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Editorial

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The history of literature is replete with multiple instances of protest and censorship. Words, phrases, sentences, sentiments and emotions have constantly been thwarted on various pretexts. Suppression of voice and individual spaces have always been there as a part of any dominant culture. Media too, has a significant role to play in the culmination, dissemination and even in the repression of protest through atrocities. There has been the best of times now, and the worst of times as the opposite. With gender-based, caste-based, creed-based and community-based violence and oppression on the rise, literature becomes a powerful tool to highlight the voice of the marginalized. National and international contexts in which protest, censorship and the criticism occupy a centrestage have been negated very often by powerful media houses, and on the other hand, literature in that direction has played a significant role in creating an all-encompassing region of going beyond the brutalities of censorship. There can be prevention, encryption, destruction and omission of sensitive literature or cultural information. Numerous ways in which the acts of writing can be suppressed can also fall under the category of creative censorship.

The current issue of Litinfinitive Journal (Volume 6, Issue 1) is on 'Literature, Media, Culture and Censorship.' The aim of this issue is to look at the multifaced and interwoven characteristics of literature, culture, and media in terms of the applicability and the unforeseen consequences of censorship. The first paper titled *How to avoid the paradigm of censorship: Self-consciousness, mimetic desire and the empathic style of Anita Desai* by Manodip Chakraborty investigates the major social forces in the writing of Anita Desai and how the knowledge and boundaries of desire and self-absorption are often seen as the paradigmatic opposite to censorship. Manodip writes how 'The censoring paradigmatic conception of 'permitted', 'allowed', or 'functional' interest in defining a human factor proved confusing to literary writers, when they have compared the 'ideal' as proposed by the censorship and the 'real' that these censorships are trying to prevent.' (Chakraborty 2) The next paper by Dr. Sutanuka Ghosh Roy explores and reinstates the intricate layers of censorship in *Michael Madhusudan Dutt's 'The Captive Ladie': Text Context and Perspectives*. Her paper questions that very fabric of identity politics and its diversification. Moreover, there is a subtle hinting of what the essence of nationalism entails. She interprets *The Captive Ladie* from social, cultural and political contexts and writes: 'A probe into the poem reveals that the first and last paragraphs of the poem are arranged in a similar vein and the four paragraphs in the middle are of different types. The most striking feature of the poem is Dutt's patriotism. He was a follower of the West in 1841 and considered Albion as his native land.'

We also have one more research paper in this volume. It is titled, *Obscene and Perverse Fictions: Saadat Hasan Manto and Censorship* written by Monalisa Jha. She examines the nature of obscene and perverse in terms of cultural normativity and the proclivity of Manto in renegotiating the boundaries of culture, censorship, media and

obscenity in general. She refers to Foucault's ideas about government, political system, learning and unlearning the concepts of a nation state. Monalisa observes, 'In a society which at best ignored and at worst actively suppressed the idea of adolescent sexuality, where discussion of sexuality was regarded as unclean and outside the realm of the polite public sphere, Manto boldly traces the sexual awakening of twelve-year-old Masud, as he sees smoke rising from the freshly cut goat meat in the bazaar, and then thinks of his sister's limbs as akin to the meat as he massages her legs.' (Jha 22)

We also have two book reviews in this issue. Dr. Monika Malhotra reviews the book *Woman-Nature Interface: An Ecofeminist Study* by Dipak Giri and Shiba Khatoon reviews the book *A review of Christian Education and Democracy in India* edited by George Thadathil. *Woman-Nature Interface*, as self-explanatory, with ideas of patriarchal domination and ecofeminism taking centrestage. The book is an edited volume consisting of chapters that are introspective in nature, on the role and status of women vis-à-vis the active environment. As Dr. Malhotra opines through her critical lens: 'how religious and cultural narratives perpetuate these constraints, and how ecofeminists strive to overcome them. The book also talks about third world countries where Earth is represented as a female Mother earth and Virgin land. Both suffer exploitation and violence at the hands of patriarchal capitalist society. Apart from this, the book also depicts that the nexus between nature and woman has been the focus of ancient Indian literature.' (Malhotra 29). The next book, *A review of Christian Education and Democracy in India* edited by George Thadathil is critically read by Shiba Khatoon who takes into consideration the huge literary, cultural, social, political and religious impact that this book can have. The history of Christian education intertwined with layers of democracy are susceptible to multiple interpretations. As the researcher Khatoon observes: 'The book helps in understanding the context (vision) which led to the development of the Indian Constitution while appreciating diverse perspectives with a single motive of the development of the people into a true democratic country. The Editor, upholding a similar spirit and vision, welcomed diverse perspectives from a cross section of people in bringing this book to its fruition with the unwavering motive of highlighting the relentless contribution of Christian Education towards the making of Indian Democracy'. (Khatoon 32)

I hope our readers, scholars, researchers and faculty will derive the necessary academic nourishment from Litinfinitive Vol. 6, Issue 1.

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

I offer my sincerest thanks to Penprints Publication, for their constant technical support.

Thanking You,

Sreetanwi Chakraborty
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How to Avoid the Paradigm of Censorship: Self-Consciousness, Mimetic Desire and the Empathic Style of Anita Desai

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Abstract

Anita Desai and her writings have surfaced undoubtedly as a significant expression of contemporary domestic atmosphere – voicing suppressions, subjugations, embedded violence, and/ or culturally dominant structural family patterns. It is without a doubt then, her writings too have been subjected to censorship binaries, but somehow passing through them is voicing the emanant. What then she embedded in her writings, how she had codified the narratives, which even though stands in antagonism to the prevalent cultural patterns – still is finding an outlet without obscurity? The answer lies in the narrative choice of her stories. The plots, instead of featuring an alien story features a familiar story (a characteristic feature of mimetic desire). Amalgamated with this is her unique capability of using semiotics of self-consciousness. Combined, both these devices make her readings a direct apprehension of a phenomenon in a not-so-direct manner. This paper thus proposes to analyze selected works of Anita Desai's to understand her use of self-consciousness and mimetic desires of her characters as a potential device to penetrate the censorship stigmata.

Keywords: *Apprehension, Diachronic Temporality, Embeddedness, Anti-Expression, Enumeration*

Introduction: To understand how Anita Desai's work fully nullifies the recent explosion of censorship, one must be back into the functioning of censorship as a cultural apprehension. What were the 'censoring' bodies talking about when Anita Desai marred with devastated plights of contemporary existence had decided to voice them? Censorship all began with a truth that ideological freedom of artistic endeavor can challenge and thereby disrupt the 'formally' accepted meanings coded by cultural practices over a diachronic temporality (Moore 1). Societal shapes, patterns, relationships all carry their own culturally embedded hierarchy – and hence 'meaning' – for all human beings. Some critics among censorship have argued for discarding the counting of 'human meanings' for the construction of a pure societal structure (Paret 361). However, nothing is more human than the love of creating 'abstract' censoring to control the human species and dominate over them. The censoring binaries that were established, or discovered, or invented, like the forms we find in the physical world, were there because who pursued them found them worthy of pursuit to control the chaos of human imagination, even if it was at the cause of studying that 'chaos' through a pursuit of it.

The censoring paradigmatic conception of 'permitted', 'allowed', or 'functional' interest in defining a human factor proved confusing to literary writers, when they have compared the 'ideal' as proposed by the censorship and the 'real' that these censorships are trying to prevent. In this regard, works of 'fictional literature', even though long been subjected under censorship for a proper definition of *fictional* (which should be in compliance with the accepted cultural modulations), still responded as a proper medium to Anita Desai's love for the 'actual'. But they often come laden with other interests. The conception at censorship is not a modern compassion, its antiquity has made humans to follow its structures – whether in compliance or not – therefore, what one refers as critical judgement of a conscious individual (probably in antagonism with cultural censorship) also is constructed through censorship ideologies. The space in that is being propelled by a tendency of absolute imitation – human senses only function in it by being subjected to it. Adorno and Horkheimer has commented on this gyre nature of censorship with respect to their understanding of the cultural industry: “culture mockingly fulfill the notion of a unified culture which the philosophers of the individual personality held out against mass culture...anyone who resists can survive only by being incorporated” (103-104). As a result of this, the very act of making even the most anti-censorship work imports into it meanings that carry both the making and applying of censorship other than a pure contemplation of a literary narrative, “sooner or later every writer must therefore struggle with the problem of how to deal with the scandal of what is often called “content” for expression” (Booth 14).

Every writer who has pronounced boldly for a purified literary expression, away from the confinements of censorship has been confronted by the problematic fact that all actual works of literary (as well as non-literary) expressions are already being subjected to censorship aspects. This parameter became even more pressing when the 'messages', opposing the censoring signifiers are blatantly obvious; as the expressions for the untouchables in Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* (1935). But it is equally problematic when the literary work fully disguises the 'anti' sentiment, as in *Bravely Fought the Queen* (1991) or in *On a Muggy Night in Mumbai* (1998) – censorship critics can easily discern the embedded 'anti' elements and can criticize them limiting their exposures to a restricted academic circle. A whole history of literariness within the Indian demography has been written and distorted by these factors. The authors as well as the engaged critics caught themselves into a parabolic gyre – failing to expunge the lingering impurities of 'censorship'.

Of all the authors, contemplating for a way out, but has been caught by the censorship model, Anita Desai's fiction has been more resistant to the dictatorship of censorship. Her writings are so obviously built with censorship models many critics have misunderstood the appearance of her characters by categorizing them with the prevalent censored criticism. Therefore, Arun and Uma from *Feasting, Fasting* have been identified under the binaries of “fire and water” (Volna 3), Sita from *Where Shall We Go This Summer* as “nervous, sensitive” (Manimozhi and Shanthi 18), Nanda's epistemology from *Fire on the Mountain* as a “reclusive existence” (Batts 22) and so on. Since, Desai have understood, to tell a 'story' is in itself a confession to censorship model, the probable thing to do is to frustrate the story in some way: by leaving the characters purged of emotional empathy (as in Maya); by telling everything in a complexed manner (as in Uma), by imposing various word games and tricks with point of view (as in Nanda's). Her genius lies in explicitly inviting the readers that the fictions they are exposed are 'generated' not by an interest in character portrayals (even though it can be a method of anti-expression) and how the characters relate with each other, but by number of multifarious modalities, which can be shuffled. But the contour is that, as soon as a character is named, an

incident is described, immediately it conforms to censorship model of expression – thereby, all the effort ‘against’ has gone down the drain.

