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# Editorial

The October 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 September 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 four research/critical articles and 2 poetries. 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

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# Hope, Resilience and Perseverance in Cormac McCarthy's Wasteland

**Md. Asif Nawaz and Jayed Ul Ehsan**

***Submitted 05/08/2023 Revised 25/09/2023 Accepted 30/09/2023, Published 31/10/2023***

**Abstract:** This paper investigates the thematic and narrative elements of Cormac McCarthy's novel, *The Road*. The novel, though built on a pessimistic foundation, portrays a painful and prolonged journey towards hope by its two protagonists. McCarthy seizes the opportunity to sketch a "mapless" post-apocalyptic wasteland that reflects the body of growing anxieties and concerns found in contemporary climate and apocalyptic fiction. This study primarily focuses on the narrative aspect of hope, resilience, and perseverance depicted in the novel. It aims to identify the intricate interrelations between these elements that convey the concept of a directionally challenged "storyworld" with minimal prospects for survival. Additionally, the research explores the pivotal role of hope, resilience and perseverance constructing this apocalypse narrative. Furthermore, it examines how McCarthy's narrative style, reminiscent of some of his earlier southern novels, has contributed to shaping his fictional world of this novel. Through the exploration of these themes and narrative techniques, this paper seeks to shed light on the underlying message of perseverance and resilience amidst the harshest of circumstances, making *The Road* a compelling and thought-provoking work of literature.

**Keywords: Hope, Resilience, Perseverance, Post-apocalyptic Narrative, Climate Fiction**

## Introduction:

The flood narrative in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is noteworthy as a cautionary tale. It acts as a diversion from Gilgamesh's quest and highlights the folly of the gods to unleash a destructive flood on humanity (Kline 25). It also underlines the strength of human rebellion in the face of divine absurdity. The flood account is presented to show that humans can examine the essence of human life, even when it appears to contravene divinely set laws. Christopher and Lomas thinks that this narrative serves as a reminder of Gilgamesh's act of defiance against the gods, reflects his will to strive as a mortal to must strive for his place in order to achieve something that looks impractical and beyond human capabilities (4). Similarly, the story of Noah and the flood can be found well presented in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

McCarthy's novel *The Road* does not depict a literal flood, it does explore themes of loss, rebirth, and the quest for meaning in a lonely and dreary world. Like the flood tale in Gilgamesh, the novel examines the human ability for perseverance, revolt against hardship, and the search for something better in a harsh and cruel world. The novel's philosophical ideas take us to the space in the face of immense catastrophe, which

is mirrored in *The Road*'s characters, the father and the son, who cling to hope. They also form a deep bondage while traversing a barren and hazardous world. Their resolve to quit was distinguished not only by their activities and the timeless spirit that guided their existence in a post-apocalyptic world. Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space* delves into the emotional reaction and psychological influence of the areas we dwell, such as the house, the attic, the cellar, and the forest (16). He argues that memory, places and dreams have a vastness that can be understood by the nature of "Intimate Immensity" which is the relationship between images and in the "power of the word" (202-212). In the same vein, The *Road* is often seen as a sign of freedom and adventure, which reflects the means of a reluctant exploration of the world and discovering new experiences. It also represents the duality of a physical journey or a metaphorical one. Nevertheless, it is the journey of self-discovery in a pathless and undesired location. This paper explores the core narrative of the novel while examining the ideas of hope, resilience and perseverance in Cormac McCarthy's haunting tale.

**_The Road_ and it's Influences:**

The narrative philosophy of Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* is distinct with its storyworld and narrative formation, unlike other post-apocalypse and climate fiction (cli-fi) novels like Stephen King's *The Stand*, Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven*, Mike Mulin's *Ashfall*, John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, Kim Stanley Robinson's *The Ministry* for the Future, and collected stories. His work bears certain connections with Southern Gothic in terms of its investigation of dark, perverse, horrible, and transgressive human qualities, akin to what Edgar Alan Poe, one of the founding figures in southern gothic, has sketched out in his writings. Southern Gothic literature has its own lineage in the Freudian concept of repression, according Bjerre, it assumes "concrete forms in the shape of ghosts that highlight everything that has gone unsaid in the official version of southern history (Southern Gothic Literature)". Cormac McCarthy is without a doubt the most well-known Southern Gothic author working today. McCarthy's writing career began with four Appalachian Tennessee-set novels: *The Orchard Keeper* (1965), *Outer Dark* (1968), *Child of God* (1973), and *Suttree* (1979). These works are influenced by the Southern Gothic tradition, founded by Poe, and later developed by William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor. McCarthy's horror-driven and allegorical artistic style is paired, according to Lydia Cooper, with "with historically rooted commentary on social ills, such as issues of race, class, urbanization, and industrialization, to bring into focus repressed social anxieties" (41).

**Moral Compass and Perseverance:**

David Brian's novel *The Postman*, perhaps has provided some direct influence in the world building of *The Road*. Gordon Krantz the central character realized at some point in the novel that "All legends must

be based on lies; Gordon realized. We exaggerate, and even come to believe the tales, after a while" (Brian 221). He refers to oral tradition, in which stories are passed down from generation to generation. As stories are passed down through the generations, details may be changed, exaggerated, or idealized, resulting in the construction of legends and myths. These stories frequently take on a life of their own, becoming part of the community's collective psyche. This message has also been reflected in Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*; the protagonist Atticus Finch says that "The one thing that doesn't abide by majority rule is a person's conscience" (Lee 120). He was referring to the main idea of the book, which is that while the majority may agree, each person is deeply aware of the truth. Everybody is responsible for taking initiative and acting morally.

*The Road* is a sophisticated and self-conscious tale that is primarily guided by the boy's moral compass and without a map. McCarthy's narrative is natural, and its weaving pulls us into a hunt for a specific area where the "good guys" reside. This idea appears to be a difficult choice for the author in a seemingly nihilistic world cemented by death and despair because in Noha's tale what intervened was what Aristotle calls "Deus ex machina" which is the divine presence, but here in the novel, everything is dark from the aftershock of the external "event". As Russel indicates, the novel's darkening environment is "far more difficult to render [into] a dreadful world while simultaneously conjuring an alternative with such clarity of vision that its truth is likewise questionable" (p. 68).

The novel takes place after a global catastrophe. Ash covers the sunlight, and most animals and humans are extinct. The father and the boy usually sleep in the forest "the blackness [exists] to harm [ears] with listening" (McCarthy 14), and to the father it feels like, making each night "sightless and impenetrable". Days are gloomy. All trees are "charred and limbless". The father and the boy travel south to find solace by the sea in a harsh world of lone travelers and cannibalistic gangs. The father dreams of a blind cave monster. He moves south in pursuit of warmth despite not keeping a calendar for over a year. The work depicts a journey to comprehend our place in the world, not a specific location. It is gloomy and lifeless. No maps emphasize the story's journey and revelations.

In his visions, the father sees his wife emerging from green leaves like a bride. In other dreams, he and the boy travel through a "flowering wood" with birds and a clear sky. "The call of languor and of death" (McCarthy 17) makes the parent doubt these lovely dreams. Even though he fears the old world will be lost, he tries to wake up from the lovely dreams. Using a shopping cart for refuge, the characters head south. The father remembers his wife and the color of the sun while watching the forest fire that made him compile a list. The father's spatial relationship with his surroundings creates the "desolating act of

displacement" that Cassy calls "exterocentric movement from a real imagined palace of familiarity into unknown marginal areas where dissolution is prone to found and experienced" (194).

The father recalls the chaos after the disaster and reflects on crime and judgment. He and the boy travel through the forest facing cold, hunger, and exhaustion. The boy asks if they will die, and the father assures him they will not and are moving south for warmth. The father also says he would like to kill the boy first rather than be food to cannibals. As Jay Ellis thinks that the Father not necessarily worries about being dead rather his response would be termed as the reaction to the idea of the conscience which is the ‘‘construction of the possibilities of space into a fixed set of circumstances" where his death means nothing while it is primer that the boy must carry the "fire" or the "ark" and the "chalice" which means that their importance of the "Place is ontological, space existential" (17).

One of the instances when the father lies awake, wishing his "heart were stone", as watching his son fall asleep. The following morning, the guy mumbles a prayer, pleading with God to "throttle" and "damn" him. After that, they leave and go through a deserted city. The guy informs the boy that "What you put in your head is there forever? Yes" (McCarthy 106). as they pass a shriveled body in a doorway the significance of this event later has implications in the inner thinking of the Boy as he finds himself thinking as in particular, using elements from the grail story which assimilates the boy as Perceval and the grail, the father as the comatose Fisher King and their treacherous voyage to revive the possibility of healing (Cooper 222). They scavenge abandoned buildings for food in cold, exposure, and famine as the boy imagines a baby which is his extended family, that affirms his leeway to continue carrying the fire as he suggests that "If we had that little baby it could go with us" (McCarthy 111) and the bay becomes his way of navigating through the rubble of ruins of America.

After roaming and starving, when they found a home with additional canned food, they felt happy as some old memories came back but the sea that they were rooting for as a solace was dull and hopeless. This led the father feeling abandoned by God and the "good guys", they discharge the flare pistol, one night. Among other things, the desperate father stays with the boy when he has fever. Once the boy recovers, they tour the beach and find their cart and possessions stolen. As they follow the thief down the street, the father threatens him with the revolver. Despite the boy's sobs and pleadings, the father strips the thief before taking back their cart and leaving him freezing on the road. This led the boy to question their moral motif again. When the father dies, from an injury that he suffered from an assassin, he urges the boy to carry the last bit of hope that they have. The boy eventually finds some "good guys" and decides to trust them. This incident separates the boy from the father whose moral convictions are better than the father.

