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Editorial

I am happy to announce that the 2022 issue of Journal ofWomen's Studies is now published.

Women's Studies Journal has persistently focused on problems related to women, gender, sexuality, caste, and literature since its first modest publication, in an effort to represent the concerns of repressed women, and women in general, who are usually beleaguered.

This issue of Women Studies Journal draws attention to the diversity of women's social and political realities, centralizes women's experiences, particularly those whose social situations have not been researched upon or altered by socio-political movements. The multidisciplinary essays make an effort to investigate gendered experiences from new perspectives. Meanwhile the journal has grown, it now has an editorial board and an advisory board and the essays are now sent for peer review.

At the heart of feminism is the fight against sexiest oppression. The objective of feminism is not to promote any particular race, class, or a group of women. It does not promote an edifice that will privilege women over other genders. It incorporates education and awareness that have the potential to significantly alter each of our lives. It is not a way of life or a prefabricated identity. Instead, it confronts identity politics by providing investigative tools that broaden our understanding of who we are, deepen our awareness of inter-subjectivity, and strengthen our connection to collective reality. The Journal of Women Studies seeks to make a small contribution to this field.

Our history is a combination of conquests and conversions. History books and mass media overwhelmingly record stories of men's achievements from which women are largely absent. To use the historian's cliché, absence of evidence is not always evidence of absence. The participation of women in the socio-cultural history of nation formation have been overlooked, or thought not fit enough to be archived, and if archived, they were not brought to discussion and thus their contributions overlooked. 'The Narratives of Displaced Women: Journey from Assam to Siliguri (1947-1991)', 'Contribution of Muslim Women's Participation in Non-cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement

with special focus on Bengal', and Shades of South Asian Women in Rasheed Jahan's Writings: Navigating Patriarchies, Spaces, Regime Control, and Colonialism' are attempts to fill in the gaps in history and serve as a reminder of the contributions and involvements of women in the history of the nation.

The word "power" is the most noticeable aspect of the term "empowerment". Power is one of the most distinct and perhaps the most contested concept in social theory. Steven Lukes in Power: A Radical View (1974) claimed that the perception of power is fundamentally contested and inherently evaluative. Nalia Kabeer in Reversed Realities: Gendered Hierarchy in Development Thought (1994) distinguishes between various conceptions of power that are crucial to the idea of empowerment. She draws a distinction between 'power to' and 'power over' and 'power within', that is equivalent to the idea of having control, having control over others and having control within oneself. The ability to affect a situation's result in opposition to the preferences of other actors is viewed as having power, and 'power over' which is strongly related to liberal theories on decision-making processes. In this understanding, 'power' is exclusively considered in terms of human decision-making while the structures and processes through which decision-making occurs are largely ignored. The struggle for control, as well as the question of who is making decisions and what should be decided, must also be addressed in the discussions on the process to empowerment. "No response is a response": Interrogating 'Silence' and Woman question in Select Indian Tea Narratives" discusses the power of silence.

While statistics points out the need for women empowerment in order to balance out society's imbalance, women with disabilities — who are commonly overlooked — face double oppression. They frequently lack access to basic services, have less social, political, and economic opportunities, and may be more vulnerable to poverty and social marginalization. 'Ignored Voices: A General Overview on the Life of the Women with Disabilities in India' talks about women with disabilities.

Gender politics in Girish Karnad's writing are very well expressed through his woman characters in his plays. Contrary to the majority of male authors of his generation, Karnad made it a point to give his female characters more than just a voice; they were integral to the progression of the plot and to

what Karnad was attempting to convey to us about the world in which we live and an idea of the improved world we may live in. Even when they are placed inside the oppressive limits of patriarchal organizations, Karnad's women are independent in their thought and can assert their agency. 'Subjugation and Emancipation: Women Characters in the Select Works of Girish Karnad' discusses the portrayal of women characters in the select plays of Girish Karnad.

Over the past 40 years, the global popularity of Japanese visual culture has grown exponentially, making it a multifaceted cultural phenomenon. Since the 1980s, manga (Japanese comics) and anime (Japanese animation) have been incredibly popular among the young adult populace. Superflat and Post-Gender: A Case Study of Female Bodies in Ghost in the Shell and Paprika' studies the female body in Anime and Manga with reference to Mamoru Oshii's 1995 cyberpunk masterpiece Ghost in the Shell, and Satoshi Kon's 2006 film Paprika.

When we stop accepting the oversimplified explanations of discrimination against girls and women within a family or within an institution, or in society at large, we start to look at the ingrained patterns of existing domination in the society and also at how we contribute to their upkeep and perpetuation. Some groups who are exploited and oppressed are frequently pushed by people in positions of authority to believe that their circumstances are hopeless and that there is little they can do to alter the pattern of dominance. These groups have been socialized to believe that the only acceptable response to hegemonic power can be silence and passive acceptance of their situations. They are made to believe that their passive reaction is in no way threatening to their existence and rather contributes to the stability of the structure which is essential for their survival. When we stop accepting the oversimplified explanations we soon realize that this kind of strategy does not help to alleviate their oppression or domination. Only after we comprehend the structure of domination can we think of new possibilities and work towards them. Women's Studies Journal offers a platform for expressing such viewpoints.

I extend my sincere thanks to the editorial board of Women's Studies, University of North Bengal, to the authorities of the University of North Bengal for their support and encouragement, to the members of the Advisory Committee, and the Academic Board of Women's Studies for their valuable inputs and support. I take this opportunity to thank all the contributors for their essays.

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I

The Narratives of Displaced Women: Journey from Assam to Siliguri (1947-1991)

Sweety Paul

Abstract: *Siliguri became the center of attraction for a bulk of Bengali immigrants from Assam to resettle in the new region. The extraordinary population-growth of the town especially during the second half of the twentieth century indicates the influx of the evacuees from Assam into the realm. After independence Siliguri Sub-division was confronted with unusual pace in its development. Severe lucrative scope of secondary and tertiary sectors in the town favored the displaced people to get engaged in this new commercial field of the metropolis. The people commenced their new journey in a new way in the burg through their own initiatives. These massive number of people were mainly due to the East Bengali Hindu Refugee* Scheme *of West Bengal in newly independent India. Unfortunately, in reality they could not find any kind of facilities for their resettlement neither by the Central Government nor by the State Government. A voluminous number of evicted women had to go through many hazards and trauma in their lives. The words of these victimized women require special attention in understanding the truth about their struggle for existence in Siliguri after escaping from Bangladesh at first and then from Assam.*

Key Words: *1947 Partition, East-Bengali Hindu Refugee, Bongal Khedao Andolon, Displaced Women, Resettlement.*

Introduction:

The flaw of the Partition made a number of East Bengali Hindus homeless overnight. The repeated waves of the immigration of these Bengali Hindus shook the Assamese society again and again. It is to be noted that the Assamese population already had their grievances against the Bengali dwellers in Assam and these never-ending infiltrations of the East-Bengali refugees into the region gave momentum to it. The ignominious Asamiya-Bengali conflict took a new turn through the phases of language movement and the notorious Bongal Khedao Andolon [drive out the Bengalis from Assam]. The Bengali community

found themselves impotent to resist the unwanted blow as the situation was degrading promptly and they were searching for a new place to survive. Bengali women living in post-colonial Assam lived a life of tremendous misery. They became the common targets for both the leaders of the above-said Andolan and Assamese criminals. At this phase an enormous number of these Bongal Khedao Andolon-displaced people found a new epicenter, the foothill town Siliguri as their new hope of living. This forced-migration from Assam into Siliguri made rampant changes in the city's demographic profile. This essay intends to review the sorrow, the hazards and hardships, and the mental trauma, the women faced during their first displacement from East Pakistan or Bangladesh and during their second displacement from Assam to Siliguri. It records their personal experiences through their words collected through interviews (structured and unstructured).