This mode of critical composition has relevance when enumerating Anita Desai’s compositions. She has summed up the novelist’s major discoveries in the realm of anti-censorship as the depiction or rather the re-recreation of the self-developing idea, inseparable from personality. On this paradigm, Maya appears to be the ‘role character’ on whom the development of an idea and her personal enumeration about them are inseparable. The depth is so much in her that her cognition about the summer smell and the attraction of snakes by the smell attains a thesis-antithesis conjecture even when she is deciding the connotation of everyday subjects for her. She exhumes: “I lay back in my chair and breathed deeply, lay there waiting – for summer? For snakes? For the moon? I did not know” (10).

Desai overlaps her own ideas in a curious way, for her the unity of the ‘becoming’ (developing) the idea is the crux, the source of a certain internal open-endedness in her compositions. Internal open-endedness is a part of her theme (viable for the generation of multiple point of views to batter censorship), and the external open-endedness a feature of its exposition (to convey a conformity with cultural paradigm). Therefore, when Maya (*Cry, the Peacock*), Monisha (*Voices in the City*), Sarah (*Bye-Bye Blackbird*), and Sita (*Where Shall We Go This Summer?*) acted out against the traditionality of a submissive wife it is an allusion to the internality; while at the same time, her denotative criticism for being a psychological victim conforms to the external structures, therefore, the crust of the argument remained nullified within censorship.

It is sufficing to say that, this complex amalgamation of internal and external has something to do with Desai’s conception of wholeness of a literary work. But, the wholeness for Desai is not a finished entity; it is always a relationship. She understood that within censorship an aesthetic creation – or for that matter, any existence of human or the non-human – acquires wholeness only when an individual, by conceptualizing within censorship structure assumes a concrete attitude towards it. Thus, what she is aspiring is to make the ‘whole’ never be finalized. When a whole is realized (at the level of external features), it should be by definition open to change in an internal structure. Therefore, the cathartic effect of her writings consists in the realization that: “...nothing conclusive has yet taken place in the world, the ultimate word of the world and about the world has not yet been spoken, the world is open and free, everything is still in the future and will always be in the future” (Bakhtin 166).

Parallel Synthesis: The Mimetic Aspirations of Her Characters

In this regard the protagonists of her works interest Desai not as some manifestation of reality that possesses fixed and specific socially typical or individual characteristic traits, nor as a specific assembled profile of censorship, the application of which can answer why the ‘action’. On the other hand, the characters interests Desai as an atom of particularity in symbiosis with oneself and on the world – as in the position, enabling a character to interpret and evaluate their own self and their surrounding reality in an effort to forget their censorship pre-inheritance – a presence, that is there even before the conception of the character(s). It is in this coax that nothing can be affected by censorship. No more credits, no more borrowing from censoring. So if one is to understand the functioning of the character(s), it is only achievable in the unleashed overflowing, by employing all logical forms, one ought to recognize it by nothing other than the

excess of “this untimely dis-identification, therefore by nothing that is. By nothing that is presently identifiable” (Derrida 165).

For this reason, what is important to Desai is not how her protagonists appear in the world but first and foremost how the world appears to her protagonists, and how the protagonists appear to themselves. On several occasions, her characters have aroused their self-consciousness by enumerating their ‘desires’ to be free – while being conscious of any form of ‘human’ desire is potentially contagious and mimetically censored. They have understood that human desire being a culturally censored phenomenon, sometimes it becomes very hard to detect its presence, for the human desire follows the most absent ways in order to spread from one person to another; “it gains support from the obstacles we set in its way, from the indignation it arouses, from the ridicule we try to heap on it” (Girard 98). This is a very important and fundamental feature of the way a fictional character is perceived to portray the ‘anti’ by staying within a demographic censorship. The protagonists as a point of view (against censorship), as an option on the world and on themselves requires utterly special methods of discovery and artistic characterization. This is because, for Desai, what must be discovered and characterized to construct an anti-sympathy is not the specific entity of the protagonists, not their fixed images, but their sum total of consciousness and self-consciousness, ultimately the protagonists’ final word on themselves and on the world. Consequently, those elements out of which the protagonists’ image is composed are not features of reality – features of the protagonists themselves or of their everyday surroundings, but rather the significance of these features lies for the protagonists themselves, for their self-consciousness.

All the stable and objective qualities of the protagonist – their social positions, the degree to which they are sociologically and characterologically typical, their habitus, their spiritual profile and even their physical appearance – that is, everything that usually serves an author to conjure an anti-atmosphere – in Desai is the object of the protagonist’s own introspection, the subject of their self-consciousness. At a time for other authors when the self-consciousness of a character becomes merely as an element of their reality, as merely one of their integrated images, here for Desai, on the contrary, all of reality becomes an element of the character’s self-consciousness – allowing the characters to justify their entropy against a censorship deed. For this reason, Desai retains for herself, that is for her exclusive vision for a free ambiance of existence, not manipulated by censorship, not a single essential definition, not a single trait, not the smallest feature of the protagonists: she enters it all into the field of vision of the protagonists themselves, she casts it all into the amplification of the protagonist’s self-consciousness.

One must not interpret the self-consciousness of the protagonists on the societal plane and merely see it as a new trait against censorship. That is how exactly Bindhu and Kumar have understood Lila (from *Village by the Sea*) as the victim of women’s suppression, Anamika (from *Fasting, Feasting*) as a victim of social evils, or Nirod from *Voices in the City* as a “dominating figure” (7). Desai have realized that the self-consciousness, as the ‘artistic prominence’ governing the construction of the protagonist, cannot lie alongside other features of the characters (suppressions due to conformity); it absorbs these others into itself as its own material and deprives them (the logocentric censorship) of any power to define and finalize the protagonist.

Self-consciousness can be made the dominant feature in the representation of any character(s). But, not all the characters are equally favourable material for such a representation. In this respect, the male counterparts offered too narrow a potential perspective. When Maya craved: “is there nothing in you that would be touched ever so lightly” (114), Gautama presented

a detachment theory completely in conjugation of a censored understanding: “he who, controlling the sense of the mind follows without attachment the path of action with his organs” (p 114). Consequently, the other narratives are also restrictive in their depiction of a male voice against censorship – they are designed to communicate the censorship binaries, against which the other voices emerge. As a result of this, Monisha (*Voices in the City*) is having a parallelism with her brother’s, Sita is being shaped and reshaped by her father.

Anita Desai sought a protagonist who would be occupied primarily with the task of becoming conscious, the sort of protagonist whose life would be concentrated on the pure function of gaining consciousness of themselves and the world. And at this point, in her works there began to appear the metaphors “neurotic maya” (Chaudhari 79), Bim in *Clear Light of Day* with “melancholic, disillusioned, withdrawn” (Bala 644). The consciousness of a disillusioned or a neurotic person – who are not personified and cannot be personified (as the adjectives are of pluralistic connotation) – is the most favourable soil for Anita Desai’s creative purpose. For it allows her to fuse the artistic dominant of the representation with the real-life and characterological dominant of the represented person. As she exclaimed: “my stories are generally about those who can’t, the kind that are trapped in situations over which they haven’t control” (Bliss and Desai 524).

For instance, Maya not only dissolves in herself all possible fixed features of a censorship depiction, making them all the object of her own introspection (triggered by the death of her dog), but in fact, she no longer has any such traits at all, no fixed definitions, there is nothing to say about her, she figures not as a person taken from life, but as the subject of consciousness and dream (thereby non categorizable). And for Desai, as well they (the characters) are not a carrier of traits and qualities that could have been neutral toward her (Desai’s) self-consciousness and could have finalized them (characters). No, what the author visualizes is precisely the protagonist’s self-consciousness. Thus, the real-life censorship definition of Maya (as a neurological exhibitor) or any other such characters, and the artistic dominant of her image (against the categorization of censorship) are fused into one.

Self-consciousness as the artistic feature in the construction of the protagonist’s image is by itself sufficient to break down the censorship unity of the world – but, only on condition, that the protagonist, as self-consciousness is really represented and not expressed, that is, does not fuse with the author, does not become the mouthpiece of the voice. Only on condition, consequently, that accents of the protagonist’s self-consciousness are really objectified and that the work itself observes a distance between the protagonist and the author. However, the censorship criticisms are functioning to retain her works within the norms. The prevalent mode is to restrict her understanding within a pre-given data set. For example, Kaur observed (by following the multitude critics) that the roles her characters play at the surface are their true value set and are governed by the male domination for a female action – therefore they are nothing ‘new’. Even the space and time of her creation are also dominated by societal favouritism. As a consequence of this on any reading of her novels, the reader would be left with the sense of powerlessness of the characters “not only in the public sphere but also in the domestic sphere where their autonomous existence is dominated by either the parents or the husbands” (Kaur 798). If this umbilical cord uniting the protagonist to their creator is not cut, then what one has is not a work of art (battering censorship) but a personal document.

Desai’s works are in this sense profoundly objective – because the protagonists’ self-consciousness, once it becomes the dominant, breaks down the censorship binaries (while at the

exterior level reflecting the conformity). The protagonists become relatively free and independent, because everything in Desai's design that had defined them (characters), as it had sentenced them everything that had qualified them to be once and for all a completed image of censorship, now no longer functions as a form for finalizing them, but operate as the material of their self-consciousness.