The novel ends with a beautiful reminiscence of mountain stream brook trout to spread further hope to the readers.

**Hope and Resilience Amidst Passivity**

*The Road* is a continuation of prior works that garnered McCarthy a critical audience and a Hollywood fan following, most notably *Blood Meridian* in 1985. William Dalrymple, the multi-award-winning historian, writer, and broadcaster, dubbed this work the "great American novel" (William Dalrymple: *Blood Meridian* is the Great American work). McCarthy's Hollywood debut came with the film version of his 2005 novel *No Country for Old Man,* which won four Academy Awards, including best picture. McCarthy's themes include racial tension, social class, the capitalist hegemonic destruction of the middle class, and the significant use of local language. In a letter to the author and literary critic John Peale Bishop McCarthy wrote that "Personally, I feel there is no hope for us" (Gray and Robinson 3).

American South has cultural and political success in American literature. Southern authors have shaped international literature. The neighborhood has produced writers such as Thomas Hardy, William Faulkner, John Grisham, Anne Tyler, J. D. Salinger, and Harper Lee. The South had an impact on authors such as Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, and Charles Brockden Brown. Some other noteworthy authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, James Fenimore Cooper, Carson McCullers, Margaret Mitchell, Ralph Ellison, and Toni Morrison all lived in the South. Most of them published their first books there. Cormac McCarthy's place in southern literature is quite unique like his southern root which almost made him an outsider as author Lindsay Pernell considers his lineage to the south as "is a displaced Northerner, who has become an adopted and proud son of the South" (Cormac McCarthy: Southern Literature's Adopted Son). McCarthy, according to Kollin, developed his own atmosphere of "fraught human interactions" and "more-than humans" in his own storyworld throughout dozens of novels and movies (216). Aside from the early successes of southern gothic, McCarthy's novel *The Road* has a more unsettling aura of the future, as Kollin also believes that this novel has accumulated all the major environmental disasters and the inevitability of human death in a single narrative of a boy and his father (225).

Hope and resilience have been the dominant themes in the novel's core story where the readers could see the overwhelming level of optimism from the father and the boy to reach a certain destination where there are "good guys" and vegetation which Russell claims as "the conduit to that destination" (McCarthy 345). The novel has chased the American myth of the frontier with familiar confusion that resonates John Ronald Reuel Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* in the voice of Samwise Gamgee, the hobbit, "It's the job that's never started as takes longest to finish" (361). This idea of finding the right "job" can be seen as a

symbolic gesture about the nature and role of the disaster that shaped the novel's core story lies in its straightforward mode of storytelling.

McCarthy's negativity was accompanied by persistence and hope throughout the story. The father frequently dreams about his wife, who committed suicide to prevent rape and murder. She experienced tremendous psychosis, losing control of her mental space, and declares,

"They will rape me. They're going to rape him. They're going to rape, kill, and devour us, and you're not going to face it. You'd rather sit back and watch it happen. But I'm afraid I can't. I'm afraid I can't" (McCarthy 33).

Paranoia is caused by war and sadness. Cannibalism and a lack of vegetation in the narrative represent a destroyed world from which the mother believed her suicide would allow her to flee.

McCarthy faced personal challenges from his relationship with his eleven year old son and his worries about the future of the world while putting them together in a singular tale that expands an affectionate bond between a father and son beyond the nature and face of post-doomsday America. In one of his interviews in the Wall Street Journal, he stated that "a lot of the lines that are in there are verbatim conversations my son John and I had" (Jurgensen), but in the case of *The Road* "he had no clue where it was going as he wrote it" (Conlon). McCarthy has considered the events of present climate issues as "[the] signpost and [your] guide"; he also added that, "You can't plot things out. You just must trust in, you know, wherever it comes from (McCarthy)."

The novel's main topic, hope, is concentrated on the characters' moral quandaries that separate the "good guys" and the "bad guys". McCarthy's representation of sadness in the novel is distinctive in terms of how the narrative storyworld and visions of dread are handled. This novel, according to Monbiot, is one of the most significant environmental novels ever written since "[i]t contains no graphs, tables, facts, figures, warnings, predictions, or even arguments. McCarthy focuses on the possible outcomes rather than the likelihood" (2). Cooper asserts that, "[T]he novel's initial draft title was *The Grail*, a title symbolic of the narrative arc in which a dying father goes on a mission to preserve his son, whom he imagines to be a chalice" (219). She also claims that the grail narrative in this story is more mythical, as the father and son traverse the "unreal" landscape and their burnt, dreary world. Establish the medieval grail tale before delving into the storyline (ibid). The earliest account of literature about the Grail story is the unfinished work by Chrétien de Troyes called, *Perceval, the Story of the Grail*, which relates how, after his knight father died in battle, his mother reared Percival in the forest (Tether 5). When the boy first sees Arthurian knights in their splendor, he is perplexed (Troyes 4). He abandons her mother in order to find the Grail,

which he learnt from his mother, bringing her suffering and death. The grail story goes inside people's heads and causes the story to end. *The Road*, like Troyes' story, is about hope and the triumph of good over evil on both an intellectual and ethical level but it does not end in a positive high note rather forces its readers to speculate about the future.

**Conclusion**

McCarthy's vision of a wasteland appears to be an extended paranoia that works as an understanding of a proper concern as it connects both ends of modern paranoia of mercantile tendencies to signify the protagonist duo's pilgrimage towards a blurred positivity despite the presence of negativity everywhere. *The Road* is a new style of literature that rejects the postmodern situation in favor of exploring posthuman circumstances. However, the boy's ambition in the story is philosophical, but it travels into the last scene where there is a memory of the Trout, which is extinct, but it flickers a hope that the boy as a symbol of regeneration might flicker fresh hope for the rest of the world. By abandoning traditional navigation, the novel aspires to "eternal nothingness" and the need to adhere to a fundamental hope. The two fundamental concepts of nihilism and optimism play important roles towards the novel's conclusion, giving the youngster a fighting chance as the world dies in one enormous disaster, yet it may always be brightened by a small flicker. Though the novel depicts a fictional wasteland, Cooper believes that the curative sense of the narrative is metaphysical as the image of the disaster is about future and worthy of notice as our current world is on a path that could potentially be something like that same barren, burnt, and ash laden planet. *The Road* from the very core of its existence ignites the readers' imagination which redirects the narrative loop against soundlessly in the dark. McCarthy portrays the boy as the last symbol of hope, resilience, perseverance and the ark that is the last fighting chance for humanity. The boy acts as a cure for contemporary toxins. The father's attempt to keep the kid alive may also be interpreted as a promise to the increasing tension that as inhabitants of the planet. McCarthy's philosophical stance in the novel pleaded us to perform the order of "carry[ing] the fire" from generation to generation.

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# Voices of Struggle: Pain and Injustice in Namdeo Dhasal's Poetry

**Nancy Bisht and Dr. Raf Raf Shakil Ansari**

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**Abstract**: Namdeo Dhasal (1949-2014), a prominent figure in Dalit literature and activism, employed his poetic voice to vehemently confront the pain and injustice experienced by marginalized communities within the rigid framework of the caste system in India. Namdeo Dhasal's poetry stands as a visceral and unflinching exploration of pain and injustice deeply rooted within the social fabric of India. His verses resonate with the anguish of marginalized communities, particularly Dalits, who have historically endured systemic discrimination. Dhasal's words cut through the veneer of societal norms, exposing the raw wounds of oppression and the suffocating weight of caste hierarchy. In his poetry, pain is not merely a sensation; it's a lived experience that is palpable in every stanza. His language is marked by its rawness, painting vivid images of suffering and resilience. His verses evoke the physical and emotional torment faced by Dalits, casting an unapologetic spotlight on their daily struggles. The pain in his poetry is both personal and universal, capturing the collective trauma of a community sidelined by societal norms. This study delves into Dhasal's poetry, examining how he artfully weaved together his personal experiences, collective suffering, and a searing critique of social inequality. Through an analysis of key poems, this study explores how Dhasal's evocative language, vivid imagery, and unfiltered emotions conveyed the raw realities of discrimination, oppression, and the enduring struggle for equality. By shedding light on Dhasal's poetic lens, this study seeks to illuminate the transformative power of his words in fostering awareness, empathy, and a collective call for social change.

**Keywords**- Caste, Dalit literature, Equality, Justice, Protest, Social injustice.

## Introduction: Tracing the History of Dalits in India

The history of India is a tapestry woven with the threads of diverse cultures, languages, and religions. Yet, underlying this intricate fabric lies a deeply entrenched system of social hierarchy known as the caste system. Within this system, Dalits, also referred to as Scheduled Castes or Untouchables, occupy a unique and often painful position. The term 'Dalit' itself signifies 'oppressed' or 'broken' encapsulating the centuries of discrimination, marginalization, and injustice faced by this community. To understand the current social landscape of India and the struggles for equality that persist, one must trace the historical trajectory of the Dalits; a journey marked by resilience, resistance, and a relentless pursuit of social justice.

The roots of the caste system can be traced back to ancient scriptures and texts, wherein society was stratified into rigid hierarchies based on occupation and birth. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the Dalits, who were often relegated to menial and degrading tasks. Their mere presence was perceived as polluting, leading to a practice of untouchability, wherein Dalits were subjected to segregation, denied access to public spaces, and treated as social outcasts. Over the centuries, various socio-political forces and movements have shaped the trajectory of Dalit history. The Bhakti movement, which emerged in the medieval period, challenged the caste hierarchy by emphasizing individual devotion to a higher power, irrespective of one's birth. However, it wasn't until the 20th century that Dalits began organizing themselves more assertively to challenge their subjugation.

