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Editorial

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Migrancy, Mobility, Diaspora and Transnational Cultural Flows in Literature and Social Science – the theme for the December 2025 issue of Litinfinitive Journal tries to interrogate several multilayered and nuanced patterns of movement, types of mobility and their various consequences in terms of negotiating borders, boundaries and transnational cultural paradigms across global literature segments. These negotiations are important parts of Postcolonial Studies, Cultural and Linguistic Studies, Sociology, History and Migration Studies. Migration has all the elements of nostalgia, hybridity, sense of displacement and cultural negotiation. For instance, Chathushkie Samurdha Jayasinghe’s paper ‘What Constitutes Mediocre Writing? A Study of Excessive Sinhala Usage in English Fiction Through Manuka Wijesighe’s *Theravada Man* (2009)’ delves deeper into the new forms of postcolonial language always create sites of contestation and conflict. Whenever there is use of the interruptive language, it gives rise to alternative identity formation by the expatriates. The paper discusses the effects of war, the advancement of technology and the possible problematics created by dogmatic beliefs. The use of Sinhala usage also plays a prominent role in understanding the layers of translation. Dr. Jemima Sakum Phipon’s paper ‘Lores and Lyrics of *Basain Sarain* in the Select Works of Prajwal Parajuly’ is yet another instance of how basain sarai and migration in select works of Prajwal Parajuly have also been resulting from the Nepali short stories, poems and songs that tell of the British era, and the post-independence conditions of the working class in the Nepali society. As Phipon writes, “The *dukha* (sorrow), poverty resulting from the exploitative feudal system, the rigid caste hierarchy and the regressive moral codes of conduct under the 19th century Gorkha regime forced multitudes to leave their *muluk* (native land) for *Muglan* (land of the Mughlas, British India) where money seemed to grow in tea bushes (*chiya ko botma paisa phalcha*). The fact that *Muglan* or India was comparatively liberal and hence free from the oppressive socio-religious customs and practices of Nepal served as a potent pull factor for immigrants from Nepal.”

The next paper titled ‘Translating Chitra Mudgal’s novel - *Post Box No.203, Nala Sopara: Theory and praxis*’ is by Madhu Sriwastav, a paper that elaborates how “After a text is translated, a scholar may evaluate it to see which theories or methods the translator has applied. Translation is a complex process. Critics have formulated many theories about translation over the ages. Richardson dives deep into the nature of translation, “there remains a gap between what I want to say and what the language will let me say (or even think).” (Richardson 267) He dwells upon the impossibility of accurate communication, “We can never understand anyone’s meaning in its pristine state.” Translation is not just about the source and the target language, but while analyzing the paper, it becomes a clear objective that mobility and cultural flow can be of various regulatory methods during the process of translation. Formation of a new identity and cultural practice, understanding the nuances of translation, and embracing the otherness while not sacrificing or appropriating the stances of difference within a source text. In fact, any single reading of any text to be

translated is not always enough. *Nala Sopara* follows the epistolary structure, and hence there is always a subjective, personal touch to the translation that is done. Mobility, even if it occurs, it is more about cultural invasion, percolation of ideas, myths, storytelling, everyday narratives that come to occupy a shattering reality of Vinod's life. Home, shelter, house, and the stress on displacement, grief and never coming back to occupy the same space are instances that highlight the major aspects of Nala Sopara. It is not just about the translation of an address, but a whole gamut of emotions.

In this issue, we also have Amit Pandey's fresh take on 'Human-Monster Interactions, Lawlessness and Plasticity in *Lord of the Flies: An Interdisciplinary Exploration*' in which the scholar unveils the postmodern and Anthropocene take on the work. He further adds the monster theory and the invasion of humanity in and across realms of nature.

The current issue also has two book reviews - 'How All Stories Should End: A Review of *The Sky Husband* by Easterine Kire' a review by Dr. Lalthansangi Ralte and the review of *The D'Costa Family*, Rochelle Potkar's novel by Mohan Ramanan. In Easterine Kire's book, there is a combination of Naga legends, love confessions, forest songs and events of trauma narrating the development of the major characters in the stories. Ramanan, on the other hand, points out, "Let us also remind ourselves, as Nietzsche knew, that no writer is free from the confessional habit. Callian, where much of the action unfolds, is in fact Kalyan, the Bombay suburb where Rochelle was raised in a Goan landlord's home. She has said that from the eccentrics of this community, she has through the application of imagination created a gangster world filled with dark secrets, mysteries, affairs, and, yes, murders." And hence, what Rochelle has woven into the Goanese cultural narratives, also talk about the developments in new literature in English.

I hope our readers, scholars, researchers and faculty will derive the necessary academic nourishment from Litinfinite Vol. 7, Issue 2.

I express my heartfelt thanks to all our esteemed editors and contributors.

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Thanking You,
Sreetanwi Chakraborty
Editor-in-Chief
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What Constitutes Mediocre Writing? A Study of Excessive Sinhala Usage in English Fiction Through Manuka Wijesinghe's *Theravada Man* (2009)

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Abstract

Identifying an excessive use of the local lexicon by the expatriate writer Manuka Wijesinghe in her novel *Theravada Man* (2009), this study questions whether it is a deliberate effort with a masked intention or a display of mere ornamental use of language. An in-depth textual analysis is carried out to identify her strategic use of Sinhala in Sri Lankan postcolonial literature of English and thoughts of critics Alonso-Breto and Harshana Rambukwella are utilized as secondary sources that constitute the study's theoretical framework. In seeking a rationale to her actions, the study investigates how Sinhala terms are employed from within Sri Lanka to assert cultural authenticity and critique nationalist orthodoxy. Across the diverse contexts observed within the study, the Sinhala lexicon emerges as a tool of literary agency, critique and authenticity. It is understood that Wijesinghe uses Sinhala to destabilize linguistic hierarchies imposed by the colonial grasp of English and as a mode of writing from within to reclaim identity. Sinhala is therefore revealed to aid the author in marking both national and social identity, articulate resistance, and enrich postcolonial expression through linguistic hybridity.

Keywords: *Agency, Identity, Resistance, Sri Lankan Postcolonial literature, Sinhala language.*

Introduction: Postcolonialism, Manuka and The Paradox of Awkward Language

Postcolonial literature of any origin stands out, and Sri Lankan writing that took form once the British left the island and evolved to its current dimensions is no exception to this. The question of what language to utilize in writing such texts has always materialized within a space of conflict: critiqued by some and highly regarded by others. In the words of Kenyan writer Ngugi Wa Thiong'o one should never write in the language of the colonizer while Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie highlights the importance of writing in English as a key strength of rebellion and the best mode of writing from within. Multilingualism, or the use of multiple languages, might perhaps be the solution to these clashing ideologies and the current writers of postcolonial literature appear to not only use but develop this strategy to their benefit.

In today's globalized context, writers who utilize this hybrid language practice are of many types: the diasporic/migrant writer, the expatriate writer and the resident writer. The migrant writes from abroad and publishes globally and therefore often uses the lingua franca as his main language of writing, categorically falling under the definition of the "global writer." He often has a strong yearning to reconnect with his lost cultural heritage that appears in his

emotions, content and also in the context of multilingualism: the use of local words. The resident writer, writing for the local audience, often takes the local language to be their dominant form of writing and this perhaps explains why then the Sri Lankan resident writer of English too uses Sinhala/Tamil words amply in their work.

The expatriate writer is more complex to deconstruct. Although he too may fall into the gray area of “global writer,” he is not as far removed as the migrant: he is almost equally situated between cultures as someone who is employed abroad but still has close connections to his home country with the ease of travelling between. Depending on who the audience is and/or personal preference, his use of language can thus change. Hence evidently, the expatriate who writes in English still might use the local lexicon in their work.

However, despite reaching such conclusions about the expatriate writer, reading the work of Sri Lankan author Manuka Wijesinghe triggers inquiry in how she utilizes the local language. As someone publishing within Sri Lanka and essentially writing for a local audience she uses the local lexicon substantially. However, the problem lies not in why but in how it is used. The *Theravada Man* (2009), one novel out of a trilogy, appears subpar in writing in relation to works of other celebrated global writers like Romesh Gunasekara and Michael Ondaatje, where her incorporation of the local lexicon in writing materializes to be rather extravagant, or even unnecessary on certain occasions. Considering practical realities, one could even suggest that the Sinhala used in the said text is unpolished, untranslated and interruptive.

I believe that she has a masked intention in doing this rather than to undermine her own writing through such an uneven execution, nor is it to impress the English reader with her knowledge of the local language. What I mean by the English reader here is twofold. Wijesinghe utilizing the English language as her primary language of writing inherently makes her audience “readers of English.” Secondly, such a readership may include both local and global readers, considering that she is an expatriate writer publishing locally. The objective of migrant writers like Ondaatje can be best explained through the concept of hybridity and third space introduced by Homi K. Bhabha (1994), where Ondaatje’s use of local words highlights exoticism, nostalgia and cultural resonance, which can be understood as modes of challenging rigid binary identities to clarify the existence of hybrid identities. Gunasekara’s linguistic decisions appear to focus on facilitating a strong state of return, commonly faced by diasporic communities as explored by Vahagn Vardanyan’s conceptualization of the diaspora (2020). In contrast, Wijesinghe’s linguistic strategy functions as an assertion of cultural agency and a critique of nationalist orthodoxy. In fact, this very linguistic tension is central to the novel’s critique of nationality and aestheticism, where the use of Sinhala words is intentional and performative in nature.

The Embodiment of the Theravada Man, Alonso-Breto and Harshana Rambukwella

In order to explore the said phenomenon, this qualitative study conducts an in-depth textual analysis of Manuka Wijesinghe’s *Theravada Man*. Set in 1940s Sri Lanka before the second world war, it presents the character and life of Weerasinghe Arachchilage Piyatissa Weerasinghe, a village schoolmaster and a self-declared ‘Theravada man.’ Caught between Buddhist doctrine and bodily desires, the story relates the development and transformation of Piyatissa as a Theravada man caught in the backdrop of an impending war, technology and dogmatic beliefs. It presents a sharp and satirical examination of Sri Lankan society during the

1920s and 30s, a time of intense nationalist awakening and cultural reform. Set in a period when the island, still under colonial rule, was grappling with the contradictions of modernity, tradition, and national identity, the story depicts how Piyatissa confronts his internal struggles with reason, emotion, tradition, and desire, in Wijesinghe's attempt to explore the broader cultural tensions embedded within the Sinhala Buddhist imagination. In discussing her rationale for strategically utilizing the local lexicon, Sri Lankan political and social critics Alonso-Breto's thoughts on Dharma and Harshana Rambukwella's notions on authenticity are employed. They act as secondary sources utilized in this study.

Authenticity, Hybridity and the Politics of *Apekama*

Unlike diasporic authors such as Michael Ondaatje and Romesh Gunasekara mentioned prior, Manuka Wijesinghe writes not from a place of exile or return, but from within the lived realities of Sri Lanka. Thereby, *Theravada Man* stands apart from other global fiction as a domestic Sri Lankan narrative. Immersing herself in the local cultural landscape inherently alters the role of the Sinhala lexicon in her novel. In *Theravada Man*, Sinhala does not necessarily mark loss or cultural recovery. Instead, it operates as a linguistic validation of authenticity. It is rather a voice from within; a gaze turned inwards at the complex and contradictory nature of Sri Lankan identity. She writes with the presumption that her audience (very much Sri Lankan) is culturally literate and are able to decode the social and symbolic resonances without translation or explanation. Therefore, we see how her writing resists the globalizing tendencies of migrant writing and positions the 'local' as its primary interpretive center.

Wijesinghe's use of Sinhala can be best situated within what Harshana Rambukwella terms *The poetics and politics of authenticity* (2014). Rambukwella observes that, for over a century, that the Sinhala nationalist discourse has equated authenticity with the Buddhist, rural, and disciplined life of the idealised village (138). Within this discourse, the concept of *apekama*, often translated as "ourness," functions as a major ideological construct articulating the concepts of identity and belonging through the community of the rural Sinhala-Buddhist collective. Though idealized, this construction has greatly shaped the nation's political imagination, state policy and modes of cultural production. However, Rambukwella also suggests that the said ideological construct of the village rarely lives up to the nationalist ideal. He therefore demands a continuous effort to reshape the social reality to fit said fictional representation.

The protagonist of *Theravada Man*, Piyathissa Weerasinghe, embodies this tension. As a devoted village schoolmaster and follower of Theravada Buddhism, he represents the nationalist essence of the disciplined, rational Sinhala-Buddhist masculinity. His world view which is shaped by piety, moral restraint and high regard given to reason echoes the reformist vision of figures such as Anagarika Dharmapala, whose project of Buddhist modernism sought to align Sinhala identity with Victorian moral codes of discipline and rationalist values and continues to affect contemporary constructions of postcolonial Sinhala identity.

However, Piyatissa's lived experience attacks this ideal. His desire for a wife, fascination with numerology, folk ritual and astrology, which are elements often dismissed by reformists as irrational or superstitious, interfere with reason and faith, discipline and desire. His many internal conflicts such as his longing for companionship, spiritual uncertainty and susceptibility to emotion, all reveal the limitations of a singular moral framework and destabilize the ideal of

the reformed Sinhala-Buddhist man. Thus, through Piyathissa, Wijesinghe exposes the fragility of nationalist ideals by revealing how they fracture under the weight of individual experience. Rather than attempting to resolve these conflicts, Wijesinghe amplifies it, through a protagonist whose inability to embody the ideal reveals the many layers of performativity and authenticity itself.