In a censorship design, the protagonists are closed and their semiological boundaries are "a kind of condenser of all the principles of sign-ness and at the same time goes beyond sign-ness. It is a mediator between different spheres of semiosis, and also between semiotic and non-semiotic reality" (Lotman, 111). They act, experience, think and are conscious within the limits of what they are, that is, within the limits of their image defined as reality. They cannot cease to be themselves, that is, they cannot exceed the limits of their own characters, typicality or temperament without violating the author's censorship design (for achieving cultural success) concerning them. For this reason, the 'crowd' which encompasses the mass of common creation tends towards active violence by coming away the natural causes of censorship and directing their actions towards something which they possess under them. Since by definition, the crowd cannot exist by eliminating the natural causes of censorship and at the same time live with them – those who make the 'crowd' always tend to blame others for their misfortunes and this "they dream of purging the community of the impure elements that corrupt it, the traitor who undermine it". (Girard 30-31)

The self-consciousness of the protagonist is inserted into this rigid framework, to which the protagonist has no access from within and which is part of the authorial consciousness defining and representing them – presented against the background of a censorship conformity, these models achieve relatively high popular cultural demands for their categorization nature. However, Anita Desai renounces all these conformity premises. Everything that the censored driven authors kept for their creation, to reflect the ultimate unity of a work and the world portrayed in it, Desai turns over to her protagonists, transforming all of it into an aspect of the protagonist's self-consciousness.

There is literally nothing that one can say about the protagonists of Desai. Maya from *Cry, the Peacock*, even though was reflecting deep psychological impulses was aware of her typicality of her time and social group, of the sober psychological or even psycho-pathological delineation of her internal profile, of her understanding of the category of characters to which her consciousness belongs, her comic as well as her tragic side, all possible moral definitions of her personality, and so on – all of this, in keeping with Desai's design, the protagonist knows perfectly well herself, and she stubbornly and agonizingly soaks up all these definition from within. Any point of view from without is rendered powerless in advance and denied the finalizing word.

Because the dominant of representation in this literary work of Desai coincides maximally with the dominant of that which is represented, the formal task of Desai can be very clearly expressed in the content of how she is creating a paralogical set of consciousness against censorship. What Maya thinks about most of all is what others think or might think about her; she tries to keep one step ahead of every other consciousness, every other thought about her, every other point of view on her. At all the critical moments of her confessions she tries to anticipate the possible definition or evaluation others might make of her, to guess the sense and tone of that evaluation, and tries painstakingly to formulate these possible words about herself by others, interrupting her own speech with the imagined rejoinders of others:

‘Stop them, tell them, tell them to stop’. I begged, when in this state. And then, in the convalescent calm that followed, wondered if such drum existed. In all my sane life – and surely there were times when I was no longer sane! – I had not heard such a rhythm – uneven, so that it could not be an accompaniment to a dancer, or, at any...I searched for the dancer then, then powerful dancer gone berserk, but found only shadows, for he had danced his dance, departed to dance elsewhere, leaving only the rhythm pounding in my ears (130-131).

And this not merely a character trait of a single protagonist’s self-consciousness, it is also the dominant governing principle of the author’s construction of her protagonists. Desai does not indeed leave the final word to her protagonists. And precisely that final word – or, more accurately, the tendency toward it – is necessary to conquer the censorship model. She constructs her protagonists not out of words foreign to the protagonists, not out of neutral definition; she constructs not a character, nor a type, nor a temperament, in fact she constructs no objectified image of the protagonist at all, but rather the protagonist’s discourse about them and their world.

Desai’s protagonists are not an objectified image (of censorship model) but an autonomous discourse, pure construct. One does not see them but hear them; everything that one sees and know apart from their discourses are nonessential and is swallowed up by Desai’s employment of discourse as a raw material, or else remains outside it as something that stimulates and provokes. Thus, all these compositional devices in fact perform the function of nullifying the realization of censorship conformity. The serious and deeper meaning of this revolt might be expressed this way: a living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some censorship, by finalizing the cognitive process. In a human being there is always something that only she herself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing censorship definition. In Desai’s subsequent works, the characters no longer carry literary censorship model with a denotatively fixed definition, but they all do furious battle with such definitions of their personality in the mouth of the other censorship people. They all acutely sense their own inner unfinalizability, their capacity to outgrow the censor, as it were, from within and to render untrue any externalizing and finalizing definition of them. As long as the protagonists are alive, they live by the fact that they are not yet finalized by cultural model, and can therefore violate any regulating norms which might be thrust upon them.

Conclusion: One way to fight censorship is to seek expressions that can function as a taint on that pure censorship form. In the mid-20th century, Raja Rao was already dwelling on a literary expression of ‘nationalism’ (the binaries of which is defined by literary censorship) in his *Kanthapura* (1938), in which censorship for expressions of a nationalistic fervor was very well tuned with an anti-censorship elemental feature: nationalism and its principles cannot bring unity to all individual. Murthy’s action at last to renounce the Gandhian principles of nationalism in favour of a new one shows a conscious search for free expressions. In post independent India, the factor of ideal conception of an ‘anti’ space became even more elusive, when ‘literary expressions’ were not questioning the ‘actual’, but the past ‘content’ (partition) for its upholding as necessity by the censorship culture to alter or draw away the focus from the problematics of the domestic, the everyday phenomenon to a ‘lived’ national sympathy. The challenge then that was presented before Anita Desai (to voice the ‘living’ experience) required an entirely different level of encounter. This challenge had little to do with whether or not Anita Desai claims privileges over literary censorship of expression or exercises inside views. Indeed,

it had nothing to do with Anita Desai's effort to produce a single unified work. Her subject was not the ordering of technical vocabulary to create a synthesis for the mass appeal, as much as the 'effects' of the quality of the author's imaginative gift – the ability or willingness to allow voices into the work that are not fundamentally under censorship control and can process its own ideology.

This problem lies deeper than the question of authorial discourse on the superficial level of composition, and deeper than a superficially compositional device for eliminating authorial discourse by means of first-person narration (as in *Cry, the Peacock*) or by a narrator's introduction (as in *Fire in the Mountain*), or by constructing the novel in scenes and thus reducing authorial discourse to the status of a stage direction. All these compositional devices for eliminating or weakening authorial discourse at the level of composition do not in themselves tackle the essence of the problem of censorship; their underlying meaning can be profoundly different, depending on the different artistic tasks they perform.

For Anita Desai, the notion of diverse tasks is quite different from other literary writers, who intend to produce an artistic effect like tragedy, comedy, satire or eulogy. Anita Desai's essential task was not simply to make the most effective work possible, as viewed in its kind, proposed by censorship argumentations. It is rather to achieve a view of human existence superior to all other views, fiction of the right kind, pursuing the right tasks – is the best instrument of understanding that has ever been devised by Anita Desai. It is indeed, the only conceptual device that can act 'justice', by achieving a kind of objectivity quite different from that hailed by censorship critics, to the essential, irreducible, multi-centeredness of human life. In freeing the readers from narrowly subjective view of censorships, the best novels of Anita Desai achieve a universally desirable quality, regardless of the particular effects of censorship which at the surface structure her writings reflect. Like the universally desirable 'sublimity' pursued by Longinus, the artistic quality pursued by Anita Desai is a kind of sublimity of freed perspectives within the narrow ambiance of censorship – that will always, on all fictional occasions be superior to every other.

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Michael Madhusudan Dutt's *The Captive Ladie*: Text Context and Perspectives.

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Abstract

Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873) is a revered name in Bengali Literature. To gauge his merit is an arduous task. It is he who changed the literary sky of Bengali literature with grace and elan. He began writing English poetry at the age of seventeen and started sending his works to publications in England, including *Blackwood's Magazine* and *Bentley's Miscellany*. However, his desire to go to England and make a name in English literature became largely unfulfilled. He succumbed to familial pressure and was forced to leave Calcutta for Madras. In 1849 he composed *The Captive Ladie* a poem of two cantos. This paper is a fresh take on *The Captive Ladie* beyond the conventional, canonical critical approaches that usually estimate *The Captive Ladie* from social, and philosophical perspectives, the paper takes recourse to the cultural issues of India as a nation, language 'differences', identity politics, personal struggle.

Keywords: *English poetry, Bengali Literature, England, Social, identity politics.*

Introduction

Michael Madhusudan Dutta (1824-1873) was a meteoric talent who filled the literary sky with new light. He was born in Sagardari, Jessore now in Bangladesh to parents Rajnarayan and Jahnabi. He was the only child of his parents and received an education in the English language. Rajnarayan had intended this Western education to open up avenues for a government job for his son (*Journal of the Calcutta Historical Society*). After completing his formal education in Sagardari, he was sent to Hindu College in Calcutta for higher studies with the eventual aim of becoming a barrister. At Hindu College students had to study under a Westernized curriculum, speak the language, dress as English men, and eat British cuisine with cutlery. The British wanted to create an anglicized middle-class Indians who would serve as officials in the colonial administration. As a student of Hindu College Calcutta, he was inspired by his teacher David Lester Richardson who helped him understand the works of Shakespeare, Milton, and other eminent literary figures of English literature. He was largely influenced by European classical writers like Homer, Milton, Dante, Tasso, Aristotle, Shakespeare Byron, Keats, Shelley, and others. He embarked on a journey with the European classical writers and accepted their culture and sartorial choices. He developed an aversion towards his mother tongue Bengali. In one of his poems, he writes,

Where man in all his truest glory lives,
And nature's face is exquisitely sweet;
For those fair climes, I heave impatient sigh,
There let me live and there let me die". (Chakraborty, 33).

While Dutta was studying at Hindu College, he imitated Derozio another popular academic and poet who taught previously in Hindu College. Derozio left an indelible mark in the minds of the progressive class of Indians. He sowed the seed of freedom in the hearts of his students and followers. In Hindu College, Dutt mastered the languages and developed intimate friendships with Gourdas Basak, Bhudev Mukhopadhyay, Sriram Chattopadhyay, Swarup Mukhopadhyaya, Hari, Banimadhav Basu and Rajnarayan Basu. He began writing English poetry at the age of seventeen and started sending his works to publications in England, including *Blackwood's Magazine* and *Bentley's Miscellany*. Richardson was instrumental in shaping Dutt's literary career. He not only taught Dutt the English language but also painstakingly corrected his manuscripts. In a poem written in 1841, Dutt expressed his desire to go to England and become a famous poet in the English tradition. His father strongly objected to this and fixed his marriage with a beautiful Bengali girl. He had to abide by his father's wish and aborted his dream to go to England.