Figures like Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, an architect of India's Constitution and a prominent Dalit leader, played a pivotal role in advocating for the rights and dignity of Dalits. Ambedkar's fight for social justice and equal rights culminated in his conversion to Buddhism as a rejection of the caste system's oppression. His actions sparked a movement of Dalits embracing Buddhism as a path to liberation. The latter half of the 20th century witnessed the rise of the Dalit Panthers movement, which sought to address the systemic injustices faced by Dalits through activism, protests, and literature. Authors like Namdeo Dhasal, and many others, channeled their creativity to spotlight the pain, suffering, and aspirations of the Dalit community, effectively creating a literary movement that articulated their struggles. In contemporary India, affirmative action policies have been implemented to uplift Dalits through reservations in education, government jobs, and politics. These efforts have sparked debates about equity, representation, and the delicate balance between addressing historical injustices and creating a harmonious society.

The history of Dalits in India is one of resilience in the face of adversity. It is a narrative that encapsulates a journey from subjugation to assertion, from untouchability to empowerment. Understanding this history is crucial not only for comprehending the complexities of Indian society but also for acknowledging the ongoing struggles for equality and justice that continue to shape the nation's future.

**The Essence of Dalit Literature in India**

Literature, as a mirror to society, reflects the multifaceted realities of human existence, both individual and collective. In the diverse landscape of Indian literature, one narrative stands out distinctively; Dalit literature. Rooted in the experiences of the marginalized, oppressed, and often silenced Dalit communities, this literary movement serves as a poignant testimony to the struggles, aspirations, and resilience of those historically relegated to the fringes of society. "Dalit Literature is a challenge to the varna system which has placed sudras to the lower strata" *(Arora 220)*. Dalit literature emerges not only as a form of artistic

expression but also as a powerful tool for social transformation, shedding light on the complexities of caste-based discrimination, systemic injustice, and the enduring quest for equality.

The origins of Dalit literature can be traced back to the 19th century when reformist movements sought to challenge the entrenched caste hierarchy. However, it was in the mid-20th century that Dalit literature began to coalesce into a distinct and coherent voice. Inspired by the ideals of social justice and empowerment, writers from Dalit communities embarked on a journey to reclaim their narratives, transcend their historical subjugation, and demand a rightful place in the literary canon.

Dalit literature is characterized by its unflinching exploration of the harsh realities faced by Dalit individuals; untouchability, discrimination, exploitation, and socio-economic deprivation. These narratives challenge the conventional portrayals of caste, presenting an alternative perspective that confronts the often glossed-over truths of Indian society. Through vivid storytelling, evocative imagery, and an infusion of personal experiences, Dalit literature pierces through the layers of social veneer, exposing the systemic injustices that persist. “If there is anything like Dalit literature, it is something created by superimposing the idiom of social sciences upon literary criticism, which has adequate methodological and terminological resources of its own to deal more than descriptively with literary movements” *(Chitre 93).*

One of the cornerstones of Dalit literature is its exploration of identity; the journey of self-discovery and self-acceptance amid a society that frequently devalues Dalit lives. This literature celebrates the complexities of Dalit identity, revealing the rich tapestry of emotions, struggles, and aspirations that define individuals within these communities. Dalit literature is not just a literary movement, it’s a political statement, a cultural revival, and a means of advocacy. It serves as a platform for Dalit writers to reclaim their narratives, challenge the normative discourses, and assert their presence in the literary arena. These narratives not only empower the writers themselves but also resonate with readers from all walks of life, fostering empathy and awareness about the intricacies of caste-based discrimination. This is a journey to unravel the depths of human experience, transcending geographical and temporal boundaries. This literary movement challenges us to confront uncomfortable truths, contemplate the evolving dynamics of social change, and envision a society where every voice is heard, every story valued, and every individual treated with the dignity they deserve. In doing so, Dalit literature illuminates the path towards a more just, inclusive, and compassionate India.

**Namdeo Dhasal: Champion of Subaltern Voices, Catalyst of Change**

Namdeo Dhasal, a luminary of modern Indian literature, carved an indelible niche as a poet, activist, and voice of the oppressed. Born in the crucible of caste-based discrimination and societal inequity, Dhasal

emerged as a literary force dedicated to capturing the raw essence of pain, injustice, and resilience that defines the marginalized communities in India. “The poetry of Dhasal, starting from the late 1960s, documents all the tribulations and changes that came in the lives of the Dalits” *(Suri 90)*. His poetry serves as an unfiltered conduit for the silenced narratives of Dalits and other marginalized groups, painting a vivid picture of their struggles against a backdrop of a deeply unequal society.

Dhasal’s poetic oeuvre is a profound exploration of themes that reflect the harsh realities of his lived experience, and by extension, the collective suffering of his community. His verses navigate the labyrinth of pain, injustice, identity, and resistance, unveiling the multifaceted struggles and triumphs that define the lives of the oppressed. Themes of caste-based discrimination, economic disparities, and the yearning for dignity pervade his poetry, forming the tapestry of a narrative that exposes the fault lines of a society divided by privilege and prejudice.

The essence of Dhasal’s writing lies not only in the themes he addresses but also in the unique stylistic flair he employs. His verses are characterized by their raw intensity, stark imagery, and a fearless confrontation of societal norms. Dhasal’s language is poignant and piercing, capturing the visceral emotions of pain and anger, while also illuminating the sparks of hope and resilience that persist in the face of adversity. His words do not merely describe experiences; they immerse the reader in the very essence of the pain and suffering he seeks to convey.

Dhasal’s poetry is a mosaic of emotions, where anger, sorrow, and determination converge to create a compelling narrative that resonates with the marginalized. His ability to blend personal experiences with larger societal issues grants his work a universal appeal, transcending individual stories to become a clarion call for social change. Through his eloquence, Dhasal serves as a guiding light for those who have been marginalized, silenced, and oppressed, reminding them that their voices are not only heard but also celebrated in the realm of literature.

This exploration will delve into the themes that course through Dhasal’s poetry, capturing the essence of pain, injustice, and resilience that define his verses. It will also dissect his unique style of writing, which ignites emotion, challenges conventions, and invites readers to confront the uncomfortable truths embedded within society’s structures. In doing so, it will unearth the profound impact of Namdeo Dhasal, a poet whose words illuminate the darkness, empowering the marginalized and kindling the flames of change.

**Namdeo Dhasal's Contribution and the Significance of His Work**

Dhasal contributions extend beyond mere words; they encompass a legacy of social change, an unyielding call for justice, and a testament to the power of art to catalyze transformation. His work, both poetic and activist, holds immense significance for its role in reshaping perceptions, challenging the status quo, and fostering a collective consciousness about the issues that plague society. Dhasal's poetry, often referred to as 'Dalit Panther Poems', reverberates with the collective pulse of the oppressed. His verses, rooted in his own experiences as a Dalit, magnify the suffering, resilience, and aspirations of a community that has endured generations of discrimination. Dhasal's ability to encapsulate raw emotions and give them poetic form creates an empathetic bridge between the reader and the marginalized, breaking down barriers of ignorance and indifference.

Dhasal's poetry is an unflinching critique of the caste-based inequalities that permeate Indian society. His verses serve as a mirror, reflecting the ugliness of untouchability, social hierarchy, and the trauma borne by Dalit communities. Through vivid imagery and bold language, Dhasal shines a light on the darkest corners of caste discrimination, compelling readers to confront uncomfortable truths. Dhasal's literary voice was also a vehicle for protest. His poetry became a powerful means of resisting the oppression that Dalits faced. He challenged the normalized oppression, speaking against the established norms that perpetuated injustice. Dhasal's words did not merely lament; they revolted, instigating thought and igniting conversations about the urgent need for change.

**Namdeo Dhasal's Poetry: A Window into the World of Pain and Injustice of the Marginalized**

Dhasal wrote several influential poems that address the issues of social inequality, discrimination, and the struggles of the marginalized. His poetic works serve as a powerful lens through which we can peer into the stark realities of pain and injustice faced by marginalized communities. His verses, often raw and unapologetic, provide a poignant narrative that unearths the struggles and hardships endured by those on the fringes of society. Such narratives are discussed in the paper highlighting the poems *'Man, You Should Explode', 'Their Orthodox Piety', 'I Slew the Seven Horses of the Chariot of the Sun'* and *'The Tree of Violence'*.

In order to break the social stigma and assert Dalit identity in Indian society as an equal but separate caste identity, Dalit literature was created. Namdeo Dhasal used poetry as a potent tool to highlight the plight of people who have endured prolonged oppression and have a painful past. *'A Current of Blood'* is one of the most important collections in Dalit poetry. These collections of poems are solely the poet's voice, an attempt to educate readers about the suffering endured by Dalits and to provide a fresh aesthetic.