Bengali Population Movement into Assam Prior to 1947 and after 1947 :

After taking the administrative responsibility of Assam in 1826 the colonial rulers of India immediately initiated to employ the Bengalis for their administrative purposes which led to a massive immigration of Bengali officials in colonial Assam, particularly from Sylhet district of present Bangladesh. In addition to this there was also continual inflow of "tea garden coolies" from vicinage Bengal from 1880 to 1930 (Dikshit, Jutta Dikshit, 1995, p.459). A bulk of Bengali peasants especially from Mymensingh district also resettled in Assam. "The sequential process was to establish their foothold somewhere, reclaim wasteland, cultivate and develop their own permanent settlements. These immigrants never returned and settled in Assam" (Dikshit, Jutta Dikshit,1995, p.459). C.S Mullan, Census Superintendent of colonial-Assam commented on the migration from East Bengal to Assam as "the only thing I can compare it to be the mass movement of a large body of ants".[1] It can be said that Assam reformed into 'a kind of extended Bengali district to the western region to take advantage of the available lands' at the end of the 19th century (Ghoshal, 2021, p.122). The influx of the Bengali Hindus remained same as the Partition of India in 1947 that tremendously affected the East Pakistani Hindu refugees and the several waves of refugees hit Assam thoroughly through many decades. Besides the infamous Noakhali massacre, a number of other obscure incidents

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[1] Report of the Deputy Commissioner, 1937, Nowgong on the Immigrant, Report of the Line System Committee: Question of that District,p.21.

like Soneswar and Habibganj in 1949, the persecution of the Hajongs in North Mymensingh[2] were enough to spread fear among the minority people from the-then East Pakistan or present Bangladesh. In 1964 severe anti-Hindu Riots were conducted in East Pakistan while these people pursued their only ray of hope in the immigration from Eastern Pakistan to Assam or West Bengal, India (Hazarika, 2000, p.191). In addition to this after the 1965 India-Pakistan War, the East Pakistan Government passed the Enemy Property (Land and Building) Administration and Disposal Order in 1966 which instigated the Bengali Hindus to emigrate from East Pakistan or Bangladesh (Trivedi, 2007, Part xiv). According to Professor Abul Barkhat of Dhaka University 5,000,000 Hindus lost 2,000,000 acres of land and nearly 40 percent of the Hindu families found themselves victimized by the Act[3]. After 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War hordes of East Bengalis immigrated into Assam to be relieved from the repression by the Pakistani military[4]. The flow of continuous immigration continued up to the 1980s which prompted an anti-immigration movement in Assam.

Mapping the Violence against the Bengalis in Post-Colonial Assam:

The continuous immigration of Bengalis not only brought significant changes in the demographic scenario of Assam but also changed the socio-cultural-political spheres of the state. As the Bengalis found themselves advantageous in the spheres of education, job-opportunity and business in the state through the colonial period the Assamese people got scared about their holdings in various realms of Assam. They had been going through an identity crisis which gradually took the form of resentment, hostility, and led to uprisings during the post-colonial decades. Therefore, this time the Bengalis perceived themselves unsecured in the state and became bound to flee to neighboring Bengal.

The demographic profile of Assam had a predominant Bengali population against whom the host Assamese society had socio-cultural-economic rivalry continued for almost a century (Sharma, 2011, p. Introduction). It is needless to say that the attitude of this Assamese society towards the voluminous

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[2] Baghaiwalla R.P., 1951, Census of India 1951, Part 1-A, Prefatory Note on Assam, Monipur and Tripura of Vol xii.

[3] Prothom Alo, 2004, Newspaper, November, 4, viewed on April 20, 2020 at http://en.prothom-alo.com/.

[4] Upadhay R., 2001, Work Permit to Infiltrators: need for caution, South Asia Analysis Group viewed on July 21, 2020 at http://www.southasiananalysis.org/%5Cpap...er 248.html.

number of refugees was entirely different than that of the other refugee-absorbing states like West Bengal and North-East India (Hussain, 1993, p.165). In all respects the Bengali refugees were assumed as 'irritants' in Assam (Dutta, 2013, p.103).

The Assamese were eagerly waiting to get rid of the Bengali assimilation and they also felt a little relieved with the consequence of Sylhet Referendum in 1947[5].

But the irony of history is that the Bengalis in camouflage of 'Refugees' again entered into Assam which provoked the hostility, this time in a severe manner, amongst the host-community[6]. The 'Bengali Conspiracy' theory became popular among the post-independence Assamese intelligentsia (Sharma, 2011, p. 290). The Assamese Bengali language politics took its utmost shape in the form of 'Medium of Instruction Movement' of 1972[7]. The rhetorical slogan of the insurrection was – "Bangladeshi, illegal immigrant, and foreigner" (Baruah, 2020, p. 64). The anti-foreigner insurgency took place for six years (1979-1985) in the state which can be identified as the definitive in the exodus of the Bengali Hindus from Assam (Bhaumik, 2009, p. 133).

Towards Siliguri, Search for a Second Home:

These displaced Bengali communities eagerly felt the need to resettle in Siliguri as soon as possible as the importance of it as a commercial metropolis was perceived by them. Siliguri became an exceptionally important place from geographical aspect as well as the political and geographical scenario of post-colonial India. These displaced families heartily wanted a space where they would not have to face any social intolerance or rivalry again in their lives. The politically stable and calm atmosphere of Siliguri played as the pull factor for immigration of these people while the troublesome condition pushed them from Assam. The evacuees initiated their new-journey in the town and assimilated themselves in the existing society of Darjeeling Terai.

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[5] 'Viceroy's Personal Report No. 13, dated 18th July, 1947', File No. L/PO/6/123, Pt-1, Neg 9850 (1-105), IOR.
[6] File No. V/24/1033:1942-1947, IOR.
[7] Weiner Myron, 1993, 'Rejected People and Unwanted Migrants in South Asia', Economic and Political Weekly 28(34), p.1742.

Siliguri has often been considered as a migrant's town. The transfiguration from a tiny thorp to over-populated city becomes the striking feature of Siliguri as a town of Darjeeling district. In the words of Samir Kumar Das, Siliguri is a "town in transit" with the implication that it is the city that moves with its moving population and loses fast its potential of becoming anyone's home conventionally understood as the relatively stable abode where the family lives like what Hegel calls "an individual" (Das, 2011, p.80). "The transit nature of this migrant city – in the dual sense of being transitional and transitory- is not an effect merely of its fugacious daytime workforce. It is an effect produced by the historical fact that waves of migrants have over the decades found a home in Siliguri, be it the Marwari settlers, old and new, the plantation workers of the nineteenth century, the partition refugees of mid-twentieth century or the recent flows of "multi-collared" labour drawn by the lure of "neoliberal lucre" (Ghosh, 2016, p.8). Prof. Das also recognizes that "According to a sample survey conducted in 1990," "amongst the immigrants, 60 per cent come from East Pakistan/ Bangladesh, while 17 per cent come from Bihar and 8 per cent happen to be Marwaris mainly controlling the wholesale trade. The rest 15 per cent come from South Bengal or Assam" (Das, 2011, p.80). It is also to be noted that Siliguri not only expanded itself but also it gave birth to multiple number of suburbs around the town- "There were 500 neighboring villages and local hamlets around the vicinity of Siliguri town that were became dependent on it for economic and various other reasons. The continuous urban flourishment of this town was not only concentrated within the area of Siliguri Municipal Corporation, rather the areas upto 10 miles radius like Matigara, Shivmandir and Bagdogra has been included under the greater urban agglomeration of the Siliguri town" (Bhattacharjee, 2014, p.43).

