reality."[35]

This is somewhat similar to what Adrienne Rich means when she quotes Wittgenstein (no feminist) who said that "[t]he limits of my language are the limits of my world."[36] Rich, therefore, advises "a constant critique of language"[37] in order to extend and revise these limits. Literary language is gendered in such a way that it configures the approval and disapproval of women and men in different spheres of life. Since women have hardly any role to play in social, economic, and political formations and organizations, the result is a critical discourse that is male-defined and this makes it more difficult to acknowledge originality in women writers. If women writers are to be applauded, their works are designated as graceful, modest, elegant, delicate, or soft etc. When Adrienne Rich published her first volume of poems, *A Change of World*, in 1951, Auden wrote the foreword to it. He commended her poems as "neatly and modestly dressed, speak quietly but do not mumble, [and] respect their elders."[38] It was almost as if he, like the rest of the age, expected women to write in a way that they were expected to conduct themselves. The language of Rich, in her early poetry, conforms to what male poets dictated as good poetry.

The New Critical mode allowed her to adopt a formal strategy in which the poet was conspicuously absent, and if at all *he* spoke, it was through a distant persona. This stratagem (of evasion) is best described by the poet herself as handling her subject, as it were, with 'asbestos gloves.' The poem "An Unsaid Word" (the title is ironic) contains the first reference to the silence of women and the absence of their voices from language and discourse. The poet leaves unspoken the implicit criticism of the passive roles women have had to assume willingly in order to allow men their "estranged intensity"[39] and separateness. It is also "unsaid" that there is no place where a woman "could be mentally foraging alone, and whence he might forbear to call *her* back."[40] In "Unsounded," the poet describes how

[35] Cameron, *The Feminist Critique of Language*, 103.
[36] Quoted by Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, 245.

[37] Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, 245.
[38] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 278-279.
[39] Rich, *CEP*, 28.
[40] Gelpi, *ARPP*, 301.

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the imperative to discovery, separateness, and adventure is felt by both the sexes, though it remains "unsounded," "unsaid" and unheard of in women.

What is left unarticulated by the woman "who keeps her peace";[41] by Aunt Jennifer who embroiders her unexpressed desires onto needle-worked screens;[42] and by Queen Mathilde who weaves her silent agony while waiting for men who are away fighting battles and creates a beautiful tapestry[43] is foregrounded as a muted discourse that Elaine Showalter terms "double-voiced discourse."[44] It is ironic that in Queen Mathilde's case, her Bayeux tapestry is all that remains as a mute testimony to the Anglo-Norman wars, thereby showing that it was "[m]ore than the personal episode, more than all / The little lives."[45] The phrase "little lives" is also ironic as it diminishes great kings and war heroes. The ironic mode becomes possible because of the mask that the poet employs and negotiates through formal tactics. However, beneath this façade of formalism, she is aware of a split within her—between "the girl who wrote poems, who defined herself in writing poems, and the girl who was to define herself by her relationships with men."[46]

Like Aunt Jennifer, Rich "suffers from the opposition of her imagination."[47] This duality of the imaginative psyche is unresolved and is metaphorically reflected in the image of the glass, which "has been falling all the afternoon;"[48] in the tigers who prance unafraid on embroidered screens;[49] in the ominous rumblings of dissenting missile–throwers;[50] in the days "where we speak all languages but our own."[51] The poet has to exhume these "unpurged ghosts"[52] before encountering her own self and connecting to it. Her first two volumes of poetry exemplify this approach. Rich may write in the way tradition and her poetic fathers dictated, yet she cannot effectively hide the split or duality in her psyche. Conforming to the paradigmatic

[41] Rich, *CEP*, 28.
[42] Rich, *CEP*, 4.
[43] Rich, *CEP*, 29.
[44] Quoted in Claire Keyes, *The Aesthetics of Power*, 15.
[45] Rich, *CEP*, 29.
[46] Gelpi and Gelpi, *ARPP*, 171.
[47] Gelpi & Gelpi, *ARPP*, 171.
[48] Rich, *CEP*, 3.
[49] Rich, *CEP*, 4.
[50] Rich, *CEP*, 24.
[51] Rich, *CEP*, 8.
[52] Rich, *CEP*, 57.

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parameters of the male-defined, censored image of the marginalized other makes the woman and artist in the poet rebel against these norms. She embarks upon a "quest for self-definition."[53] Her discovery of individual emotions and intellectual capability, occasions "particular formal and stylistic decisions, often designed to disrupt and alter our sense of literary norms."[54]

In the third volume of poems, *Snapshots of a Daughter-in-Law,* the formal mask seems to slip a little and her previous strategy appears unworkable with her growing consciousness as a woman and an artist. Strategy, technique, tone, and language all change. She now uses the photographic method to produce pictures of different kinds of women of different ages and belonging to different times. Her anguish and dilemma are expressed in the woman who inadvertently scalds her hands while she is intent upon listening to her own desires; in the portrait of Mary Wollstonecraft who was "labeled harpy, shrew and whore"[55] because she spoke for the rights of women; and in the figure of the woman who would like to "smash the mould straight off."[56] In this way, the poet registers the change in women's consciousness taking place at that time. Her unfulfilled longings find fruitful expression in the figure of the graceful woman (resembling Simone de Beauvoir's truly liberated woman), whose purpose is to deliver the palpable cargo of a life of fulfillment for women. Keyes comments that "[i]n her treatment of identity and of costumes of the self, Adrienne Rich participates in a vision of the world and the self-found in feminist modernists like Virginia Woolf."[57]

With the breaking of silence comes language. The consciousness of dichotomy and pain produces a certain hardness of tone or the "exoskeletal style"[58] in Rich's poetry. Her language begins to acquire a rough, uneven quality that verges on the harsh. The vignettes of women in different poems portray acute feelings and situations in real life. In "The Loser" a married woman is "squared and stiffened by the pull / of what nine windy years have

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[53] Alicia Suskin Ostriker, *Stealing the Language: The Emergence of Women's Poetry in America*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1986, 10.
[54] Ostriker, *Stealing the Language*, 11-12.
[55] Rich, *CEP*, 147.
[56] Rich, *CEP*, 148.
[57] Claire Keyes, *The Aesthetics of Power*, 49.
[58] Ostriker, *Stealing the Language*, 12.

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done,"[59] while the mind of a woman is described as "mouldering like wedding-cake, / heavy with useless experience."[60] The torment of her fragmented, divided and alienated self causes the poet to "smell my own rising nausea, feel the air / tighten around my stomach like a surgical bandage"[61] since a "thinking woman sleeps with monsters."[62] She is hesitant and dissatisfied because there is no point in living "illusionless, in the abandoned mine- / shaft of doubt, and still / mime illusions for others."[63]

Rich's intention is two-fold in writing such mordant language, which is starkly embellished by the use of strong similes and metaphors. She can begin to understand her pain and fragmentation by reflecting it in poetry. At the same time, on reading her, the reader is made equally uncomfortable and involved in the poet's dilemma as a figuration of her own experience. Rich appears to realize that her poetics are moulded in a language tracing its ancestry in patriarchy. Her increasing feminist stance makes her confront (though not as boldly as she would like to) the language and discourse of patriarchy. It is obvious that the "oppressor's language" is unable to define her identity and feelings. She has seen the silence of women beginning with her own mother, and in the lives of other women, as something that is undesirable and has to be questioned and broken. She reads it as a condition of powerlessness imposed by a predominantly male-oriented society. It is also the language of the weak, which signifies women's fear of having nothing important to say or having too much to say that is all bitter invective.

There is also the risk of saying something too late. Rich faces a problem here—that of how to depict an attitude or stance, which is at once ideal and pragmatic. In this case, the language with which to express the ideal assumes great significance as it has to sustain the vision through the passage of time and change. This ideal could be posited through negatives of prevailing and past norms and the history of women. These negatives may trap her into a too-strident and overly aggressive declamation that may undermine her identity and position as basically using the same methodology as that of the oppressor. The other option is to take over a model from the past and re-work and tailor it to present use. This task poses another difficulty—that of finding a model. The past offers none. The male poetic models that are available contradict her ideal. Whatever the ideal may

[59] Rich, *CEP*, 140.
[60] Rich, *CEP* 145.
[61] Rich, *CEP*, 154.
[62] Rich, *CEP*, 145.
[63] Rich, *CEP*, 157.

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be, along with language, it has to be defended and located in the realistic encounters of life. In order to survive, it has to withstand the tests of time and change.

This is what the poet would like to posit: a re-envisioned feminist ideal and aesthetics, which can incorporate change and question its own assumptions and positions as well as those of others. It should be able to face the challenges posed by the then (history) and the now (present). Rich believes that the language used by her and other feminists must be "active" enough to "effect social and political change."[64] Along with its creative potential and capacity, it has the ability to mould conceptions of the self and of the world. Therefore it has to be used carefully in order to avoid repeating male-defined clichés, depicting ideas of a unitary self, or presenting a universal worldview that was, generally, non-female. The poet has come to believe in the power and efficacy of language and discourse to free women from their oppressive state. In this way, words will begin to function as active agents of change in the position of women. Language has to be used in a way "that facilitates openness to difference and change rather than emphasize a closed, exclusionary view of identity."[65]

Rich has to learn to differentiate between language using women and women using language. This insight nudges the poet into seeking alternative ways to use language, or 'repossess' it, in a way that will bestow life, visibility, expression, and validity onto women and their experiences. Tillie Olsen in *Silences* discovers the language by and of women in journals, letters, memoirs, personal utterances etc., i.e. in all those places not considered 'art.' This language is one that the self speaks in order to apprehend, comprehend, and transform itself into a speaking subject. This helps to enlarge its experience and perceptions.

Rich takes this idea further when she writes of the relationship between the poet and her poetry:

> "Poetic language the language on paper is a concretization of the poetry of the world at large, the self, and the forces within the self; and those forces are rescued from formlessness, lucidified, and integrated in the act of writing poems. But there is a more ancient concept of the poet, which is that she is endowed to speak for those who do not have the gift of language, or

[64] Christina Hendricks and Kelly Oliver, eds., *Language and Liberation: Feminism, Philosophy, and Language*, Albany: State Univ. of New York Press, 1999, 1.
[65] Hendricks and Oliver, *Language and Liberation*, 1.

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to see for those who for whatever reasons are less conscious of what they are living through. It is as though the risks of the poet's existence can be put to some use beyond her own survival."[66]

The bardic role of the poet and of poetry committed to social and psychic change marks the writings of Adrienne Rich. She states in a review essay, "Poetry for Daily Use," in *Ms*:

> "In poetry the test is always, finally, language. What I ask of that language is whether, and by what means, it helps me live my daily life by reconnecting my scattered parts. I go to poetry for a different climate, a language equal to my particular urgencies yet which also takes me deeper, further, than them language that bears its own witness in the world, whose charge is never to trivialize my or any life; language located in the pulse, ordinary pungent speech, music, desire, anger, risk."[67]

Her commitment to a personally and socially useful poetry is undeniable.

Her linguistic concerns are reflected in her comments on language that is gendered, "spoiled," and sounds like "perjury." At times, silence is preferable to such language, just as Emily Dickinson chose "silence for entertainment."[68] However language's utility in its integration into the essentialism of life cannot be denied. In "languaging"[69] her feelings, relationships, thoughts, and the changes within her mind, language has been a key factor. But the question is of the nature of language, which can analyze, investigate, represent, and communicate to others. In *Necessities of Life*, she desires to "create a space for her poems that is free of false speech."[70] This kind of speech "perpetuates or participates in unequal power balances"[71] and language becomes a matter of both politics and aesthetics.

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[66] Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, 184.

[67] Rich, "Poetry for Daily Use," *Ms* 2 (September/October 1991): 70-71.

[68] Rich, *CEP*, 232.

[69] Kathleen Scheel uses this word in her discussion of Daphne Marlatt's novel *Ana Historic* to define the heroine's reappropriation of patriarchal language in order to voice the silence of women and their experiences in her essay "Freud and Frankenstein: The Monstered Language of *Ana Historic*," in *Essays on Canadian Writing* 58 (1996): 93-114.

[70] Nick Halpern, *Everyday and Prophetic: The Poetry of Lowell, Ammons, Merrill, and Rich*, Wisconsin: The Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2003, 200. Halpern adds that poets like Lowell, Ammons, and Merrill chose to use this "false speech" in their poems as a way of exploiting its possibilities and limitations.

[71] Halpern, *Everyday and Prophetic*, 202.

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Therefore, a balance has to be maintained in using a language that is political in force, aesthetic in expression, and honest in nature. No more clichés, hackneyed phrases, or polite circumlocutions for her.

Rich has often bemoaned that language as given is inadequate for the task of elucidation. That is why she looks for a "passion" that will subvert "the cool blankness, the manic speech, of the buyers and sellers who are our 'leaders'—passion that can't be managed, packaged or freeze-dried into group-therapy formulas."[72] She "wants poetry that refuses the commoditizing of women's lives, whether as kinky vicious Madonnas or as Madonnas of moral superiority."[73] The "words" of poetry should be those "that can be read and re-read without being used up."[74] In an increasingly materialistic culture, language is used for promoting commercial interests without realizing that its potential, power, and influence have become unidirectional; and its richness and variety have been lost. According to the poet, "fascistic tendencies, allied to the practices of the 'free market,' have been eviscerating language of meaning" which has become "threadbare" with its "frozen metaphors"[75] and materialist images. In short it has become "a necklace of shabby desires."[76]

The close connection between reality and its linguistic representation preoccupied her for a long time. However, there were hardly any female linguistic models or traditions to follow and all experience had to be "rendered into the oppressor's language."[77] In the 1961 poem "The Roof Walker," she catechizes herself for using tools inadequate to the pursuit of an alternative poetics and the way to find the right ones: "even my tools are wrong ones / for what I have to do."[78] She questions her own metaphor and expresses dissatisfaction/discontent with her work. The difficulty of maintaining a balance between experience and its retelling is conveyed through the image of the roof walker silhouetted precariously on a rooftop. But she prefers to carry her rebellion against the "calm betrayals and

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[72] Rich, "Poetry for Daily Use," *Ms* 2 (September/October 1991): 70-75.
[73] Rich, "Poetry for Daily Use," *Ms* 2 (September/October 1991): 71.
[74] Rich, "Poetry for Daily Use," *Ms* 2 (September/October 1991):71.
[75] Rich, *The Arts of the Possible: Essays and Conversations*, New York: Norton, 2001, 117-118
[76] Gelpi,*ARPP*, 370.
[77] Rich, *CEP*, 385.
[78] Rich, *CEP*, 193.

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falsehoods of language,"[79] in spite of the risk of being silenced in doing so. Moreover, to:

> "Think like a woman in a man's world means thinking critically, refusing to accept the givens, making connections between facts and ideas which men have left unconnected. It means ... constantly retesting given hypotheses against lived experience. It means a constant critique of language."[80]

As language becomes exclusive rather than inclusive, the experiences of women are encoded in silence and obscurity. The breaking of silence requires a language, which can begin a process of self-exploration. This will help women to uncover their hidden realities, make their presence visible, and define a reality that affirms their being—individually and as a community. With few linguistic precursors or adequate tools to help her, Rich engaged with the problematic of locating/inventing a language that would have to address, define, and authenticate her pursuit of selfhood, for "every existence speaks a language of its own."[81] At the same time she had to, in Willard Spiegelman's words, "discover in language a map not only for herself but also for the larger community—often a community of women, sometimes one that includes both sexes—of which she is a part."[82] In the essay "Poetry and the Public Sphere" she reiterates this idea: "I want to read, and make, poems that are out there on the edge of meaning, yet can mean something to the collective."[83]

The search for the discovery of the self and integrity of identity, also translates into a quest for language. Since language is "a map of our failures"[84]—it becomes time for Rich to begin remapping boundaries, roles, images, ideology, and language itself. Her quest for identity and wholeness becomes meaningless and a failed mission unless elucidated in words. She realizes that in this journey there is no unitary self that can be described and defined. There exists more than one self and it is the conjunction of these selves that delineate her selfhood. As such, there is an emergence of multiple voices in her poetry. At times she speaks through a persona as a textual 'I'; at other times she is the lyric 'I,' the self-reflexive 'I,' the

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[79] Gelpi, *ARPP*, 374.
[80] Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, 245.
[81] Rich, *CEP*, 353.
[82] Gelpi, *ARPP*, 370-371.
[83] Rich, *Arts of the Possible*, 118.
[84] Rich, *CEP*, 366.

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historical 'I,' the bardic 'I,' or even the prophetic 'I.' The pronoun 'I' is seemingly non-gender specific. The poetic 'I' usually denotes the generic 'he.' Rich's conscious decision to speak from a subject position involved "an immense shift from male to female pronouns."[85] This was, according to Jane Hedley, "an important contribution a feminist poet could make to the repossession of language; and the politics of the personal pronoun was an important dimension of her own linguistic activism."[86]

Harriet Davidson aptly remarks: "between the kitchen stove and the galaxies of stars, Rich continues her feminist project of re-visioning the world and embracing its contradictions through unflinching critique and passionate commitment."[87] Rich's imaginative capability leads her, in Muriel Rukeyser's words, to surpass herself. Her rewriting of gender extends to both women and men. It is articulated as a continuous process of revision by engaging in an ongoing dialogue with the self and others.

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[85] Rich, *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence*, 248.

[86] Hendricks and Oliver, *Language and Liberation*, 116.

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CHAPTER SIX

LINGUISTIC VERNACULARIZATION IN MALAYALAM CINEMA: URBAN KOCHI SLANG AND YOUTH IDENTITY

JAYAKRISHNAN NARAYANAN
AND RAJESH KUMAR

Introduction

Popular media, in the form of music, film, television, and other mass media, act as centres of youth culture formation (Hall 1976; Bennet 2001; Alan 2001) and have shaped the identity of their audiences through various eras of social change. In recent times, Malayalam films through the mediatized vernacularization of urban Kochi slang have actively influenced the construction of youth identity.

Though Malayalam has several regional dialects, for a long time Malayalam films limited the depiction of linguistic plurality by using standard Malayalam (Vishwanath 2012). Since 2007, a 'new generation' of Malayalam cinema (Prakash 2013; Xavier 2015) has witnessed a process of vernacularization with several films significantly featuring regional dialectic varieties of Malayalam. Among these, the number of films featuring the urban Kochi slang/Kochi dialect has risen markedly.

This paper discusses linguistic vernacularization (Coupland 2014) or de-standardization in Malayalam film through the rise of urban Kochi slang, its construction as a youth identity marker through films, and its acceptance amongst young audiences as fashionable. By analyzing and categorizing the changes in the portrayal of the Kochi dialect in cinema over the years, this paper looks into the 'bricolage' (Levi-Strauss 1966) of the film industry, which has caused a re-ordering and re-contextualization of linguistic and dialectal identities with enhanced social meaning. This paper uses the

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framework of mediatized vernacularization (Coupland 2014) and its role in processes of linguistic pluralization, in line with the findings of Smith et al. (2013), Tagliamonte et al. (2005), and Coupland (2009) on language variation in the absence of direct contact, as deemed necessary by Trudgill (1986).

Language Variation and the Media

Several studies have speculated on the causes of language change and have sought to observe its progress (Labov 1966; Trudgill 1986). In his theory of diffusion and transmission in language change, Labov (2001) asserts that geographic contact is required for permanent language change. However, studies on mass media (Crystal 2001; McQuail 2010) and language change (Muhr 2003; Buchstallerand D'Arcky 2009) question the requirement of geographic proximity. The spread of the quotative 'be like' (Tagliamonte et al. 2007) and the use of intensifiers such as 'really' and 'so' (Tagliamonte and Roberts 2005) among geographically distant speakers of various varieties of English are all examples of media-induced language change. Trudgill (1986) studied the impact such features of mediatized speech had on speakers as "vocabulary and phrases are easily transmitted via media influence" (Rice et al.1988).

Coupland (2009) finds that "language in media can offer new social meaning to existing linguistic features" and cites the contextualization of language variation through the popularity of idiolects used by celebrities. Smith et al. (2013), studied accelerating linguistic change (TH-fronting and L-vocalization) in Glaswegian vernacular through mediatization, causing innovative variants to be linked to new social meanings and furthering linguistic innovation. This is in line with Milroy's (2007) 'off-the-shelf changes' where the media makes available linguistic resources for a speaker's own stylistic and personal needs, as a ready-made component that may be taken up and out down again as desired (Eckert in Androutsopoulos 2010).

Language and Identity

Identity involves "an active negotiation of an individual's relationship with larger social constructs" (Mendoza-Denton 2002). It ceases to remain an abstract psychological construct of "self-classification and is a dynamic entity that is constituted through social action, especially through language" (Bucholtz and Hall 2005).

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Language reflects an individual's mental status and is negotiated by the image of the self and the image one wishes to project in society. This relation is 'indexical' in nature as there is a "semiotic link created between the linguistic form and social meaning" (Ochs 1992; Johnstone and Bean 1997). Every utterance is linked to a negotiated identity. Myers-Scotton (1993) deals with 'code-switching' and 'style shifting' in multiple identity projections where, "a change in code might signal a different identity." That is to say, the negotiation between identity and language is pragmatic, contextual, and ephemeral, as discussed by Bucholt and Hall (2005) in their study on the principle of 'relationality.' They define this as "the use of linguistic elements in a discourse" that positions the speaker as similar to (adequation), or distinct from (distinction) the identity in question.

Standardization and Vernacularization through the Media

Standardization involves the levelling of non-standard varieties of a language, where a society embraces the "prestige varieties of speech and writing" (Milroy 2004; Haugen 1982). It eliminates diversity and variety (Wardhaugh 1989) and can be institutionalized through linguistic policies (Kachru 1985) causing speakers of other dialects to "adopt it and modify their dialect according to the standard one" (Kachru 1985). Mass media has been accused of promoting linguistic standardization (Smith et al. 2007; Agha 2007; Bennet 2001). Agha (2007) cites the institutionalization and standardization of the rhotic pronunciation of English by the BBC through its newsreaders as "homogenizing the conditions for subsequent response behaviours and role alignments across a wide social domain."

The opposite trajectory to standardization has been termed vernacularization (Coupland 2014) or de-standardization (Kristiansen 2011); this remains a less well studied area. Vernacularization is a result of the mediatization of vernacular dialects causing code-mixing between geographically distant dialects (Coupland 2014). De-standardization can also be seen when an established standard variety loses its authority and prestige (Kristiansen 2011). The broadcasting of vernacular language through the media causes "a better knowledge of other varieties" and a "relaxation of norms in the spoken standard varieties"; it contributes towards community building and increases minority language prestige (Ota and Takano2014; Shetty 2008) leading to "an early stage of semiotic pluralization" (Coupland 2014; Stoeckle and Svenstrup 2011). Coupland supports this statement with instances of rhotic pronunciation and Standard English giving way to a more inclusive 'broadcast standard' with the introduction and spread of Welsh

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and Scottish accented English vernaculars in television programmes "both in serious news as well as situational comedy programmes."

Vernacularization and the Creation of New Identities

Ichiro Ota and Shoji Takano (2014) consider de-standardization to be closely connected to identity and the "formation of new dialects among younger generation." In their study, the attribution of youthfulness to "the use of synthesized and dynamic pitch shifts" in mediatized Japanese, is associated to "younger speakers' positive attitudes toward the youth culture" and its delivery via media, packaged as 'metropolitanism' to younger speakers across the country, "regardless of their dialectal origins."

The study by Karanja Lucy (2010) on the creation of *Sheng*, a Kenyan urban youth language, takes this topic several steps forward. In Kenya's culturally ambivalent and multilingual society, *Sheng*, a combination of several languages including Swahili and English, developed through the "re-negotiation of youth identities" both traditional and urban. *Sheng's* formation was due to extra linguistic factors as "Swahili exists as a *lingua franca* that these youth could use for communication." Popular culture, including film, music, and other media, acted as the centre of youth identity formation and promoted the establishment of "a language that is socially neutral, capable of expressing their mixed and fluid identities" (Samper 2002).

Analysis

This paper uses a triangulation of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. For analyzing the pattern of dialectic representation in Malayalam films, a list of films released between 2006 and 2016 was prepared and classified with inputs from linguistic and film experts.

For the structure and use of urban Kochi slang in daily discourse, interactional behaviour was studied among young viewers of Malayalam cinema through covert participant-observation using an outsider-in approach (MacRae 2007). The researcher covertly participated in discussions with peer group members aged between 20 and 35 to observe the features of the slang they used.

To study the linguistic attitudes and identity formations of the audience with respect to Malayalam films, a limited survey was conducted with a sample size of 96 respondents. Targeting an ideal sample of Malayalam speakers

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aged between 20 and 35 with frequent exposure to Malayalam films, the survey was posted on the Internet and the desired sample reached through snowball sampling and stratified random sampling (by posting it on Malayalam films groups/pages in several social network websites).

A Description of the Kochi Dialect

Spoken in and around Fort Kochi, the Kochi dialect varies from the standard variety of Malayalam mainly at the phonological and morphological level, apart from pitching variations. It has sub-dialects that include Jewish and Anglo-Indian varieties. Since a comprehensive analysis is not within the scope of this paper, this section only discusses some of the significant linguistic characteristics of the dialect.

Devoicing of the word final plural case marker

The Standard Malayalam I & II person pronoun plural markers vary between the Kochi dialect and its counterparts.

Regular	***Kochi slang***	***Meaning/Gloss***
ɲaŋŋaL	ɲaŋŋa	we (I, exclusive, P)
niŋŋaL	niŋŋa	you (II, P)
nammaL	namma/numma	We (I, inclusive, P)

The word final liquid /L/ is devoiced in all three cases. Also notable is the free variation allowed between /namma/ and /numma/ in the Kochi dialect.

Variations in adverbs of Place

The casual Malayalam lexicon (used in free variation) for the place adverb ‘here’ is /iŋŋoːdə/ and/or /iŋŋoːttə/; for ‘there’ it is /aŋŋoːttə/ and/or /aŋŋoːttə/.

Informal variants
iŋŋottəvaru:/ iŋŋodəvaru:
here come
‘come here’
Informal variants
namukkəaŋŋottəiri^{j}kkam/
namukkəaŋŋodəiri^{j}kkam
we (I, Inclusive) there sit
‘we will sit there’

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The Kochi dialect uses the variants /inŋŋa:də /and /anŋŋa:də/ in informal speech. The variation involves an elongation and fronting of the vowel.

nIinŋŋa:dəva:	niŋŋaanŋŋa:dəpokko:
you here come	you there go
'you come here'	'you go there'

Possessive case marker

The Kochi dialect varies in its accusative case marker realization. The regular accusative possessive case marker in Malayalam is /de/. In the Kochi dialect there are two case markers, /de/ and /kkade/. While the accusative case marker for masculine pronouns remains the same as in regular Malayalam, it changes for feminine pronouns.

Regular		***Kochi dialect***	
avaL	avaLude	avaL	avakkade
she (Nom)	she (Accu)	she (Nom)	she (Accu)
'she'	'her'	she	'her'

Variation in continuous aspect realization of the verb

Kochi dialect uses /Ney-aNu/ as the continuous aspect marker compared to its standard dialect counterpart /aNu/.

Regular	***Kochi dialect***
po:kuka-j-a:Nə	po-Nej-a:Nə
go present cont.	go present cont.
'going'	'going'
iri^{j}kkuka-j-a;Nə	irikka-Nej-a:Nə
sit-present cont.	sit-present cont.
'sitting'	'sitting'

Urban Kochi Slang Variations and Structural Patterns

A slang is defined as "a language in *statu nascendi*, an experimental language (or at least a lexicon) in the making that may use 'lexical innovations,' 'neologism' and 'word borrowing'" (Somig 1981; Eble 1996). Slang differs from other language variations, such as dialects and

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sociolects, "insofar as they usually do not affect most of the existing rules for syntactic concatenation" (Somig 1981).

Kochi as spoken by the youth is not a dialect in itself, but a slang that retains the structural features of the Kochi dialect. It is used along with certain fashionable lexical innovations that may have been part of an earlier Kochi dialect or have been reintroduced with enhanced identity functions and social meanings through external stimuli, in this case, through films. Certain idioms, linguistic elements or catchphrases popularized by characters speaking the urban Kochi dialect in film, have become a part of the daily pragmatic discourse of the youth.

Some of these linguistic elements and innovations include words as simple as *bro, dude, buddy, machan, machu,* and other phrases as shown in table 4.1.

Expressions	Connotational meaning	Source
kola mass **murderous mass**	'Brilliant'	*Da Thadiya*
ku:ttansravə **huge shark**	'Very powerful person'	*Best Actor*
vandividə **vehicle leave**	'Take off from here'	*AnuragakarikkinVellam*
Scene aakkanda **Scene make (present)—don't**	'Don't make an issue'	*Sagar alias Jackie, Anwar*
paint po:yi **paint go (past)**	'Suffer minor injuries'	*Honey Bee*
scene contra **scene—neologism**	'The situation is bad'	*Premam*
ettintepaNikittum **eight's job get (fut.)**	'you will get into big trouble'	Eg. *Big B, Anwar*

Table 1. Expressions, literal meaning, and connotational meaning

These expressions translate as absurdities and sometimes as completely nonsensical (Somig 1981) conveying meaning only at the metaphorical/connotative level (e.g. *Paint Poyi*). Some neologisms and lingo, like *polichu*, are variations unique to Kochi slang:

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g) avanpolichu. poliyanu. kola mass paripadiyayirunnu
'He rocked. It was a rocking/superb performance'

Polichu is a modified form of an existing casual expression, *adichupolichu* meaning 'rocked.' The meaning of the expression has been retained, but the expression itself has varied.

Regional Dialects and the Malayalam Film Industry

Malayalam films have always been inconsistent in their representation of regional vernacular varieties, although social varieties of dialects have occasionally featured. Up until the 1980s, most films had settings in which the characters spoke standard Malayalam (Vishwanath 2012; Soman 2015). A few exceptions include: *Chemmeen* (1965, Alleppey coastal dialect); *Kodiyettam* (1977, Central Travancore dialect); *Kolangal* (1981, Central Travancore dialect); and some historical films that used the *Valluvanadan* dialect.

In the 1990s, serious film makers of mainstream cinema, like Aravindan, Padmarajan, and Bharathan, occasionally depicted the use of regional dialects. While most films penned by M. T. Vasudevan Nair stuck to the *Valluvanadan* dialect, films by Adoor Gopalakrishnan portrayed a wide range of regional dialects ranging from Central Travancore/*Vembanad* (*Kodiyettam* 1977) to South Canara/North Malabar dialect in *Vidheyan* (1994). Commercial films of the mid and late 1990s seldom used regional dialects except for a few films: *Orkkappurathu* (1988, Kochi); *Kottayam Kunjachan* (1990, Kottayam); *Kattukuthira* (1991, Cherthala/Central Tranvancore sub-dialect); *Malappuram Haji Mahanaya Joji* (1994, Malappuram); and *Lelam* (1997, Kottayam).