Within this framework, Wijesinghe's Sinhala lexicon operates as an important site of ideological negotiation and not an ornament adding local flavour to her work. Words like "iskolemahaththaya" (village schoolmaster) (*Wijesinghe* 2), "gaeniye" (woman) (*Wijesinghe* 12), "hooniyang" (a type of curse) (*Wijesinghe* 96), and "peretha lokaya" (the spectral realm) (*Wijesinghe* 25) appear unmarked and untranslated within the English text. There are no explanatory footnotes or narrative glosses (except the elaborate appendix at the end of the novel, which will be noted later as the discussion progresses). This deliberate choice privileges the local reader and alienates the foreigner, thereby fulfilling the critical task of reversing what one would call the "conventional linguistic hierarchy" of postcolonial English writing (Bhabha). In *Theravada Man*, the focus is not on shaping Sinhala thought but in making English the vessel through which Sinhala structures of meaning assert themselves. This is why an important aspect of authenticity in *Theravada Man* is the rejection of external validation and challenging the dominance of English. Effectively, Wijesinghe indigenizes English, not as a nostalgic return to the local vernacular like most Global writers but as a mode of cultural sovereignty visible in lived language experiences. Through this domestic perspective, Wijesinghe engages with authenticity not as a romanticized memory but as an active and contested process.

Thus, *Theravada Man* situates the Sinhala language within the politics of *apekama*, not to recover a lost sense of authenticity but to interrogate the very notion of the authentic. By displaying Piyatissa's contradictions, the novel questions the attainability of a pure "Sinhala-Buddhist" identity. It suggests that authenticity itself is a construct that is continuously negotiated. The blend of Sinhala and English words/phrases in the novel reflects this instability as they mark both intimacy and alienation, belonging and critique. This linguistic hybridity parallels what Homi K. Bhabha defined as the "postcolonial hybridity" (1994) where one's cultural identity is not fixed or pure but is affected by colonial and indigenous influence. To Wijesinghe, Sinhala does not simply signify an essence of culture, but it becomes a tool of reflection and resistance, and a way of communicating the shattered awareness of society caught between modernity, tradition and the myth of national purity.

Situating the Story and Situating the Writer: Are They Connected?

It is also important to note that the story was set in the 1920s-30s backdrop of Sri Lanka, where the Sinhala nationalist consciousness emerged invasively and marked a collective desire to reclaim a "pure" Sinhala identity. This consisted of Buddhist values, traditions, customs and agrarian life. By situating the story during this time, it therefore explores tension between preserving these traditions while faced with the challenges of modernity. While this is visible in Piyatissa's internal struggle alone, it is even seen in his attire as "...he wore a white sarong, a white shirt, a grey blazer and a grey tie. Under the sarong he wore black trousers..." (*Wijesinghe* 7). He is conflicted in how he commits to traditional Sinhala-Buddhist ideals while his practicality and logic determines that an English education is important for his son. Piyatissa is in fact only a microcosm of the larger society he represents; a community with broader anxieties

negotiating its place within the colonial framework, questioning whether they can balance between being authentically “Sinhala” while participating in colonial modernity. Thus, through Piyatissa, we see an invitation to readers to consider authenticity not as a fixed or nostalgic presence but an ongoing process of struggle or negotiation.

Wijesinghe’s own position as an expatriate writer adds further dimension to these concepts of identity and authenticity. Unlike most global migrant writers who work from a place of displacement and hybridity, we see a writer who occupies a temporary space as an expatriate where her distance from Sri Lanka is not absolute or alienating. She has the privilege of continuing an intimate connection to her homeland. Thus, this position shapes her literary approach where she writes not for an international audience unfamiliar to Sri Lankan culture but to Sri Lankans who share her cultural, historical and linguistic frameworks. This is why the many phrases she uses like “... not even the heeri yaka can wake him.” (*Wijesinghe* 12), “...my throat is parched like a thaachchiya...” (*Wijesinghe* 45) and “...he silently spat three times...” (*Wijesinghe* 63) makes little sense to the foreigner but carries layers of meaning in a nativized context. As the novel progresses, she even adopts a more daring approach in including “karatta kavi” (cart poems) in the original Sinhala script itself, without translations. As noted, this does not constitute an issue if she is writing for a Sinhala audience.

Thus, in *Theravada Man*, it is clear that the use of Sinhala words and expressions are not gestures of nostalgia or return but a direct mode of articulating authenticity as it exists in everyday Sri Lankan life. Her approach to achieve this through not simply narrative content but also via language and form therefore demonstrates not a weakness in her writing; instead, the seemingly excessive use of Sinhala has a crucial role in contributing to a nuanced understanding of Sri Lankan Literature.

Linguistic Choices, Cultural Significance and Performativity: An Analysis

By now it is clear that Wijesinghe’s *Theravada Man* intends to engage with the Sinhala audience and thus amply utilizes the Sinhala lexicon and therefore, she is unlike most global writers of English who provide explanations and contextualization for local words that they use sparingly. She provides a comprehensive glossary at the end of the novel, which helps the unfamiliar reader, while readers familiar with the local culture can read without interruption. This suggests that she is confident in her audience, their cultural and linguistic competence. She is aware that her audience is largely Sri Lankan and therefore fluent or at least conversant in Sinhala terms, and thus she creates a pleasant and intimate reading experience that reinforces the cultural authenticity discussed prior.

The text is rich in Sinhala terms that carry cultural, religious and social significance. Words such as “pol mudalali” (a coconut vendor) (*Wijesinghe* 181), “raban sural” (local drum beats) (*Wijesinghe* 182), “swabhasha” (the local vernacular) (*Wijesinghe* 187), “thalaguli” (a type of local sweet made from honey and sesame seeds) (*Wijesinghe* 189), “vedamahaththaya” (local medicine man) (*Wijesinghe* 199) and “kendarakaaraya” (a local village astrologer) (*Wijesinghe* 15) all position the story deeply within the Sri Lankan context. While some may interpret this as exoticization, Wijesinghe’s sense of expatriation that binds her strongly to the homeland suggests that they encode the everyday realities of Sinhala rural life, caste dynamics, and spiritual beliefs. In fact, this linguistic hybridity present in the novel reflects its social

commentary on Sri Lankan social hierarchies and social contradictions through local words that signal social positions, caste and spirituality. According to Wijesinghe, English is not entirely foreign or imposed; it has been indigenized and merged with Sinhala linguistic forms to create a new, hybrid medium for storytelling. This linguistic hybridity reflects Sri Lanka's colonial history and postcolonial present, where identity and authenticity are continually redefined through cultural synthesis.

Moreover, repeated references to village authority figures, caste names and local spirits in Sinhala reinforce how Wijesinghe focuses on localized power structures, therefore making Sinhala an active tool that unmasks systemic inequalities, cultural contradictions and dominant narratives within Sri Lankan nationalism. As noted, to contest colonial language norms, pressures of globalization and that of the nationalist discourse itself, Wijesinghe provides a distinctly personal and Sri Lankan perspective on social issues through such incorporations. This ultimately makes the social critique of the novel inseparable from its linguistic essence, where *Theravada Man* functions not simply as a literary work but as a cultural intervention. It challenges readers to confront uncomfortable truths about identity, religion and power in Sri Lanka.

It is also to be noted that these words are transliterated in such a way that they attempt to preserve oral intonation and pronunciation, which is a unique trait noted in Wijesinghe's novels, once more granting importance to cultural authenticity. This practice shows how English has shed its colonial exclusivity in Sri Lanka, emerging as a hybrid language interwoven with native language textures.

Wijesinghe's expression of local oral traditions that the study previously noted through untranslated "karatta kavi" (cart poems) serve more purposes than one. Not only does it cater towards preserving the oral tradition, but it also asserts the artistic worth of Sinhala verse while undermining English's dominance as the medium of writing used in the novel. It also aids in reflecting local aesthetics and cultural memory through the rhythmic and performative layer that the poems provide. While this asserts that the "excess" of Sinhala is a performative strategy, it can be argued that Sinhala in *Theravada Man* is a literary and intellectual medium used to convey complex meanings of philosophy, spirituality and culture, which cannot be entirely captured by English translations. Meanwhile the glossary at the end shows how crucial understanding Sinhala is to read this novel; it helps the younger, urban, less familiar readers of Sinhala or complete foreigners to access the Sinhala language. This emphasizes that her use of Sinhala is not empty, shallow or simply tokenistic but very deliberate and central to understanding its content, context and themes.

In fact, it ought to be understood that the "excess" of Sinhala is a performative strategy. The linguistic dominance that the said performativity poses make the reader actively engage with the text, either through referring to the glossary or encountering moments of untranslatability. The discomfort it creates is not a flaw but rather a decolonizing impulse that resists the erasure or domestication of Sinhala within Global English literature. Therefore, the abundant Sinhala lexicon that the novel includes (poetic forms, local idioms, spiritual terms and folklore references as noted) enrich the narrative structure creating a space that is authentically Sri Lankan. As opposed to migrant writers, her "chunkiness" of Sinhala is a strong assertion that Sinhala culture cannot be smoothed into the conventions of English prose, thereby demanding recognition as an authoritative voice.

In summary, the analysis makes it evident that the use of the Sinhala lexicon in *Theravada Man* is a deliberate political and cultural act as it asserts an authenticity rooted in local culture that contests colonial linguistic hierarchies while reaffirming Sri Lankan identity from within. The dominance of the Sinhala language in *Theravada Man* challenges readers and linguistic norms alike. It is a conscious literary performance reflecting and reinforcing the novel's critique of cultural assimilation and spiritual paralysis while asserting the powerful Sinhala voice and culture from within the postcolonial English novel.

A Deep Dive into Spirituality and Dharma in Weerasinghe Arachchilage Piyatissa Weerasinghe

Moving on to spiritual and philosophical dimensions of Sinhala Buddhist identity that the novel embeds, Samaranayake's critique of Theravada Buddhism as a collective identity and Alonso-Breto's analysis of competing spiritual narratives can be utilized. Samaranayake, in 2013, argues that Theravada Buddhism cannot simply be considered a collective spiritual foundation for all Sinhala Buddhists, which assumes that within a Theravada Buddhist society, people inherit spiritual authority and purity at birth itself. This is considered insufficient and limiting. Yet the novel in concern, presents its protagonist on a spiritual journey which challenges this assumption. His path requires looking beyond the inherited doctrine through experience, trial and transformation. Thus, the novel emphasizes the clash between reason and emotion, indicating through the protagonist himself that clinging rigidly to a rationalized and doctrinal self-disrupts deeper spiritual growth. One can transcend ego and alienation (with which Piyatissa is faced) and move to a more profound spirituality when the self is set aside.

Alonso-Breto in 2016 highlights the juxtaposition of Piyathissa with the astrologer figure who frequents the novel. The astrologer openly critiques Buddhism as a stagnant system and argues that the Buddhism practiced in Sri Lanka is a political "Sinhala Dharma (Alonso-Breto 139)," and no longer the pure "Buddha Dharma." According to him, the said politicized version overlooks spiritual value and emphasizes status, symbolism and identity. This definition exposes how Buddhism is disfigured into a performative nationalism where religious practices serve nationalistic purposes over individual spiritual enlightenment. Therefore, her noticed preference for Sinhala words serves to reinforce said critiques of spiritual rigidity. Words like "yakkini" (female demon) (Wijesinghe 169), "peretha" (ghost) (Wijesinghe 25) and "deviyo" (God) (Wijesinghe 97) function as terms with cosmological and moral significance unique to the worldview of the Sinhala Buddhist. Her refusal to translate these words safeguards the complexity of local thought, thereby underscoring universal frameworks that dismiss indigenous knowledge systems and the limitations they bring.

Wijesinghe's engagement with spirituality further aligns with the broader argument of this discourse: the function of the Sinhala lexicon in Sri Lankan English literature. She utilizes it as a tool of cultural and ideological agency from within a national context. *Theravada Man* therefore reveals the tensions and contradictions in constructing a Sinhala identity while criticizing the simple, romanticized views of tradition. It demonstrates once more that the use of Sinhala words in English narratives are not mere linguistic flourishes but deliberate acts of reclaiming agency. They provide writers like Wijesinghe narrative control to write back to colonial legacies and to the nation itself. To sum, *Theravada Man* stresses that spirituality and

authenticity are neither static or monolithic but rather contested and performative influenced by experience and other social forces. Thus, Wijesinghe's engagement with spirituality shows how she challenges readers to reconsider the meaning of Sinhala Buddhist identity beyond stagnant nationalist frameworks through her linguistic and thematic choices.

Synthesis and Outlook: A Conclusion to Manuka Wijesinghe's Obsession over Sinhala Words

The use of Sinhala in Wijesinghe's novel is unique and it offers a profound and complex exploration of the Sinhala identity. Unlike Global writers who attempt to use Sinhala words to evoke nostalgia, hybridity or a romanticized return, she utilizes it to deliberately assert authenticity, critique and agency. Her use of Sinhala is rooted firmly in the lived realities of Sri Lanka, and it acts as a way of authenticating culture from within. Her audience that is deeply familiar with the social, religious and political nuances embedded in Sinhala facilitates this process.

The difficulties inherent in constructing a singular, pure Sinhala Buddhist identity are revealed through the novel. Sinhala terms of caste, folklore, ritual and spiritual beliefs present in the novel act as weapons in unmasking the performative nature of nationalist discourses. Thereby these deliberate linguistic choices challenge the reader to reconsider notions of authenticity not as fixed ideals but contested processes shaped by history, culture and power. By combining Sinhala and English in a way that avoids subordination, Wijesinghe also confronts the colonial language hierarchies. The said combination maintains an incisive critique of prevailing institutional and ideological structures while emphasizing the broader themes of hybridity, identity and resistance. In sum, the Sinhala in *Theravada Man* is symbolic of narrative agency where the author writes back from within the postcolonial context, to claim a space for the Sri Lankan voice in postcolonial literature. As she writes from within a space of internal cultural negotiation rather than an external return, the Sinhala utilized by Wijesinghe differentiates itself from diasporic narratives. Thus, the study makes evident that the dual function of Sinhala as a tool of authenticity and social commentary illustrates its vital role in shaping both national and individual identities. Thus, while the Sinhala lexicon can be a powerful medium of expression both in the hands of the expatriate writer and the migrant writer, in the case of Wijesinghe, it is not a simple linguistic choice. It is a firm validation of the culturally positioned voice that demands recognition and challenges monolithic narratives of identity.