In 1843 he embraced Christianity at the Old Mission's Church despite stiff resistance from his parents and relatives. On account of being a convert, he had to leave Hindu College. After his conversion to Christianity, he composed the poem *King Porus* which was published in *Literary Gleaner*. The 140-line poem *King Porus* was divided into six paragraphs. A probe into the poem reveals that the first and last paragraphs of the poem are arranged in a similar vein and the four paragraphs in the middle are of different types. The most striking feature of the poem is Dutt's patriotism. He was a follower of the West in 1841 and considered Albion as his native land. But he underwent a sea change in the last two years. This patriotic vein is reflected in *King Porus*,

But where, oh! Where is Porus now?
And where the noble hearts that bled
For Freedom---with the heroic glow
In patriot-bosoms nourish'd---
---Hearts, eagle-like that reeked not Death,
But shrank before foul Thralldom's breath?
And where art thou – fair Freedom! –thou –
Once goddess of Ind's sunny clime! (Madhusudan *Rachnabali*, 477)

In 1844 he resumed his studies at Bishop's College where he stayed for three years. His conversion to Christianity created a furore in familial as well as societal relationships. He was immediately ostracized by the conservative Hindu society. His father disinherited him, (Paranjape, 76-78) as a result of which Dutta met with an acute financial crunch. He moved to Madras (Chennai) in 1847 and began his career as an "usher" at the Madras Male Orphan Asylum. Dutt had always wanted to marry a blue-eyed blonde and could never settle for marrying a Bengali girl of his parent's choice. He got married in 1848 to Rebecca a resident of the Madras Female Orphan Asylum. In 1849 he composed *The Captive Ladie* a poem of two

cantos. Four years later, in 1851, he became a Second Tutor in the Madras University High School. (Paranjape, 76-78). He started reading the Sanskrit classical literature and Indian epics.

In Madras, he was away from his family and friends and Rebecca was his oasis. He was madly in love with his newlywed bride. After his marriage, he composed four love poems under the pen name of Timothy Penpoem. We are not sure why he adopted this particular pen name—Timothy was the name of Shelley’s father. We are to remember that Byron and not Shelley was his favourite author, even though he had striking similarities with Shelley. After the publication of his poems in the *Madras Circulator* he acquired fame as an aspiring poet. After three and half months of their marriage, Rebecca was pregnant. Dutt’s happiness knew no bounds. It was in this state of mind that he wrote *The Captive Ladie* (An Indian Tale) in two Cantos for the *Madras Circulator* and *General Chronicle*, later on, he appended to it *Visions of the Past-A Fragment* and published both together in a book form in 1849.

This paper is a fresh take on *The Captive Ladie* beyond the conventional, canonical critical approaches that usually estimate *The Captive Ladie* from social, and philosophical perspectives, the paper takes recourse to the cultural issues of India as a nation, language ‘differences’, identity politics, personal struggle. The paper further tries to trace the hyphenated status of the poet. The paper also unearths in the poetry of the maestro the cultural tensions between the East and the West, and negotiations that struggle for recognition of Michael Madhusudan Dutt as a poet.

As for the sources of *The Captive Ladie* Dutt refers to, (in his last note to the second canto), Alexander Dow, a British historian. The note is an important one, as it provides the only reliable source from which Dutt might have derived the subject matter of his poem:

It was in those days a custom of the Hindus, that whatever Raja was twice worsted by the Mussulmen [sic], should be, by that disgrace, rendered unfit for further command. Jeipal in compliance with this custom, having raised his son to the Government, ordered a funeral pile to be prepared upon which he sacrificed himself to his Gods. (Dow's *Ferishta*, Vol. 45. (Third Edition) (Notes on Canto 511).

He dedicated the poem to his friend Richard Naylor who helped him in more than one way. After Dutt wrote more than one canto, he changed his mind and dedicated the poem to George Norton, the advocate general of Madras. In the dedication he writes:

To/George Norton, Esquire/ The following tale/ is/ (by permission)/ most respectfully dedicated, / by his most obedient/ and most humble servant/The author.

Norton was a popular public figure in Madras and he was strict in his demeanor as is evident by the use of the word “by permission”. Apart from being the Advocate General, he was a patron and advisor to many organizations (Murshid, 118). In this context, Dutt wrote to his friend Gourdas Basak,

he will consider it an honour to have a work exhibiting such great powers and promise dedicated to him (Shome,60).

George Norton liked the poem and encouraged him a lot. In a letter to his friend Gourdas Basak, he writes,

You have no idea what a kind and flattering reply I got from him. He says he will consider it an honour to have a work "exhibiting such great powers and promise" dedicated to him. I have great hopes for his patronage. I wonder how the Calcutta critics will receive me.

In the Preface to *The Captive Ladie* Dutt writes,

The following tale is founded on a circumstance pretty generally known in India, and if I mistake not, noticed by some European writers---A little before the famous Indian expeditions of Mohommed of Ghizni, the king of Kanoje celebrated the "Raj-shooio Jugum" or as I have translated it in the text, the "Feast of Victory". Almost all the contemporary Princes, being unable to resist his power, attended it, with the exception of the King of Delhi, who is a lineal descendant of Pandu Princes—the heroes of the far-famed "Mohabarut" of Vyasa—refused to sanction by his presence the assumption of a dignity—for the celebration of this Festival was a universal assertion of claims to being considered as the lord-paramount over the whole country—which by right of descent belonged to his family alone. The King of Kanoje, highly incensed at this refusal, had an image of gold made to represent the absent chief. On the last day of the Feast, the King of Delhi, having, with a few chosen followers, entered the palace in disguise, carried off this image, together, as some say, with one of the Princesses Royal whose hand he had once solicited but in vain, owing to his obstinate maintenance of the rights of his ancient house.—The fair Princess, however, was retaken and sent to a solitary castle to be out of the way of her pugnacious lover, who eventually affected her escape in the disguise of a Bhat or Indian Troubador."

The Captive Ladie is a poem of two cantos each of which is preceded by lines from Byron's *The Giaour* and Moore's *Lallah Rookh*. It begins with an 'Introduction' comprising eleven stanzas and is based on legend, history, and fiction. *The Captive Ladie* commences with a song sung by a bard, entitled "The Feast of Victory," which describes the preparations in the city to celebrate the joyful occasion.

And all around the dazzled eye,
Met scenes of gayest revelrie:-
For, here beneath the perfum'd shade,
By some bright silken awning made,
Midst rose and lily scatter'd round... (486)

Dutt presents a peaceful image of India and depicts the Muslim invaders as 'rude' and 'unsparing' 'demons', raiding the land of her riches. What is striking is that, for the first time in poetry written in English by an Indian, the appellation 'father-land' for India. Dutt's use of the term 'father-land' instead of the usual Indian personification the 'motherland' stems from Western influences. It is a term that was also commonly used by the Dutt family Album (*Rachanabali*, 71).

The first canto quotes from *The Giaour*:

Love will find its way/
Through paths where wolves would fear to prey';
and the second canto is preceded by lines from *Lallah Rookh*:
Land of the Sun!
what foot invades
Thy pagods and thy pillar'd shades,
Thy cavern shrines and idol stones,
Thy monarchs and thousand thrones?
Tis he of Gazna! (*Rachanabali*, 480,494)

There is a remarkable similarity with Derozio's "The Enchantress of the Cave". It seems that long after Derozio passed away he remained as an unconscious echo in the minds of the students of the Hindu College. *The Captive Ladie* is based on the central tenet of the opposition of two cultures, ideals, and religions between the Muslim invaders and the Hindu invaded which more than often results in fearful battles between the two sides.

They say the Crescents' on the gales
Which whisper in our moon-lit vales -
They say that Moslem feet have trod
The fanes of him - the Bramin's God -
And that from western realms afar
Fast flows the tide of furious war. (*Rachanabali*, 487)

The second canto shows the Muslim invaders as 'aggressive' and 'fierce'. Dutt is influenced by Jones' translation "A Persian Song of Hafiz" as he refers to Rocnabad and Mosellay (Jones' *Poetical Works*, 191). In the poem Dutt narrates the history of the East, he writes about *Kali*, *Lakshmi*, *Saraswati*, *Agni*, and *Rudra* (*Moniruzzaman*, 49).

Though the title of the poem is *The Captive Ladie* it is based on the character of Prithviraj the protagonist of the poem and the poem revolves around him. Dutt paid more attention to the narration of human feelings rather than history. Dutt's outlook towards the Indian content of his poem was indecisive in its position, sometimes assuming a native person's acquaintance with the subject, and, at most others, espousing the detached tone of a commentator. However, the poem shows Dutt's extraordinary command of the English language at a young age. It remains a significant milestone in his poetic oeuvre. The poet banks on the Indian epical tradition and re-tells the story of *The Ramayana*. He deftly describes the pain and solitude of Ram after the

abduction of Sita by Ravana the demon King,
And how the wanderer of the wood
Came home – but came to solitude-
And in his grief sought her in vain
O'er mount-in cave-by found-on plain (*Madhusudan Rachanabali* 469)
Dutt attaches a note to this allusion,

This is the subject of the Ramayana of Valmiki. The abduction of Seeta - the Indian Helen, and wife of Rama - by Ravana king of Ceylon. Seeta was taken away from the forest where Rama resided during his banishment from his kingdom. The consequence is well-known.

Thus, he acquaints the readers of the West with the legends, myths, history, and fiction of the West. Both the Indian epics found their way into *The Captive Ladie*. "It is as if the poet has written a garland of Indian mythology in a foreign language. On the other hand, in Bengali poetry, these references are very relevant to the story; the images are small and cohesive, often in the form of metaphors" (*Madhusudan's Poet-Spirit and Poetry*, 66). Dutt also banks upon the Indian epic --*The Mahabharata*. He describes the fall of Hastinapur and the defeat of Prithviraj by Gazni. In a dream, Sanjukta saw a blood-stained female figure/deity with a sheathless sword appeared before her. She was dark as a cloud around her waist was a hideous zone of hands with charnel lighting. She wore garlands of human heads that had blood dripping from their neck. She had a fierce look as if she represented death itself. The deity addressed her as daughter and warned her of the impending doom,

I saw a pyre
Blaze high with fiercely gleaming fire.
And one there came, --a warrior he,--
The faint yet bold --undauntedly,
And plung'd oh! God! Into the flame
Which like a hungry monster rose,
And circl'd round a quivering frame,
A hideous curtain---waving close!