The trend of commercial films depicting regional dialects resurfaced in 2005 when Trivandrum slang was in vogue. *Rajamanikyam* (2005), a commercially successful film featuring exaggerated Trivandrum slang, was followed by several films showing minor characters speaking this slang (Velayanikal 2012; Soman 2015). After the former's success, several commercial and arthouse films began portraying regional dialects more sensitively. Following the success of *Big B* (2007) and the rise of 'Bro Culture' (Lukos 2005; Xavier 2015), the number of films depicting the Kochi dialect and/or Urban Kochi slang has been on the rise. Chart 1 shows the pattern of this increase strengthening between 2010 and 2016.*

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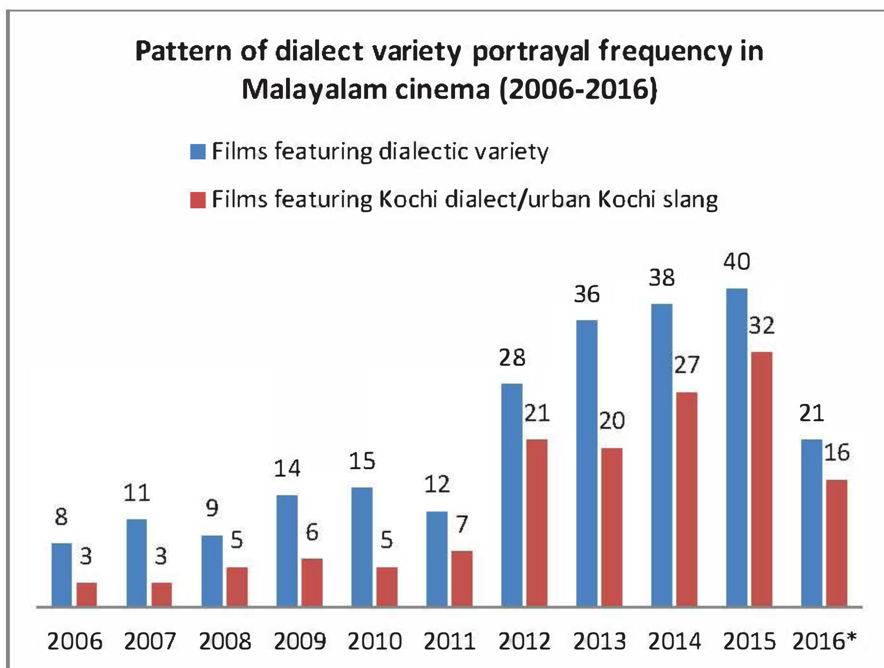

Chart 1 (*until July 2016)

Representation of Speakers

Malayalam cinema's portrayal of Kochi slang speakers can be divided into three broad categories based on a content analysis of the films.

Ethnic identity marker

This category of films portrays Kochi dialect in its native community settings, including: films dealing with coastal variants of the Kochi dialect such as *Amaram* (1991) and *Chamayam* (1993); films featuring the Kochi-Jewish sociolects; and dialects spoken by the Anglo-Indian community in Kochi such as *Orkkappurathu* (1988), *Danny* (2001), *Akale* (2004), and a few other films.

There is a strong ethnic identity associated with the portrayal of the dialect and this approach shows 'the Other' in an exotic manner creating an inherent distance between the viewer and the characters. There is no scope

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for cultural interaction or engagement between the viewer and the dialect unless the viewer is a native speaker of the dialect.

Characterization and comedy

In these films, the dialect is used for the unique characterization of each character depicted. The dialect is used to reveal the character's background or to add humour. The stereotypical comic associations with certain dialects make it difficult for the viewer to engage in any serious identity associations with the dialect except in cases evoking humour.

Urban Kochi slang

The initial portrayals of Kochi slang were coupled with gritty situations involving gangsters, henchmen, and violence depicting colony/ghetto identity, aggression, and camaraderie. After the success of *Big B* (2007), several films featuring this dialect went on to build on this association and continue to do so—films such as *Annayum Rasoolum* (2013) and *Kammatti Paadam* (2016) dealing with gang wars. However, over the years, violence as the sole identity trait associated with Kochi slang has given way to another defining trait: 'Bro Culture.'

Bro Culture, akin to hip-hop culture (Kubrin 2005), has been promoted through films like *Da Thadiya* (2012), *Ustad Hotel* (2012), *Trivandrum Lodge* (2012), *Honey Bee* (2013), *ABCD* (2013), *Premam* (2105), and *Charlie* (2015) among others. Portraying urban youth culture, tastes and sensibilities that urban youth could easily relate to, these films feature happy-go-lucky urban youth, displaying camaraderie and bonding. Urban Kochi slang was the common dialect used in these films with characters being presented as free-thinkers, artists, travellers, musicians, loafers, IT professionals, and the like.

With identity tags made available in the visual and character depictions, these films provide scope for the participatory engagement of the audience, especially the youth, by associating Kochi slang with a particular collective identity.

Discussion of the Survey

The 96 respondents represented dialectal plurality well (fig.1). It is interesting to note that a good majority of the respondents were proud

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speakers of their native dialects and were defensive about this pride. 82% of the respondents revealed their linguistic identity without hesitation. Over 74% strongly or mildly disagreed that they were stigmatized by standard Malayalam speakers when using their native dialects (fig. 2).

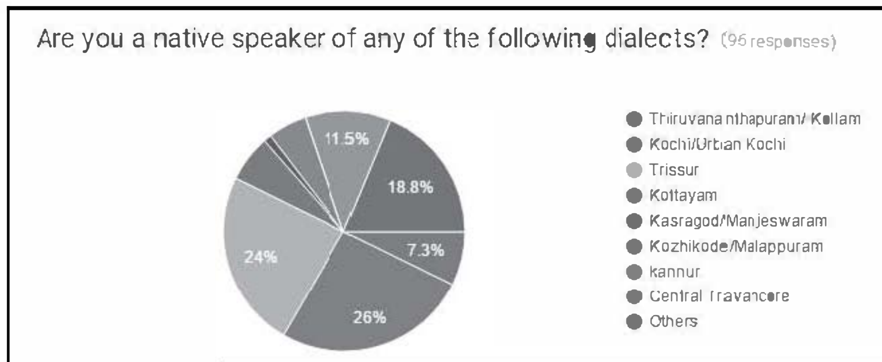

Fig. 1

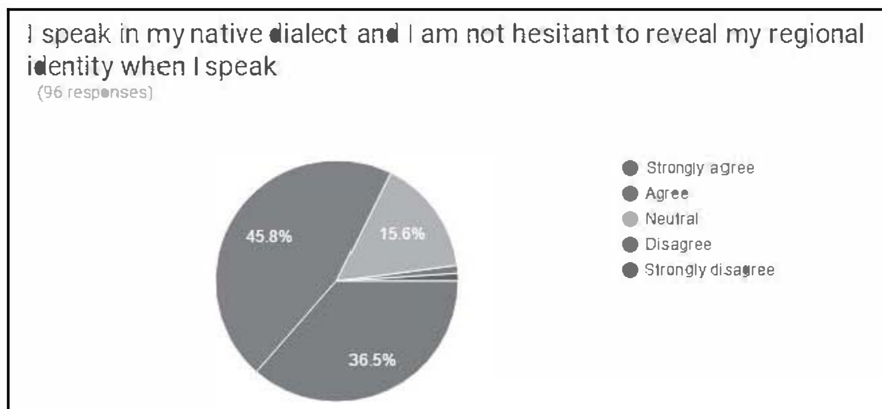

Fig. 2

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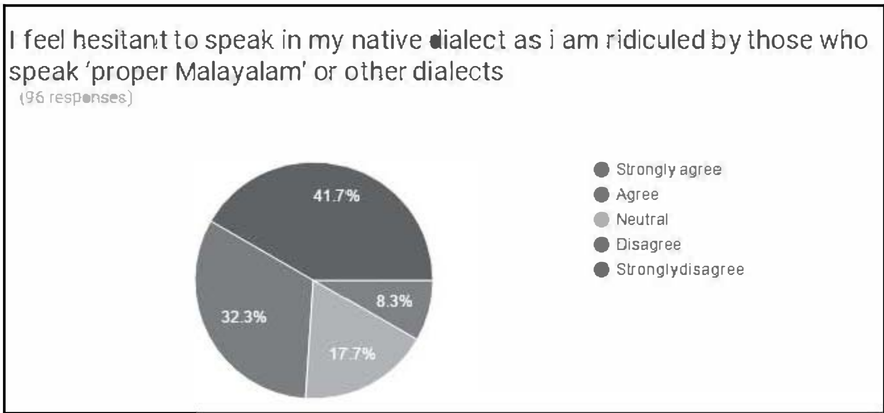

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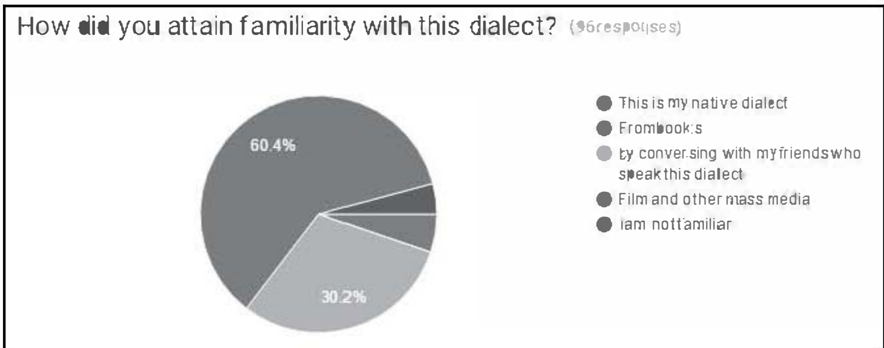

Fig. 4

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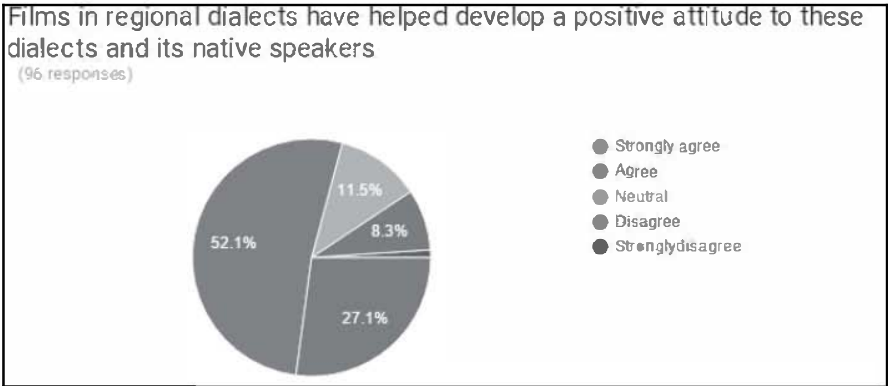

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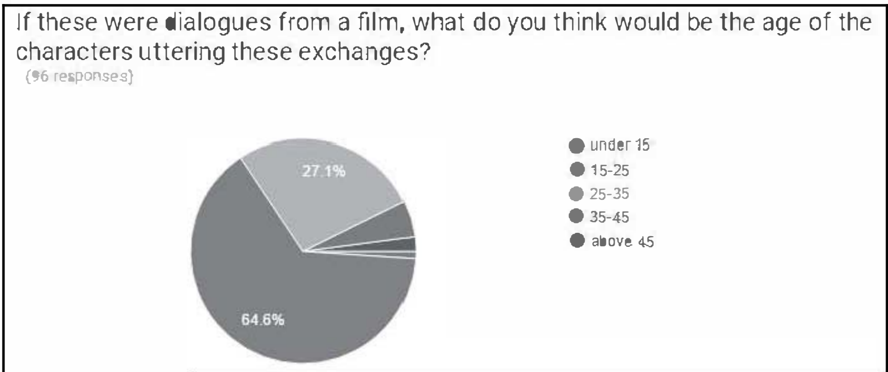

Fig. 6

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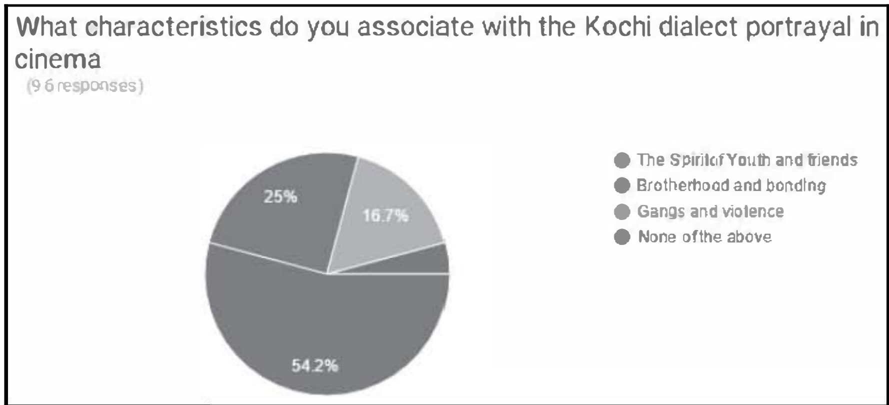

Fig. 7

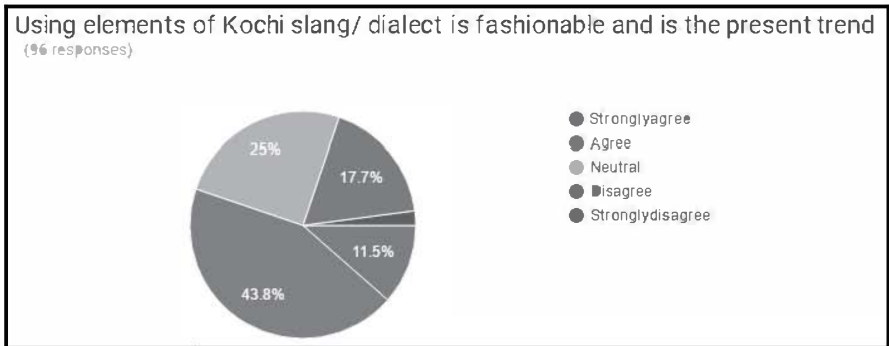

Fig. 8

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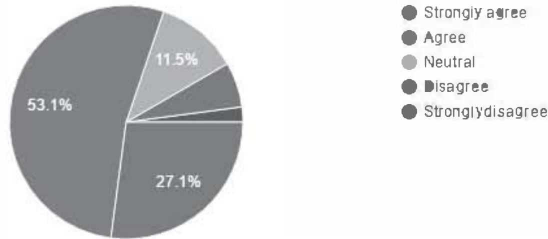

Fig. 9

82% of the respondents were very frequent or frequent film viewers. 67% said that the representation of dialects in commercial cinema had gone up between 2005 and 2015. On films and the Kochi dialect, almost 95% of the respondents agreed on the increase in the number of films featuring this dialect in the last few years and 80% said that film and mass media had been responsible for the spread of the Kochi dialect among young people (fig. 9).

The respondents were shown an image with three sentences using urban Kochi slang and were asked to identify the dialect used. 92% of the respondents identified it as the Kochi dialect. 60% said that they were introduced to this slang through film and other mass media (fig. 4). Almost 90% said that linguistic elements or catchphrases in regional dialects had become fashionable after the commercial success of a film in that dialect. 80% of the respondents agreed to the effectiveness of cinema in creating awareness about various dialects and in building positive attitudes to both dialects and their speakers (fig. 5).

Respondents were asked to relate the sentences (in urban Kochi slang) to the age of the characters uttering them, as if the sentences had come from dialogue in a film. 65% thought that the characters would fall within the age group of 15-25 and 27% went with 25-35 (fig. 6). An interesting observation on analyzing the data was that there was a visible correlation between the age of the respondents and their response to guessing the character's age. When guessing the age group, 53% of the respondents chose the age group that they belonged to. For example, most respondents belonging to the age group 15-20 chose 15-25 as the probable age of the characters delivering these lines. A question that followed was on the emotional characteristics that they would associate with urban Kochi slang as portrayed in Malayalam

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cinema. 54% said that they associated 'the spirit of youth and friendship' with the slang and 25% associated it with 'brotherhood and bonding'—both being markers of youth identity, this substantiates the relationship presented in our hypothesis.

51% of the respondents either used the slang rarely or regularly. 62% of them were native speakers of other dialects (Central Travancore, Kottayam, Trivandrum, Trissur, Kozhikode, and others). This allows one to speculate on the pathways of cross dialectic code mixing. In support of this observation, 55% said that Keralan youth used Kochi slang in their daily conversations irrespective of native dialect and regional differences. 86% (of those who used the slang) said that they would use it while conversing with friends and members of their peer group. 87% of the respondents said that they had observed their friends code-mix Kochi dialect into their discourse. 55% said that using elements of Kochi dialect or urban Kochi slang was fashionable and a contemporary trend.

Discussion

One can see from the data analyzed (Chart 1) that there has been a pronounced rise in the number of Malayalam films featuring the rich dialect variety of the language. As is evident in Chart 1, films featuring Kochi slang seem to have increased compared to other dialects and significantly outnumber films in other dialects. Though films in other dialects are equally successful with younger audiences, their real-life identity negotiations favour urban Kochi slang over other dialects.

This choice may be guided by several factors. As explained earlier, films have consistently portrayed Kochi slang alongside strong markers of youth identity: fashion and lifestyle; passion and aspiration; physical attributes and style statements; socialization and community membership; and linguistic stylization and camaraderie. The respondents seemed to identify themselves with the characters that spoke the dialect—this is substantiated by the tendency of the respondents to choose their own age group when guessing the age of the characters using this dialect onscreen. This change in the relationship between cinema, audience, society and language, and the change in the social meaning and function of the Kochi dialect, which is now rich with meta-signs that signify a unique identity, is also shown by the majority of the respondents choosing 'the spirit of youth and friendship,' followed by 'brotherhood and bonding,' in response to the question on the emotions they associate with the slang.

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According to Coupland (2014), "class is no more a strong social divider like sociolinguists expected it to be"—resorting to Kochi slang levels community and caste differences in dialects and grants to the speaker membership of a common community—the urban youth. On the rising number of films set in Kochi, an urban centre and commercial capital, Asha Prakash (2013) says, "the city, its night life, malls and cafes, and the unique culture of Fort Kochi and Mattancherry are all lapped up by young filmmakers these days." The tendency to use the dialect of the commercial capital of the state can thus be extrapolated to the negotiation of dual identities between the traditional and urban self.

This survey rejects the initial hypothesis that resorting to the Kochi dialect over a native dialect was a mechanism for gaining prestige through 'status raising' by engaging in trending practices. The responses in the survey prove that native speakers are proud of their dialect identity and are not hesitant to reveal their regional identity. A new dialect or slang becomes a linguistic necessity only if there is a gap in communication caused by the absence of a common language (Lucy 2010). For an existing dialect to be innovatively fashioned into a new slang and to be widely used, irrespective of regional origin, may be seen as an off-the-shelf language change—a change introduced through the media that remains dormant, before suddenly being taken up in a speech community with enhanced social meanings. This can be attributed to the depiction of youth identity in association with Kochi slang. This is evident in the connection of Kochi slang and Bro Culture. The majority of the respondents found it fashionable to use Kochi slang (fig. 9). The catchphrases listed in table 1 and connected lexical innovations have been popularized through film and have gone on to become indexical signs (Mendoza-Denton 2002) that signify a new social meaning arising out of pragmatic use.

Peer pressure also needs to be analyzed as a factor. The survey points to the youth using the language in discourses involving friends and peers. The peer group acts as a space where the identity of "youth is performed, played with, and negotiated" (Weiss in Nakassis 2010). The majority of the respondents said that they had observed their friends using the slang, as a fashionable practice, and that they used it sometimes with their friends. This is a pragmatic choice that is guided by a desire to gain membership to the larger identity of urban youth.

Urban Kochi slang, as a variant of the Kochi dialect, exemplifies Karl Somig's (1981) definition of slang as "breaking established rules" and "adding lexical innovations." Though the slang only shows innovations in

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the form of catchphrases foreign to the Kochi dialect, its wide use as a fashion statement among young people, as a detour from using the commonly used standard Malayalam, points to a negotiation of dual identities—the balancing of a native identity and an identity as a member of the urban youth. As mentioned earlier, the new generation of Malayalam films pose several questions around time-tested social constructs, such as morality. This can be considered an extension of the urban youth's questioning of existing social constructs and rules (Sornig 1981). In that sense, this detour from standard Malayalam may be seen as a desire to break the rules and assert one's identity, "forming a new unified identity of the urban youth."

Conclusion

The spread of the Kochi dialect is an example of language variation caused by the media and in the absence of direct contact. The underlying correlation between the rise in the portrayal of urban Kochi slang in films and its increased use among *malayali* youth has been established through the preceding analysis. Films have caused a two-step vernacularization: by increasing the prestige of the regional dialects portrayed, both by enhancing the attitude of other dialect speakers to the featured dialect and by increasing the self-esteem and positive attitudes of the native speaker to their native dialect, it has caused a de-standardization of 'neutral' Malayalam; the second is a uniform diffusion of mediatized/vernacularized Urban Kochi slang.

The popularity of Kochi slang is related to the cultivation of an urban youth identity by these films. It is not the slang's linguistic features that have caused this code-mixing, but the similarities the urban youth associate between themselves and the characters seen using this code-mixing onscreen. The slang and the identity have a causal relationship that can operate in both directions. The slang's popularity among young people is proportional to the number of films featuring it; it has been tagged as a youth identity and fashionable in films and this is related to the urban youth using the slang in pragmatic discourse. Young people 'adequate' (Boucholtz and Hall 2005) and mimic youth portrayals in films and borrow depicted identity markers as their own. The slang's acceptance among young people and its use in daily conversation, even among native speakers of other dialects, has risen from a non-linguistic necessity to one that is determined by extra linguistic factors like the collective identity of urban youth, the desire to

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negotiate dual identities, the association of the dialect as fashionable, peer pressure, and its increased prestige.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

AVOUCHING THE SILENCED VOICES: THE INNER CONFLICT OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN LITERARY ACCOUNTS

MANJRI SUMAN AND OM PRAKASH

African Americans struggle with a double consciousness. This struggle always leads to a quest for identity and a need for recognition, not just in society generally, in order to make their presence felt, but also within themselves. This newfound identity, if found at all, is asserted in different ways by different people. This paper is about the search for identity among African Americans and how that identity is ultimately avouched as they find their voices in their respective domains. African Americans were, and continue to be, trampled under the bigotry of white oppression. Their very existence often seems a harsh reality or an evil dream without end. The early conservative Africans, who were brought to America as slaves, believed that it was God's will that led them to live a life of such pain and sacrifice and only death could provide release. However, as the times changed and awareness grew among African Americans, they revolted against this questionable and unconventional belief. They rejected the stoic idea that African Americans were born to be tortured by, and to serve, the white population and set out on a quest to construct their own identity.

African Americans were brought as slaves from different parts of Africa to the American continent where they were used as plantation slaves and they saw the worst possible aspects of life. Slavery, the Great Migration from the southern states, emancipation during the American Civil War, the turmoil of the civil rights movement, and finally, racist housing segregation increased the anguish and crippled the 'negro' deeply. More often than not, African Americans succumbed to the ill-treatment meted out to them and the coercion of the white ruling class forced upon African Americans was fatal to their consciousness. A few African Americans

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dared to go against the status quo; they not only questioned white supremacist attitudes, but also questioned the class distinction among their own race and within their own consciences. These people detested and revolted against both whites and white--aping black people alike. They were the ones who were unable to bear their long oppression any further, and rebelled in both violent and non-violent ways in order to find a true 'self.' They found this 'self' and claimed their new identity by gaining a 'voice'—a voice that had never found articulation before. It was a voice previously unheard, sometimes even by the speakers themselves. As such, this paper studies the gaining of a voice and the claiming of an identity by African Americans through their representation in literary texts.

The protagonists of most novels written by African American writers are often bildungsroman characters who transition from being fragile and helpless to strong and assertive personalities. African Americans were frequently denied the basic rights of other Americans, and more importantly, those of being human. Walter, the protagonist of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun,* highlights the bitter fact that even after six generation of African Americans being born in the United States, they were still treated as outsiders and as people who were alien to the country. Black people were socially handicapped because of their skin colour and were treated as outcasts by a white-dominated society.

As a result, African Americans faced a strange alienation on their very own land—the land where they themselves, their parents, and their children had all been born. These were people struggling for acceptance and with a thirst for recognition. Justice was still denied to 'negroes'[1] long after slavery had been abolished. Racial oppression and housing segregation created a wide gap between black and white people. This gap transformed into a sensation of eeriness and alienation, resulting in hatred. This hatred increased thanks to atrocities committed by the Ku Klux Klan. In Richard Wright's *Native Son,* Max, a communist lawyer, describes the cause of this alienation. Defending an African American in court, who has been charged with two murders, he says:

> "(I)njustice which lasts for long centuries and which exists among millions of people over thousands of square miles of territory, is in injustice no longer; it is an accomplished fact of life. What is happening here today is

[1] The terms black, negro, negroes, nigger, slaves etc. have been used to refer to the African Americans because of the prevalent attitude of the then dominant class and the authors do not subscribe to such terms.

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> not injustice, but oppression, an attempt to throttle or stamp out a new form of life" (Wright 1940: 391).

Max tries to tell the court that Bigger's crime was "an act of creation" and that circumstances had forced him to commit such an offence—Bigger's character was a product of the society in which he was born.

Consequently, an African American trapped on the American continent, hardly aware of his/her African heritage, faced the dilemma of a double consciousness. This term, coined by W. E. B. Du Bois in 1903, describes the inner conflict of African Americans and how they were trapped in a quandary as to whether to assimilate with white Americans to gain acceptance or to push away from them and create their own identity.

We provide here two male African American literary characters as examples—one is highly assimilationist while the other nurtures a deep-rooted hatred for whites. The former is Walter Younger, the protagonist of Hansberry's play *A Raisin in the Sun.* Born and brought up in America, he does not understand any other culture and wants a better life for himself. He wants to get away from the stereotypical jobs available to African Americans: drivers, conductors, waiters, and other such menial jobs. He has a 'white' dream of rising high. He is also plagued by the patriarchal mindset of white society where a man is supposed to be the head of the household. Not receiving such privileges, he becomes frustrated and revolts against his own family.

As black people were a minority when compared to white people, the latter's language and culture had a huge impact on the life of black people. Smitherman rightly puts it by saying that the "influence of majority culture and language on its minority is powerful indeed, and there is a great pressure on minorities to assimilate and adopt the culture and language of the majority" (2006: 10). Walter's psychological state can be understood if we consider him to be the product of a segregated society that was predominantly white. At the same time, Walter is fully aware of his social and racial status. He gets the shock of his life when he is cheated by an African American friend. His belief in the system further deteriorates when he realizes that white people are not ready to welcome him and his family into a white neighbourhood. He is disheartened by the fact that even though his son is a sixth generation African American, this hyphenated identity does not buy him acceptance and respect in American society. There are reports of the Ku Klux Klan bombing black houses in white neighborhoods and similar threats have been made against the

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Younger family. When contacted by a white negotiator who seeks to persuade him not to move into the white neighbourhood, Walter refuses to accept the proposal and, in an act of rejection, mimics stereotypical African American speech, quite uncommon in urban Chicago. This is an act of defiance against white hegemony as he wants to show the white supremacists of the neighbourhood that the Younger family will not give in to their inimical circumstances. This speech shows how Walter, who has been a frustrated character throughout the play, finally gains a voice, not just for himself, but for his entire family.

Bigger, in Richard Wright's *Native Son,* is the "product of violence and racism that suffused the devastating social conditions in which he was raised" (Lowenstein 2013: 1). The blacks and whites were unknown to each other. The segregation of blacks and whites was the root cause of this strangeness and the alienation that they felt from one another. Wright says that there are two worlds:

> "The white world and the black world, and they are physically separated. There are white schools and black schools, white churches and black churches, white businesses and black businesses, white graveyards and black graveyards, and, for all I know, a white God and a black God" (1940: 5).

Bigger is a creation of this suffocation, separation, and isolation. In Wright's words, Bigger is a product of a "dislocated society; he is a dispossessed and disinherited man" (1940: 15); "to Bigger and his kind, white people were not really people; they were a sort of great natural force, like a stormy sky looming overhead, or like a deep swirling river stretching suddenly at one's feet in the dark" (1940: 114).

Moreover, the attitude of the dominant white class towards African Americans had always been demeaning and they were often treated no better than animals. A grotesque description of Bigger is given in the newspapers where a white girl says that "he looked exactly like an ape!" (309). As we move further into the article we read that "he [Bigger] gives the impression of possessing abnormal physical strength. He is about five feet, nine inches tall and his skin is exceedingly black. His lower jaw protrudes obnoxiously, reminding one of a jungle beast" (1940: 309). African Americans were not allowed any representation in the white world. During the era of slavery, they were only mentioned in newspapers when they ran away from plantations—the articles presented them as property, evaluating them on their competence in English. Later, they were labeled runaway slaves. Post-slavery, 'negroes' found mention in newspapers

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only when they committed a crime and then only if the crime was committed against white people. A black person attacking or robbing another black person was not a matter of concern.

Native Son stands against the backdrop of Du Bois' double consciousness. Bigger is an African American trapped between two worlds, struggling to identify with one and to fit into the other. He is caught in the dilemma and duality of black life and white values and this has drawn him into a different psychological state. A third consciousness develops in him. Chen Xu states that Wright develops three characteristics in Bigger: "[a] very strong sense of himself, his freedom to control that self, and his double awareness of the two cultural milieus in which that self has to exist" (2009: 40). As such, according to Xu, the maintenance and establishment of 'self' in black people's double consciousness is a third consciousness. Bigger is on a quest to restore his voice, find a self, make his presence count, and achieve self-fulfillment. Xu further opines that:

> "The third consciousness is a new consciousness, as well as a spirit, formed in the black people's striving for a better life and self-realization in the racist society. On the one hand, they, confined by their double-consciousness, are timid and submissive before whites; and on the other hand, they rebel against Whites when their own life is in danger (2009: 41)."

The assertion of this consciousness can also be violent at times. This is exactly what happens in Bigger's case. Overtly aware of his dark skin, Bigger craves recognition. Bigger wants to be an engineer and a businessman, but he knows that this is not possible in a white-dominated world. His blackness leaves him helpless, invisible, and unrecognized. Even an act of kindness by his white employers makes Bigger uncomfortable and he accidently kills Mary Dalton. Although the murder is unintentional, Bigger does not want to admit to it being so. He wants to shout about it to the world and claim his deed. This is the first time in his life he can own up to something. This murder is the only activity in his life for which no one else can take credit. This quest for selfhood and the restoration of his voice finds fulfillment in the commission of a brutal crime and his unregretful acceptance of that crime.

However, there are a few critics who maintain that Bigger never actually gains a voice of his own. Rather, they consider that the character of Max is prioritized, highlighted, and glamorized because of Wright's affinity to the Communist Party. It has been suggested that Max speaks for Bigger leaving him a mere spectator in a white world. Bigger's character in the

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novel exercises power and authority, but that is limited to his own (black) world and among his own (black) people. Even his language is affected when in front of white people—it consists of monosyllabic responses and this practice prevails for a long time in front of everyone except Max. Critics, such as Irving Howe, Robert Bone, Dan McCall, Edward Margolies, and Russell Brignano believe that Max's appearance is an ideological intrusion that disrupts the artistic unity of *Native Son* (Miller 1986). Max's dominant role in articulating Bigger's stance has led some critics to conclude that:

> "Bigger Thomas himself is inarticulate, incapable of negotiating the conflict between 'thought' and 'feeling' which defines his emotional life for a great deal of the novel, incapable of telling his own story and, therefore, of defining himself" (Miller 1986: 501).