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Lores and Lyrics of *Basain Sarain* in the Select Works of Prajwal Parajuly

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Abstract

This paper looks at how *basai sarai*, migration has been an integral part of the life of Nepalis in the Indian subcontinent and how it has played a crucial role in their identity construction. It traces the trajectory of the *basain sarai* spanning from the 19th to the 21st century. It shows how the *dukha* (sorrow), poverty resulting from the exploitative feudal system, the rigid caste hierarchy and the regressive moral codes of conduct under the Gorkha regime forced multitudes to leave their *muluk* (native land) for *Muglan* (land of the Mughals, British India). The *lahures* and *paltanes* (soldiers) formed the majority, the others included the tea and cinchona plantation workers, coolies, dairy farmers and graziers. Besides some seasonal workers, the rest of the workforce settled down in the places of their work, constructing identities and making claims of belonging to their host societies. Meanwhile the economic backwardness, underdevelopment, unemployment and the political turmoil in post-colonial Darjeeling pushed many educated but unemployed youths to Nepal, Sikkim and many other Indian cities for employment. With time, overseas migration of Indian Nepalis has increased considerably. Unlike their passive and 'economically inactive' predecessors, presently even Nepali women migrate for employment and/or education. The paper will make a close reading of Prajwal Parajuly's short stories, "The Cleft", "The Immigrants" and his novel *The Land Where I Flee* to bring out the harsh realities and the lived in realities of the *basain sarain*.

Keywords: *Basain Sarain, Migration, Identity, Lived in Realities*

Lores and Lyrics of *Basain Sarain* in the Select Works of Prajwal Parajuly

Displacement, both voluntary and involuntary has been an integral part of the life of Nepalis in the Indian subcontinent. *Basain sarai* or migration is voluntary where migrants leave their homes for better economic opportunities. *Basain sarai* has played a crucial role in the Indian Nepali identity construction and its ensuing identity crisis. The harsh socio-economic conditions of the early 19th century Gorkha kingdom in Nepal first compelled many to migrate to *Mughlan/Munglan* (the land of the Mughals, India). The early *basai sarai* was followed by waves of migration of a heterogeneous group of people from different castes, tribes and regions of Nepal over time and space. The lived-in experiences of the *basain sarai/s* and *nirvasan/s* of Nepalis across time and space have been an important theme of Nepali literature. Nepali poems, stories and songs are replete with stories of migration across time. This paper closely studies the implication of waves of migration over time and space on the identity crises of a people living in India but having close historical, cultural and linguistic ties with Nepal.

The *dukha* (sorrow), poverty resulting from the exploitative feudal system, the rigid caste hierarchy and the regressive moral codes of conduct under the 19th century Gorkha regime forced multitudes to leave their *muluk* (native land) for *Muglan* (land of the Mughlas, British India) where money seemed to grow in tea bushes (*chiya ko botma paisa phalcha*). The fact that *Muglan* or India was comparatively liberal and hence free from the oppressive socio-religious customs and practices of Nepal served as a potent pull factor for immigrants from Nepal. Nepal, then was under the repressive moral codes of the *Muluki Ain* (National Civil Code). It was introduced by Jang Bahadur Rana in 1854 and incorporated the diverse racial, ethnic, linguistic and religious groups of Nepal into a rigid Hindu *varna* or caste system (Chettri 78). The *Muluki Ain* legitimated practices of untouchability and serfdom. The hill tribes and the low Khas castes like the Kamis, Damais and Sarkis were subjected to oppression and exploitation by the high Khas castes like the Bahuns, Chettris and Thakuris.

Among the hordes who emigrated to British India, a good number were *lahures* and *paltanes* (soldiers). The term *Lahure* was derived from 'Lahore' -the place they were first enlisted to in Ranjit Singh's army and the latter presumably from 'platoon'. The *Gurkha* (British adaptation of 'Gorkha' in British military parlance) soldiers formed a majority of the Nepali emigrants among the tea and cinchona plantation workers, coolies, dairy farmers and graziers. With time, Nepalis were scattered over the breadth of British India spanning from the Garhwal hills in the west, across the Darjeeling hills, Dooars, and Assam, to the fringes of the British eastern province in Burma as well as the kingdoms of Sikkim and Bhutan.

Even after the Indian Independence in 1947, a large number of Nepalese were recruited by the Indian Army by virtue of the Britain-India-Nepal Tripartite Agreement, or the TPA. As a result of which, large number of Nepalese still serve in the Gorkha Regiment of the Indian army including other security wings of the Indian government (Sharma and Thapa 17). The Indian educational institutions also drew many students from Nepal. The migrants in the second phase were mostly from the 'poorest', the most infertile and remote places of Western Nepal who flocked to Indian cities like Delhi, Bombay, etc. Unlike the migrants of the first phase who permanently migrated to India in search of lands for cultivation and settlement, they were seasonal migrants "absenting themselves for six to eight months" in a year when agriculture was leaner every year. Chain migration was prevalent among them where people from a specific district migrate to one city. They provided cheap unskilled labour in construction sites and took up a varied range of jobs like that of *chowkidars* (door keepers), waiters, porters, masons, petty peddlers, cattle herders, farmhands, domestic helps, etc (Gellner 7-8).

Whereas in post-colonial India, the underdevelopment and abject poverty of the tea plantations in the Darjeeling hills and the Dooars region forced many individuals and families who depended on the tea gardens for sustenance to migrate to Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, the Northeast and the cities in search of jobs. Many women, children and even men were compelled to cross over to Nepal to work as servants, babysitters in the houses of the affluent Nepalese. Prajwal Parajuly's "The Cleft" (2013) depicts how poverty and the miserable life in the tea gardens urges the tea garden worker-parents of a nine-year-old Kaali to readily "offer" Kaali as a servant girl to Parvati "for free". With many more mouths to feed, the cleft-lipped and thus 'deformed' child was a huge burden to her parents so Kaali is sent off to Kathmandu to work for Parvati. Some educated yet unemployed youth from the Darjeeling hills also migrated to the

towns and cities of Nepal in search of jobs as the region was plagued by underdevelopment, poverty, unemployment in the post-independence period.

The government failed to generate opportunities for employment in the Darjeeling hills. The tea gardens managerial and other good posts were filled by Bengalis and Nepalis were still stuck with low paying, menial jobs. In comparison to their counterparts from Nepal the Nepalis in the Darjeeling hills had received a decent education owing to the establishment of schools and colleges by the missionaries. Indian Nepalis who migrated to Nepal were readily employed as teachers in schools, or even in offices. Many talented Indian Nepali musicians, singers, and actors moved to Nepal and made it big in the Nepalese music and film industry. Zealous and mission-minded Christian youths from the Darjeeling hills also migrated to the Hindu kingdom of Nepal to evangelise and plant churches in Nepal.

India and Nepal have also encountered many challenges because of the open Indo Nepalese border. One of the major problems posed by the unhindered and unchecked movement of Indian and Nepalese nationals across the border is the evil of trafficking. It is believed that every year some 15,000 Nepali women, girls and children are taken to India against their will (Thapa "Taken for Granted"¹⁴). Many women and children and even men from various villages and towns of Nepal have been trafficked to Indian brothels, circuses, etc. The easily accessible India-Nepal border also facilitated the free movement of trafficking agents who lured and duped poor and innocent women, children and even men from Nepal to Indian towns and cities like Siliguri, Bombay, Delhi, etc. For instance, Kaali in "The Cleft" (2012) is instigated to flee her mistress' house in Kathmandu and join the film industry in Bombay after a surgery on her cleft lip. "The Maoists have destroyed Nepal, he said. Even if you escape the clutches of your cruel mistress one day, what will you do in this country? ...It's time for you to leave the country and make a life for yourself, Kaali. The rich go to America, to England. You will go to Bombay and become the biggest star in Bollywood (Parajuly 30) Many poor, innocent and gullible Nepali women are lured to cities like Mumbai and Delhi with prospects of high-paying jobs, joining Bollywood or of marriage. There has been a significant rise in the trafficking of Nepalese girls and women to Indian cities in the recent times in the aftermath of Maoist insurgency and the devastating earthquake in Nepal in April 2015. Whereas many poor and vulnerable Nepalese were lured to Indian metropolitan cities and made part of organ donation scams. Traffickers take advantage of the fact that official documents of individuals crossing the border is not maintained as individuals can freely cross the border without having to produce any documents for identification.

Miscreants from both the nations misused the open border and used it as a freeway for smuggling of arms, drugs and money. The open border was also of great benefit to political escapees who fled their country and sought refuge on the other side of the border. The open border, non-requirement of official documents, and minimal cost of migration pulled and still pulls many Nepalese to seek jobs across major cities in India. The Nepalese in India and the Indians in Nepal were on the receiving end and were greatly benefitted by the Indo-Nepal Treaty of Peace and Friendship. Citizens of Nepal and India freely bought land, constructed houses and engaged in trade and business on the other side.

Post-colonial Darjeeling witnessed very little or no change in the administrative and economic structures. Discrimination and economic deterioration persisted in Darjeeling in the

form of internal neocolonialism perpetrated by the Government of West Bengal. The Government of West Bengal ushered in very little or no changes in the administrative or economic structure of Darjeeling. The tea estates which were once owned by European planters were owned by Bengalis, Marwaris or by big corporate from other parts of India. Meager wage paying manual labour and tea picking jobs were limited to Nepali men and women. Only a very few locals held higher positions in the tea estates. The tea gardens had turned into sites of underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy and unemployment. The stagnation in the development of agriculture further led to the economic deterioration of the region.

The Tourism industry in the Darjeeling hills began to thrive with the establishment of the West Bengal Tourist Development Corporation (WBTDC) in 1975. But wealthy outsiders owned a majority of hotels and transport companies which were only managed by locals. The locals were involved only in petty things like the sale of souvenirs and local agricultural produce, photography, driving etc. The major stakeholders in the industry were the outsiders (Subba 49). Trade and commerce in the region too were completely dominated by outsiders-the Marwaris and Biharis. There was very little or no scope for locals in the sphere of trade and commerce except for petty ones. The Marwaris and Biharis held a monopoly over the best businesses in town, and the locals were left selling vegetables and fruits. Despite their numerical strength the locals found themselves being economically exploited by the outsiders. The educated Indian Nepali youths of the Darjeeling hills too found little or no employment opportunities as the bigger and better share of government jobs was taken over by the Bengalis. This compelled people in pursuit of jobs and better lives to move to Sikkim, Nepal, Bhutan, the Northeastern states and the Indian metropolitan cities from the world-famous tea gardens of the Darjeeling hills that had drawn their forefathers to it about two centuries ago. For the young, able-bodied, adventurous, semi-literate Nepali men from India as well as Nepal, the decent salary, facilities and the glory of military and paramilitary services caught their fancy. Many thronged to the recruiting centers and got themselves enrolled in large numbers, hassle-free.

The small Indian towns where the Nepali population was concentrated provided very few avenues and platforms for youngsters passionate about sports, music and films to hone and showcase their talents. With the advent of televisions in small towns even if not to each one of the houses, young people were exposed to the world of films, television serials, sports and music and they began harboring dreams of moving to big cities to fulfill their dreams. A good number of educated second and third generation Indian Nepalis migrated to cities like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, etc. in order to carve a niche for themselves in the field of music, sports, films, journalism, etc. rather than getting enlisted in the Indian Army or working as labourers and tea coolies like their forefathers.

Prajwal Parajuly's debut novel, *The Land Where I Flee* (2013), portrays the lives of homosexuals and transgenders. The novel depicts how social prejudices and lack of social acceptance, homophobia have driven homosexuals and transgenders from their wee hometowns in the Darjeeling hills to the cities in pursuit of freedom and a dignified life. The fear of 'coming out' and expressing his true identity to Aama the conservative matriarch of the Neupaney family, Agastya chooses to settle in New York and never return to Gangtok. Prasanti the domestic help of the Neupaney family, a trans woman was born as Prasant. He flees from his home in Kalimpong immediately after his father's death fearing he would be made a Pundit as the only son of an Upadhyay Bahun according to his family's Bahun customs and traditions. His

desire to lead a dignified life and protect his family from being tarnished and condemned leads him to Mumbai where he takes refuge in a *hijra* house. After a gender reassignment surgery in Bangalore, Prasant becomes Prashanti and goes to Gangtok instead of returning home to Kalimpong.

Besides migrating to cities for employment many from middle-class Nepali families were sent to cities for higher education. With the establishment of call centers in cities in the early 2000s a good number of educated Nepali youths were recruited. The uneducated or those schooled till the primary or middle school level worked as domestic help, security guards, ayahs, salespersons, waiters in restaurants and especially young Nepali women as assistants in beauty parlours. Many ex- servicemen were also recruited as security personnel in shopping malls, banks, complexes and apartments after their retirement from the army. Some earned their living by running small eateries selling momos and other traditional food items. As more and more Nepalis migrated out from their Nepali majoritarian hometowns, they experienced hostility, intolerance from other Indian communities and were deeply hurt and humiliated. Even in Sikkim, the Nepalis who had migrated to Sikkim from the Darjeeling district and the Doars region were looked down upon with hostility as 'others', 'outsiders' and therefore competitors in their race for jobs, resources and land in Sikkim. Many ignorant fellow Indians considered them to be foreigners or citizens of Nepal. To the mainstream Indians, Nepalis were stereotyped as '*bahadurs*' or '*durwans*'. The second and third-generation Indian Nepalis, with their exposure to mainstream India and its attitude towards them, began to suffer from a deep identity crisis which their forefathers had not experienced.