The population profile of Siliguri was not such highly expanded in the pre independence period but in post-independence era Siliguri has been identified with amazing population-growth due to non-stop inflow of immigrants. Although majority of these evacuees had to immigrate directly from East Pakistan or Bangladesh to Assam due to its vicinity with East Pakistan or Bangladesh at the first phase and then they again had to leave Assam because of the disturbances within it and decide to immigrate into Siliguri. A voluminous number of this massive influx was Bongal Khedao Andolon-displaced Bengali families of Assam. Due to the miseries, and fear that arose in the minds of the Bengali denizens of Assam a bulk of them found their new settlement in the Siliguri Sub-division. Naturally a question appears why did those evacuees select

Siliguri or why did they choose to re-settle here? As an answer to this question, it can be said that several pull factors acted as crucial role in this context. These pull factors may be identified as the geo-strategic location of Siliguri, the job-opportunities, the commercial importance of it. It is true that the definite number of these displaced-peoples could not be counted but it is beyond doubt that the bulk of these immigrants from Assam since the 1960s took their new shelter in Siliguri (Saha, 2004, p.33). The Bongal Khedao Andolon caused a number of continuous waves of immigration into the city which changed the town's demographic profile several times. With this massive influx the town enlarged itself by leaps and bounds.

Women and Bongal Khedao Andolan: A Narrative of Displacement:

The forced-migration of Bengalis from Assam into Siliguri made drastic changes in the town which helped it to gain in importance in the socio-economic-political panorama of West Bengal. The Bengalis from Assam tried utmost to be assimilated in the prevailing society of Siliguri. To protect themselves from unwarranted arrests, looting, rape, hazards, turbulence and other forms of physical and mental hardships, and organized killing, huge numbers of Bengalis had to leave Assam and migrated for their survival in a new town, new society. It is to be noted that the Bengalis of Darjeeling Terai region also showed their agitation against the Bongal Khedao Andolon. The people protested while Mr. Hareshwar Goswami, the Minister of the-then Assam arrived at Siliguri Junction on 9th July 1960 (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p.42). On that day the agitators set fire to an ambassador car, death of five people in firing took place leading to an injury of 10-12 people that made the calm Siliguri town agitated. People observed "Bangla Hartal" in the town on 16th July to show their protest against the repulsion of Bengalis from Assam (Chattopadhyay, 2000, p.40). The Bengali evacuees after leaving Assam rebuilt their new residence in the different corners of Darjeeling Terai region like–Dabgram Unnayan (1, 2), Deshbandhu Para, Baghajatin Colony, Subhash Nagar, BBD Colony, Adarsho Nagar Colony, Notun Para, Jyoti Nagar (2), Pati Colony, Sukanto Pally, Swami Nagar Colony, Panchanoi Colony, Lichubagan Colony, Santoshi Nagar Colony, Prantik Pally (Chakraborty, 2015, p.231). The series of interviews with them brought to the light the qualms of these people and revealed that they were both the victims of Partition of India and Bongal Khedao Movement.

A member of a Bengali Hindu family in newly created East Pakistan Dipali Das (Personally Interviewed at Hakim Para, Siliguri on 08/11/2020) had to first leave her own primitive birthplace and then her family took refuge in adjoining state of India, Assam initially. Her father Dr. Nagendra Chandra Das also spent his childhood at Bajrajogini village in Bikrampur District, Dacca of East Pakistan. After 1947 they had to take shelter in India. She recalls that her father had to join Hatibari Tea-Estate Hospital, Rangapara, Assam in 1952 in newly independent India as a Doctor. In 1953 he opened Nowgong Pharmacy at Nowgong. But their apparently peaceful life suddenly began to be ill effected by the political insurgencies in Assam during 1960s. During the Official Language Movement in 1960 unfortunately her father was attacked by a "Chaku" (pen knife) on his chest. Her family along with herself also witnessed the killing of a renowned Bengali reporter in front of them. She describes that in 1972 her father was invited to join a meeting supporting the favor of Assamese language. She narrates that there was also a demand in the Nowgong Bengali Girls' High School that the girls from class vii would wear the traditional dress of Assam i.e. "Mekhla" instead of Saree. Her father was also threatened that if he did not join the meeting the Nowgong Bengali society would be burnt. Her father promptly decided to leave Assam to protect the future of his family. Dipali Das also says that she along with her sister used to hide themselves in the 'Goyal ghar' (cattle shed) at night for a number of days. Her family fled to take asylum at 'Bangali Para' (The Colony of the Bengali dwellers). She yelled out to say that they used to hear from the Bengali rescuers of the colony–"aschhe, aschhe" (coming, they are coming). Her father had to sell his house, clinic, car at nominal value to Dr. Barkakoti. She describes with grief that the Nowgong Pharmacy was transformed into Barkakoti Clinic within a few days in front of them and Dr. N. C. Das's house was transformed into Barkakoti Nursing Home. To remain alive, they immigrated to Siliguri in the year 1971 and her father set up 'Das Medical Hall' at Bidhan Road, Siliguri. Unfortunately, her family had to go through the traumatic experiences of majority Hindu - Muslims problem in East Pakistan at the first phase and then they again confronted the Assamese-Bengali rivalry in Assam.

A lady compared her situation with the Hindu refugees of East Pakistan as her family had to leave their home in Assam to flee from the socio-political socio-political tensions. She felt sorry as she perceived "Ami amar pranta Nowgong-te fele chole esechhi" (I left my heart and soul in Nowgong).

Mitra Das (Personally Interviewed at Church Road, Siliguri on 07/11/2020) remembered the black days of Assam disturbances. She saw how the Assamese agitation made the apparently calm city into an untamed one. During the chaos of Language Movement, the slogans like "Bangali hathao" (Drive out the Bengalis), "Ahomiya Bahako Mul Baha Koriba Lagibo" (Asamiya language should be the main language of the state) flared up the atmosphere of the city. She remembered that the agitators threw big bolders aiming at the window-glass of their house. The anarchy in 1972 made her family bound to leave Assam. She discusses that her elder sister had to discontinue her study due to her mother's sickness who became traumatized during Assam disturbances. She remembered that she started her education life again from Siliguri Girls' High School where she was admitted in the middle of the session in 1973 and initially was very shy and lonesome as she was teased by her classmates because she could not pronounce 'A' properly. As a result of childhood life in Assam her pronunciation of 'A' was like 'O' and her language seemed like "Bangal" (the language of the Bengali people of East Pakistan). She used to be scolded by her teachers in school for this reason and she gradually rectified herself. She told while giving her interview that though the city remained to her as a "Praner Shohor" (the city very close to her heart), but still today she is scared to remember the Nowgong-days. She has suffered a lot from trauma and depression due to the displacement.