Contrary to this opinion, we believe that Bigger always had a voice, which, as mentioned, he exercises in his community. His suppressed voice in a white setting was waiting for an opportunity to be projected, but unfortunately that projection was violent. Max is a white communist who acts as a bridge between the white and black communities. Bigger gains his voice and speaks his mind about his hatred and aspirations. Even if Bigger had spoken in the courtroom or in front of other white people, his voice would have fallen on deaf ears as no one would have tried to understand his state of mind.

Miller further states that Bigger:

> "Belongs to a specific speech community within the larger black community, one which is governed by its own norms and values: the world of black, urban, male lumpen proletariat. Not only is Bigger articulate in this world he exercises considerable power within it" (1986: 503).

Max, who is Bigger's representative both legally and linguistically, fails in the end as it is evident from Bigger's last sentence that while he has no role to play in developing Bigger's consciousness, he is definitely the building block that helps him realize his 'self.' Bigger stands firm when in the end he says "What I killed for I am" (453). Miller believes that by saying so Bigger shakes the "authoritative discourse of the white people to its very foundation in this scene" (506).

The African American male faced a multitude of problems in the 1980s. Although the African American male was a publicly visible figure, he was a member of the least understood and least studied of all the gender and

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racially defined groups in the United States (Staples 1986b quoted in Blake and Darling 1994). More often than not African Americans were labelled "immoral, lazy, violent, and mentally deficient, along with being sexual superstuds, athletes, and rapacious criminals" (Hare and Hare 1984 in Blake and Darling 1994: 402). Even if equipped with positive qualities, they have been portrayed as handicapped or as lacking certain essential qualities that force them to seek help from a white man who acts as a guardian angel.

Nickel states that it was a common practice to present African American men as disabled to appeal to the sympathies of white spectators:

> "The lachrymose black disabled figure accommodated the anxieties and biases of mainstream audiences. Weak, passive, dependent, vulnerable, persecuted, humble, and innocent, the black disabled figure hit just the right note sympathetic and not too threatening for contemporary white moviegoers" (Nickel 2004: 33).

This notion applied to books as well as movies. Nickel further states that African American men were presented in fiction as displaying courage, but not enough to make them clear-cut heroes. Blackness was considered a disability in the post-war years and black people either had to cope with this or overcome it—more often than not they were represented as being rescued by a white person who was the only one capable of resolving the 'negro problem.' Atticus, in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, acts as a guardian angel to Tom, the alleged rapist of Mayella Ewell; Max is shown to play a similar role for Bigger.

Gayatri Spivak's subaltern theory applies to the condition of African Americans. She uses the term 'subaltern' to refer to groups who are subject to hegemonic domination by a ruling class (1988). Spivak, in her article Can the Subaltern speak? (1988), asks questions concerning postcolonial feminist theories and subaltern studies. Spivak highlights how colonial power silenced the subaltern by representing him/her in colonial discourses as having no role. She does not mean that subalterns cannot speak, rather she asserts that members of oppressed classes use the dominant voice appropriate to their situation in order to be heard by society. In a colonized society, the dominant authority colonizes both men and women of colour. In turn, black men colonize black woman. Spivak suggests that "the constitution of the female subject in life is the place of the differed" (Soleimani and Bahman Zarrinjooee 2014: 783).

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Spivak concentrates on marginalized people who are not presented as being a result of Western structures and imperial law. She believes that these dominant mindsets are still prevalent among the dominated classes and even though subaltern writers have emerged, in one manner or another, their writings are controlled by the dominant system. Spivak challenges and protests against these controlling systems of marginalized groups and doubly colonized women and rejects those controllers whom she believes are speaking from the margins.

Literary texts are full of examples of strong African American women who fight with their male counterparts, and with the world beyond, in search of an identity. Suppressed in the beginning, they emerge as powerful independent women who gain their identity through their newly acquired voice. This definition of identity and independence, however, is different for different women. Janie, the protagonist of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, has to shift between three husbands to find her identity in blackness. She regains her voice by losing the love of her life, which makes her strong. Her new independent stance is symbolized by an event where she narrates her own story to her best friend and comes to the town in her overalls, disturbing gender stereotypes—her equality with men is symbolized by the imagery of Janie switching to overalls from normal female dress and her freedom is symbolized by her getting rid of her head-rags. Unlike the prevalent expectation of the time, the death of her husband does not weaken her, but gives her enough strength to move on. She cherishes the love she receives from her third husband, Tea Cake, and emerges a strong woman. In the discovery of Janie's identity, "Tea Cake was her companion in her quest, not her master or mentor" Kubitschek (1983: 111).

With Tea Cake, Janie leads the life of a common black person in the truest sense and this is when she discovers her true self. Janie's grandmother and Joe Starks, her second husband, want her to ape a white lifestyle, but Janie fails to connect with them. Janie does not have her own voice and feels compelled to go along with whatever they say. But with Tea Cake, a representative of black culture, Janie realizes that it is in blackness that she finds fun and solace. Her hair and her lighter skin colour often distance her from other black people and since childhood it has often been assumed that she is not one of them, but that she is white. With her new-found self-determination, she forces Tea Cake to make her one of them—a common black girl who belongs to her own community.

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Another female African American character looking for her identity is Beneatha, Walter's sister in *A Raisin in the Sun*. Beneatha is in her early twenties and is a modem, educated woman who represents female empowerment. She brings new ideas and philosophies to the family, although some of her ideas are not liked by other family members, especially her mother. God is an idea for her that she is not ready to accept. She questions the concept of God receiving credit for all human activity. Her mother is not ready to accept her atheism and when she is the head of the family she slaps Beneatha for her disbelief. However, Beneatha is in search of greater realities. She is on a quest for her true identity, but gets no support or recognition for this from fellow Americans. She tries to find comfort and solace in her African heritage. Her friend Asagai, who hails from Africa, helps her to do so. She tells Asagai "I want to talk to you. About Africa ... I am looking for my identity" (62). Nowrouzi and Faghfori (2015) consider Beneatha to be trapped in Du Boisian double consciousness. She is living an American life and the American dream, but is trying to find her African origins too. Asagai makes her aware of her African connection and helps her find her identity. He accuses her of being an assimilationist who has straightened her hair to be like white Americans. Realizing the truth behind this accusation, she happily wears the Nigerian dress given to her by Asagai and cuts her straightened hair off to reject her American assimilation. Although she wants to live an African life, she returns to reality when George asks her go out with him. She is living in an American reality, but at same time she seeks to reject it. She tells everyone that she hates being an assimilationist "negro." When asked by Ruth, her sister-in-law, what this means, Beneatha describes an "assimilationist" as someone who is "willing to give up his own culture and submerge himself completely in the dominant, and in this case oppressive culture!" (81). Thus, Beneatha's way of finding her voice is to deviate from white American reality and to live an African dream. Beneatha may be considered a good best example of a person suffering from a push-pull syndrome—she is pushed unconsciously towards a white American culture and lifestyle, but consciously pulls away from it in her desire to go towards an imagined African reality.

However, seen from a different perspective we do not feel that Beneatha is trapped in the psychological dilemma of double consciousness. It cannot be denied that she is an American individual, but she is aware of the fact that even after generations of American ancestry, her people are not accepted as Americans and have to deal with their alienated citizenship. Therefore, rather than being trapped in a double consciousness, she consciously makes an effort to discover the roots of her African identity.

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When talking about African American women characters, particularly their plight and identity, Celie, the protagonist of Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, cannot be ignored. A sexually and physically oppressed woman, Celie emerges as a strong woman who asserts her voice both literally and figuratively. She starts "wearing pants" in the house, symbolizing the fact that she has gained strength and has done away with any kind of stereotyping. To start with, her voice had been suppressed by her stepfather who raped her and fathered her child and threatened her to keep her quiet. Despite being silenced, Celie decides to articulate her feelings by writing letters to God. She creates a virtual relationship in order to communicate her feelings. But in the real world, her voice is suppressed, first by her stepfather and then by her husband. She is nothing but a sexual convenience for Albert, aka Mr. ____ (as depicted in the novel), and a "mammy" to his children. Celie is trapped by sexual, racial, and linguistic barriers, which she later overcomes with the help of external support from Shug and Sofia. She works her way "from speechlessness to eloquence … from suffering patriarchy, to rebelling against its conventions" and to creating her own ethos (Cheung 1988: 162).

Initially, Celie takes solace in God and writes letters to him to get rid of the imposed silence upon her and to share her feelings. But later in the novel we find a transformed Celie who not only questions the existence of God, but also starts writing letters to her sister, Nettie, and finally learns to assert herself. She blames God for being nothing but a mute spectator of Celie's tortured life. Celie comes out of her dependence on God and travels a long path from voicelessness, eventually becoming a strong-voiced woman who knows how to fight for herself and for her friends. She protects Shug's image, whose character is maligned by society, because it is Shug who makes her realize what true love is and it is through Shug and Sophia's combined efforts that she becomes independent. Subdued as a woman, Celie "gathers strength through a female network" (Cheung 1988: 166). Cheung further states that Celie as a person is convinced that, like Sofia and Shug, she must hold her "own self is what us have to hand" (238). Writing about Sofia, Shug, and Nettie allows Celie to relive and rehearse their speech and actions thereby composing a new self.

Celie finally emerges as a strong woman. When Mr. ____ says "You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to open your mouth to people ... You black, you pore … you a woman. Goddam. You nothing at all" (186-87), Celie retorts "I'm pore, I'm black, I may be ugly … *But I'm here*" (187 emphasis added).

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Many scholars have accused Walker of not using the correct form of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) in her novel; Walker has defended herself by saying that her grandmother, who was of Cherokee Indian ancestry, used to speak in this way. In the novel, we find that Celie takes pride in the language she speaks. We find Darlene, one of the black women co-workers of Celie, trying to teach her the correct form of the language as she is considered stupid by other people. When asked by her sewing assistant, Darlene, to work upon her language, the liberated Celie not only feels fine about her dialect, but even resists her sewing companion's attempt to teach her to "talk proper," thinking to herself "Look like to me only a fool would want you to talk in a way that feel peculiar to your mind" (194). Although Celie is unable to produce 'proper' English, her Black English enables her to forcefully assert her self-hood: "it is uneducated but personal, difficult but precise" (Fifer in Cheung 1988: 170).

In the act of understanding one's identity, the greatest plight was that of mulatto women. Smethurst says that "perhaps the most ubiquitous figure in nineteenth-century black literature is that of the 'mulatto,' a person of equal African and European ancestry" (2001: 30). Such a person was often the daughter of a 'negro' slave who inherited a lighter skin-tone from her slave-owner father. The daughter of the female slave and the slave master often stood as a double to the slave master's legal daughter. As such, hatred was a gift that she received from birth. Vyry, the protagonist of Margaret Walker's *Jubilee*, is an example of such a woman—she has to pay the price for being her master's daughter throughout her life and she is often tortured by the legal wife of her biological father. She works as a house servant and is like any other slave in her own father's house. A forlorn girl, she scarcely gets any support from her father. She identifies as a black woman, but both Randall Ware, her first love, and her husband accuse her of not understanding the actual pains and hardships of a "nigger slave" as she was born privileged and therefore they assumed that she faced no hardship. In reality, she has suffered the most in her quest for an identity, as, due to her mixed ancestry, she is not accepted by either race, despite belonging to both. She is subjected to rejection and aloofness from both societies. Even after emancipation, Vyry is emotionally suppressed. Both her partners fail to understand her feelings and she herself ignores them for a long time. When Randall says "Well, Vyry, I keep forgetting you're half-white and you love white folks bettern you love colored folks," she retorts by saying "That's a lie, and don't you say no sitcha thing to me" (474). It is surprising for Innis Brown, her husband, to see a normally docile, optimistic, and quiet woman become so angry. But for Vyry, who

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has been tortured throughout her life by her white masters, it is hard to bear this accusation and the volcano of voicelessness and suppressed silence erupts in the form of an angry voice.

Conclusion

The lives of African Americans in the racist society of America have been, and still are, difficult. The treatment of African Americans under slavery was brutal, harsh, and barbaric and reflected the pervasive misconception that blacks were less than human and more like animals and beasts of burden, such as mules (Taylor 2007). Black women have been described as "outsiders twice over" (Carolyn Heilbrun 1979: 37), excluded from both the mainstream and from ethnic centers of power. Some of these women were thrice muted through sexism, racism, and a 'tonguelessness' that resulted from oppression and language barriers.

Many of the fictional characters that have described the African American experience can be analyzed through the lens of Tajfel's (1979) social identity theory, which deals with *in-group* and *out-group* racism. People believe themselves to be part of a group and this increases their sense of pride and self-esteem. According to Tajfel's theory, in-groups have a tendency to discriminate against out-groups in order to enhance their self-image. This "out-group racism" is a "socially organized set of attitudes, ideas and practices that deny [a racialized group] the dignity, opportunities, freedoms and rewards that [the United States] offers White Americans" (Feagin and Vera 1995: 7). As can be seen in this paper, more often than not, African Americans, irrespective of the time-frame, have been denied basic rights and facilities.

The male and female characters studied in this article break through these barriers, search for their own identities, and establish their fuller selves by gaining a voice. Previously silent or ignorant characters go through many hardships, but emerge as strong personalities. They break through language barriers, dilute the heavy weight of voicelessness, and start speaking for themselves.

These literary encounters reveal that African Americans were frequently pushed to the periphery and were regarded as out-groups by people belonging to the in-groups of American society. Sometimes, these characters try to make a way into the in-group, but usually they reject the concept of assimilation. Those that suffer most of all, however, are those who find themselves the subject of the third consciousness that emerged in

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the identity of many African Americans. The avouching of their voices can conquer all three situations.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

REASONING WITH REASON: UNDERSTANDING THE CONFLICT OF CULTURAL BELIEF IN AMITAV GHOSH'S *THE CIRCLE OF REASON*

SUKANYA MONDAL AND RASHMI GAUR

Identity and culture are two inextricably intertwined ideas. A culture contributes significantly to the identity of an individual who belongs to that culture. Although culture informs a specific layer of one's identity, a person cannot be judged solely by the culture s/he belongs to, because a person's identity has too many dimensions to it. One's education, professional ethics, religious beliefs, and political ideology are all determining factors of one's identity. This paper attempts to examine the relation between reason/rationality and the aforementioned factors of personal identity in the context of a particular situation in Amitav Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason*. The context here is the final episode of the novel where all the major characters assemble in Algeria and discuss the cremation of a dead body. In the course of this debate, different sides of the characters' identities gradually unfold and the process shows us that there are certain human values that question the tyranny of rationalism.

The Circle of Reason (1986) is Amitav Ghosh's first novel. As is hinted at by the title, reason binds the otherwise loosely knit episodes in this novel together. Part I ("Sattva") starts with Balaram who is inspired by a biography of Louis Pasteur during his student life at Presidency College, Calcutta. He, along with a few like-minded friends, forms a club called 'The Rationalists' Club.' In Part II ("Rajas"), his nephew, Alu, carries on Balaram's task of defending reason. Finally, in Part III ("Tamas"), Dr. Maithili Prasad Mishra, an Indian doctor in Algeria, acts as the protector of reason. Throughout this transcontinental journey of reason, reason is not unqualifiedly championed. In general, reason is considered to be a weapon

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to fight superstition and other backward practices, but this novel questions the validity of reason, especially the post-Enlightenment European version of reason or rationality as a universal benchmark. There are numerous episodes and events worthy of critical study in this novel. The particular episode this paper aims to critically delineate is the debate between Dr. Maithili Prasad Mishra and Mrs. Verma on performing Kulfi's last rites.

Before embarking on the focal issue of this paper, we offer a brief note on the novel. The novel begins in Lalpukur, a small village in West Bengal mostly inhabited by refugees from the eastern part of Bengal. Alu, the nephew of Balaram Bose, flees from Lalpukur to Al Ghazira via Kerala, after becoming the prime suspect in the bombing of Bose's home. Jyoti Das, a young policeman from the Intelligence Department follows him. Kulfi, Professor Samuel, Karthamma, and a few other people are illegal Indian immigrants doing menial jobs in Al Gazira—a fictitious oil rich city in the Middle East. Alu finds shelter in Zindi's house along with these other immigrants. After most of the immigrants are killed in an encounter with some soldiers, Alu, Kulfi, and Zindi, along with the son of the dead Karthamma, Boss, escape from Al Gazira to Algeria. Jyoti Das follows them. All of them, coincidentally, find themselves in Mrs. Verma's house in Algeria.

Kulfi dies suddenly of a suspected cardiac condition in Mrs. Verma's house. Out of compassion, Mrs. Verma proposes to cremate her according to Hindu ritual, saying "we shall have to cremate her ourselves, properly, somewhere among the dunes" (438). Here, Dr. Mishra questions the very concept of a "proper Hindu cremation" (438). Dr. Mishra is against taking any such responsibility to cremate the corpse from the very beginning. He refers to the unavailability of various items necessary for a cremation, e.g. Gangajal (holy water from the Ganga), ghee, and sandalwood, as a reason for not attempting to cremate her. When Mrs. Verma manages to collect most of the items required for a so-called Hindu cremation, he broaches the dubious marital status of the departed.

What is interesting, and probably a bit horrific as well, in this episode is the debate between two people, both of whom have commendable knowledge in their own professional fields, over a corpse as to whether she should be granted a proper Hindu funeral or not. The crux of the problem is what determines how a person should act in a certain situation. The importance of this episode is that it offers a crucial moment of rupture. At this moment, a person's knowledge and general understanding of the ways of the world find them at odds with the world and reason, which lies behind every action,

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is questioned. The thematic link that connects all the three parts and the entire chain of events of this novel is the search for reason. That search culminates in the problematizing of reason in the episode of Kulfi's funeral.

Initially Balaram, and towards the end Dr. Maithili Prasad Mishra, stand as advocates of reason—the scientific way of looking at things. Balaram repeatedly expresses his high appreciation of the *Life of Pasteur*. He claims this book to be his guiding light. Though this book is mentioned several times in *The Circle of Reason*, its content is not substantially referred to. However, through this mention alone, Ghosh provides a significant intertextual link in the novel. Ironically, Louis Pasteur whose biography plays the most influential role in shaping Balaram's and then his nephew's philosophy, was himself a man tom between his convictions derived from scientific experimentation and his faith as a Catholic. Pasteur observed his dilemma thus:

> "In each one of us there are two men, the scientist and the man of faith or of doubt. These two spheres are separate, and woe to those who want to make them encroach upon one another in the present state of our knowledge!" (Debre 1998: 368).

Besides, if one minutely follows detailed records of how great inventions are made, one finds that although people extol reason or rationality as the key to science, in many cases important discoveries are simply the result of coincidences. Ghosh points to the randomness of scientific discovery by referencing Pasteur. It is known from Pasteur's biography that he came to invent the cure for cholera by chance. His assistant forgot to put the sample of bacilli in the cupboard of his lab and instead left it exposed to the sun for a day after which Pasteur injected some cholera-infected chickens with the solution. The chickens were cured. Although the credit of this discovery is given entirely to Pasteur, one can construe from the actual sequence of happenings that he had had very little to do with the process. In addition, his lab assistant who unknowingly facilitated the whole process remains unnoticed. Scientific discoveries are often 'benevolent' accidents. Nonetheless, in the history of science a number of branches have evolved, such as phrenology, which at some point gained huge popularity, but were later proved to be baseless pseudoscience. In this novel, Balaram, despite staunchly championing reason throughout his life, practices phrenology. Thus, it is evident that like Pasteur, he too suffers from the dilemma of reason and things that cannot fit into the compartmentalized frame of reason. Balaram himself perishes in an attempt to erase this divide; before that happens, he destroys the village with buckets of carbolic acid. The

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problem with people as obsessive about a thing as Balaram is that they act eccentrically because of a fierce intention to dedicate their life to their philosophy.

Mrs. Verma is against such stubborn holding to one's principles. What is most important to her is being a good human being. At this point, the novel presents an age-old dilemma—what should be prioritized at a moment of judgment: the 'heart' or the 'brain.' While Mrs. Verma is clearly observing the whole unfortunate situation from a humanitarian point of view, Dr. Mishra's stance is that of a disinterested observer. There is a certain characteristic to his erudite argument that makes him a bit aloof from the situation. Without doubt what Dr. Mishra says in his argument is rational, but there are moments when rationality cannot have the final say. Actually, the imposed objectivity that is considered to be the cornerstone of rationality is the bone of contention in the debate between Dr. Mishra and Mrs. Verma.

Rationality achieved its triumphant status when the ideas of Enlightenment gradually seeped down to the praxis of life. The result of this spread of the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment was a highly specialized treatment of different spheres of life. Jurgen Habermas in his essay "Modernity: An Unfinished Project" describes how the objective rationalization of social relations increased "the distance between the expert cultures and the general public" (Habermas 1997: 45). This observation is evident in Mrs. Verma's argument where she describes, as a microbiologist, how important it is to her to not forget that she is a human being. In her profession, it is her job to identify the microbes and bacteria in the human body that cause different types of pain and she compares her role to that of a motor-mechanic—a mechanic checks the different parts of an automobile to ascertain the reason behind its malfunctioning. A microbiologist does almost the same thing. In fact, his/her case is rather metonymically impersonal. The mechanic still has the whole car to inspect in order to determine which part is out of order. Similarly, a surgeon too, Mrs. Verma thinks, is luckier than her in this regard. In the laboratory, the microbiologist has only bottled specimens of blood, urine, or different body serums. She is weirdly alienated from the real person and has to test the person to diagnose the disease they are suffering from. The patient is as impersonal to the microbiologist as s/he is to the patient. Because of this distance between them, the microbiologist has to remind him/herself constantly that s/he is human too. The same is applicable to the patient, but Mrs. Verma feels sorry that it is the "tyranny of … despotic science" that forbids the medical practitioner "to tell one that … all you have to do to cure yourself is try to be a better human being" (445).

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The advancement of science has created an atmosphere for rational thinking, but the partisans of rational thinking have applied this method so intensely that rational thinking has become equivalent to superstition. To be more precise, it has become a type of faith for some people. People like Balaram or Dr. Mishra forget to look at their surroundings without the lens of reason. The problem in following an uncustomized version of post-Enlightenment rationality is that it asks the observer to take a disinterested stance and to count only those solid facts that will lead him/her to the right judgment. It is a matter of debate whether the outcome of this process is *the* right judgment or not, but in a way it inculcates an emotional detachment in the observer's mind. S/he forgets to feel empathy towards a sufferer or any other being and instead gives everything the status of an object. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2007) lucidly explains this situation and the possible danger associated with it in "Reason and the Critique of Historicism" in his famous book *Provincializing Europe*. Chakrabarty observes:

> "They have assumed that for India to function as a nation based on institution of science, democracy, citizenship, and social justice, 'reason' had to prevail over all that was 'irrational' and 'superstitious' among its citizens" (237).

He argues that dismissing the polytheistic system of the Indian subcontinent as irrational and superstitious makes one harshly judgmental. Moreover, these supposedly superstitious practices are mostly associated with the lower-classes or uneducated women. Therefore, labelling these marginal groups as superstitious is an act of elitism on the part of the rationalists. Rationality is a priceless gift of the Age of Enlightenment, but one must not forget the relevance of historical and political context. This is exactly the point on which Mrs. Verma's replacement of Gangajal with water from her kitchen tap is questioned by Dr. Mishra. Dr. Mishra reprimands Mrs. Verma for believing in the custom of pouring Gangajal on the lips of the dead: "you as a rational, educated woman wish to encourage anyone in the belief that a bit of dirty water from a muddy river can actually do them any good when they're already dead" (434). What is crucial here is neither the dirtiness of the water from the Ganga, nor the replacement of it with water from the Saharan water table, but is that Mrs. Verma, while an educated woman, is indulging in this *superstitious* practice. Dr. Mishra does not use the word 'superstitious,' but the implication of his words is quite the same. The problem here is the tendency to identify reason as a part of modernity and modernity as being inseparably linked to the European Enlightenment. This tendentious identification of reason actually leads one to identify anything that does not fit into this reason-modernity network as

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pre-modem and therefore irrational. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2007) also lists this tendentious judgment in the writings of noted Bengali scholars from different disciplines. He observes how Satyendranath Bose, a noted scientist, terms science as knowledge that necessarily opposes religion: "(Science) was obliged to oppose religion whenever religion [presumed to] speak about things on this earth" (Chakrabarty 2007: 237). Thus, these rationalists consider science and religion as two poles of a binary opposition.

It is very difficult to consider the European Enlightenment as a universal mould in which the cultural history of any and every place can be cast. The unsympathetic dismissal of local praxis and the forceful imposition of knowledge and ideas derived from Enlightenment ideals are tantamount to epistemic violence. In *The Circle of Reason*, all the declared rationalists—Balaram, Dr. Mishra, even Alu—do exactly that. They dismiss anything for which they do not find a viable reason at hand, although they are never ready to accept that *their* vision might be incomplete or obstructed. Dr. Mishra rejects the cremation of Kulfi's body because he does not find any reason to help Alu at this critical juncture; in the same situation, an Indian tourist's difficulty with the corpse of his suddenly dead wife moves Mrs. Verma emotionally. When Dr. Mishra asks Mrs. Verma not to worry about Kulfi's cremation because "you don't even know them" (437), logically he may be right, but Mrs. Verma makes the case that this is something for which one should cross the threshold of logic. She behaves in a more humanitarian fashion. Her counter-argument is that because she offered her help when she was alive, why should she not arrange her last rites now that she is dead and in her own house too. Therefore, what is rational or what is not, is not always absolute. The first section of the book shows how the rigidity of rationality can cause annihilation. Balaram Bose in his pursuit of reason not only destroys an entire village with carbolic acid, but is cremated alive with his family. Mrs. Verma argues for moderation.

When it comes to a ritual or a religious practice, Dr. Mishra, who plays the rationalist here, questions Mrs. Verma at every deviation from the established custom. Mrs. Verma sounds more rational in her lack of rigidity about the religious rules. In her reply to Dr. Mishra's scathing comment about her use of carbolic acid instead of Gangajal for cleaning the place for the corpse, Mrs. Verma is splendidly clear on her point: she argues that just because Gangajal was considered holy for its purity at one point in time, it need not be always. In her circumstances, where the availability of Gangajal is impossible, (and its purity is questionable too), it is quite reasonable to use carbolic acid instead.

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Rigidity in rationalism, in the way Dr. Mishra repeatedly emphasizes the rules, is, according to Mrs. Verma, the cause behind the destruction of everything. Mrs. Verma thinks that it is this rigidity in the thought of the so-called rationalists that ultimately spoils everything:

> "All you ever talk about is rules. That's how you and your kind have destroyed everything science, religion, socialism with your rules and your orthodoxies" (442).

There is another tendency among the declared rationalists in *The Circle of Reason*, which may be termed unflinching bookishness. Initially, Balaram is seen to be overly dependent on what is written in a book instead of what the actual circumstances are. Later on, Dr. Mishra always cites from books and Hindu scriptures in order to counter Mrs. Verma's proposition to cremate Kulfi's dead body. She refers to her father, the late Hem Narayan Mathur, as being the same. Her father, as Mrs. Verma remembers, used to consider the books in his bookshelf to be his only friends. Mrs. Verma was against this as her point was that loving inert objects was unnatural because it is a one-way relationship. Even if a person loves books, books cannot love that person in return. Thus, when Alu, discovering the *Life of Pasteur* in Mrs. Verma's bookshelf, says that it is like a reunion with his brother, Mr. Verma expresses her lack of conviction in his statement.

The muscular atrophy of Alu's thumbs provides a similar example. Alu's thumbs became rigid because of this muscular atrophy, but the condition incapacitates his mind so much that whenever he is conscious about his thumbs, he cannot do anything with his hand. When he tells Mrs. Verma that he will not be able to light the pyre of Kulfi because of his thumbs, Mrs. Verma reminds him that he cut the wood to make the pyre himself. Being the disciple of his rationalist uncle, as well as his foster-father Balaram, Alu has been trained to judge everything according to cause and effect. Thus, as he has a condition in his thumbs, he is led to believe that he cannot do anything with his hand. The block here is mental rather than physical. After the cremation of Kulfi, it seems Alu is cured not only of the problem in his thumbs, but also of his ailment of always being a slave to reason: after he sets fire to the pyre, he realizes the futility of keeping the *Life of Pasteur* with him and throws the book onto the pyre. There remains only a slight hint of suspicion about his cure when he produces the container of Kulfi's ash as a "good reason" for going home. Thus, rationalism, as these advocates of rationalism depict it, seems too rigid to accommodate free will. Alu himself could have decided whether or not to go back to India; he does

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not say what he wants, but produces reasons as to why he should go somewhere.

To conclude, the episode of the funeral, which serves as the novel's closure, brings together characters from different strata of society—the poor, the marginalised, and the elite. The marginalised here are the unskilled labourers, who are illegal immigrants as well (Kulfi, Alu, Zindi). Jyoti Das (a civil servant), Mrs. Verma, her husband, and Dr. Mishra, who are medical practitioners in Algeria, constitute the elite characters of this novel. The meeting of these two apparently opposite sections of society does not end in conflict. *The Life of Pasteur* was put on the pyre with Kulfi's body. The incident does not symbolize an end of reason. Amitav Ghosh does not locate reason as an unsustainable part of human intellectuality, but by presenting the difference between the interests and emotions of these two sections of society, he shows that blindly following reason might make one take a lopsided view. It is the path of liberal humanism that ultimately emerges as the balancing element.

In the last episode of this novel, Jyoti Das' pursuit comes to an end and Alu and Jyoti Das converse face to face. Alu asks him about the fate of the people who have survived the blast at Al Ghazira. Jyoti Das tells them what he knows, but particularly mentions Professor Samuel. When he was being deported with other people, as Jyoti Das tells Alu, he found Professor Samuel shouting to him: "the queue of hopes stretches long past infinity" (442). This sentence captures the basic flaw in the meticulously disciplined argument of the self-declared rationalists in *The Circle of Reason*. Hope does not necessarily have any valid reason. Had it been so, Zindi, after losing everything, could not have set out on a new journey with little Boss in her lap and the hope of starting life afresh.

What comes out of the debate as well as the novel is that the notion of identity has a confining quality. When a person like Dr. Mishra is overly conscious about retaining his carefully constructed identity, he unknowingly submits to the exertion of this binding force. In order to maintain his identity as a rationalist and a practitioner of science, he opposes the cremation of Kulfi's body. In this moment, he deliberately relegates the other layers of his identity—those of being an Indian, a Hindu, and above all, a human being. He forgets that this last part of his identity, that of being a human being, obliges him to honour the dead. Thus, by depicting the conflict among different parts of people's identity, Ghosh finally shows that in spite of cultural specificities, humanity has a universal appeal.