The 21st century migration of Nepalis (both from India as well as Nepal) involves migration overseas for employment or education. For Nepali migrants, India had been a major destination for employment for almost two centuries. However, since the last few decades, the migration of the Nepalese to India has decreased. Nepalis are seeking employment opportunities abroad because of the considerably higher wages and the glitz and glamour of working in the *bidesh* (foreign country). Many Nepalis have been lured to the U.S. and countries like Hongkong, Singapore, Dubai, Kuwait, Oman, Israel, etc. With the Nepali ex-British Army and their families settling down in places in the U.K., the number of Nepalis in the U.K. has been increasing. Due to the geographical proximity of India, the low travel costs to India still draws Nepalese migrants who cannot afford to go overseas. A shift in the nature of the immigrants of recent times comprise of educated people, professionals and students in pursuit of professional employment or higher education in foreign countries though the majority remain unskilled and semi-skilled workers. The fictional works of Prajwal Parajuly, the internationally acclaimed Indian Nepali diasporic writer portray the injustice, indignity meted out on Nepalis in the host nations. Parajuly's *The Land Where I Flee* (2016) and "The Immigrants" demystify the life of Nepalis living abroad and bring out the harsh realities of their life in the *bidesh*.

In Prajwal Parajuly's *The Land Where I Flee* (2013), the Neupaney siblings who hailed from the wealthy and influential Neupaney family of Gangtok had all settled abroad. The eldest, Agastya, was a soon-to-be green card holder oncologist in New York. The migration of Nepalese women was negligible in the past, it was the men who migrated and women were mere dependents, they stayed at home and took care of the home and children. A few decades ago, women were passive agents of migration, and their migration was because of their marriage or family migration. The two Neupaney sisters Bhagwati and Manasa too were 'passive agents of

migration' and settled in Colorado and London by virtue of their marriage. Bhagwati and her family had landed in America as part of the Lhotshampa rehabilitation project of America after being 'herded out of Bhutan'. The Oxford-educated Manasa was settled in London after she became the daughter-in-law of a moneyed Nepalese family in London. Ironically, Bhagwati, the least educated among the siblings, washed dishes at a diner to make ends meet for her family but the intelligent and Oxford-educated Manasa was 'economically inactive' as she was busy taking care of her invalid father-in-law.

In recent times, many Nepali women are immigrating to foreign countries in search of jobs though their numbers are lesser than their male counterparts. Most women migrants are school-level dropouts however some among them are college educated. Many work as housemaids, caregivers, cleaners, salespersons etc. Some are also employed in the hospitality sector in hotels and restaurants, and a very small percentage of Nepali women work as nurses and other professionals such as salespersons, and cashiers, as well as in the manufacturing of electronics, textiles, food processing, construction and transportation sector (Limbu 128). As a majority of Nepali women migrants are employed in the domestic sector as housemaids, caretakers of children and the elderly this has led to Nepalis being stereotyped as suitable servants. Sabitri a young Nepalese woman from Rolpa in Parajuly's "The Immigrants" (2013) worked as a *kaam garne* (servant) in America and eventually ended up working for Amit a Nepali from Darjeeling. Sabitri cooks for Amit in exchange for English lessons from Amit. Sabitri denies being paid in cash by a fellow Nepali "It's one Nepali helping another. I cook your food; you teach me English. Problem solved. Let's not be petty" (Parajuly 254). Though both spoke the same language, shared the same culture and values and ate the same food, in terms of their socio-economic status they were worlds apart. Amit was Sabitri's employer, richer, worked in a company, owned a tiny apartment in Manhattan and even had achieved "a brown man's biggest aspiration", a German maid before Sabitri. At twenty-five he was proud that he had climbed up the 'ladder of success' in America with 'zero help' from his parents. Unlike Amit, Sabitri felt she was moving towards the 'worse' instead of 'moving' towards 'better things' "Better things? I am wiping shit of Madam's grandchildren. This is not better things" (271).

The reason that motivated their immigration to America was different, for Sabitri, it was purely a compulsion to financially support her family whereas for Amit it was his desire for a better life, the glitz and glamour of America and the prestige of working in America. Sabitri's sole ambition was to earn lots of money and to own a clothes store of her own. Right from the first month of her stay in America, Sabitri had started sending money home to repay the loan her family had taken for her travel and rent for the first month. For Amit whose parents were Lecturers in a reputed college in Darjeeling, it had never occurred to him, even in his wildest dreams that a person would have to take a loan to go to America. Unlike Sabitri, he had little or no familial responsibilities and financial constraints as he came from a relatively well to do family. Little did Sabitri's family know that she shared a one bed- room apartment with seven people so that she could save some more money and send it home for the construction of a new 'cement house' in Illam.

At home, everyone thought that Sabitri worked in an office "But I am working as a *kaam garne* here. No one in the family knows it...They think I am working in an office. And no one knows about the seven people who are my roommates. Three are men. Almost all of them are illegal (256). But Sabitri was lucky, she had won the most coveted Diversity Visa lottery which

meant that Sabitri was a lawful citizen of America per say but this category of American citizens was resented as much as refugees and expatriates in America. While professionals like Amit and also Agastya belonged to the category who comprised of “professionals-diligent graduates from American Universities, working harder still to climb the immigrant ladder one visa status at a time...” and “maintained a safe distance from” Diversity Visa holders like Sabitri and Bhagwati who had received citizenship by luck or on humanitarian grounds “in no small part by a mixture of scorn and envy (Parajuly 22). When Amit’s application for the H-1B Visa gets rejected, Amit is compelled to accept Sabitri’s proposition. “I am a citizen of America. You need to stay in the country legally. You can marry me. It won’t be real. No one has to know... And after marry, you can continue your job. We can get divorce in no time (278-79). Amit’s decision portrays how youths from countries like India, Nepal, blinded by their American dreams deliberately embrace desperate measures to make a living in America.

The history of Nepalis in India is steeped in stories of migration. It began with the migration of Gurkha soldiers, tea plantation workers and labourers in the 19th century even before the demarcation of national territories and boundaries of India and Nepal by the British colonizers. The *dukha* caused by the socio-political and economic of nineteenth century prompted Nepalis to migrate to *Muglan/ Mungalan/ Mughlan*, British India the land of plentitude. The open Indo-Nepal border still facilitates migration between the two nations though the migration is mostly uni-directional. The geographical proximity has made India a major destination for Nepali workers. For the Indian Nepalis, migration to the cities or overseas for jobs and economic benefits still forms an integral part of reality today.

Bipul Chettri a renowned Indian Nepali singer and songwriter in his recent song “Mughlan” narrates the agonizing lived experience of Nepali migration that cuts across nationality (Nepalese/Indian Nepali), ethnicity, gender, class, space and generations. It captures the *byatha* (pain, suffering) of a helpless *Kancha Dai* –a Nepali Everyman, who is compelled to leave home for Mughlan (also Muglan, Mungalan) in search of a better life. “*Yestai cha yo katha Kancha Dai ko byatha*, this is how the story of the misery of Kancha Dai unfolds / *Juni Juni dekhi yestai nai awastha* Such has been the plight for generations (Chettri 4:09). The character, Kancha Dai is not bound by gender, space and time and represents the entire Nepali speaking community irrespective of citizenship whether Indian or Nepalese who have been forced to leave their ‘*desh*’ and migrate to ‘*bidesh*’, ‘*pardes*’ whether in the past or the recent past for their economic wellbeing. Mughlan too, is not restricted to the nineteenth century, prosperous land of Mughals where money grew in tea bushes but any country overseas or any place away from home where Nepali men and women migrate to work and live permanently or temporarily. “*Jiwna yaha garo bho* (Life here is arduous) *Kaam gari khana sahro bho* It is difficult to earn a living here... *Bhagya raicha yestai hamro* What a deplorable fate we have (Chettri 0:35). The song ponders at the wretched fate of Nepalis that causes them to choose from two equally difficult choices of leaving home and estranging oneself from one’s *muluk* and the warmth of being with loved ones to a distant land with aspirations for economic prosperity and a better life or staying back to a life of poverty, injustice and caste oppression. The brighter side of *Muglan* was the freedom it offered – freedom from the rigid caste hierarchy, freedom to climb up the social ladder on the basis of one’s ability, labour and also financial freedom from the back-breaking burden of debts. The deep sense of rootlessness and nostalgia which is aggravated by non-acceptance in the host society/country also finds expression in the song. “*Bidesh ta gayeni aafno thaw bhane afnai raichani* I went to a foreign land and realized that there is no place like one’s own (2:58). But the decision

to return was an equally difficult one. “*Farkana ta mann lagcha, desh ko haal sochi darl agcha* I long to return, but shudder at the state of my country) ...*farki ke garu bhani darlagcha* (I despair at what I will do on returning (3:32). Migrants hesitated to return to the hard life fraught with poverty, violence and strife back at home. Chettri’s “Mughlan” presents the psychological reality of migration and hence strikes a chord with the entire Nepali community for whom the phenomenon of migration forms an integral part of their history and reality.

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Translating Chitra Mudgal's novel - *Post Box No.203, Nala Sopara*: theory and praxis

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Abstract

This paper aims to make a study of the theory and praxis of my translation of Chitra Mudgal's Sahitya award winning Hindi novel - *Post Box No.203, Nalasopara* into English. The paper engages with the challenges of translating from *bhasa* such as Hindi into English which is so different from it. Moreover, this book uses a Hindi which is a cosmopolitan, drawing heavily from Gujrati, some Marathi and Punjabi. This increases the challenge of translating into English keeping the nuances of these languages into the target language. The applicability of theories of translation has been discussed in the act of translation, making it intelligible for readers of another culture. The paper also discusses the aspects of untranslatability faced in the act of translation from Hindi to English. The importance and difficulties of negotiating the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the original text into the translated text has also been discussed in the context of my translation.

Keywords: *Translation, Theory, Culture, Untranslatability, Aesthetic.*

This paper aims to make a study of my translation of Chitra Mudgal's award winning Hindi novel - *Post Box No.203 Nala Sopara* into English as part of a Sahitya Akademi translation project. It is an epistolary novel about the life of a transgender. It opened up a whole new world for me, widening my perspective, sensitizing my indifferent self to the issues of trans identity, emotions, problems and politics on an intellectual and emotional level. As a translator the text held its own challenges of translating from a Hindi which is cosmopolitan, drawing heavily from Gujrati, some Marathi and Punjabi into English. English has such a wide readership that it is impossible to fully negotiate the culture and vocabulary of it as the target language.

After a text is translated, a scholar may evaluate it to see which theories or methods the translator has applied. Translation is a complex process. Critics have formulated many theories about translation over the ages. Richardson dives deep into the nature of translation, "there remains a gap between what I want to say and what the language will let me say (or even think)." (Richardson 267) He dwells upon the impossibility of accurate communication, "We can never understand anyone's meaning in its pristine state." (Richardson 267) He looks upon written or spoken language as an act of translating what we think. He argues that reading is also an act of translating as "...we are translating the text into our experience." (Richardson 267) He compares a translator to an anthropologist, "...both are entrusted to interpret the experience of other cultures for those who lack knowledge of them." (Richardson 267-268) Thus, the role of a translator is difficult as well as problematic.

Analysis of a translation entails the study of the theoretical framework. Richardson divides translation theories into three categories. 1) It is assumed that all languages are equivalent to each other and so it is possible to find corresponding words, sentences and ideas in other languages and cultures. 2) Literary translation demands a greater involvement. Spivak, herself a translator says "Translation is the most intimate act of reading. I surrender to the text when I translate." (Spivak 398). The translator needs to get into the skin of the text in order to convey the experience the author intends the reader to experience. Translator's task is to bring the writer to the reader who is unable to understand his/her language. Publishers look for lucidity in the translated work as if it was written in that language. 3) The third form of translation is called 're-invention.' Here the translator recreates the source text somewhat freely breaking the bounds of the language. Within the rubrics of such a translation Richardson calls Joyce's *Ulysses* a translation of *The Odyssey*. (Richardson 272)

Language is a living entity which is constantly changing and evolving. Dingwaney and Maier argue that translation is,

"...the creation of complex tension. That is translation, ideally, makes familiar and thereby accessible, what is confronted as alien, maintaining the familiar in the face of otherness without either sacrificing or appropriating difference. This means that the translator must have a foot in each of two worlds and be able to mediate self-consciously between them." (Dingwaney 304)

The translator's preoccupation should be to transfer the main idea in the target language. In this transfer, the culture of the target reader is as important as the culture of the source reader. Lokman cites translation theoretician Jiri Levy in his paper arguing that in the translation of a literary work it should not lose its literary value. According to Levy the translated text, the translator and the translation process are equally important. Levy argues that the artistic components of a text can be transferred into another language by replacing them with formal components of that language. Levy treats translation as no less than an art. According to Levy the purpose of translation is to comprehend the original text and transfer the original message. (Lokman 100). So, a translator must have the skill to transfer the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the original into the translated language.

Sociolinguistic theories link translation to communicative theory and information theory, with special emphasis on the receptor's role in the translation process. They do not overlook language structures completely, rather engage with it on a higher level in accordance with their functions in the communicative process. For literary texts these language structures could involve figures of speech or rhetorical devices such as irony, hyperbole, simile, metaphor, etc. So, the translator must have language competence and language performance.

Following Nida, translation is looking for equivalence between source language text and target language components. Every translator has his/her own way of working, still the basics are similar. It can be said that the translator begins by looking for 'formal equivalence' i.e. a 'word for word' translation of the source text. Then the attention shifts to 'dynamic equivalence' in seeking equivalence in content and form between source and target language when the former becomes impossible to attain. It is sometimes required to translate a sentence of say four words into ten words in the target language in order to convey the legitimate meaning. This is mainly because of the difference in the grammatical structure of the languages, so that the meaning can

be conveyed. But equivalence theory has its limitations especially when it comes to transference between Hindi and English which have different grammatical structures and cater to different cultures. There are numerous examples of this difficulty cited later in the paper where either sentences had to be expanded or contracted to convey the meaning in the target language.