This phenomenon is explicated by Madhusudan as a 'popular belief, common amongst all heathens, that when misfortune is about to befall a family its Penates desert it.' (Notes on Canto 511).

The images of Rudra, Kali, and Agni are painted beautifully by the poet.

This is the goddess Cali. - "She (Cali) is black, with four arms, wearing two bodies as earrings, - a necklace of skulls, and the hands of several slaughtered giants round her waist as a girdle." &c. British India - Vol. II. There are some inaccuracies in this description, Cali does not "wear two dead bodies as earrings." I have in my description omitted the circumstances of her having four arms. (Notes on Canto, 511)

The queen had a second dream where she saw a warrior almost like a hungry demon bold and undaunting. Sanjukta thought this was her father Jaychandra and wondered whether his father forgave her finally and would help her husband Prithviraj in crushing the Muslim invader. Dutt uses several allusions from Indian mythology, and he substantiates his use of Indian antiquities in a letter to his friend Gourdas Basak,

Pray, tell Bhoodeb that when he gets my Poem, he will be surprised [sic] at my knowledge of Hindu Antiquities, for it is a thorough Indian work, full of Rishis - Calis - Lutchmees - Camas, Rudras, and all the Devils incarnate, whom our orthodox fathers worshipped. The 1st canto contains an episode called the "Raj-shooya Jujnum" with a terrible

battle and "a that." (Letters [37] Madras, 19th March 1849, 533. Bhoodeb Mukhopadhyay was a fellow Hindu College classmate, and an eminent scholar and writer), ("a that" is from Robert Burns whom the Derozians often quoted).

The characterization of Jaychandra is rather sketchy even the depiction of the character of Sanjukta is rather wobbly. The character of Prithiraj as portrayed by Dutt is a bit autobiographical. He focuses on Prithiraj's love for Sanjukta, his anger, pain, angst and finally winning her. In a way, he glorifies his protagonist's overcoming of the obstacles in the way of love, and it seems to be a reflection of Dutt's love for Rebecca in real life, resistance from his parents and society, and attempts to overcome the hurdles and finally his marriage with Rebecca. In *The Captive Ladie*, he writes,

Oh! Who can look upon the plain,

Where sleep the glorious – mighty slain –

Brave Hearts that for their country bled,

And read upon their eyes, tho' seal'd,

Lit by each spirit ere it fled –

Or mark the fierce disdain that lies,

Upon their lips and yet defies,--

Unquench'd by Death, like the last ray,

Of the set sun, still lingering there,

As if too loth to pass away,

But scorch and blast with lightning glare,

The poem was an instant hit in the literary circle of Madras and received rave reviews in the newspaper *Athenaeum*. Madhusudan's perception of its reception in Madras was, therefore, bright:

I wrote it [*Captive Ladie*] for the pages of a local paper, the editor of which, one of the most eminent in India, has been blowing my trumpet like a jolly fellow. It has excited great attention here, and many persons of superior judgment and acquirements have induced me to republish it in a bookish form (Letter,36, 511)

In a letter a writer by the penname of Laelius highly praised the poem and drew the attention of the editor:

Addressing you as a friend to Literature, and yourself a cultivator and reaper of its fruits, I am desirous of bespeaking your attention to a work of no ordinary Poetic talent just published at Madras, by Mr M. S. Dutt, entitled *The Captive Ladie*.

He also reiterated the fact that he has no personal connections with the poet.

In offering a few critical remarks, which some may think of too favourable a character, I must premise that they proceed from a total stranger to the author of this poem – the Preface and Introductory verses to which but too plainly proclaim an obscure and unbefriended man.

He also made an endearing comment regarding the introductory passage of the poem where Dutt wrote effusively about his lady love his wife, Rebecca.

There is a melancholy tenderness in that Introductory address, which at once charms from its poetic feeling, and elevates from its ardent manliness. In the whole range of recent Poetry, we shall rarely meet a sweeter strain of melody or more impassioned sentiment, addressed to beloved object than stream forth in the following lines.

Not only did he appreciate the poet he also wrote a critical analysis of the poem:

The poem, itself too much – and too fatally perhaps for its popularity – recalls the o'er burdened sentimentality of the Byron school; and may probably be the effusion of youthful or unpractised musing. It sins, therefore, in exuberance of epithet, and wanderings of fancy. The reader pauses too often to comprehend the feeling, which in truer and more perfect poetry at once reaches the heart. More care and fondness are displayed in dressing up the thoughts than in expressing the thoughts themselves. But it would be to deny to Keats and Shelley, and even to Byron himself, one-half of their poetic merit, to refuse all admiration of beauties, which, however graceful in themselves, often encumber rather than adorn the sentiments to which they are allied; and sometimes overwhelm the sentiments altogether.

The natural question that may haunt the readers is who is the writer of this letter? Is it his friend Richard Naylor or the poet himself? In defense, one can say that it is either of the two. How is it possible for an ordinary reader to buy a copy of *The Captive Lady* and write a letter to the editor of the journal within two weeks of its publication? If in case someone wrote this letter genuinely then seeing his poetic talent being compared to Byron Dutt might nurture the thought of achieving fame even without going to England. After receiving rave reviews from readers in Madras Dutt was eager to hear from his readers in Calcutta. He wrote several letters to his friend Gourdas Basak (MMD to Basak, Letter no. 40, 41) to enquire whether any reviews were published in the magazines/journals in Calcutta. Gourdas praised his poem and wrote him letters to express his feelings about Dutt's composition; however, one should remember that he was not a poet so one might ignore his comments and feelings about the poem.

Calcutta was silent about Dutt's composition, and this unnerved the poet. After waiting for a considerable amount of time *Bengal Hurkaru* a newspaper on 19th May 1849, published a review of *The Captive Lady*. The reviewer was rather severe and harsh in his tone,

There is nothing poetic in the curt and dumpy name of Dutt. No more would there be in the equally brief and insignificant patronymic of Scott were it divested of its associations. But the Scotts and above all the *Scotts*, have given to their name a classical euphony that makes it musical all over the world. Perhaps the Dutts may do as much for their own little pudgy appellation. Unpoetical as it sounds *now*, it designates a family whom the gods seem to have made poetical, or at all events, endowed with the wish to be or the belief that they are so. In Calcutta, we have at least three of the names who write English verses of faultless rhyme and musical rhythm, as our columns often show and as even the most inveterate contemner of Young Bengal must allow.

We find this review a bit problematic as the reviewer went out of his way and is more of a personal attack and the racist attitude of the reviewer is also exposed when he mentions the word “heathendom’. In the Preface to *The Captive Ladie* Dutt wrote,

I have, I am afraid, many reasons to apologize to the Public for the imperfections which have crept into the following poem. It was originally composed in great haste for the columns of a Local Journal— “*The Madras Circulator and General Chronicle*” —in the midst of scenes where it required a more than ordinary effort to abstract one’s thoughts from the ugly realities of life. – Want and Poverty with the “Battalions” of “Sorrows” which they bring, leave but little inspiration for their victim! –

To counter Dutt’s point the reviewer argued,

Possibly had our poet looked the ugly realities of life manfully in the face instead of trying to abstract his thoughts from them, he might not have been dependent on Want, Poverty, and Co. for his inspiration.

Further, he writes,

We are not those that think a poet must necessarily be poor and miserable, but we believe that a youth

Who pens a stanza when he should engross

Has only himself to blame if his pen neither brings him fame nor food.

When it comes to the poem itself, he says that it is amateurish in manner then he cannot but say, The style is Scott-Moore-Byronical-and quality of the poem may be judged from the following passage with which it commences is not bad:

The star of Eve is in the sky,
But pale it shines and tremblingly,
As if the solitude around
So vast-so wild-without a bound,
Hath in its softly throbbing breast
Awaken’d some maiden fear-unrest;
But soon-soon will its radiant peers
Peep forth from their deep-blue spheres
And soon the ladie Moon will rise
To bathe in silver Earth and Skies
The soft-pale silver of her pensive eyes.

The reviewer did not like *The Visions of the Past*, he was critical of Dutt’s knowledge of English Grammar and spelling, and he tried to pin down the poet by saying that,

These verses of M.M.S. Dutt are very fair amateur poetry; but if the power of making has deluded the author into a reliance on the exercise of his poetical abilities for fortune and reputation or tempted him to turn up his nose at the more common-place uses of his pen, the delusion is greatly to be regretted. We believe that none of our Calcutta Dutts has fallen into this ruinous error, but that steadily following their more homely and more profitable vocations, they

prudently reserve their poetical powers to amuse their moments of leisure-it will be well if the recreations of Young Bengal were always so innocent.

And he comes to a closure with a rather rude comment,

With this, we take our leave of M.M. S. Dutt and his poetry.

We can very well comprehend the mental state of the poet. If we look back thirty-one years ago, we find that a young poet was critiqued in three magazines England *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, *Quarterly Review*, and *British Critic*. That did not deter the young poet John Keats in his poetic journey. In the case of Dutt, he was criticized because he imitated Byron and Keats was critiqued for imitating Hunt. In a letter to his brother George, Keats wrote that he would leave an indelible mark in the history of English Literature after he died in the same vein Dutt wrote to his friend Gourdas Basak, that he is least perturbed by the review, All right, my boy, You seem to consider the "Captive" a failure, but I don't. For look you, it has opened the most splendid prospects for me and has procured me the friendship of some whom it is an honour to know... (Letter no 40, 41).

He was waiting for responses from his friends in Kolkata he was clear that his friends would not be influenced by responses in *Harkaru*. After nine days of publication of this review in *Hurkaru*, another review of *The Captive Ladie* was published in the *Hindu Intelligencer*. This reviewer was Kashiprasad Ghosh who had lived with Dutt in Khiderpur. Kashiprasad however could not whole-heartedly appreciate a fellow poet in spite he being a poet. He writes,

It has been noticed that the kind of poetic talent that we look in for a true poet Dutt has that in him. Nature has blessed him with immense mental strength if he can utilize that he is sure to stand tall in the literary circle – hope he achieves fame and name and our wishes are with him.