> "Dhasal sings the song of equality and unity among Hindu people who are divided into Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, and Shudras in the opening poem of the collection A Current of Blood, 'Man, You Should Explode'. By offering suggestions like smoking hash, chewing opium, carrying knives and weapons, using abusive language, engaging in rapes and murders, carrying acid bulbs, destroying police stations and educational institutions, etc., the poet implores men to engage in all manner of sinful activities that may destroy humanity and good in society. Additionally, these men should keep waging caste wars and riots in their communities in order to completely transform into savages and evil individuals who are capable of going above and beyond what is expected of humans" *(Bajaj 340).*

Dhasal used to mock ongoing human behaviour in Indian society. The poet strongly disapproves of caste wars, acts of violence committed in the context of community and caste, jealousy and hatred that caste creates among people, etc. In keeping with the idea that maintaining humanity as a single, interconnected family is possible, Dhasal writes in *'Man, You Should Explode'*:

> "One should regard the sky as one's grandpa, the earth as one's grandma
> And coddled by them everybody should bask in mutual love
> Man, one should act so bright as to make the Sun and the Moon seem pale
> One should share each morsel of food with everyone else, one should
> compose a hymn
> To humanity itself, man, man should sing only the song of man" *(Dhasal 11).*

The above quote is a profound and eloquent expression of Dhasal's humanistic and egalitarian philosophy. Dhasal envisions a world where love, compassion, unity, and a shared sense of humanity prevail over divisions and conflicts. His words reflect a vision of a harmonious and equitable society where individuals recognize their interconnectedness with each other and the natural world, striving to make the world a better place through their actions and collective efforts. Dhasal, a socially and politically engaged member of the Dalit Panther movement, possessed a deep understanding of the historical and social realities surrounding the aristocratic and landlord class. He castigates them as the architects of the suffering endured by Dalits. In his poem *'Their Orthodox Pity,'* Dhasal illuminates the callousness of those who, having enjoyed life's bounties, have forsaken Dalits, leaving them in a state of subjugation and obscurity. Throughout history, justice has predominantly rested in the hands of the affluent, relegating the oppressed class to a position deserving of nothing more than sympathy. Thus, the poet uses the following lines in *'Their Orthodox Pity'* to vent his rage towards the wealthy class:

"In this lowered life imposed on us, not even a pavement belongs to us
They've made us so helpless; being human's become nauseating to us
We can't find even dust to fill up our scorched bowels
The rising day of justice, like a bribed person, favours only the
While we are being slaughtered, not even a sigh for us escapes their generous
hands" *(Dhasal 21).*

"In another poem titled *'I Slew the Seven Horses of the Chariot of the Sun,'* Dhasal personifies the Sun as a passive observer permitting the atrocities faced by Dalits. The poet directly addresses the Sun, blaming it for not shining its fire on the powerful class, allowing oppressive authorities to maintain control over the oppressed. Dhasal expresses his anguish over the hardships his community faces by metaphorically depicting his suffering and condemning the affluent class, landlords, and feudal lords responsible for depriving his community of social standing and economic stability. Various metaphors, such as 'the beguiling spy,' 'the heartless rock in heaven,' 'the illustrator of the peopled world,' 'the distortion of fire,' 'the devil,' and 'the wretched one,' are employed by Dhasal to describe the Sun" *(Bajaj 342).* In his letter to the Sun, Dhasal states:

"Nullify the fraudulent change of hands
That robbed us of our hands
Punish the landowners and the feudal lords;
Whom caste and money have made powerful and arrogant
Return to us the rain that belongs to us
And irrigates our crops" *(Dhasal 84,85).*

Dhasal's poetry frequently critiques India's social structure and the prevailing hierarchy of the powerful and the weak. The poem *'The Tree of Violence'*, wherein Dhasal uncovers the real persons behind violence, uses the potent metaphor of a tree to represent violence. In the poet's tale, a tree transforms into a ferocious creature that devours the lives of anyone who comes into contact with it. According to Dhasal's *'The Tree of Violence'*, the metaphorical tree here for violence is deeply rooted:

"The tree couldn't be broken.
The tree couldn't be sawed off.
Not even a chip of its bark would come off.
Why doesn't the tree break? " *(Dhasal 38).*

The root of the tree here personifies as the cause of cruelty and it is found in the homes of capitalists, zamindars and members of the ruling class. They feed the tree of violence, which eventually ensnares Dalits and residents of ghettos. Dalits frequently become the targets of violence because they are defenseless and helpless. In this poem, Dhasal draws attention to how the Dalits were mistreated during creation of a new country:

> "Really, the tree cannot die
> But multiply it will- by the hundreds, by the thousands, by the millions, and by
> the billions The public will kill it in broad daylight
> It will overflow into rice-fields, and foul up Parliament, it will run
> Over the ghettos of the untouchables, the mangs and the mehtars,
> The mahars, and the chambhars, into the fields and into the factories" *(Dhasal 41).*

Namdeo's poetry, without a doubt, raises a forceful protest opposing the injustices that Dalits face. The upper class has long ignored this class, which has raised awareness and turned poetry into a vehicle for them to demand their equal place in community. According to the poet, "Both my individual and my collective life have been through such tremendous upheavals that if my personal life did not have poetry to fall back on I would not have reached thus far. I would have become a top gangster, the owner of a brothel, or a smuggler" *(Dhasal 112).*

In order to effect change in society, the Dalit community as a whole has suffered atrocities that reflect in poetry as a result of the poet's journey from repression to assertion, like Dhasal. Following a protracted period of Dalit repression, Dhasal breaks the stillness and becomes the people's voice. He opposes the actions taken by the upper castes against Dalits and calls for an end to their discriminatory practices. He focuses on the need to alter the upper- caste's mindset, saying that they must first change their own behaviour before criticising others.

The political and literary interests of Babasaheb Ambedkar have had a significant impact on Dhasal. Dhasal turned into an ardent supporter of Dr. Ambedkar, Acharya Narendra Dev and Ram Manohar Lohia. He conveys regard to Babasaheb as a messiah who transformed the way they live and adds a source of peace and certainty. Through his words, his admiration for Dr. Ambedkar is evident;

> "Once you develop a taste for knowledge, you begin to grow fast. If you do not have a vision, you become a problem unto yourself. I never became a problem to myself. I became a socialist; but as soon as I saw the hollowness of it, I turned to communism. However, whatever I did, my foundation was Ambedkar's vision" *(Dhasal 112).*

Chitre (2007) in his essay *'Namdeo's Mumbai'* on Namdeo Dhasal, explains the Dalit teachings that Dhasal received. According to Dhasal, being a Dalit entails being denied free access to water. Being conscious that Dalits are a product of a unique experience with a unique soil—an unproductive area of land that others do not want to till—is what it means to be a Dalit. He regularly questioned the essence of Indian democracy and produced a number of political poems. Dhasal penned a lot of poems when his organisation, the Dalit Panthers, was at its strongest phase. In his words, "My so-called political poems belong to that rich period of my life when Dalit Panther was on the right track. That is where the force in these poems comes from" *(Dhasal 116).*

**Conclusion**

Namdeo Dhasal's poetry indeed serves as an invaluable window into the world of pain and injustice experienced by marginalized communities. Through his powerful verses, he acts as both a source and a vehicle for asserting profound truths about the lives of the oppressed classes, truths that were often concealed or overlooked by the general public. Dhasal's earlier poetry reflects a more assertive, forceful, and scathing criticism of the dominant forces that perpetuated the oppression of lower strata in society. His words cut through the layers of hegemonic expression to reveal the harsh realities faced by the marginalized.

As his poetic journey evolved, Dhasal's focus shifted from being outspoken against the oppressors to critiquing the injustices endured by his own tribe and the broader Dalit community. He delved into the countless tragedies, hardships, and personal experiences, drawing from his own birth in a Dalit caste. Through it all, Dhasal refused to surrender to despair and continued to write prolifically, ultimately emerging as the unmistakable voice of the Dalit community in the 20th century. The social and political impact of Dhasal's writings is profound and enduring. His poetry played a pivotal role in raising awareness about the systemic discrimination and violence faced by marginalized communities in India. It fueled a sense of identity and pride among Dalits, inspiring them to assert their rights and demand justice. Dhasal's work contributed significantly to the broader social justice movements in India and helped pave the way for greater political representation and empowerment of marginalized groups. His poetry continues to inspire generations, serving as a testament to the enduring power of words to challenge oppression and champion the cause of the marginalized.

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# Linguistic Interface of Bangla and Angika: A Case of Language Contact

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**Abstract:**An attempt has been made in this paper to make an interface study between Bangla and Angika Language within the framework of Generative Phonology. Until the 1912 partition of West Bengal and Bihar, both the states were united by similar geographical conditions and there was language exchange through progressive language contact. Therefore, a certain kind of similarity among languages of a particular family can be expected to prevail. Also, languages spoken in neighbouring regions show certain phonologically and phonetically similar traits since there happens to be a lot of close contact situations between populations of adjacent regions. Both Bangla and Angika belong to Indo-Aryan language group, where Bangla uses Brahmi Script and Angika uses Devanagari script. Angika or Chhechha, is spoken predominantly in eastern Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, and in Nepal (Terai region). Whereas Bangla is predominantly used in West Bengal, alongside other states of Bihar, Assam, Orissa, Bangladesh, Tripura, etc. This paper deals with the phonetic-phonemic importation of two languages, Bangla and Angika. Every language is featured by its own phonemes and is characterised by unique properties that makes it different from the other. Through contrastive phonology, several phonemes of a language are put side by side and particular features of individual phonemes are experimented and are again analysed with phonemes of other languages. However, this is executed to compare and contrast the sound systems, especially the sound inventories of two or more languages.

**Keywords:** language contact, language family, sound inventory, interface, phoneme.

## Introduction:

Magadhan literature and manuscripts account for the fact that the original prototype, i.e., ‘Magadhi Apabhramsha’ has given rise to its several sister forms namely, Magahi, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Angika, Bangla, Oriya and Assamese. It can be assumed that during $8^{th}$ to $11^{th}$ century, through language contact, these languages were able to engage in linguistic diffusion among them, fill the gaps through possible repair strategies, in order to conform to their own Morpheme structure constraints, (i.e., constraints defined at the level of Underlying Representation of Magadhi language) and expand individually through morpho-phonological nativization. Modern day Indian languages of Aryan group were in the early developing stage till $8^{th}$ century AD. The later stage of language development, i.e., $8^{th}$ to $11^{th}$ century is a wide range of period and cannot be particularized as to which specific language developed in which particular time.

Linguists are of the opinion that most of the above-mentioned languages retrieved themselves back to Aryan language of India spoken during medieval age. These languages had to resort back to their prototype language family, i.e., Indo-Aryan language and import their inventory for rich vocabulary and improve their native language inventory, leading to morpho-phonemic adaptation.