Minakshi Mukherjee points out that translating an Indian language or *bhasa* into a European language is not equivalent to translating into another *bhasa* which shares many commonalities of structure, grammar, culture and vocabulary:

“Translating a text – say from Hindi to Bangla or from Marathi to Kannada- is a far more natural and satisfactory activity both for the translator and reader than when the same novels are rendered into English, where negotiating semantic and cultural hurdles to achieve equivalence of meaning tends to be a relatively uphill task.” (Mukherjee 188)

Having undertaken this mammoth task, I share my experience, the challenges I faced and ways in which I negotiated them with examples quoting the original Hindi lines and their rendition into English. In the paper I refer to myself as ‘one’ to indicate how I went about it. One begins by trying to translate sentences word by word in the first draft. It’s like breaking down the whole structure and rebuilding it brick by brick. With every editing the eye catches and works on the finer details which cannot be comprehended right away.

One begins with understanding the words, phrases and sentences i.e. what the author wants to say. A single reading of the text is never enough to facilitate translation; multiple readings are required. One has to get immersed in it before unravelling it and recreating it in a different language as proposed by Spivak.

Next one takes into account how the author says it, so one has to grasp the literal intentions as a whole. A sentence can be ironical, satirical, hyperbolic etc. Recreating the mood, tone, feeling is the challenge. In the text *Post Box No 203 Nala Sopara*, there is supposedly one narrator, but many voices speak and it was a task to separate these voices, just enough to make it intelligible to the reader.

Every author has a certain style which is extremely difficult to reproduce in the translated text. It has been said that a translator must have language competence as well as performance i.e. as per linguistics the knowledge of the language and ability to use it. There are words and phrases in Hindi in the text which have an impact on Indians which cannot be replicated in the target language English. The translator has a lot to negotiate, s/he doesn’t only have to work on style but prioritise the meaning when the style becomes non-negotiable. Sometimes one has to make compensations in other places when it is not possible to replicate the style by one’s creativity.

Post Box No 203 Nala Sopara being epistolary has a very informal, personal diction. There is a single narrator but there are many voices, and each have a different way of speaking. There are multiple characters from different ranks of society and accordingly the choice of words, manner of speaking, sophistication and tone change. India is a multilingual country and almost every Indian knows more than one language and there is a rich interchange and adaptation of vocabulary between the *bhasa* languages.

As a translator I tried to strike a balance between faithfulness and lucidity. My intention was very clear, that the reader must be able to grasp the sense that is being conveyed, the meaning should not be lost even at the cost of lucidity. Grammatically Hindi and English are very different as are all Indian languages, working around that was sometimes tricky to convey all that is being said with the same emphasis.

Post Box No 203 Nala Sopara has a protagonist from a cosmopolitan set up in Mumbai, hailing from a Gujrati family travelling to Delhi, interacting with Punjabis and people from the Northern part of the country. As the region and identity of the Hindi speaker changes, so does the Hindi, in the words and salutations used at the outset with differences in the style of talking etc. The challenge in an English translation was to retain these regional nuances and differences to preserve the cultural essence of the source text into the target text.

There are many words and ideas that are not translatable, retaining the original and providing the meaning in the glossary helped maintain the lucidity of the novel:

1. Indian languages have more kinship terms than English and these terms change depending upon the region of the speaker. For e.g. - "*Ba*"- mother in Gujrati (Sriwastav 204) "*pappa*" -father in Gujrati (Sriwastav 207) "*dikra*" -son in Gujrati (Sriwastav 205), "*mota bhai*" - elder brother in Gujrati (Sriwastav 207) "*Bhabhi*"- sister-in-law in Gujrati (Sriwastav 204), "*ben*" -a generic term meaning sister to address all women in Gujarati (Sriwastav 204), "*mama*" -maternal uncle (Sriwastav 207) "*bhai*" - brother (Sriwastav204), "*bauji*" -father in Punjabi (Sriwastav124) "*biji*" -mother in Punjabi (Sriwastav 204) "*samdhan*" -Mother-in-law of son (Sriwastav 208)

Now one might say that *Ba* and *pappa* could easily be translated as father and mother...but that would only convey the meaning not the emotion. I have used these terms creatively as well...for instance...I use the Gujrati word for mother *Ba*, most often but I have also used the word 'mother' in places - *Ba* says- "Your father did take you to visit a specialist, didn't he?" (Sriwastav 4) The reader is introduced to the father in this line given the impression that he did his duty towards his son. Just after this, in a few lines, Vinod says that he tried to keep up the hope raised by his mother that someday there would be a solution to his problem. But his illusions were shattered and for the first time he condemns his parents for his state.

Here I use *pappa*- father in Gujrati (Sriwastav 207) to emphasize the intimate relationship of trust, as it foregrounds the deep sense of betrayal he faced. He says--- "You my mother, you and *pappa* jointly put me into the hands of butchers, like an innocent goat" (Sriwastav 5) Here he distances himself from her ...so a less intimate term- mother. Later on, in the text MLA Ji asks him to address him as "*bauji*"- Punjabi for father (Sriwastav124) ...as he looks upon him with affection...but when Vinod realizes that he is using him...he stops calling him '*bauji*' ...so once again this gives the sense that these terms are very intimate carrying the weight of emotions...without which they lose meaning.

2. The place where the transgenders live with their Sardar is called "*thikana*" (Sriwastav 208) I have retained the word because I couldn't find a suitable alternative in English...it is not home, nor is it shelter, it's a place they are forced to inhabit.
3. Greetings used in the text confirm to cultural nuances -"*adaab*" (Sriwastav 204).
4. Festivals referred to such as "*rakhi*" (Sriwastav 207).

5. Names of deities- *Jwala Devi* (Sriwastav 206).
6. Ethnic and regional denominators - "*Kachhi*", "*lungi*", "*salwar kameez*" (Sriwastav 206, 207, 208).
7. Similarly, words denoting the food items, here from a Gujrati, Punjabi cuisine, have been retained in the translation e.g.- "*thepla*", "*khandwi*", "*shrikhand*", "*aloo paratha*", "*balushahi*", "*kulfi*" etc (Sriwastav 208, 206, 208, 206).
8. Words used to abuse e.g.- "*kalanki*", "*karamjala*", "*barkhordar*" (Sriwastav 206,204)
9. Sounds like "*ufff*", indicating irritation, "*uhoon*" in a romantic mood "*dhab, dhab*" sounds of the head racking in pain, were retained as these are not translatable. (Sriwastav 135, 80).
10. Idioms in the vernacular could not always be replaced by a similar idiom in the target language- e.g. "*Sheikh Chilli*", "*gudri ka lal*" (Sriwastav 208, 206).
11. The words- "*ganga jal*", "*mandal kamandal*," "*Lakhsman Rekha*" - have mythological connotations. (Sriwastav 167, 207, 206).
12. There are several terms for transgenders in India...I have used "*Hijra*" and "*Kinnar*" at times for specific reasons.... otherwise, I use the general term transgender...Tiwari Ji says, "*Hijras would best be addressed by hijras*" (Sriwastav 143) this burns Vinod's ears. The word transgender would fail to create the same impact for it sheds all illusions, unmasks his benefactors and throws another betrayal on his face.
13. Lines from songs in Hindi (Bollywood) and a Gujrati lullaby ... I retained the original and kept translated meaning in brackets as follows - "*(hum pe ye kisne hara rang dala, khushi ne humari hume maar dala)* Who threw this green colour at me... my joy killed me" (Sriwastav 108) to allow the reader a treat of the original sounds of the vernacular.
14. In a scene where Vinod hallucinates...he is suffering from extreme cold and is shaken ...I have kept the Gujrati, "*Jyostna tu mara room ma?*" (Sriwastav 81) to jolt him back to reality!

Alexander Fraser Tytler says that a translated text must replicate the style of the original text. There are instances where there are very short sentences in the original...but in translation I had to merge a few to make the meaning clear. For e.g. when the protagonist talks about the pain in his mother's feet...how he would press his mother's feet to his chest and fall asleep... Here the author creates an intensity that escalates the feeling of the protagonist ...not only through words but also through sentence construction. Regarding style and manner, translation theorist Alexander Fraser Tytler's says that it should be the same as that of the source text. If the source text is racy at some point the translation should bring the same effect and if it were slow, mundane and introspective the translation should have the same impact.

I have followed this pattern in translation but in one or two places I have merged them keeping intact the pace, intensity and meaning of the text. I have used a comma instead of a full stop to merge sentences:

“तेरे पांव अब भी सूजते होंगे न बा। मैं उनकी उँग लियों को कैसे चटखायुं। कैसे दूर करूँ उनकी थकान। थककर डबल रोटी से सूज जानेवाले तेरे उन पावों को मैं चूमना चाहता हूँ। उनकी टीसैं हर लेना चाहता हूँ उन्हें छाती से लगा कर सोना' चाहता हूँ। हफ्ताभर! नहीं, दररोज ! नहीं, महीनो ।

नहीं, पुरे वर्ष । सं चत कर लेना चाहता हूँ ताउम की नींद। जितनि भी मल जाए। फर चाहे जितनि रातें पलक झपकाए बिना गुजरें। बैठे -बैठे कटें। करवटें भरते बीते या पूरी रात टहलते हुए। बस सेह लूंगा। शकायत नहीं करूंगा कसी से की इसी लए अनमना हूँ की रातभर सो नहीं पाया।(Mudgal 08)

Translated as:

“Your feet must still be getting swollen isn’t it *ba*? How do I crack your knuckles now? I want to kiss your tired feet, puffed as fluffy bread. I want to soothe their ache. I want to press them to my heart and sleep. A week! No, every day! No, for months! No, the whole year! I want to store away sleep for a lifetime, as much as I can. Then I won’t care for the sleepless nights that may pass, sitting through the night, turning on my sides or strolling. I will bear it endure the pain and will not complain that I am restless because I couldn’t sleep all night.” (Sriwastav 02)

There are many such lines where sentences have been merged and also lines comprised of a single or double words that had to be expanded to transmit the meaning which shows that it is not possible to find ‘equivalence’ as proposed by Nida, in the target language due to the huge difference in grammatical structure and linguistic difference between Hindi and English. The line - “रात है, बात है, घात है, साथ है, मात है” (Mudgal 148) was rather difficult to break down in English. This is a speedy and alliterative line which builds the tension in the novel at this juncture. The alliteration couldn’t be achieved in the target language, so I tried to retain the tension and urgency in the following way- “It is a menacing night of random talks, people and defeat!” (Sriwastav 134)

Readers of the English language should get a taste of the culture the original language, I have retained words and phrases from the original text largely because these are rooted in the culture and there are no direct equivalents in the target language. The novel beautifully paints the cultural milieu of a cosmopolitan Gujarati, Marathi, Hindi setting with characters from different strata of society.

Translator theorists like Jiri Levy treat translation no less than an art form as mentioned earlier. The translator is expected to reproduce the artistic and aesthetics of the original text into the translation. This is extremely difficult taking into consideration the difference in grammatical structure, linguistic and cultural differences between English and Hindi. I have tried to negotiate the nuances of the language that is being translated in my efforts to retain rhetorical devices as far as possible to transfer the style, tone, mood. E.g. “ताप से पघलती सुनहरी बर्फ सा चेहरा। उस चेहरे की खामोश सुबक सी फूटती श्रीण धाराओं में कल -कल, छल -छल नहीं, पकड़ से छूटते अवलम्बन की पघलती आशंका रिस रही है” (Mudgal 83.) Translated as - “A golden face, like ice melting with warmth! The silent sobs of the face broke not into the splosh-splash of streams, but into the oozing of the apprehensive loss of a support. ...” (Sriwastav 72) Here I have retained the alliteration in a different sound set in Hindi associated with flowing of streams, with a similar sound set in English...echoing the joy associated with it...to the sound ‘रिस’...meaning flowing very slowly...to ‘oozing’ in English ...that is associated with pain.

I have tried to keep my focus on the sounds of the words and worked accordingly. E.g. The grandson of *Ba* is called *Nanu baba*....and he has some problem in his *nunu* -penis, now this can easily be translated but in the context of the story the genitals play an important role and *Ba* stays back in her son's in-law's house only to ensure that his *nunu* is fixed, enduring criticism, as it is not the norm. I kept the *nunu* also because it rhymes well with *Nanu*so the line goes- "Nanu baba ka *nunu*". (Sriwastav 194)

Again, in a sentence like ...” जनप्रतिनिध के लए सभी जन महत्वपूर्ण होते हैं. भले यह समय उन्होंने वशेष तवज्जो देते हुए मेरी झोली में डाला था मगर बा, दिल्ली का वधायक केवल समय ही न दे, आपसे राजदार भाव से आपकी समस्या से पुरे धैर्य से साथ अवगत होना चाहे तो है न महत्वपूर्ण उपलब्धि” (Mudgal 39) .

I translated this as - “Everyone was important for MLA Ji, a people's representative, he not only gave his precious time to me *ba*, but also tried to be the confidante of my troubles, now that is surely of some import.....” (Sriwastav 33) I didn't translate the figure of speech he used but wrote a simple sentence that gave the meaning. Again, I have taken some liberty in inserting the names or kinship term of the person addressed even when it is not there, or omitted it as required to give clarity or make it lucid. In this way I compensate for the style with my own creativity.