Another women-evacuee Shampa Roy (Personally interviewed at Sevoke Road, Siliguri on 10/11/2020) expresses her sorrow at how partition did not only make sections of undivided India, the Hindu- Muslim division but it also divided innumerable Hindu families. At first her in-law's family went Assam but they could not reside there forever and became a Bongal Khedao Andolon displaced family. She discussed how her husband is a rich businessman of Siliguri, he belonged to Assam whereas his forefathers immigrated into Assam from Satgaon, Bikrampur, Dacca after the Partition. Through the linkage with their relatives they resettled at Golaghat, Upper Assam first. But due to the notorious Assam disturbances vividly in 1971 her family had to move to Siliguri. She describes how they had been financially annoyed by the ULFA and that her elder brother-in-law Dasmohun Roy, was kidnapped by ULFA. Only after providing the demand-money they could leave Assam and they readily immigrated to Siliguri in 1989. In Siliguri her family had to struggle a lot to start hardware business at Sevoke Road before settling peacefully here.

Chhanda Mukherjee (Personally Interviewed at Milan Pally, Siliguri on 14/11/2020) came to Siliguri for resettlement in 1982. One biased incident also needs to be mentioned in this regard that only for being a non-Assamese a Bengali's name was cut from the job-list in Asssam (as reported) though the Bengali person had ranked first in the examination. Her elder brother Samiran Mukherjee faced such discriminations during their days in Assam. She resided in Jamunamukh of Nowgong district, Assam, for nearly 35 years and directly experienced the violence conducted by the Assamese anti-Bengali groups. Their house was set on fire. She with her entire family had to pass seven days beside the railway-lines. For a week they used to eat only boiled arum. All of her sisters had to hide themselves behind cattle-shed. Her family came to Siliguri to get relief from such turmoil in Assam and her father joined as the Supervisor of a tea estate nearby Siliguri.

As many of these displaced people left Assam without any of their possessions these families had to pass through long hardship in their resettlement in this new town. They shared their experience about the Assamese annoyance against the Bengalis.

Nanibala Majumdar (Presonally Interviewed at Mahananda Para, Siliguri on 04/11/2020) originally belonged to Noakhali District of East Pakistan, she immigrated to Assam in 1968. She stayed in Assam for 20 years and her father used to work as an Assistant Manager at Kulikuchi Tea Estate in Nowgong suburbs. Unfortunately, the Assam agitation compelled them to migrate again. The Assamese threatened to burn their abode and they took shelter behind the Kulikuchi hummock for three days. Fortunately, the Assam Military Force rescued them and they got the chance to migrate to Siliguri. Here her father joined as the Manager in Saraswatipur Tea Estate near Salugara.

It is known through the interviews that the cordial connection among the relatives or the neighbors earlier residing in the same locality in East Pakistan had played a crucial role in the migration in both cases of Assam and Siliguri. In this context Prabha Aich (Personally Interviewed at Raja Rammohun Roy Road, Siliguri on 05/11/2020) an evacuee from East Pakistan to Assam was largely helped by her elder brother-in-law Late Jogesh Chandra Aich to resettle in Siliguri. After partition she along with her husband settled at Lamding of Nowgong district of Brahmaputra valley in Assam. But there the Assam disturbances in 1960s had already begun. In 1962 she with her husband, Balaram Aich came to Siliguri and

gradually her husband started 'New Variety Stores' at Hill Cart Road at only 30 Rupees rent per month.

People facing hazards by the different anti-foreigner parties of Assam were compelled to leave Assam. Shilpi Das (Personally Interviewed at Deshbandhu Para, Siliguri on 17/11/2020) recollected her childhood memory at the time of giving her interview. Earlier her father Mr. Gauranga Das established his own sweet-store 'Mamata Sweet Centre' after the name of his mother and also initiated his clothing business 'Shilpi Dresses' after the name of his daughter. 'Shilpi Dresses 'was set up at Dhemaji in Upper Assam in 1979. Shilpi says that the business of her father was extremely hampered by the ongoing Bongal Khedao Movement in Assam. Many local leaders of ULFA became nuisance for their family and her father's business as they paid nothing after having food and buying cloths from his shop. Her father readily decided to resettle in Siliguri for the sake of his family and started a new business with his lump sum amount. But here he failed to continue his merchandise activities. Shilpi describes that she and her brother, Dipankar Das went through extreme difficulties in their study in the Bengali-medium schools of Siliguri as they had earlier studied in Assamiya-medium school of Assam. Thus they spent their childhood days in extreme harassment due to the Assam disturbances.

The Sylhet Referendum drastically changed the lives of the Hindus of the district. Many Hindu 'Sylhetti' families had faced robberies which were mainly conducted by the terrorist groups and they were also beaten and threatened to leave their abode. They had no chance to live furthermore in East Pakistan and being compelled they left their home, agricultural land and their possessions. Mrs. Usha Paul (Personally Interviewed at Hill Cart Road, Siliguri on 29/11/2020) a 'Sylhetti' lady spent her childhood in East Pakistan. Her family also could not remain untouched by the aftermaths of Partition. She with her husband migrated to Guwahati in 1962. One by one all of her family members could immigrate to Cachhar district of Barak valley of Assam as it was adjacent to their earlier residence at Dawpara village, Habiganj Thana of Sylhet district. However, her husband, Late Biresh Chandra Paul was offered to move forward for Siliguri where the construction of Indian Oil Pipeline was going on. Gradually in the 1960s 'Mahananda Stores' at Airview More, Hill Cart Road was established by him. Mrs. Paul thoroughly narrates their hardships in their twice displacement.

Conclusion:

The forced-migration of these women reveals one truth that they bear the scars both of Partition of India at the first phase and the Bongal Khedao Andolon in the second phase. These women were in a double bind. Firstly, they always became the soft targets of the criminals as the minorities in East Pakistan or Bangladesh from the religious perspective and in addition to this the other reason of their harassment was because of their female existence. These women shared their painful experiences which brought out their tremendous trauma and stinging of sufferings. Their appalling experiences cannot be shared here. Many of these women also could not complete their nominal study. It is woeful that till now they cannot forget the violence they experienced during partition and the embarrassing situations they faced. Besides this, it is also true that they also cannot forget their childhood sweet memories of their native abodes which was in present Bangladesh. Whenever they meet any of the Partition-displaced Bengalis belonging to their native residential area now in Bangladesh they spontaneously start to speak in their indigenous 'Bangal' language. These women heartily try to follow their intrinsic customs and rituals in any of their social occasions which show their core respect and love for their traditions. But with this it is to be noted that the next generation of these displaced-Bengali families are not equally respectful towards their language, customs and rituals as their elder generation. This study was conducted to find out that women of the Partition-refugee families had to go through sufferings that was both mental and physical through structured and unstructured interviews, through conversations with them for data collection for this paper.

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II

Emancipation and Empowerment of Women – Barriers and Challenges

Sayantani Roy

'It is perfectly natural for the future woman to feel indignant at the limitations posed upon her by her sex. The real question is not why she should reject them: the problem is to understand why she accepts them'

-Simone de Beauvior, *The Second Sex*

Since time immemorial, women have been held in the shackles of mediocrity under the guise of domesticity with the notion of inferiority complex silently embedded in their psyche. The invariably assertive surroundings forcibly made an inevitable resolution to push her down the same path that her matriarchal lineage committed to ages since. The fear of obligation and guilt persisted in following her in the subsequent time, no matter how hard a woman attempted to break free from the confines that had been deftly built to keep her in place. The terrifying outburst of self-criticism is a product of the generational transmission of a mental process that endorses patriarchy and relies on the idea that women are in fact a subordinate category incapable of being left on their own. A key component of feminist definition and politics is empowerment, which became a buzzword in the 1970s among development agencies, is not without obstacles and challenges.

