

Abstracting and Indexing:
Index Copernicus, SJIF, Citefactor.org, IJIF, DAJ, ESJL,
DRJI, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, Researchgate

GNOSIS |

An International Refereed Journal of English Language and Literature

YKING BOOKS

ISSN 2394-0131

Gnosis

An International Refereed Journal of
English Language and Literature

Vol.9 No.4 July 2023

Editor : Dr. Saikat Banerjee

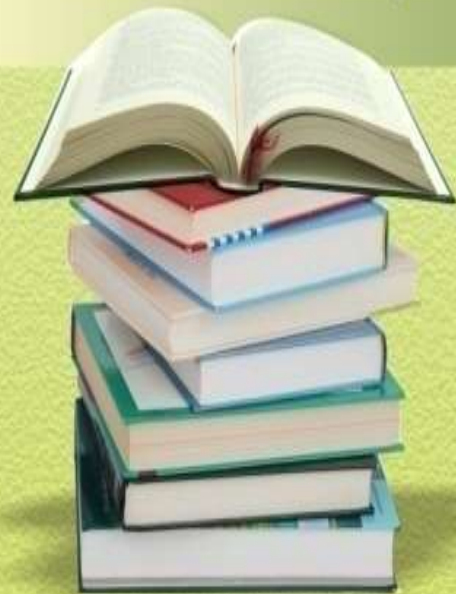
ISSN 2394-0131

Gnosis

An International Refereed Journal of
English Language and Literature

Vol.9 No.4 July 2023

V
o
l
9
N
o
4



GNOSIS

An International Journal of English Language and Literature

Vol. 9 -No. 4 July, 2023

Abstracting and Indexing:

Index Copernicus, SJIF, Citefactor.org, IJIF, DAJ, ESJ, DRJ, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, ResearchGate

Editor

Dr. Saikat Banerjee

Assistant Professor

Department of English,

St. Xavier's College, Ranchi,

Jharkhand, India

E-mail: gnosisprintjournal@gmail.com

Publisher

Yking Books

G-13, S.S. Tower, Dhamani Street,

Chaura Rasta, Jaipur - 302003, Rajasthan, India

Phone No. - 91-141-4020251, M.: 9414056846

E-mail: ykingbooks@gmail.com

Table of Contents

<i>Editorial</i>	2
Research Articles	
Unravelling the Sidekick Journey: A Study of Narrative Wizardry in Gitanjali Shree's 'Tomb of Sand' Dr Pankaj Bala Srivastava	3
A Comparative Study between Synchronous and Asynchronous Learnings Koel Basak	10
Trauma in Anuradha Roy's 'All the Lives We Never Lived' Dr. Rafrak Shakil Ansari	24
“And knows in her sleepless sleep that she is caged”: Retracing the Oral History of the Cree Community in Tracey Lindberg's novel Birdie Dr Pradip Mondal	32
Sufi-Pop-Rock: Fusing the Sacred and the Ordinary in Hindi Cinema Balpreet Singh	41
Badal Sircar's Udyog Parva: The Third Gaze at the Mahabharata Sharuk Rahaman	52
Intertextuality in Agha Shahid Ali's Selected Poems Tanvi M. Pujara	60
Our Esteemed Contributors	67

Editorial

The July 2023 issue of GNOSIS had a very warm response from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder or this issue even before the deadline of 30 June 2023. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted. As a journal committed to quality research and writing, we are aware of the need to delink quality from publication cost. Hence, our decision is to charge no publication fee from the scholars whose papers will be published in the issues of GNOSIS. At the same time since GNOSIS is a self-financed venture, co-operation and support in the form of subscriptions are solicited from the readers and admirers of English Literature and Language from all over the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the Academicians and well-wishers of GNOSIS who recommended GNOSIS for publication. This issue has seven research/critical articles. Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our esteemed members of the Board of Advisors and Review Editors for their selfless and tiresome efforts in assessing the articles very sincerely and giving their valuable remarks to bring out this issue in such a grand manner. I am also grateful to the revered contributors who have made this issue of the Journal a beautiful reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast. Happy Reading!

Dr. Saikat Banerjee

Editor

Unravelling the Sidekick Journey: A Study of Narrative Wizardry in Gitanjali Shree's 'Tomb of Sand'

Dr Pankaj Bala Srivastava

Submitted 23/02/2023 Revised 25/06/2023 Accepted 30/07/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: Throughout history, using animals and birds as sidekicks in narrative techniques have been a captivating and popular element in numerous novels, stories, and poems across diverse languages, including Sanskrit literature, Hindi literature, and Indian English literature. This technique serves as a potent tool to enrich narratives, skillfully portray conflicts, evoke emotions through distinct characters, and invite readers to engage with the storyline actively. This research paper focuses on the art of employing animals and birds as supporting narrators in Indian literature, with particular attention to Gitanjali Shree's celebrated novel 'Tomb of Sand,' a recipient of the prestigious Booker International Prize. The study delves into the intriguing ways these creatures bring unique perspectives, profound symbolism, and depth to the narrative, thus shedding light on the experiences, emotions, and dilemmas human characters face as their companions and guides. Through this masterful technique, animals and birds emerge as narrative devices that seamlessly bridge the gap between the human and natural realms, facilitating a profound understanding of interconnectedness. In essence, this paper endeavours to unravel the magic woven by Gitanjali Shree's novel, which skillfully harnessed the potential of animal and bird sidekicks to create a captivating and thought-provoking storytelling experience. Readers can embrace a more profound connection with the rich tapestry of life's narratives by exploring this dynamic relationship between humans and their non-human counterparts.

Keywords: Hitchhiker Technique, Sidekick, Gitanjali Shree, Tomb of Sand, Narrative Technique.

The concept of the sidekick has long been prominent in literature and film. Sidekick is a slang expression for a subordinate or supporting character who accompanies the main character and helps reveal the plot's subtext and hidden meaning. The co-travelling characters share and add depth to the narrative through their perspective, experiences and thoughts. Although they may not be as prominent as the protagonist, they play an essential role by providing comic relief and emotional support or contributing to the story through their interactions. Sidekicks are valuable allies to the protagonist, often undermined by the story's antagonists. Unlike the main character, sidekicks usually have fewer powers or abilities. However, they compensate for this with their unwavering loyalty, ability to inspire, unique skills or

knowledge, and often a good sense of humour. In many cases, the sidekick is not only a trusted companion but also a close friend of the protagonist, adding depth and complexity to their relationship.

What makes the sidekick character so appealing is their ability to provide a different perspective on the story. They provide insight that illuminates and traces the protagonist's journey through their truth, offering a new view through which the reader or viewer can engage with the narrative. By featuring the sidekick's perspective, the story gains additional dimensions and allows for more decadent themes and character dynamics exploration. Sidekicks thus serve as much more than just supporting characters. They are integral to storytelling, incorporating moments of excitement, imparting wisdom, and providing a distinctive voice that complements the protagonist. Through their presence, sidekicks contribute to the overall narrative tapestry and enhance the reader's or viewer's experience by adding depth, complexity, and a new perspective.

The history of Indian literature is rich in using the co-traveller technique in fiction writing. This technique has been used in immense evidence from ancient times and can be seen in poetry, drama, novels and mythology. The sidekick technique can also be seen in the Puranas; for example, the Vishnu Purana mentions the Garuda bird as a co-traveller of Lord Vishnu. As his companion, the eagle bird narrates his actions and presents the religious message. Even in Vedic literature, stories have been expressed through 'chariot driver', 'river water' and 'bull's words' in 'Shatapatha Brahmana'. Bharat Muni, the author of Indian Natya Shastra, has given an essential place to the sidekick technique in Natya Shastra. It has been mentioned as 'Sabha-Yatri' or 'Darbar-Yatri', through which dialogue could be established between the main characters. Through this technique, the intimate expressions and speech of the characters in the play could be revealed. In Valmiki Ramayana, animals and birds like Hanuman, Jatayu and Sugriva are presented as the leading storytellers. The story of Ramayana is elaborated through these animals and birds and provides an opportunity for the readers to interact with the story's primary characters.

In Sanskrit literature, 'Shakuntalam' written by Kalidas, 'Kavya Manjari' composed by Bhanudatta, etc., animals and birds have been presented as main characters. The principles of knowledge, policy, ideology, and education are mentioned through them. In medieval Hindi literature, the stories of Munshi Premchand are examples of telling stories through birds and animals.

"*The Call of the Wild*" by Jack London (1903) is a classic adventure novel set in the late 19th century during the Klondike Gold Rush in Canada's Yukon Territory. The story revolves around Buck, a pet dog who transforms from a pampered pet in California to a wild and instinct-driven creature in the harsh Yukon wilderness. This gripping tale explores themes of survival, instinct, and the primal nature that resides within all living beings. Buck's encounters with various other dogs are crucial in the narrative.

Spitz, the lead dog on the sledge team, becomes Buck's main rival, representing the brutal and dominant side of the wilderness. Dave, an experienced sledge dog, mentors Buck and helps him adapt to his new life. Curly, a friendly sledge dog, befriends Buck before meeting a tragic fate, leaving a lasting impact on him. These sidekick dogs provide contrasting personalities and experiences that complement Buck's character development. They also reveal the harsh hierarchy and social dynamics among wild dogs. "The Call of the Wild" masterfully depicts the enduring sense of resilience and adaptability in humans and animals, making it a compelling and emotional adventure that transcends time.

'Watership Down', a timeless classic adventure novel by Richard Adams (1972), follows a group of brave rabbits on a quest for survival and a new home. The visionary rabbit, Hedgehog, leads them on a perilous journey to find safety and establish a new colony. Along the way, they face challenges, dangers, and adversities, forming a close-knit group of companions to support them. Among the supporting animals in *'Watership Down'* are Bigwig, the solid and loyal right-hand rabbit to Hedgehog; Fiver, Hedgehog's psychic younger brother whose visions guide the group; Blackberry, the resourceful problem solver; Kehar, the seagull turned unlikely ally; and Pipkin, the gentle and sensitive rabbit providing emotional solace. These companions enrich the narrative, showcasing individual strengths, adding depth to the group dynamics, and infusing the story with magic and mysticism. Themes of friendship, loyalty, courage, and resilience resonate throughout the novel. It explores human and animal nature, social structures, and the unyielding struggle for survival and freedom. Richard Adams weaves a rich and imaginative world using rabbits as main characters and other animals as supporting figures. *Watership Down* is cherished as a literary masterpiece that captivates readers of all ages, offering an adventurous tale and profound insights into the human condition.

Kenneth Grahame's *'The Wind in the Willows'* (1908) is a classic children's novel following the adventures of four animal friends - Mole, Mouse, Toad, and Badger - in the English countryside along the River Thames. Mole's yearning for exploration leads to a close friendship with Rat, discovering the joys of sailing and riverside beauty. Their encounter with the flamboyant and impulsive Toad at Toad Hall adds humour to the tale, despite his reckless behaviour. The group befriends Badger, an intelligent mentor and father figure. His wisdom becomes vital in their adventures. The novel also introduces other animal characters like the Otter, another friend who adds depth to the story. *The Wind in the Willows* beautifully captures friendship, camaraderie, and the wonder of nature. Each character brings uniqueness, making their escapades entertaining and heartwarming. The story contrasts home comforts with the allure of the wilderness, highlighting the beauty of both domestic and adventurous lives.

'*Ret Samadhi*' (2018) by Indian author Geetanjali Shree is a Hindi-language novel skillfully translated by Annie Montaut into French as 'au-delà de la frontière' (Beyond the Border, 2020) and by Daisy Rockwell into English as '*Tomb of Sand*' (2022), making it accessible to a global audience. Notably, 'Tomb of Sand' became the first Indian-language novel to win the International Booker Prize in 2022. In Gitanjali Shree's 'Tomb of Sand,' animals and birds play a brilliant role as sidekicks, with pheasants, birds, sticks, butterflies, and others appearing. However, the main sidekick driving the plot is the crow-crowess duo, providing readers with a comprehensive experience of the novel's theme. The story beautifully portrays various aspects and characteristics of crows, showcasing them engaging in meetings on essential subjects just like humans do - a unique and captivating narrative technique.

"But for the crows, everything had gone awry in terms of both their meeting and the air... the sky was blanketed with black wings. The crows had rallied in huge numbers. ... So the fatter and more aged crows seated the smaller crows in their laps...two heads bobbed atop each crow body, sporting four eyes rather than two. The mounds and trees were filled with these two-in-one crows...The crow meeting was underway. Regarding the horrific problems they were experiencing due to climate change and the science-worshipping humans. There was much cawing as the environmentalist birds pulled their prepared speeches from under their wings and read them out. Those who were particularly skilled delivered speeches extemporaneously. The assembled crows cawed approvingly, or shall we say that it would have sounded simply like caw caw to humans had they been listening, the way every language does to an unfamiliar ear, be it Hindi, Marathi, Tamil, or Morse code...let us set aside politically correct questions such as whether these were actual languages or regional crowlects they spoke. Suffice to say that the heavens echoed with their versions of Bhojpuri, Maithili, Avadhi, and Braj.

The era of debate was still extant among the crows, and conversations proceeded boldly. ...The mass of crows was a sight to see. Old birds, whose blackness had not turned to white but bore a whitish tinge, high school and college student crows, male, female, all openly debating: about how the entire cosmos had been thrown into a muddle, even our sharp intellects have begun to fail us. ..The conversation had turned to El Nino. One young jackanapes, rather bored in his youthful zeal, as well as a bit self-enchanted, asked with curiosity (but also just to rile), Nina who?

Nino, corrected the one next to him. El Niño, said another knowledgeable crow. Le what? asked the jackanapes, twisting his beak to pronounce it. El, el, replied the elder crow loudly...Pay attention, don't turn everything into a joke, retorted an elderly lady crow.

Hey, caw caw, make your own homes dirty, why have you snuck into ours to spread filth? Our home is the cosmos and nature, and this wingless community is bent on destroying our home to

build their own. ...There were many presentations that began to burst forth from the mouths of the crows, after that wingless being had moved...Surely he looks down on our colour too. He has dishonoured us! The cawing of the crows transformed into a roar: So what if we're black! We're crows! And thus, their honour was now at stake.

Everyone began to hop about in a rage, and that rage rose up from the soles of their feet to the hillocks and branches and it turned into droplets of burning flame, which a human might have mistaken for the last rays of sunshine...Because according to the new instructions, the location for the acknowledgements portion of the meeting has been changed. It was shifted to the dome, ledges, and portico of the old tomb inside the grove. The black mass rose up and burst forth from the trees and hills. Yet, all the young crows kept leaping up and diving down towards the plants behind, which was why the tiny flapping, fluttering gowned woman shrieked at them, I'll crush you if you come over here! And then flying (Tomb of Sand: 372-378)."

In the novel, crows (kaue-kauvi) symbolically represent contemporary burning topics such as feminism, gender equality, and other pertinent issues affecting human society:

"An elderly crowess with the heart of a poet began to remind everyone of the crowlaw. She had been one of the most badass feminists of her time, one who had fought and won the right for mothers to attend meetings, and also take part in community decisions. Also: that none should leave their egg in the nest of another out of crowpathy, nor should they throw about stalks and straws willy-nilly to build a nest—we too will live in an orderly fashion, and the mancrow will also warm the egg, since the babies that will be born will be his as well. She was still outspoken and said her piece elegantly. She was more than ten years old now, getting on. Her eyes were as peaceful as a cow's and there was a certain wisdom in her wings, as in the sagely drooping roots of the Barghad tree. She hopped slowly, and few knew that she hopped like that on sunny days so she could soak all the vitamin D into her joints, and now it was simply the way she rolled, and consequently, when all the others started hopping about like mad she walked forth with (Tomb of Sand: 378)."

In the novel, crows are shown giving advice to their offspring as well:

"My dear children, do not behave in such a manner that the crow becomes synonymous with mischief. Soften. Rain down from the sky like gentle flakes of snow, so the world spreads out tenderly beneath your cottony whiteness. Observe from your heart; not with unkindness (Tomb of Sand: 379)."

"Crowess now explained this to the little ones: the language that rings out all around you fills your unconscious mind, and then shocks you and makes you wonder when did I learn all this? That is why one should wander about where people speak well (Tomb of Sand: 389)."

Crows, as nurturing parents, impart valuable advice to their young ones, encouraging them not to engage in acts of violence. This parental guidance helps instill essential values of peaceful coexistence and non-aggression in the offspring, promoting a harmonious and compassionate society among the avian community:

"And you, Crowess stared at Jackanapes, why does absolutely everything incite you to violence? Bathe in the rain daily to cool yourself down a bit. It's too easy for you to stray, get worked up and lose your judgment. Just because you have ambitions of flying beyond the crowthority. Birds like you are the ones that get caught every other day: someone gives you a bomb, and says, take this, fasten it to your belt and go to festivals and fairs and press the button; daily your mug will appear on the front page. You just take off thoughtlessly and do what's asked; only your beak remains in the newspaper, which you can't even see. You're a crow. Don't be an ass. Or a kite or a falcon or a crane either. Patience, child, she said, patting him on his bowed head (Tomb of Sand: 379-380)."