**Bangla:**

Bangla originates from the New Indo-Aryan division of Indo-Aryan languages, which evolved in three stages comprising of: Old Indo-Aryan (1500 BC-500 BC), Middle Indo-Aryan (500 BC-1000 AD) and New Indo-Aryan (1000 AD-present). Buddhist and Jain texts, manuscripts, inscriptions used the Middle Indo-Aryan dialects where they applied 'Prakrit' (meaning 'natural') due to its comparatively simpler grammar and morpho-phonology. Prakrit was preferred to Classical Sanskrit (literally meaning 'refined') as Sanskrit was much complex and a refined form of language which had complex grammar, vocabulary and morpho-phonology, and therefore avoided by Buddhist and Jain texts. Among several of the Prakrit dialects, 'Ardhamagadhi' and 'Pali' deserves special mention for being utilized as religious texts of the period. The final stages of Middle Indo-Aryan comprise of the 'Apabhraṃsha' ('corrupt' in Sanskrit language) dialects; these dialects are 'genetically the closest predecessors of New Indo-Aryan languages such as Hindi and Bengali' (Masica 1991: 51-52). Around 10th century AD, Bangla had extreme evolution and was capable of attaining the status of an independent language. Since 16$^{th}$ century, Bangla came into an extreme language contact with diverse European languages, comprising French, Portuguese, English and Dutch. There are several languages of Magadhan subfamily (Indo-Aryan) that came into contact with Bangla are, Magadhi (Maithili, Angika, Bhojpuri, Hindi, Oriya, and Assamese). After being in contact situation, with Angika (our target language) the languages lead to a stable bilingualism and multilingualism for Bengalees. Bangla has 36 consonants and 21 vowels in its inventory. Total number of Bangla speaking population is about 300 million speakers across the world, out of which 97.2 million speakers are from India, while 100 million speakers live in Bangladesh (as it's the official language of Bangladesh).

**Angika:**

Angika is enlisted to the eastern group of Indo-Aryan languages with a speaker of approximate six crores, worldwide (www.angika.com). Though a majority of Angika speakers live in Indian states of Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, it is also spoken in some of the other Asian countries like Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Nepal. Until partition of West Bengal and Bihar in 1912, both Angika and Bangla had a huge contact situation and the speakers of both ranged widely during the period. But, according to

1971 census (provisional figures), as given in Languages and Script (People of India, National Series Volume IX-Appendix –V, page no. 27), Angika speakers were 4,23,502.

Angika is surrounded by the speakers of Maithili and Nepali in the North, Magahi in the Southwest, Santhali, Munda and Ho in the Southeast and Bengali in the East. The area of Angika speaking population is also called "Ang Pradesh". On the basis of research done in Angika by scholar Kantesh Kumar Singh in his M.Phil thesis (2005), "A contrastive phonological study of Angika and English," the language properties are as follows:

In the phonemic inventory of Angika, the total number of consonants is 29. There is a voiceless/voiced distinction and aspirated/unaspirated distinction for plosives. There is no such distinction for other consonants. There is a wide range of distribution of all sounds with a few exceptions. Consonant clusters are limited. Gemination for consonant in the medial position is phonemic. Total number of vowels are 14, monophthongs are 10 (short 5, long 5), diphthongs are 4. Generally, length and nasalisation are phonemic among vowels. Since the number of vowels varies after language contact with Bangla, several monophthongs and diphthongs came into being and started to be used by both the speakers (Bangla and Angika).

**Contact Language and Linguistic Interface**

The language contact theme can be presented through two distinct though complementary points of view: an institutional channel that manifests diverse contextual demands and operates as the primary source of cultural transmission, the second manifests it as a network of grammatical rules that gives sound correlations with the corresponding meanings and vice-versa, the two arbitrary poles that lose their arbitrariness as the system of rules that correlates them is utilized by the vast speech community.

Bangla has been in a language contact situation with Hindi and Angika (owing to their neighbouring regions) for more than two hundred years in the Bengal region (eastern India and Bangladesh), leading to the spontaneous linguistic diffusion of Bangla and Angika, and their code-switching between the Bengali groups. Although there has been hardly any research on Bangla-Angika contact, yet it is rational enough that Bangla and Angika may have linguistically affected each other through phonetic-phonological importation affecting changes at different levels: lexical, phonological and morpho-syntactic. According to the history of origin of languages, Bangla, Oriya, Assamese, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi and Angika are all sister languages. Both Angika and Bangla have originated from its prototype Magahi language. Linguists are of the view that Magahi originated from Magahi-Prakrit and Apabhramsa. Therefore, the languages mentioned above had their source prototype within Magahi and hence have been in close contact through

generations and exchanged phonemic-phonetic importation through language contact situations. These Bihari languages, viz., Magahi, Maithili, Bhojpuri and Angika had enormous linguistic diffusion among themselves, and with Bangla, as Bangla is their neighbouring sister language due to similar geographic boundaries (Bengal and Bihar were under same governing presidency of Kolkata until partition of 1912). Due to similar geographical location, Angika, Magahi, Maithili, Bhojpuri come under Bihari subgroup and has much of North western influence on one another. The political and cultural relationship between Angika and Bangla, specifically a type of phonemic exchange between the both stands remarkable. We can refer to fricatives like alveolar /s/, post alveolar /ʃ/ and palato-alveolar /S/. Linguists refer to post alveolar /ʃ/ to be the original sound present in Prakrit from which the other two fricatives originated and got incorporated into later varieties. From Prakrit, Magahi Prakrit originated, followed by Magahi language, which only used alveolar /s/ in its sound system. According to Grierson, these kinds of sound shifts occur due to North western political influence over the language. According to literary inscriptions from Ashoka's period, it can be deduced that the usage of alveolar /s/ has been in existence since Ashoka's time in Magadha. But the general public in Ashoka's province used post alveolar /ʃ/ in their daily conversation. Similarly, the official language in Rajsabha of Pataliputra (present day Patna, capital of Bihar) used alveolar /s/ in their speech for the post alveolar /ʃ/ and palato-alveolar /S/. In contrary to this, Ramgarh Mountains of Mirzapur district had inscriptions and manuscripts within 'Jogimara caves', where all the alveolar /s/, post alveolar /ʃ/ and palato-alveolar /S/ has been merged only to post alveolar /ʃ/. We can find a basic similarity when we compare this phenomenon with Bangla phonemic inventory. Since Bangla also emerged from Magadhan subfamily of Indo-Aryan subgroup of Indo-European language family and is a sister language of Angika, Bangla uses the three fricatives alveolar /s/, post alveolar /ʃ/ and palate-alveolar /S/ in written forms, but in speech they merge all these sounds only into one, post alveolar /ʃ/. Angika has similar usage like the language used in Rajsabha of Pataliputra: usage of alveolar /s/ in their speech for the post alveolar /ʃ/ and palato-alveolar /S/. [The data used throughout this paper is mostly collected from native Bangla speakers (5 speakers) of West Bengal and Angika speakers (6 speakers) of Khagaria (Bihar). Few examples are taken from research articles mentioned in the bibliography.]

Examples in Angika:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| /s/ | | /sa:g/ | 'leafy vegetable' |
| /ʃ/ | /s/ | / d̠ərsən/ | 'view' |
| /S/ | | /bis/ | 'poison' |

Examples in Bangla:

/s/ /ʃa:k/ ‘leafy vegetable’

/ʃ/ /ʃ/ /d̪ɔrʃon/ ‘view’

/S/ /bi:ʃ/ ‘poison’

**Comparative Phonological Analysis of Angika and Bangla:**

**Consonants:**

The phonological systems of Angika and Bangla are juxtaposed in order to determine the contrasts and similarities of the consonants present in both their phonemic inventory.

**Plosives:**

| LANGUAGE | BILABIAL | DENTAL | RETROFLEX | PALATAL | VELAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANGIKA& BANGLA | /p/, /pʰ/, /b/, /bʰ/ | /t̪/, /t̪ʰ/, /d̪/, /d̪ʰ/ | /ʈ/, /ʈʰ/, /ɖ/, /ɖʰ/ | /tɕ/, /tɕʰ/, /dʑ/, /dʑʰ/ | /k/, /kʰ/, /g/, /gʰ/ |

Both Bangla and Angika have four subclasses:

i. Voiceless unaspirated- /p/, /t̪/, /k/, /ʈ/, /tɕ/
ii. Voiceless aspirated- /pʰ/, /t̪ʰ/, /kʰ/, /ʈʰ/, /tɕʰ/
iii. Voiced unaspirated- /b/, /d̪/, /g/, /ɖ/, /dʑ/
iv. Voiced aspirated- /bʰ/, /d̪ʰ/, /gʰ/, /ɖʰ/, /dʑʰ/

The mechanism of aspiration is phonemic both in Angika and Bangla, and both the languages have 20 plosive phonemes in their phonemic inventory.

**Nasals:**

| LANGUAGE | BILABIAL | ALVEOLAR | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANGIKA & BANGLA | /m/ | /n/ | | |
| LANGUAGE | DENTAL | RETROFLEX | PALATAL | VELAR |
| EXAMPLES: | /n̪/ | /ɳ/ | /ɲ/ | /ŋ/ |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ANGIKA | /bɔn̪d̪$^{h}$ən/ ‘unity’ | /ka: ɳɖ̤/ ‘incident’ | /məɲdʑira/ ‘vocal istrument’ | /pəŋkədʑ/ ‘lotus’ |
| BANGLA | /bɔn̪d̪$^{h}$on/ ‘unity’ | /ka: ɳɖo/ ‘incident’ | /moɲdʑira/ ‘vocal instrument’ | /pɔŋkodʑ/ ‘lotus’ |

Both the languages have allophonic variations of the alveolar /n/, depending upon the environment of the sounds that follow it. These allophones occur in such a position where it acts as a homorganic nasal and is followed by a plosive:

**Affricates:**

In both the languages, Angika and Bangla, /tɕ/, and /dʑ/ are phonetically affricates, but phonologically they are plosives because:

a. Similar to other plosives, both the languages have voiced/voiceless distinction.
b. Similar to other plosives, both the languages have single/geminated categorization.