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CHAPTER NINE

MULTILINGUALISM AND IDENTITY: AUTHORIAL IDENTITY IN ACADEMIC WRITING

SHAGUFTA IMTIAZ

Multilingualism and Second Language Writing

Multilingualism signifies an important aspect of diversity. It suggests the variations and differences that arise due to linguistic and cultural aspects, the differences in terms of the processes in which the writer is engaged, and the outcome in the form of the text that emerges. Multilingual writers cannot be considered to be a part of a monolithic whole, but are to be viewed as individual writers whose trends cannot be generalized. Multilingual writing has been researched in a number of ways. Atkinson and Connor (2008) have chronicled the results of multilingualism and the development of second language writing in terms of three trends. Silva's(1993) study represents the first trend. It was conducted to show the differences in English as a first language through a close study of seventy-two articles of empirical research. A number of differences emerged from this research. Second language (L2) writers were seen to do less planning and seemed to have more problems in revision, goal setting, and composition. Silva concluded that important differences existed between first language (Ll) and L2 writers, which were strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different. Cumming's (2001) study represents the second trend. It summarised the findings from two decades of research on ESL writing in terms of text, processes and sociocultural contexts. The text-based studies showed that multilingual writers not only developed native-like competence in language but also signalled capabilities of interrextuality. The process-based studies s suggested that composing processes are largly similar in L1 and L2. However, the cognitive effort on formal issues is exerted more by multilingual writers, which is likely to "affect their ability to plan as well as to perform other cognitive tasks." (Atkinson and Connor, 2008: 519) a The contextually- based studies of

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Cumming involved different settings in which the individuals develop multilingual writings. Polio's (2003) more recent review, which represents the third trend, looked at second language writing studies in terms of the following four categories:

1. Text-based studies that provided historical documentation of the development of writing and explored the role of the tasks in writing performance. These studies have largely been qualitative in nature.
2. Process-based studies, which have mostly been qualitative in nature, exploring those questions that centred on the processual nature of writing, i.e. those dealing with changes, revisions, retrieval from memory, and teacher and peer feedback in writing.
3. Writer-based studies that have mostly been qualitative in nature and have attempted to describe the experiences of ESL learners in various ways.
4. Social context research studies that moved beyond the classroom to include other practices, which are formative for learners (Atkinson and Connor, 2008).

L1 and L2 Writing and Cultural Differences

Cultural factors have an impact on the teaching and learning processes of culturally diverse learners. Educational practices are shaped by the culture in which learning takes place, which plays an important role in influencing L1 and L2 writings.

L1 and L2 writings have been studied and the differences between them have been highlighted in articles by Atkinson and Ramanathan (1995). They looked at a number of cultural assumptions in L1 and their impact on critical thinking. Differences between L1 and L2 writing involve the influence of L1 rhetorical and cultural preferences for organizing texts (Connor 1996; Leki 1991). Johnson (1997) suggests that commonalities between two cultures in terms of communicative purposes and formal features emerge from similarities at different levels.

L1 and L2 research shows similarities in some areas depending on the inter-relationship of the two languages studied. There are certain important differences that can be seen in L1 and L2 study. Silva makes an important comment when she says that "L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing" (1993: 669). These differences can be in terms of linguistic proficiencies, learning experience, the sense of the audience, and the processes of writing.

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Western and Eastern Cultural Differences: A Generalization

A broad generalization can be made regarding Western and Eastern cultures. While Western cultures reinforce an analytical, critical, and interpretative stance, many Asian cultures encourage imitation and memorization. Closely related to this is the issue of identity, which is reflected through writing. Critical thinking and learning is emphasized in Western cultures and is encouraged as part of the classroom practices. This may be contrary to the learning practices of an "L2 learner from more collectivist or independently oriented cultures" (Ramanathan and Atkinson 1999, cited in Hyland 2003: 39. The importance given to shared thinking, in a way, overshadows the need for individual thinking and critical analysis. Kaplan's (1966) study saw a linear pattern in English writing. He further saw 'Oriental' writers as having an indirect approach in writing and 'coming to the point' only towards the end. Kaplan, however, has been criticized as generalizing results and being prescriptive. However, the impact of L1 and the impact of writing preferences cannot be ignored while examining relevant texts.

Contrastive Rhetoric and Cultural Differences

Cultures differ with regards to text organization, feedback, and classroom interaction:

> "Contrastive rhetoric maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a result, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it. Furthermore, the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with the writing of the second language" (Connor 1996: 5).

Following Kaplan's 1966 study, a number of studies have been carried out examining the rhetorical traditions of different cultures. The studies made by Hinds have been quite significant and are worth elaborating on. He viewed the rhetorical traditions of Asian languages and found certain commonalities among Asian cultures in terms of writing practices. For instance, his study on the conventional patterns of expository prose in Japanese allowed him to argue that some Japanese patterns, such as "ki-sho-ten-ketsu," not only differ from English, but are also transferred to English academic writing by Japanese people (Hinds 1983a, 1983b). In his 1987 study, Hinds provided a typology concerning "reader versus writer responsibility" and "introduced the idea that different languages assume

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different levels of [responsibility] for explicitness" (Atkinson and Connor 2008: 525). He further argued that the distinction between deductive and inductive rhetorical structures, which is a common contrastive feature across these languages, is practiced in Asian languages for the purposes of making the text inductive in nature. Yamuna Kachru (1999) points out that the use of language in discourse and text is related to the cultural identity of an individual. Research has shown that successful language learning depends on the learner's distance from the target language in social and cultural terms (Schumann 1977).

Contrastive rhetoric has evoked criticism from several quarters for essentializing, homogenizing and dichotomizing "East Asian writers along Oriental lines" (Kubota, in Atkinson and Connor 2008: 525) Even other culturally focused multilingual writing research has shown dissatisfaction with the essentialist and homogenizing approaches of practitioners of contrastive rhetoric.

Cultural Knowledge and Multilingual Writing Research

Largely inspired by Bhabha (1994), a focus on cultural aspect brought a new dimension to multilingual writing research that focused on the notion of 'hybridity.' Multiple linguistic and cultural aspects make writing an important area for the production of hybrid forms and concepts. As Canagarajah (1999, 2000b) states:

> "We now know that there is considerable interaction, borrowing and fusion between cultures and communicative genres. The hybrid nature of cultures in the postmodern world creates considerable problems in defining which constructs of a particular culture are unique and native to one community and which are borrowed (or interactively shaped in contact with another culture).If the monolithic definition of cultures and genres is rejected, it becomes easy to see how students may move across cultures and texts in their communicative practice. Although students may come with certain preferred traditions and practices of text construction of their own, they can still creatively negotiate alternate structures they are introduced to" (in Atkinson and Connor 2008: 526)

The notion of multicultural hybridity has impacted research in multilingual writing development and a number of studies that aimed to provide different approaches to researching hybridity in multilingual texts have emerged. However, this has also generated criticism of the notion of cultural hybridity itself.

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Identity

Contemporary research conceptualizes identity as a process that is continuous and evolving. New labels such as 'fluid,''dynamic,' and 'shifting' have replaced the notion of 'fixity.' Identity has been viewed in a number of ways. Different concepts have emerged to show the defining characteristics of different types of identity, like social identity, linguistic identity, and sociocultural identity. Identity is no longer confined to the domain of a single discipline—it has moved towards being more contextualized, marking a significant shift in the spirit of the times. Pierce (1995) laid down some important groundwork for looking at identity as multiplicitous and as a site of struggle. Norton (2000) defines identity as "how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how that person understands possibilities for the future" (in Miller 2011: 174). Pennycook defines it as "a constant ongoing negotiation of how we relate to the world" (2001: 149).Additionally, it has been defined by Johnson (2003) as being "relational, constructed and altered by how I see others and how they see me in our shared experiences and negotiated interactions" (in Miller 2011: 174)

Language and Identity

Identity is considered central to language. Language allows us to say a great deal about ourselves and our likes and dislikes; it also allows us to reflect on the kind of person we are. These reflections are indicative of the reflexive functions of language and implicate links between language and identity. Recent work on language and identity not only views identity as constructed, performed, negotiated, and renegotiated, but gives "detailed consideration to how social meaning attaches to linguistic forms, and how linguistic forms can become associated with social identities of various kinds" (Llamas and Watt 2010: 3). Bucholotz and Hall (2010) have proposed a framework for the analysis of linguistic interaction and identity, structured around thefollowing five principles:

1. **The Emergence Principle.** As an ontological basis for identity construction, the emergence principle draws on linguistic anthropology in seeking to show a connection between language, culture, and interactional linguistics, which is based on usage-based grammar. Identity is formed under conditions of linguistic interaction. According to this principle, "identity is best viewed as

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the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (19).

2. **The Positionality Principle.** This principle does not correlate identity with social categories. It looks into the micro details of identity, which is "shaped from moment to moment in interaction" (20).This has been the approach of linguistic ethnographers who have "repeatedly demonstrated that language users often orient to local identity categories rather than to the analyst's sociological categories" (ibid.) According to this principle, "identities encompass (a) macrolevel demographic categories; (b) local, ethnographically specific cultural positions; and (c) temporary and interactionally specific instances and participants roles" (21).
3. **The Indexicality Position.** This views the ways in which forms are used to construct identity. An index has been described as a linguistic form that depends on contexts where transaction of meaning takes place. It involves the links between the forms and meaning and is affected by cultural beliefs and values. This linguistic elaboration provides relevant insight into identity construction. This is an important indicator of micro-level structures, such as style features and stance features.
4. **The Relationality Principle.** This principle suggests that identities acquire meaning in relation to other identity principles. Identity cannot be viewed simply as revolving around the principles of similarity and difference, but are constructed through "several, often overlapping, complementary relations" (23).
5. **The Partialness Principle.** Inspired by the postmodernist critic of grand narratives, this principle draws on insights in cultural anthropology and feminist theory to suggest that all "representations of culture are necessarily 'partial accounts'" and that identities are constituted by context (25).

Poststructuralism and Identity

Poststructuralists view identity as dynamic, fragmented and constantly shifting (Hall 1992; Weedon 1996; Norton 2000; Sarup 1993). Identity is not considered static, but is a process that is affected by various cultural contexts. It is through language that shifting identities can be viewed and negotiated. The traditional view of identity formation was based on distinctions of class, gender, race, and other forms of stratification, making it a monolithic entity. The essentialist notion of identity looks at it as static

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and unchanging, whereas poststructuralists view individual agency as a component of identity formation; an individual makes meaning out of events and acts intentionally based on this meaning and the values ascribed to these events. In this regard, identity becomes 'transformative' and 'transformational' (Varghese et al., in Aquino-Sterling et al. 2015: 1), where the former indicates how an individual views themselves and the latter looks at how others view the individual. Assigned vs. claimed identities are viewed in relation to the multilingual classroom, which provides a 'third space' (Bhabha 1994).

Since identity is always in a state of flux and is context-dependent, poststructuralists state that while identity suggests where one belongs, it is also indicative of the space where one does not belong. At the individual level, identity suggests commonalities and differences with others, i.e. it is about "belonging and the assessment of what one has in common with others and how one differs from others" (Weeks 1990, in Aquino-Sterling et al. 2015: 3). Identity, at the intrapersonal or macro level, can be seen as how individuals perceive or define themselves and how others define them (Weedon 1996, in Aquino-Sterling et al. 2015: 3). Buzzelli and Johnson (2002) looked at this difference of self-perception and perception by others in making a distinction between 'assigned' identity, which is the view others have of an individual, and the 'claimed' identity that an individual claims for themself (in Aquino-Sterling et al. 2015: 3).

A context becomes a place where an individual's identity is negotiated. This may lead to rejection or acceptance of the identities that one encounters in diverse contexts. There are multiple social sites, which are often linked to the notion of power, from where subjectivity is produced. The space where this negotiation takes place can be constructed socially, culturally, and institutionally. The concept of 'personal agency' is important in the construction of identity. Personal agency is, according to Bandura (2001), the "essence of humanness" (in Aquino-Sterling et al. 2015:3) and agency, in contemporary theory, refers to the question of whether action can be initiated by the individual and how far this is affected by the identity that has been constructed. This action is never complete, but is in a constant state of flux and negotiation. As Hall (1990) puts it, "identity is not … an accomplished fact but rather …a 'production' that is never complete" (in Aquino-Sterling etal. 2015: 3). In postcolonial times, this referred to the ways in which dominance was subverted and resisted. Identity is a process for knowing that the self is never complete. We constantly "deconstruct and reconstruct" our subjectivities as we "move through different geographical locations and social, cultural,

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linguistic and political positionings" (Haraway 1991b, in Aquino-Sterling et al. 2015: 3).

Self in Academic Writing

Ken Hyland (2002) in his article "Authority and Invisibility: Authorial Identity in Academic Writing" talks about the representation of the self in academic writing. Academic prose is not impersonal, as has been commonly believed. It has been looked at as displaying certain marked characteristics that project an identity. One of the ways in which identity has been studied is through the use of first person pronouns and their determiners. Academic writing is not only an objective, dispassionate form of writing, but has features that mark the identity of the writer. Identity has been viewed in terms of the social and cultural influences that affect the discourse pattern of writing. Writing is not a neutral act, but expresses the conventions of a certain community of learners. The choices made by the writer or "the rhetorical resources accepted for the purpose of sharing meanings in a particular genre and social community" (Hyland 2002:1093) signal the identity and affiliation of the writer.

Ivanic (1998) speaks of three aspects of identity interacting in writing: the *autobiographical self*; the *discoursal self*; and the *authorial self*. The *autobiographical self* is influenced by the life history of the writer, while in the *discoursal self* the writer projects an 'image' or 'voice' in a text. In the *authorial self*, the writer's intrusion into a text and the claim of responsibility for its content are manifested. Hyland (2002) considered aspects of the *authorial self* in order to study identity construction through the use of first person pronouns. (Hyland 2001; Kuo 1999; Tang and John 1999). The use of 'I' helps to establish a relationship with readers and the positioning of the pronoun as the 'theme' in a sentence suggests its importance.

About this Study

This study aims to look into the use of the first person in writing among twenty-five third year medical students at Jawaharlal Nehru Medical College, Aligarh Muslim University. This research is based on Ken Hyland's (2002) article "Authority and Invisibility: Authorial Identity in Academic Writing." All twenty-five students engaged in this study were Indian and male and the number of languages known to them was between three and four. The task given to them was to write a paragraph about their

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views on 'reading' They were administered two sets of questions. The first set of questions asked them to write their views on reading. This was followed by a set of twenty questions that were based around reading. The respondents had to mark their answers on a Likert scale. The paragraph, which was written as the first task, was analyzed on the basis of the use of first person pronouns (*I*, *we*, *me*, *mine*, *my*, *we*, *us*, and *our*). In addition, the use of *he*, *she*, *they*, and *anyone* was also analyzed. The use of these pronouns was marked and analyzed. The pronouns are indicative of the ways in which identity construction takes place.

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No. of Respondents	I	We	Me/Mine	My	We	Us	Our	You	He/She	It/They/anyone/everyone
1.	1	1		2		1		1		
2.	1	2	1							
3.	1	1		1		1	1		1	
4.	1		2	2						
5.	3			1						
6.										
7.	1					2	1			1
8.		3					1			1
9.		1				1	2			2
10.	7									
11.	1			3						
12.										
13.	2									
14.		1							4	2
15.	3		6							
16.									1	3
17.										
18.	1									
19.						1				2
20.				1			2			1
21.									5	3
22.	2			2						

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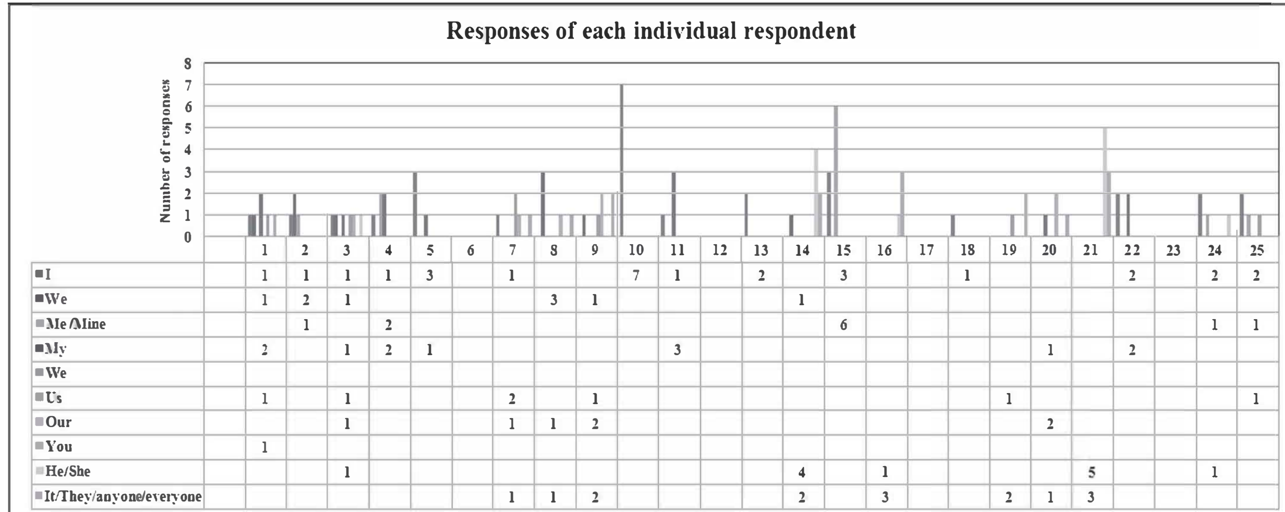
23.										
24.	2		1						1	
25.	2		1			1				

Table 1



	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
I	1	1	1	1	3		1			7	1		2		3			1				2		2	2
We	1	2	1					3	1					1											
Me /Mine		1		2											6									1	1
My	2		1	2	1						3									1		2			
We																									
Us	1		1				2		1										1						1
Our			1				1	1	2											2					
You	1																								
He/She			1											4		1					5			1	
It/They/anyone/everyone							1	1	2					2		3			2	1	3				

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Analysis, Results, and Discussion

The table above shows the following results. The most used pronoun is *I*. This was used 28 times, followed by *it/they,* which was used 15 times. The words *my* and *he/she* were used 12 times. *Me/mine* were used 11 times. This study looked at the textual functions of pronominal use and the semantic and lexical classes of pronominals. The category of pronominals includes personal pronouns, possessive adjectives, and possessive pronouns. A pronoun may function as the head of a nominal group and may take the following forms: *I*, *you*, *we*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *they*, and *we*. The form differs when it is not a subject: *me*, *you*, *us*, *him*, *her*, *it*, *them*, and *one*. The maximal use of the pronoun *I* is indicative of the reference to the situation. The use of *I* is in the subject position and is anaphoric in most cases.

Academic identity does not just convey ideational content, but also makes visible the self of an individual. Research suggests that even academic writing cannot be treated as being a simple factual collection of details, but that the use of pronominals invests it with authority. Academic writing, like other forms of communication, displays a manifestation of self and identity. The use of various pronominal forms is deliberate as they are used to share meaning in a particular social community. One of the most explicit ways in which writers represent themselves is through the use of the first-person pronoun. The use of pronouns in important thematic places in a clause is significant. The theme of a sentence foregrounds important information. Writing, therefore, embodies assumptions about academic research, which is objective and based on data.

However, for second language learners embodying different epistemologies, this may pose a challenge. To affirm their positions and to make assertions means expressing certain contentions. For ESL learners from various cultures, the self may be constructed collectively. Furthemiore, there is an authorial concealment among L2 learners. The topic given here, however, does not show this trend—use of *I*, *me*, and *mine* is followed by the use of *we*. This may be because of the subjective nature of the writing. Another aspect is the use of a pronominal at certain positions, which is indicative of certain trends. Its position at the beginning may suggest stating a goal, elaboration, clarification, or highlighting a thesis statement. Thirty-five sentences began with *I* in this study and despite the generalisation that suggests this is unacceptable in Asian cultures, which favour a more unitary identity, the use of *I* shows a certain assertiveness and subject positioning.

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Conclusion

Identity theorists look at the ways in which race, gender, and class affect the process of language learning and teaching. The reading and writing process is central to second language acquisition and is socially structured. This study was not constructed in a classroom setting. Considering that the learners had a medical background, they seemed to be motivated enough to indulge in reading for pleasure. They were able to answer the questions related directly and indirectly to identity formation. The learners seemed to be motivated and interested in the practice of reading. Subjectivity, as referred to by Weedon (1987/1997), can best be understood as being socially and historically embedded. The act of reading and writing re-situates and reconstructs their identity positions. The use of *I* as the theme in a sentence revokes this position, not only making the identity position more socially and historically embedded, but also constituting it in and through language. As Weedon (1987/1997) points out:

> "By extension, every time language learners speak,read or write the target language, they are not only exchanging information with members of the target language community, they are also organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. As such, they are engaged in identity construction and negotiation" (in Norton 2013: 4).

Positioning in a sentence can be seen in the various ways in which pronominals figure in the sentence. In some of the writings, the use of *I* as the theme asserts itself repeatedly; whereas, in others other pronominals are used. It becomes obvious that these positions are not 'given,' but have been used deliberately by the various writers of these texts. The desire to read for pleasure, not for learning, as in the present context, leads to the notion of 'investment.' Dissatisfied with the already established construct of motivation found in the field of second language acquisition, Norton proposed the development of the construct of investment to complement it. She argued that motivation, which is primarily a psychological construct, "did not pay sufficient attention to unequal relations of power between language learners and target language speakers" (Norton 2013: 6). Investment, on the other hand, is a sociological construct, capable of addressing unequal power relations. According to her, the construction of investment:

> "Offers a way to understand learners' variable desires to engage in social interaction and community practices [signalling] the socially and

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historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it" (2013: 6).

The investment of writers shows their commitment to learning a foreign language, which paves the way for greater access to power and superiority. Of the three aspects of identity in relation to academic writing outlined by Ivanic (1998), it is the authorial self that explores the authoritativeness with which writers take up various positions. The pronouns used usually tend to be in thematic positions in the clauses. A pronoun at the beginning of a sentence sends a number of important signals by foregrounding important information. The use of the first-person in such a position suggests authority on the part of the speaker. The frequency of the occurrence of the use of *I* suggests the authorial identity of the writer. Furthemiore, self-reference becomes a way of asserting identity.

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CHAPTER TEN

IDENTITY-WORK IN COMPLEX SOCIETIES

AVINASH PANDEY

0. Introductory Notes

India has been engulfed by identity politics, of various hues, for several decades now and such endeavours are only gaining strength. The recent successes, at the political level, of a majoritarian politics based on religion clearly indicates the ascendancy of an identity politics of a particular kind. This rise in the prominence of identity politics has coincided with the advent of the free market economy in India, giving rise to serious debates on the correlation between the two. It is perhaps no coincidence that such a kind of politics is always accompanied by the rhetoric of 'development.'

While this kind of politics may have gained prominence in recent times, it is by no means the case that identity politics did not exist before. In fact, the decision to organize parts of India along linguistic lines gave rise to movements based on linguistic sub-nationalism in various parts of the country. The state of Maharashtra, where I live, owes its formation to one such movement: the Samayukta Maharashtra Movement (SMM).[1] One can observe the rise of regional identity politics after the formation of the state. Mumbai has been the hub of such movements and political formations. To gain a sense of the dominance of this kind of politics, one only needs to look at the recent municipal elections held in Mumbai where 80% of the votes

[1] The SMM was a movement led by the Communists and the Socialists in the 1950s. The main agenda of the movement was the formation of a united Maharashtra state a state that unified all the areas in which Marathi speakers were in a majority. The formation of the state in 1960 very quickly gave way to a sectarian movement based on the issue of Marathi 'pride.' The cosmopolitan city of Mumbai was the base of this movement. The dynamics of this shift in character of linguistic sub-nationalism in Maharashtra forms an important chapter in our understanding of identity politics in India. We will however not pursue this thread in this article.

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polled were for parties whose main agenda was identity politics of some sort, whether based on region or religion. Such unprecedented success is clearly a result of the energies released from the crucible of identity politics one can observe both at the regional and the national level. Dynamics of this kind form part of the context in which individual histories develop. Responses vary depending upon individuals, as well as groups. It is imperative to note these variations in response for two reasons. Firstly, such responses clearly indicate that the situation and the corresponding context varies and thus cannot be stated in a monolithic fashion. Generalizations regarding the actual sociocultural practices of a region are almost always based on broad trends and are thus not fine-grained. Without questioning the usefulness of such generalizations, one can also note that realities on the ground always show variation and some of these variations offer space for responses that are not consonant with the general trends.

It also serves as a reminder that although objective situations constrain possible responses, they do not determine them—the vagaries of human will cannot be discounted, nor can collective responses based on a particular understanding of the situation. There are laws of nature, but no laws of human nature. Social practices offer spaces for alternative conceptions and formulations to exist. Humans engage in introspection, deliberate, and often make informed choices. Such possibilities cannot be ignored. Therefore, a human action cannot be seen as a mere reflex to a situation in which a person finds themself.

Of course, these points are quite well known, but they are not very often appreciated, especially when human actions and responses are theorized. Therefore it is always useful to remind ourselves of Dante's maxim that *every variation varies in itself*. Such a caveat has personal resonances for me and provides me with an entry point into this discussion on identity and social practice.

My immediate ancestors lived in a small village near Varanasi in northern India. This makes Varanasi my 'native place' (in current Indian parlance). My father migrated to Pune, a city (it was then a town) in Maharashtra. Pune is often referred to as the cultural capital of Maharashtra and is considered to be a conservative place. I work in the capital city of Maharashtra, Mumbai, which is well-known for being cosmopolitan. Mumbai, being the commercial capital of the country, is inhabited by people from all parts of the country (and the world), which gives it a very colourful demographic character. Mumbai has also been at the centre of sub-nationalistic fervour, which has exhibited contrasting ideological contours. Therefore, I have, for

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the past 40 years of my life, stayed in places dominated by a kind of conservatism and sectarian identity politics. The situation seems grimmer for people like me (whose 'native place' is in northern India) as the current other in a dominant trend in the identity politics of Mumbai.

On a more personal note, my father brought me to Pune (for better educational opportunities) when I was 4-5 years old. At that point, I spoke a linguistic variety known as Bhojpuri. My father enrolled me in a private, English-medium school where the teachers could not understand my, nor I understand their, speech. Given the complete lack of communication, the school informed my father that if these circumstances continued I would have to quit the school. My father panicked and strictly forbade me from using Bhojpuri anywhere. My other family members were also instructed to communicate with me in Standard Hindi. I have thus lost any active use of my L1, Bhojpuri, and am fluent in three languages (all of which would count as my L2, given that they chronologically came after my L1): Hindi, English and Marathi.

Given my personal history, as well as the general histories of the places I have lived all my life, it is but natural to expect me to have all kinds of identity issues: linguistic, regional, and ethnic. However, Maharashtra is the only place where I am comfortable; where I can be myself. I cannot remember *any* incident where I have felt discriminated against or marginalized due to my background or due to the identity politics that surround me. I find it very difficult to bring myself to think of myself as a migrant (it sounds very odd to me), which I am by any definition of the term. When I meet colleagues from other parts of the country, they often ask me about the 'situation' in Mumbai, especially the discriminatory politics that they are sure I am facing in the university (and the city) and wish to know how I survive in such a hostile environment. I find myself in a difficult situation for I know where they are coming from, but that is simply not my situation. When I state this to be the case, I see a sense of disbelief and incomprehension on their faces (and often a sense of betrayal). Often, my response is seen to be the result of a fear to speak out or a result of me having 'sold out,' i.e. I have become assimilated to the local culture at the cost of the culture of my 'native place.' I have given considerable thought to these possibilities and I am convinced that my response is neither a result of fear nor of complete assimilation. It may be that I am just a quirky case and my personal experience cannot be generalized. Possibly so—I do not have a case study that would help me decide. Whatever may be the case, I think that any theory of identity needs to have the conceptual tools to account for both the general trend and individual variation. We need a conceptual toolkit

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that can help to zoom in and zoom out of particular cases, depending upon the discussion at hand. Providing a point of departure for such a consideration is one of the aims of my paper. As a first step towards this aim, let us examine the notion of identity in complex societies.

1. The Notion of Identity

The term identity literally means 'the same as the entity under consideration.' Identity assumes a uniqueness of entities. A related meaning of identity, involving a weaker condition, is that of similarity and congruence. This meaning implies a *selection* of attributes that are common between two (or more entities).[2] In principle, any two (or more) entities always have some features that distinguish them and other features they share. Whether entities choose to emphasize their similarities or differences has been an object of research in the social sciences and humanities. This selection simultaneously creates the reference for the self and the other. There is no self without the other—all we have is an undifferentiated whole. The notion of self fractures this undifferentiated whole into two (or more parts): the self and the other.

We can say that the self is separated from the other, i.e. it is *alienated* from it. This feeling of alienation creates a desire for unification with the other. All expressions of love—whether for the self, other human beings, nature, or god—are expressions of this longing for the unification of the self and the other to a higher unity, i.e. a differentiated whole. This path from undifferentiated whole to differentiated whole is the trajectory of identity. For example, when a child is born, it is in a relation of an undifferentiated whole with its mother. Gradually, as it grows up, it develops an awareness of its identity, i.e. an awareness of being a separate entity. The love of the child for the mother is a desire for unity with the mother, i.e. the desire to form a differentiated whole. The domain of love (understood as the desire to overcome alienation) is beautifully captured in the following couplet by the poet Firaq:

> ik lafz-e-mohabbat kā adnā ye fasānā hai
> simTe to dil-e-āshiq phaile to zamānā hai
>
> "The story of the word love is quite simple; when it shrinks it becomes the heart of the lover, upon spreading it is the age/world."

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[2] As any process of selection (in the social sphere) involves a matter of choice, we talk about the politics of identity.

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The notion of identity presupposes humans in contact. The different dimensions of this contact involve contact with nature, with other human beings, and with the self (self-awareness). One can come into contact with nature; with the identity of an individual; with that of a social group; with a member of a species; with a member of the animal kingdom; or with one living being among others. Each of these form different conceptions of the self and therefore will correspond to different conceptions of nature, which will be identified correspondingly.

Similarly, with other human beings, we come into contact with them with the identity of an individual and a social group classified on the basis of different social variables such as gender, class, caste, ethnicity, race, nationality etc. Correspondingly we may look upon another human being as an individual or belonging to some social group. For example, a linguist may meet individuals of a community focussed on data collection. In this contact, the linguist may identify herself/himself as an individual, a linguist, a person of a particular gender, a member of an ethnic group, and/or simply as one human being meeting another. Identities are not *given* in such a situation, although they are constrained by contact. The choice is made through this contact. The outcome of the contact is not completely predictable and is dependent on its conditions.

It is important to remember (although not always easy to do so) that these dimensions are involved in *every* contact situation and that we can only talk about these dimensions separately in an abstractmarmer. For example, when I think of myself as a modem man, my perception of self involves notions of time, space, and attitudes towards nature; other human beings; myself; my access to technology; and a particular lifestyle, among other things. Every assertion of identity involves a particular configuration of these dimensions. The self is therefore not a monolithic entity, but dependent upon the other. The identity of the self is determined through its relationship with the other. The self is a result of a process of *negotiation* with the other. This process of negotiation can be captured through the notion of *identity-work*. The nature of the negotiation, like all negotiations, depends on the conditions under which the negotiation takes place. Furthermore, like all negotiations, this process of negotiation is transient and dependent on the dynamics of the situation. In a very real sense, therefore, identity—the location of self—is an *identity of the situation*, rather than of people, as a result of *identity-work* on the part of the individuals involved.