Crows, like humans, observe and take notes on society and groups, demonstrating their keen ability to monitor and understand various aspects of their surroundings. Their observational skills enable them to gather valuable information, contributing to their adaptability and survival as intelligent creatures like other characters of the novel:

"The young crows, eager to attain knowledge, took out their notepads and each ripped out a feather for a quill, dunked it in tree sap, wrote down name and date, and sat at the ready....The Crowess was their preceptor, and when they didn't understand something the sleeping man was thinking, she'd clarify. Saris unfurled, softly swinging from branches. ... But no sari was as regal as the Gadwal, he said in his thoughts. Regal, a young lady crow noted, thinking this to be a type of sari. It's a Gadwal, silly owl, her elder sister scolded. I'm a crow, not an owl, she retorted, rolling her eyes (Tomb of Sand, : 383-384)."

In the novel, crows are portrayed performing various roles, including espionage and gathering information, akin to being spies and reporters. Sidekick's multifaceted abilities demonstrate their intelligence and versatility in the narrative, contributing to the richness of the story:

"The first messenger was a crow. Whom no one noticed because those days are gone when a person would see a bird and realise that it was Jayant or Jatayu, the one who recognised Sita and passed on the details to Ram, etc... This was Jackanapes, the same crow who had jumped up and disrupted the meeting and threatened to do this and that, when Crowess had reasoned with him and made him understand (Tomb of Sand: 393-395)."

As the story unfolds, crows work as sidekick characters, particularly the crow accompanying the story's protagonist 'Ma,' who cross the India-Pakistan border. In a remarkable scene at the end of the story, the protagonist enters Pakistan without a visa or passport to meet her lover, who is in a coma and unable to speak. This scene surprises the crows, and they express their wonder. This portrayal sheds light on the narrative's ever-changing direction and the crow characters' significant role. The crows caution others that no obstacle should hinder the reunion of long-lost lovers.

Works Cited

- Shree, G. (2022). *Tomb of Sand*. Translated by Daisy Rockwell, Penguin Books
- London, J. (1903). *The Call of the Wild*. Macmillan Publishers.
- DiCamillo, K. (2003). *The Tale of Despereaux*. Candlewick Press.
- Grahame, K. (1908). *The Wind in the Willows*. Methuen & Co. Ltd.
- Adams, R. (1972). *Watership Down*. Rex Collings Ltd.

A Comparative Study between Synchronous and Asynchronous Learnings

Koel Basak

Email: basak.koel@gmail.com

Submitted 09/03/2023 Revised 26/05/2023 Accepted 25/06/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic during 2020 with continuous lockdowns forced complete closure of all educational institutions. Alternative approaches to education were adopted to ensure continuity in teaching and learning process via e-learning portals or web-based learning. Different types of courses are conducted for varying age groups to educate people all over the world. The aim of this paper is to highlight the different types of online learning- the synchronous and asynchronous platforms and to point out the areas of strength, weakness, opportunities and threats faced by online portals. The synchronous learning approach permits the students studying at their own rhythm in various places as they are not capable to attend the conventional face-to-face offline classes at the educational institutions. To reflect the growth of synchronous platforms, Porter's 5 forces model has been used to depict usage of synchronous platforms and revenue generated by its usage. Due to the wide acceptance of synchronous platforms among all stakeholders, it has become more powerful compared to asynchronous learning platforms.

Keywords: E-learning, Synchronous learning, Asynchronous learning, COVID-19, SWOT analysis.

Introduction

Online education takes place over the internet and is also termed as e-learning. E-learning is paperless, but it requires computers/laptops or smartphones and a high-speed stable internet connection. E-learning is helpful in situations where students live in remote areas and for working individuals who do not have the time to attend physical classes. Classes can be rescheduled if they are missed, and it focuses on self-paced learning aspect. E-learning can be classified under the following: Synchronous learning and Asynchronous learning. (Dhawan, S, 2020)

Synchronous learning: This type of learning approach has followed a highly organized learning environment. This environment is represented by a trainer, who delivers a lesson in the presence of students. The students listen and participate in the discussion and join classroom activities at the same time. (Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Synchronous learning does not always take place in the classroom. Synchronous learning can also take

place in remote locations as long as it is taught by a teacher who holds the students' attention. It can also be incorporated in online classrooms that possess the facility services of breakout rooms, when the mentor divides the class into groups to allocate tasks together. Hence, the concept of synchronous learning suits in with today's networked learning atmosphere. Besides, there exist several advantages in synchronous learning approaches, even in the prevailing online-centric state. Moreover, it adds significant value to the Socratic approach of live-action speech.(Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Implementation of synchronous learning in an online course also has its several disadvantages. Among all, the main drawback is the prevalent technological glitch. For example, it is very difficult to keep a class in connect when each learner experiences numerous issues including the poor network connectivity, a large number of memory consuming learning apps that usually crash systems, and a labyrinth of speaker, camera, or microphone issues. Subsequently, it has been observed that significant time is lost because of all those types of issues.(Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Asynchronous learning is an open learning approach that usually takes place at the student's own momentum. In this procedure, the mentor generally allocates instructional material, set out tasks or assignments for conclusion and offer examinations that can be finished according to the convenience of the student. Also, teachers' possess numerous sources from where they develop their course materials, so they can obtain instructional content from pre-existing digital books and online videos and combine those in with the third-party learning applications. (Pappas, C, 2015)

An instance of asynchronous learning taking place offline is when a student registers for a solitary study course. One more example is when a teacher allocates a research project or a book report that permits students to select their own way when finishing it.

Objectives

The objectives of E-learning vary from one individual to another. These objectives may be general or specific. General objectives are common for all. Specific objectives vary from person to organization. The objectives of this research paper are as follows:

1. To assess the different synchronous E-learning platforms
2. Asynchronous learning portals to train students and professionals

3. To conduct Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis of both synchronous and asynchronous platforms
4. Analysis of synchronous learning platforms through Porter's 5 Force Model
5. To reflect the usage and revenue generated by the synchronous learning platforms during the post-COVID era.

Research Methodology

Data for this research study is procured from secondary data. Secondary data is collected from various sources such as reference books on Online learning, Web Portals, Distance learning, search engine, magazines and journals.

Results and Discussion

Synchronous Learning Portals:

There are various synchronous E-learning platforms across the globe. However, we shall highlight only a few of them for the purpose of research. They are as follows:

1. Google meet
2. Zoom
3. Vedantu
4. Microsoft Teams
5. Extramarks
6. Meritnation
7. Toppr

1. **Google meet**– It was launched by Google in March 2017. It is a video communication service which has innumerable user-friendly features. Two-way and multi-way audio and video calls, screen sharing to show documents, spreadsheets, presentations or browser tabs. It also has call encryption between all users, ability to raise and lower hand, deny and permit users during a call,

noise cancelling and audio filter. These features help to make it a platform for synchronous learning where through online meetings and direct interactions, effective learning takes place between the learner and the teacher or mentor. (Peters, J, 2020)

2. **Zoom Video Communications, Inc. or Zoom**– It is an American technology communications company founded in 2011. It has its headquarters in San Jose, California. It is used for teleconferencing, social relations, online chat services through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform. This platform is now commonly used by academic institutions mainly after the advent of COVID-19 since March 2020, when the entire education system had come to a standstill with the closing down of schools, colleges and universities to maintain social distancing. (Iqbal, M, 2021)

3. **Vedantu**– It is a leader in offering online classes since 2014. It offers online tuitions to students of all age groups from 3 to 18 years old. It even provides for the preparation of competitive examinations including NEET, IIT-JEE, ICSE, CBSE, state board examinations etc. It even offers extra-curricular classes like English, Speaking, Coding and Reading. (Upadhyay, H, 2019)

4. **Microsoft Teams** – Microsoft Teams is a communication platform developed by Microsoft. It has about 250 million users and is also used as a platform for synchronous learning. Innumerable features like chats, group chats, sharing of files, teams, channels, calling, meeting team live events, assignments etc. make online learning easier, interesting and interactive. (Galov, N, 2023)

5. **Extramarks**– It ranks 3rd in the list of e-learning software/platform for schools. It is a ready –made solution for students, teachers and parents. The platform has varied features like conducting online classes from anywhere, assigning homework and worksheets and it unlocks the world of advanced learning options. (“Extramarks' Learning App aimed at future of digital home learning”, Business Standard, 2019)

6. **Meritnation**– It is an innovative learning platform that can be accessed from all types of devices such as smart phone, tablet, windows etc. Students’ understanding is enhanced with the usage of animated

videos. Free live classes are also conducted to help students from 6 to 12. Interactive sessions with experienced teachers, revision notes, interactive games, chapter test and 24x7 doubt resolution with experts through chats are the features that attract school learners. (“Meritnation Mobile App”, Educational App Store)

7. **Toppr**– It has smart digital learning features like online sessions, mock tests, quiz and live doubt clearing sessions makes the Toppr one of the leading e-learning software. This platform analyses the strength and weaknesses on the basis of the past performance of the students and offers suggestions for practice that eventually enhances the learning for students. It also provides 24x7 live doubt clearing support. (“Toppr's Exponential Growth During Pandemic To Compete in EdTech Market”, Startup Talky, 2022)

Asynchronous Learning Portals:

1. **e-Skill India**– National Skill Development Corporation has introduced the e-Skill India platform to provide skilling opportunities to the youth fraternity of India. e-Skill India agglomerates content from digital platforms like such as IBM, TCS, SAS, Salesforce etc., trying to enrich the content that will benefit skill seekers. e-Skill is accessible through web portal and also via an app and the registration process is simple to help students to find their courses. Registration can be done via email id or mobile number and both free and paid courses are available in more than 10 languages. It offers courses on communication skills, digital and financial literacy to trade oriented courses for various sectors such as ‘Apparel’, ‘Healthcare’, ‘Tourism’, ‘Automotive’, etc. The objective of these courses is to train people on key functional skills to elevate their confidence level at the start of their professional journey. A number of these courses are supported by assessments and e-certificate is provided to the students upon successful completion of the course. (“eSkill India – Fostering a future-ready workforce, digitally”, National Skill Development Corporation, 2022)

2. **SWAYAM** – It is a system, which was rolled out by the Government of India. The program has been developed to accomplish three basic principles of Education policy, namely, access, quality, and equity. The aim of this course is to offer best education resources to everyone, even to the most disadvantaged. SWAYAM tries to bridge the gap between the privileged and the unprivileged students.

This platform hosts all courses from standard IX till post-graduation and it is accessible to anyone, anywhere and anytime. The courses are framed out by the teachers in India, and they are accessible free of cost to the learners. They have video lectures, reading resources that can be downloaded, tests through quizzes and digital discussion forums for clearing any type of doubt. Learners who wish to get a SWAYAM certificate should register for examinations with a fee and appear at designated centers on a specified date. (“SWAYAM Portal”, Ministry of Education, Government of India)

3. **SWAYAMPBHA**– It is a congregation of 22 DTH channels that is usually applied to broadcast exceptional quality of educational programs on 24x7 basis by the usage of GSA-15 satellite. The new content is broadcasted every day for four hours and repeat telecast five more times daily. Consequently, it benefits students for opting time as per their ease. Moreover, the channels are usually uplinked from BISAG-N Gandhinagar. The course materials are offered by UGC, IITs, IGNOU, NPTEL, CEC and they are meant for postgraduate and graduate level covering diverse disciplines such as arts, commerce, science, law, medicine, humanities and social sciences. (“Swayam Prabha”, Vikaspedia, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India)

4. **ePathshala**– It is an educational portal/app developed by Ministry of Education, Govt. of India and National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). It has been launched for portraying and disseminating all types of educational e-resources such as textbooks, audio, video, periodicals, and a variation of other print and non-print materials for students, teachers, researchers, educators, and parents. This platform offers course content, which is available in English, Hindi & Urdu. This portal provides NCERT textbook for classes 1-12, audio visual resources, magazines, teachers’ training modules etc. The contents can be accessed by users for offline use with unlimited downloads. The flipbook format of the app provides a realistic experience. (“E - Pathshala”, Vikaspedia, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of India)

5. **TCSiON**– It is a digital learning platform that provides an interactive learning environment. It is empowered by a Learning Management System (LMS), which offers a pedagogical model for participatory learning experience by allowing course delivery, assessment and learning opportunities in a community setting. The key offerings of TCSiON include robust collaboration tools, intuitive testing

engine, powerful analytical engine and calendar function. (“TCSiON – Digital Learning”, Tata Consultancy Services)

SWOT Analysis of Synchronous Learning Portals

Strengths

Synchronous learning platforms are a blessing in these times of crisis. It has innumerable strengths which makes it extremely supple for the learners who use such platforms. It offers flexibility of timings and location for the learners. Platforms have diverse audience from various age groups who use wide variety of online tools for effective learning. Educators use audios, videos, power point presentations and conduct live sessions with students to enrich their experiences of learning. This procedure can help to create an interactive learning environment, where students can freely interact with their classmates and teachers and give their feedback or clarify their doubts and queries instantaneously. Moreover, less cost is incurred in online learning compared to physical training cost. Thus, advancement of technology has offered anytime-anywhere learning boon for all enthusiastic learners. (Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Weakness

Synchronous learning platforms have certain weaknesses such as technical difficulties, where the student faces internet connectivity issues and are not able to make necessary provisions for huge data consumption during live sessions. Wide variety of learners have varying potential but among them are many who lack necessary qualities such as attention span, they feel frustrated in online sessions as they do not feel comfortable in attending online sessions. This further drops the learners’ confidence level. Insufficient knowledge regarding the design of the application and its operation by the learner creates an imbalance in the teaching-learning process. (Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Opportunities

Synchronous platforms have innumerable opportunities and due to the advent of the pandemic, academic institutions have switched on to this mode. Flexible programs can be designed to meet the requirements of students and teachers. Both the teachers and the students are thoroughly trained, and they gradually learn to reap the benefits of digital development. Constant online interactions help students to improve their

skills and inculcate problem solving and critical thinking skills to users of any age or sex. Innovative pedagogical approaches can be designed to teach, evaluate, publish result and certify and so on. Increasing market demand for e-learning is an excellent opportunity for synchronous platforms to bring about technological advancement in the educational sector.(Mary Sistek-Chandler, C, 2019)

Threats

Synchronous learning platforms face a number of threats ranging from learner's point of view, teacher's perspective and content issues. It is difficult for educational institutions to involve students and make them participate in the teaching-learning process. It is equally difficult for the teachers to shift from offline methodology to online platforms and change their pedagogy within a short span of time. It is difficult to develop content according to the curriculum and at the same time engage the students. The quality and content of synchronous learning platforms varies as there is no stipulated government directive regarding the e-learning platforms. This problem should be effectively handled so that everyone can enjoy the benefits of e-learning. Students think that internet shorthand (abbreviations, emoticons and playful spellings) used in assignments, has increased the dependency on computers for grammar and spelling, hence deteriorating knowledge of the English Language. Chat options in synchronous platforms during classes proved to be a distraction. Above all, a huge amount of cost is incurred in designing the applications, and maintaining them.(Mary Sistek-Chandler, C, 2019)

SWOT Analysis of Asynchronous Learning Portals

Strengths

Students of asynchronous portals get a scope to control the speed and pacing at which they can complete the course with a greater sense of freedom. They can share their views about the various class schedules as opposed to synchronous learning platforms. Students who are unable to attend physical classes consider it very helpful since it is very convenient for them, as they can work and earn money at the same time. Additional cost for travelling and other infrastructural costs can be eliminated which benefits both the students as well as the teachers. (Brown, D, 2021)

Weakness

Seclusion is a major disadvantage of online learning. Students who enjoy learning with their peers or in social settings find it difficult to adopt online learning. Moreover, it diminishes the spirit of competitiveness among the learners as they do not get an adequate opportunity to interact with their classmates. Using asynchronous platforms for learning makes one procrastinate and students develop a tendency of not submitting their assignments at the right point of time. Lack of instant feedback and limited interaction with the instructors also demotivate the students from effective learning. (“The Pros and Cons of Asynchronous Distance Learning”, ViewSonic, 2020)

Opportunities

Asynchronous learning provides lot of opportunities to its learners to learn at their own pace and simultaneously obtain a clearer understanding of the subject. They can access the content from any part of the world and at any point of time and they do not fall behind. Since students possess the independence to study at their own momentum and focus on what they want, they sense that they possess more ownership over the content, rather than following a teacher’s exact schedule. Although students are physically separated in asynchronous learning, but there is enough scope for collaboration in this type of learning. Availability of different tools makes it possible for online sharing of content thereby making learning more effective and interesting. Thus, students can effectively collaborate while working on their computers than in traditional setting. Asynchronous learning offers the facility to not only view the content to any number of viewers but also participate in online examination and discussion. (Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Threats

Asynchronous learning platforms want the learners to be more focused, goal oriented and acquire time management skills. Absence of these skills proves detrimental to learning. Success in asynchronous learning platforms require learners to be strongly committed and disciplined, failing would definitely ruin the entire system. Asynchronous platforms also face threats from other competitive platforms in respect to its number of users. (Mary Sistik-Chandler, C, 2019)

Porter’s 5 Force Model

Porter's 5 Force Model is a tool for analyzing a company or industry's competitive environment. It has been used here to analyze the synchronous learning platforms. **(Figure I)**. ("Porter's Five Forces: Understand competitive forces and stay ahead of the competition",50Minutes.com, 2015)

The five forces in the model are as follows:

- a. Power of consumers
- b. Power of suppliers
- c. Competition in the industry
- d. Threat of new entrants in the industry
- e. Threat of existing substitutes

Figure I
Porter's 5 Force Model

Porter's 5 Forces

- **THREAT OF NEW ENTRANTS IN THE INDUSTRY**

Apart from the 7 major existing synchronous platforms, the new entry of any other platform can create stealth business competition among them.