Naturally, Dutt was not pleased with this kind of review. Another review of *The Captive Ladie* was published at the end of the year in *Calcutta Review* Vol. 12, No. 24 entitled *The Poetry of the Dutt*s. In this review, Dutt's poetical prowess was considered to be below average lesser than the poetical prowess of Govinda Dutta. Dutt had also presented a copy of *The Captive Ladie* to John Drinkwater Bethune. Bethune wrote a letter to Dutt's friend Gourdas Basak where he advised Dutt to concentrate on studying his mother tongue. Though *The Captive Ladie* did not bring luck to the poet it remains a watershed moment in his poetic career. He had immense respect for classical writers like Homer, Virgil, and Horace he loved the epic tradition of John Milton. "*The Captive Ladie* displaying similar affiliations, written before he had turned to Bengali, and his first step towards publication in book form, may also be read as a nucleus containing the seeds of those trends in his authorial temperament that was to become prominent later in his life". (Chaudhuri, 173).

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Obscene and Perverse Fictions: Saadat Hasan Manto and Censorship

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Abstract

This paper aims to explore how Saadat Hasan Manto, (1912-1955) faced state censorship and social criticism on charges of obscenity and sedition for his stories. The present paper shall seek to trace the charges of obscenity that were laid in colonial India and Pakistan against these stories, in order to trace the national/cultural imaginary through which the nation states of British India and the newly formed state of Pakistan sought to define themselves, to attempt to identify precisely what was found to be threatening in these texts to merit state censorship. The paper asserts that a study of these censorship trials might throw an interesting light on how the South Asian state in its precolonial and then national form imagined itself into being by containing and censoring what was seen as inhospitable to the creation of the governable subject.

Keywords: *Censorship, Obscenity, Sedition, Perversity, Subjectivity*

Introduction

Saadat Hasan Manto is perhaps the most well-known and controversial figure in the history of Urdu literature which flowered between 1930-1950 in late colonial India, and independent India and Pakistan. He was tried for obscenity six times; thrice before 1947 in colonial India, for his short stories *Dhuan*, *Boo* and *Kali Shalwar*, and thrice after independence in Pakistan, for *Thanda Gosht*, *Khol Do* and *Upar, Neeche aur Darmiyan*. Manto's stories explore sexuality through the marginalised, the outliers of society who are not granted legitimacy or autonomy by the machinery of governmentality of the nation state.

Foucault in what have been termed his 'governmentality lectures', delivered in 1977-78 as lectures on *Security, Territory, Population* introduces the concept of governmentality which has been used by postcolonial scholars to explore the political systems of the colonial and post-colonial nation states. Deanna Heath and Stephen Legg in their introduction to *South Asian Governmentalities* understand Foucault's concept of governmentality as emerging in systems that combined sovereign, disciplinary and governmental powers to ensure legalised behaviour and to discipline and manage subjects (Legg 1). An analysis of Manto's stories and the censorship narratives Manto was embroiled in from the perspective of governmentality reveal how the efforts to police the stories were part of a larger political project or form of bio-power to exercise control over the public sphere by the

state, as well as the non-party social movements which emerged in colonial and postcolonial India and Pakistan.

A substantial amount of research on South Asian colonial histories observes how the structures of censorship shift from eighteenth and nineteenth century Britain to twentieth century India and locates the cause of this in the obsession with, and prohibition of what was perceived as obscene in the Victorian moral strictures put in place by the imperial state. The first obscenity statute was passed in India in 1856, a year before it was passed in Britain. Heath reports that from the mid-nineteenth century civil society in India, missionaries, social organisations, nationalists and hygiene groups, put pressure on the government to regularise and police obscenity in the social sphere (Heath 161).

It was, however, the Indian elite, and not the British colonisers who transformed the colonial obscenity laws into a 'biopolitical project'. The censorship trials faced by Manto, might in Foucauldian terms, be then seen as a 'governmentalising project'. Alan Hunt defines a 'project' as governmental processes and practices directed towards the control of civic social life (Hunt 26). All such projects are constituted by the agents who exercise state or voluntary control, targets who may be individuals or social groups, techniques in the form of law or texts prescribing certain kinds of behaviour, governmental discourse in the form of policy documents, and a political paradigm within the context of which these regulatory apparatuses operate (Hunt 28).

In this context, it is interesting that while the obscenity charges brought against Manto were ostensibly to police the sexual content of his writing, thus contributing to the fashioning of a sanitised moral subject, a closer reading of the trials and the texts reveal that the regulatory panopticon in the case of these stories also sought to fix and discipline the unruly subjectivities which did not or could not be commensurate with the new allegories of ideal citizenship being upheld by the elite public sphere. Manto's subjects are those who have been abandoned or left behind by the narratives of progress or development. They lack the safety nets of social security or financial stability, and one suspects it is their class and caste affiliations which render them unpalatable or 'obscene' rather than merely the depictions of sexuality in the texts.

Dhuan is the title story of Manto's third collection of short stories which was published from Delhi in 1941. It is an account of the sexual coming of age of a young boy. In a society which at best ignored and at worst actively suppressed the idea of adolescent sexuality, where discussion of sexuality was regarded as unclean and outside the realm of the polite public sphere, Manto boldly traces the sexual awakening of twelve-year-old Masud, as he sees smoke rising from the freshly cut goat meat in the bazaar, and then thinks of his sister's limbs as akin to the meat as he massages her legs. The prepubescent confusion of the young boy at this sudden attraction towards the physical, the quickening of his body and flesh before sexual awakening has fully occurred have been evocatively depicted in the story. But one may well understand the bourgeoisie moral policing and middle-class squeamishness of colonial India which found such a frank account of sexual awakening so disturbing and 'obscene'. One can see that Manto, even this early in his career, had a penchant for articulating the inarticulable, and voicing what lies hidden in the silences of polite civil society. Manto's preoccupation with the carnal is scarcely about mere erotic pleasure. Here the references to Masood's sexual confusion are an attempt to explore adolescent sexuality and capture the experience through a psychosexual lens. The creation of the bourgeoisie subject requires the disciplining and policing of adolescent

sexuality in order to create a socially acceptable sexuality governed by sociocultural repression. Manto's story in its refusal to cater to the repressive mode threatens the strictures and structures of the conventional social sphere.

Similarly, Sultana in *Kali Shalwar* is a sex worker who has shifted from Ambala to Delhi at the behest of her lover/pimp Khudabaksh. To relieve her ennui, she calls in the stranger Shankar, who asserts he is just like her. Shankar brings Sultana the coveted black shalwar to be worn for Muharram in exchange for sexual favours, and also in exchange of her silver ear drops, which he has gifted to her friend Mukhtar. Sultana's geographical displacement from Ambala to the urban ghetto of Delhi has affected her business, and also her social life. She lives in a flat in a row of buildings which look identical to each other, and which have been provided by the state to house, control and contain prostitutes. In an attempt to construct what Stephen Legg calls a "sexually civil city" (Legg 42), a hierarchical infrastructure was put in place, which banned the prostitutes to the outskirts of Delhi, by providing government constructed housing for them there. This points to how the colonial government was increasingly taking on the mantle of protector of morals in a civil society, as opposed to being concerned with political governance alone. It is Manto's insistence on focussing on these marginalised, excluded peoples, and humanising what was regarded as the 'other', which probably led to an obscenity trial against *Kali Shalwar*. The real obscenity which remains unarticulated in the trial, which supposedly addresses the immorality and vulgarity of the text, is Manto's audacity in forcing civil society to come face to face with its own hypocrisies.

In an upending of the romantic notion of the lovers exchanging gifts a la O Henry's *The Gift of the Magi*, the only thing possible in Sultana's world is a trading of the flesh in exchange for goods or money. No higher sentiment or religious piety may be allowed to the figure of the prostitute. Sultana and her friends in being abandoned by the civil society and also the state have lost recourse to fundamental rights such as expectations of fairness, justice or dignity. This is amply clear to Shankar, who sees Sultana's and Mukhtar's asking for a gift not as a beloved's romantic gesture, but as simply a demand in exchange for sexual favours, a demand which he fulfils by giving each lady what she desires by taking it from her friend. Manto's text is unsettling and 'obscene' precisely because it reveals the uncomfortable truth of how the state and society choose to dehumanise and then abandon the sex worker, metaphorically and literally, by putting them in ghettos outside the city of Delhi. Legg calls this 'civil abandonment': "The abandonment of Delhi's prostitutes was specifically gendered and sexualized, within contexts of both imperial and Indian reformist stigmatization of prostitutes, which increasingly worked to portray the prostitute as the outsider within. The prostitute in interwar India threatened not only British soldiers with venereal disease, but also the emergent nationalism with a radically "other" negotiation of the gendered division of public/private space, that is, the prostitute/brothel rather than the mother/home" (Legg 51)

Manto's story indirectly addresses the hypocrisy and unfairness of sociopolitical and cultural structures which dehumanize the prostitute and put her in a situation which is always already precarious and uncertain. However, as this truth is too dangerous to be articulated, state censorship seeks to ban the text on the pretext of its shunning of the mores of bourgeois respectability. The trial of *Boo* can also be traced to its politically uncomfortable subject. The trial has been reported by Ismat Chughtai in her memoir *Kagazi hai Pahraian*, as both Chughtai and Manto were being tried for their stories *Lihaaf*, and *Boo* respectively. In the combined obscenity trial (1944-46) held at Lahore High Court, evidence of textual obscenity was presented by the

witnesses by picking up words like 'breasts' which appear in the story. But as A. Aftab has rightly pointed out, both stories "sketch deeply the subaltern body whose articulation--or disarticulation--was considered unpalatable and threatening to the newly emerging nation-state." (Aftab, 29) Randhir is an upper caste Hindu man and a womaniser. He usually seduces Christian women, because he finds they are easier to court than Hindu girls. But as Christian women are currently unavailable and involved with the white soldiers in the time of war, he spots a young lower caste woman standing below a tree who he calls inside his house. This one encounter seems to haunt Randhir, as the stench of the 'ghatan' woman's sweat seems to pervade his senses. The story shifts to another day, when Randhir's upper caste fair bride lies next to him. For the life of him he cannot evoke a comparable passion for this woman as for the 'ghatan'. While the story has been praised for its upending of the romantic aura associated with a fair skinned woman, thus subverting conventional romantic ideas, and while Manto has been compared to D.H Lawrence for his frank portrayal of the sexed body, (Basu 1) what is interesting is that *Boo* was first tried in court on charges of sedition rather than obscenity. (Waheed, 127) Its portrayal of Christian women as being sexually available was taken as a slur against the Women's Auxiliary Corps of the British Indian Army, which was comprised of mostly Anglo-Indian Christian women. It was only later that the charge was shifted to obscenity, in an attempt the colonial state made at moral policing, in keeping with the desires of colonial India's increasingly squeamish middle classes.