The contact situation may differ in terms of the scale and order of contact. Scale gives us the quantity of contact, i.e. the mass, depth, and intensity of

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contact. For example, a common way of representing the scale of contact is to use notions such as 'local,' 'regional,' 'national,' and 'global.' For example, we often talk of 'the local community' or 'the international community.' Furthermore, people may come into contact, but for different periods of time. For example, around 9 million labourers migrate from Marathwada, especially Beed district, to western Maharashtra for around 6 months every year to cut sugarcane in the fields and transport it to the region's sugar factories. This contact is neither the kind where communities have stayed together for years, nor the kind where one meets people fleetingly or for a short period of time (like that of a student community). This scale of contact gives rise to a special contact situation that cannot be handled through the traditional assumptions of contact that academia is used to. The order of the contact refers to the level of abstraction at which identities are negotiated—individual, group, community, ethnicity/nationality, civilization, species, living beings etc. For example, if I were to think about life outside the planet Earth and wonder whether it would be similar to us, 'us' and 'it' would refer to life on Earth and life outside Earth (if it exists). Here, the order of my location of my identity constitutes a more abstract and higher order than, say, my identity as a human being, which in turn is more abstract and of a higher order than my identity as an Indian. The contact situation—in its varying orders and scales—forms the *canvas* on which the identities of individuals are positioned. These contact situations form landmarks in a person's experiential landscape. A corollary of such a formulation is that it is very restrictive to talk about *the* identity of a person. We need to refer to an identity of a person in a particular contact situation; we need to *pragmatize* identities.

As discussed above, the fundamental dynamics of identity-work aim to overcome one's alienation with the other and form a unity (identity) of a higher order, if only to confront an other of a higher order. The logic of identity-work dictates that this process continues until there is no other, i.e. obtain the unity of a differentiated universe.[3] It is only when one realizes a trajectory from an undifferentiated universe to a differentiated universe that one realizes one's individuality in its complete sense. We often get a glimpse of this individuality in the lives and aspirations of evolved beings, to whom we turn for inspiration and insight. One such example is the

[3] In spiritual terminology, this state of the differentiated unity of the universe is referred to as *nirvana*. Here we understand the dynamics of overcoming alienation as a material process a process that involves both the mind and the body.

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thirteenth century poet Dynaneshwar. Let us look at one of his creations, *Pasaydan,* a prayer-poem that has proved popular over the centuries:

पसायदान

(ज्ञानेश्वरी अध्याय १८, ओवी १७९४ ते १८०२)

आतां विश्वात्मकें देवें। येणें वाग्यज्ञें तोषावें।
तोषोनि मज द्यावें। पसायदान हें॥१॥
जे खळांची व्यंकटी सांडो। तयां सत्कर्मी रती वाढो।
भूतां परस्परें पडो। मैत्र जीवांचें॥२॥
दुरितांचे तिमिर जावो। विश्व स्वधर्मसूर्यें पाहो।
जो जें वांछील तो तें लाहो। प्राणिजात॥३॥
वर्षत सकळमंगळीं। ईश्वरनिष्ठांची मांदियाळी।
अनवरत भूमंडळीं। भेटतु भूतां॥४॥
चलां कल्पतरुंचे आरव। चेतना चिंतामणीचे गाव।
बोलते जे अर्णव। पीयूषाचे॥५॥
चंद्रमे जे अलांछन। मार्तंड जे तापहीन।
ते सर्वांही सदा सज्जन। सोयरे होतु॥६॥
किंबहुना सर्व सुखी। पूर्ण होऊनि तिहीं लोकीं।
भजिजो आदिपुरुखीं। अखंडित॥७॥
आणि ग्रंथोपजीविये। विशेषीं लोकीं इयें।
दृष्टादृष्ट विजयें। होआवें जी॥८॥
तेथ म्हणे श्रीविश्वेशरावो। हा होईल दानपसावो।
येणें वरें ज्ञानदेवो। सुखिया झाला॥९॥

The English translation of the poem is as follows:

Pasaydaan[4]

(Dynaneshwari. Chapter 18, verses 1794-1802)

1. May the Self of the universe be pleased with this sacrifice of words and bestow His grace on me.
2. May the sinners no longer commit evil deeds, may their desire to do good increase, and may all beings live in harmony with one another.
3. May the darkness of sin disappear, may the world see the rising of the sun of righteousness, and may the desires of all creatures be satisfied.
4. May everyone keep the company of saints devoted to God, who will shower their blessings on them.

[4] Translation from http://sanskritdocuments.org/marathi/misc/pasAyadAn2.pdf

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5. Saints are walking gardens filled with wish-fulfilling trees, and they are living villages of wish-fulfilling gems. Their words are like oceans of nectar.
6. They are moons without blemish and suns without heat. May these saints be the friends of all people.
7. May all beings in all the worlds be filled with joy, and may they worship God forever.
8. May all those for whom this book is their very life be blessed with success in this world and the next.
9. Then, Nivrittinath, the great Master said that this blessing will be granted. This brought great joy to Dynaneshwar.

The vast canvas on which the poet operates stands out. The poet operates at various levels: the individual (verses 1, 9); groups of people—sinners (verse no. 2), saints (verses 4, 5, 6); all human beings (verses 4, 6); all creatures (verse 3); all living beings (verses 2, 8); the world (3, 8); all living beings in all worlds (verse 7); and the self of the universe (verse 1). All these levels converge in मज (self) as the poet prays for its goodness, well-being, and harmony. As a result, the poet locates his identity at various points in the ordered scale. We observe a desire for union (love) with the 'other' creating the self of higher orders with the highest being that of 'self of the universe' where there is no other. The entire trajectory leading to the differentiated whole is covered in these nine couplets.

The immense and longstanding popularity of the poem and the goodness it draws out of the being of the reader clearly indicate that the poem appeals to a basic need of humans, elevating the status of the poet to that of one of the most evolved beings ever to be born. He is able to create in imagination—something we have not yet made possible in practice—the entire range of identities individuals can have. Such an arc of imagination, a desire for love, is not a matter of the imagination of one poet. In fact, such expressions of the desire to overcome alienation and form a higher unity through the union of the other are replete in the entire corpus of bhakti poetry, a movement which has served as a source of wisdom for the entire population of the subcontinent over many centuries.

In terms of language,[5] identities can be understood in terms of communication patterns and the correlations between these patterns and the interactive stances adopted by interlocutors in the process of communication. These

[5] Language is of course but one dimension of identity trajectory. Other dimensions may include the ethical, the moral, the institutional, the cultural, the economic, the political, the legal, and the practical.

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correlations form a foundation for linguistic identity. At the lower end of the spectrum is the idiolect, which involves characteristics an individual shares with no one else. However, conversations involve other individuals and to be engaged in conversation with them one needs to locate a neutral linguistic space in which such an exchange can take place. This *kata* or *choupal* of linguistic transactions is the place where individuals come out of their linguistic idiosyncrasies and create a common linguistic bond between the concerned parties, thereby creating communities of practice in which group identities are indexed. This neutral space creates the conditions for overcoming the other through a communicative union to form an identity of a higher order. Thus, access to this neutral space is essential for the creation of social networks and communities of various orders in which the individual can be integrated as an equal. Participation in larger networks/communities of practice/speech communities is ensured through languages of wider communication—bazaari (market-place) varieties, which people develop over a period of time, and lingua-francas/koines/ national languages. There have been efforts to develop international languages—Esperanto being one example—for the purposes of interaction between communities at international level. Access to and use of these languages of wider communication lay the foundations for a democratic polity and constitute the basis of the functional differentiation of languages. We thus get the canvas of linguistic interactions on which the individual can position herself/himself and thereby realize an identity of a higher order.

An individual participates in networks/groups/communities at various scales and orders and through this participation, negotiates identities of varying orders and scales, a combination that we have referred to as the canvas on which the individual positions herself/himself. Every individual participates in situations of various kinds and through these situations develops her/his identity, which is a complex of various identities negotiated in various situations. In this sense we talk about identity-work in complex societies.[6]

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[6] I have used the term complex societies to refer to multilingual/plurilingual and multicultural/pluricultural societies without limiting the term to a *mosaic*-like arrangement where different communities co-exist side by side, perhaps with sharply defined centres and fuzzy/porous boundaries. The emphasis is more on the *diffusion* of practices and the accompanying notion of *flow*, which make linguistic/cultural and social practices *complex*.

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2. The Practice of Identity-Work

A cursory glance at the available literature on identity studies makes it clear that an overwhelming majority of case studies have involved oppressed and marginalized sections of society. It is rare to come across a study of the dynamics of identity-work in the more privileged sections of a region. There seems to exist a correlation between identity-issues and the process of marginalization. How does one understand this asymmetry, in the expressions and study of identity-work, within the framework provided in the previous section?

The promise of identity-work is based on the possibility of sociocultural practices that enable an individual to embody her/his potentiality and thereby realize her/his individuality—her/his place in the universe. If sociocultural practices can enable an individual, they can also disable them, thereby limiting individuals/groups to particular identities. In the previous section, we discussed the prayer-poem in which the poet desires an environment where all can live in peaceful harmony, as a whole in a differentiated universe. While we find such a possibility very attractive, we also find it to be utopian: something that is not practically possible. The real world is quite different from the one we desire. Such an evaluation of the concrete situations around us often leads us to state that selfishness is basic to human nature and one has to simply accept it. Desires, as expressed by the bhakti poets, are not to be taken seriously in everyday life and are to be treated as an escape into a fantasy/romantic/ideal world; as a form of entertainment *after* one is done dealing with the real world. Others seek to locate the site of fulfilment of such desires in the transcendental realm, in a realm that lies beyond the world in which we live. Both these orientations treat *love*, as a conceptual category, to be sterile in its capacity to deal with the real world in concrete situations.[7] Most people's evaluation of the possibility of living in a world without boundaries would be very similar to Ghalib's evaluation of paradise:

[7] A corollary of such an orientation is that we do not treat creative artists as serious intellectuals or push them into the realm of the mental or spiritual. Engineers build the real world; what do artists do (or for that matter even intellectuals in the humanities and social sciences)? "We build *minds/character!*" is the most common retort in response to calls of proving one's 'usefulness.' Both the question and the answer push the creative artist out of the realm of the physical or even real. Such an attitude has constituted a crisis facing the faculties of humanities and social sciences today. Given the massive reduction in budgets in these disciplines, the crisis is real and its effect can be seen on the way these disciplines are conducting themselves.

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ham ko ma.alūm hai jannat kī haqīqat lekin
dil ke ḳhush rakhne ko 'ġhālib' ye ḳhayāl achchhā hai

"We know the reality of paradise O' Ghalib, but the imagination is nice to keep the heart happy."[8]

It is important to explain this seeming contradiction, which is a sort of conflict between the mind and the heart. We need to understand why this yearning for union seems to be the major concern of the best of our minds and yet seems so far removed from the real world. Such an examination, to my mind, may provide us some capacity in grasping and explaining the dynamics of identity formation within the framework of identity-work. Such an explanation would help us explain the gap between the mind and the body and, thereby, also show the way ahead in reducing the tensions surrounding identity, which are so prevalent today.

An entry point into such an explanation is our discussion regarding the need to pragmatize the notion of identity and bring into focus identities of people-in-situations rather than discuss them abstractly. Here, the notion of a *variable* serves as a useful analogy. A variable is like an empty space in a proposition that is filled through the process of quantification and properties are ascribed to the quantified entity. The value that a variable can acquire is potentially unlimited (which is why it is a variable) and is only dependent upon the *model* and the value-assignment-function under consideration. Constraints are imposed on the value of a variable through the list of entities made available as candidates for its quantification. A change in the model and/or the value-assignment-function changes the limitations of the value a variable can take.

Analogically, one can understand identity as a variable and a development paradigm as the model through which identities are assigned. Limitations on identities that an individual can take are actually limitations of the development model under consideration. Appropriate changes in the model remove the limitations on the positioning of the individuals in their landscape and allow individuals to *realize* their potential and realize their individuality in a real and meaningful sense. By developmental paradigms we mean the *ways* in which we organize ourselves at various levels—the way we produce, consume, or waste resources, both natural and social. Such

[8] In the film *3 Idiots* this attitude is elevated to a strategy of survival, something that provides us with an advantage in our efforts to deal with difficult situations.

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paradigms, to a large extent, determine our *relations* with nature, other human beings, and ourselves, thereby constraining our identities.

If nature is treated as a mere resource (limited or unlimited) that one exploits, then the possibility of treating oneself as one with nature seems very remote. We talk about nature as if it is *out there*. Being one with nature means driving several kilometres outside the city to see a few trees and mountains. The trees and mountains within the city are for the purposes of cutting down and removing, for we need *development*, or perhaps we just have too many people. Our development paradigm is based on profit and thereby *greed* and as such it calls for maximum intervention in (and subversion of) natural processes. Under this vision, the more we consume, the more developed we are. The havoc created by such a paradigm can be seen in metropolitan cities like Mumbai, and Chennai, where natural processes like floods become disasters. There is a sense of inevitability leading to an air of resignation regarding the manic destruction of natural ecologies. However, it is useful to remember that this harm is not a result of active choices (at the individual or group level) for most of us, but a consequence of the developmental paradigm that we have adopted. Some kind-hearted people wish for development with a 'human face' (destruction with a reluctance and thus at a slow pace), but we cannot choose to be the destroyers and the saviours of our ecology at the same time. Given the level at which we erode our ecology, considering the possibility of a union with the other (nature) as part of our everyday life seems to be a distant dream. In such a paradigm, 'man' and 'nature' are relegated to unsurpassable identities. We seem to permanently alienate a part of ourselves and label it as 'nature' and treat that difference as essential, thereby creating an arena of constant conflict between 'man' and 'nature.'

The conflict for resources is not limited to 'nature' alone, but is also seen in human relations, where a similar process of mediation of the development paradigm is observed in the way relations between humans are determined. Consider for example the major conflict over forest land in the heartlands of India. These lands are a major source of minerals, seen as essential for development, and the people living on these lands are portrayed as a hindrance to development. Multinational companies vie for dominance over these lands and any suggestion that these lands belong to the people living there is seen as an act of subversion against the Indian state. Such conflicts are not new and are, in fact, continuations of the legacy of colonialism. At the very basis of colonialism is the insatiable desire for resources and cheap labour. In order to quench some of this thirst, the colonial powers subjugated regions across continents to their needs. While this subjugation had several

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dimensions, the effects of which we are feeling even now, we will look at one such dimension: land reserved in the subcontinent for the purpose of teak needed for the domestic market of the colonisers. They thus divided the people of this subcontinent into two—those living on forest land and those living on revenue land.[9] The former were labelled 'tribal' and their rights to the land on which they were living were transferred to the colonial state. The people living on forest land were given a new identity and simultaneously deprived of their traditional modes of living. This change, rather than being one initiated from below—i.e. through activities of the people—was imposed on them through state apparatuses—the people concerned had no say in this. Furthermore, these changes meant displacement, drudgery, and insecurity for the people concerned. In comparison to these insecurities, the traditional modes of living appeared well-defined and well-understood by the people involved. The dynamics of resistance against these changes give us a clear peek into the politics of identity: the thread binding all those people displaced through the new laws brought in by the colonial state was that the law itself brought in the identity of 'tribal.' The only way these people could form a collective to fight for their rights was under the 'tribal' label, which only confirmed and cemented their newly formed identity. Their negotiations with the state were done on a common platform created by the state itself. Furthermore, their negotiations could be for regaining their previous ways of living; for finding a decent location in the development paradigm; for finding a different developmental paradigm; or a combination of the three. The terms 'tribal,' 'tribal-identity,' 'tribal-issues,' and 'tribal conflict' are polysemous and thus their meanings should not be treated as a given. Nevertheless, the only way a tribal (or a group of 'tribals') could negotiate with the state or the dominant community was through the assigned identity of being a 'tribal.' This is the dynamics of tribal identity and that is why, to my mind, we have seen a rise in identity politics in these communities. While we have discussed the case of 'tribals,' we can generalize the situation to include a large number of identities that have emerged in the last two centuries. One such example is that of the Denotified Tribes (DNT), a category created by the colonial state through the Criminal Tribes Act (1871) and its subsequent modifications. We can observe an overall rise in assertions of identity—identities that are based on the birth of the individuals.

This rise has led to a paradox in our polity: the Indian Constitution is based on the principle that the fundamental unit of the nation-state is the individual. This principle constitutes the promise of modernity, i.e. a

[9] I owe this insight to Prof. Ganesh Devy (p.c.).

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promise that the value of a person in society will not depend upon any privilege derived from where the person was born, but from her/his abilities as an individual. This principle is codified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)—a document which clearly inspired the formation of our nation-state. One can look upon this focus on the individual (rather than groups) as an attempt to overcome the legacy of the past—both the pre-colonial and the colonial state—which sought to enforce particular identities upon people. The Constitution looks to undo this damage. However, in actual practice these identities were only further crystallized as the marginalization of people—due to the kind of development paradigm and cultures pursued—only continued and, in some cases, worsened. As result, we can observe how in recent decades, in actual practice, the state has begun negotiating with groups rather than individuals. This has led to a situation where the state looks to control the activities of its people by treating them as individuals, but negotiates with them as groups based on particular assigned identities.

The indications of such contradictions—in public as well as private life—can be observed in assertions of Dalit identity. The Dalit movement largely derived its strength from the promise of modernity, which the colonial state and, more importantly, the independent Indian nation-state sought to represent. The basic impulse at the beginning of Dalit politics was to overcome the identities and ways of living that had been brutally imposed for centuries. Modernity promised a way out. But the actual practice has been full of contradictions—negotiations with the state have only been possible through a group identity, limiting the Dalits to their assigned identity. Attempts to overcome these limitations have not received much support from the state, or civil society, as both limit Dalits to a monolithic group-identity. Thus, while Dalit politics has gained strength to the extent that it cannot be ignored, individuals from these groups are limited to their group identities—writers, poets, leaders, and capitalists who have emerged from the crucible of the Dalit movement have been ghettoized as Dalits (or sections of this group), while the dominant sections of society retain their identity as the 'mainstream.' A similar pattern can be observed in the case of women's movements—gender has been similarly ghettoized. What we observe in *all cases* is the subversion of the liberational possibilities of modernity. This subversion has occurred in civil society—we have not developed cultural movements that allow us to be liberated from the cleavages of the past—as well as in the politics of the state (as discussed above). The result has been a limited modernity; a modernity which allows space for liberation only to the extent that the interests of the development paradigm are not brought into question. The interests of the nation are

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aligned to coincide with the interests of the elite whose identities are treated as defaults and as constituting the primary content of our nationality. The identities of the dominant, the elite, are masked as being *general* (the default) while anything different—identities of marginalized groups—is treated as *marked* (identities that stand out). It is therefore no surprise that these marked identities constitute the focus of identity studies, while the identities of the elite are often treated as a national question. The centre is thus unified and the margins fragmented.

These outcomes of limited modernity can be clearly observed in the cultures of language-use that we have seen in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We have discussed the need for neutral spaces where people can engage with each other and transcend their identities through union to form higher identities. This need is subverted through an interpretation of the neutral variety being identical to the default, i.e. the variety belonging to the elite. The variety of the elite is treated as *general* while the varieties spoken at the margins become *particular*, i.e. accentuated and thus marked. Generalization of a variety spoken by a particular group (the elite) makes that variety very powerful and it makes immense gains in the number of L2 users, thus increasing its communicative potential. It is therefore no surprise that people queue up to gain access to these varieties. One observes a fetishization of languages, especially in the case of English, which is seen as carrying the virtues of being modem, advanced, and civilized, and as having the power of transferring these virtues to its users. Correspondingly, the mother tongues—the languages of the marginalized—are seen as backward, uncivilized, and unsuited to modem times. The speakers of these languages are therefore marked by these qualities. On a personal front, my shift from Bhojpuri to English (and Standard Hindi) can be seen as an attempt to bestow upon me the virtues of these languages and keep me away from the drawbacks of my mother tongue. As a result the centres become unified—overtly through the process of standardization and increased communicative potential—while the margins are fragmented and bear a deserted look.

This fragmentation causes the canvas on which the identities of individuals are positioned to shrink rapidly. This shrinking is part of a larger process of denial of any meaningful space in the socioeconomic practices of the 'mainstream.' What is actually a small part of a larger process of identity-work becomes the only accessible identity for individuals belonging to marginalized groups. The reduction of the canvas converts these identities into *essential* identities, i.e. identities that are fixed and cannot be transcended. As a result, the individual is prevented from realizing their

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individuality in any true sense. This shrinking of the canvas is portrayed beautifully in the following poem by Arun Kamal:

किसकी ओर से
मैं किसकी ओर से बोल रहा हूँ

उन असंख्य जीवों वनस्पतियों पर्वतों नदियों नक्षत्र तारे,
उन सबकी ओर से जो अब इस पृथ्वी पर नहीं हैं
पर जो कभी थे या होंगे?

नहीं, केवल मनुष्य योनि की ओर से, बस उन्हीं के लिए
जो अभी मृत्यु की प्रतीक्षा में जीवित हैं मर्त्यलोक में।

तो क्या मैं सभी महादेशों द्वीपों समुद्रों की ओर से बोल सकता हूँ?

नहीं, केवल एशिया की ओर से।

तो मैं पाकिस्तान चीन नेपाल वियतनाम की ओर से बोल सकता हूँ?

नहीं, तुम केवल भारत के नागरिक हो।

अखंड भारत का नागरिक अखंड भारत की ओर से?

नहीं, तुम्हें केवल बिहार आबंटित है।

...जिसकी देह अभी-अभी काटी गई दो हिस्सों में?
ख़ैर इतना भी कम नहीं कम से कम छह करोड़ लोगों की ओर...?

नहीं, छह करोड़ नहीं, केवल अपने धर्मवालों की बात करो।

तो क्या मैं अपने दोस्त इम्तू को छोड़कर बोलूंगा?

नहीं, उतना भी नहीं, केवल अपनी जाति, नहीं उपजाति की ओर से और केवल पुरुषों की
ओर से जो धन में तुमसे न ऊपर हैं न नीचे और यह तो तुम जानते ही हो तुम सबसे दरिद्र
हो सबसे कमज़ोर
महज एक कवि मनुष्यता का फटा हुआ दूध
इसलिए तुम्हें चेतावनी दी जाती है कि तुम किसी की ओर से
नहीं बोलोगे, अपनी ओर से भी नहीं-
उसके लिए राष्ट्र की संसद काफ़ी है।

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On Whose Behalf?

‘On whose behalf am I speaking?
May I speak for all the countless organisms, plants, the mountains and rivers, the stars and their constellations?
On behalf of all those beings who do not exist right now but have or will exist on earth?’

‘No. you may speak on behalf of mankind alone; and only those mortals who are now living, awaiting their death.’

‘So may I speak for all the continents, all the islands and the seas?’

‘No. youmay speak on behalf of Asia alone.’

‘So could I speak on behalf of Pakistan, China, Nepal and Vietnam?’

‘No. you are only a citizen of India.’

‘A citizen of unregimented India; speaking for the whole of India?’

‘No. only the state of Bihar is allotted to you.’

‘The Bihar whose body has recently been chopped in two? Well, even that is not too little; I can at least speak for 6 crore people?’

‘No. you may only speak for the people of your religion.’

‘So will I exclude my friend when I speak?

‘No. not even that much. You will speak only for your caste, or better still, your subcaste, you will speak only on behalf of the male-sex of men who are economically neither higher, nor lower than you. And surely you already know … that you are the poorest, the weakest of all’;

A mere poet; the curdled milk of hunanity.
You are therefore warned, that you will not speak for anyone.
Not even for yourself.
For that task, the parliament of the nation will suffice.

The shrinking of *voices* through a process that reduces an individual to his/her primordial being is a clear subversion of the promise of modernity through the mainstream practices of modernity. While modernity foregrounds the individual (the power of one), at the same times it makes it impossible for humans to gain their individuality. It fragments people, and alienates

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them by reducing the individual to the role of consumer—the only space where s/he can be an individual. Thus the individual's individuality is not realized through the process of forming identities of higher orders, through a politics of love, but rather through the ownership of commodities. What we observe is a fetishization of commodities, granting commodities the power to grant the consumer his/her place in the universe. We can be good to ourselves, the people around us, to our country, and to mankind by being a good consumer of commodities. This debasing of human qualities explains why humans seek to discover themselves elsewhere, i.e. in their primordial identities. It also explains why the allure of providing *samskar*—through religious rituals—to children is so strong, even among people who are otherwise not religiously orientated in their daily lives. We can observe the reflex of this in the way we perceive our languages, a perception that contributes to our determination of domains of language-use. If English is the language of technology, commerce, and consumerism, then our mother tongues are the languages of our culture, ethos, authenticity, and an expression of our real selves, which is distinct from our consumerist selves. This division of labour in the domains of language constitutes two (among others) dimensions of our language-use and we need to keep in mind that these dimensions constantly interact with each other. For example, a global language needs a local language to be authentic. The local language provides the accent to the global language. That is one of the prescribed roles of mother tongues in the new linguistic order. I had the occasion of conducting an empirical study of the linguistic landscape of Vasai (a locality just outside Mumbai, but integrated with the city). In the study, I observed sign-boards, posters, bills etc. put up for public display. The domains of language use I observed broadly were as follows: a large number of sign-boards (except government ones) were multilingual, with English as the organizing language. I also observed the prominence of certain languages for particular uses in the signage: English for modem amenities, jobs, technology, and education; French (as shop names) for lifestyle; Italian for food; Marathi for formal written communication in government offices and churches; Hindi, Gujarati, and Marathi for cultural and religious matters and traditional food places; Marathi and Hindi for sexual problems and diseases; and a few Urdu bills for religious purposes. Local languages were conspicuously missing from the signs. The division of domains could clearly be seen even in the written communication of the signage.

If our daily commercial lives debase our individuality by reducing us to being consumers, then we need to discover our higher identities in a spiritualized ethos—something that is not dependent upon our daily living. In a world marked by insecurity, this spiritualized ethos serves as a

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reassuring space for many. This spiritualized ethos makes our primordial identities something beyond change; something beyond human intervention; something that *runs in our blood* (in Indian parlance). Identity expressions of the well-off are often of this kind, though the phenomenon is not limited to the centre. We get glimpses of it even at the margins. We thus observe *essentialism*, both in the centre and at the margins. It is not only the self that is made essential, but also the other. The other is a permanent other and needs to be kept separate from the self. The other is often caricatured, demonized, and stereotyped to give a sense of it constituting a difference that cannot be overcome. The resultant attitude is that of keeping a respectful distance, of indifference, or of treating it as evil—a cause of the problems faced by the self. The primordial self is likely to feel threatened by the primordial other and this can often lead to heightened communal passions. This politics of hate, which isolates individuals and seeks to imprison them in primordial identities, has been the cause of a lot of socio-political strife, especially in India. The politics of essentialism and the politics of hate are two sides of the same coin.

In the introductory part of this piece, we talked about indeterminacy caused by human will and active intervention. The same applies to essentialism as well. While it may be the case that essentialism, in a large number of cases, can be correlated with the politics of hate, it cannot be reduced to it. Essentialism is often used as a strategy to mobilize people against fragmentation. One can strategically underplay internal (though important) differences within a group, in order to fight the marginalization of the group, believing that the differences can be dealt with later. The identity assertions of Dalits, tribals, and women have often been of this kind. These assertions have a lot of positive content in the sense that they aim to raise the confidence and dignity of groups through calls for unity (based on essentialism). The hope is that once the movement gains strength, internal differences can be tackled. However, the experience of such strategic moves has been mixed. While such movements have grown in strength, it is all too easy to forget that the sweeping of internal differences under the carpet was a temporary strategy. Such anmesia, especially amongst the comparatively privileged within a group, can lead to challenges to the hierarchy between the centre and the margins, and can also lead to the strengthening of fragmentation. A glance at the caste question in India reveals such dynamics. Voices within the Dalit movement raising questions about caste, class, and gender within Dalit communities are often muted in the name of unity. The same applies to women's movements where questions of caste, class, and ethnicity pose similar problems. The issue of essentialism within such groups raises important issues that need to be addressed. If not, the

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privileged within these groups will hijack all hopes of overcoming the fragmentation imposed by the development paradigm. Without challenging the established norms of development and cultural practices, the challenge of essentialism cannot be met.

3. In Lieu of a Conclusion: The Way Ahead

Challenging essentialism in identity-work is an important aspect of our attempts to make the path from the undifferentiated whole to a differentiated whole accessible. This challenge involves rethinking our ways of establishing relationships with nature, other people, and the self. We need to develop alternative paradigms of development that do not fragment us, but enable us to attain higher levels of unity. I do not wish to suggest that until we develop alternative paradigms there is nothing to be done. Striving for such paradigms and building upon incremental gains not only provides us with the path ahead, but also the inspiration to overcome the fragmentation imposed upon us. As discussed above, the notion of identity needs to be pragmatized, i.e. we need to talk about identities of situations. If we are able to create special situations (to the extent that it is possible) for the realization of higher identities, then small steps towards this aim can be taken. An awareness of such fragmentation, an understanding of the dynamics behind it, and the steps needed to overcome it (even if only partially) will bring people together and provide them with an environment to overcome the limitations imposed upon them. For example, we have discussed the need for a neutral space where people of different backgrounds can meet and integrate in a meaningful and democratic way. In linguistic terms, this neutral ground would be languages of wider communication. We have seen that these neutral spaces have been encroached upon by languages of the elite. Recovering ground for these languages and enabling their use in the public sphere forms an important part of our attempts to overcome fragmentation. This would of course be a long-term strategy. On a more immediate basis, making the languages in use for wider communication accessible to marginalized communities is important if we wish to make our attempts more grounded.[10] Such a dual

[10] My own cultural and linguistic experience suggests that such a strategy has the potential to work. My access to Hindi, English and Marathi as well as my interactions with people (especially in the literacy movement initiated by BGVS) regarding the possibility of creating a better world allowed me to be integrated with the culture around me and consider it my own, without the fear of losing my own culture; this was possible because I met them on neutral grounds created by the movements I participated in.

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strategy, which on the surface seems contradictory, is laced with teething problems and runs the risk of losing out. But then such risks always accompany attempts to deal with real problems and real people—-purity is a quality of the abstract and we need to dirty our hands and take risks. Therein lies the way ahead. In the words of the noted poet Kaifi Azmi:

> Jo Door Se Toofan Ka Karte Hain Nazara
> Un Ke Liye Toofaan Yahaan Bhi Hai, Wahaan Bhi
> Dhaare Mein Jo Mil Jaaoge, Ban Jaao Ge Dhaara
> Hai WaqtKa Elaan, Yahaan Bhi Hai, Wahaan Bhi

> "A detached observer would realize that communal winds do not discriminate on the basis of arbitrarily drawn borders; the answer lies in synthesis not segregation."[11]

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[11] http://www.thehindu.com/features/cinema/blowin-in-tbe-wind/article5037590.ece

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

IDENTITY AND PRONUNCIATION

SHREESH CHAUDHARY

KNOW YOUR SURGEON!

If a *daakter* (Hindi for doctor) asks for a *jesta* x-ray, he's from Tamil Nadu; a *chaste* x-ray would make him a Maharashtrian; a chest *eggs-ray* means he's a Keralite; and a chest *ekkas-ray* means he's from Delhi or beyond. From the North-East, it comes as *chess-ess-ray*. And if one *axes* for the x-ray, one is a Goan Catholic. But in the end, it is *Eenjuctions* and *madiseens* that finally *kewer* (cure) the patients.[1]

Introduction

Stereotypes, exaggerations, caricatures, and memes of English spoken in different parts of India exist and not entirely without basis. They are an endless source of fun, but not to those that speak that way. With my umbilical cord extending to Bihar, I never suffered as I did when I went to the Central Institute of English & Foreign Languages (CIEFL, now called English and Foreign Languages University or EFLU), Hyderabad. I went there with /inglis/ not /ingliʃ/. I sounded "quaint," a friend told me. But I do not remember anyone saying they did not understand me. I may have talked about Shakespeare and Shylock, or fish and chips, and may have uttered them as /sekspiyər/ and /sailək/, or /phis/ and /tsips/, but I was always understood. I always got a milkshake even when I asked for /milksek/, a popular drink in pre-cyber age Hyderabad.