- **THREAT OF EXISTING SUBSTITUTES**

Competition among the existing platforms-intra competition among them

- **POWER OF CUSTOMERS**

The usage has increased in terms of professional communication, business transactions, studies, social networking, amusement, and online medical consultation.

- **POWER OF SUPPLIERS** Growth of synchronous learning platform providers mainly during the pandemic time.

- **COMPETITION IN THE INDUSTRY**

Online medium of learning has superseded the traditional offline medium of learning based on synchronous learning platforms.

Compiled by the author from various sources

The following table (**Table I**) illustrates the usage and revenue of synchronous learning platforms post pandemic:

Table I
The Usage and Revenue of Synchronous Learning Platforms Post Pandemic

Post Pandemic (2020 onwards)		
Synchronous Platforms	Usage	Revenue
Google Meet	100 million daily users between January and April 2020	\$69 billion
Zoom	300 million daily users as of April 21*2020	\$188 million by the fourth quarter of 2020
Vedantu	40 million students	\$11.96 million in FY21
Microsoft Teams	270 million users	\$51.7 billion
Extramarks	12.2 million	\$38 million in 2021
Meritnation	15 million students (2020)	\$114.5million
Toppr	30 million in September 2020	\$6.8 million in FY21

Compiled by the author from various sources

The above-mentioned Synchronous learning platforms are also referred to as “live or real time” interaction as it employs video conferencing and various multimedia techniques to allow students to constantly work together and take part in critical and meaningful dialogue to indicate the mastery of learning. Meaningful educational experiences are created at the confluence of teaching, social and cognitive incidents. Thus, all these causes have led to the immense popularity of the Synchronous learning platforms and its usage and revenue have been portrayed in the table above.

Asynchronous learning was devised to accomplish the requirements of those students who had been facing the problem of poor internet connectivity. They had access to the recorded lessons at their convenient time and pace. But it lacked face to face interaction with peers and teachers, resulting in the absence of vibes or energy as a real-time interaction and thus became a lonely experience.

Due to the wide acceptance of synchronous platforms among all stakeholders including corporate, academicians, government officials, NGOs, medical professionals etc., the synchronous platforms have become more powerful compared to its counterpart, asynchronous platforms during the pandemic and post pandemic time period.

Conclusion

In this informative age, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) has established its important role in education system. Subsequently, ICT is broadly accepted mainly during the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of advantages, ICT significantly benefits learners and educators by offering them vast digital resources at their fingertips and providing them the choice to learn at their own pace among many other advantages. While the increased autonomy may increase some learners' desire and interest, others may lose focus in asynchronous sessions due to a lack of self-discipline and self-learning techniques. This is especially true of younger pupils. Because of this, synchronous sessions are essential to ICT, and they are what transform it from a collection of cutting-edge and potent tools into genuine education.

Works Cited

- Bianchi, Tiago, “Revenue of Google from 1st quarter 2008 to 1st quarter 2023(in million U.S. dollars)”, Statista.com, 2023, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/267606/quarterly-revenue-of-google/>
- Brown, Daniel, “10 Benefits of Asynchronous Learning”, edapp, 2021, <https://www.edapp.com/blog/10-benefits-of-asynchronous-learning/>
- Curry, David, “Microsoft Teams Revenue and Usage Statistics (2022)” BusinessofApps, 2022, <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/microsoft-teams-statistics/>
- Dhawan, Shivangi, “Online Learning: A Panacea in the Time of Covid -19 Crisis”, *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 2020, 49(1): 5-22, doi: 10.1177/0047239520934018
- Galov, Nick, “11+ Microsoft Teams Statistics”, Web tribunal, 2023, <https://webtribunal.net/blog/microsoft-teams-statistics/#gref>
- Iqbal, Mansoor, “Zoom Revenue and Usage Statistics,” BusinessofApps, 2021, <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/zoom-statistics/>
- Mary Sistik-Chandler, Cynthia, “Exploring Online Learning Through Synchronous and Asynchronous Instructional Methods (Advances in Mobile and Distance Learning)”, 1st Edition, IGI Global, 2019
- Pappas, Christopher, “Asynchronous Learning Advantages and Disadvantages In Corporate Training”, eLearning Industry, 2015, <https://elearningindustry.com/asynchronous-learning-advantages-and-disadvantages-in-corporate-training>
- Peters, Jay, “Google’s Meet teleconferencing service now adding about 3 million users per day”, The Verge, 2020, <https://www.theverge.com/2020/4/28/21240434/google-meet-three->

million-users-per-day-pichai-earnings

Upadhyay, Harsh, “Vedantu spent Rs 39 Cr to earn operating revenue of Rs 10 Cr in FY19”,
ENTRACKR, 2019, <https://entrackr.com/2019/11/vedantu-revenue-losses-fy19/>

“Comparing Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet”, devoteam G
Cloud, <https://gcloud.devoteam.com/blog/comparing-zoom-microsoft-teams-and-google-meet/>

“E - Pathshala”, Vikaspedia, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government of
India, <https://vikaspedia.in/education/interactive-resources/e-pathshala>

“eSkill India – Fostering a future-ready workforce, digitally”, National Skill Development
Corporation, 2022, <https://nsdcindia.org/e-skill-india#:~:text=eSkill%20India%2C%20an%20eLearning%20initiative,the%20youth%20of%20the%20country.>

“Extramarks' Learning App aimed at future of digital home learning”, Business Standard, 2019,
https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/extramarks-learning-app-aimed-at-future-of-digital-home-learning-119041500730_1.html

“Meritnation Mobile App”, Educational App Store,
<https://www.educationalappstore.com/app/meritnation>

“Porter's Five Forces: Understand competitive forces and stay ahead of the competition”,
50Minutes.com, 2015

“SWAYAM Portal”, Ministry of Education, Government of India,
<https://pmevidya.education.gov.in/swayam-portal.html#:~:text=SWAYAM%20is%20a%20programme%20initiated,%2C%20access%2C%20equity%20and%20quality.>

“Swayam Prabha”, Vikaspedia, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Government
of India, <https://vikaspedia.in/education/interactive-resources/swayam-prabha#:~:text=SWAYAM%20Prabha%20is%20an%20initiative,course%20content%20covering%20diverse%20disciplines.>

“TCSiON – Digital Learning”, Tata Consultancy Services,
<https://www.tcsion.com/dotcom/TCSSMB/education/product/digitallearning.html>

“The Pros and Cons of Asynchronous Distance Learning”, ViewSonic, 2020,
<https://www.viewsonic.com/library/education/the-pros-and-cons-of-asynchronous-distance-learning>

“Toppr's Exponential Growth During Pandemic To Compete in EdTech Market”, Startup Talky, 2022, [https://startuptalky.com/topprs-growth-pandemic/#:~:text=The%20operating%20revenues%20of%20Toppr,56.4%20crore\)%20earned%20in%20FY19](https://startuptalky.com/topprs-growth-pandemic/#:~:text=The%20operating%20revenues%20of%20Toppr,56.4%20crore)%20earned%20in%20FY19)

Trauma in Anuradha Roy's '*All the Lives We Never Lived*'

Dr. Rafrak Shakil Ansari

Submitted 21/06/2023 Revised 25/06/2023 Accepted 25/07/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: '*All the Lives We Never Lived*' (2018) by Anuradha Roy is a novel that delves into the theme of trauma and its profound impact on individuals and their lives. Set against the backdrop of India's struggle for independence and World War II, the story follows Myshkin, a horticulturalist in his 60s, on a quest to uncover the truth behind his mother Gayatri's abandonment when he was a child. Through Myshkin's introspective narrative, the novel explores the lasting effects of trauma and the complexities of personal and collective healing. Gayatri's departure serves as a central trauma in the novel, as it leaves an indelible mark on Myshkin's psyche and shapes his understanding of love, loss, and identity. Roy skillfully portrays the long-term consequences of such a rupture, highlighting the lingering emotional wounds and the subsequent search for closure and resolution. The trauma depicted in the novel extends beyond individual experiences and encompasses the broader sociopolitical context of India during a time of upheaval. Roy masterfully weaves historical events and figures into the narrative, showcasing the interplay between personal traumas and the collective trauma of a nation fighting for its freedom. The characters' lives are intertwined with the tumultuous events of the era, amplifying the magnitude of their individual struggles and the weight of historical trauma. Through her nuanced exploration of trauma, Roy highlights the complexities of healing and resilience. The novel portrays the enduring power of memory, the longing for connection and understanding, and the transformative potential of confronting and processing one's past. It also examines the intergenerational transmission of trauma and the ways in which personal stories intertwine with larger narratives of nationhood and identity. The present paper is an attempt to analyze the representation of trauma in '*All the Lives We Never Lived*' and examine its impact on the characters' lives and identities. It also tries to explore the connection between personal trauma and the broader historical and sociopolitical context of India during the period of the novel. Through an analysis of the novel's themes, narrative techniques, and character development, this paper aims to deepen our understanding of trauma and its multifaceted manifestations shedding light on the intricate connections between personal experiences, historical events, and the enduring quest for healing and reconciliation.

Keywords: Collective trauma, identity, memory, personal trauma.

Introduction

Trauma refers to a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope with it effectively. It can be caused by various events or situations that are perceived as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening. Traumatic experiences can have lasting effects on a person's mental, emotional, and physical well-being. Trauma can result from a single incident or it can be caused by ongoing or repeated experiences, such as child abuse, domestic violence, or military combat. Trauma can be the result of experiencing or being exposed to events that are extremely stressful, even if they are not life-threatening, such as a serious illness or the sudden loss of a loved one. The impact of trauma can vary from person to person. Some individuals may experience immediate and intense reactions, while others may have delayed or suppressed responses.

Trauma is a significant theme explored in literature across various genres. Authors often use literature as a means to depict and explore the psychological, emotional, and physical effects of trauma on individuals and society as a whole. Many literary works delve into the experiences of characters grappling with PTSD, such as Tim O'Brien's 'The Things They Carried' which focuses on the trauma experienced by soldiers in the Vietnam War. Family dynamics and interpersonal relationships are also a source of trauma. Stories like 'The Glass Castle' by Jeannette Walls or 'The Kite Runner' by Khaled Hosseini depict characters dealing with the aftermath of abusive or dysfunctional family environments. Literature often explores the collective trauma experienced by communities or societies due to historical events, such as wars, genocides, or social injustices. Novels like Toni Morrison's 'Beloved' tackle the trauma of slavery and its enduring impact on African American communities. By depicting trauma in literature, authors aim to raise awareness, foster empathy, and explore the complexities of human experiences. These works can provide insights into the psychological and emotional aspects of trauma and offer readers an opportunity to engage with these important themes. The novel selected for the present study '*All the Lives We Never Lived*' is a novel by Anuradha Roy that explores themes of personal freedom, identity, and the lasting impact of trauma. The story revolves around Myshkin, a young boy growing up in the town of Muntazir (which translates to "the one who is waiting impatiently"), in India during the 1930s and 1940s.

One of the central elements of the novel is the trauma experienced by Myshkin's mother, Gayatri. She rebels against societal expectations and her role as a wife and mother, choosing to pursue her artistic passions instead. Gayatri's decision to leave her family behind and pursue a life of independence and creative freedom has lasting consequences on Myshkin, who grows up longing for his absent mother. The trauma in the novel is both personal and collective. Myshkin grapples with the trauma of his mother's

abandonment and the questions surrounding her disappearance. The narrative explores the broader trauma of India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule. The historical and political backdrop of the novel, including the impact of World War II and the Partition of India, adds layers of collective trauma to the characters' individual experiences.

Through the exploration of trauma, the story delves into the complex ways in which personal choices and historical events shape individuals' lives. The novel examines the consequences of suppressed desires, the search for personal freedom, and the longing for a sense of belonging and identity. It portrays how trauma can shape and define the paths taken by individuals and the subsequent impact on their relationships and sense of self.

Personal and Collective Trauma

In the novel, trauma is a prominent theme that runs throughout the narrative, shaping the lives of the characters and influencing their actions and relationships. The trauma explored in the book includes personal, familial, and collective experiences. The trauma experienced by individual characters is a central focus. Gayatri's decision to leave her family behind and pursue her own desires, while an act of personal liberation, inflicts a deep wound on her son, Myshkin. In the story, the protagonist narrates, "In my childhood, I was known as the boy whose mother had run off with an Englishman. Though many decades have passed, the pain and shame of that abandonment still feel fresh. My mother had torn herself up and scattered her shreds in the breeze when I was nine. Ever since, I have scoured everything I read, see, hear, for traces of her" (Roy 110). His longing for his absent mother and the unanswered questions surrounding her disappearance create a lasting emotional trauma within him. The rupture caused by Gayatri's departure reverberates throughout the family. Myshkin's father experiences the trauma of losing his wife and becomes emotionally distant; "my father sat there, saying nothing, doing nothing" (Roy 115). The absence of a nurturing maternal figure has a profound impact on Myshkin's upbringing, shaping his relationships and influencing his perception of love and intimacy. Myshkin avoids friends and family, lives his lonely life "in the house where he was unhappily raised. Wary of being hurt so badly again, he dedicated himself to the more reliable companionship of plants and trees" (Charles).

The trauma inflicted upon individuals within relationships is depicted in the book. Myshkin's relationship with his father is strained due to the trauma caused by Gayatri's departure. "Myshkin remains caught in between, craving the affection of a delightful mother who inexplicably leaves him and the approval of a

pompous father who constantly criticizes him” (Charles). The novel also explores the complex dynamics of power and control within relationships, including instances of emotional manipulation and abuse.

““Have you any idea how tolerant I am? I despair sometimes. Everyone admires me as a progressive man. Allows his wife every freedom, they say in my staffroom, lets her do anything she pleases. And yet the other day . . .’ ‘So my freedom is something you store in a locked iron safe? To dole out when you see fit?’ When my mother flared up like this, the clock stopped ticking, the dog hid under the bed. ‘All I ask is that you don’t speak to me this way,’ my father said” (Roy 22).

The backdrop of India’s struggle for independence from British colonial rule adds a layer of collective trauma. The historical events, such as the Partition of India and the violence and displacement that followed, have a profound impact on the characters’ lives. The trauma of war, political unrest, and the loss of loved ones is felt deeply within the narrative. “Roy is grappling with bigger themes—freedom, nationalism and nature—against the turbulent backdrop of India’s fight for independence and World War II. Her mastery of detail ties an intimate domestic drama to national history, offering a portrait of one family’s troubles with desire and loss that speaks to the more universal struggles for personal and political freedom” (Bajekal). The novel touches upon the concept of intergenerational trauma, where the effects of past traumatic experiences are passed down through generations. Myshkin’s own trauma is shaped by the experiences of his parents and the historical context in which they lived.

Freedom and Identity

Myshkin is a sensitive and introspective individual whose life is profoundly shaped by the trauma he experiences and the search for his missing mother, Gayatri. Myshkin was so traumatised by her mother’s unexpected departure that he began to doubt himself and also began to discover things that would never leave him. “As a child, I would place my back against one of our trees and feel its reassuring solidity, its immobility. It was not going to move, it would never go anywhere, it was rooted to its spot. For as long as they are alive, trees remain where they are. This is one of life's few certainties. The roots of trees go deep and take many directions, we cannot foresee their subterranean spread any more than we can predict how a child will grow. Beneath the earth, trees live their secret lives, at times going deeper into the ground than up into the sky, entwined below with other trees which appear in no way connected above the ground” (Roy 82).

Myshkin's emotional depth is a defining characteristic. He carries a deep longing for his mother who left him to pursue her own desires. This longing becomes a central theme throughout the novel, driving his search for answers and shaping his relationships with others. "The socially embarrassing incident serves as Myshkin's defining characteristic throughout his boyhood and exposes the weighty nature of the situation. The socially created and maintained shame around his mother makes the grief of this abandonment much worse because it has become so ingrained in his identity. The separation is permanent and irrevocable effects are most clearly seen in Myshkin's perspective of his life as being divided" (Dalal & Srivastva 90-91).