**Flap:**

Both Angika and Bangla have retroflex flap /ɽ/ which occurs in word medial and final position.

**Fricatives:**

Angika and Bangla have two fricatives: alveolar /s/ and glottal /h/.

**Lateral:**

Angika and Bangla have clear alveolar lateral /l/.

**Frictionless Continuants:**

Both Angika and Bangla have alveolar frictionless continuant /r/ in their inventory. Angika alone has labio-dental frictionless continuant /ʋ/ which occurs only during utterance of Angika English, where English sounds /v/ and /w/ are replaced by it. Bangla inventory does not include /ʋ/ and hence in Bangla English /v/ and /w/ are replaced by /b$^{h}$/ and /o/, /u/ respectively.

**Semivowel:**

Both Angika and Bangla have the semivowel /j/. In Angika, /j/ occurs in all the positions of a word: initial, medial and final. Whereas in Bangla, /j/ occurs only in medial and final position of a word and does not occur in the initial position.

Examples:

| **Angika** | **Gloss** |
|---|---|
| /**j**a:r/ [initial] | 'friend' |
| /məi**j**a:/ [medial] | 'Mother' |
| /la:**j**/ [final] | 'sweet dish' |

| **Bangla** | **Gloss** |
|---|---|
| /ba:**j**na/ [medial] | 'nag' or 'demand' |
| /ra:**j**/ [final] | 'verdict' |

**Contrastive Analysis of Angika and Bangla on the basis of Phonological processes prevalent:**

| **ANGIKA** | **BANGLA** | **GLOSS** | **PHONOLOGICAL PROCESS** |
|---|---|---|---|
| /d̪ərsən/ | /d̪ɔrʃon/ | 'view' | /ə+ə/ □ /ɔ+o/(Vowel Harmony) |
| /rəndi/ | /rendi/ | 'prostitute' | /ə/ □ /e/ (Vowel shift from low to high) |
| /bi:s/ | /biːʃ/ | 'poison' | /s/ □ /ʃ/ (Post-Alveolarization) |
| /t̪o:r/ | /t̪o:r/ | 'your' | No alteration |

| **ANGIKA** | **BANGLA** | **GLOSS** | **PHONOLOGICAL PROCESS** |
|---|---|---|---|
| /mo: r/ | /mo:r/ | 'my' | No alteration |
| /hamar/ | /amar/ | 'mine' | initial /h/ deletion (Procope) |
| /gel/ | /gælo/ | 'went' | /e/ □æ& /o/ final addition (Synthesis) |
| /tɛəɽəl/ | /tɛoɽlo/ | 'climbed' | /ə+ə/ □ /o+o/ (Vowel Harmony) |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| /pəɽəl/ | /poɽlo/ | ‘read’ | /ə+ə/ □ /o+o/ (Vowel Harmony) |
| /pərəl/ | /poɽlo/ | ‘fell’ | /ə+ə/ □ /o+o/ (Vowel Harmony) |
| /d̪ekʰil/ | /dekʰlo/ | ‘saw’ | /i/ deletion medially (Syncope), /o/ insertion finally (Synthesis) |
| /bu:dʑʰli/ | /bu:dʑʰli/ | ‘understood’ | No alteration |
| /dʑəisən/ | /dʑæmon/ | ‘similar’ | /ə+ə/ □ /æ+o/ (Vowel Harmony), /s/ □ /m/ (Fricative□Nasal) |
| /t̪əisən/ | /t̪æmon/ | ‘likewise’ | /ə+ə/ □ /æ+o/ (Vowel Harmony), /s/ □ /m/ (Fricative□Nasal) |
| /t̪əkʰni/ | /t̪ɔkʰon/ | ‘that moment’ | /ə/ □ /ɔ/, /i/ □ /o/ (Vowel rounding), |
| /pija:s/ | /pija:ʃ/ | ‘thirst’ | /s/ □ /ʃ/ (Post Alveoralization) |
| /dʑʰulasna/ | /dʑʰɔlʃano/ | ‘burn’ | /as/ □ /ʃa/ (Metathesis), s□ʃ (Post Alv), /na/ □ /no/ (Vowel rounding) |
| /nilədʑdʑ/ | /nirlədʑdʑo/ | ‘shameless’ | /r/ inserted medially (Epenthesis), /o/ inserted finally (Synthesis), /ə/□ /ɔ/ (Vowel rounding) |
| /sãdʑʰ/ | /ʃ ãdʑʰ/ | ‘evening’ | No alteration |
| /gatɛʰ/ | /gatɛʰ / | ‘ tree’ | No alteration |
| /pa:t̪/ | /pa:t̪/ | ‘plate’ | No alteration |
| /rəud̪a/ | /rod̪̪ur/ | ‘sunlight’ | /əu/ □ /o/ (Monopthongization), /d̪/ □ /d̪̪/ (Gemination) |
| /kanna/ | /kanna/ | ‘to cry’ | No alteration |
| /t̪ərkari/ | /t̪ɔrkari/ | ‘vegetables’ | /ə/ □ /ɔ/ (Vowel rounding) |

| ANGIKA | BANGLA | GLOSS | PHONOLOGICAL PROCESS |
|---|---|---|---|
| /bʰa:ʈ/ | /bʰa:ʈ/- | ‘rice’ | No alteration |
| /pisa/ | /pæʃa/ | ‘aunt’s husband’ | /i/ □ /æ/ (Vowel centralization), /s/ □ /ʃ/ (Post alveolarization) |
| /pisi/ | /piʃi/ | ‘aunt’ | /s/ □ /ʃ/ (Post alveolarization) |
| /ɖaɖa/ | /ɖaɖa/ | ‘elder brother’ | No alteration |
| /ki:n.na:/ | /kena/ | ‘to buy’ | /i:/ □ /e/ (Vowel shortening & lowering), /nn/ □ /n/ (De-gemination) |
| /ʈʰo/ | /te/ | ‘unit’ | /ʈʰ/ □ /t/ (Loss of Aspiration & Alveolarization) |
| /taka/ | /taka/ | ‘money’ | No alteration |
| /ʤʰal/ | /ʤʰal/ | ‘hot/spicy’ | No alteration |
| /bərəpʰ/ | /bɔropʰ/ | ‘ice’ | /ə+ə/ □ /ɔ+o/ (Vowel Harmony) |
| /gundi/ | /guɽo/ | ‘powder’ | Total change (Dissimilation) |
| /goru/ | /goru/ | ‘cow’ | No alteration |
| /ʤʰor/ | /ʤʰol/ | ‘gravy/curry’ | /r/ □ /l/ (Lateralization) |
| /ʈʰakur bari/ | /ʈʰakur ba:ɽi/ | ‘god’s place’ | /r/ □ /ɽ/ (Retroflexation) |
| /basa/ | /baʃa/ | ‘home’ | /s/ □ /ʃ/ (Post Alveolarization) |
| /mirtɕaj/ | /moritɕ/ | ‘chilly’ | Dissimilation |
| /harɖi/ | /holuɖ/ | ‘turmeric’ | Dissimilation |
| /matɕʰri/ | /matɕʰ/ | ‘fish’ | /ri/ final deletion (Apocope) |
| /mans/ | /maŋgʃo/ | ‘meat’ | /o/ final insertion (Synthesis), /n/ □ /ŋg/ (Velarization), /s/ □ /ʃ/ (Post Alveolarization) |
| /kʰɔr// | kʰɔɽ/ | ‘straw’ | /r/ □/ɽ/ (Retroflexation) |

gor/ /gɔɽ/ ‘touch feet to respect’ /o/ □ /ɔ/ (Vowel Rounding) and

/r/ □/ɽ/ (Retroflexation)

From the above examples we can determine the number of phonological processes in action with Angika and Bangla: Prothesis, Epenthesis, Synthesis, Procope, Syncope, Apocope, Metathesis, Gemination, De-gemination, Velarization, Alveolarization, Post-Alveolarization, Dissimilation, Vowel alterations (shifting, rounding, centralization, shortening, lowering, harmony) etc. In few cases there are examples where no alterations at all occur, resulting no change in phonological process. All these exemplify an immense language contact situation, which has given rise to linguistic diffusion, therefore results in phonetic-phonemic importation by adoption of repair strategies and giving rise to alterations in phonological processes in each sound of both the languages in question.

**Conclusion:**

Generally, language contact situations result in a unidirectional, rather than bidirectional linguistic outputs, conditioned by the social circumstances, in which our target languages Bangla and Angika are also the case where linguistic structure overwhelmingly conditions the linguistic outputs. Lexicon is precisely the most easily borrowable entity, as we saw in the paper how the borrowed lexicon led to structural alterations at structural level in Bangla and Angika. Since phonology is quite susceptible to alterations, therefore as a result of word borrowing and linguistic diffusion, a massive phonetic-phonemic importation took place. Language alterations presume linguistic diffusion from single entities or minor groups to the entire speech community, as there is a one-to-one correspondence between both and this is applicable to language contact within individual sound units of internal linguistic change. Therefore, the amalgamation of the individual with the entire speech community through language contact within progressive languages stands as the greatest challenge and the best opportunities for upgradation in the linguistic research in Bangla and Angika, for the upcoming generations.