[1] See Chillibreeze: http://www.chillibreeze.com/articles/IndianPronunciationofEnglish.asp. Thanks to Mangalam for finding it for me.

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I found that many of us from Nepal, Bihar, Assam, Bengal, Orissa, etc. "espoke" or "eshpoke," this way, and we were seen as mentally retarded, a cause for concern, and in need of special attention. Many of us, who had until then thought rather highly of ourselves, were reduced to tears by the special attention we received in and outside class there. We had been brought up on 'high' literature, from Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) to Thomas Steams Eliot (1888-1965), and had been used to 'A's and first classes and to seeing ourselves at the front of the pack, almost sipping coffee on Mount Everest; now we were suddenly condenmed to the sunless depths of the Pacific, thrown into slums and gutters. We had been blissfully unaware of anything called pronunciation and accent and similar stuff, but now we found ourselves confronted by this new thing, and found ourselves bracketed with 'E's and 'U's and also-rans.

This is how all who did not speak what was believed to be General Indian English (GIE),[2] considered worthy of cultivation by all Indians then, were treated. Some got greater attention than others; but hardly anyone was spared. In general, people from Orissa, Bengal, Bihar, and Nepal, almost in that order, received excessive attention. Bengalis had only /ʃ/, so they used it even in place of /s/, and took a /ʃip/ of tea, though meaning "sip," and not "ship." Many from Orissa, Bihar, and Nepal spoke only of a /sip/ load of tea, when they actually meant a "shipload" of tea. Among south Indians, many from Kerala received excessive attention for their interchangeable use of /p/ and /b/, when they said "simbly," but meant "simply"; or when they spoke about "not book" and meant "note book," etc., interchanging /ɒ/ for /ɔ/, and vice versa. Witty people suggested other pairs of words, such as "cock" for "coke," "doll" for "dole," "hop" for "hope," as Malayalis allegedly said one word, but meant the other.

Officially, these variations were seen as incorrect, and all possible attempts were made to correct their users. This attitude had an undesirable effect. Many students at CIEFL were intimidated into silence by courses in Spoken English (SE). They dared not open their mouths lest they should be guilty of mispronunciation. Courses in SE had a silencing effect.

[2] This model, in favour at CIEFL in those days, was an ill-concealed attempt at teaching a regional version of the Received Pronunciation (RP) of Britain and had little impact on English taught, learnt, and spoken in India generally. It was inclined to accept some shorter vowels and fewer diphthongs than those in RP, otherwise it was no different. See Bansal (1972) for details.

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In this essay, I will first describe how some aspects of speech are crucial to the identity of speakers and need not necessarily be unlearnt. Then I will talk about features of accent that define regional and ethnic identity. I will then discuss the relative importance of different features of English phonology for a course in SE. Finally, I will suggest an approach to the teaching of SE that allows the learner to retain their identity and yet understand and be understood by speakers of standard varieties of English worldwide. I will claim in the end that since this approach does not involve any 'unlearning,' it can be used for teaching speaking in any language to any group of learners.

Variety of Accents

Most existing courses in Spoken English (SE) and their teachers do not appear to admit that every region and every individual has a unique identity, which is reflected in how they speak. Every language is an aggregate of the various accents of its speakers characterised by individual tempers and group factors like region, class, caste, occupation, etc. It is not just where one is born, but also where one has been educated, or has had no education at all; where one works and what kinds of friends one keeps that can generally be seen in the way one speaks. Ben Jonson (1572-1637) wrote, "Language most shows a man, speak (so) that I may see thee."[3] A similar mantra in Sanskrit says, "your speech reveals your family/education."[4] A character in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* claims, "You can spot an Irishman or a Yorkshire man by his brogue. I can place any man within six miles. I can place him within two miles in London. Sometimes within two streets."[5]

English in India is no exception. Indians have assiduously cultivated the spelling, punctuation, grammar, vocabulary, literature, diction, and writing style of English. Rarely does an educated Indian confuse "its" and "it's," "principal" and "principle," or between "stationary" and "stationery." One's entire education and academic reputation may be at stake if one were to misspell any of these. Yet English pronunciation has remained untaught and almost un-regarded. Many Indians, therefore, speak English 'naturally,' i.e.

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[3] http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/b/benjonson382177.html

[4] ***kulam aakhyaati bhaashaNam*** "family/education is spoken of (by) speech."

[5] Shaw, Geoge Bernard (1912) See the following. http://s3.amazonaws.com/manybooks_pdf_new/shawgeoretext03pygml10?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAITZP2AAM27ZGISNQ&Expires=1461976282&Signature=q8xT9iUh7dQEu%2F5WclIJ39%2F1jGQ%3D

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without any special and deliberate effort at pronunciation, as they would speak any other language. Thus, they bring many phonological features from their mother tongue to bear upon their speech in English. Traditionally, the presence of phonological and phonetic features of one language in the pronunciation of another language has been blamed upon the speaker's mother tongue, considered a product of the "gravitational pull of the mother tongue,"[6] or "interference" from mother tongue phonology in learning the phonology of a new language.[7] But this appears to be an incorrect view of a natural phenomenon.[8]

All speakers of any language, native or otherwise, show their ethnicity in their speech. This is as evident in their phonology as in other aspects of their language. This is true not just of English and not just of India; it is true of speakers of any language anywhere. Caricatures of British accents of Hindi typically exaggerate the absence of dental and aspirated consonants, just as they exaggerate the presence of long vowels, so that /t̲um/ "you," of Hindi, sounds like /tu:m/; and, /hæ/ "is," sounds like /hai/, on the British tongue.

Accents of Dialects

Just as one has an individual voice, which upon hearing, even on the phone and even without the display of a name, allows us to say if the speaker is male or female, young or old, etc., we can also hear whether one has a regional or ethnic voice. We can not only say who is speaking, but we may also be able to say from which region or ethnic background the caller may be. Prof. Henry Higgins in *Pygmalion,* the popular play by G. B. Shaw (1912/1918), does just that. This is true of the entirety of mankind, though not all may have the ability to distinguish people from one another to the

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[6] See Bansal (1972) for a general view of this school of thought upon the Indian pronunciation of English.

[7] Selinker (1972)

[8] Many speakers of any mother tongue manage to learn to speak another language reasonably well, in spite of their mother tongue. Besides, if this view of the effect of the mother tongue on the pronunciation of other tongues were correct, no one would mispronounce at least those words attested in their mother tongue. But that is not so. All mispronunciations occur for want of "right" or adequate exposure to the desired kind of pronunciation, or due to over-generalizations, such as pronouncing "heat" like "head," because they are both spelt alike. Mother tongue does not prevent learning of other languages. Languages have no mutual hostility.

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same degree. But then no talent seems available to all mankind alike and in the same degree.

Individual voice is mostly a physiological property—a product of the cumulative effect of the size of arytenoid cartilage in the glottis and of the glottis itself; of the size and shape of the tongue, lips and jaws; and their relative positions and their dynamics. Besides phonetic factors like amplitude, pitch, tempo and tone caused by social and cultural factors, it is the physiology of our vocal apparatus that gives us our individual voice. Then there are social-psychological and cultural factors that also influence the way people speak. In many communities, it is considered polite to speak softly; in others, it is otherwise. In many communities, a rapid tempo is a sign of proficiency and learning; in others, it is taken otherwise—it may be a sign of rudeness and insensitivity to the listener. Language is also a social phenomenon and all speakers reflect their social make-up in the way they speak.

But few people, even very young infants, willingly accept any attempt to change their speech. That they may do so themselves, of their own accord, is one of the species-specific mysteries of the biological make-up of mankind. Given the motivation, human beings go beyond their biology and sociology. No other animal is known to voluntarily take pains to please others. But, ordinarily speaking, few people like to be told that they should get rid of the caste or class marker in their accent. Under economic and political compulsion, however, immigrant communities and socially and politically disadvantaged groups have done so. They have or have tried to shed their native accents. But these things, such as the cultural features of accent and a speaker's intent to retain or change them, have their own dynamics. They also go in a cyclical manner. A feature of a sub-standard variety of a language, over the course of time, may acquire prestige, if for some reason such a feature becomes fashionable. Features of Black English in America have at times found a place in standard varieties of American English.

Today in Tamil /s/ is preferred to /ts/. Previously, /ts/ was preferred. This occurred in Brahmin Tamil, which was the language of people in power. Now non-Brahmin Tamil is the language of people in power and it uses /s/ in place of /ts/. So now Brahmins also use /s/ and say "solinga" in place of "cholinga" and "kursii" rather than "kurchii." We find a number of Hindi words from street varieties in the language of discussants in chat shows on television. Dialectal, or ethnic, features of language are dynamic and keep going in and out of fashion and prestige.

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Accent is the audible mark of a dialect. Hindi spoken in North Bihar sounds significantly different from the varieties of Hindi spoken in western Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, Jammu, and Madhya Pradesh. Unlike its dialects in western India, Hindi in Bihar does not stress many word-final vowels. No one in Bihar extends the length of the final vowel in words like "garib" 'i.e. poor, "karib" 'i.e. near, "nasib" 'i.e. fate, "safed" 'i.e. white, "sabut" 'i.e. evidence, etc., as dialects of Hindi in western India do. The final vowel in these accents becomes so long that the initial vowel is almost elided, reducing the initial syllable to a cluster of onset consonants for the following vowel. Hindi in Bihar does not do so and here the cluster of initial consonants is broken differently. While in a Haryanvi accent, "spashT," i.e. clear, can become /səpəshT/, in Bihar it is likely to be said /əspasT/. "Spray" in English is /sə'pre/ in Punjab, but /es'pre/ in Bihar.

A huge number of British speakers of English in what is called the midlands pronounce "cut" as /kut/, "sun" as /sun/, "love" as /luv/, and "enough" as /i'nuf/. Many educated and upper-class speakers of English in the UK drop /r/ in "car" and "market," pronouncing them as /ka:/ and /ma:kit/, rather than as /kar/ and /markit/, which is how many upper-class educated Americans do. Many educated Scots and educated Englishmen even in northern England drop the /r/ in "car: and "market." Some upper-class British speakers of English do not distinguish between "caught" and "court," pronouncing them both /kɔ:t/. Other speakers of English pronounce them differently.

Many American speakers, on the other hand, do not distinguish between "God" and "guard," rendering them both as /ga:d/. They also blur the difference between "writer" and "rider," pronouncing them both as /raiDər/. Many uneducated speakers in New York do not pronounce "r" in "car" and "market." Many Australians do not distinguish between "day" and "die," pronouncing them both /dai/; according to one stereotypical joke about Australians, a newcomer there should say "Yes!" to a question like "Did you come here /tu + dai/," meaning "today." Many Australians pronounce "bake" as "bike," "date" as "diet," "fate" as "fight," "late" as "light," etc. Similarly, many in New Zealand do not distinguish between "cheer" and "chair," pronouncing them both "chair." Different parts of the USA have their own peculiarities. In places like Atlanta, some pronounce "maize" as "mice." Many in the USA pronounces "anti" as /æntai/, and "semi" as /semai/, "caste" and "cast" as /kæst/, "class" as /klæs/,etc. But they pronounce "dimension" as /dimenʃən/, not as /daimenʃən/. So "multi-dimensional" is /mʌltidai'menʃnəl/ in the UK, but /məltaidi'menʃnəl/ in the USA.

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One can go on citing examples of regional and ethnic variations in the accents of any language. A language like English spoken worldwide has global varieties of accent.[9] Should all of these accents be neutralized? Should everyone speak alike, in one and the same accent? Even if it were possible to implement this idea, it may be undesirable: it may rob learners of their individuality without necessarily increasing communication.

Ethnic and regional accents sound different because distinctive features in an accent are induced by the following factors:

1. Kinds and numbers of vowels and consonants;
2. Numbers and positions of their occurrence individually or together at the beginning, end, or in the middle of a word, and;
3. The relative stress on them in phonological strings, i.e. in connected speech.

Standard British English, for instance, has more fricatives, more and longer vowels, and fewer dental and aspirated obstruents than many other languages. Few languages reduce the quantity and quality of unstressed vowels like English does.[10] Hindi, on the other hand, has fewer vowels, but many more aspirated and plosive consonants.[11] The difference between stressed and other vowels in Hindi is not exaggerated like it is in English. The peculiarities of accent in each language owe much to these segmental and supra-segmental features. All languages have bundles of these features, but no dialect of any language uses them all or uses them alike.

One dialect of a language may have one feature, another dialect may have another feature. These features give a unique identity to the speakers of any dialect of any language. We saw some examples above. That American, Australian, British, Canadian, and New Zealand English are all dialects of one language is borne out by this fact. That does not mean they do not have individual differences. There are divergences between American and British varieties in word stress itself: British English has /lə'bɔrətri/, the American variety has /'læbretɔri/. These differences are systematic and are attested across different varieties and dialects.

Yet, regardless of the number of divergences between dialects, there is enough in every dialect that conforms with other dialects. Actually, it is due

[9] See Wells (1982)
[10] See Gimson (1980)
[11] Ohala (1983)

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to these shared features and the conformity of each dialect to the shared features that speakers of one dialect understand those of another dialect, even while understanding that the two of them speak the same language differently. A large number of speakers of standard varieties of English have: a relatively slow tempo; phrasal pauses; long vowels and diphthongs; very prominent stress on some of them in certain positions in a word; and certain kinds and numbers of consonants in their inventory of sounds. Taking insight from this division of phonological features into core or shared versus peripheral and dialect specific features of languages, linguists have pointed out that all successful learners of a language learn all of the core features of a language, as well as some features of the variety among whose speakers they find and/or with whom they wish to identify themselves. These features have been called by many names, such as 'core,' 'vital,' minimum essential,' etc., in contrast to features that are 'marginal,' 'peripheral,' 'dialectal,' etc.[12]

If this view of the phonological features and accent of any language is accepted, then it follows that a course in SE in India should encourage the learning of all, and only, core features, so that the speakers do not have to lose their regional and ethnic identity, unless for some socio-political reason they wish to do so themselves.

Identity and Learning another Accent

Does this view, then, mean that nothing should be learnt; nothing other than what one may be born into? Some philosophers have held the view that all institutional learning takes us away from nature, and, in that sense, all formal learning is artificial and unnecessary.[13] Perhaps that view is right too, if not altogether better. And we have enough examples and evidence to support and argue for this view as well. But, because we are in the business of teaching in schools and colleges, we cannot avoid this question. The

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[12] For a discussion of this view, see Chaudhary (1996).

[13] Mark Twain (1835 1910) said, "I have never let my schooling interfere with my education." See <http://quoteinvestigator.com/2010/09/25/schooling-vs-education/>; George Bernard Shaw (1856 1950), another great wit of recent time, had a similar view, "If you teach a man anything, he will never learn." See < http://ireland-calling.com/george-bernard-shaw-quotes-education/>. On a serious note, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 1778), a great thinker, opposed all institutionalized learning. He believed man was better without it. For his views on education, see < http://cdwaymade.blogspot.in/2012/09/educational-philosophy-of-jean-jacques.html>

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answer obviously is that since English is not just a written language like Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Persian, or Sanskrit, and since it is a living and spoken language our students must learn to speak this language in such a way that they can understand and be understood by speakers of this language worldwide. How can that be done?

The answer lies in identifying the core features of the language. Just as a good course in English grammar should first emphasize accurate learning of word-order rather than using one or another preposition, for example, at the level of syntax, so should a good course in SE emphasize core features of its phonology. There is no comprehensive body of work in this subject, but from the research that has occurred on the mutual intelligibility of varieties of SE and other aspects of the phonology and phonetics of English, a body of opinion and speculation on this subject has grown. Perusing this research, it appears that the following, in the given order, constitute the core features of SE. These features are found in all standard varieties, and in varying degrees in many other varieties too.

Core Features of Standard Spoken English

1. A Relatively Slow Tempo of Speech
2. Phrasal Pause
3. Word Stress
4. Length of Vowels
5. Some Features of Some Consonants

In the following lines, we will briefly illustrate these features to show how they help speakers of different varieties of English understand one another.

1. A Relatively Slow Tempo of Speech

A number of studies on the mutual intelligibility of different varieties of SE have shown that nothing promotes the intelligibility of a speaker of one variety of English to listeners from other backgrounds as much as a relatively slow tempo of speech.[14] Actually, in general, this is true for any speaker and listener of any variety of any language. A slow tempo is a great help in understanding and in being understood by others. For English in India, there is an unfortunate impression from the days of the British Raj that only a rapid tempo of speech indicates fluency in English. So a large number of Indians spoke rapidly thinking that in this way they impressed

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[14] See Black (1966), Bansal (1969) & Usha (1995), among many others on this issue.

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their British employers and were more likely to get a job in the East India Company offices in Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, and elsewhere.[15] Rapid speech shrinks the syllable and word templates causing distortions of sound and resulting in a listener mishearing. In courses I have taught in SE, I have found dramatic results from slowing the tempo of speech.[16] A slow tempo of speech not only gives greater intelligibility to the speaker, it also gives the speaker time to think and gain greater self-confidence. Lots of people in India speak at a speed of about 10 to 12 syllables per second (SPS). Stories told by some of these Indian speakers were played to listeners from within India and it was found that they were not understood easily and accurately. But the same speakers were much better understood when they spoke at a tempo of 6 or 7 SPS.[17]

However, teaching slow speech, particularly teaching adult students to speak slowly, is not very easy. They have all spoken in a particular manner all their lives and cannot be expected to change suddenly. But, given the motivation, which comes best through a view of the dramatic change that comes into the speech of many, these things are not difficult to cultivate. With some determination, a student can slow down considerably. It is possible that a student trying to learn to speak English at a slow tempo may at first be laughed at by his friends and peers, and the learner may become de-motivated by the attitude of their peer group. But some counselling from the teacher can help them to move on and to learn to speak comfortably and slowly. I have got desirable results, as can be seen in the course mentioned above.

2. Phrasal Pause

Another unique feature of the phonology of English is a pause at the end of every phrase. In Hindi and many other Asian languages, there is an audible pause at the end of a sentence, but not within the sentence. In English, on the other hand, there is a clearly audible pause at the end of every phrase, besides a longer one at the end of every sentence, as for example:

> ##Hamlet # the prince of Denmark # said (that) # frailty # thy name is woman##

[15] Chaudhary (2009)
[16] See "Better Spoken English" course at the following website: <http://nptel.ac.in/courses/109106067/>
[17] Usha (1995)

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In Hindi, and in many other Asian languages, we do not usually pause within the sentence in this manner. We do not usually say:

*## denmark ke raajkumaar # hamlet# ne kahaa (ki) # chhal ## teraa naam aurat hai##

I am not suggesting that we cannot speak in this manner, perhaps in some enactment of the play we may. But we usually do not speak with these pauses in many Indian languages. This, however, is crucial to the global intelligibility of SE. English is not a highly inflected language, like Sanskrit, or even Hindi and other Asian languages; it is a word-order dependent language; as such words have to be organised in linear phrasal groups for their meaning to be understood. The following sentence is a good example:

a woman# without her # man is nothing##

a woman # without her man# is nothing##

The different grouping of words in the sentences above, primarily through changing the location of the pause within the sentence, changes its meaning. The first sentence means that woman is important, whereas the second sentence means that man is important.

Hindi and many other languages have no such problem. In Hindi, case markers like "ka," "ke," "ki," "ne," "par," "me," "se," aided by inflecting word particles, afford much greater flexibility in the way different words can be spoken together or in different groups. But in a language like English, where word stress is so variable and matters such a great deal, it is important that words are correctly grouped. Luckily, teaching and learning phrasal pauses is not so difficult. The moment students can be shown the underlying relationship between/among words in a group, they can pick up the grouping of words intuitively and correctly. All words that make a noun phrase can go together, just as all the other words that make a verb phrase, etc. can go together. In the Indian tradition of English language teaching, most students can identify these syntactic categories correctly. Most of the time, I have found that students learn how to group words into a phrase quickly and correctly. Through some drilling with frequently occurring bits of language, this feature of standard SE can be taught in no time.

3. Word Stress

A prominent word stress on a syllable of every polysyllabic word in English is a salient phonological feature of all standard varieties of English—

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American, Australian, British, or Indian. But unlike many languages of the world, English does not have across the board rules for assigning stress to its words. French, for instance, stresses the final syllable of every word. Tamil and other south Indian languages prefer it on or near the word-initial position. Hindi and many other north Indian languages prefer it on or near the word-final position. But English has no such preference. Two words with otherwise identical phonological structures can be stressed differently. So, for instance, in English, /bə(r)'lin/ and /brə'zil/ are stressed on the final syllable, but /'lʌndən/ and /'pæris/ are stressed on the initial syllable.

Word stress in English is also problematic for non-native learners because stress in English is not influenced only by phonological factors, it is also influenced by grammatical ones—if the word to be stressed is a noun, verb, or adjective; and by morphological factors—what suffix has the word been derived with. Suffixes like "-ic," "-ian/ion," "-ity" behave one way and others like "-al," "-er," "-ive," etc. behave in another.[18] Few non-native learners of English have anything of this sort in their languages.

Research has shown that the correct assignment of stress to words is more crucial to intelligibility than using the right sound in these words. Bansal (1966) found that "development" pronounced with stress on the initial syllable, as many Indian speakers in his study of intelligibility of Indian English did, had been understood by the British listeners as "double up"; "character" generally stressed by Indian speakers on the second syllable was misunderstood by British listeners as "director" and "erected." Other studies since then have also found this to be true. Words with the correct stress may be more easily understood in spite of one or two incorrect or inaccurate sounds.

Though word stress in English at first appears to be erratic, it is not so. Kingdon (1958) has shown that correct word stress can be predicted in a large number of words. Besides, most speech in daily life consists of monosyllabic words.[19] It is only in about 10 words in every 100 where non-native speakers of English can go wrong. If we can identify these frequently occurring and often mis-stressed words, which may not be more than a few hundred, we can help all non-native learners do a reasonably good job of

[18] See Chomsky & Halle (1968) for details of stress assignment in English.
[19] About 80% words in daily speech in English are monosyllabic, nearly 15% are bi-syllabic, 3% are tri-syllabic and others are polysyllabic words. See Gimson (1980:305).

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speaking in English with the correct word stress. Courses in SE, designed in this manner, have been successful.[20]

4. Long Vowels

Standard varieties of English have more and longer vowel sounds than many other languages. Of the 20 vowel sounds that British Standard English has, only half a dozen can be called short vowels. Of those remaining, eight are diphthongs, i.e. so long that they take two consecutive breath pulses and a glide of tongue. Nearly half a dozen are long vowels, as speakers of many other languages know them. Many non-native speakers of English do not get the length of all the long vowels and diphthongs right, confusing hundreds of minimal pairs, such as: bell ~ bale/bail; cell/sell ~ sale/sail; fell ~ fail; full ~ fool; get ~ gate; hell ~ hail; pill ~ peel; pull ~ pool; tell ~ tale/tail.

Once again teaching students to achieve the correct length of a long English vowel is not very difficult—some extra musculature or longer articulation can do the job and drills for a few minutes over a few days can develop this length distinction in the SE of any learner.

5. Fricative Sounds

On the scale of relative importance in teaching, some consonantal sounds can also be taught. Since English has more fricative sounds than many other languages, and since it is highly likely that many non-native learners of English may not have all of these, it may not be a bad idea to take some time to teach the articulation of these sounds. Experience has shown that drawing learners' attention to the articulatory mechanism used in the production of these sounds helps them do it correctly and also helps them see how sounds in their native languages are different from those in English. Again, some drilling with relevant and frequently occurring words can do the trick.

Some Concluding Remarks

It should be obvious to any teacher that no language needs to be spoken exactly alike in all respects by all its learners. Some features of any language

[20] See Chaudhary (1992/2002) and also https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0AM35Nu5McY

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must essentially be learnt by all, otherwise their speech may not be normally intelligible. But in some others, each learner should have freedom of choice.

What is more important is that non-native speakers of all languages are seen and accepted as non-native learners. They are understood and appreciated for the efforts they make in picking up someone else's language. They retain their identity not just in appearance, but also in speech without in any manner incurring an exorbitant cost for doing so. The precious time saved in learning trifling features of a standard language can be better invested in learning more words and idioms and acquiring greater confidence in speaking that language though practice in and outside the classroom. This may be easier to achieve, and may motivate the learner to speak at any possible and available moment. Pronunciation should promote understanding without degrading the identity of the speaker. As a recent work in this area suggests, let us not produce parrots; rather, let us produce people who retain their identity, but are understood in the wider world.[21]

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[21] Paula and Stefanie (2005).

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CHAPTER TWELVE

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

SYED NADEEM FATMI

Introduction

In recent times, there has been an increasing interest in different approaches to studying identity, such as through the escalating awareness of self-identity as a result of modernity (Giddens 1991). Various new concepts and perspectives on identity have blossomed over the last 50 years. It is important to take these various and constantly developing perspectives into account when conceptualizing identity. Identity comprises an abundance of different aspects and fields, encompassing, "social identity, ethnic identity, cultural identity, linguistic identity, sociocultural identity, subjectivity, the self and the voice" (Miller 1999: 150).

The concept of identity encompasses various forms. Identity is used here in two linked senses—these may be termed social and personal. In the former sense, identity refers simply to a social category—a set of people marked by a label and distinguished by rules deciding membership and characteristic features or attributes. In the second sense, identity involves certain distinguishing characteristics that a person takes special pride in or views as socially consequential, but more-or-less unchangeable. Thus, identity in its present incarnation has a double sense. It refers to social categories and the sources of an individual's self-respect or dignity. There is no necessary linkage between these things. In ordinary language, one can use identity to refer to personal characteristics or attributes that cannot naturally be expressed in terms of a social category; in some contexts, certain categories can be described as identities even though no one sees

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them as central to their personal identity. Nonetheless, identity evokes the idea that social categories are bound up with the bases of an individual's self-respect. Arguably much of the force and interest of the term derives from its implicit linkage of these two things.

While language systems reside in individual minds, they also have a separate existence and remain detached from their users. Although individuals play no role in shaping these systems, they can use them as they wish in expressing personal meaning, since the more traditional view considers individuals to be agents of free will and thus autonomous decision-makers. Moreover, since this view considers all individual action to be driven by internally motivated states, individual language use is seen as involving a high degree of unpredictability and creativity in both form and message as individuals strive to make personal connections with their surrounding contexts. As for the notion of identity, a sociolinguistic perspective views it as a set of essential characteristics unique to individuals, independent of language, and unchanging across contexts. Language users can display their identities, but they cannot affect them in any way.

Social Identity

Social identity encompasses participant roles, positions, relationships, reputations, and other dimensions of social personae, which are conventionally linked to epistemic and affective stances (Ochs 1996: 424). Identity is how we define who we are. One might answer the question "who are you?" entirely differently in different circumstances.

When we use language, we do so as individuals with social backgrounds. Our backgrounds are defined in part by our membership of a range of social groups that we are born into, such as gender, social class, religion, and caste. For example, we are born as female or male and into a distinct income level that defines us as poor, middle, or upper class. Likewise, we may be born Hindu, Christian, Sikh, Muslim, or with some other religious affiliation, and thus take on individual identities ascribed to us by our particular religious association. Even the geographical region in which we are born provides us with a particular group membership and at our birth we assume specific identities such as Indian, Chinese, Canadian, or American, and so on. Within national boundaries, we are defined by our membership of regional groups and we take on identities such as, north Indian or south Indian.

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In addition to the assorted group memberships we acquire by virtue of our birth, we appropriate a second layer of group memberships through our involvement in the various activities of social institutions in our communities, such as school, the church, the family, and the workplace. These institutions shape the kinds of groups to which we have access and to the role-relationships we can establish with others. When we approach activities associated with the family, for example, we take on roles such as parents, children, siblings, or cousins and through these roles, fashion particular relationships with others such as: mother and daughter; brother and sister; and husband and wife. Likewise, in our workplace, we assume roles, such as supervisor, manager, subordinate, and colleague. These roles afford us access to particular activities and to particular role-defined relationships. As company executives, for example, we have access to and can participate in board meetings, business deals, and job interviews that are closed to other company employees and are thus able to establish role-relationships that are unique to these positions.

Our various group memberships, along with the values, beliefs and attitudes associated with them, are significant in the development of our social identities—they define the kinds of communicative activities and our access to particular linguistic resources for realizing them. That is to say, as with the linguistic resources available to be used in our activities, our various social identities are not simply labels that we fill with our own intentions. Rather, they embody particular histories that have been developed over time by other group members enacting similar roles. In their histories of enactment, these identities become associated with particular sets of linguistic actions for realizing particular activities and, with them, particular attitudes and beliefs.

The sociocultural activities constituting the public world of an upper-caste male born into a working-class family in a rural area, for example, will present different opportunities for group identification and language use from those constituting the community of an upper-caste male born into an affluent family residing in the same geographical region. Likewise, the kinds of identity enactments afforded to middle-class women in one region of the world, China for example, will be quite different to those available to women of a similar socioeconomic class in another geographical region of the world, such as Italy or Russia.

The historically grounded, socially constituted knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes comprising our various social identities—predisposing us to act, think, and feel in particular ways and to perceive the involvement of

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others in certain ways—constitute what the social theorist Pierre Bourdieu termed our 'habitus' (Bourdieu 1977). We approach our activities with the perceptions and evaluations we have come to associate with both our ascribed and appropriated social identities and those of our interlocutors, and we use them to make sense of each other's involvement in our encounters. That is to say, when we come together in a communicative event we perceive ourselves and others in accordance with the manner in which we have been socialized. We carry expectations built up over time through socialization in our own social groups about what we can and cannot do as members of various groups. We hold similar expectations about what others are likely to do and not do as members of their particular groups. The linguistic resources we use to communicate, and our interpretations of those used by others, are shaped by these mutually held perceptions. In short, who we are, who we think others are, and who others think we are, mediate our individual use and evaluation of our linguistic actions in any communicative encounter in important ways.

Identity may also be considered just a social category and to have a particular identity means to assign oneself to a particular social category, or perhaps just to be assigned to it by others. A social category is a set of people designated by a label (or labels) commonly given to or used by a set of people. The label must be invoked often enough or in sufficiently important situations that people condition their behaviour or thinking around it. Social categories have two distinguishing features. Firstly, they are defined by implicit or explicit rules of membership, according to which individuals are assigned to or rejected from a particular category. Secondly, social categories are understood in terms of sets of characteristics, for example, beliefs, desires, moral commitments, or physical attributes that are thought typical of members of the category, or behaviours expected or obliged of members in certain situations, as in the case of roles such as a professor, student, or police officer. These are considered the contents of a social category. Membership rules and the contents of a social category may, of course, be subjects of dispute. Indeed, contestation over the membership rules, content, and moral value or political treatment of a social category is what political scientists refer to as identity politics.