Although Waheed asserts that the story "in some respects, reinforces a widespread cultural trope in India about the sexually exotic tribal woman who is at once earthy and magnetic in some otherworldly way", (Waheed 131) one must remember that the classist and casteist gaze in the story is of its protagonist Randhir's and not Manto's. Randhir as a womaniser repeatedly objectifies women in the story, whether they be Christian, or 'ghatan', or even his own bride. His attraction for the tribal woman may be seen as an attraction in Randhir's case for what is deemed impermissible and socially forbidden. While the woman is given no name, and her point of view is never put forward, except for the sudden shame in her eyes before disrobing, this is because for Randhir she is no more than an object of desire, not an autonomous subject in her own right. The charge of obscenity against the story is not ultimately about its sexual frankness, but its laying bare of the fissures of caste and class, which had hitherto remained unarticulated and inarticulable in colonial India. In the absence of a vocabulary through which the issue of cast could be addressed, the lawyers acting for the state in the trial point to the sexual connotations of words, objecting to the use of 'breasts', and other words denoting the body or the sexual act.

Thanda Gosht, *Khol Do* and *Upar*, *Neeche aur Darmiyan* were the three stories which faced trial after 1947 in the newly created state of Pakistan. *Thanda Gosht* and *Khol Do* are among the finest of Manto's partition stories. Both focus on the plight of helpless young women and make an attempt to record the unprecedented cruelty of the sexual violence which is one of the most unpalatable and heinous facts of the partition of colonial India into the nation states of India and Pakistan. Here too, Manto refuses to adhere to easy classifications of us/them. In *Thanda Gosht*, a sardar confesses to how in his state of violent lustfulness, he had ended up raping the corpse of a young Muslim girl, not realising that she had died. *Khol Do* ends with the image of an almost dead girl, who automatically loosen her salwar when she hears the words 'khol do', as a result of the repeated rapes which she has suffered at the hands of the volunteers who were supposed to be her protectors. The censorship of these stories is not on the grounds of titillating the senses, but due to the need of the new nation state to fashion an imagined history for itself

which would be built on the erasures and silences necessitated to carve a glorious national allegory. Manto was tried in 1950 in Lahore under charges of obscenity, where obscenity in section 292 of the Pakistan Penal Code is defined as any violation of 'modesty' or chastity'. Censorship was thus carried out to bring into being an ideal modern Islamic state, buttressed by a pure, hygienic and sanitised sociocultural milieu (Ahmed 41). In other words, these trials were an attempt to use the law to police the boundaries of representations of the partition. As the partition of pre independent India into the nation states of India and Pakistan saw unprecedented violence across national borders, writers from India and Pakistan recorded in fiction the mass upheaval and violent chaos for which scant archival records exist.

That Manto was seriously concerned about how the new nation of Pakistan would shape itself is clear from his preface to his volume of short stories *Yazid*, published in 1951: "How would the new cultural and social atmosphere nurture our thoughts and feelings? What would be the relationship between the state, government, community and the individual? These were issues that we needed to seriously concentrate on." (7) The question of utmost importance in the Pakistan public sphere seemed to be how one imagines a future after witnessing the carnage of partition. Ali sees Manto's post partition stories as resisting a monolithic, unilateral fashioning of the new nation in terms of a moral community of Islamic South Asian solidarity. Manto's partition stories can thus be read as representing his ambivalence and uncertainty about the consolidation of a unitary identity in the Pakistani state. (Ali 20) Manto resists through his stories the avowal of any single South Asian Muslim identity to be protected under the guardianship of the Pakistani state. His partition stories thus explore the fissures, dichotomies, frictions in the conceptions of the singular citizen subject who was the product and creation of the homogenising nationalist narrative of the State of Pakistan.

In attempting to regulate representations which did not tow the national narrative, the state and civil society were choosing to elide over representations which did not fit neatly into the pro/anti categories of the newly independent nation state.

Upar, Neeche aur Darmiyan is a playful story which explores the sexual squeamishness of the bourgeois middle classes. What Manto wishes to assert is that "performances of politeness were a farce that either hid one's indiscretions or were demonstrative of social distancing, the antithesis of intimacy." (Waheed 107) Manto gives his own accounts of his court trials in essays, including "Pānchvāñ Muqaddama", "Lazzat-e Sang" and "Zahmat-e Mehr-e Darakhshāñ," all of which were written and published in Pakistan.

Manto was accused of obscenity not only in legal trials but also by his peers. Sajjad Zaheer, a founding member of the Communist Party of Pakistan, and a part of the Progressive Writers' Movement in India and Pakistan, commented on the story "Bu": "The portrayal of the sexual perversion of a self-indulgent member of the middle-class, however realistic, is a waste of time of both writers as well as readers." (Zaheer 252) It is obvious that Zaheer chooses to respond to the sexual descriptions in the story, rather than to the nuanced expression of the dual cast/gender dynamic. In mid twentieth century India, caste discrimination was a proverbial 'elephant in the room', which was denied visibility or legitimacy or voice as being an issue. Manto's attempt to boldly address this, however, remained unmarked, as "Bu" was repeatedly denigrated on grounds of obscenity.

Calling works of literature obscene effectively ensured their being taken out of circulation through a form of social or cultural censorship. Ali argues that progressives sought to tame the conditions of the debates regarding what should the new state of Pakistan be like according to their own vision of a more egalitarian future. In doing so they used the trope of sexual deviancy to curb the chaos that they thought would ensue from “nonprogressive” literature. (Ali 20) For the communist and Marxist social formations in Pakistan, any ideology which was not based on notions of class solidarity was ‘nonprogressive’. Much as the Islamic state, these communist formations wished to curb the multiplicity and jouissance of the social, to replace it with simplistic and misleading versions of the ideal subject of the nation state. In this rationally controlled and unitarian, homogeneous, morally ordered world view, there would be no dissent or ambivalence. In its efforts to organise and discipline the social within neatly constructed binaries of pure/perverse, the state and its contingent formations sought the assistance of censorship machineries associated with the courts and the legal systems in place which had been carried over from colonial regimes of governance. Both in colonial India and postcolonial Pakistan, the machinery of censorship worked as a discursive system to police, repress and contain alterity and non-normative ways of being and thinking. Manto’s stories, in imagining the political and the social in ways which were not ideologically sanctioned by elite civil society or the state subverted and countered majoritarian narratives of progress and development.

In Foucauldian terms, censorship practices on grounds of obscenity function as a ‘norm’, i.e. as normal and normalising. Simply put, norms encourage subjects to perform in strictly prescriptive ways in order to be recognised as normal subjects. (Taylor 47) Taylor argues that certain practices become ‘normal’, and inevitable, immune to critical analysis, when by sheer repetition their arbitrariness becomes invisible. Thus, obscenity proceedings may be said to depend upon a set of nebulously perceived assumptions which are granted the stature of universal truth value. The norm of ‘purity’ functions to produce docile bodies and situate subjects in a web of disciplinary and bio power, locating them in a graded hierarchy of legitimate subjectivities on the one hand, and deviant or perverse bodies, delegated to the sphere of the ‘abnormal’ Anything labelled as ‘obscene’ then carries significations of undesirability, sickness and fruitlessness. When the ‘obscene’ is ahistorically and uncritically accepted as deserving censorship, without interrogating, contextualising and historicising the social and political regimentation which defines and decides what is labelled as obscene, the emancipatory potential and agency of non-normative counter-discourses lose their relevance and power as sites of resistance and reformation. Manto in his stories acts the part of the Foucauldian intellectual, “turning himself into the relay of local struggles”, (Artieres 224) peopling his stories with prostitutes, pimps, oversexed adolescents and the poor and the marginalised.

Thus while the attempts to censor Manto’s stories were ostensibly on grounds of their ‘obscenity’, a close reading of the stories themselves and the trials reveal that the motivation for censorship in these cases was rather the desire to preserve a status quo, to fashion a world view which would elide over the more complex nuances of the lived experience of the common man to replace it with a more sanitised, unproblematised official version; dismissing the stories under the guise of obscenity, or limiting their circulation through legal or social censorship served to mark them as being merely sexually titillating, while suppressing their subversive and liberatory agency. This is what Manto seeks to challenge as he tests the limits of what is permissible and impermissible speech and as he establishes himself as a litterateur and

intellectual who is not afraid to destabilise culturally available notions of propriety while fostering new ways of thinking about power and privilege.

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Woman-Nature Interface: An Ecofeminist Study by Dipak Giri

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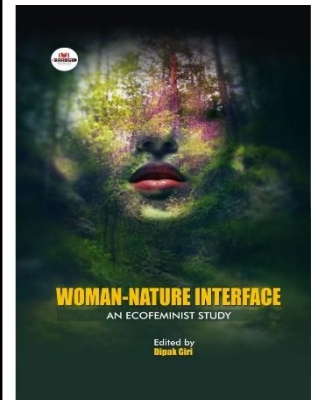
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The book *Woman-Nature Interface: An Ecofeminist Study* under review is a scholarly compilation offering a nuanced and insightful exploration of the intricate connection between woman and the natural world through the ecofeminist lens. The cover page of the book features a visually engaging design reflecting the main theme of ecofeminism and the underlying connection between women and nature. The content of the book provides comprehensive examination tracing the roots of ecofeminism and highlighting its key proponents. Meticulously structured, this collection of articles by various scholars illustrates how women's issues and environmental concerns intersect and how these intersections are addressed within the framework of ecofeminism. As a reviewer I perceive, the book presents a multifaceted examination of how the exploitation of nature and the subjugation of women are deeply intertwined. The volume comprising nineteen chapters provides a critical analysis of how patriarchal structures and environmental degradation are intertwined and how it underscores the importance of addressing these issues in tandem. The contributors explore how cultural narratives shape perceptions of both women and the environment and how these narratives can be reimagined to promote equality and sustainability.