Keywords- *Women, Rights, Empowerment, Femininity*

Introduction:

The women's suffrage movement is where the conversation about women's rights first gained traction. Women traditionally grew up with the ambiguous message that they lack the mental and physical fortitude that is usually appreciated in their male counterparts. Women were led to believe that they lacked the physical and mental strength that were almost always associated with masculinity, for instance, virility has traditionally been the standard to judge the men. It is effectively professed as a quality that is valuable to inculcate since it is seen as a way indicate power. If femininity exists in this place as a sharp and,

in some ways, harsh contrast to that preoccupation, it stands there constrained to its boundaries.

The women's suffrage movement, which dates all the way back to the 18th century, might serve as an example of challenging the traditional outlook. Women were denied the basic right to cast their vote till then. The earliest of the countries to grant women's suffrage was New Zealand which happened in the year 1893. Australia followed by in 1902 giving all Australian women the right to vote, but indigenous Australian women were excluded from this right. The privilege was bestowed on them but much later, in the year 1962. The seeds of the suffrage movement in the United States were sowed in the Seneca Falls Convention, 1848. It was the first convention to be held for women's rights in the United States that was solely organized by women and for women. *The Declaration of Sentiments* was the manifesto to the Seneca Falls Convention. "We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men and women are created equal". The Seneca falls convention was planned for various reforms of women, and for legitimizing their voting rights. The impact of the suffrage movement was one whose significance can clearly be felt in a broader context. Suffrage movement garnered enough recognition and support from various fields, and the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on 5th June, 1919, granted women the right to cast their vote. In countries like India, the fight for independence categorically fueled women suffrage movement. Mumbai (then, was known as Bombay) and Chennai (then, was known as Madras) happened to be the earliest provinces to allow a limited number of votes for women in the year, 1921. Universal suffrage was permitted with the passage of the Indian Independence Act 1947.

 "It is through their travel, correspondence, petitioning, marching, and publishing that a range of Indian suffragettes were able to ensure that Indian women's rights were not overlooked either in India or other parts of the world."

- Dr. Sumita Mukherjee, author of *Indian Suffragettes, Female Identities and Transnational Networks*

Feminism minutely studies the position of the marginalized population and comprehends the idea of the power dynamic at play. Power is not a finite entity that can be located, but is relational and constituted in network of social relationships among subjects who have agency. It includes the understandings

of where there is power, there is also resistance. We owe to Foucault's studies on the regimes of power and knowledge for the current advancements in the understanding of power. The impacts of structural oppression, like those of male violence against women, which shape women's experiences and may make them unable to oppose dominance, are issues that go unmentioned in the peripheral view of power, resistance, and women's empowerment.

Feminism takes an interdisciplinary approach which allows it to not limit itself within any specific discipline but encompasses issues in literature and culture. Feminism not only concerns itself with theories but includes activism relating to framework of culture, contemporary situations in history, sociology, anthropology, performance theory, and importantly, psychology. By undertaking the procedure of investigating the power dynamics which goes behind all the workings, the resistance to norms which vocalize such quotients can be made aware to all.

> "If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifies which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles its very different sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within" to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking it in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her own teeth to invent for herself a language to get inside of. And you will see with what ease she will spring forth from that "within" from where she so drowsily crouched- to overflow at the lips she will cover the foam"

> \- Helen Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*

Analysis:

A term which is often discussed these days is 'Empowerment.' If discussed from a wider contextual basis, empowerment is granting someone the authority to handle and take the responsibility of their actions, and therefore it includes attaining freedom to take one's decisions.

Jo Rowlands (1998) proposes a slightly different definition of the concept. She argues that the dominant perspective of empowerment held by western development experts and by the "Women-in Development" approach is to give women the chance to occupy positions in power, in terms of political and economic decision making. This act of autonomy not only aids in

representational purposes, but also overcomes the barriers that come in the forms of self-assessment, skepticism and dependence. From an administrative point of view, empowerment may be defined by the divergent policies and guidelines that are adopted to endorse a person's overall wellbeing. This is where 'rights' do willingly come into account. Rights initiate the entire empowerment's course of action. It dictates its plan and sees if the implementation has the farfetched ability to grow its outlook. Women still are generally considered to be the caregivers of a family. Hence, looking after the needs that arise subsequently must be taken into account because if the nurturers do not live well, so will their families. Putting that aspect aside, if a thorough study is conducted regarding the contribution of women in all fields, it will be evident that right opportunities can actually build their grit and determination like no other event can. Rowland has argued that the notion of empowerment stems from the dominant understanding of power as 'power over'. Power in this sense is finite supply and empowerment of a group at the expense of other that might lead to backlash later. The problem with empowerment from outside is that it can be bestowed and it can be easily withdrawn.

Education is one of the most significant means for empowering an individual or community in general, and women and girls in particular. According to census report 1951, 8.9 percent women were educated against 27.2 percent men. In 2011, 64.6 percent women are educated against 80.9 percent men. The gap remains. A girl is sometimes denied the basic right to education owing to a lot of factors which contribute to this denial. Families not affluent enough, tend to educate the male children leaving the girls to work at home. Government schools are trying to cope up with this problem by offering midday meals and different scholarships for girl children. Girls are married off at the prime of their youth in an attempt to find suitable grooms. In many states child marriages continue to exist. They are threat to a girl's childhood and health. It also proves detrimental for a child's psychology. At an age when they are not even aware of the world's ways, they are considered a burden by their parents and married off. Many parents fear that they would not get worthy grooms for their daughters if the girls grow up well beyond their adolescence. In some families' education is provided to a girl not for the purpose of making her self-reliant and self-sufficient, but for becoming suitable for affluent partners. Due to these mindsets dowry deaths are still prevalent in India. Girls are compulsorily married off; gifts are negotiated between families to make a decent match. In many occasions, women are helplessly married off, driven away from their homes,

and are made to extract the gifts from their parents after marriage. Many parents fail to match up to the expectations created. Dowry deaths happen thereafter. Women are killed by their husbands and their in-laws or tortured and abused to the extent that drives them to choose the path of suicide. Many women are also expelled by their in-laws along with their children after the death of their husbands. Financially weak, with little to no money, they go to their parent's place more often than not, to be turned away. Sometimes they find shelter in their parental home which, however, no longer remains their home once they have been married off. Just as from childhood girls are taught that her husband's home is her real home, they are also conditioned to believe that they are incomplete without a partner. They are made to believe that once they are married, their male partners will make them into complete human beings. They mistakenly believe marriage to be empowering.

Complications develop when these women are left alone. They are made to feel weak and inferior since the moral mindset of the society is at play, and they have no man to turn to. After being evicted from the homes they marry into and have been socialized to believe are theirs, they must endure a variety of difficulties in order to survive. The capacity to make a living is one of the most important factors in determining survival. The majority of women who overlook that necessity are compelled to look to earning by themselves only when they are left alone.