An identity as a social category does not work when we use identity in the personal sense, which may be formulated in terms of a group affiliation. In addition, even when the word does refer primarily to a social category—nation, gender, sexuality, for instance—it can mean somewhat more than just a social category because of an implicit linkage with the idea of personal identity.

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Contexts and Social Identity

Even though we each have multiple, intersecting social identities, it is not the case that all of our identities are always relevant. As with the meanings of our linguistic resources, their relevance is dynamic and responsive to contextual conditions. In other words, while we approach our communicative encounters as constellations of various identities, the particular identity, or set of identities, that becomes significant depends on the activity itself, our goals, and the identities of the other participants. Let us assume, for example, that we are travelling abroad as tourists. In our interactions with others from different geographical regions it is likely that our national identity will be more relevant than, say, our gender or social class. As such, we are likely to interact with each other as, for example, Indians, Americans, Australians, or Italians. On the other hand, if we were to interact with these same individuals at events related to school, such as a parent–teacher conference, we are likely to find that certain social roles take on more relevance than our nationalities and we would interact with each other as parents, teachers, or school administrators. Likewise, at workplace events, we are likely to orientate ourselves to each other's professional identities and interact as employers, colleagues or clients, rather than as parents and teachers, or Indians, Americans, and Canadians.

How we enact any particular identity is also responsive to contextual conditions. Philipsen's (1992) study of the ways in which a group of men enacted their identities as 'men' in a town he called Teamsterville is a compelling illustration of the fluid, contextual nature of identity. According to Philipsen, when a relationship between the men of Teamsterville was symmetrical in terms of age, ethnicity, or occupational status, the men considered it highly appropriate to engage in a good deal of talk with each other. However, when they considered the relationship to be asymmetrical, that is, when the event included men of different ages, ethnic groups, or occupations, little talk was expected. To do otherwise was considered inappropriate.

It is important to remember that our perceptions and evaluations of our own and each other's identities are tied to the groups and communities of which we are members. Expectations for what we, in our role as parents, can say to a child, for example, are shaped by what our social groups consider acceptable and appropriate parental actions. Some groups, do not consider it appropriate for a parent to tell a child how to do something. Instead, the child is expected to observe and then take action (Heath 1983). Our linguistic resources then can perform an action in a communicative

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event only to the extent to which its expected meaning is shared among the participants. Given the diversity of group memberships we hold, we can expect our linguistic actions and the values attached to them to be equally varied.

Identity and Linguistic Use

While our social identities and roles are to a great extent shaped by the groups and communities to which we belong, we as individual agents also play a role in shaping them. However, unlike the more traditional sociolinguistic view, which sees agency as an inherent motivation of individuals, a sociocultural perspective views it as the "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (Aheam 2001: 112), and thus locates it in the discursive spaces between individual users and the conditions of the moment. In our use of language, we represent a particular identity at the same time that we construct it. The degree of individual effort we can exert in shaping our identities, however, is not always equal. Rather, it is an aspect of the action arising from specific social and cultural circumstances constituting local contexts of action.

Individual identity is always in production. When we enter a communicative event, we do so as individuals with particular constellations of historically laden social identities. While these social identities influence our linguistic actions, they do not determine them. Rather, they predispose us to participate in our activities and perceive the involvement of others in certain ways. At any communicative moment, there exists the possibility of taking up a unique stance as regards our own identity and those of others, and of using language in unexpected ways for unexpected goals.

As with the meanings of our linguistic actions, however, how linguistically pliable our identities are depends, to a large extent, on the historical and socio-political forces embodied in them. Thus, while we have some choice in the way we choose to create ourselves, our every action takes place within a social context and can never be understood apart from it. Therefore, individual agency is neither inherent to nor separate from individual action. Rather "it exists through routinized action that includes the material (and physical) conditions as well as the social actors' experience in using their bodies while moving through a familiar space" (Duranti 1997: 45). According to Norris, identity is constantly interactively constructed on a micro-level, where an individual's identity is claimed, contested, and reconstructed in interaction and in relation to the other participants (Hall 2012).

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Giddens' Theory of Structuration

While current conceptualizations of agency and language use in applied linguistics draw on several sources, one of the more significant ones is Anthony Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration. According to Giddens, individual agency is a semiotic activity and a social construction is "something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual" (Giddens 1991: 52). In our locally occasioned social actions, we, as individual agents, shape and at the same time are given shape by what Giddens refers to as social structure—conventionalized, established ways of doing things. In our actions, we draw on these structures and in so doing recreate them and ourselves as social actors. Our social structures do not, indeed cannot, exist outside action, but rather can only exist in their continued reproduction across time and space. Their repeated use in recurring social practices, in turn, leads to the development of larger social systems, "patterns of relations in groupings of all kinds, from small, intimate groups, to social networks, to large organizations" (Giddens 1991: 131). The mutually constituted act of 'going on' in the contexts of our everyday experiences—the process of creating and being created by our social structures—is what Giddens refers to as the process of structuration.

While Giddens is not particularly concerned with identity and language use *per se*, his ideas are useful in that, by locating individual action in the mutually constituted, continual production of our everyday lives—the dialogue between structure and action—Giddens' social theory provides us with a framework for understanding the inextricable link between human agency and social institutions.

Co-Construction of Identity

Drawing on the strengths of interactional sociolinguistics and incorporating insights from such social theorists as Bourdieu (1977), Giddens (1984), and others, current research on language, culture, and identity is concerned with the ways in which individuals use language to co-construct their everyday worlds and, in particular, their own social roles and identities and those of others. These studies assume that identity is made up of multiple, varied individual representations, which embody particular social histories built up and continually recreated through everyday experience. Moreover, individuals belong to varied groups and so take on a variety of identities defined by their memberships of these groups. According to

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Miller, however, these identities are not fixed, but are rather "multifaceted in complex and contradictory ways; tied to social practice and interaction as flexible and contextually contingent resources; and tied to processes of differentiation from other identified groups" (Hall 2012: 41). These studies often draw on a variety of data sources, such as field notes, interviews, written documents, and observations in their analyses, in addition to taped versions of naturally occurring conversation to uncover larger-scale macro patterns, including institutional and other ideologies, exerting influence on processes of identity construction.

Sociolinguistics can provide ways of exploring both the positive attitudes that people hold in relation to some forms of language and the negative attitudes that some hold towards other forms of language. In addition, it can provide a framework for discussing the complex notions of power and identity that are connected to those attitudes. Furthermore, it offers a perspective through which to look at how the choices we make when we use language in any given situation shape how people think about who they are. In essence then, sociolinguistics allows us to look at how we create or construct our identities in any given situation. Precisely because language choices are made by a speaker in relation to the people they are interacting with at any given moment, we can say that the speaker's choices both affect and are affected by their interaction with other people in an ongoing interaction. It can be said that the speaker's identity is both constructed and co-constructed in that interaction. In moments with friends, we can feel that the co-construction creates powerful, positive identities for us and in moments with people that do not know us well or have other motives, we can find the co-constructed identity a very frustrating one. We construct and co-construct all kinds of particular aspects of our identities throughout the day in all our interactions with others. At a larger social level, these kinds of constructions affect how large groups of people think about their group, ethnic, and national identity as well.

Conclusion

As we have discussed in this paper, a sociolinguistic perspective on identity and language use is based on several key premises. It replaces the traditional understanding of language users as unitary, unique, and internally motivated individuals with a view of them as social actors whose identities are multiple, varied, and emergent in their everyday lived experiences. Through involvement in their socioculturally significant

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activities, individuals take on or inhabit particular social identities and use their understandings of their social roles and relationships with others to mediate their involvement and the involvement of others in their practices. These identities are not stable or constant across contexts, but rather are emergent, locally situated, and, at the same time, historically constituted; they are constantly reconstituted in our discourses.

Finally, culture does not exist apart from language or apart from us, as language users. This approach sees culture, instead, as reflexive, made and remade in our language games, our lived experiences, and "existing through routinized action that includes the material (and physical) conditions as well as the social actors' experience in using their bodies while moving through a familiar space" (Duranti 1997: 45). In this view, no use of language and no individual language user is considered to be 'culture-free.' Rather, in every communicative encounter we are always, at the same time carriers and agents of culture. While language is a socio-historical product, language is also an instrument for forming and transforming social order as well as identity. Such a view of language and identity leads us to articulate the relationship between the structures of society on the one hand and the nature of human action on the other. An important focus of study shifts towards the identification of the different ways individuals use the cues available to them in various communicative encounters in the construction of social identities.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

LANGUAGE IS THICKER THAN BLOOD: A PERSONAL REFLECTION ON LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY IN INDIA

S. P. DHANAVEL

What is language? What is identity? What constitutes the identity of an individual? These are questions that have been asked many times over the course of human history? Several answers have also been attempted; but the issues of language and identity keep coming back, not just into our academic lives, but also into our personal lives (see for example Edwards 2009; Schriffin et al. 2010). Every generation and every individual challenges the dominant discourses of language and identity of their time, attempting to make sense of the socio-political contexts in which they often engage with multiple languages, especially in terms of their livelihood or survival. Here is one more account; more specifically my personal account of being a Tamil speaker who learnt English and chose English as a means of living, not in my native state, but in a different linguistic environment far away from my home, which enabled me to realize the truth of the statement that language is thicker than blood. This account may be considered a self-reflective documentation of a complex interaction between language and identity in a multilingual and multicultural country.

Born in a small village called Kulappady in Perambalur District, a backward district in Tamilnadu, I attended a Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church (TELC) primary school in our village. I was not exposed to any other language except Tamil. English was introduced to me in Standard III when I learnt a few words and phrases and some nursery rhymes. I still remember the colorful, rectangular English reader, starting with letters of the alphabet and ending with a few stories in simple language. When I went to Thuraimangalam for middle school, I had little knowledge of

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English. We had English textbooks thereafter, but they were not attractive like that first primary school text. Here I came to know about the use of Telugu by some speakers. Later I completed high school and higher secondary school education at the Government Higher Secondary School, Perambalur.

English was one of the subjects I had to study in school. I do not remember learning English seriously as a means to a future career. Like other students, I attempted to pass in all subjects from Standard X to XII by cramming. However, like my enthusiastic third grade English teacher, Mr. Balachandran, my twelfth grade English teacher, Mrs. Parvatham, left a deep impression on me. She arranged for the screening of R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* for us. At this time, we read Oscar Wilde's "The Happy Prince" and "The Model Millionaire," as well as R. K. Narayan's "The Blind Dog," which remain fresh in my memory even today. Perhaps these two teachers had some influence on my decision to go to the island of England later on. More than just the subject, I shared Mrs. Parvatham's enthusiasm for understanding and appreciating the value of English language and literature. Equally powerful was the influence of my Tamil teacher, Mr. Venugopal, who used to come to school on a Bullet motorbike in his spotless white shirt and dhoti. He inculcated in me a love for learning Tamil literature, for which I remain grateful. These two languages were taking shape in me without conscious effort on my part to acquire either of them. There was no conflict in me about my loyalty to my mother tongue or English. They were shaping my identity as an individual in a Tamil society that historically prides itself on its legacy of inspiring poets, kings, scholars, and teachers who lived and breathed Tamil day in and out. Of special importance is the poet Tiruvalluvar and his immortal holy text *Tirukkural*, which is a part of the cultural landscape of every Tamil speaker from birth to death.

As I did not do well in my Standard XII examinations, I could not go into the science stream for higher studies despite my background in mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. When my father decided to send me to college, we applied to four well-known colleges: St Joseph's College; National College; Bishop Heber College; and Jamal Mohamad College, in Tiruchirappalli, our district headquarters at that time. Later, Perambalur District was carved out of it. We also applied to the Government College of Arts in Ariyalur for a BSc in Mathematics. No college called me for an interview in any subject. After waiting for a considerable time, we enquired with the colleges and found that my low score was the reason for their silence. However, my father was hopeful

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that I could get admission to the National College on a degree course and took me there to meet the principal. When the principal noticed my fluent use of Tamil, he offered me a place on the BA Tamil. But my father and I had decided that I should join the BA English or BSc Mathematics only. At the insistence of my father, I took up English and dispelled the principal's impression that I could not study it.

The first year of English for a rural student without any knowledge of English was a tough time. With the help of some kind-hearted teachers and my own perseverance, I passed all but one paper in the first year. Compared to other students, I did fairly well. However, a question raised itself in my head: why did I fail this one paper? After some brooding, I found the answer: I had memorized my essays for that particular paper, but it was my bad luck that those topics did not find a place on the question paper. Whatever I wrote was irrelevant to the questions asked. Then I asked myself why I should spend a lot of time and energy in memorizing essays and paragraphs that I would not find useful after the semester examinations were over. Therefore, I decided to learn to write some sentences of my own, even if they were grammatically and semantically wrong. Luckily, I had Professor S. Pushpavanam in my second year. He taught me the difference between relevant and irrelevant sentences in a paragraph and also led me to understand the ordering of sentences in a paragraph. Furthemiore, he encouraged me to write my paragraphs and show them to him for correction. Some squirrels ate my paper while they were in his table drawer, but that is another story. He deeply regretted that he did not find time to read my paper before the squirrels could. I also had another sincere teacher, Professor R. V. Ram, who helped me with a slice of spoken English as part of his course on linguistics. He assigned me the task of proposing the vote of thanks in a meeting of the English association of the department. When I hesitated, he wrote down a few sentences on a piece of paper and asked me to memorize and reproduce them in the meeting. He trained me to say those words flawlessly. His sympathetic guidance was the single most important influence on my life and I continue to help my own students in my classes as he helped me.

Interestingly, at this point in my life, as I was moving towards expressing myself in English, I translated from Tamil into English, studied Tamil in English, and then transformed what I studied from English into Tamil in the examination paper. This was a rare and memorable experience in my life. In the third year, I began to speak in English in class and write reasonably well, though still with some mistakes. My fear of communicating in English was gone and the confidence to speak in

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English with anyone and at any time developed in me. My professors were proud of me when I scored the highest mark, 75 out of 100, on a paper on Shakespeare. I must add that this happened not only because of my mastery of English, but also because of my mastery of the subject—I read the original texts of Shakespeare, even though I did not understand them fully. More than English words and sentences, organizing them into coherent paragraphs and essays was the real trick. I learnt how to organize my thoughts coherently into a meaningful text in English and Professor Pushpavanam was instrumental in shaping my thoughts.

I did not process information when using Tamil in the same way that I did in English. I began to notice some changes in my approach to collecting, analyzing, and storing information. Extensive reading in English, including newspapers like *The Indian Express* and *The Hindu*, exposed me to a rich variety of written language. I still had some difficulty with recalling exact information, which I solved much later through the creative use of acronyms when I became a lecturer. In fact, I published an article on "Learning through Acronyms" in the Open Page column of *The Hindu* dated May 27, 1997, and earned a cheque for Rs. 200/- too.

Joining the same college for my MA helped me build on my strong base in English language and literature. The key to my growth was to attend my classes regularly, read the original texts, refer to standard secondary sources for further understanding, and take notes seriously inside, as well outside, class. Whenever it was possible, I read additional books, which were not mentioned in the syllabus of any course. As part of the MA programme I had to write a dissertation. With the guidance of my mentor, Professor R. V. Ram, I was able to do a good job. I understood my strengths better when I joined the MPhil programme at the Department of English, Bharathidasan University. Professor Noel Irudayaraj sharpened my critical literary skills through his hard-nut-to-crack-but-inspiring lectures. Both linguistically and intellectually, I had grown up and so took up a part-time job at Bishop Heber College in Tiruchirappalli.

Knowledge is the key to communication. The knowledge that we obtain through a language helps connect us to our external world. The knowledge and language that goes with this world, in terms of words, sentence structures, and paragraphs, make us ~~as~~ human beings with recognizable and memorable experiences. My experience through and with English was nothing spectacular. However, when I moved to another state with no specific Tamil society and environment, I realized the interconnection between language and identity.

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I was comfortable with English as long as I was in Tamilnadu where I worked as a part-time teacher for two years at Bishop Heber College, for three months at Pondicherry University, and for another three months at Vivekananda College, Chennai. I never knew that switching over to a different language for the sake of employment could disorient me completely. This disorientation is at the heart of the interface between language and identity, which I discuss in the rest of this piece.

If there was any ambition in my life, it was to become a university teacher. I acquired this idea because my coach R. V. Ram had told me of his difficulties being a college teacher. If one is interested in reading and doing some kind of serious academic work, college would not be suitable, according to him. My father, who was a primary school teacher, had also shared some problems of being a school teacher. Therefore, I resigned the job of lecturer at Vivekananda College, Chennai, and joined Tripura University, Agartala, when the opportunity presented itself. I had attended the interview in Calcutta, but the offer letter came much later.

Without thinking much about the consequences of leaving a comfortable job in my native state, I left for Tripura University. I found a good companion in Dr. Kalidas Misra from Orissa. He was a reader and I was a lecturer. We stayed together and helped each other. Life was thrilling at the beginning. I was learning and teaching literature to MA students. Within one or two months the charm of university life eroded. I noticed that some part of me, my inner self, was breaking and withering. I became thirsty to speak in Tamil with others again, but there were no other Tamil speakers. The Tamil I could speak to myself did not convince me that I was my own authentic interlocutor. I became restless, almost mad. I became a stranger to myself, unlike that which D. P. Pattanayak says about "the English identity," which can change "a neighbour into a stranger" (1991: 102).

One day I was walking back home in a place called College Tilla, a raised piece of land where the locally well-known M. B. B. College is located. I heard some words in Tamil behind me. I turned back and saw two elderly people walking and talking in Tamil. One worked as a bank official and the other was a Kendra Vidyala school principal. Both had been posted to Agartala as part of their job routine. On hearing their words in Tamil, I instantly felt my linguistic thirst quenched. When I shared with them how happy I was to see them and listen to them speak Tamil, all three of us were overjoyed. I took them home, made some coffee and then sent them on their way. Thereafter we had some occasion to meet and share our

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experiences of living in Agartala. We also met a few other Tamil people who were living in Agartala as part of their job requirements. They were all amused by my sentimental idea of becoming a university teacher. They were even sympathetic to me and prayed for my return to Tamilnadu, which happened after nine years in Agartala. We formed a community of Tamil speakers in Agartala and shared our joys and sorrows of living in a distant land. The fact that there was someone near me speaking my mother tongue was a great source of psychological stability and support for me.

This intense and uncontrollable thirst for some meaningful contact with my mother tongue was a totally new experience for me. I had chosen English voluntarily as a subject of study. I left Tamilnadu on my own, resigning a permanent and secure government job. I thought I would be able to refine my knowledge of English if I lived in a totally non-Tamil environment. I wanted to use English for all my emotional and intellectual needs. But when I lived in Agartala without speaking or listening to my own mother tongue, my job, my ambition, and everything else became secondary. I had to ask myself what I was without my language. The startling answer was that I was dead and lifeless in the absence of the language in which I grew up. Where was I then, in Tamil or English? That is where I realized the significance of the metaphorical proverb "blood is thicker than water." This may refer to the fact that blood relationships are stronger than relationships with strangers. Obviously, the emotional security of a closed clan in terms of blood relations is noteworthy. In my case, when I did not have any relatives and could not speak in my own mother tongue, some strangers who were speaking my language became closer to me than my relatives. Evidently, when it comes to deep emotions, it is our mother tongue that counts. That is when I realized that language is thicker than blood. Of course, speakers without a mother tongue to call their own may have a different account to share.

In course of time, I learnt the local language, Bengali, and started to interact with people in their own language. English did not give me that comfort, but Bengali did. I began to learn Rabindra Sangeeth from professionals. It was a happy occasion for me to connect with other Bengalis in their own native language. Even now when I meet some Bengalis in Chennai or speak to Bengalis in Agartala, I use a few words and phrases and we are instantly connected. This linguistic and social connection occurs even with Oriya speakers as Oriya is close to Bengali. However, it does not happen with English. What does this signify? Beyond blood comes language. Beyond language comes a shared culture

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and geography. Perhaps people who migrate to other countries may feel connected through English because we belong to the planet Earth.

However, Hindi, an official language of India, did not elicit such a response from me. There was never a need for me to use Hindi. Occasionally, I travelled in some Hindi speaking areas, attending seminars and job interviews. I used a few words and phrases to get directions and some help to complete my tasks. Once I attended a month-long educational contact programme as part of my Postgraduate Certificate in the Teaching of English (PGCTE) at the Regional Center of the Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (now EFLU), Lucknow. The programme was meant for participants on the PGCTE course. It was necessary to attend the contact programme and take an examination at the end. My neutral attitude to Hindi changed radically when I encountered some English teachers with Hindi as their mother tongue who expected me to converse with them in Hindi. When I said I did not know Hindi, they retorted "How can you live in India, if you do not speak Hindi? It is the national language. You must speak Hindi." I replied that there was no need for me to use Hindi at all. However, I also recognized a danger to my primary identity as a Tamil speaker. This was an instance of creating resistance to another language when we are compelled by others to adopt a politically, geographically, or economically dominant language. It opened my eyes to the seriousness of the anti-Hindi agitation that shook the nation in 1965. This incident shows how a separatist movement can come about because of the fear of linguistic dominance of one group over another. Tamil leaders like E. V. Ramasamy Periyar and C. N. Annadurai demanded a separate state from the Indian Union because they felt threatened that Hindi would deprive them of their linguistic identity and dignity. Even now protests are staged whenever there is an attempt to impose Hindi in some form or the other in Tamilnadu. More than livelihood, more than existence, what matters to a native speaker of Tamil is the pride of being a Tamil. Such is the cultural and intellectual power of Tamil language and literature. No wonder then that the father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, wanted to learn Tamil for the sake of reading *Tirukkural* in the original.

On the other hand, I had another interesting incident in Agartala. The Kendra Vidyalaya Principal invited me to join him on a selection committee for the recruitment of an English teacher in a school under his control. There I met a Hindi-speaking person whose way of speaking Hindi was pleasing to my ears. His conversation was very pleasant. There was warmth in his interaction with me and others. Then I understood that a

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language by itself is not a threat to any other person. It is the attitude of the speakers of a language that affects the perception of the listener. As a teacher of English for communicative purposes over a period of 15 years at Anna University, Chennai, I understand that Hindi may also be used as a tool of communication with people who do not know my language or English. To speak with others in their own language is a positive attempt to make communication between people easier, warmer, and stronger. There is nothing wrong with communicating in any language. It is the perception based on some incidents in our life that decide our attitude to other languages.

Now I send my children to private tutors to learn Hindi. I believe that my children will have smoother interactions with speakers of Hindi. My wife watches Hindi serials and I join her occasionally. After all, these TV serials deal with the universal experiences of common people all over India. I work in an institute under the control of the central government, which encourages the use of Hindi without coercion. Also, for a period of nine months from April 2016 to December 2016, I happened to be the Director of the Central Institute of Classical Tamil, Chennai, which publishes translations of classical Tamil literature into English and other Indian languages, including Hindi. A mega-project to translate the *Tirukurral* into all scheduled Indian languages is under way at the institute. Two-way traffic in languages and cultures is the best way to maintain linguistic diversity and secure the social identity of individuals irrespective, of mother tongue.

This narrative illustrates my linguistic and social identity as a Tamil speaker, an English teacher, and an Indian citizen. Primarily, it shows how non-contact with one's mother tongue/native language can be traumatic and disorienting for an individual. Additionally, it explains how coming into conflict with a dominant language can cause socio-political problems within a country that can threaten the stability of the country itself. The underlying meaning and message of this narrative is that the linguistic identity that one forms in childhood continues to play a key role in all personal and professional relations and responsibilities. What is needed is a tolerant approach to linguistic diversity, which can create an accommodating environment for speakers of different languages to co-exist, without which the co-existence of human beings will remain a distant dream. Every Indian should remember the words of Professor D. P. Pattanayak:

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"Linear and binary logic excludes individuals and groups and leads to the imposition of the tyranny of the majority or the powerful. It must be recognized that integration and cohesion cannot be the result of compulsion and coercion. National integration results from the recognition of identities, their non-recognition results in national disintegration" (1991: 106).

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

LANGUAGE, STORIES, AND IDENTITY

DEEPA KIRAN

Human Beings: Narrative Creatures

We construct stories with language and that is how we make sense of our world and make meaning in our lives. We create our identities through a narrative framework.

> "There have been great societies that did not use the wheel, but there have been no societies that did not tell stories" Ursula K. LeGuin.

A story:

> "Once, two teenage fishes were chatting with each other, when a grandfather fish passed by asking, 'How is the water today?' The fishes looked perplexed and muttered something in response. Once he had passed by they rolled their eyes and wondered aloud, 'What water is he talking about?' The fishes lived in the water. They were surrounded by water all the time and for that very reason had become unaware of it. They were unaware how the water was the source of their survival. They knew nothing about the purity of the water, or its adulteration. They were oblivious to the power and the influence it wields over them."

So is it with stories. We live in stories and therefore are often unaware of the very stories in which we live. We need them and we are almost unaware of their existence because they are all around us and we are in them. They define us, rule us, exercise their power over us and yet, in many ways, we are unaware of this, as "narrative is a mode of representation tailor-made for gauging the felt quality of lived experiences" (Fludemik 1996).

Narratology studies the nexus of narratives (mass media, oral, print, audio-visual, internet-based) and the mind, delving deep into narratives as the

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object of interpretation, as well as the experience of meaning-making. Film maker Beeban Kidron talks about this when she says:

> "Evidence suggests that humans from all ages and all cultures create their identity in some kind of narrative form. Human beings have always told their histories and truths through parables and fables. We are inveterate storytellers" (TED Talk, 'The shared wonder of film,' TEDSalon London Spring 2012 · 13:12 ·Filmed May 2012).

Storytelling is a powerful way of getting a message across to an audience, as there is willingness and openness to receive a story and the message is not shoved down the audience's throats, but travels gently in the story-capsule, into the minds of the listeners, who are biologically programmed to facilitate a narrative framework.

Storytelling connects us and breaks down barriers between people; stories help us make meaning in our lives, help make sense of ourselves as part of a community, help us transmit our learning to the next generation, and ensure that important things are well-remembered.

Oral Storytelling: The Beginning

It comes as no surprise therefore that storytelling has existed since human beings first lived in caves—paintings on the walls told their stories. Today, the same kind of posting is done on a Facebook wall. Stories are how we experience life and how we store these experiences. Yesterday is a story. Tomorrow is a story. Stories are how we connect with ourselves, with the world, with life itself, and how we make sense of it all. As humans, we are constantly seeking to frame our lives in narrative terms and there is an intrinsic appeal in making and sharing stories.

The oral tradition of storytelling has existed ever since man learnt to speak and has been integral to the development of civilizations the world over. The art of oral narration is one of the oldest forms of entertainment and engagement of a community. It predates writing. As the stars came up, people sat around fires or inside their dwellings and shared stories.

Over time, oral storytelling traditions in communities develop into resilient folk traditions. The aboriginal Australians, tribes in Africa, shamans in Mexico, traditional storytellers in Japan, and many others understood the importance of narratives and allowed themselves to experience the power of stories, songs, silence, and solitude. The world over, traditional

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storytellers, through their storytelling, have kept alive the heritage and customs of past generations.

Through their stories, people introduce, teach, and maintain their culture, wisdom, and learning. Through the telling of stories to younger generations, a connection with them is made and they are given access to memories; memories that will define them, guide them, give them solace, and lead them on their journey of life as individuals and as members of the community.

In India, there is an awareness of the power of stories and of listening. The wise minds of yesteryear packed the wisdom of life and their knowledge of living into stories. Indian literature includes: epics like the Mahabharatha and the Ramayana; collections such as the Kathasaritsagar and the Panchatantra; travelogues like the Kasimajilikathalu; stories of wit and wisdom from Tennali Rama to Pedarasipedamma Kathalu; and folklore, origin stories, and more.

The way the stories were spread was significant. Storytellers zealously pursued the art of oral narration. India has rich traditions of storytelling that are infused with music, dance, and poetry. Traditional storytellers still continue to perform in towns and villages. They take many different forms and names such as: Harikatha in Karnataka; Burrakatha in Andhra Pradesh; Kathakalekshepa in Tamil Nadu; Pandavani in Madhya Pradesh, Ottan Thullal in Kerala; Dastangoi in Kashmir; Baul in West Bengal; and Kavad in Rajasthan, among many others.

However, not many retain the grandeur they sported before the advent of modern technology. Patronage for artists has sadly dwindled in recent times and there is a need to revive these dying traditions.

The Unique Elements of Flesh and Blood Oral Telling

A Story:

> "In a small African village an experiment was done. A man from the city left a television set and said, 'Now you don't need your storyteller. This box knows more stories than any storyteller.' He went back after a month to the village and was surprised to find that the whole village had deserted the TV box and had gone to listen to their storyteller! When he asked the villagers why they were not watching television they simply said ......
>
> 'The television knows many stories but the storyteller knows us'"
>
> African Saying

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While the world has been taken over by technology, the truth is that we still seek the joy of simple face-to-face conversation and connection. What this implies is that the transaction of sitting before an audience, looking into their eyes, and telling them a tale holds an entirely different and deeper appeal, for which other media cannot substitute. The act of listening in the flesh is an act of co-creation. As the storyteller narrates, the listener listens intently and weaves out visual images from the words of the tale. Together they create a 'storytelling' experience. This two-way conversation between teller and listener has the power to move us deeply and influence us in ways that we cannot imagine.

When we tell stories, we are telling the listener, 'I value spending time with you.' In a multimedia inundated world, where we spend more time being in the 'there and then' than in the 'here and now,' oral storytelling offers a focussed space where one can forget all else, paradoxical as it sounds, and the mind can simultaneously relax and focus. In addition, through the act of listening to a story, the mind can create actively yet effortlessly all at once.

Think of listening to stories as licensed and channelized day-dreaming. The listener finds a similar connection to when (s)he day dreams. Such joy cannot be offered by even the best movies. Audio and video has its own charm, but the images are pre-prepared and served up to the audience. The unique charm of oral narration is that it is the audience that creates the visuals in their minds. ●ne way of understanding this is by analogy with a cup of tea. A cup of tea is certainly tasty and worth sipping and relishing. Watching a story onscreen is the same as drinking the tea; listening to a story is like making cups of tea together before drinking them together. There is the added joy that both the making and the togetherness offer.

Reading a book to ourselves also takes us into a space of creative visualization. The element missing is that of a human connection. Story reading is often confused with storytelling. These are two different worlds. In story reading, much of the eye contact is lost and the scope for expression through the body is dramatically reduced. Drama infuses life into the telling and eye contact by the creation of a deep bond between the teller and the listener. These cannot be easily substituted.

It is not without reason that one of the finest scientists and humanists the world has known, Albert Einstein, believed deeply in the power of oral storytelling and strongly advocated the same to parents who approached him for advice on how to nurture the minds of their children. His oft quoted words are:

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"If you want your children to be smart tell them stories, if you want them to be smarter tell them more stories and if you want them to be even smarter tell them even more stories!"

The Practitioner's Process and Intended Outcome

Traditional storytellers, like other artists who are born into and grow up in artist communities, begin at a very young age and receive tutelage from their parents and the elders of the community. They are trained in the specific stories and styles of the community and perform on specific occasions and rituals.

The story is rather different when it comes to contemporary storytellers. Most of them are educated in schools in urban or semi-urban areas. Through theatre, dance, or exposure to other professional storytellers, they recognise and choose the field of storytelling.