Myshkin inherits his mother's artistic sensibility, particularly her passion for painting. He finds solace and a means of expression through art, using it as a way to connect with his mother and explore his own identity. His artistic nature allows him to perceive the world with a keen eye for detail and introspection. Myshkin grapples with questions of identity throughout the story. His mother's departure and the absence of a maternal figure leave him feeling adrift and disconnected. He seeks to understand his own identity by unraveling the mysteries of his mother's past, hoping to find a sense of belonging and purpose. As the narrative progresses, Myshkin undergoes a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. His search for his mother and the revelations he uncovers along the way shape his understanding of himself, his family, and the world around him. He learns to confront his own fears and traumas, finding strength and resilience in the process. Myshkin's experiences and observations prompt reflections on societal norms and the struggle for personal freedom. He questions the limitations imposed by society and the sacrifices individuals make for the sake of conformity. Myshkin's own desire for personal freedom and authenticity becomes intertwined with his understanding of his mother's choices. Throughout the novel, Myshkin serves as a lens through which the reader explores themes of trauma, longing, identity, and personal freedom. His emotional journey and introspective nature offer insights into the profound impact of trauma on an individual's life and the transformative power of self-discovery.

Myshkin's mother, Gayatri, is a complex and enigmatic character in novel. Her choices and actions deeply influence the trajectory of the story and have a lasting impact on Myshkin and those around her. Gayatri is a woman who defies societal expectations and traditional gender roles of her time. She rejects the role of a conventional wife and mother, instead choosing to pursue her artistic passions and seek personal freedom. "Existing between the societal demand of being subordinate to the masculine world and her commitment to the assertion of her womanhood, a woman always inhabits a bipolar world. For Gayatri as a married woman, the problem is always simply being someone's mother or someone's wife without any chance of establishing her own identity" (Sen 461).

Her pursuit of independence and nonconformity sets her apart from the norms of her society. Gayatri is a talented and passionate artist. She finds solace, purpose, and self-expression through her artwork, particularly her paintings. Her artistic sensibility reflects her inner world and serves as a means of exploring her own identity and desires. Gayatri's longing for personal freedom and fulfillment is a driving force in her life. She yearns for a life beyond the confines of societal expectations and seeks to pursue her dreams and passions. "She is an inspiration to all women—this is what the liberation of women is about" (Roy 100). This longing propels her to make choices that have far-reaching consequences for herself and her loved ones. With enormous compassion for Gayatri, who had 'fallen as low as a woman could' by leaving behind her husband, son, and home, Roy deftly navigates the gender issues entangled in India's fight for independence. The protagonist regrets having to stay at home rather than pursue her own aspirations; "What good will the great nation's freedom do for me? Tell me that! Will it make me free? Will I be able to choose how to live" (Roy 66)? Roy demonstrates with her signature light touch how the world praises males for their political actions while ignoring their domestic behaviour, a luxury rarely granted to women who pursue their own ambitions. Although Roy occasionally veers into a peripheral story of the real-life Bengali poet Maitreyi Devi, whose life somewhat like Gayatri's.

Gayatri's absence from Myshkin's life is a central mystery in the novel. Her decision to leave her family behind and embark on a journey of self-discovery creates an aura of intrigue and longing. Her absence leaves a void in Myshkin's life, shaping his emotional development and his perception of love, relationships, and motherhood. Gayatri's choices and actions have a profound impact on those around her. Her departure leaves Myshkin longing for her presence and searching for answers. Her absence also affects her husband who struggles with his own emotions and the responsibilities of raising their son alone. Gayatri's character represents the pursuit of personal freedom, the tension between individual desires and societal expectations, and the complexities of motherhood and self-expression. She embodies the longing for a life unlived and the ripple effects of personal choices on loved ones. Through Gayatri, the novel explores themes of personal liberation, sacrifice, and the enduring power of art and passion.

Conclusion

A deep and multi-layered story is produced by Roy's deft mingling of fact and fiction, political and personal, suspense and reward, and more. He was not only abandoned by his mother, Gayatri, but his father, Nek Chand, also left home, who involved himself in the freedom movement. Both parents abandoned this nine-year-old little boy, one for seeking her own freedom and the other for the freedom of the nation. The trauma of abandonment changed his perspective towards life and he didn't get married throughout his life. Myshkin and Gayatri both represents different journey to search their identity and

freedom. Both are traumatized by the familial and societal bonds. Fiction and history are intermingled in Myshkin's search for his mother, the truth about history, and the illusive pursuit for India's real independence. Rabindranath Tagore, German curator Walter Spies, and vocalist Begum Akhtar all play significant roles in the narrative, placing it firmly in the past even though it takes place in the imaginary village of Muntazir in northern India, close to the foothills of the Himalayas. Gayatri's worries about hyper-nationalism, women's freedom, acceptance of homosexuality, and conviction in the arts are still unanswered even after more than 70 years of India's independence. In general, India is still suffering from the effects of colonialism. The emergence of religious prejudice in India demonstrate that the concerns Gayatri had about democracy and freedom in the first half of the 20th century are still unresolved now. We look forward to a day when the world recognizes the futility of war and believes in the power of art, a time when women won't have to leave home to find herself like Gayatri did. Myshkin, the protagonist of Roy's novel, sets out on the same journey that his mother did decades earlier.

Works Cited

- Bajekal, Naina. "The Personal Gets Political in the Masterful New Novel All the Lives We Never Lived" *Time*, 8 Nov. 2018. <https://time.com/5448809/all-the-lives-we-never-lived-book-review/> Accessed 15 May, 2023
- Charles, Ron. "Decades after his mother's disappearance, a man searches the past for clues" *The Washington Post*. 10 Dec. 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/books/decades-after-his-mothers-disappearance-a-man-searches-the-past-for-clues/2018/12/10/15a3e1c2-fc84-11e8-862a-b6a6f3ce8199_story.html Accessed 15 May, 2023
- Dalal, Payal. and Srivastava, Anupriya Roy. "Exploration of Trauma in Anuradha Roy's All the Lives We Never Lived." *International Journal of English and Studies (IJOES)*, Volume-5, no. 4, 2023, pp. 87-92.
- Roy, Anuradha. *All the Lives We Never Lived*. MacLehose Press, 2018.
- Sen, Tuhin Shuvra. "Rejecting 'the Feminine Mystique' in Quest for Self-fulfillment: A Study of Meena Kandasamy's When I Hit you: Or, A Portrait of the Writer as a Young Wife and Anuradha Roy's All the Lives We Never Lived." *Language in India*, vol.19 no.4, 2019, pp.456-464.

Singh, Shailendra P. "Memory and Loss in Anuradha Roy's *All the Lives We Never Lived*." *Research Chronicler*, vol. 7 no.1, 2019, pp. 82-89.

Suganya, K and A. Selvaraj. "Quest for Self in the novel *All the Lives We Never Lived* by Anuradha Roy." *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no.9, 2021, pp. 2298-2302

“And knows in her sleepless sleep that she is caged”: Retracing the Oral History of the Cree Community in Tracey Lindberg’s novel *Birdie*

Dr Pradip Mondal

Submitted 24/05/2023 Revised 24/06/2023 Accepted 26/07/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: The Indigenous people of Canada have been facing a history replete with black umbra of colonization, physical maltreatment, and racial discrimination, and it is still rampant today. As a debutante, the Canadian aboriginal Tracey Lindberg’s ambitious novel *Birdie* (2015) resorts to a distinctive method of storytelling. She dedicates the novel to “all of the mothers and little mothers, sisters and cousins who are murdered, missing, disappeared or who feel invisible. We are one. We are with you. We are family” (“Voices” n. p.). The crux of the story is told through the eyes of the eponymous character Birdie—a survivor of sexual abuse who is trying to overcome the trauma of sexual abuse in her childhood. Lindberg, herself a member of the Cree community, inserts the elements of folklore of the Cree community and weaves oral tradition into the narrative fabric of the novel, thereby adding layers of mythic resonances. She deftly addresses the lack of national empathy towards the aboriginal women. The nation cares a straw about their cultural stereotypes and they don’t bother to glorify the contradictions that make Bernice a creature of flesh and blood.

Keywords: Racial discrimination, sexual abuse, aboriginal women, *Birdie*.

Though oral history had been a part and parcel of indigenous communities, there is still the lingering apprehension of erasure of oral histories coupled with age-old tradition. The strong impact of colonization also put the oral traditions at stake, says Lindberg, who herself is from a Cree Nation, in the Kelly Lake (northern British Columbia). The protagonist of the novel Bernice Meetoos is a worried Cree girl who is affectionately called as ‘Birdie’. The plot is propelled by Bernice’s recollections about sojourns to places she had lived erstwhile. Her background includes an abominable incest in her childhood, a time under foster care, life on Edmonton streets, and a brief stint in a psychiatric rehabilitation centre. The readers find that repeated trauma forms and deforms Birdie’s personality.

Many indigenous cultures in Canada and worldwide are ingrained in age-old oral traditions like myths, folklore, and legends. Transferring the legacy of the oral tradition and hoary culture to the next generation demands impeccability on the storyteller’s end, as the moral of a particular tale and its inherent truth must be reproduced with utmost accuracy. It is a kind of connecting link to transmit culture from one generation to the next. Through the use of ballads, sermons, harangues, legends, and stories, any oral tradition can mould the diurnal life and *weltanschauung* of the Cree community. When the British and the

French colonizers settled on Canada, they gave more importance to written literature than oral narratives, under the biased conception that the oral mode must be uncouth, and the written mode is symptomatic of civilization. Today, many indigenous societies rely on oral tradition as a means to transmit knowledge, in spite of taking recourse to written literature.

The transpiring of these stories from one generation to the next nonetheless gives stability to the social status quo. As it is widely believed, oral histories must be transmitted immaculately, by a conscious kenner of oral histories. In this way, he/she preserves the annals of the community. Notwithstanding the emphasis on immaculateness, narrators may appropriate a story to situate it in their respective contexts, for explaining a specific aspect of the story or to share a moral lesson from a new angle, among other reasons. Only proper transmission can maintain the veracity of the historical record.

Oral traditions create a domain for the community's interface with the environment. For many people of 'First Nations', the landscape that collates these stories becomes a stage for unfolding their histories and a mentor in decision-making and problem-solving process. A number of scholars have explained in detail an organic network of landscapes, aboriginal people, and their oral traditions. Here, the readers see that Bernice moves from place to place. Still, she tries to cope up with the circumstances to create a doorway for the recuperation from her traumatic past. Birdie's narrative is also fed by her background story and the history of her family, thereby lending a genuine voice to the narratives around aboriginal issues in Canada.

The readers find Bernice to be rolling on bed in her closet in the upper floor of Lola's bakery "Little Slice of Heaven", where she is engaged as a labourer, in a trance-like condition: "sleepwake state". Her dreams take her down memory lane, but with a definite intent: "what she had to do was find the space where her memory could live peaceably with her body" (Lindberg 208). Re-visiting/re-living the moments of psychological injuries provokes such an intense emotional distress that traumatised people like Birdie can go to any lengths to shirk it. Any attempt to stop thinking about the trauma too often gives birth to a foggy memory, avoidance of social engagement, and a depleted life for the survivor. Birdie on her sickbed remains in a state of stoicism, in which fright, anger, and pain get amalgamated. The readers experience a blurring view among descriptions of dreams, memories, and reality. For this, the novel comes close to the genre of 'magic realism'. They have this blurring view throughout the novel which is punctuated with commentaries by an anonymous storyteller who records Bernice's traumatic story in a way that it can show some way to others.

At Lola's bakery, Bernice realizes that she cannot digest more of her past. On her sick bed, she delves into a trance-like state in quest of an answer to what her true identity is, buried beneath the debris of abuses and dark secrets:

When it was time, and when the fury of her past began to race ahead of her future, she simply lay down. Where she went depended upon something that she could not control. All she knew was that she usually ended up someplace where the past lives with the present, and they mingled like smoke. Once it cleared she was almost sure she would see her future. (Lindberg 134)

Lindberg does not give a graphic description of the abuse Bernice had undergone, but she insinuates the readers about the psychic damage caused to her: Bernice feels disconnected from her body. She thinks it as a kind of "vacancy". Major chunk of the narrative is communicated from Birdie's angle, and what harrowing experiences that she underwent in the company of lustful men has had a traumatic effect on her: "For a long time, since it started, she pretended that her uncle was not an uncle when he did this, that he shape-shifted and became something less than uncle and more than animal" (Lindberg 157). The noted American psychologist Judith Herman notes, "...as children are the most powerless of victims, often dependent upon their abusers, their chances for justice have ever been the most remote" (Herman 245). Here, Birdie is the most powerless victim as the sexual perpetrator is her own uncle.

Deep-rooted understanding of Canada is possible only through Cree language and ancestral knowledge. Storytelling had been and still is an inseparable organ of day-to-day Cree life. When Christian missionaries set foot on Canada, part of the missionary zeal to convert the Cree people involved erasure of Cree tradition from psyche of the community. In order to decipher the unwritten history of the Cree community, "one must take into the consideration the Indigenous perspective and ways of knowing that shaped the cultural forces in the first place" (McLeod 17).

Following a shattered childhood, Birdie's soul-searching on her way to Gibsons, British Columbia exists outside the linear time. She is on a spiritual journey, seeking to decipher the meaning of life. Bernice then heads for Molly's Reach to find the key to unlock her soul, but they are not the ones she expected. After getting partially cured, when Bernice finally wakes up, preceded by many days in her "sleepwake" condition, she has been able to throw away much of the burden of her traumatic past. In the dreamscape, she sometimes appears as her *birdself*. She marks her healing of the self from extensive trauma by participating in traditional Cree rituals shared with others.

Bernice would try to fill in her void with having sex with men and come home to Lola's bakery late at night exhausted with bruises on her: "She is a reminder to Lola that she herself used to be with rough men too" (Lindberg 103). Bernice called the white men "Phils". They are all the same: "Then there was another Phil and another" (Lindberg 122). It came as a relief when a British family took her into their home as a foster child. The Ingelsons, with no children of their own, picked her up a few weeks before her sixteenth birthday.

Every year a sizable number of indigenous girls and women go missing. Lindberg also highlights this issue in this novel in a subtle way. Bernice's mother Maggie represents "Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls" who have been forgotten about. Maggie's character appears most often in non-linear time, showing up in Bernice's dreamscapes and visions she has about her past. Birdie's mother was an alcoholic who did not know how to care for her own daughter, let alone take care of herself. Birdie's mother, Maggie, plays a pivotal role in her life, both when she is present and *in absentia* as well. Moreover, the narrator gives the readers cue that Birdie's mother Maggie goes missing, perhaps murdered or dead. There is a constant reminder that "*Maggie was gone*" (Lindberg 181). It throws the reader in bafflement about her whereabouts or whether she intentionally put herself in a volatile situation. In the end, it is her sheer absence that sends Birdie over the cutting edge. This novel teaches the readers to see the resilience of the indigenous women.

Like her mother, Bernice/Birdie is also a representative of missing women. She can feel her body but she cannot trace her true spirit. Birdie worries that "Her auntie will notice something else. Missing. From her eyes. From her spirit. ... She is afraid her auntie will notice what is missing, not what is happening" (Lindberg 99). Birdie's case brings before us issues that hover before our eyes. Birdie's pain, solitude, and psychological odyssey call to mind all the women who have suffered—both physically and psychologically.

Birdie craves for her home but the notion of home is something that she cannot understand properly yet: "She is so hungry. Not for food, not for drink, not for foreign skin. This appetite that sits next to her now is relatively unknown and persistent. She is hungry for family. For the women she loves. For the sounds of her language. For the peace of no introduction, no backstory, no explanation" (Lindberg 95). According to the political theorist Hannah Arendt, "What has been lost is the continuity of the past.... What you then are left with is still the past, but a *fragmented past*, which has lost its certainty of evaluation" (qtd. in Hinchman 124).

Bernice has been lonesome for sure, but Lindberg makes it clear that she cannot remain on her own terms. We see how Bernice's life is touched upon by female characters like Lola and her other kindred

Maggie, Kohkom Rose, Auntie Val, and Skinny Freda. We also see how each of them provides moral support for Bernice as she gradually recovers. Lindberg hopes that her book would propel the authority to change the law, as she tells Elysia Petrone Reitberge in an interview, “not only as a series of rights, but also as a set of responsibilities and obligations to other people, and to the natural world”. (Lindberg, Tracey. Interview. By Elysia Petrone Reitberge, 10 March 2016).

Due to the many dialects of the Cree language, the people of this community have no modern collective autonym. Lindberg makes use of a train of unique compound words that helps the author to describe a range of complex emotions and relationships occurring in the novel: fearanger, griefanger, sleepingwake, sistercousin. Each chapter ends with an *Acimowin* (It means ‘story’ in Cree) mostly in the form of poems. These stories represent the way in which Cree people transmit certain life lessons. The readers also find excerpts of dreams and memories to what is happening in Bernice’s mindscape on her spiritual odyssey: “And knows in her sleepless sleep that she is caged”. Lindberg focuses on Cree poetic aesthetics; snippets of humorous fables and legends also pop up.