Some similes were translated for e.g.- पक गयी आदत जोड़ में धंसी कील होती है। (Mudgal 59)- “Old habits are like iron nails stuck in the joint.” (Sriwastav 52) Some lines like the following will show how I worked around the nuances of Hindi into English-

“तुमने स्कूल के लए निकलते समय, चुपके से मेरी जेब सरकाए जाने वाले नोट की भांति, "खा लेना जो तेरे मन में आए, बीन्नी!" ढेर - सी दिलासा सरकाई थी मेरे जहन में” (Mudgal...10) translated as : “When I was leaving for school, just as you had secretly slipped a currency note into my pocket saying, “Have something...whatever you like Binni!” you had slipped in a lot of hope into my consciousness!” (Sriwastav 04)

Some lines were very difficult to translate as the images were abstract:

“ऐसी मनः स्थिति में मेरी आँखों से खारा पानी ढुकने लगता है बा! गालों और गले पर कत्थई लकीरें गहरी और गहरी नहरों की तरह खुद जाती हैं। जो कभी सूखती नहीं, न खाली होती है. जब उन्हें ऊपर दिखाना होता है, तभी दिखती हैं एहसास कराने के लए की अपने कत्थई गीलेपन को मेरी उँग लयाँ छू सके। नहीं दिखना होता है तो वे गायब हो मेरे' जिस्म' के अधूरे हिस्से में जाकर जैम जाती है। अँधेरा पए हुए काली बर्फ की तरह।” (Mudgal 30)

These were translated as...

“At such moments, in place of tears, blood oozes out of my eyes. Dark marks of flowing tears become etched like canals on my cheeks and neck, tears that neither dry nor are emptied. They surface whenever they want to, to make me aware that I can touch their

dark wetness. When they don't, they go and freeze in the vacuum of my missing organ, like black ice drunk on darkness." (Sriwastav 26)

I believe there is no perfect translation because even after publication, reading one's work there is a strong urge to edit as better expressions come to the mind. The success of a translation is to be reviewed by the reader. The fact that it was published by Sahitya Akademi gives it a certain value as they have a review committee that screens the work before okaying it for publication. As the readers read it and give their feedback the receptivity of the work is ascertained. The completion of the task with publication of the book leaves a translator with a hankering for the reader's response to one's work. Then there is the dilemma of ownership, having invested one's time, emotion and creative faculties on it as not one's own, gives the feel of surrogacy as it is called someone's else's child at the end.

Translations and translators are being better acknowledged now. The sharing of the Booker Prize 2022 between Daisy Rockwell translator of *Ret Samadhi* with the author Geetanjali Shree and of the International Booker Prize 2025 between Banu Mushtaq and Deepa Bhashti for her translation of Mushtaq's short stories into an anthology - *Heart Lamp* has raised the status of translators and their works. Keya Majumdar sums up the purpose of reading translations, "better human relations will result with widely differing views sharing and comparing their responses through strategies of Interpretation and Reading...to see and feel what other people have experienced, to know what they have they have known in their own ways." (Majumdar 169) The theory and praxis of translation is complex and difficult, but the horizons are widening with recognition of their work, thus encouraging translators to take up translation with care and a mission to transfer literature to a wider audience.

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Human-Monster Interactions, Lawlessness and Plasticity in *Lord of the Flies*: An Interdisciplinary Exploration

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Abstract

William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* is considered one of the best dystopian fictions not for its segmented setting and political contour but for its deep exploration of the horror and terror of untrodden spheres of the human psyche. In the novel, in Jack's life we witness a paradigmatic metamorphosis that results in human monstrosity due to the neuronal politics. So far, academic research is concerned, Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies* already holds a significant amount of scholarship in the existing body of literature. In spite of that, the neuronal concern for turning a human into a monster is yet to be negotiated. The venture can be efficiently supported by the framework of the plastic brain by Malabou, which relies on the mechanism that if the subject's ego dies because of trauma as a result of constant humiliation, the destructive plasticity starts working by default. Therefore, by problematizing the question of the brain mechanism that helps someone perceive things in an alternative way this paper articulates the concern for dystopia itself as a destructive creation. It shows how a traumatized psyche can restore law and order and destabilize too.

Keywords: *Monstrosity, Lawlessness, Dystopia, Human Monster, Brain Plasticity*

Introduction

In the age of the Anthropocene, when human activity decisively governs planetary processes, the question of agency and responsibility acquires new urgency. The argument begins with our consideration of the Anthropocene as a separate entity with a plastic brain capable of both creation and destruction. Then why can't we regard dystopia as a brainchild of an anthropocentric ontology, especially when it shows very little care for its ecology? The politics of psychology goes back to the days of Sigmund Freud, when he was treating his hysterical patients. Although Freud initiated the process of fathoming the deep machinery of the human psyche, it is carried forward by Malabou with her thought-provoking insights into the trauma of new wounds—the wounds that Freud did not address at that time.

However, with due respect to Freud, Catherine Malabou broadens and enriches the psychoanalytic tradition. It is Malabou who, for the first time, asserts that the human brain is flexible in nature and it can shape a human identity according to its operational mechanism. She believes that trauma completely reorganizes human psyche in such a way that the former becomes unknown to the latter. This change, she contends, exposes both the fragility and

resilience of the human mind. Hence, unlike other trauma theorists, Malabou designs the model of trauma in a far-fetched way, which advocates for the emergence of neo-formed beings.

In the novel, we encounter the stranded British schoolboys on a barren island. Everything happens after a plane crash. The boys undergo terrible consequences. In understanding trauma, we are not supposed to deny the role of place that interplays with the life of a trauma subject. William Golding's establishment of an isolated island as a setting intensifies the island's traumatic qualities, causing almost all the boys present to undergo mental transformations. We cannot deny Jack's demagoguery, which the island makes possible. D. Graham Burnett argues in *On the Monstrosity of Islands*, that islands historically evoke confinement, betrayal, and despair. According to him, islands are "homes to mutineers, wreckers, and pirates," places where monsters appear with alarming frequency (90). Golding's island belongs to this tradition, producing monstrosity as a function of isolation and trauma. In the essay, "Self-Destructive Community and the Improbability of War in *Lord of the Flies*," Yasunori Sugimura writes that:

An uninhabited island, the setting of this story, contains two vying elements: firstly, the sign system and the sign-destroying force. These two elements, juxtaposed and intertwined with each other, inhere in the topography, scenery, and various aspects of the island, interacting in a delicate balance, out of which comes the endlessly multivocal, differentiated world. The conch is a typical example of this sort of balance. Lack of this balance brings about the world of nondifferentiation, uniformity, and violence. (47)

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen's *Monster Theory* deepens this perspective. He argues that monsters are cultural constructs. They embody society's fears, anxieties and desires. Jack is not an abnormal child. He is the representative of the projection of humanity's inherent aggression. And it is revealed when societal order falls apart. Monsters, Cohen insists, are "our children," generated from within rather than encountered from without. Golding's narrative exemplifies that monstrosity arises not from an external beast but from within the boys themselves.

Masahiro Mori's insights further complicate this analysis. Through his famous concept of the uncanny valley, Mori describes in the book *The Buddha in the Robot: A Robot Engineer's Thoughts on Science and Religion*, how the discomfort humans feel toward entities that resemble them but deviate subtly from natural human form. Jack always appears frightening to his comrades. He bears a face of both human and inhuman which generates an uncanny effect on his fellow mates. Thus, Jack's and even Hitler's transformations are poignant illustrations of how the rise of an uncanny demagogue warns society of a monstrous future. And indeed, the entire matrix is psychological.

The Monster Question

Now, what do we mean by a monster? What does a monster do? So, the term 'monster' has its Latin root, *monstrum*. It means an omen, a sign of divine displeasure with the charisma of creation. As Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock cites Stephen Asma to point out that the monster is not simply a biological anomaly. It is a cultural construction. It is a "cultural category" under which societies place unusual forms of existence. This is the same kind of monstrosity we encounter in a serial killer. In *Monster Studies*, one strand of inquiry is teratology, or the study of birth defects. Based on Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock's book *The Monster Theory Reader*, the French physician Ambroise Paré ponders on the birth of a monster in his treatise *On Monsters and Marvels*. These

include the glory of God, the narrowness of the mother's womb, the corruption of semen, the imagination of the parents, or even physical blows to the mother's body during pregnancy. Paré emphasizes on the anomalous physical appearance however metaphoric to define monstrosity. In this case, the monstrosity is psychological.

The becoming of a psychological monster can be traced to neurological deformities, dissociation, and trauma, as the monster rejects normative cognition and calls into question social notions of justice. As Weinstock explains, "comprehending psychological illness as the product of childhood trauma and/or psychological factors may help us feel sympathy for those affected and thus undercut their monstrosity in our eyes" (23). People are motivated by powerful external forces that are beyond their control in certain circumstances. After being tragically shaken to the hilt, they opt for a deviant behaviour (23).

The role of childhood in the becoming of human monster has been studied extensively. James Kincaid's explanation in the edited book *The Cultural Construction of Monstrous Children: Essays on Anomalous Children from 1595 to the Present Day* by Simon Bacon and Leo Ruickbie, that children are not fully developed individuals is a clarion call for its own safety as well as the protection of society, this ambivalent and potentially violent individual needs to be socialized. They contend that childhood becomes a place of the continual conflicts between collective guilt and suppression and cultural standards, resulting in a fetishized body that suggests societal anxiety and what might happen in the future if such suppressed impulses come to light (16).

Michel Foucault in *Herculine Barbin* talks about historical construction of monsters. They are produced. Cultural and legal systems have constructed them. Consequently, they tread beyond transgressing nature's rules and society's customs (Weinstock 26). In William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, particularly in the figure of Jack, we find same phenomenon takes place. We see how Jack's ego being weakened by external forces paves the way for transformation into a human-demon. Hence, Jack becomes the embodiment of Foucault's human monster whose transgression of natural restraint and social law marks his metamorphosis into monstrosity.

Hitler and Jack, the Human-Monsters: Lawlessness and Brain Plasticity

In his foundational work *Monster Culture (Seven Theses)*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen asserts that "the monster is difference made flesh, come to dwell among us." (7) Monstrosity is the expression of cultural, political, racial, sexual, or psychological alterity in human form. (7) Sigmund Freud reminds us in *Civilization and Its Discontents* that the foundation of civilization is collective power, which restricts personal freedom. All members should be equally protected by true justice, but unbridled ego and aggressiveness resurface when social systems break down. This tension between cultural restraint and individual impulse creates the ground for monstrosity. (95) The monstrous identity is an abjected identity, the simultaneous attraction to and rejection of what breaks cultural boundaries. Jerome Cohen argues in the sixth thesis of the book *Monster Culture (Seven Theses)* entitled *Fear of the Monster is Really a Kind of Desire* that the monster is the abjected fragment that allows for the construction of all types of identities-personal, national, cultural, economic, sexual, psychological, universal, and particular; as such, it displays their partiality and continuity. (19)

Judith Herman argues that trauma frequently drives the subjects into moral conflict, particularly when violence is man-made. Such trauma erodes the boundary between victim and

perpetrator. Judith Herman writes in the first chapter *A Forgotten History* of his book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* about psychological trauma of a child. He discusses psychological trauma and points out the necessity of witnessing horrifying events in this course. When traumatic events are caused by humans, those who see them become embroiled in a conflict between victim and perpetrator and struggle to stay neutral in the situation. (4)

Adolf Hitler exemplifies the historical human-monster so as Jack in *Lord of the Flies*. Jack's metamorphosis from a mere schoolboy to a cruel human monster is an instance of demagoguery. Like Hitler, Jack also uses spectacle, fear, and an appeal to instinct rather than reason to establish power. Jack does not focus on the wellbeing of the group. He insists on violence. Jack's becoming of Hitler like despotic not only makes his leadership condemnable but leaves a footprint a cruel monstrosity. Believing the Jewish race to be evil, Hitler orchestrated the Holocaust as an attempt to annihilate an entire people. Here monstrosity was not an abstract metaphor but a catastrophic reality that indicates toward a broader political danger of demagoguery, the frightening ease with which civilization can yield to spectacle, fear, and authoritarianism. In her book *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, and Deconstruction*, Catherine Malabou argues that brain wounds can so radically alter personality that identity itself collapses, creating a new and often monstrous self. (xv)

Mohammed Abdulbasit Ibrahim uses Caruthian model of trauma in his article, "The Beast Within: Trauma and Psychological Effects of War in *Lord of the Flies* (1954)." He writes:

Freud and Caruth both believe that trauma could be expressed through nightmares. According to trauma theory, when a person experiences a traumatic event, their unconscious mind may struggle to cope with the overwhelming emotions and memories associated with it. These hidden desires and suppressed goals, often related to traumatic experiences, interact with cultural norms and standards. (79)

Further pondering upon the traumatic impact on the characters the author directly takes example from the novel. He writes:

In the same way, in *Lord of the Flies*, many of the boys experience nightmares and flashbacks related to their past experiences, which can be interpreted as symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). For example, Simon has nightmares and dreams in which he imagines many unreal things. Simon's dreams of the pig's head in *Lord of the Flies* are a pivotal moment in the novel and serve to highlight the psychological impact of trauma on the human psyche. Simon is a sensitive and usually fearful boy who is deeply affected by the violence and brutality he sees around him. (79)

He concludes by saying that "Nightmares experienced by the boys on the island are common symptoms of trauma and are consistent with the principles of trauma theory." (79)

If we look back at Hitler's, we will find a cruel and authoritarian father who stifled his early aspiration to be an artist. With affection, his creative potential might have been realized instead, his psyche was moulded toward destruction. A literary analogue to Hitler's monstrosity can be found in William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* in which the boys fall into lawlessness

initiating a concern for fragility of civilization. Jack manipulates others using the imagery of the “beast” and creates propaganda to obtain power, much as Hitler did.