Contemporary storytellers, the group to which I belong, usually undertake a journey, exploring the art and slowly discovering their style and their audience. They work on their performance techniques, which include a number of aspects. Storytelling involves engaging in drama and conversation with a group of people.

It takes a while before you arrive at the realization that you wish to be a storyteller. I had been dabbling with narrative structures and storytelling in many different ways: learning and performing classical dance from the age of 6; reading books and listening to stories from my father; learning to play the violin; flying glider planes and coding programs in C++; working with the radio and among other things, doing an audio book series on Alice in Wonderland; leading an oratory club in the city as the secretary; pursuing a master's degree in English literature, teaching English; and writing for newspapers, journals, and websites. I include technology and adventure sports in this list as I see my interest in them as driven by my curiosity to explore new narratives—an important quality for a storyteller.

By then, three decades had passed after which my official journey began; a journey that led me to connect with professional storytellers via email and travel to other cities, and even other countries, just to watch quality international performances live. Videos, audios, resource materials were zealously devoured. Gradually, I pieced my learning together, understood my strengths better, found ways to tell stories and express myself through their telling, and discovered new pathways of connecting with the audience.

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The skills involved include theatre and elements of:

Drama—body language, gestures, actions, expressions, voice-work (modulation, intonation, pitch, sounds, speech, mime, mimicry and more), if we were to break them down in a rather simplistic manner.

Public Speaking—being able to confidently and comfortable converse with a crowd, sense the pulse and take people on a journey with you.

Teaching—classroom management, and clarity and simplicity in communication so that the message is effectively received.

Storytelling is the practice of integrating all these roles and, whenever required, switching from one role to another during performance. The storyteller sometimes acts, sometimes tells, sometimes asks, sometimes comments, sometimes laughs, and sometimes stops. Employing the best of what works when comes with practice and experience.

Simplicity is the essence of oral storytelling traditions. Unlike written texts, the plot and the language are most effective when they are simple and easy to comprehend. The challenge is to not make it boring in the process, but to balance this with colourful and engaging language, dialogue, characterization, and an arresting narration that keeps the audience hooked.

Weaving music, dance, and poetry into the performance is down to the choices that different storytellers make. There are no fixed definitions or rules of performance. The goal of every teller is to offer through words and oral narration vicarious experiences for the listener, which the teller and listener create together. In this journey on the wings of words, it is the teller's responsibility to maintain the trust of the listeners and safely bring back them back to the real world.

The intended outcome is always the offering of a vicarious experience created on the strength of the words used, one's voice, and oneself. The secondary outcome may vary from healing to education, the dissemination of information, or entertainment. Nevertheless, the act of face-to-face story listening is primarily meant to disengage the listener from the anxieties and distractions of the world around them and inside them, and draw them into a relaxing experience where the mind can focus effortlessly, but engage deeply.

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Through my Window

As a storyteller and educator, I have had the opportunity to collaborate, and hold performances and workshops with an exhaustive range of audiences: international professionals from over 100 countries studying English in India; teachers in central government schools across 29 states of India; students of psychology, literature, design, and performing arts at universities; children in private and public schools; members of clubs such as Rotary, Lion, and Toast Masters; connoisseurs of art and literature at literary and arts festivals; professionals in the corporate sector; scientists and educators in non-profit organizations, libraries, and publishing houses; and teachers, home-makers, and storytelling enthusiasts in India and other countries. The themes and locations have been just as exhaustive: heritage storytelling in heritage buildings; rock conservation storytelling on a hillock; stories of the sea in a palm grove on a beach; musical and mythological stories in a temple; and summer camp stories at night around a bonfire. My canvas is filled with many more colourful memories.

Over the last four decades of my life, and the last 9 years of officially being a professional storyteller, I have observed that I have never, to date, met any child or adult who has said that they do not like stories or that they do not like listening to stories. Only on one occasion did a little boy say that he did not like listening to stories, only to forget what he had said once he had been drawn into the telling.

Human beings are intrinsically drawn to listening to stories. Adults often come in just to accompany children, or if they pluck up the courage to come in on their own, it is with much scepticism. Inevitably they enjoy the storytelling just as much as the children. Stories speak to the child in us. As a performer I can see the audience's emotion on their faces without them knowing.

Undoubtedly, children enjoy listening to stories. The beauty is that in smaller settings like the classroom, they often forget their anxieties and self-consciousness when they listen to, respond to, and even narrate a story. Adults take a while, but also let their guard down and travel with the tale. They are vicariously living the experiences in the story. It is that special joy of being able to experience something and yet not be involved in the experience. A story I love sharing is that of a 92 year old Rotarian who said that that was the best Rotary session he had attended in all these years. The 92 year old had become 92 years young.

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In the process of listening to a story, we are able to experience and also step back and watch this experience. In terms of self-awareness, it is has often been advocated that we step back and watch ourselves instead of getting drawn into the drama of the moment. This is rather difficult. Storytelling opens up possibilities for self-introspection and the revelation of deeper meanings. Repeated listening can also help a listener make new discoveries about the same story.

Storytelling and Education

At the age of 21, when I had to teach English to students of grades 11 and 12 in a government school, stories came to the rescue in the classroom. They helped in innumerable ways. It was a heterogeneous classroom, but those who were very good with the language and those who struggled with it both connected to the storytelling in their own way. It generated interest in the subject and my pupils found it is a much easier and engaging way of comprehending a text. The children grew to like the stories and, consequently, the subject.

I also shared stories with the other children that I met when I had the duty of supervising the class in the absence of their regular teacher. I used the time to share stories with the children and soon found that I was very popular. I was considered their friend just because I had shared a story on a random visit. This drew my attention to a very important aspect of teaching—the teacher-student relationship. Academics apart, storytelling can build a beautiful bond between teacher and child—one of friendship and trust—very valuable indeed to the teacher.

I was invited by the US Consulate in my city, Hyderabad, to work with young adults and conduct storytelling-based reading workshops. As I walked down the corridor towards the large classroom, I could hear the raucous group of over 80 young men and 20 young ladies. The warden's voice floated above through the microphone, "Shut up you fellows and behave yourselves. The facilitator is about to enter." Apprehensively I walked in. I told them first that they must be amused that somebody has come to tell them stories as if they were little children! I requested that they cooperate with me, humour me, try and listen intently and imagine everything I say. I promised I'd try to offer them an engaging journey. I reminded them that I had no HD screen or Dolby system to draw their attention, but a simple story and myself to tell it.

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The next 20 minutes passed without any of us realising it. At the end of the story, as they broke into applause, students came up to the stage and started sharing stories that they were reminded of after hearing mine. They came without anybody even asking them to. It was the magic of the narrative and oral sharing. Thus, I slowly discovered that even older students respond just as well as children. There is, after all, a child in each one of us.

They were given texts to read with planned activities and there was enthusiastic participation and involvement in the language learning tasks in the classroom. The teacher reported that there was usually resistance to reading English texts, but as a post-storytelling activity, the response was very different.

Storytelling, despite our reservations, works even in highly unexpected quarters, which can surprise us. A storyteller in Singapore once saved herself from some thugs by telling stories! I did not have the fortune of such adventures, but came close. A group of 200 boys and girls, 13 years of age, studying at a high-end international school certainly does not make an inviting audience for a storyteller. It was quite expected that when I was introduced before the start of the creative-writing session based on storytelling, the audience booed. By now a hardened veteran when going into battle, I continued after my standard initial request for cooperation and collaboration. Soon they were lost in the story and, in fact, had to be cajoled to proceed to the writing task because they insisted they wanted to listen to more stories.

When I received an English Language Teacher Development Research grant from the British Council, I chose to work with the teachers of a charitable trust. The students were children of domestic help, plumbers, and mechanics. They came from homes where parents were illiterate and could help little; they also witnessed domestic violence and alcoholism. The primary school teacher was trained by me, the researcher and storyteller, in the art of storytelling and how to employ it in an ELT (English Language Teaching) setting.

The three most interesting outcomes for the teacher were, in her own words: (1) "children are *listening* to me in the English class"; (2) "children are voluntarily speaking in English even without my telling them to"; (3) "children love repeating the little ditties, rhymes, and rhythms of the story." The teacher began to grow in confidence and find ways of expressing herself with the vocabulary at her disposal; she also became curious about ways to

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improve her language, her classroom performance, and ways to reach her students better.

This was very exciting for all of us. Another interesting development occurred a month later. Seeing the power of stories and storytelling, the school teacher and the school management requested the creation of stories to convey concepts from the grade 6 science textbook. I worked on two concepts and gave two story-scripts to the teacher. She was experienced by now and simply took the script and narrated the stories, which were analogies for the water cycle and deforestation.

I received a call two weeks later. It was difficult to follow what as being said as in her excitement the speaker was rushing her words. It took me a while to understand that it was the principal. She had called to say that her students presented the water cycle and deforestation through stories at an inter-school science fair and the District Education Officer assumed that, based on their presentation, they were from one of the elite schools of the city. It was a little moment of celebration for all of us. The children had not only understood a concept, but had found the language to express their understanding in a simple and impactful manner.

Behind the Stories and the Telling

There are many more such stories to share. It is important to note that this is of particular relevance in countries where access to high-end resources is not easy to come by. Storytelling serves as an effective pedagogical tool. At the same time, it is an inexpensive affordable epistemic process. Storytelling is an art, but not one as exclusive as playing the harp. Teachers can be trained through experiential workshops to discover their style and use storytelling in the classroom.

This is not a theoretical statement, but one coming from having worked with thousands of teachers from varied backgrounds and challenges. Most have successfully found their style of telling stories and understood the ways in which they can be employed in the classroom for learning.

Language acquisition theories tell us about how we learn our mother tongue by listening to it and attempting to speak it. Storytelling offers the opportunity to listen and respond. As we saw in the previous anecdotes, students respond to the language, engage with it, and learn it when we begin with a story.

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Students are naturally curious and storytelling both whets and satisfies their curiosity. Storytelling has associations of warmth, care, relaxation, fun, imagination, and joy. As such, the learner enters a mode of reception and openness. Young or old, each one of us is constantly engaged in making meaning of ourselves, the world, and our relationship with it and others—we construct our identity based on our understanding.

Narratives offer us a structure, characters we can relate to, and experiences we can explore as we progress through this meaning-making journey. So the listener/child/student/learner is drawn to the story. They forget their anxieties, self-consciousness, and other concerns. The cognitive pressures of a regular classroom setting evaporates during story time. There is a deep joy that comes through imagination and a lightness that finds resonance in the term 'Leela' from Hindu texts, meaning playfulness.

Not only that, there is relevance to the learning as the learner can relate to what is happening. The triggering of imagination also brings alertness and relaxation. There is a strong desire to relive the story, by telling it to others and even listening to it again from the teacher. This offers opportunities to 'revise' the text. Not only that, the learner is often willing and wishes to 'revise' the text. What more could an educator want?

These are some of the crucial elements of storytelling that lend themselves so well to the learning environment. Most tribal literature, folklore, and religious texts employ narrative frameworks. From the Mahabharatha to Aesop's Fables and One Thousand and One Nights to stories about Anansi, telling, listening and passing them on has always been seen as a way to recollect and use. (In fact, when the terrible Tsunami of 2004 hit the islands of Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal, the Jarawa Tribe escaped in time to the interior of their jungles. Apparently they had heard stories that said that when from a distance they see the water rise higher than their hills, the people must run back to their homes.)

While the children in the classroom gain much from storytelling, so does the teacher. Initially there is pressure on her to learn to perform. Like any other artform, with practice comes confidence and comfort in creating, performing, holding the audience, encouraging their participation, and leading them as desired. This builds confidence and proficiency in the teacher for the long road ahead.

One finds that sometimes children with hearing issues, or other learning and/or developmental issues, and autistic children respond a little more

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easily to stories than they do to mainstream modes of teaching and communication. Storytelling has strong potential for inclusive learning systems.

Finding my Style

As a professional storyteller, I have been able to evolve my signature style of telling, which involves weaving in music, musical instruments, and movement. These are heavily inspired and borrowed from Indian oral traditions that are rich with poetry, small movements, and have a chorus of singers who support the teller. As a teacher, I also involve my audience and encourage them to guess, move along, sing along, clap along, and connect with the music and movement in ways that appeal to them.

Having had a one-year stint playing the violin and a natural inclination for playing musical instruments, I find it easy to incorporate music and instruments into my storytelling. My childhood learning of Sanskrit slokas and fluency in four languages helps me build songs, poetry, and chants using different languages depending on the origin of the story. My interest in folk traditions, mythology, Bhakti poets, Sufis, ecological issues, science, and the language of science have all shaped the stories I tell and the productions that I have chosen to conceptualise over the years: silly fun folk tales; musical narration of stories by Bhakti poets interspersed with their songs and Bhakti philosophy; musical narration of mythological stories; productions based on themes such as rock conservation in the Deccan plateau of India; bird watching, heritage conservation, and ecological issues such as the need to bicycle more or to use our resources judiciously.

The Story of the Storyteller

Interestingly, a journal entry of mine, as a 13 year old says "I want to tell stories to the world." Except for that written in my handwriting, I have no conscious memory of ever wanting to be a storyteller. I had dreamt of being a dancer and dance was an integral part of my life for over two decades. Being interested in many things all at once is something that has always been with me. In terms of my professional journey, I graduated with a degree in nutrition, simultaneously flying glider planes. Later, I studied programming and coding while working part-time for a radio station. I moved on to doing a master's degree in English literature—a journey that I deeply cherish.

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Life took me into the world of English language teaching and writing. For over a decade I pursued this, teaching in government schools across the country in quaint little towns and learning much from my students and colleagues, especially about the cultures of the places I lived. As a child, my parents often took my sister and I to all the little places around where ever we lived. So I had a natural and well-developed curiosity for the people and places around me. What did they speak? What did they eat? How did they cook that vegetable? What were their stories, their heroes, heroines, their songs and dances? I was always asking questions. I still do.

In 2008, when I made a conscious decision to take up storytelling as a profession, it was as a consequence of a critical medical ailment. I wanted to do what I really wished to in the worst case scenario of my health deteriorating further. I also wanted the strength to face my health issue. Storytelling came to the rescue. There has been no looking back since. What began as a small summer camp in a little town in Maharashtra moved on to the city of Hyderabad. The initial need was to tell and then to grow as a teller. I knocked on many school doors and also held my own public performances. In 2009 and 2010 the responses from schools were often random and unpredictable, but continued trickling in. However, I continued. I realised that I could not bank on making money from storytelling at that point and freelanced as a writer and MC (master of ceremonies) for cultural events.

A six month stint in 2011 as an education coach for a company was a turning point. I found the clarity and path to marry storytelling and learning, and designed modules for training teachers in employing the same. Queries came in for different shows and performances, including collaborations with musicians, dancers, and other artists. This led to interesting solo productions, such as musical storytelling based on myths and other themes, like the Bhakti poets of India. This journey slowly brought recognition in the city, in other cities in the country, and, eventually, other countries in the world. The overwhelming response to my children's print-cum-audio book was a shot in the arm to take the work further.

Looking back I feel much gratitude to all those who supported and guided me, especially other storytellers—Cathy Spagnoli from America and Jeeva Raghunath from India. A journey that began with a local summer camp in 2008 now includes being a resource person for the Ministry of Culture, government of India and receiving invitations to the historic Scottish and Austrian Festivals in 2017.

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The biggest lesson on this journey has been not to get anxious, to trust in oneself, and to follow one's heart; to keep doing, to keep growing, to keep sharing. Life will collaborate and weave a beautiful narrative.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

DISCOURSE AND THE PROBLEM OF STRUCTURAL POWER: A NOTE ON THE MISSING STORY OF HUMAN VULNERABILITY IN THE INTERCHANGE

HEMACHANDRAN KARAH

In an epoch when all things seem relativistic and contextual, one can still spot a score of phenomena that are absolutely universal. Vulnerability is definitely one such phenomenon, for it does not spare anyone, including the most privileged of us. For example, a middle-class man may hook on to an array of networks to bypass a harmful structural entrapment. However, such networks may not offer protection against something like the impoverishment of the inner self or moral conflict. All the same, an overarching system of power, such as patriarchy, may perpetuate itself by hijacking people's personhood, so that the latter becomes a site for dominance. Discourse analysis involves a plethora of frameworks, such as 'subjugation,' 'internalized oppression,' and 'docility,' to capture the performance of power. Furthermore, in reviewing a powerplay that seems intangible and yet formidable, discourse-based scholarly enterprises unfold with the conviction that a hijacked personhood is the ultimate manifestation of human vulnerability. At its best, such a conviction is salutary. For example, during moments of enslavement by a harmful discourse, one may become nothing more than an attenuated play of signifiers. That is not all—social contracts run the risk of delegitimization when they are upheld by communities who themselves are dispersed from within.

While such a critique is almost thorough, it is limited by the worldview that human vulnerability is noticeable only within a social contract situation. After all, is it not true that a failed social contract is a clear symptom of an underlying vulnerability? Although such self-referential questions seem indisputable, there exist myriad narrative themes of vulnerability that slip

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through the cracks. By this metaphor of the crack, I mean the cluster of gaps within a system of knowledge, such as discourse analysis, that are tailored to examine the reach of structural power. In gathering together these narrative themes, I make use of the concept of moral paradox. The idea of moral paradox is not a novel invention. It is very active in other contexts, such as in religious texts and philosophical treatises. I deploy moral paradox more in a philosophical sense that is fine-tuned to capture less-acknowledged stories of vulnerability. What follows is a fictional narrative that may resemble many such stories of vulnerability that slip between the cracks.

The arrival of a disabled baby in a family: a special story of vulnerability and resistance

Srinivas and Mary are delighted that their baby is due next week. The great day indeed comes. Srinivas is told by the hospital nurse that they are blessed with a baby girl. Hurrah! Wow! Now he is a proud husband and a cute dad! Wait a minute, his excitement is not going to last long. Srinivas is told by the doctor that the child will not be able to see at all since her eyeballs are missing. Their baby has a rare medical condition called anophthalmia, which can leave the globe of the eye completely stunted. An umpteen number of explanations follow such a declarative statement. Of course, none of them impact Srinivas. He disconnects for a moment; rather, he is in touch with a loud and theatrical conversation from inside. Since I find it hard to fashion a compassionate academic lexicon to describe such a disconnect, I seek recourse to my own amateur translation of a Tamil film song "Maunathil vilaiyaddum" (That which is a play in the speechless). I do this not to create melodrama, but to capture the maiden moments of a journey in disability, which may not be facile all the way.

That which is a play in the speechless
How do I ever know you, my conscience?
For you are an eternal play in silence, in a speechless domain;
A thousand memories, a blissful dream,
A failed toil, and a broken duty,
In tearful eyes they all remain.

You are a secret mine;
A restless stage;
An unfailing moral battlefield;
Because you are a mother of all human sorrows,
Be it a flaw or a slip, for all yugas you bleed;
A deaf interlocution, enacted all in tears.

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Yes, Srinivas and Mary and a million other couples invariably land in the moral battlefield of their consciences. They wind up there because of an urge to take decisions that will hurt them badly amidst competing discursive formations. What is the nature of these discursive formations? Let us begin with the doctor's advice to the couple. For the doctor, anophthalmia is undoubtedly a well-documented genetic disorder. Although it may be a rare condition, one should remain vigilant nevertheless. Couples who are high-risk, such as Mary and Srinivas, should be particularly open-minded. For example, they cannot afford to bring abnormality into the world due to a careless pregnancy. Babies who are born blind may grow up to adulthood conspicuously bearing the burden of their condition. Not only that, they may pass on the burden to their dear ones, on to public institutions such as centers of learning, and the economies of demography at large. For its part, the state may be required to bear the indirect costs that accrue due to a disability. In fact, it is parental irresponsibility to bring forth a life which cannot experience something as sublime as the visual. And thus unfolds a clinicalization discourse with a sanctimonious tenor.

Disability Studies (DS), a specialist field that is meant to espouse the cause of the disabled, makes an interesting argument about such a discourse and its apparent wholesale purchase by the populace. Its devastating critique is based on the view that blindness will remain an anomaly and a personal tragedy as long as it is projected as a mere corporeal deficit. DS labels such a projection a medical model of disability. The medical model or clinical deficiency framework gains critical density in a social sphere, since it promises to overthrow corporeal imperfection. Who likes imperfection after all? Due to a systematic and protracted battle with such a belief, DS communities now have accumulated a good many narrative frameworks to counteract the discursive investment in corporeal perfection. One of these frameworks is known as the social model of disability. Around the globe, activists, legal experts, and policy enthusiasts alike promote the social model as an antidote to the medical model. They make use of the social model's potential to take away the burden of helplessness from the disabled. In this way, the framework offers a brand new outlook, if you like, a paradigm-shift with regard to the problem of accommodating disability. Put precisely, the social model encourages the viewpoint that it is an ill-organized social formation that causes disability, and not people's impairments per se. For example, audio-enabled traffic lights, computers with speech synthesizers, and availability of knowledge systems in a score of accessible formats, such as e-books, may facilitate independent professional mobility among people with visual impairments. A barrier-free environment, therefore, is a pathway towards the removal of stigma

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connected to disability, and not clinicalisation. That said, by no means is the social model framework a catch-all solution to disability (Adams and Reiss et al. 2015).

Coming back to the present, I meet Mary and Srinivas with their daughter Shilpa who is now a teenager. I can infer that the couple are already proud of their daughter's exceptional performance as a budding playback singer. Surprisingly, all three are disability activists as well. Hence, they appreciate the contrariwise opinions espoused by medical and social model defendants. They are particularly grateful to the position of the social model, for it has kept their aspirations alive with a guilt-free conscience. Drawing on such an insightful immersion into activism, Mary and Srinivas also tell me something interesting. Parenting a disabled child is a unique journey into a world of moral paradoxes. Activism, including a social model of persuasion may not necessarily pay adequate attention to such paradoxes. Not all the time at least, they say. I cannot help but nod my head in the affirmative.

In teasing out the moral paradoxes that may be linked to the theme of disability and parenting, I take a narrative thread from Saul Smilansky's philosophical interventions. Smilansky closely reads the biographical profiles of Abigail and Abraham to explore what he calls the 'fortunate misfortune' paradox. Abigail is born with a rare lung condition that makes both breathing and leg movement a wearisome chore. Fortunately, a doctor advises very early on that Abigail should start swimming so that her lung condition may improve. In due course, swimming becomes Abigail's primary identity and an unrestrained fame-fetcher. Similarly, for Abraham misfortune comes in the form of poverty. He not only extricates himself from its unforgiving clutches, but with superhuman drive, manages to build a business empire. Given these success stories, should one treat their early difficulties as mere misfortune? On the one hand, we may argue that Abigail and Abraham's current state of glory is inspired by their early misfortune. If not for their excruciating childhood circumstances, they may not have developed the mettle and urge to build a worthwhile personhood, let alone attain celebrity status. In fact, they deserve both pity and praise since they had to put up with a harsh life for a very long time, and at the same time they managed to engineer an enviable destiny all by themselves. A contradictory view may also command equal moral weight, argues Smilansky. Lives of suffering and glory are not always commensurate with each other. In fact, in contrast to Abigail and Abraham there may be millions imprisoned by structural entrapment, whose stories may not make it into the light of day at all. To recapitulate, disability and other special human conditions come with a couple of moral paradoxes. The first one may

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concern the good and the bad thing about the role of barriers, including corporeal limitation, and the second—commensurability or otherwise about the link between misfortune and the proverbial good life (Smilansky 2008).

Every now and then, Mary and Srinivas slip into Smilansky's 'fortunate misfortune' paradox. Perhaps the slips aid them in their exploration of an emotional muddle that is at the heart of caregiving. For one thing, they find it hard to deny that the arrival of a disabled child is anything but a misfortune; and for another, they know very well that it is Shilpa, and no one else who can so un-presumptuously bestow a rare sense of irreplaceability on their being. Such bestowals, and the emotional muddle, give rise to other moral paradoxes that have enriched Shilpa's family during her gradual growth into an independent young adult. They include the paradoxes of the 'burdensome gift' and 'special normalcy.' While the burdensome gift paradox captures the urge to treat disability as fortuitous training in disguise to handle a life of challenges, the special normalcy paradox focuses on an antinomian reception for the same. Antinomianism about disability stems from two opposite persuasions, which treat the phenomenon either as a special case or as a mainstream identity problem. Such moral paradoxes, or pushes and pulls about disability care, may seem like mere contradictions. In reality, they are much more than that. Millions of people, including Mary and Srinivas, seek refuge in them because they can be helpful in harnessing an emotional architecture. So, how does the burdensome gift paradox fit into such a schema?

I used to joke in the classroom that disability is not an American passport. Therefore, people may not run after it with open arms! Mary and Srinivas also did not welcome Shilpa's arrival with special enthusiasm. Perhaps she arrived in their lives almost like a cross to bear on their shoulders, if not an inexhaustible liability. During those early moments, the couple may have found themselves asking: why did this happen to me? Why should Shilpa undergo this condition? Can we do something to remedy her blindness? Why is god so cruel to good people? How should we prepare ourselves for a life-long burden? Could we have prevented a life of misery for Shilpa? In addition, there may be many other questions, which may not sound meaningful at all. Such questions may even lack syntactic integrity. One way to fathom such narrative pieces is to see them as a direct outcome of a malicious medical and a religious discourse. Such an entrapment is entirely possible. People may fall for them if they cannot find alternative frameworks that have the potential for healing.

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Believe it or not, Shilpa's parents consider her disability to be a burden even now. Celebrating their daughter's achievements while treating her as a burden at the same time does not seem to go well together. Perhaps this 'burden' has a brand new signification now? Maybe. For example, Shilpa is a special gift because she is also a joyful burden. Shilpa would have been a special gift without her disability as well. However, because the couple were required to give her care, they could discover meanings that may have otherwise remained inaccessible. For example, during a protracted journey with disability, the couple get a rare opportunity to test their endurance, the dynamics of competing gender roles in the domestic space, the limitations and strengths of a conjugal tie, collective wisdom in handling stigma, and above all, a will to forgive. It is not as though the couple rank the best in a test for familial virtues because they are parents of a blind daughter. On the contrary, such tests turn out to be the robust and pliable building blocks of a caregiving setting, which Mary and Srinivas have painstakingly put together over a period of time. It may not be very hard to imagine why they see Shilpa as a special catalyst in their wedded life, as much she is a burden of labour and love.

There is one more viewpoint to consider. During the couple's early moments with blindness, it seemed rather like a dark world bereft of visual sensation. Thanks to Shilpa, they now know that blindness is a rich synaesthetic experience. Also, visuality as much as the binary of light and dark, are cultural entities (Karah 2012). Like Shilpa's world of Carnatic music, diverse artistic forms and genres relate to such cultural constructs differently. As mature participants of the visual world, Shilpa's parents do not get panic attacks when they are thrown into darkness. Not anymore. Nor do they feel the urge to treat blindness as a miserable and a desperate performance in darkness. Such an outlook is a rare gift because it can also aid a social model performance by a thousand miniscule means.

For example, Mary and Srinivas are now better equipped to build tiny emotional and cultural infrastructures around them that do not necessarily impinge upon the idea of corporeal perfection. In the developing world context, such tiny infrastructures play a crucial role, for perfect, and pan-national social model projects remain anything but an aspiration. Abigail and Abraham can draw on a 'fortunate misfortune' paradox since they can rely on a universal social model implementation, such as the British National Health Service (NHS). Even if such systems were nonexistent, they can still rely on a robust medical and a legal support system in that part of the world. Such a taken-for-granted universal support system may in turn induce an investment in the supremacy of personal agency. All things being

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in the right place, one can deploy inner resources to the fullest to achieve a desired goal. In the absence of reliable public infrastructure, Mary and Srinivas may not be in a position to bank on human will alone for wish-fulfillment. Instead, they may find themselves drawing on the 'burdensome gift' paradox. If not total structural transformation, such an immersion, they hope, might enable a meaningful connection with their vulnerable inner selves and a personal investment in micro-social model projects.

During an intimate journey in caregiving, Mary and Srinivas have also sought recourse to the 'special normalcy' paradox. As parents, Mary and Srinivas know intuitively that their child is unique since she has special needs. For example, she may require a braille device, a colour identifier app for choosing an outfit, and a notetaker to jot down music scores. Are these requirements any different from Rajesh in the neighborhood, who now needs a specially configured Linux machine to run a language module? Not really, one might say. Take another example. Shilpa may need a compassionate familial setting to learn messy things about growing up. In such a setting, she may also need a friendly hand that can serve, protect, and withdraw appropriately during a moment of self-assertion. She may also benefit by a gender-sensitive environment where she can be herself without undue scrutiny. Put simply, Shilpa will always like people to understand that she may not need pampering all the time. Assistance, if any, will have to be at the right moment, and in the right proportion. Her family may have to treat her like a 'normal' person, and yet understand that she will need assistance for doing well in the normalcy game. While normalcy here may mean scopic typicality, being special denotes a requirement for assistance in fulfilling such an end. Mary and Srinivas forever confront the 'special normalcy' paradox for the same reason. They offer assistance that may enable Shilpa to be part of a visual culture that is in sync with her gang, but stop when such assistance becomes a visceral marker of her difference. They need to do this a bit astutely, since Shilpa is sensitive and touchy about the fine boundary between both responses.

In a public setting where the idea of productivity and consumption is a dominant social contract condition, blind people may associate normalcy with scopic typicality. By scopic typicality I mean the sum total of practices and consumer behaviours that feed into the makings of the society of the spectacle (Debord 1994). A hurried journey towards perfection and a greater propensity for consumption is a modernist impulse. If you like, normalcy is just another name for such a game plan called modernity. In fact, it is notable that the word normal entered the English lexicon only in the eighteenth century. Thereafter, it served the deviant purpose of clearing

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away human performances that failed to meet a particular statistical standard. Over a period of time, normalcy became a self-serving mission, which still encourages, among other things, a eugenic perspective. Hence, we need to overthrow the idea of normalcy, argues Leonard Davis (Davis 2013).

One should constantly challenge all self-serving ideals including normalcy. Notwithstanding such a challenge, moral paradoxes including the 'burdensome gift' conundrum may flourish. How much one should serve another human being; to what extent can the other be a part of oneself and the sea of humanity; to what extent can one hold onto the other and what is the morally appropriate time to withdraw; what is a good Samaritan intuition and what is not; and many such questions, in reality, are antinomian impulses. They are not simple contradictions. They are modes of living, thinking, and relating among fellow human beings. Each one of these impulses will seem true until one is ensconced in it. Apparently, one seeks refuge within them despite the dominance of reductionist discourses such as normalcy.

What about vulnerability and resistance?

Elsewhere I have argued that vulnerability is a spectrum of human conditions and predicaments that may render people volatile from within, and perhaps expose them to external impingement. That is still true. It may also be important to note that side-tracking from the demands of moral paradoxes is the highest marker of human vulnerability. If not for a nonlinear journey through such paradoxes, aggressive discourses such as normalcy may sweep us away in the wink of an eye. Moreover, unconditional embrace of a discourse that seems absolutely transparent, straight, and bereft of paradoxes is a sure symptom of a deeper vulnerability.

Besides an opportunity for reflection, moral paradoxes offer a space of our own beyond a discursive system and a slavish social contract norm. Hence, an interjection with moral paradoxes is also a performance in resistance against structural power. Srinivas may resist structural power by getting in touch with what he calls 'deaf interlocutions' of the conscience. You and I may do it differently.

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