The readers find many Cree symbols in this novel, such as owl, tree of life, buffalo etc. Bernice is sometimes called as a ‘buffalo’ by some people. Her surname ‘Meetoos’ means ‘tree’. Perhaps through this ploy, Lindberg wishes to focus on organicity of Cree community. One of the recurring symbols in Cree folklore is the vanishing of buffalo that signifies the disappearance of a way of life. The owl in Bernice’s dreams is her, she dreams of herself as owl trying to find herself in the dust of the world. The owl is in the lookout for her, and her dreams help her to backtrack her to move forward: “In her dreams, and there were four days’ worth of dreams, she is an owl/ Flying over/The Tree of Life./ She keeps carrying/ twigs and leaves/ to the Tree/ in order to/ nest there” (Lindberg 215).Owls are often mentioned in some Cree stories: “When she looks back, that old young owl, /She sees that /her home, her tree, had become/ ravaged with wolf urine/ and twisted with heat”; “At the top of her lungs, the owl hoots hoots hoots as he soars over a shiny spot on the ground below her”(Lindberg 211). In her dreams the owl helps Bernice recover from her dream-state which takes her to the Tree of life.

In this novel, *Pimatisewin* (It is a Cree term that can be loosely translated as “the good life” in English) represents the tree of life which has lost the sap of life. The readers can easily link this to Bernice’s pitiable health. *Pimatisewin* is used by Lindberg to portray a bonding with the non-human: “In actuality, the tree itself represents that there is wellness, beauty, and potential for regeneration through nature... Metaphorically, it is a reminder that life is outside ourselves, that regardless of what is going on in our minds, our spirits and bodies have an obligation to our natural environment to behave in reciprocal, healing and positive ways” (Lindberg, Tracey. Interview. By Shelagh Rogers, 1 Feb 2016). The tree eggs

her to look outside of herself and think of organic unity in Nature. It helps her to behave and make decisions in a way that will allow her to live a good life. Birdie thinks herself as the owl that moves towards the 'tree of life'. In the traditional knowledge systems of Cree community, *Pimatisewin* plays an important part and by using this Lindberg obliquely attacks the human rapaciousness in cutting down trees of the forest. In this regard, Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka's play, *A Dance of the Forests* (1963) can be referred to. In that play, Forest Head (the major deity for the Yorubans) decides to open the eyes of human folk wide, masquerading "as the filing clerk Obaneji for the courts to carry out his design of letting the human characters judge themselves" (Mondal 47).

In her interview with Shelagh Rogers, Lindberg makes a fine observation: "I want people to understand that individuals do make choices, but sometimes those choices are quite limited by the circumstances in which you have been placed. Or you have been defined by, or marginalized by, the circumstances that create an environment where hostility and violence can take place." (Lindberg, Tracey. Interview. By Shelagh Rogers, 1 Feb 2016). Bernice struggles very hard to find a *home*. She has had her upbringing in a place which itself was not safe for her as she was molested at a very young age by her uncle. She would watch TV with her uncle Larry and he would touch her private parts. Uncle Larry (brother of Birdie's mother) also raped her before the age of 11, in her little room under the stairs.

What Bernice desperately craves for in her home is a healthy rapport between her and the folk around her. Discussing the harrowing experience of the survivor with others is a prerequisite for creating a habitable world. In this prolonged and painful process, the survivor thinks of getting help not only from his/her kin but also from the broader community as a whole. But she keeps it secret from her family members. What is really pathetic was that no one really helped her when she was young: "No one mentioned that her underwear was bloodied, that there were bruises on her arms and neck" (Lindberg 148). She looks for understanding but she cannot find it. The tug-of-war between the wish to overlook her traumatic past and the desire to disclose is the moot point of the novel.

Apart from her telling depiction of abuse, Lindberg reminds the readers about the missing indigenous womenfolk. The dark humour that Birdie makes use of in her narration is a kind of allaying mechanism to cope up with the stark realities of multi-faceted violence. Birdie explains, "Homeless people, in fact an Indian woman (or, that's what they called her in the paper), had been set on fire in their dumpsters before (and, really, to think Bernice oblivious to that fact was to seriously misinterpret her circumstance)" (Lindberg 91).

This novel can also be classified into trauma literature. Judith Herman explains traumatic events as un-utterable and unthinkable, not because of its rare occurrence, but because the victims face a titanic task

to adapt to ordinary and sane life. Re-living the traumatic moments forces the Birdie to confront certain un-resolvable issues lying outside the ambit of the personal or the collective. In her ground-breaking study, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence – from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992), Herman describes how the dialectic of trauma works: “The dialectic of trauma gives rise to complicated, sometimes uncanny alterations of consciousness [...] It results in the protean, dramatic, and often bizarre symptoms of hysteria which Freud recognized a century ago as disguised communications about sexual abuse in childhood” (Herman 1-2).

A central principle of Cree law, viz, *Wahkohtowin*, is to be found in the novel. The main tenet of this is that people should treat one another with goodwill in mind, irrespective of their class, culture, creed or community. Through the infusing of stories into the narrative structure, Lindberg pinpoints specific cases in which these laws are cut off. Lindberg observed that the “obligations of this law have been broken by people in Bernice’s life, and her childhood home lacked reciprocal obligations” (Rogers np).

In the context of Canada, reconciliation means the process of systematically atoning for the crimes and broken promises that a nation has historically committed against indigenous people. “The Truth and Reconciliation Commission”, a court-like entity was established in 1995 by the South African government “to help heal the country and bring about a reconciliation of its people by uncovering the truth about human rights violations that had occurred during the period of apartheid” (Tutu n.p.). It demonstrated that the reconciliation process demands divulging the truth, having others pay heed to the story of the survivor. The noted feminist critic-cum-literary theorist Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal essay “Can the Subalterns Speak?” (1985) opines that, “The question of “woman” seems most problematic in this context” (Nelson 294) of subalternity. One can say that Bernice is a subaltern. She is doubly marginalized—first as a woman, second as a member of an indigenous community. Bernice’s voice is found to be repressed here. She is a victim of psychological trauma. She bears burning testimony to the horrific physical and psychological violence meted out to the lost indigenous women.

Therefore, we must create a protected space where the survivors of sexual and psychological trauma can open their hearts out without any fear and hesitation. This will assuage their tormented souls to some extent. It will, at least, have a purgatorial effect on them. They must overcome their own fright and inner tug-of-war. At the same breath, they have to confront external social pressure and overcome those as well. If they fail to do so, they will have to face chronic trauma in their diurnal life. The fundamental ways for recuperation are ensuring safety, re-living the traumatic event(s), and re-establishing an accord between

the survivors and their community. Recollecting traumatic events and baring those open to the listeners are the preconditions to repair the social order and to restore the mental sanity of the survivors as well.

Works Cited

- Dickason, Olive Patricia. "The Many Faces of Canada's History as It Relates to Aboriginal People". *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and their Representations*. Edited by Ute Lische and David T. McNab. Wilfrid Laurier UP, 2005, pp. 117 – 48.
- Herman, Judith. *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence from Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*. Basic Books, 2015.
- Hinchman, Lewis P., Hinchman, Sandra K., editors. *Hannah Arendt: Critical Essays*. State U of New York P., 1994.
- Johnson, Paulina. "The Nêhiyawak Nation through Âcimowina: Experiencing Plains Cree Knowledge through Oral Narratives". *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology* 23. 1 (2015), 8 July 2015. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/totem/vol23/iss1/8/>
- Lindberg, Tracey. *Birdie*. HarperCollins, 2015.
- . Interview. By Elysia Petrone Reitberge, 10 March. 2016.
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/canada-reads-birdie-law-school-1.3483814>. Accessed 20 May 2023.
- McLeod, Neal. *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. Purich Publishing Limited, 2007.
- Mondal, Pradip. "Paranoid Past, Paralytic Present, and Fearful Future: A Study of Wole Soyinka's *A Dance of the Forests*". *Outside The British Canon: Reading Literatures from Former European Colonies*. Edited by Sarbojit Biswas, Aadi Publications, 2015.
- Rogers, Shelagh. "Next Chapter": Tracey Lindberg on telling Indigenous stories, *CBC Radio*. 1 Feb 2016. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thenextchapter/tracey-lindberg-tom-jackson-and-mary-dalton-1.3422758/tracey-lindberg-on-telling-indigenous-stories-1.3422766>. Accessed 22 May 2023.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Can the Subalterns Speak?" *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg. MacMillan, 1988, pp. 271-313.

Tutu, Desmond. "Truth and Reconciliation Commission, South Africa". *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 Mar. 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Truth-and-Reconciliation-Commission-South-Africa>. Accessed 23 May 2023.

"Voices of Our Sisters In Spirit: A Report to Families and Communities". March, 2009.
https://www.nwac.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/NWAC_Voices-of-Our-Sisters-In-Spirit.pdf

Sufi-Pop-Rock: Fusing the Sacred and the Ordinary in Hindi Cinema

Balpreet Singh

Email -hanjrabalpreet@gmail.com

Submitted 26/06/2023 Revised 26/07/2023 Accepted 30/07/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: In the 1990s, a new subgenre of Sufi music emerged, veering away from its traditional moorings, and incorporating elements of contemporary music of pop and rock. This article looks at how Sufi music, a form of devotional music, merged with western-influenced pop-rock in Hindi films. In the mystical tradition, Sufi music spreads a message of love, tolerance, and spirituality. It explores how Sufi music, despite its religious origin, integrates rock music feelings as it makes its way from shrine to stage and finally stage to film. This paper explores the interaction of Sufism with popular culture as a part of people's culture. For instance, Sufi songs like *Kun Faya Kun*, *Khawaja Mere Khawaja* from Bollywood movies fit into this category. Because of the inseparable relationship between musical production and reception, this study uses ethnomusicology to investigate Bollywood Sufi music within its social and cultural setting. The present research also analyses the relevance of Sufism in dynamic concert contexts like animated stage setting.

Keywords: Sufism, Sufi music, Rock music, Ethnomusicology, Sufi-pop-rock

Introduction:

“Popular art is the dream of society; it does not examine itself.”

Margaret Atwood

There are various etymological sources for the term Sufi - *Safa* (Purity), because of the purity of their hearts; *Saff* (Rank), because of their first rank before God; *Suffah* (platform), people of the platform who had devoted their lives to worship; *Suf* (Wool), one who wears wool; and *Safwah* (the chosen), the chosen or selected ones. Sufism, also known as *Tasawwuf*, means wool and ‘one who wears wool.’ This clothing represented penitence, as well as self-denial and rejection of worldly desires. As a mystical Islamic movement, it involves dealings between oneself and God. Sufism's rise and popularity was greatly influenced by socioeconomic, religious, theological, and intellectual factors. It emerged during the Umayyad Rule (661-750 CE) or Abbasid movement, when God-fearing people complained that rulers were indulging in worldly activities and acquiring material wealth more than they should. Though, it was at its peak in twelfth and early thirteenth century. Thus, Sufism can be seen as a reaction to the rise of materialism.

Sufis are deeply committed to 'Dhikr', or the Practice of God's Remembrance. Sufism is a path that leads from *Ishq-e-Majazi* (Personal love) to *Ishq-e-Haqeeqi* (Love of God). When a Sufi attains a high level of excellence, he attains *Fana* (Annihilation of Ego), the highest *Maqaam* (Station), where an individual self ceases to exist. Sufis believe that removing *Nafs* (ego), or ego, is the only way to achieve *Wasl* (union with God). Love for Allah is eternal, whereas love for everything else is illusory.

Sufism as a movement and religious trajectory emerged in South Asia in the twelfth century as a liberal and more flexible movement, incorporating facets of Islam and Hinduism in various domains such as religious, cultural, literary, and musical. Music and poetry, both of which have a rich artistic legacy dating back almost a thousand years, are central to a Sufi identity. Sufi music genres like qawwali and ghazal express works by Sufi mystical poets such as Baba Sheikh Farid, Rumi, Amir Khusrau, and Baba Bulleh Shah. Sufism adopted a liberal view in propagating the spirituality and devotion as Sufi songs are heavily influenced by Hindu Bhakti poets and, later, Sikhism. According to Peter Manuel, Sufi qawwali has become the "quintessential exemplar of Hindu-Muslim artistic syncretism" (380).

In the popular arts of the last several decades, especially film and music, Sufism and Sufi shrines have become embodiments of the popular culture at large. The word "popular culture" is commonly used to describe to mass-produced items that are uniquely connected with entertainment, media consumption, and personal preferences. Mittell in *Genre and Television: From Cop Shows to Cartoons in American Culture* defines popular culture as an "expressive and shared system for the production, transmission and consumption of cohesive yet simple values readily accessible to and accepted by most members of a given society at any given time, simultaneously fulfilling both normative and practical social interests" (8). Within this swiftly evolving and widely encompassing field of study, in the age of digitized globalization, "culture is more profitably thought of in terms of 'fields,' 'flows' and 'knots' involving the continual hybridization of meaningful practices or performances in global space" (Barker 66). As a result, the presence of religion in popular culture should not be seen as an indication of the decline or superficiality of modern faiths but rather as a continuation of a long-standing human pattern of expression and experience. It is no surprise that Sufi shrines and the rites and activities that take place within them are being portrayed in today's popular art forms of film and music albums like *Rockstar*, *Jodha Akbar* and many more. Examining the evolution of Sufism's depiction in world cinema sheds light on how it has been used as a cinematic signifier and what structural and socio-political frameworks have informed these depictions.

These Sufi spaces are represented in film and popular art forms to popularise and promote the religious faith through the screen. As, Johnson in *Everything Bad is Good for you* (2005) explains that the activity of the people can be identified at two levels. On the first level, the people are identified as the producers of

popular culture (so that popular culture becomes the folk culture of an industrial society). On the second level, which is more sophisticated, the people are the interpreters of this culture.

Qawwali: Staging the Sufi Essence

Music affects the soul in various ways because of its melody, lyrics, and sounds. Sufi music arose from the heart of *Sama*, a ceremony of spiritual singing and music in Sufi shrines by Sufi masters (*Khalifah*) and their pupils (*Mureed*). *Sama* creates an aura through music that allows the human soul to transport and feel the majestic presence of God. Transcendental and sublime, the music instils in the listener an intense love for the divine. Music beseeches the Almighty, honours the Great Sufi Saints, and commemorates their lives. Sufi poetry, like its liberal tenets and beliefs, adapted to local and regional styles, such as *Sufiana Qalams* (Sacred Words), *Kafis* (Punjab folk music), *Naat* (poetry recitation in praise of Prophet Muhammad), and *Qawwali* (devotional singing at shrines).

Sufi music made its way to the stage from shrines and *Sama* mehfiles, particularly in the form of Qawwali. Qawwali is the devotional, sacred music of Sufis, Islamic mystics. When a Qawwal (a person who sings Qawwali) sings a song, he is praising *Allah* (God). One may see how modern technology is used to amplify Qawwali performances in historic Sufi music venues. Qawwali is most often associated with the Islamic ritual of *Sama* (the hearing of sacred words set to music). The Chishti Sufi order in South Asia is responsible for the creation of the genre of music known as Qawwali, which is a form of devotional music. According to Qureshi (1995), a Qawwal is someone whose job it is to perform Qawwali because they are completely devoted to love. Qawwali is a path to self-awareness and, ultimately, love. The goal of a live Sufi performance is to lead the audience into *fana* (absorption) by way of *dhikr* (chanting the holy name of Allah) and *sama* (literary audition) in the context of a conventional spatial paradigm. Qawwali performances at the *darghah* are governed by a class of hereditary performing groups that impose a devout kind of etiquette (*adab*) among the audience. Audience members are also asked to refrain from clapping and to take seats behind the Qawwali performers so that everyone may enjoy the music while facing the Shrine. Notable Sufi Qawwals such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan and Abida Parveen were instrumental in bringing this genre to the forefront and making it an indelible part of Hindi cinema.

Sufism and Hindi cinema have a long history. Sufi music, despite its religious and devotional nature, made its way from the stage to the cinema post 1950. In an amalgamation with cinema known as *filmi Qawwali*, Qawwali became a staple in Hindi films. Sufi expressions were used in movies and came out in the form of Qawwali. Movies like *Barsaat Ki Raat* (1960), *Mughal-E-Azam* (1960), and others featured excellent Qawwali at the time. Sufism in cinema is not just limited to the genre of Qawwali, it also includes the

beautiful compositions and lyrics by Sufi saints in scenes. The first scene of Hindi Film *Junoon* (1978) opens with a composition by Amir Khusrau,

‘*Aaj Rang Hai*’:

Moray mehboob kay ghar rang hai ri

Sajan milaavra, sajan milaavra,

Sajan milaavra moray aangan ko

Aaj rung hai.....

Mohay pir paayo Nijamudin aulia

Nijamudin aulia mohay pir payoo

Des bades mein dhoondh phiree hoon.,

(The house of my Beloved is filled with radiance

At last I have found my Beloved in my own courtyard

I have found my pir Nizamuddin Aulia.

I have roamed far and wide in the world) (Amir Khusrau translated by Rupa Abdi)

In keeping filmi Qawwali's historical syncretic approach, it occasionally included hints of modernity. Manuel describes this adaptation as an "idiosyncratically modernised" Film Qawwali (384). R. D. Burman, for example, used acoustic and electric guitar in the Qawwali "*Pal Do Pal Ka Sathhamara*" in *The Burning Train* (1980).