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# Traversing Through the "Red River": Examining the Titular Character's Fluid Journey in Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife*

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**Abstract**: In this era of the Anthropocene, it seems that the universal spiritual values that drive humans together organically are lost in the void of immediacy. With technologically driven lives, we have disassociated ourselves from our natural environment, thereby creating a serious dearth of those spiritual values that long stood as hallmarks of humanity. But in recent years the academic world has witnessed a considerate shift in its main interest from an anthropocentric, techno-centric world to a more eco-centric one, where scholars are now reimagining and re-examining Human's relationship with its More-than-human world. In this context, some environmental thinkers have challenged the primacy of the green and pastoral in our collective vision of the global eco-sphere. Thinkers in the field of "Blue Humanities," such as Steve Mentz point out that water covers the majority of our planet's surface, and that understanding the human relationship to nature might depend more on the sea than the land. Therefore, in this paper, I have taken into account one of the literary works produced from the corpus of Northeast Indian literature to showcase how 'water' plays a significant part in contouring the life of the protagonist, often decentering the superiority of 'green' in the novel under analysis. Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* (2005) is a saga of the plight of the titular character, Rukmini Bezboruah, who is a part-time lecturer of English at a local college in Parbatpuri, Assam. Rukmini's seemingly perfect life as the wife of the District Collector and as a college lecturer is a facade. To embody the inner isolation endured by Rukmini and her subsequent transformation into an assertive woman, Mitra Phukan uses the metaphor of the "Red River", which as it snakes its way past Parbatpuri, drives Rukmini along with it through a journey of spiritual reflection and restoration.

**Keywords:** Blue Humanities, river, environment, spiritual reflection, North-East.

"Thousands have lived without love-not one without water," says the renowned British-American poet, W.H. Auden. Such is the value of water! This life-giving and life-sustaining component of Nature is our planet Earth's biggest blessing. Hailed as the 'Blue Planet', nearly three-fourths of the Earth is covered with water. Since time immemorial rivers and oceans have been considered as panacea to the disputes of ever-conflicting human civilizations and habitations and likewise have inspired writers across time and

space. Even if, the rivers have long been a potent symbol in literature and art, evoking a wide range of feelings and ideas, from the sublime to the tragic, little critical attention have been given to them. However, with the emergence of the field of Blue Humanities, and Blue Ecocriticism, few thinkers and writers have turned their attention from 'landscapes' to 'seascapes' or 'riverscapes'. Unfolding itself as a response to the extreme weather conditions, melting ice-caps, loss of oceanic biodiversity, issues of overfishing and maritime pollution, "Blue Humanities" strikes back at, what Sidney I. Dobrin calls ecocriticism's "Ocean deficiency" (Dobrin 09).

From the Vedas and epics like the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* to 21st-century Indian English fiction like Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), Indian literature has come a long way with rivers, which are often used as metaphors, background settings and central elements in the narrative. In fact, in Indian Literature it is hard to find classics devoid of water motifs and the corpus of North-East Indian Literature is no exception. A diverse land of astounding mountains, rolling valleys and exotic landscapes, North-East India is home to rivers of various moods which crisscross states and even countries. In a world led by electronic media and information technology, there is very little space left for personal quests and less even for an observation of the environment or any form of the spiritual conception of the world. Rivers in India, as in other cultures have usually been associated with the sacred and it is for this belief, that rivers or seascapes have the potential to rediscover those lost spiritual values and establish human's communion with its larger spiritual world. In the novel under analysis, *The Collector's Wife*, written by one of the most prominent voices from North-East India, one shall observe, as the novel unfolds how the life of the titular character gets intertwined with the changing course of the 'Red River'.

Owing to her social position as a college lecturer and as the wife of the District Collector, Rukmini Bezboruah is respected in the socio-cultural milieu. But often she is harassed by the public for being childless as is evident at the very beginning of the novel when Rukmini on attending one of her colleague's wedding, witnesses an utter disgust - "What times we are living through! In my days, even the shadow of a barren woman wasn't allowed to fall on a bride" (15). Rukmini's entire life schedule is determined by her husband Siddharth's social position. She can neither take up any permanent post in any college despite having requisite academic qualifications, because of Siddharth's transferable job nor can she apply for a different job since the profession of a teacher is what considered best with a district collector's position. The only reason for taking up this 'part-timer' job, that too with such a meagre remuneration is to somehow 'shed the persona of The DC's Wife' (28), something which has become the central fact of her existence in this district town of Parbatpuri. The novelist by naming the book *The*

*Collector's Wife* has tried to shed some light on the status of women in our society and how Rukmini is just an emblem of it.

Therefore, what Rukmini is leading is a life of loveless marriage, devoid of mutual understanding, happiness and companionship as Siddharth is least bothered about Rukmini's whereabouts. To showcase this inner isolation endured by Rukmini, Mitra Phukan deploys the metaphor of the "Red River", which as it snakes its way past Parbatpuri, drives Rukmini along with it through a journey of spiritual reflection and restoration. The "Red River" or as is called in Assamese the Lohit River, is a tributary of the Brahmaputra River in Assam. Tempestuous and turbulent it is known as the "river of blood" owing to its lateritic soil, which as the novel unfurls will literally become enmeshed in blood. The blue-green flatness of the ocean has always perturbed Rukmini and there has always been a flutter of unease whenever she has tried looking at it. The unease stems much from the knowledge that the "Red River" is unfathomable to her. Not just the depth and fluidity of the river, but the very 'thinking of the river', leads her to distress. Leslie Marmon Silko in her novella *Oceanstory* has pointed out this dilemma in knowing the ocean- "Who knows the ocean best? Is it the oceanographer or the marine biologist, the one who studies and performs experiments on ocean water? Is it the fisherman…? Is it the one who swims in the Ocean? Is it the one the ocean takes, does that person know the ocean best?" (Dobrin 11). The same has been reiterated by Steve Mentz, who too believes that the gravest problem the ocean poses is to know "an ungraspable thing" (Mentz ix). To Rukmini, the Red River at times looks deceptively still and silent mirroring her inner loneliness on account of living with an utterly unresponsive mate, while, again at some other time it becomes incomprehensible to her. One is baffled when posed with such a question- Is it even possible to know the unknowable or are humans well equipped to engage with the mysterious differently?

Rukmini's social status and well-settled life, do not give her the ability to live life on her terms. She is often looked down upon for being 'barren'. Mitra Phukan narrates this situation in the following way: "Her very own identity dependent on her ability or otherwise, to contribute a brood of children to a waiting world" (41). It is out of this burden to fulfil her part of a social contract, Rukmini signed years ago with Siddharth's family, that she finally visits Dr Rabha, the fertility specialist at Parbatpuri. Brooding over Dr Rabha's suggestion of taking fertility-enhancing drugs Rukmini's conscious desire of embracing motherhood gets jolted by the placidly flowing Red River beneath her bungalow at the hilltop. The river seems to question her very desire to have a child and if she is ready enough to let her body go through such physical and mental trauma. She poignantly associates her infertile condition with the 'barren waste of empty sands' (84) on both banks of the river, which soon will get swamped by the fertile flood of monsoon, ushering in a season of life and light. She wonders how it feels to let go of one's essence and

"get drowned by water or science just for the sake of fertility" (84). Pondering over the fate of the bleached sand, Rukmini feels her intake of fertility drugs would be like crossing some invisible barrier, violating her very woman self. For the barren sand, there is no choice but to get washed by the monsoon rains given its inability to voice its feelings but the well-educated and well-placed, Rukmini has a choice or is the seeming choice actually a non-choice? In the contemporary Indian society that Mitra Phukan depicts, there is very little choice left to a woman than to succumb to patriarchal ideologies.

Thus, Rukmini constantly grapples to suppress her own desires and wishes and prioritize Siddharth's. However, soon, all her struggles for recognition, companionship, warmth and existence find their voice in Manoj Mahanta, the manager of CTF Tyre Company, whom she meets at a wedding. It is significant to note that Rukmini's changing relationship with Mahanta runs almost parallel with the changing course of the 'Red River' in every new season. Though Rukmini has met him by chance, her desire to be with Manoj is a very conscious choice. She gradually becomes unapologetically herself when around Mahanta. In him, she finds a friend, a better companion, and a confidant. Mahanta's light-hearted nature embraces Rukmini with all its love and light. Mitra describes the 'newness' in Rukmini's life in the following way- "Rukmini caught the mood. Suddenly, for no reason, she felt happy. The heaviness in her mind, which, over the last few weeks, had communicated itself to her limbs, lifted as swiftly as the winter mist on the Red River before the rays of the sun" (207). Manoj Mahanta is to Rukmini's turbulent mind what the rays of the sun are to the Red River covered in winter mist. As the Red River changes its course and attitude with every changing season, it takes Rukmini along with it through an evident transformation from a meek, dependent, submissive woman to a carefree, defiant, untamable one who is fearless to gives vent to her opinions and priorities. To quote Maya Angelou "A Woman with harmony in her spirit is like a river flowing. She goes where she will without pretense and arrives at her destination prepared to be herself and only herself" (Angelou 2019). Such is the image of the new Rukmini, owing to her proximity to the Red River. With Manoj Mahanta's entry into Rukmini's life, her quest to find her true self begins which unfortunately culminates in Mahanta's untimely death at the encounter with the insurgents. This relationship has given her everything that she has lost while trying to be a 'good wife' to Siddharth, especially her identity. The beginning of a 'new life' in her has bestowed her with larger wisdom and extraordinary courage. She confronts Siddharth about his unfaithfulness in marriage and firmly talks about her relationship with Manoj. When Siddharth asks her the reason for her conduct, she replies to him that it is out of a grim sense of "loneliness", companionship that she has surrendered herself to Mahanta. Rukmini further adds - "I know I've never really been very decisive about anything. But on this I'm firm, I'm having this baby" (315).