Even Hitler, the quintessential human monster, had Buddha-nature, as Mori would tell us. The tragedy isn't his innate deformity, but the perversion of his spiritual potential. Some biographers speculate that he might have become an artist. Instead, the violent imprint of his upbringing and the sociopolitical climate activated the destructive pathways of his plasticity. And he became a monster. The monstrous, then, is not an essence but a potential realized under particular condition. In his article, “Civilizing Massacre: Lord of the Flies as Parable of the Invention of Enemies, Violence, and Sacrifice”, J.S. Piven argues that the children's cruelty can stem from an authoritarian quest for imposing order. René Girard says in his book *Violence and the Sacred* that sacrifice transfers communal violence to a chosen victim, temporarily uniting the group. Piggy has been cast as a scapegoat throughout the narrative. Yasunori Sugimura writes in the essay, “Self-Destructive Community and the Improbability of War in *Lord Of The Flies*,” that

What is common with the victims in *Lord of the Flies* is that they are killed or almost killed in a sacrificial fashion; sacred imagery is used in relation to Simon's dead body, Piggy falls and crashes on an altar-like square rock, Ralph's head is to be pierced like a sow's with a stick sharpened at both ends. The sow's skewered head is contrived to appease the uncanny beast, which is actually an image cast from the boys' minds full of aggrandized violence. But this sacrificial offering produces an adverse result. The violence intrinsic to the sacrificial ritual itself does not expel violence from the community but redoubles it. (55)

Manoj Kumar writes in his book chapter titled *Destruction of Environment: Consequences and Treatment in Context of William Golding's Lord of the Flies* that:

the children are allowing themselves to be captured by illogical thoughts that they need to murder because of the island, because they are so wrapped up in the ritual and the celebration of their sacrifices. This is because the youngsters are so preoccupied with the ceremony and the celebration of sacrifices. The children had no idea what they were doing since the ritual was controlling them in a negative way and prevented them from positive thinking. (63-64)

The boys' impulses override reason. The inherent evil in human being is lurking under that as Ganga Ram Paudyal points out in his article, *Inherent Evil Nature in Golding's Lord of the Flies: A Psychoanalytical Approach*. Jack's vicious laughing after murdering a pig while shouting, “I cut the pig's throat,” exemplifies the dissociation of emotion and memory. And the trait is very common in a traumatized psyche. Then, in the book *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Herman claims that traumatic symptoms have a tendency to become separated from their cause and take on a life of their own. (24-25) And Jack's is not an exception.

In his research article *The Kids Are Still Not Alright: Rediscovering Lord of the Flies*, Florian Andrei Vlad mentions the film *Cannibal Holocaust*, which is well-known for its depictions of animal brutality, rape, mutilation and murder. Florian points out that, “in addition to the youth as a facilitating factor to the manifestation of the dormant evil within human nature, a further problematic issue is that of monstrosity.” (5) Under certain conditions, such as a breakdown in

society norms, individuals can be pushed to perform horrific deeds even if they do not have an inherent psychological problem. Jack is a cold-blooded troll. His journey along the uncharted path transformed him into a human devil.

Malabou describes Jack's metamorphosis, but Masahiro Mori's idea of the "Uncanny Valley" highlights the emotional and artistic aspects of his leadership. Now, what is "Uncanny Valley"? In his essay *The Uncanny Valley*, Mori proposed that as robots and artificial figures become more humanlike, our comfort with them increases to a certain point. When a figure appears almost human but slightly "off," our emotional response dips sharply into what Mori called the "uncanny valley." This is the zone of unease, eeriness, and fear. If the resemblance becomes perfect, comfort rises again. Due to significant advancements in fabrication technology, it is now impossible to tell the difference between a prosthetic and actual hand at a look. The prosthetic hand resembles a natural hand, except it is pinker, as though it had just been washed. (2)

Why does this happen? The uncanny valley occurs because near-human figures highlight distortions and ambiguities. They look alive but not fully. They remind us of death, corpses, or the sick. They unsettle because they violate our expectations of humanness. However, when we understand that the hand, which appeared to be real at first glance, is actually artificial, we have an unsettling feeling. For instance, we might be taken aback by the coldness, texture, and feeble, boneless grip during a handshake. As a result, the hand seems strange and we lose our sense of kinship. (3) Jack's painted face conceals his previous identity and allows him to act without shame. For the other boys, his painted face produces fear and awe. It transforms Jack into an uncanny figure, still human yet disturbingly inhumane. This uncanny transformation is central to his demagoguery. Just as propaganda and spectacle exaggerate charisma, Jack's mask heightens his power by producing both attraction and repulsion. The boys submit not because of reason but because the uncanny spectacle overwhelms them. Mori's framework helps us see how Jack's theatricality operates. His uncanny appearance destabilizes the boundary between boy and monster, amplifying his authority.

Beyond the psychological, Golding also critiques ecological monstrosity. The boys' violence against nonhuman life mirrors the Anthropocene's destructive relationship with nature. Here monstrosity extends from human cruelty to environmental devastation. Scholars like Mohammad Shaaban Ahmad Deyab argue in the article, *A New Historicist Reading of William Golding's Lord of the Flies* (1954) that Jack mirrors Hitler's authoritarian ruthlessness. His dismissal of a fainting boy during a march reveals his disregard for human vulnerability, foreshadowing his complete moral decline. Jack's monstrosity lies not only in savagery but in his instrumental view of others as mere tools for power. (86)

Nidhi Gupta and Pratibha Tyagi write in their article, *Decoding the Myth of Civilization in Heart of Darkness and Lord of the Flies* about the contrast between 'savagery' and 'civilization', a highly contested idea. They have tried to establish the fact that how Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* both examine the innate darkness within humans, which emerges when societal structures are removed. Conrad argues that prolonged separation from civilization tempts individuals toward their inherent evil, as seen in Marlow's journey deeper into the wilderness. Similarly, Golding illustrates how a group of stranded boys,

without the constraints of society, gradually descend into barbarism. We see Jack, in particular, becomes a brutal leader of the precarious civilization. Gupta and Tyagi further write:

Golding tries to imply that it was not just adults who had the capacity for brutality and cruelty as could be witnessed in German labour camps. He isolates young children on a deserted island and makes us see that how these young, innocent children are capable of acting with just as much barbarism as adults in the real world. (265)

Ultimately, with such characterization of Hitler and Jack we are provided with a clearcut understanding of how repression, trauma and unchecked aggression can deform the human psyche into monstrosity. Malabou believes that such transformation “reinforces the permanence of identity.” A completely new and unique identity develops alongside the previous one and gradually takes over entirely. Human nature is sensitive to external influences, especially fear, turmoil and social pressure. Jack, like Hitler, exploits these conditions to consolidate power.

In Part I, Chapter IV, “Psychoanalytic Objection: Can There Be Destruction Without a Drive of Destruction?” Catherine Malabou makes this argument, of the book *Ontology of the Accident, An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, “a monster is a new being who comes into the world for a second time, out of a deep cut that opens in his biography. (2) She goes on to say that this kind of plasticity can create identity by destroying things, which allows a psyche that has given up its history, its precedents and itself to arise. (68) Cohen’s seventh thesis then reminds us that “monsters are our children.” (20) And, they return to confront us with the darker side of our cultural and psychological inheritance.

Conclusion

The discussion indeed juxtaposes a wide array of ideas to justify the metamorphosis of a trauma subject. Malabou and Mori both contribute to Jack's image as a prototypical demagogue. Their reasons for consideration differ. Malabou emphasizes the emotional injury that culminates in a new horrible identity. Mori highlights Jack's strange self-presentation. And for Foucault, Jack is a human monster constituted by transgression of social and natural norms who, like Hitler, leverages fear and creates adversaries. His demagogic leadership out of trauma, turmoil and fear supplants reason and justice. To summarize, this argument is the last but not least when referring to Macbeth’s transition into a hellhound from valour's minion, to demonstrate the inevitability of degeneration when the cognitive process is ruled by something weird.

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A Review of the Impossible Return: Post-Migratory Narratives and the Reconstruction of Identity in Contemporary Latin American Literature

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Abstract

Return migration, traditionally conceived as the closure of the migratory cycle, is represented in contemporary Latin American literature as a complex and unstable process marked by estrangement, nostalgia, and fractured identity. This article analyzes the notion of the “impossible return” through a comparative reading of works by Valeria Luiselli, Cristina Rivera Garza, Edwidge Danticat, and Selva Almada. Drawing on postcolonial theory, diaspora studies, and transnational approaches, the study demonstrates that return does not allow for a harmonious recovery of the subject’s former identity, but rather produces a conflictive superposition of memories, cultural practices, and divergent temporalities. The article argues that post-migratory literature redefines “home” as a mobile, discontinuous, and permanently negotiated space. Through close textual analysis, this study reveals how return becomes not an act of restoration, but one of crisis and revelation, exposing the irreversible transformations produced by displacement. Ultimately, the article positions the “impossible return” as a key narrative device for understanding identity reconstruction in transnational Latin American writing.

Keywords: *Return Migration; Post-Migratory Identity; Latin American Diaspora; Cultural Memory; Transnational Literature*

Introduction

Migration has been one of the most decisive historical forces shaping Latin American subjectivity. From the mass displacements caused by dictatorships, civil wars, and economic crises to recent migrations driven by structural violence, labor precariousness, and political persecution, the movement of bodies and cultures across borders has profoundly redefined notions of identity, belonging, and community. Within this context, narratives of return occupy a privileged position for understanding the complexity of contemporary migration, as they question the widespread assumption that returning to the homeland necessarily restores continuity of the self or recovers “home” as a stable and protective space.

Contemporary Latin American literature does not depict return as a linear or reparative process. On the contrary, return is represented as a liminal experience where conflicting memories, fractured identities, and cultural tensions converge. This perspective aligns with diaspora studies, which understand transnationality as a permanent condition rather than a temporary stage (Brah 182; Hall 235). The “impossible return,” a term used here to define the impossibility of restoring a pre-migratory sense of belonging, emerges from the recognition that migration irreversibly transforms both the subject and the abandoned territory.

This article examines the literary configuration of this return marked by estrangement by focusing on works by Valeria Luiselli, Cristina Rivera Garza, Edwidge Danticat, and Selva Almada. Through a comparative approach, the article analyzes how these authors employ return as a narrative device that exposes the loss of home in its traditional sense while opening new forms of subjectivity within transnational space.

Theoretical Framework

To understand return migration as a problematic space, it is essential to turn to the concepts of diaspora, hybridity, and cultural memory. Avtar Brah defines diaspora not as a singular journey but as “multiple journeys” intersected by subjective experience, cultural practices, structures of power, and transnational politics (Brah 183). Within this framework, “home” is not a fixed location but an affective and symbolic construction that is continually reconfigured. Paul Gilroy has likewise argued that diasporic identity is relational and mobile rather than rooted in a single national territory (Gilroy 15). This notion is central to understanding why literary representations of return often result in disillusion rather than reconciliation. From postcolonial theory, Homi Bhabha introduces the concept of “unhomeliness” to describe the sense of dislocation experienced by the migrant subject when the space once considered home becomes unfamiliar (Bhabha 13). This condition intensifies upon return, as the migrant encounters a homeland transformed by time, violence, or social change. Svetlana Boym’s distinction between restorative and reflective nostalgia also proves fundamental. While restorative nostalgia seeks to rebuild an idealized past, reflective nostalgia acknowledges the irreversibility of time and the impossibility of full return (Boym 41). In the works analyzed here, reflective nostalgia dominates memory does not restore the past but exposes its fractures.

Transnational studies further complicate the notion of return. Basch, Glick-Schiller, and Szanton Blanc demonstrate that migrants build identities across multiple sociocultural spaces simultaneously (Basch et al. 7). As a result, return does not reestablish linear belonging but reveals the tension between divergent networks, expectations, and experiences. Within this framework, the “impossible return” functions as an interpretive category that captures the emotional, political, and cultural complexity of return in contemporary literature.

Return Narratives in Latin American Literature

In Latin American literature, return often appears as an ambivalent movement: it expresses longing, necessity, and belonging, but also pain, rupture, and alienation. Three primary modalities of return can be identified: voluntary return, forced return, and symbolic return. Voluntary return involves the subject’s attempt to reconnect with origins only to encounter symbolic distance. Forced return results from deportation, family crisis, or political violence. Symbolic return, meanwhile, takes place through memory, imagination, or mourning when physical return is no longer possible.

In many narratives, these modalities coexist, producing representations of return as an unfinished and unstable process. The returning migrant is shaped by multiple identities that the homeland often cannot assimilate. At the same time, the homeland itself appears transformed by inequality, urbanization, violence, and historical trauma, intensifying the sense of estrangement.

Valeria Luiselli: Displacement and the Fracture of Belonging

Valeria Luiselli has explored the consequences of displacement in works such as *Lost Children* and *Lost Children Archive*. While these texts do not center explicitly on physical return, they engage deeply with the impossibility of returning to a stable identity or an intact homeland. Home becomes a fragmented and temporary experience. The characters' attempts to rebuild affective ties with their places of origin reveal the irreversibility of diasporic transformation. Return in Luiselli functions as a narrative mirage. Characters pursue a version of home that grows increasingly abstract. Migration, especially in its childhood form, exposes the fragility of identity when it depends on unstable political and social contexts. Return does not repair loss but confronts the subject with absence.

Cristina Rivera Garza: Return, Mourning, and the Wounded Nation

Cristina Rivera Garza offers one of the most profound representations of impossible return in works such as *The Invincible Summer of Liliana* and *Dolerse*. Here, return is not simply geographic but emotional and political. Returning to Mexico means returning to the open wound of feminicidal violence. The homeland appears to be a space of unresolved trauma. Rivera Garza's writing situates return within the tension between Mexico and the United States, revealing how transnational movement conditions subjectivity, language, and memory. Return becomes a destabilizing process that confirms home as a space where belonging may be unbearable.