Reliving the Past: Memory in the Realm of Popular Culture

Sufism as a faith/religion, through and within the sacred spaces, negotiates its own aesthetics to produce the “popular” in the realm of culture. At these Sufi spaces, *Urs* (Commemorative Memories) and *Ziārat* (Pilgrimage) are occasions where boundaries between the participants and observers are blurred, and these Sufi shrines have become fluid spaces for cross-religion interaction and cultural transaction.

These Sufi spaces are infused with millennia' worth of memories. Through these shared sacred spaces people who settled after partition partially substituted their pre-partition lived landscape. During the annual *Urs* festival (Commemorative memories), which commemorates the deaths of Sufi mystics, shrines host gatherings that attract people from all walks of life and across social, economic, and religious lines. Thus, as a "living memory" that contemporizes the past and "carries within itself both survivals from previous eras and the possibility for further change" (Moran 56), popular shrines are a type of "bridge of [historical] understanding" (Humboldt 112).

At Sufi shrines, this past is retrieved through the practice of rituals and celebration of festivals like *Urs* in the form of commemorative memory. In these "commemorative memories," Paul Connerton observes, there is a strong link between memory and space. Historian Nile Green argues that Sufi shrines are the only places where rituals, book collections, and even family trees have been preserved in their original forms. They are "places in which memory is crystallized" (Safvi 201).

In cinema marginalized characters find in Sufism and in their memory a transgressive and transcendent refuge from the oppressive weight of separation, the alienation of modernity, and the violence of empire. Sufism serves as a metaphor for reclaiming one's identity, materialising one's spirituality, and enacting one's sense of community belonging in the films' overarching themes of exile, displacement, and migration. With its musical, ritualistic, and contemplative activities and mystical aesthetics, Sufism is ideally suited to visual depiction, giving filmmakers a poetic framework within which to investigate ontological and existential concerns of destitute characters like Jordan in movie *Rockstar*. In addition, the movie has a deep connection to the mystics, their memory and legacy.

Sufi-Pop-Rock: The Divine Fusion through Cine Lens

Filmi Qawwali and Nusrat paved the way for Sufi song's transformation and fusion of Sufi with pop-rock in the 1970s and 1980s through high-profile international projects, collaboration with international artists, and recording in Hollywood studios. So, over the last two or three decades, Sufi music has evolved beyond the *Filmi Qawwali* style to embrace popular and contemporary western music imports such as Pop and Rock. It is a fusion of pop-rock sounds and Sufi imagery that helped pioneer the Sufi-pop-rock genre. Independent artists began performing what Manuel refers to as "new-age pop" (385).

What features do Sufi music and rock share that allow for such a fusion? Alan Merriam, one of the founders of ethnomusicology, proposed the concept of cultural and musical interaction. He asserted that when two cultures meet one another, they are more likely to freely exchange ideas (28). Because music is inextricably linked with the context in which it is produced and consumed, it is always influenced by its social and cultural context. As a result, a successful fusion of Sufi song and rock music would rely on similarities and overlaps in both genres' aesthetics and sensibilities, as well as in the musical, social, and political realms. As Sufism originated as a protest to the rigid and Islamic extremists, according to Abbas, Sufi poets like Shah Abdul Latif and Bulleh Shah "challenged theocratic forces of their times and questioned the religious establishment." (626), the type of rebellion that is appealing to a segment of the youth audience. Similarly, the socio-historical characteristics of rock music and its origins in the United States were quickly associated with an assessment of the current situation. Furthermore, both genres were similar enough in energy and performativity. These are the common ground for the fusion of Sufi-rock

music. In the film *Rockstar*, for example, the song '*Sadda Haq, Aithe Rakh*' ('Our right, keep it here') uses the Punjabi phrase to emphasise Jordan's (Protagonist) rebellion and continued descent. The song and accompanying visuals, perceived as a rock anthem in the film, use of electric guitar and heavy metal music to highlight Jordan's police arrest after fighting, as well as his unhinged existence. Singer Mohit Chauhan says, with time, the sound has changed, the style of expression has changed and now, we have a whole lot of different kinds of Sufi stuff in films there are ones that are fused with Western elements, like there is Sufi rock. *Naadan Parinde* from *Rockstar*, sung by AR Rahman, is a good example of this genre (Sen).

Also, another reason for this fusion is the commercialization of music. In the 1990s, rock became a permanent fixture in South Asian culture, and thus in the Hindi film industry. Its acceptance was aided by India's post-liberalization and the opening of economic channels, which provided a less hostile platform for western influences. Rock, which had previously played a less prominent role in everyday life, flourished, and rock musicians discovered their voice, experimented, recorded, and gigged in a more open and accepted market environment. As this genre became more popular in Hindi cinema, audiences became acquainted with this creative fusion and its composers, such as A R Rahman. The present study traces the selected songs composed by Rahman in this confluence.

Rahman's trademark Sufi-inspired song '*Chaiya, Chaiya*' ('Walk in Shade') from the 1998 film *Dil Se* ('From the Heart') fuse the breath of Sufi *zikr* with a rock beat. This song became famous on music charts and heralded an entirely new genre of quasi-religious Sufi poetry and music in Bollywood films. This song is originally based on '*Tere ishq nachaya kar ke thaiyya thaiyya*' a Punjabi sufi Kalaam by Bulle Shah. It was rewritten by Gulzar for the movie.

There are several examples of Sufi pop and rock songs whose lyrics were influenced by or perhaps explicitly copied from the works of these poet-saints. One such work is Bulleh Shah's "*Bullah ki Jaana*" ("I know not who I am"). This *kaafi* was first rendered in the 1990s by the Punjabi rock band Junoon, and it was then recorded by the Punjabi Singer Rabbi Shergill in 2005 as part of his Sufi-rock fusion, which became famous in India and Pakistan. In the words of the song "*Bullah ki Jaana*," I do not follow the teachings of the Vedas or the mosque. This song, sung by the Rabbi with a guitar in his hand, depicts the divine fusion of Sufi lyrics with rock beats, and its accompanying video shows a soul singing in various locations to relocate himself while also launching an attack on the established order and on the conventional values that the new young culture is rejecting, which is apt for a xenophobic society. Sufism, which takes issue with both strict religious doctrines of Islam and Hinduism, appeals to both dissidents and unifiers, despite the fact that many faiths arose from a break with a more established religion. This emotion is often associated with the counterculture of the 1960s and the hippie movement, but the mystical

and transcendental paths inherent in the Sufi experience are also very attractive to the generation that feels marginalised, which is another common thread in this fusion.

A. R. Rahman's *Rockstar* (2011) soundtrack album is an excellent example of the fusion of these characteristics, as well as the consistent use of Sufi elements, imagery, and motifs in rock beats, demonstrating the depth of this infusion. Rahman's most of the songs are highly 'Sufi-oriented', but with a wide range of variation - some songs feature Sufi-inspired lyrics, while others have few overt Sufi connections and even words directly from the Quran. Furthermore, the use of a guitar is not only a feature of the songs, but also a critical musical element that represents both rock and Sufi-pop music equally. Jordan, a musical neophyte who performs on street corners and college campuses with his acoustic guitar, is desperate for inspiration to become a true musical artist in the film. Two songs, '*Phir se Ud Chala*' ('I've Taken Flight Again') and '*Kun Faiya Kun*' ('Be, and it is'), which appear near the middle of the film almost back-to-back, represent a major turning point in the narrative and a critical moment for Jordan's character. Heer, his love, is getting married in Czechoslovakia. Jordan's reaction is to withdraw from the outside world. The Sufi-inspired lyrics of '*Phir se Ud Chala*' represent a moment of complete despair in which he has given up desire and worldly things: 'I've left this world, people and cities all seem the same.' His withdrawal from the world represents the loss of all his ambition and his path in life, while family abandons him at the same time.

Jordan, destitute and alone, seeks refuge at the famed Nizamuddin shrine, where he temporarily resides. It is during this time that he rediscovers his inner-self through his voice by singing Qawwali '*Kun Faiya Kun*,' at the dargah. The phrase '*Kun Faiya Kun*' is found directly in Quran and literally means 'be, and it is' and when spoken, it invokes Allah's creation of the world. The song also mentions "*jab kahin pe kuch nahi bhi nahi tha, vahi tha vahi tha,*" which translates to 'when there was nothing, he was there,' alluding to the nothingness associated with religion's primal origins in a 'time before time.' This song represents Jordan's point of no return and the pinnacle of his spiritual redemption. Jordan sings near the song's conclusion, "let me see myself, set me free from myself." Jordan's crossover occurs at this exact moment, when he is reborn into a second life. Musically, this point also marks a transition from pop to rock modes. Jordan begins by playing acoustic guitar to accompany the Qawwali, as he has done previously. He is, however, playing the electric guitar by the end of the song, foreshadowing his musical transition and fame. When he grows his hair and stops playing the acoustic guitar, his transformation is complete.

In the film's final scene, a montage featuring the song "*Nadaan Parindey*" encapsulates and culminates in some of his most rebellious and reckless behaviour. Jordan is on stage by the end of the song, complete

with smoke, intense heavy metal/rock guitar playing, and screaming. 'O scavenging bird, gorge on my flesh, but don't eat out my eyes; I want to see my beloved,' he says. He has a vision of Heer rising from the crowd in a flowing gown towards him, singing, '*tumko pa hi liya,*' 'you have finally gotten in a way like I have close to you.' One of the song's verses is based on a sloka (verse) by the Punjabi Sufi poet-saint Baba Sheikh Farid, 'O crow! Come and peck all the flesh from my skeleton, but leave these two eyes alone because they are waiting to see my grand beloved'. The song concludes with a line from a Rumi poem that says, "Out beyond ideas of wrong doing and right doing there is a field." 'I'll see you there.' 'When the soul lies down in that grass, the world is too full to talk about,' the poem continues. Ideas, language, and even the phrase "each other" do not make sense (Barks 36).

In the Bollywood movie *Jodaa Akbar*, Sufi symbolism was a hit with millions of viewers. Hrithik Roshan, who plays the Moghul ruler Akbar, sits before a gathering of dervishes in a legendary scene. Qawwali '*Khwaja mere Khwaja*' ('O My Lord') is played, and dervishes in white robes and brown felt hats spin around. This rendition depicts Emperor Akbar's entry into the divine realm and attainment of *Wajd* (Religious Ecstasy). Rahman employs traditional Sufi aesthetics and traditional instrumental visuals while employing modern instrumentation (piano, guitar), resulting in a visual-aural disparity that is functionally expressive and effective. While the whirling dervishes may appear out of place on a Bollywood set, this Sufi hymn to Moinuddin Chishti creates an atmosphere of ecstasy, love, and spirituality for the audience. This new form of Sufi popular culture, known as Sufiaana, is now recognised as a genre in India.

Not only in his music albums, Rahman's music, even on stage, promotes a message of love and tolerance in the tradition of Islamic mystics. In his 2014 Dubai concert, Rahman's stage set is made up of flickering computer animations projected onto four large screens: spiralling Quran verses, Moroccan-style mosque pillars, and the Sufi mantra '*HU*', which floats in hundreds of iterations like a swarm of bees (Brehmer).



Photo from concert. Source – Qantara.de

Conclusion

Sufi music and rock were initially relegated to the margins of Hindi film music, with both genres being used primarily for novel or exotic purposes. However, as they progressed from the margins to the mainstream, both genres gained increased levels of authenticity and sophistication, becoming standardised components of the film song formula. The established genre of Sufi rock, along with sociocultural changes in India, infiltrated the standard film song ideal by the mid-1990s and onwards. Rock's power, beat and style, combined with Sufi mysticism in soundtracks like *Rockstar*, helped cement rock's place firmly within the film song repertoire, while also establishing rock as its own genre, derived from, but distinct from, the western ideals and roots of rock. Rock can captivate listeners with its beats, and the ability of Sufi lyrics to elicit intense emotions completes the Sufi-rock genre. This genre reveals to non-Muslim audiences the compassionate, tolerant, and creative aspects of Islam, blurring communal boundaries and achieving a unity beyond confessional borders in musical bliss.

The examples discussed demonstrate that the popularisation of Sufi music evolved into a distinct expression of contemporary Sufi thought. Sufi rock songs are part of the globalised exchange of musical ideas, allowing rock to deepen its message by embracing Sufi ideals. Sufi-pop-rock becomes familiar and powerful enough to strengthen its functionality and importance in the contemporary Hindi cinema narrative. In other words, Sufi music adapted rock, while rock adapted Sufi song, in order to increase the exposure, impact, and poetic sensibility of both.

Works Cited

- Abbas, Shemeem Burney. "Risky Knowledge in Risky Times: Political Discourses of Qawwālī and Sūfiana-Kalam in Pakistan-Indian Sufism." *The Muslim World*, vol. 97, no. 4, Oct. 2007, pp. 626–639., doi:10.1111/j.1478-1913.2007.00204.x.
- Abdi, Rupa. "Sufi Poetry and Music in Popular Culture." *Speakingtree.in*, Speaking Tree, 25 Sept. 2011, www.speakingtree.in/blog/sufi-poetry-and-music-in-popular-culture.
- Babu, Subash. "Bollywood's Sufi Music Obsession Has given Many Timeless Melodies." *OnManorama*, 11 July 2020, 11:11, www.onmanorama.com/entertainment/entertainment-news/2020/07/11/bollywood-sufi-music-obsession-dress-circle.html.
- Barker, Chris. *Making Sense of Cultural Studies: Central Problems and Critical Debates*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2002. SAGE Knowledge, 29 Dec 2022, doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781446220368>.
- Barks, Coleman. *The Essential Rumi*. Castle Books, 1997.
- Brehmer, Marian. "Sufism and Bollywood: A Glittering Antidote." Translated by Katy Derbyshire, *Qantara.de*, 2018, en.qantara.de/content/sufism-and-bollywood-a-glittering-antidote.
- Manuel, Peter. "North Indian Sufi Popular Music in the Age of Hindu and Muslim Fundamentalism." *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2008, pp. 378–400. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20174605>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2022.
- Merriam, Alan P. "The Use of Music in the Study of a Problem of Acculturation." *American Anthropologist*, vol. 57, no. 1, 1955, pp. 28–34. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/665784>. Accessed 29 Oct. 2022.
- Qureshi, Regula B. "Sufi Music of India and Pakistan." *Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*, University of Chicago Press, 1995, doi:10.1604/9780226700922.
- Sarrazin, Natalie. "Divine Fusion: Sufi Music With a Rock 'N' Roll Soul in Hindi Cinema's Rockstar." *Performing Islam*, vol. 6, no. 1, Intellect, May 2017, pp. 11–21. https://doi.org/10.1386/pi.6.1.11_1.
- Sen, Debarati S. "Bollywood Is Soaking in the Sufi Spirit - Times of India." *The Times of India*, The Times of India, 16 Jan. 2017, timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/music/news/bollywood-is-soaking-in-the-sufi-spirit/articleshow/55354195.cms.
- "Rabbi Shergill - Bulla Ki Jaana Maen Kaun." *YouTube*, 16 Mar. 2006, www.youtube.com/watch?v=pTxZy32Fv_0.

SonyMusicIndiaVEVO. “Khwaja Mere Khwaja - Jodhaa Akbar|@a. R. Rahman|Hrithik Roshan|Aishwarya Rai.” YouTube, 7 Dec. 2020, www.youtube.com/watch?v=4YbAaRFk70o.

T-Series. “Kun Faya Kun Full Video Song Rockstar | Ranbir Kapoor | A.R. Rahman, Javed Ali, Mohit Chauhan.” YouTube, 5 Dec. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=T94PHkuydcw.

---. “NADAAN PARINDE (Full Song) | Rockstar | Ranbir Kapoor | A.R Rahman | Mohit Chauhan.” YouTube, 25 Nov. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=ttIKsnxPrMY.

---. “‘Phir Se Ud Chala Full Song Rockstar’ | Ranbir Kapoor.” YouTube, 19 Dec. 2011, www.youtube.com/watch?v=2mWaqsc3U7k.

Badal Sircar's *Udyog Parva*: The Third Gaze at the Mahabharata

Sharuk Rahaman

Email- sharukrahaman9@gmail.com

Submitted 29/06/2023 Revised 26/07/2023 Accepted 30/07/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: The Mahabharata and its rich treasure have inspired various art forms like painting, song, movie, poetry, drama, fiction etc. throughout the ages. Playwrights in English as well as various Indian languages have composed plays based on characters and incidents from the epic. Badal Sircar's play *Udyog Parva* (1982), drawing inspiration from the fifth book, is a ground-breaking work in this respect. Instead of narrating the deeds of notable personalities of the epic as done by most works in the domain, the play talks about the common people and how their lives might have been affected by the war. The play changes the focus from major characters to the masses—farmers, weavers, merchants, poor priests, and foot soldiers. It also exposes oppression of the ruling class: forceful admission into the army, forcible donation from the people to war funds, sacrifice of people's lives for the false grandeur of kings. The play becomes quite relevant when placed in the context of world war atrocities and post-Partition violence, thereby establishing Sircar's theatre as anti-war and anti-oppression theatre. The present paper analyses the play as a brilliant critique of war, violence, atrocities, wartime opportunism and business, religious fundamentalism, and modern atomic warfare.