At the outset, the book introduces the core tenet of ecofeminism - its insistence that ecological and gender issues cannot be disentangled. The argument is compelling, emphasizing that the physical environment is integral to understanding the evolution of both individual and society. The introductory chapter of the book critiques the western ecofeminist view that nature and women are inherently linked through a feminine principle. In modern times, nature has become an obstacle to man on his way to establish himself as superior so becomes an object to be dominated and to control like the women who are also thought as inferior. The book as a whole delves into the concept that both nature and women are seen as giving and

sacrificing entities since time immemorial. It also talks of material bond between nature and women in countries like India and finds this connection as complex and dynamic rather than simple. The book investigates the women and nature connect in the third world countries, reflecting how nature and women both suffer under the patriarchal social system. It is also an analysis of how the ecofeminists opine that the link between women and nature can be sustained on the basis of ideology, biology, ontology and a history of oppression. There are insightful arguments, that such portrayals reflect deep-seated cultural constructs and proposes ways to liberate both women and nature from these entrenched ideologies.

Though all the chapters of the book are important to understand women-nature parallelism, some of the chapters which I think, should be mentioned here. Mahendran U's chapter "A Multidimensional Projection of Land: A Reading of *Gone with the Wind* in the Light of War" underscores the significance of land and its connection to human identity, while also addressing the destructive impact of warfare on the environment. This discussion provides a poignant reminder of the broader ramifications of environmental degradation giving it a garb of global issue. The chapter written by Jyoti Biswas explores the harmony between women and nature and contrasts it with the disruptive impact of patriarchal systems. The narrative of Mahua and her relationship with nature is particularly striking, serving as a poignant illustration of the nurturing potential of this relationship, which is starkly contrasted with the destructive force of patriarchal dominance exemplified by Homra. The chapter written by Parimal Kumar paints a grim picture of a desolate world marred by environmental imbalance and patriarchal control. It reveals how such imbalances exacerbate the suffering of women, restricting their opportunities and leading to perpetual hardship. Next Shantanu Siuli's chapter "A Re-conceiving and Re-visioning of both the Feminism and the Environmental Ethics as the Power and Promise of Ecofeminism: A Detailed Study" emphasizes the ecofeminist argument that various forms of violence against women are intrinsically linked to the disregard for the environment. It reinforces the central thought of the book, highlighting the pervasive contempt that underpins both environmental and gender injustices. On the same thread, the article on Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* written by Manas Barik continues this exploration, focusing on how the earth is symbolically represented as a female entity in third-world contexts. It critiques the exploitation of this symbolic 'Mother Earth' within patriarchal capitalist societies, drawing parallels to the exploitation of women.

The book as a whole delves into the clandestine connections between ecofeminists and nature, exploring their resistance against patriarchal and moralistic constraints. It examines how religious and cultural narratives perpetuate these constraints, and how ecofeminists strive to overcome them. The book also talks about third world countries where Earth is represented as a female Mother earth and Virgin land. Both suffer exploitation and violence at the hand of patriarchal capitalist society. Apart from this, the book also depicts that the nexus between nature and woman has been the focus of ancient Indian literature. The discussion on implication of feminization of agriculture, financial independence of women are all thought provoking representing new challenges faced by women concerning their social status in present times.

The scholarly article by the academic and writer Dipak Giri who is also the editor of the book throws light on age old struggle of women to free them from male domination and their attempts to vitiate age old gender binary nature/ culture dichotomy. The wide range of all the topics and various perspectives enrich the reader's understanding of the complex woman-nature interface.

Strengths of the Book:

The book's strength lies in its diversity of voices and perspectives, providing a multifaceted view of ecofeminism. The tapestry of varied topics and issues cover a wide range focusing on mythology, religious, spiritual, cultural, social, economic and current global perspective making the book a compendium of information on ecofeminism. In addition to this, the interdisciplinary nature of the compilation presents holistic exploration of ecofeminism, incorporating insights from literature, cultural studies, sociology and environmental science. The book offers valuable insights for scholars, activists and the scholars interested in the intersection of these fields.

Critical Overview:

The academic nature of the book may present a challenge for the readers unfamiliar with ecofeminist jargon. The wide range of topics might leave some aspects underexplored and cannot delve deep into specific issues.

Conclusion:

Overall the book is a significant contribution to the feminist and environmental literature, offering a rich tapestry of insights into the interconnectedness of gender and environmental concerns. The breadth of the topics is commendable and thus the book stands as a significant testament to the relevance of ecofeminist discourse.

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A review of Christian Education and Democracy in India edited by George Thadathil

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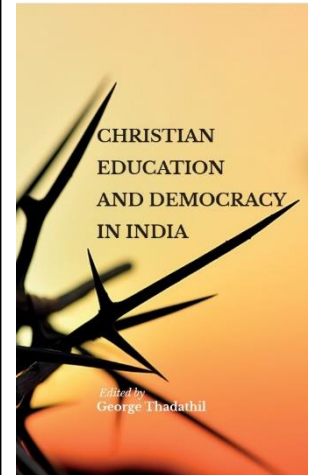
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The Editor of the book 'Christian Education and Democracy in India', Prof. George Thadathil, former Principal, Salesian College, Darjeeling, brings forth arguments in support of Christian Education's role in promoting democracy in India and the recognition it deserves. As an academician and independent researcher, his perceptively opportune observations are reflected in the planning and organization of the chapters.

This edited book is a cluster of scholarly works by reputed research scholars, educators and educational administrators across India sharing the same vision and mission. The title of the book is assertive and self-explanatory. The book is thoughtfully divided into four segments. The book narrates the journey of Christian Education from the past to the present age, leading to the possible future in Modern India. The book begins with a Dedication Page which is a humble gesture by the Editor for all those who have been a part of and have experienced Christian Education in its varied forms. The homage paid by the Editor in the beginning of the book is a very humbling experience for any reader.

This book contains a Foreword by Prof. Peter Ronald DeSouza, former Director, Indian Institute of Advanced Studies, Shimla. The Foreword situates the contributions of Christian Education and offers reasons for it needing serious engagement by scholars and those in educational administration setting the promising tone of the book.

The Preface of the book provides the context that guided the Editor to take up a work of this magnitude. The book helps in understanding the context (vision) which led to the development of the Indian Constitution while appreciating diverse perspectives with a single motive of the development of the people into a true democratic country. The Editor, upholding a similar spirit and vision, welcomed diverse perspectives from a cross section of people in bringing this book to its fruition with the unwavering motive of highlighting the

relentless contribution of Christian Education towards the making of Indian Democracy. The book with its objectively written introduction providing a bird's eye view to each of the chapters gives a good start to a scholarly work of this caliber.

The four segments contain the four core areas reflecting the purpose of the book. Each segment leads to the other. The book begins with a theoretical frame (philosophy) leading to purposive interventions (practical actions) that take to authentication (proof) and finally to the existential rationale for the persistence and far-sightedness of Christian Education in India. As a reader, I was personally intrigued by the use of the term 'purposive intervention' in the title of Part II of the book. Intervention is called for when there is a pressing need/ a pressing issue that seeks resolution. The Editor has rightly presented the pressing need for Christian Education in promoting the cause of Secularism and Democracy in Modern India.

The book is inclusive in nature reflecting how Christian Education has promoted and continues to promote the cause of inclusiveness which is pertinent in carrying forward the cause of Indian Democracy. While the book appears to be written from Christian Education perspective, it reflects an extensive body of knowledge as vital testimonials of the selfless motive of Christian Education to serve the Indian citizens irrespective of their caste, creed, gender, religion, language and economic background. Christian Educational Institutions have been a home to the downtrodden and the abandoned. The prime focus has been on holistic and multidisciplinary education. There is no exaggeration in saying that Christian Education appreciates and values India's rich cultural heritage, its languages and arts and students at such institutes are motivated to learn more about India through their curricular, co-curricular and extension activities. In my opinion, this book will serve well as a reference book for students not only from Education Discipline but also other disciplines to understand the education system of our country and its development from a broader perspective. The Part III of this book is the crux and demands the attention of the readers. The Editor has justified his submission by providing readers with real-time examples.

Among the reasons for Christian Education rising to prominence the chapter on 'Dalit Appreciation of Christian Education' by Praveen Perumalla under Part I of the book gives us an idea on why Christian Education is here to stay. Christian Education is a service to mankind without any discriminatory motive and its potent impact is reflected in the demand among common people in favor of Christian Education as understood from the case study-based chapter. Christian Education's attempt to remain progressive with a forward-thinking is reflected in the chapter by Tom Kunnunkal which speaks about reaching out to the masses through Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Vocational Training. Author Pius V. Thomas stresses upon Christian Identity achieved through Christian Educational Institutions' long-standing hustle to keep pace with and adapt to the changing time and situation without compromising on the vision and mission. The Indian identity presented in the book is that of a democratic and secular people encountering modernity and reframing it to their temperament and need. The book offers a philosophical perspective besides its apparent constructive and pragmatic stands.

The art on the cover page speaks volumes and reflects the hardships endured by Christian Education and the missionaries in the process of leaving an indelible mark in the society for the greater goal of mankind and in establishing an egalitarian society. The font size of the book, the paper quality, the cover pages, the color contrast are all added bonus and reasons to give this book a read and share with other academicians to understand the herculean contributions of Christian Education to the education system of our nation. The

language and writing style of the book are lucid and precise. The pricing of the book is reasonable considering the priceless knowledge that this book holds within.

There is a mindful acknowledgement of all those who helped in the process which is praiseworthy and it reflects academic integrity. The contributors, who are esteemed academicians with years of experience and credentials, add to the authenticity and richness of the book. Each and every chapter written by the respective authors are essential in understanding Christian Education and its Contribution for having helped create a Democratic India and for its continued preservation and sustenance.

The book under review gives hope and builds confidence in trusting Christian Education and its dedication to a cause - a Democratic India. I therefore recommend it to scholars across disciplines to give this book a mindful read.