The idea of discrimination at the workplace, as at home, is not uncommon to women. In terms of pay and for any kind of promotion at work, women are frequently flagrantly ignored. They are sometimes denied the same salary that their male coworkers with equivalent talents receive. Despite having the strong ideas, women in business struggle to put the ideas into action, secure funding and trust. There is also harassment in the workplace. Some women experience sexual advancements from male colleagues and many authorities are not fully supportive to her complaints. Situations like these are discouraging for the women to continue with their work. If they are living within a family, it is expected that the women will be the primary caregivers for children and older parents that again leaves women with the choice to quit their jobs in case they have ailing children or elders at home or settle with lesser pays nearer home. Thus in many cases women are forced to give up prospective career opportunities, and a future, which could be beneficial for their overall improvement, is lost.

Discrimination continues everywhere-- in matters of caste, creed, nationality, economic status, and also in education. The imbalance shows its influence on almost every forum, and if rights and regulations do not partake in diminishing the factors that lead to discriminations, then discussions like these are here to stay. The rights of women in particular, and human rights in general, have been framed in such a way that enough light is showcased on the cracks and crevices. With our world speeding up a million miles on a daily basis, some contemplation has to commence on if the rights and policies are accurate for the demanding challenges that conceal themselves with new developments and take on a new form of appearance simultaneously. The Sustainable Development Agenda, adopted by UN Member States in 2015 has set a 2030 deadline for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

In many countries, the ratio of women is comparatively lesser if kept alongside the ratio of their male counterparts. Forceful abortion is rampant in many places where the fetus is eliminated in their primary stages of growth after the sex is made known. There are many instances of infanticide too. Women frequently have a high number of unintended births and abortions due to the pressure and desire of their male partners, which eventually causes a significant decline in their health. The Prohibition of the Sex Selection Act was adopted by the Indian Parliament in 1994. Although it is prohibited by that Act to permit the use of any method that can reveal the sex of the fetus after conception, we know that it is not always strictly adhered to.

Another important problem that affects an extensive portion of society is trafficking. For money, many families sell their daughters and young relatives. Women who have been trafficked are susceptible to exploitation their entire lives. Violence and crimes committed against them are consistently on the rise. Similarly, abuse begins on the outer layer and shatters their self-esteem. Many women also experience domestic violence at the hands of in-laws. Marital rape, physical and verbal abuse, and control over food and resources are only a few examples of abuse. Over time, harassments can change their form as they frequently develop into other forms of abuse. These situations occur repeatedly in some lives in order to keep them submissive and meek. Most of the violence against women are fundamentally driven by the patriarchal worldview. Misogyny and a spiteful mentality are so deeply ingrained in some of the men that they think it natural to discriminate against women.

Over the past few decades, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of occurrences of rape and acid attacks on women. Blame it on the ingrained misogyny that causes feelings of anger towards even the smallest amount of opinion that blatantly contradicts the abuser's worldview. Inexpensive and effortless obtainability of acids, peer jealousy, the idea of vengeance, the idea of family honour in a male-dominated society are other factors contributing to acid attack on women.

Over the years, violence against women has taken many different forms, and abuse is differently defined today from how it was a few years ago. Violence against women is on the rise even after successful campaigns on slogans like "NO means NO" and "Stop" and other awareness camps.

Along with these discussions, it is important to keep in mind that female empowerment dynamics have recently grown. In addition to ensuring a woman's financial and emotional security, empowerment also involves a woman recognizing the preconceptions that society has traditionally presented and not recoiling in the face of the stigma that goes along with it. One very crucial thing to keep in mind is that not everyone has the unrelenting mindset and persistence to carry this out every day. The struggles are numerous, and the rendition is challenging to begin with. Not every woman has the advantage of having the knowledge necessary to understand what empowerment really revolves around. It is most likely that a woman's parents do not understand the value of a good education, leaving her to bear the burden of illiteracy or conventional mindset. This is especially true if she comes from a region that is backward from the rest of the country in terms of technological advancement and her community is economically weaker than the rest of the country. Aside from the struggle for rights, illiteracy offers very little financial security. The rest of the empowerment argument may be dismissed at the point of illiteracy but in the current era of capitalism a source of income can be instilled through the set of abilities, or technical skill a woman may possess. Multinational corporations and startups frequently target this aspect by broadening their visionary outlook, where financial empowerment can come to any woman who yearns for it and whose skill set can support the long-term profitability it generates.

The projects of empowerment of women have made major efforts to address education, marriage, reproductive rights, income discrepancy, and many other areas where women continue to experience unfair bias. The media's persistent

propensity to portray reformist women adversely, organizations that reject gender equality, and women's exclusion from particular sectors all appear to contribute to the creation of a barrier that is more challenging to overcome than it first appears.

Women's inclusion in the formulation of rights relevant to their welfare and advancement should be encouraged. Their participation in leadership roles, workplace organizations, community businesses, the arts, politics, are developmental plans is a key component to their empowerment. Some of the issues that govern the overall empowerment demography are women's awareness of their rights and their capacity to exercise them when the situation calls for it. To support a program's activity, it is necessary to allocate funding to various programs that involve women and to build and arrange various tactics that enhance their quality of life. Women should develop the ability to make judgements in the domestic sphere that will benefit both of them personally and their household. In order to recognize the subtlety of the mistreatment women are used to, they should be able to access enough information. If required, they need also to have the courage to regulate and control the worldview of men. Women are frequently made to take on a supporting role in family concerns and appear to have little or no voice even when their own reproductive health is at risk. She should be given reproductive liberty, not just in writing, but also in practice, since her health is of primary importance for her to able to handle what is expected of her. Women who are employed should be able to own their own money and spend it however they see fit. Self-confidence is a quality that all women should strive to develop. The ultimate goal of women's empowerment should be for women to be inspired to participate in their productive roles or jobs and overcome the societal obstacles one at a time.

Empowerment brings a lot of definitions with it, and one prospect to vouch for is that it widens its hemispheres for each and every woman. An effort towards women's empowerment continues. The hurdles have slightly changed, trials and tribulations are anew, and so the consistent methods of implementing empowerment are now slowly catching up. The progress will definitely need a suitable time period to even come up with a noticeable commentary on if it will be favorable at length.

Studies on Women Empowerment:

At the state and national levels, a few studies on women's empowerment have been done. Most often, developing nations are chosen for exploration because there is a chance that it will be advantageous there in one way or another. Likewise, in a study held in Nepal by Archarya and Bennet (1983), the concept of women empowerment has been analyzed through their diversification in various fields, eg: the role of women in domestic and farm labor has been investigated, and her role explored in allocating resources. These studies mostly conclude the fact that if women are brought into the market economy positively, then these aspects will definitely lend a hand to her domestic decision-making abilities and her ability in resource allocation. In another study which was done in Bangladesh by Ackerly (1995), it was revealed that women positively gain a definitive amount of knowledge and exposure through market access, but the truth lies in the fact that Bangladeshi women rarely have a way to market access. A similar study by Schuler and Hashmi (1996) reflects the utility of microcredit facility. This facility leverages women empowerment purpose, and gives them a greater economic value overall. Microcredit helps women to establish her own enterprises and generate a profit margin which is sufficient for her to empower herself in the process. Whilst the argument with regard to microfinance institutions in the women empowerment is still debatable, in countries like Bangladesh despite the co-existence of sociocultural constraints, microfinance has been able to gather the most creditworthy women clients. In a study of women empowerment in Sri Lanka by Mathura and Mather (1997), the result suggests that the education of women has definitely increased their capability but as far as financial decision-making is concerned, it has failed to achieve its goals within social issues or the organizational buildups if not within the family. Manson (1998) conducted research on south Asian countries. For sample units the study selected the urban households of Pakistan, Malaysia, India, Thailand and the Philippines. The research concluded that the social framework of gender has an impact on the economic position of women, both in a direct and indirect manner. A study on women empowerment in Indonesia by Frankberg and Thomas (2001), found that the status of women has an influence on the financial capabilities and the power of decision making by women. In a study organized on women empowerment in Cameroon, it is suggested that the current trends of social capital have proven beneficial to poor women in accessing the limits of microcredits. Narayan (2007) held the research for various countries where women empowerment for these regions were calculated on a ten-step ladder,

the top of the ladder had people who had power and rights, whereas the bottom rung featured people who were powerless. Blumberg (2005) showcased the case that economic empowerment of a woman is the main factor which goes behind the national wellbeing and helps in achieving the core of gender quality. Beneria and Roldan (1987) bring the results on a study held in the city of Mexico that wives who lend a substantial amount of money to their household income, has the proficiency to add more to the decisions in household matters.