Keywords: Mahabharata, war, Udyog Parva, Badal Sircar, Indian drama, Bengali drama.

Introduction:

Often grouped with Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, and Vijay Tendulkar, Badal Sircar (1925-2011) is considered a pioneer of modern Indian theatre. Known for his alternative theatrical practice the 'Third Theatre', Sircar contributed to Indian theatre with remarkable absurd dramas like *Evam Indrajit*, *Baki Itihas*, *Pagla Ghoda*, *Shesh Nei*, and sparkling comedies such as *Boro Pisima*, *Ballbhpurer Rupkatha*, *Ram Shyam Jadu*, and *Kabikahini*. His Third Theatre plays such as *Bhoma*, *Stale News*, *Spartacus*, *Procession*, *Indian History Made Easy*, *Udyog Parva*, *Bhul Rasta*, etc. deal with various social-economic-political issues that are still existing in the present society. The Third Theatre, drawing from both the First Theatre (folk theatre) and the Second Theatre (proscenium theatre), is non-proscenium, non-commercial theatre that seeks to make theatre flexible, portable and inexpensive, and minimize the actor-spectator distance.

The play *Udyog Parva* (War Preparation) was written in 1982 and first performed in 1983. As the title suggests, the play is inspired by the fifth book—the *Udyog Parva* (the Book of Effort)—of the epic *Mahabharata*. The book deals with the effort to make peace and also the effort for war. "This "effort," in

Sanskrit *udyoga*, may be understood both as a peace effort . . . and as a war effort. It is to the latter meaning that the etymology of the word points: “the yoking up” of the horses, chariots, and elephants of the army in preparation for making an attack: also simply *yoga*, “the yoking up” (Buitenen 133). The Kauravas and the Pandavas prepare for the great war of Kurukshetra in this book. However, the present play does not narrate the deeds of great warriors, kings, monarchs, or princes. Rather, the playwright talks about the common people and how their lives might have been affected by a war not started by them. Sircar’s theatre is anti-war and anti-oppression theatre which the play exemplifies in a striking way. The present paper analyses the play as a brilliant critique of war, violence, atrocities, wartime opportunism and business, religious fundamentalism, and modern atomic warfare. Much has not been talked about this play, while there are scholarly discussions on Sircar’s comedies, absurd dramas, and socio-political plays. The present study seeks to fill the gap in existing knowledge and bring the play into scholarly focus.

The two epics the Mahabharata and the Ramayana have been rich treasures for artists throughout the ages. The epics have inspired films, paintings, poetry, novels, dramas, songs, dances and other art forms. In classical times, great masters like Kalidasa, Bhasa, Bhavabhuti, and Sriharsha composed plays based on characters and incidents of the Mahabharata. Many Indian plays in English are based on the Mahabharata. Rabindranath Tagore’s play *Chitra* deals with the romantic love story between Arjuna and Chitrangada, a beautiful princess. Tagore’s other plays based on the epic include *Kacha Devyani*, *The Mother’s Prayer* (episode of Gandhari), and *Karna and Kunti*. T. P. Kailasam has written a number of plays based on narratives from the Mahabharata, including *The Purpose* (story of Ekalavya), *Fulfilment* (killing of Ekalavya and his mother by Krishna), *The Curse or Karna*, and *Keechaka* (story of Keechaka from the Viratparva). *The Curse or Karna* (1946) deals with various stages of Karna’s life—the curse of his Guru Parashurama (who comes to know that Karna is not a Brahmin), his coronation as a king, his participation in the great war, and his death. Regarding the epic, Kailasam opines that “the characters in *The Mahabharata* are all like us, living, rooted to this world. They may have their *adhyatmic* ambitions, but in the way the great sage Vyasa has depicted them, they are all human” (Bhatta 27).

Nalini Mohan Chatterjee’s play *Krishna* (1937) and K. S. Ramaswami Sastri’s *Droupadi* (1939) deal with various phases of the lives of the protagonists. Dharamvir Bharati’s *Andha Yug* (1953) concerns with the 18th day of the Kurukshetra War and focuses on violence, linking with the atrocities that happened following the Partition. *The Fire and the Rain* by Girish Karnad is based on the Vana Parva (the Book of Forest). The playwright employs fire as a symbol of revenge, betrayal, violence, passion, lust, death and the rain as a metaphor for salvation, compassion, forgiveness, self-sacrifice, and life. His other play *Yayati*,

based on a story from the epic, brings in the issues of class, caste, gender, race discrimination and links to contemporary times.

In Bengali also, many playwrights have composed plays drawing inspiration from the Mahabharata. Michael Madhusudan Dutt wrote the play *Shermishtha* (translated into English by himself) based on the story of Shermishtha-Devyani-Yayati. Girish Chandra Ghosh has composed few mythological plays based on the epic, including *Abhimanyu Vadh* (The Killing of Abhimanyu), *Pandaver Agyatabas* (Pandavas' Incognito Exile), *Nala Damayanti* (Nala and Damayanti), *Jana*, and *Pandav Gourab* (Pandavas' Glory). Dwijendra Lal Roy, another prominent Bengali playwright, composed the play, *Bhishma*. Kshirode Prasad Vidyavinode has authored two mythological plays—*Savitri* and *Bhishma*. Manmatha Ray wrote mythological plays that were charged with contemporary political implications. One such play *Karagar* (The Prison) is inspired by the Mahabharata. The struggle between exploitative King Kamsa and Vasudeva symbolically portrays the freedom struggle of the Indians against the oppressive colonizers. The prison of Kamsa becomes the prison of British-ruled India. The dramatist allegorically hails the countrymen to become rebellious and rise against the Britishers.

Sircar's Gaze at the Epic:

The present play *Udyog Parva* is a metadrama (play-within-a-play) in which the students of a theatre group named 'Shastriya Pragatishil Natya Shikshalaya' (Classical Progressive Theatre School) plan to rehearse episodes from the Mahabharata. But instead of presenting the incidents and deeds of notable personalities, they intend to talk of the common masses:

Five: Ours is a play.¹

Seven: A progressive play.

One: Yes, we have to talk about the common people. (517)

Here lies the unique talent of the playwright. While most of the artistic creations (drama, poetry, fiction, painting etc.) inspired by the epic present the famous characters only, Sircar's play shifts the focus to the masses. He focuses on the conditions of farmers, weavers, merchants, poor priests, and foot soldiers during war. The major characters of the epic are referred to by names only—Duryodhana, Karna, Dhaumya (priest of the Panadavas), Yudhishtira, Drona, Kripa, Arjuna, but they never appear in the play. Many of Sircar's Third Theatre plays concern with the sufferings of ordinary people like the workers, farmers, and villagers. *Udyog Parva* is a reflection of this motive of the playwright that was conveyed long ago in his magnum opus *Evam Indrajit* (1963). Through the mouth of the Writer (who is trying to write a play),

Sircar expresses his own agony: “I’ve written many plays. I want to write many more. But . . . I know nothing about the suffering masses. Nothing about the toiling peasants. Nothing about the sweating coal-miners. Nothing about the snake-charmers, the tribal chieftains or the boatmen” (6). By the time he wrote *Udyog Parva* after twenty years, Sircar had become a bit familiar through his ‘gram parikramas’ (village tours) with the sufferings of the masses and remote villagers, who were recurrently appearing in his plays.

Like a typical Third Theatre play, *Udyog Parva* has no individual characters. There are seven characters with numbering like One, Two, Three, Four and so on. This is due to the flexible nature of Sircar’s theatre. One is a (male) teacher, Seven is a female student, and the rest are male students. The beginning of the play is interesting. From the very beginning to the end, the play is a brilliant critique of war, atrocities, and violence in human society. When the students intend to start the rehearsal of their play with the War of Kurukshetra, the teacher discourages them. Their reply is an indirect satire of the destructive nature of human beings. They say that war is an interesting beginning and there is nothing more attractive than war. This reflects the destructive instinct that is very much inherent in human nature—what Sigmund Freud has called ‘Thanatos’ (the death drive).

The play is an excellent critique of violence, murder, and atrocities. The play within the play starts with a Chorus song, criticising the practice of killing. To the students, the Mahabharata is full of episodes of violence. In every book, there are murders of human beings. This act of killing links the Puranas to the contemporary time. Whatever be the reasons, there are killings in both ages. The kings start the war and the common people suffer. This reminds us of a famous saying in Bengali: “Rajay rajay judhya hoy, ulukhagar pran jai” (while the kings make war, the civilians die). The play presents the terrible scenes of the battlefield through comic and non-serious dialogues. A drunken foot soldier describes to other newly-recruited soldiers how the battle ground becomes muddy with the blood, fat, flesh, spleen, liver, and entrails of the infantries. Though the dialogue is delivered in a humorous way, the description is quite horrible even to imagine. Sircar’s comment regarding the use of humour in the black comedy *Khat Mat Kring* is equally relevant here: “a play on violence, ranging from bride-burning to gas chambers and nuclear holocaust, in the medium of slapstick humour . . . such grim themes can be made more intense and poignant if humour is used” (*On Theatre* 144).

The increasing violence, murder, assassination, atrocity, and exploitation in human society have always bothered Badal Sircar. He has dealt with these themes in dramas like *Baki Itihas* (That Other History), *Michhil* (Procession), *Basi Khobor* (Stale News), *Gondi* (The Circle), *Khat Mat Kring* (Total Destruction), *Sinri* (The Stairs), *Ka Cha Ta Ta Pa, Naditey* (In the River), *Choruibhati* (Picnic), etc. The rest of history (baki itihās) is “about oppression, violence, destruction, war, the suffering of centuries. The

history of the Pandav-Kauravs, Alexander, Nero, Chengiz Khan, Napoleon, Hitler. Thousands of years of history etched into the stones of the pyramids, the sands of the Colosseum, the walls of Jalianwala Bagh, the blasted earth of Hiroshima” (qtd. in Katyal 61). This ‘baki itihās’ lies at the centre of Sircar’s dramatic corpus. What the Narrator in Bharati’s *Andha Yug* is concerned with— “When will this bloodshed end?” (27)—also bothers Sircar. However, his critique of war is based on humanitarian grounds and concerns for the welfare of human beings. Instead of blaming any particular group or country, he draws attention to the devastating effects of war and appeals to stop war and violence. Sircar opines in his essay “Paromanobik Astrer Bibhishika Ponchasher Doshok Thekei Bhebechhi” that it is man who has started all the atrocities and it is man who should stop it (249).

The playwright exposes with subtle skill the hegemony and oppression of the ruling class. Farmers are brought from the villages and forcefully made foot soldiers in the army. The war is taking place between the kings, but the peasants are killing each other. These farmers have no personal enmity between them. They do not even know each other. The farmers simply become scapegoats in the hands of the rulers; they are used as instruments. If only the chief opponents fight between themselves, that would also be a war. But to show off their false grandeur and royal arrogance, the kings sacrifice the lives of ordinary soldiers: “Corpses, corpses—if there are not two hundred, five hundred, one thousand, two thousand corpses of infantries, what’s the worth of being a king?” (520). This episode of the play exposes the underlying strategy of warfare. Another play *Khat Mat Kring* exposes how in a war between two nations the soldiers become scapegoats killed by each other, while the leaders of the opposite parties shake hands.

The play exposes wartime market strategy. There are some opportunists who use war as a scope to earn more and more profits. Since the demands for tents, arms and other things have increased, there is price hike in everything. The relatives of kings make commission and profit in everything—horse, elephant, weapon, chariot, even food items like rice and pulses. Moreover, Duryodhana is presented in the play as an unjust king. Even if there is famine, he does not spare a single subject from paying revenues. The merchants are compelled to give donation (instead of voluntary donation) to the war funds. A merchant, hence, calls him a plunderer. Thus, the play illustrates how everything is connected with war and selfish people mind only their own profits during wartime. As people are forcefully taken to the army camp and made soldiers against their will, two poor men pretend to be blind and lame to avoid this.

The play reveals the sufferings of common people they go through during war. A Brahmin priest, who performs religious rites in the royal palace, is terminated from his job for committing a very small mistake. His wife becomes very anxious due to the loss. Wartime is a very critical phase to survive. She is worried over how their family will survive without a regular source of income. She suggests her husband

to become an astrologer, as people are anxious over their life span—whether they will come back alive from the battleground—and go to the astrologers more frequently. The wife’s instruction to her husband, who knows nothing of astrology, indirectly points towards opportunists who deceive people with false pretense. As a common woman she is concerned of her livelihood and goes to enlist her name as a cook in the kitchens of war-camps.

Through a satirical episode of a trader supplying horses and elephants for war, the play presents a critique of war and warfare. The trader has received order for supplying a large number of horses, elephants, and infantries. His staffs wonder whether the number of animals as demanded do actually exist in the whole world. The peddler tactfully says that if he does not get enough number of elephants, he will replace elephants with camels and horses with donkeys, with dogs, with cats, even with mouses to meet the number. The dealer has already received an order from the Kauravas, and at the same time he is having discussion with the Pandavas to receive their order also. Hearing this when a working staff exclaims that the Pandavas are enemies, the trader replies: “The enemy of a businessman is another businessman, never a customer” (536). To him, both the parties are customers with whom he wants to do business. His statement reveals the profit-mindedness of the capitalists. This episode exposes the nature of arm-dealers in modern times as well. The modern traders likewise sell weapons and arms to many countries together.

Composing the play during the 1980s, Sircar could not ignore the rise of religious fundamentalism in India. The following decade led to the sad outcome—the demolition of the Babri Masjid (1992) and disturbed the communal harmony of the country. The playwright critiques religion as misused by the oppressive rulers:

Four: . . . This is a religious war.

Two: Every war is religious war. Whatever the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas do, they do in the name of religion. Their very religion is different. (528)

Finally, Sircar relates the past incidents with the present scenarios. Killing used to happen long ago in the age of the Puranas and still it is happening today. Kings and emperors would then kill people in wars with swords and arrows. Now people are killed by blasting of Hydrogen bombs. From the War of Kurukshetra to the modern World Wars, the killing of people in the name of religion and nationalism is continuing. The play ends with a Chorus song, especially the last lines being quite suggestive: “At the last, the end will come/ With atom, hydrogen, and nitrogen” (539). The idea conveyed in these lines—the ultimate destruction of human kind with atomic warfare—is reflected in the play *Khat Mat Kring* (1983) that shows a post-apocalyptic world having cockroaches only and no human beings. The observation made by Anjum

Katyal is well-noted in this context:

We know that war, the death and destruction it causes, and the horror of the nuclear bomb have been an important part of [Sircar's] consciousness. . . . The destruction of war becomes a repeated reference in his plays. . . . And not just regular war—the total annihilation portended by nuclear warfare. This single fact—the existence of the atom bomb—comes to dominate his outlook on the meaning and purpose of life. (66)

Bharati's play *Andha Yug* presents the sad, desolate, devastated pictures of post-war period. It conveys the message that whoever wins, war avails nothing; both the parties suffer losses. In the play, Ashwatthama releases his *brahmastra* that can annihilate the whole world and its consequences are devastating:

For centuries to come
nothing will grow on earth.
Newborn children
shall be deformed. (114)

The same type of observation is done by Sircar in the context of atom bombs. Nuclear weapons are the modern equivalent of the 'brahmastra'. In *Bhoma* (1975) Sircar mentions the horrific effects of atom bombs and nuclear blasts that give birth to millions of "maimed and deformed children" (89).

Sircar was always saddened by the existence of the atomic weapon. His play *Tringsha Shatabdi* (The Thirtieth Century) vividly illustrates the devastating outcomes of America's atom bombs dropping on Japan in the Second World War. While people were rejoicing at the potential of nuclear power and India's successful nuclear blasts in 1974 and 1998, Sircar could not be happy considering the terrible effects: "The total stockpile of atom bombs can destroy the whole world—400 times" (*Bhoma* 90). The Vietnam War that lasted for twenty years caused millions of deaths of both soldiers and innocent civilians. Sircar crusades against the very idea of war. He believes that if all the nations forsake enmity between themselves and live peacefully, there is no need of increasing nuclear weapons. It is important to note that Sircar's anti-nuclear trilogy—*Baki Itihas*, *Tringsha Shatabdi*, and *Shesh Nei* "remain the only critique in Indian theatre of the country's demented nuclear pursuits. Sharadindu and Sumanta, the protagonists of these plays, are simply unable to accept the violence and bestiality of twentieth century's potential for mass destruction" (Menon 409). The recent Russia-Ukraine conflict (2022) certainly alerts the people that the world can be destroyed with atomic weapons and missiles. Thus, a play based on an ancient epic becomes quite relevant to the present times, thereby proving the universality of Badal Sircar as a

playwright.