Edwidge Danticat: Caribbean Return and Diasporic Memory

Although born in Haiti and residing in the United States, Edwidge Danticat extends the Latin American framework into the Caribbean experience. In *Brother, I'm Dying* and *The Dew Breaker*, return is marked by dictatorship, exile, and political terror. Return operates less as geographical movement than as ritual memory. Home in Danticat is reconstructed through storytelling rather than territory. The return is always haunted by loss and political violence. The desire for belonging clashes with the necessity of distance for survival.

Selva Almada: Internal Displacement and the Non-Return of Origin

In works such as *Dead Girls* and *The Disattachment Is a Way of Loving*, Selva Almada explores internal displacement and symbolic return. While her narratives are not centered on international migration, they address the violence embedded within national territories. Home becomes a space that cannot be safely inhabited even without crossing borders.

Return as Failure and Revelation

Across all four authors, return activates a process of disillusion. The migrant no longer belongs fully to the homeland yet remains partially foreign in the host country. This liminal condition produces a transnational subjectivity without geographic resolution.

Conclusion

The works of Luiselli, Rivera Garza, Danticat, and Almada reveal that contemporary Latin American literature understands return migration as an experience of rupture rather than repair. Return does not close the migratory cycle but extends it into new forms of displacement and

transformation. Home emerges as an affective and symbolic space constantly negotiated across multiple geographies.

In a world marked by intensified mobility, the literature of impossible return invites a rethinking of belonging through hybridity, memory, and transnational subjectivity.

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How All Stories Should End: A Review of *The Sky Husband* by Easterine Kire

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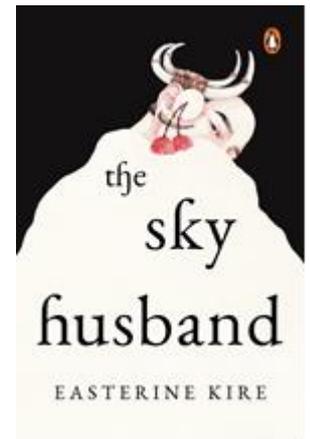
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Award-winning writer Easterine Kire is back with her latest book, *The Sky Husband*. The book is a collection of eight short stories that depict varying stories, settings and plots that revolve around the theme of love. The stories are easy to read, capturing the hearts of the readers from the start. The book cover has an illustration by Ogin Nayam who brings to life a picture of a man with eyes that seem to stare into the heart of the beholder. After reading the book, one comes to an understanding of the 'blinding' beauty of the man on the cover who seem to be an embodiment of the 'sky husband' himself. I feel that Easterine Kire wrote this book especially for her women readers who believe in finding one's true love. The book comprises of various kinds of love stories – teenage love, mystical and dreamlike love story, love story that emerged during turbulent times – all telling stories of 'difficult' loves. The first story titled 'The Sky Husband' tells the story of beautiful Aniya, the beloved of her village. In this story, Easterine Kire uses strong women characters who stay true to their beliefs. It is the old woman Hami who teaches Aniya to believe in dreams and learn to interpret her dreams as "*It is how God speaks to us*" (Kire, 2). Aniya tells Hami of "the one who had come into her dreams" (5), of the one whose beauty was so immense that it was 'blinding'. The author gives a delightful twist to the Naga legend of sky wives and recreates it into a story of sky husbands. The second story 'Chan and the Blue Forest' retells the story of a man named Chan who went missing for two years during which he had fallen in love with a forest spirit with "the loveliest face you could imagine" (Kire, 34). The forest spirit enticed him with forest song that sang of sweet, lasting affection. He was brought back to reality when he met his own spirit who made him realize that life was still sweeter than the sweetest love. Chan, unable to let go of the allure of the forest spirit, wasted away after refusing every girl he met only to return to the forest to reunite with his forest wife. The story 'The Tracker' opens with a light-hearted scene depicting the usual husband-wife relationship in a comic manner where the husband is unable to find anything on his own. The story takes a serious turn as it tells the

story of how the couple met as underground soldiers during the turbulent period of Naga history. Their love story is overshadowed by the guile of Ashi, a woman tracker depicting the perseverance of women in the underground Naga Army. The author skillfully writes about how relationships linger due to a history of shared experiences, how years have been added to their outward features as a result of the trauma they've undergone and how love is found even in the most traumatic places. The story 'Cherry Blossoms in April' was published earlier in *The Many that I am* by Zubaan. This is a story set in April 1944 when the Japanese army advanced into Kohima, of how a Naga woman fell in love with a 'fine' Japanese soldier who was so handsome that the women of the village wondered why he had come to battle as he did not look like "the sort who would go into battle" (Kire, 69). In this story, we find the courage of a woman in love, when she meets the one, her very own 'sky husband'. She boldly claimed the man whom she felt was rightfully hers. The short-lived love between Sanuo and the Japanese soldier transcends language barriers as they love wordlessly.

These are never the memories that remain and comfort. They are too fragile.

Perhaps we were never meant to love on earth. The finest love stories always end in death or parting. Perhaps we overreach ourselves when we love. (Kire, 76)

The two stories, 'Sometimes Life' and 'Sometimes Life (Bani's Story II)' are about the tragedy of unconfessed love. Insecure teenage love evolves into strong, unshakeable love as both parties are now sure of their true feelings. 'Sometimes Life' tells the love story of two couples - one is the story of aunt Nina and Uncle Fred whose love was still strong even after twenty years of marriage and the other one is the story of Bani and Liam, the difficult kind of love. Bani and Liam's love story is a teenage love story that started as a summer romance but was pursued only after many years had passed. Their misfortune was that they met during their teenage years, a time when they were so unsure of their feelings and actions. As the story ends, Bani's heart is full as her love, the one for whom she had waited thirty long years, finally had the courage to confess his love. The story 'Sometimes Life (Bani's Story II)' is a Romeo-Juliet kind of love dominated by family hate and finding love in the midst of hatred. The characters are being chained by the memory of the death of their loved one. The story 'Dodili Va'nilo' is about a woman finding her way back to her one true love, the man with the kindest eyes. This is a story about the love for the "one" who invited her, who wanted to enter her heart. The phrase 'Dodili Va'nilo' is a reference to Song of Songs 2:16 'My beloved is mine, and I am his' (Kire, 144). This is a short but extremely powerful story about 'his' love for a woman, a woman who has been away from him, in darkness for a very long time. In the last story 'How all Stories Should End', the author recalls memory looking back at the love story of uncle Ben and aunty Nima, the kind of love that carries you through the years. After celebrating sixty years of marriage, uncle Ben and aunty Nima leave Earth just 16 days apart from each other. Their love is so strong that even their spirits "reunited beyond all fear of parting" (Kire, 147). Easterine Kire, the author, aptly ends the book with the love story of uncle Ben and aunty Nima, a story based on real life. She writes -

Could any love story come up with a better ending than this one designed by the master storyteller? (Kire, 147)

Easterine Kire, the expert "storymaker", recalls memory by using simple words thus enabling her readers to live through her stories as she depicts the various kinds of love that a person may experience in this life. Her stories show how living and loving are easy with the "one" and that it takes no effort to be courageous and perseverant when love transcends time and the fear of being parted.

Reviewer's Details:

Dr. Lalthansangi Ralte is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English, Govt. J. Thankima College, Mizoram University. She finished her M. Phil and PhD from the Center for English Studies at JNU, New Delhi. Her areas of interest include Writings from Northeast India, Indian Writings in English, Translation Studies and Gender Studies. Her translations were included in *The Keepers of Knowledge: Writings from Mizoram* published by Zubaan. She has published a number of research papers on literature from Northeast India in peer-reviewed journals and books published by Springer Nature, Zubaan and Bloomsbury.

Book Review of The D'Costa Family novel

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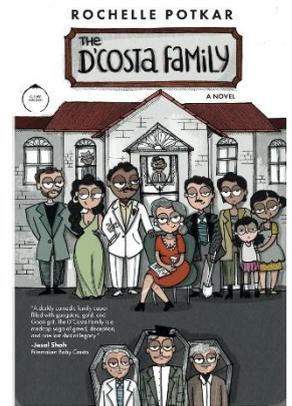
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Rochelle Potkar is a prolific writer, and *The D'Costa Family* is her debut novel, with three more in the pipeline. Drawing on her experience as a scriptwriter for films, Rochelle has produced a highly readable novel a rambunctious, Bollywood-style comedy with dark undercurrents. The two families locked in conflict are the Anglo-Indian Josephs and the Goan D'Costas. Rochelle may well have found in inspiration in Salman Rushdie, for Joseph D'Costa is a character in *Midnight's Children*. She possesses formidable linguistic ability, a strong storytelling instinct, and impressive control over plot and narrative.

Let us also remind ourselves, as Nietzsche knew, that no writer is free from the confessional habit. Callian, where much of the action unfolds, is in fact Kalyan, the Bombay suburb where Rochelle was raised in a Goan landlord's home. She has said that from the eccentrics of this community, she has through the application of imagination created a gangster world filled with dark secrets, mysteries, affairs, and, yes, murders.

Rita loves Roberto and is pregnant with his child, but on the day of her marriage she discovers that the entire Anglo-Indian Joseph estate has been burnt down by Theodore, the D'Costa Don, who watches the conflagration with satisfaction.

Before his death, Theodore appoints Pedro as successor, but the will stipulates that a re-election must take place within three months of his demise. For the moment, Pedro assumes control, and Rita faces the prospect of dependency on him. As part of Rita's grand design for vengeance, she, supporting Jason, urges the tenants to vote against Pedro. The flesh and blood of the novel lie in its details. Rochelle draws us into the mysteries of Burgundy Estate and its inhabitants in small, suggestive doses. Rita plays a dangerous and vicious role in her pursuit of revenge. Pedro is brutal and aggressive, yet spineless when faced with imminent

annihilation. Jason, fascinated by burials, prepares bodies and digs graves himself. Everyone harbours secrets, revealed gradually. There is a plenitude of characters, and each is compelling. Gaitonde is a bullying, shrewd, Bollywood-style policeman, complete with a sidekick who sings paeans to his superior. Each character adds texture and value to the narrative.

The names themselves are memorable Myna and Philomena, the D'Costa servants; Jarrett and Barrett, Brandon and Landon, Pedro's bodyguards; and, of course, the inimitable Gaitonde.

Rochelle has an impish, mischievous streak. She satirises everything the Dons, their turf wars, the women's affairs, the building syndicate, the police, and the Church. This is necessarily a sketchy outline and scarcely conveys the speed of the narrative. The plot, with its many twists and turns, races toward a climax on the day of Seneca's wedding. Food plays an important role in Rochelle's imagination. There are lavish descriptions of Goan cuisine, and she delights in naming dishes. Seneca and Milind, she says, get along like *khari* biscuit and tea. There is pleasure in the litany of *balchao*, *chorizo*, *sorpotel*, *bhakris*, *vindaloo*, beetroots, carrots, yellow dal, black moong, and red rajma. It is not merely the dish but its colour that attracts her. The kitchen at Burgundy House is perpetually active *sanna* batter fermenting, chutneys being ground, eggs boiling, garlic being peeled, ginger crushed. Annette tends a flourishing vegetable garden with ginger, lemon, fenugreek, coriander, aloe vera, and more. Anglo-Indian dishes such as kedgeree and fish rissoles appear alongside endless parties, where all the characters prove to be hearty trenchermen and women. The drinks flow freely too *feni*, *ghodumba*, wine, and beer.

Henry James spoke of 'solidity of specification' as essential to the novel, and Rochelle demonstrates this in her descriptions of the estate: the furniture, towering chandeliers, large windows, brass lampshades, the grandfather clock, and walls lined with large-framed portraits of ancestors, the fiercest being Carmino D'Costa. The Library of Secrets, Rita's favourite refuge, is stocked with maroon-bound tomes embossed with gold lettering, and a weather-beaten highchair that Rita unfailingly associates with her father, Anton Joseph. It also serves as her hiding place for the building plans she has unearthed, and the guns intended for her deadly schemes.

Religion and caste are significant within the Goan Roman Catholic and Anglo-Indian milieu. "Looks are not everything," Rita tells Annette. "It's blood skin and bloodline." Blanca is said to be Konkani Kharvi, not quite low caste but still far down the hierarchy. The Goans remain deeply caste-conscious despite their Catholicism, and Rochelle takes pleasure in listing them Gawda, Bhandari, Kharvi, Chari, Vani, Gawli, Kansar, Kalaikar, Satarkar, Shet, Kumbhar. Rita, the Anglo-Indian-turned-Catholic Goan, knows them all like nursery rhymes. Years of Catholicism have not erased her awareness of race, which matters greatly, particularly among Anglo-Indians. They trace their lineage to Sir Wolverine Joseph, an Englishman who married an Indian woman, and to their historical ties with the East India Company.

One could continue at length about this sumptuous work, but it suffices to say that if this novel is any indication, Rochelle Potkar will soon emerge as one of the leading lights of Indian fiction in English. That recognition will come sooner rather than later.

Reviewer's Details:

Mohan Ramanan retired as Professor of English from the University of Hyderabad. He is widely published and has authored more than twenty books, including several edited volumes. His scholarly work spans modern English, American and Indian poetry, R. K. Narayan, and Rt. Hon. Srinivasa Sastri. He has also published two volumes of poetry *Grills and Other Poems* and *My Son's Father Confessor*.

He has served as Deputy Director of the then American Studies Research Centre, as Head of the Department of English, and as Dean of the School of Humanities at the University of Hyderabad. His international fellowships include a British Council Fellowship at Merton College, Oxford University (1983); a Fulbright Scholarship at Amherst College, Massachusetts, USA (1989-90); a Fulbright-Nehru Teaching Fellowship at Missouri Southern University, Joplin, USA (2013); and a Montserrat Teaching Fellowship at the University of Barcelona (2005). He lives in Hyderabad, pursuing his literary and spiritual interests, as well as Carnatic music.