Despite the abundance of projects that help in the whole phase of women empowerment, it has been inferred that not a lot of countries offer full protection to women. According to the most recent reports, only a fraction of countries, namely Belgium, Spain, Ireland, Latvia, Iceland, Luxemborg, France, Denmark, Greece, Canada, Sweden, Spain, Netherlands and Germany grant legal rights to men and women in equal proportions. The pandemic has caused some problems to add to the already existing problems of women. So, in the year 2021, about twenty-three countries came together to make an endeavor to make some reforms for the economic gaps that has thrived.

> "While progress has been made, the gap between men's and women's expected lifetime earnings globally is US $ 172 trillion- nearly two times the world's annual GDP. As we move forward to achieve green, resilient and inclusive development, governments need to accelerate the pace of legal reforms so that women can realize their full potential and benefit fully and equally"
>
> - Mari Pangestu, the World Bank Managing Director of Development Policy and Partnerships.

The Women, Business, and the Law Act of 2023 was implemented specifically for this purpose. This specific aspect assesses how effective the laws that have been set out for women are. It looks for traits like the ability to relocate or the necessity for it, the site of employment, if the compensation is judged sufficient, whether a person is married or not, whether they have children, whether they have any assets of any type, their entrepreneurial talents, and whether they receive pensions. These standards are distributed throughout 190 nations with the intention of achieving gender equality. The majority of these reforms areas like parenthood, pay, and workplace. While they have served as indicators, there are still many issues that require urgent attention, such as workplace harassment

and combating discrimination that is based on gender, parental leaves for new parents and reconsidering the dos and don'ts for mothers.

This scenario has changed in the last year. Countries like China and Hongkong have increased the ten-week maternity leave to fourteen weeks. Several countries have braced the concept of paid paternity leave. Armenia and Switzerland are a few amongst them. Paid paternity leave is simply defined as the leave that is being given to the fathers for taking care of the child. This leave doesn't demand any salary cut of any kind. Some countries have adhered to the concept of paid parental leave. Paid paternity leaves is a step to bridge the inequal gap. The discrimination that women face after giving birth are too many to count, and laws that promote paid leaves ensure responsibilities being equally distributed among both the parents. East Asian and Pacific Islands countries have made their strides in the fight for equality. The retirement age for both men and women in Cambodia has been established at 60, and pensions allowed.

> "Women cannot achieve equality in the workplace if they are on an unequal footing at home. That means leveling the playing field and ensuring that having children doesn't mean women are excluded from full participation in the economy and realizing their hopes and ambitions"
>
> - Xarmen Reinhart, the Senior Vice President and Chief Economist of World Bank Group.

"If a woman had a problem in the 1950's and 1960's, she knew that something must be wrong with her marriage or with herself. Other women were satisfied with their lives, she thought. What kind of a woman was she if she did not feel this mysterious fulfillment waxing the kitchen floor? She was so ashamed to admit her dissatisfaction that she never knew how many other women shared it"

– Betty Friedan*, The Feminine Mystique.*

Despite all of the efforts made, the problematic point of view continues to exist. It is because men have held authority positions legitimately for their own advantageous gain, the fight for women's rights and empowerment has been ongoing. Recent years have seen the argument get a completely new perspective. While there are more opportunities available to women now and it is clear that more women are willingly participating in the process of empowerment, still much remains to be achieved.

There are five basic ways women's Economic Empowerment can be promoted globally:

1. Ensure women are equipped to participate in the economy fully.
2. Enforce policies and social protection systems for women.
3. Recognize unpaid labor as work.
4. Invest in women's organizations and businesses.
5. Create work for women.

With creation of environment conducive to support women in their sense of self-worth the world can do much for empowerment.

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III

Superflat and Post-Gender: A Case Study of female bodies in *Ghost in the Shell* and *Paprika*

Arghyadip Dewan

Abstract:

This article studies the representation of female bodies in two anime films: Mamoru Oshii's Ghost in the Shell (1995) and Satoshi Kon's Paprika (2006) to study how the post apocalyptic cyborg and the dream realm's alter ego both subvert the gender oriented paradigms by becoming superflat bodies in a post-gender space. Takashi Murakami's Superflat manifesto talks about the bricolage of multiple flattened layers superimposed onto one another to create a composite surface of multiple focal points where meaning exists on the surface itself rather than the interior. In both Ghost in the Shell and Paprika we see the melting of the outside into the inside. The post-apocalyptic Niihama City and the unstable kaleidoscopic dream realm both are examples of what Susan J Napier terms "fantasyscapes" where the body goes through the Guattarian "a-signifying semiotic" process to create unlimited intersections of signs, identities, images and self-images. This contributes to the Superflat "delimiting" (Looser, 2006: 108) of the body where its symbiosis with both technology and the cybernetically created alter ego takes place. It also blurs the boundaries between body and commodity. Thus the bodies of Major Mokoto Kusanagi, The Puppet Master in Ghost in the Shell and Dr. Chiba Atsuko/Paprika in Paprika become examples of Superflat bodies in a post-gender future.

Keywords: *Anime, manga, female body, Ghost in the Shell, Paprika, Satoshi Kon, Mamoru Oshii*

Introduction:

Japan as a country of diverse signs and symbols has always found itself at odds with its own subjectivity regarding the female body. From the traditional paintings of the Meiji Restoration to the explosion of anime and manga since the 1960s, the female body has found itself at the centre of many different and varied perspectives and discourses. From being idealized and commodified as sexual

and reproductive resources to inhabiting the posthuman ambivalence of human-technological symbiosis, the female body has been a playground of philosophies and art-forms to lock horns with each other. According to Dolores Martinez:

> …the female body in Japan is hyper-symbolic: it can signify modernity, tradition, social and biological reproduction, and magical or demonic powers, while holding the potential for the sorts of highly sexualized, subversive, and dangerous representations often found throughout patriarchal societies. (Martinez, 2015: 74)

Takashi Murakami's "Superflat" manifesto places Japanese visual culture as a postmodern cannibal of cosmopolitanism. Murakami has talked about the flatness of Japanese art as a result of a nation's shallow, amateur consumerism and economic instability. But he has superseded the boundary between the Western high culture and 'flat' Japanese culture to create an art form that places layers of diverse art forms and cultures and then flattens them together. The result is what is called "Superflat", a multilayered composite medium that has incorporated the many forms it combined into an inseparable coalition that at the same time points towards the vanity of consumerism and also glorifies it. The female body for Murakami not only functions as an open space for cultural and sexual critique of the Japanese plasticity of consumerism but also as an area of vast philosophical anomalies.