Conclusion:

To conclude, drawing upon an episode from the Mahabharata, Badal Sircar produces a brilliant critique of war, religion, opportunism, mass killing, nuclear warfare, and presents the sufferings of the common people in his play *Udyog Parva*. The play becomes a groundbreaking work in the domain, since most of the artistic creations focus only on the so-called renowned characters. Situating his works in the context of the affairs of common people makes Sircar truly a playwright of the people. The play becomes contemporary in the context of World War II, the Vietnam War, and the recent Russia-Ukraine War, thereby emphasizing its own relevance and linking the past and the present.

Notes:

1. The play *Udyog Parva* has not yet been translated into English. Hence, the researcher has depended on his own translation.

Works Cited

- Bharati, Dharamvir. *Andha Yug*. Translated by Alok Bhalla. OUP, 2005.
- Bhatta, S. Krishna. *Indian English Drama: A Critical Study*. Sterling Publishers, 1987.
- Buitenen, J. A. B. van, translator & editor. *The Mahabharata*. Books 3 & 4. U of Chicago P, 1978.
- Katyal, Anjum. *Badal Sircar: Towards a Theatre of Conscience*. SAGE Publications, 2015.
- Menon, Sadanand. "A Curtain Call for Political Theatre: Badal Sircar (1925-2011)." *Badal Sircar: Search for a Language of Theatre*, edited by Kirti Jain, Niyogi Books, 2016, pp. 406-14.
- Sircar, Badal. "Bhoma." Translated by Badal Sircar and Kalyani Ghose. *3 Plays*. Seagull Books, 2009, pp. 55-111.
- . *Evam Indrajit*. Translated by Girish Karnad. OUP, 1979.
- . *On Theatre: Selected Essays*. Seagull Books, 2009.
- . "Paromanobik Astrer Bibhishika Ponchasher Doshok Thekei Bhebechhi" ["The Horror of Nuclear Weapons I've Thought from the Fifties"]. *Badal Sarkar: Ebong Indrajit Thekey Third Theatre [Badal Sircar: From Evam Indrajit to Third Theatre]*, edited by Samik Bandyopadhyay, Theema, 2017, 246-49.
- . "Udyog Parva." *Natak Samagra [Complete Plays]*. Vol. 03. Mitra and Ghosh, 2011, pp. 511-39.

Intertextuality in Agha Shahid Ali's Selected Poems

Tanvi M. Pujara

Submitted 29/06/2023 Revised 26/07/2023 Accepted 30/07/2023, Published 31/07/2023

Abstract: A literary work or any type of piece of art never comes out of the vacuum. The artist's mind is never a tabula rasa. Just like that, when a writer writes, his career is built by the foundations of many writers whom he has read. Any writer or literary work is highly influenced by his/her culture and society. The past experiences or writer's readings are the base for him/her for any text which later on becomes his/her new creation. In literature this is called Intertextuality. This term is coined by Julia Kristeva. This research paper is aimed to draw out the inter-textual aspects of some selected poems of an Indo American Muslim poet Agha Shahid Ali. Ali himself is a multi-cultural, multi-talented and highly art-influenced poet. This paper reflects the influences of some poets, ghazals, folk tales and some classical works. Here I have tried to find Indian as well as American intertextual influences in the writings of Agha Shahid Ali. Some influences are based on themes whereas some are based on context. Agha Shahid Ali has celebrated the plurality of cultures that has formed his poetic consciousness since his childhood.

Key-Words: Agha Shahid Ali, Intertextuality, Influence, Indo American, Multi-cultural.

Introduction:

Agha Shahid Ali was an Indo American poet who lived from 1949 to 2001. He is the poet who portrayed the beauty of Kashmir. His poetry is the exclusive imagery of his life. Zaidi has quoted Ali's childhood words which are, "I have had a terrific relationship with my parents. I grew up in a home of so much openness, a lot of music- I heard it whenever I wrote. My parents never tried to stop me." (5). Ali's this environment made him acquainted with various literary works which influenced his writings also. His grandfather was fond of books and his house was filled with intellectual discussions. He was so much influenced by his parents that according to him his father was an institution and his mother was his poem. He started writing at the age of 9. His study at Delhi University made him acquainted with English writers. Thus he became familiar to the Indian writers during his early childhood and to the Western writers during his higher education. The shades of his known writers are visible in many of his own writings. This phenomenon of one's writing being influenced by other's writing is known in literature as the intertextuality. Intertextuality is shaping of one text's meaning by another text. It shows a kind of relation between two texts explained by Julia Kristeva in 1960s which is basically used to show a phenomenon of a conscious exchange and relationship building between texts. It is the shaping of one text's meaning by another text. Intertextual aspects can be found via open or covert citation and allusions. As per

M.H.Abrams and , Intertextuality states that any text is in fact an intertext - the site of an intersection of numberless other texts. (398) Let us look at some intertextual aspects. Such conscious influences can be found in some of Ali's poems also. In this paper we are going to have a deep study of where and how Ali's poems have the intertextual aspect in them. the intertextual elements are found in following aspects of Agha Shahid Ali.

***Heer Ranjha* by Waris Shah**

One of the Punjabi tragic romances, the story of Heer Sial and Dheedo Ranjha was written in 1766 by Waris Shah. Though Ali has not taken any direct line from this work, this work has influenced his concept of burning lovers and their forbidden love. Waris Shah and Ali both are effective in their descriptions because '.....tragedy appeals more to the human mind.' (Jamshaid). The influence of this famous tale is reflected in Ali's works when he writes in his poem *The Seasons of the Plains* "Heer and Ranjha and others/ of legends their love forbidden, / burned incense all night/ waiting for answers."(lines 20-23) He might have been acquainted with such legends during his time with his mother before leaving India. So, we here can see the cultural elements interwoven in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali.

Begum Akhtar's Ghazals

Ali was fond of Begum Akhtar's ghazals. So, we can find the echo of some lines of Begum's ghazals in his writings. Zaidi has clearly written in his book that it can be traced in a statement given by his friend who said that, "He (Ali) would always love to sing aloud Faiz's poems as sung by Begum Akhtar." (9). There is one ghazal written by Shakil Badayuni and sung by Begum Akhtar named as *Ae Mohabbat Tere Anjaam Pe Rona Aya*(O love, I mourn on your consequence). The last three lines of it "Jab hua zikr zamane me mahobbat ka Shakil/ mujko apne dil-e-nakam pe rona aaya/ e mahobbat tere anjam pe rona aaya." (When there was talk about love among others, I mourned on my defeated heart. Oh love! I mourn on your consequences) are echoed in one of Ali's works. In his *The Seasons of the Plains*, where mother herself is also being mournful on the lament of Heer in lines "My mother/ hummed Heer's lament/ but never told me if she/ also burned sticks/ of jasmine..."(lines 23-27) he echoes those lines of ghazal that on hearing about love of others, one introspects about his or her own love story also.

Call Me Ishmael Tonight

Tonight is the title of one of the famous ghazals by Ali. Here the last line has a direct intertextual impact from a famous American novelist Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick*. This line is directly taken from a dialogue of that novel *Moby-Dick* "Call me Ishmael tonight" Spoken by the first-person narrator of the novel- Ishmael. This American influence is very deep upon his mind as he has also titled one of his collections of English ghazals with "Call me Ishmael Tonight"

The Snowman

Wallace Stevens' poem *The Snow Man* is centred on an idea that the world itself is nothing without a human perspective for it. He was affiliated with a literary movement of American poetry. From there he might have come in contact with the poems of Wallace Stevens. Ali was influenced by Wallace as he is taking title of his poem *Snowmen*. Here Ali speaks of decay, death, and ancestors. It also has themes of objective reality of the world and at the same time the subjective experience of the speaker with it, just like Wallace's *Snowman*. Wallace Stevens is talking about the presence of human kind while saying "For the listener who listens in the snow." Ali also shows the existence of human kind in Kashmir from generations as he writes, "His skeleton under my skin, passed/ from son to grandson,/ generations of snowmen on my back./" (lines 15-17)

Broken Glass Imagery

William Butler Yeats has written a poem divided into two stanzas named *The Two Trees* where the prior part of poem shows very good, comfortable, romantic atmosphere of two lovers but as the poem proceeds, we can find that these lovely descriptions are exchanged by bitter glass, fatal images, and stormy nights. So now the world has become bitter and broken for the lovers. In Ali's *Dream of Glass Bangles*, we find similar thematic concerns. It starts with lovely comfortable scene of narrator's parents who are living happily. The mother has worn "Bangles/ like waves of frozen river" (lines 4-5). But as the poem progresses, we here also find the chaotic description of sound of ice breaking, fire, darkening red and at last "A widow smashing the rivers/ on her arms/" (lines 23-24) which suggests the death of her husband with which all their delicate dreams like glass are also broken and now the world is bitter for them.

Krishna Tales

One of the intertextual elements in Ali's poem *The Seasons of the Plains* is myth/tale of Krishna. Krishna tells are being sung at almost every part of India by general people, also in literary works and in many of the classical musical songs too. He has written about the myth of Krishna and his playing of flute on the shores of Jamuna River. He writes in *The Seasons of the Plains* "When Krishna's/ flute is heard on the shores/ of the Jamuna."(lines 6-8) This can be considered under a cultural influence or the influence of folk literature in Agha Shahid Ali's writings.

Faiz Ahmed Faiz's Ghazals

The structural textual aspects of Faiz Ahmed Faiz's Hindi ghazals are spotted in the English Ghazals of Ali. We can see that the ghazal writing style of Ali is somewhat adopted by him from Faiz as it is well acknowledged that Ali was inspired by Ghazal form and by Faiz Ahmed Faiz as a writer. Zaidi writes in his book that Ali himself had said once about ghazal form that, "Oh! My goodness, why have not I thought of this because here is the tradition I grew up with" (80). We can see that Faiz has repeated the last words "Gujri Hai" in the first couplet and in last words of other couplets of his ghazal *Tum Aaye Ho N Shabe-Intezaar Gujri Hai*. This same can be found also in Ali's *Ghazal*. Here Ali also has repeated the words "in real time" in the first couplet and as the last words at the end of every couplet. This structure is found to be having been influenced from the ghazal form in general but deeply analyzing, from Faiz in particular.

Cashmere Of Dickinson

It is said that Agha Shahid Ali was buried in Northampton, a town sacred to his beloved poet Emily Dickinson. About Ali Zaidi says that all through his poetic journey, Ali drew inspiration from Emily Dickinson and her notion of 'Evanescence' continued to fascinate his poetic imagination (15-16). Emily has written "fabrics of Cashmere" while speaking of coming out of the shame and negative feelings and trying to come out of it. Ali has also written "Let me cry out in that void..... Qashmir, Cashmere, Qashmir...."(Hamid) A deep sense of loss is woven in this poem. It seems that as Ali was a fan and admirer of Emily Dickinson, he has used the spelling "Cashmere" for representing his Kashmir in this poem under Emily's influence.

Imagist Influence

We can see that Ali's works are highly imagist at many places. Ali himself was affiliated with the 'New Formalist Movement' in poetry. Pound has written *In a Station of the Metro* known as an example of imagist work. Similar aspects of Imagism can be found in Ali's following lines of *The Seasons of the Plains* "... burned sticks of jasmine that, dying, kept raising soft necks of ash" (lines 26-29). Imagist language is also used in his poem *Postcard from Kashmir* while saying "half-inch Himalayas in my hand" (line 4). We can find the imagist influence of "petals on a wet black bough" can be traced in the lines of *Dream of Glass Bangles* "On my mother's arms were bangles/ like waves of frozen rivers." (lines 4-5).

Conclusion:

Ali has received multi-artistic influences and a great cultural heritage from his early childhood. His passion for ghazals, reading of poems, his education and his literary knowledge is ultimately reflected in his own writing also. Many of his works are inspired by other texts with similar themes or forms. Ali's works have the poetic practice of drawing multiple references from various cultures, myths, religions, nations, and literary traditions. Then he is interviewing them in a textual space. These interchanges then make new alliances and makes his own new creation as it happened in ghazals that he took Western language and used it with an Eastern literary form. We can see many lyrical, structural as well as thematic references from other writers and works in Ali's work. Some influences are based on the form while some are based on the themes or the contexts of the legend or folk tales. These aspects are multi coloured as we find Indian mythical and literary aspects of Krishna songs or Heer Rhanja as well as the American influences of *Moby-Dick* or Dickinson and the structural influences of imagist aspects and ghazal form. Thus some of his works are leading to the complex intertextual references. His efforts for developing an Eastern poetic Urdu form Ghazal, into a Western English language is also highly remarkable. It seems that some thoughts were imbibed in Ali's mind while reading them and he would have been so much inspired by those concepts that they influenced his poetic creation. Whether it be the highlight of American influences or the Indian Krishna tales or the ghazal form, they are clearly visible in Ali's poems as we saw. Ali's poetical development has deep impact of the areas wherever he has been to and the tracks of that can be found as the intertextual aspects of Ali's poems.

Works Cited

- “Agha Shahid Ali”. *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/gha-shahid-ali>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- “Dreams of Glass Bangles”. *The Milli Gazette: Indian Muslims’ Leading Newspaper*, <https://www.milligazette.com/archives/01022002/0102200235.htm>. Accessed on 22nd January, 2023.
- Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Harpham. “Intertextuality”. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Eleventh edition, Cengage Learning, 2015.
- Agrawal, Dipali. “Prakriti Ke Karib Hona Mere Liye Koi Mudda Nahi Raha: Kavi Agha Shahid Ali”. *Kavya*, <https://www.amarujala.com/kavya/mud-mud-ke-dekhta-hu/poet-gha-shahid-ali>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Ali, Agha Shahid. “Ghazals”. *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43279/ghazal-56d221fe8a756>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Ali, Agha Shahid. “Postcard from Kashmir”. *Poetry Nook*, <https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/postcard-kashmir>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Ali, Agha Shahid. “Snowmen”. *Poetry Foundation*, <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/50985/snowmen>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Ali, Agha Shahid. “The Seasons of the Plain”. *Agni The Journal*, Published On 15th October, 1984, <https://agnionline.bu.edu/poetry/the-seasons-of-the-plains/>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Anzar. *Tonight Ghazal by Agha Shahid Ali a Brief Summary*, <https://medium.com/aghahashidali/tonight-ghazal-by-gha-shahid-ali-a-brief-summary-d4ed1065f902>. Accessed On 22^{ns} January, 2023.
- Badayuni, Shakil. “Ai Mohabbat Tire Anjaam Pe Ronaa Aayaa”. *Rekhta*, <https://www.rekhta.org/ghazals/ai-mohabbat-tire-anjaam-pe-ronaa-aayaa-shakeel-badayuni-ghazals?lang=hi>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Dickinson, Emily. “I Am Ashamed-I Hide”. *All Poetry*, <https://allpoetry.com/I-Am-Ashamed-I-Hide>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Faiz, Ahmad Faiz. “Best of Faiz Ahmad Faiz Ghazals” *Rdshayri.Com*, <https://www.rdshayri.com/faiz-ahmad-faiz-ghazals/>. Accessed on 22nd January, 2023.

- Hamid, Wafa. “ A Desolation called Peace: Kashmir, Kaschmir, Cashmere in Agha Shahid Ali’s poetry”. *The Guftgu Collection, Indian Cultural Forum*, 30th September, 2019, <https://indianculturalforum.in/2019/09/30/a-desolation-called-peace-kashmir-kaschmir-cashmere-in-agma-shahid-alis-poetry/> . Accessed on 1st August, 2023.
- Jamshaid, Arif. “Epic of Heer-Ranjha”. *Academy of the Punjab in North America English Articles*, The news Karachi Edition, retrieved on 14th November, 2020, <https://apnaorg.com/prose-content/english-articles/page-7/article-2/index.html>. Accessed on 28th June, 2023.
- Pound, Ezra. “In A Station of The Metro”. *Poetry Foundation*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/12675/in-a-station-of-the-metro>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023
- Stevens, Wallace. “The Snow Man”. *Lit Charts*. <https://www.litcharts.com/poetry/wallace-stevens/the-snow-man>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Yeats, William Butler. “The Two Trees”. *Poetry Archive*. <https://www.poetryarchive.com/y/the-two-trees.html>. Accessed On 22nd January, 2023.
- Zaidi, Nishat. *Makers of Indian literature Agha Shahid Ali*. Sahitya Akademi, 2014.

Our Esteemed Contributors

- **Dr Pankaj Bala Srivastava**, Associate Professor & Head, Department of English, Mahila Vidyalaya Degree College, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India.
- **Koel Basak**, Department of Amity Institute of English Studies and Research, Amity University Kolkata, Rajarhat, Newtown, West Bengal.
- **Dr. Rafraf Shakil Ansari**, Assistant Professor, Sharda University, India.
- **Dr Pradip Mondal**, Assistant Professor of English, Govt. P. G. College Munsyari, Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, India.
- **Balpreet Singh**, Assistant Professor, Department of English, GGSDS College, Chandigarh, India.
- **Sharuk Rahaman**, Ph. D. Scholar, Department of English Literature, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.
- **Tanvi M. Pujara**, Research Scholar, Department of English and CLS, Saurashtra University, Rajkot, Gujarat.