As she shifts her focus from herself to her natural surroundings, she becomes aware of the vibrant, lively atmosphere. She has never walked on the road below the hilltop and now when she is exploring her immediate living environment by strolling through it her perspective on life drastically changes. She has been unaware of the symphony and sound of nature, residing in that bungalow, which though composed of a multitude of voices seems to be a single singing entity. The Red River which previously looked like a menacing loopy brown python, utterly unfathomable, has unfolded itself to be a magnificent river frothing with vast quantities of brown water, angry eddies and foaming currents that graced its surface. Unlike her old self, the new Rukmini is filled with curiosity and wonder and every inch of her is trying to locate itself within the natural surroundings. Rukmini becomes a true water's child, though for a brief moment, forgetting the complications and complexities of her life, the hatred, the violence, the suspicion and pettiness that has coloured Parbatpuri at large when she discovers amidst the mossy path, a foamy pool of rushing water. The open-throated, full-chested burst seems to immediately dwarf the marvellous, all-encompassing melody around her. Mitra Phukan has intricately pictured at length Rukmini's ecstasy on unearthing the rushing river, a confluence of three streams hidden inside the enormous velvet-green forest. Rukmini without bothering to lift her clothes waded inside the pool, drenching her face and hair with the cold, life-giving water. Even, long after she has left the spot, the sound and the mesmerizing effect of the rushing stream of water remained within her not like a roaring sound, but like a mute whisper as she recounts in the novel. Reliving her childhood days, Rukmini feels the unmistakable warmth of new beginnings within her. However, the enthusiasm she feels being in the lap of water soon subsides as she takes her way back to her bungalow. All landscapes, trees, birds, hills, and rivers seem ordinary when viewed from the DC's luxurious car, aloof from the down-to-earth life.

As the novel proceeds, the reader sees Rukmini's gradual oneness with the Red River. For hours she keeps watching the flowing muddy waters with the arrival of the monsoon. She wonders how the piled-up frail boats are never really overturned by the sudden gush of the turbulent waves. She realizes it is the power that lies within which abstains one from overturning, no matter how fragile one might look from the outside. This is precisely what Rukmini eventually follows for she never withdraws herself completely from the colours of life despite being treated with utmost indifference by her husband. As the river turns into a muddy, raging mass rendering all borders porous, Rukmini observes the precarity of human as well as non-human lives. The Assam student's agitation which forms the novel's backdrop begins as a protest against the illegal influx of foreigners from across the border into their state but eventually grows into a full-blown insurgency making kidnappings, extortion, and political instability the order of the day. This influx also results in the massive destruction of natural properties and the reader gets to see a grim picture of what happens when Nature retaliates. The sudden emergence of a monsoon flood after a period of

drought results in large-scale destruction. Huts are washed away, people are rendered homeless, and relief camps are crammed with flood-hit victims. Rukmini observes from her window as the Red River eventually becomes the site of destruction. She realizes how the water is both the preserver and the destroyer. It no longer remains a picturesque, pretty sight but angry red with fury, the brown python-like creature that it previously looked like. Huge trees, large patches of unripe vegetation, twigs, and branches are uprooted while, human corpses and wild carcasses floating down the river, are reduced to mere "brown and grey blotches". Those corpses unrecovered, make the Red River look even deeper crimson. The river has rendered the divide that has existed between 'them' and 'us', 'rich' and 'poor', 'human' and 'non-human' meaningless. The binary opposites that have so long been used to exert power over one another are smashed by the sudden surge of the river's rushing current. The Red River at once teaches the inmates of Parbatpuri, a lesson in humility, embeddedness and selflessness. Armed with destructive weapons and toxic power the extremists could easily control the mass, but what evades their control is the 'Red River'. The insurgent group chooses to travel by boat over the River to avoid being caught by the police, ignorant of the fact that they are under the River's constant surveillance if not the administration's. Considering the river, as a thing to just pass over, the insurgents' boat topples over. Rightly Juan Carlos Galeano observes in his essay "On Rivers"- "The river with his floods and changes is the best teacher. We learn about humbleness and abidance if we pay attention to the river" (Galeano 336). Rukmini realizes that her cocooned life above the hillock has been oblivious to the life below it, the trials and tribulations of the common mass, the endangered life of the non-human natural world and most importantly her place within that very world. She tries to reconfigure her identity amidst this whirlpool of violence.

It is noteworthy, that the final horrifying denouement plays itself out on the Red River itself where Rukmini's personal loss merges with the collective bereavement. Both Manoj Mahanta and Siddharth get killed in an encounter with the insurgents while on a boat. Red with unending violence on its banks, the Red River becomes merciless with men and crafts that do not respect its power. Mitra Phukan narrates the terrifying situation- "blood [mingles] with the dust of the Himalayas" (345). It is true that in this age of the Anthropocene, no corner of the natural world has remained untainted by human action but what concerns us is the fact "that most of the human population remains unaware of those transformations and effects. This is particularly true of ocean" (Dobrin 14) observes Sidney I. Dobrin. Likewise, Steve Mentz has also noted how with the advancement in transportation we have reduced the ocean merely to a thing to pass over or as Dobrin puts it elsewhere – "ocean has been recast as location for recreation, a place to visit" (Dobrin 14). What, therefore, is needed is a "wayfarer's glimpse of things connected and in need of exploration" (Dobrin 15). Perhaps, this is the only way one can engage with the mysterious, ungraspable vastness of the ocean and river capes. The Red River's stoicism lies in the fact that it still rushes past the

way it used to do as if oblivion of the enormity of tragedy it has borne. Rukmini echoes the same fortitude as she loses her unborn child's biological as well as adoptive father. Even standing on this edge of adversity she doesn't narrow downs her empathy only to her unborn child but rather extends it to "all other deaths, the ones before, and the ones to follow" (349). She at once feels as if all bereaved women of Parbatpuri, irrespective of social class have coalesced into a single figure of tear-shrouded grief.

Mitra Phukan has artistically deployed the metaphor of the 'Red River' to portray the changing course of Rukmini's life. However, a few thinkers and writers in "Blue Humanities" like Hester Blum, Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Patricia Yaeger and Stacy Alaimo, to name a few, find this metaphorical representation highly problematic. "All this metaphoric and symbolic intensity" (Yaeger 526) would render the actual sea immaterial, thereby encouraging those over-exploitative maritime activities that this very field of "Blue Humanities" seeks to question. Nevertheless, one witnesses the birth of a new Rukmini only through its association with the Red River. As Rukmini traverses through the Red River, it becomes her friend, guide and philosopher. Although the shadow of green pastoral landscapes, too, forms a part of Rukmini's consciousness, it is the broad reddish expanse of the River that helps her find her way to spiritual reflection and restoration. Much like the thinkers in 'Blue Humanities', Oceanographer Sylvia A. Earle also affirms the primacy of 'blue' over 'green' and human's inability to register it - "Green issues make headlines these days, but many seem unaware that without the 'blue' there could be no green, no life on Earth and therefore none of the other things that humans value" (Earle 12).

Therefore, through various artistic endeavours, be it literature or any form of art, the motive is to unmoor the ocean's fluidity from its land-based moorings that Ecocriticism couldn't scrape through. Needless to say, art and literature, with their power to inspire and change minds have always stood for causes of paramount importance affecting our planet at large. Hence, In *The Collector's Wife,* Mitra Phukan with her artistic vigour has consciously tried giving ample space to the Red River of Assam and showcases how densely the River weaves the personal with political fervour. The way the River's fluidity corresponds to the protagonist's stagnant journey and eventually turns it vivacious and dynamic perhaps makes this novel worthy in the field of "Blue Humanities".

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# Life’s Riddles

**Dr. Ujjwala Kakarla**

Life isn't that delicate as it appears,
It sets such papers that are tough to analyse.
We might not have thought of those even in
dreams that seem this hard to solve,
The solutions we think of experimenting
with every problem,
Change constantly within no time leaving
us spellbound.
Every fact that's predicted to be right remains
outdated making us perplexed!
Life isn't that rigid as it's felt, but to think of
passing these tests remain to be a mystery.
It never accepts the facts we predict,
Still it promotes us to the next level with
different riddles.
The answers life gives is never in synchrony
with the human intelligence,
It succumbs only to those immersed in power
of Contemplation,
When the self remains still and static,
Flying beyond the Solutions life gives.

# The Lost Mind

**Dr. Ujjwala Kakarla**

The spine chilling winter brings in the
darkness too early,
To wake up the little stars in deep slumber,
but the sky doesn't clear the black clouds
sooner for the fiery lights to shine.
Even the mind is not in ease to clear the dark
thoughts for the inner self to light up.
The night woke up from its slumber,
but still, the mind hasn't taken a nap to rest up.
Why is it that it wants to think so much?
What is it that it wants to prove out?
How much it wants to make up to show up?
Life is what it wants to understand too much,
but it ends up forgetting itself.
Why can't it flow with life to feel its life,
Freeing itself from the very life to live it up!

# A Child's Creativity

**Ritika Singh**

Racism, Classism envelope our minds,
I saw a kid learning rhymes,
About a rainbow that shared a sky,
Just as the same as You and I.

Realising how cruel are we,
To have differentiated a sea from a sea,
We've divided the lands to build nations,
Our infinity has certain limitations.

The mind that painted endless skies,
Have now been bound by the sight of eyes,
Creating a delusion of a better life,
Not knowing that it is an endless strife.

So, we break it into parts,
Name, gender and sometime hearts,
Names in two, and genders in three,
Broken hearts are an uncountable degree.

We assign them categories to identify,
Man, Woman, and the LGBTQI.
We delegate them colours to decode,
Blue, Pink and Vibgyor.

To an adult, a rainbow no more excites,
But it surely does divide.
Therefore, to term it as an identity,
VIBGYOR must have been a child's creativity.

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