My aim in this paper is to study how the groundbreaking anime films *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) and *Paprika* (2006) revolutionized the cyberpunk and sci-fi genre by portraying the female bodies firstly in a dystopian high tech post-gender scenario and then placing the female body in the discourse of a larger issue about the self and the self-image. The body politics of *Ghost in the Shell* explores the unreliability and anxiety of the ambivalence of the human-machine cyborg in the lieu of an AI antagonist who identifies as a new life form. It poses philosophical questions about evolutionary dynamics of reproduction and embodiment of the exterior and interior of a body. Superflat theory's argument of apocalypse as a means of resetting the clock here charges the motif of Kusanagi's biological and technological divide within her "shell". Major Kusanagi is not merely a cyborg but a much more 'hyper' cyborg with peak physical features of extremely sexualized toy like physique and an increasingly subjective self-awareness. The Superflat impact of blurring the boundaries between art and commodity reiterates in Kusanagi's body blurring the divide between the self and the product.

Satoshi Kon's *Paprika* (2006) on the other hand delves deep into the question of the body's capabilities regarding its own subjective structure. It pushes the limits of inhabiting a unique sense of fluidity within the alternating states of the conscious and the unconscious of the mind. Superflat's emphasis of melting the outside with the inside is consciously cultivated by Kon in *Paprika* especially in the shot where Dr. Chiba looks at the reflection in the glass and sees her alter ego *Paprika*. The deliberate "overexposure" of the internal eventually rules out the divide between an outer and inner self. Rather the surface becomes the focal point. *Paprika's* hyper imaginative sequences of the internal mind causes the dichotomy to break and the internal becomes the external and results in what Thomas Looser calls the "delimiting" (Looser, 2006: 108) of the body.

My analysis will be focusing on both of these works to study the various dimensions of representation of the female body and how they transcend gender oriented discourses to become Superflat examples of self-referential, post-gendered, uncategorized bodies of a dystopic and deconstructed future.

A brief introduction to Anime and Manga:

Japanese visual culture in the last 40 years has exploded worldwide to become a multifocal cultural phenomenon. The skyrocketing popularity of manga (Japanese comics) and anime (Japanese animation) since the 1980s has not only created innumerable rhizomes of subculture throughout the world but also has reinforced a socio-cultural invasion into the world's psyche (especially the West). Joseph S Nye has talked about the "soft power" (Nye, 1990: 166) of anime and manga that has venerated the postmodern field of semiotic boundaries by the extensive osmosis of signs and symbols from Japan. The result is a dominating and largely commodified field of production that dovetails the animation schema from what is distinctly Japanese to what Koichi Iwabuchi calls "culturally odourless" (Iwabuchi, 2002: 465).

The word 'manga' is used today to mean Japanese comic books. The word literally translates to Japanese as "various or whimsical pictures" (Prough, 2010: 56). What we call manga or comic books originated during the 1930s as newspaper strips for children. The modern manga's ancestry however can be traced back to various scrolls and caricatures in Japanese cultural history most notably *Hokusai Manga*, which was published between 1814 and 1878. Manga has a unique art-style as well as sense of realism that makes it distinct from

Western comics. The sequential panels along with a cinematic style of storytelling, make up for a unique mode of artistic expression. Craig Norris comments, "During the early postwar period manga provided cheap and exciting reading for poor workers and children. In the 1960s it was at the forefront of counter-culture thought. While its working class origins and radical counter-culture politics of the1960s may have diminished from the 1980s, it remains an innovative element of Japanese visual culture today. (Norris, 2009: 258)

"Anime" is the short form of 'animation' which generally refers to animation from Japan. If manga is the platform where Japanese visual culture first took shape, then it is anime that has largely contributed to what Douglas McGray calls, "Japan's Gross National Cool" i.e. "an idea, a reminder that commercial trends and products, and a country's knack for spawning them, can serve political and economic ends" (McGray, 2002: 53). Jonathan Clements comments that "anime is not a 'genre'. It is a medium" that can be impacted "by changes in technology, delivery systems and cultural context" (Clements 2013: 3). Today anime and manga has given birth to the 'Otaku' (Fanboy) culture all over the world which has created cultural pockets such as Fan conventions, Cosplays, Fanfictions even erotic subgenres such as BiShōnen (Boys Love). Ian Condry aptly comments, "Anime is characteristic of contemporary media in its interconnected webs of commercial and cultural activities that reach across industries and national boundaries" (Condry, 2013: 1). Mark W. MacWilliams asserts, anime and manga are "an open window onto the Japanese id, a view—not necessarily of reality itself—but of a culture's aspirations, dreams, nightmares, fantasies, and fetishes" (MacWilliams, 2008: vii). The impact of anime has also created distinct imprints onto the Indian cultural demography as Sharmistha Singh Rawat comments,

> In engaging with this global media product, the Indian fans of anime and manga are drawing desired meanings from them and engaging in specific fan practices that are informed by their particular social and cultural position within the society. In so doing, these fans are becoming a part of a growing transnational fan community of anime and manga where other fans, also influenced by their local context, are involved in similar processes of selective reception and meaning making. (Rawat, 2022: 241)

Anime and manga has ventured into a profusion of genres and sub genres that have gone on to carve their distinct niches in various socio-cultural pockets. The most prominent ones are: 'Shōnen' (Young Boy), 'Shojo' (Young Girl), 'Seinen'

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(Adult), Yaoi (Boys' Love), Dojinshi (Fan fiction), Supokon (Sports) etc. Although these sub genres do posit distinct delineation from each other, more often than not they are overlapped to create and propagate more hybrid narrative modes.

The Female Body in Anime and Manga:

Anime and manga as art forms have evolved since the early 1900s as a major cultural kaleidoscope where the female body has been portrayed in a profusion of different perspectives and outlooks. The early 'comic' illustration of women during the pre WWII era in Japan saw the female body represented in the "Shojo" genre ('young girls') in a very specific way to cater to female readership. In the works of early Shojo artists like Yumeji Takehisa and Kaoru Sudoi the female body is drawn as frail, soft and fragile which came to know as the jojo-ga style. In the 1920s we see that with artists like Koji Fukiya, women are represented with big round eyes and staring into nothingness. Mizuki Takahashi sees these female bodies as 'fresh virgins' resulting primarily from the bourgeoisie fantasies of the hyper-sophisticated male gaze (Takahashi, 2008: 116). The implied flatness of these bodies reinforce the shallow consumeristic attitude towards sexuality where the social paradigms of reproduction were based on idealized physical appearance. The skeuomorphic recreation of pale, wide eyed, frail women were not merely phallic dreams but also a means of a desired autocracy over the female body.

The post-war Japan however was a drastically different space with extremely contorted and traumatised psychological and political dimensions resulting from the impact of the mushroom cloud. The 'Mecha' genre that gained impetus in Japanese visual mediums from the 1960s projected a solidified anxiety of technological advancement. According to Kumiko Saito:

> Mecha is the Japanese term for 'mechanism' or 'mechanical' and generally means technological gadgets of all sizes that augment and enhance human abilities. Although American culture tends to use mecha to signify robots in anime, the term's original Japanese connotation for metal and mechanical things includes everything from small gimmicks and devices to human-sized cyborgs and even giant robots. Mecha in anime has also undertaken the symbolic role of representing the self in both the material

> embodiment of the human body and the metaphysical framework
> of identity. (Saito, 2020, 153)

These hyper-violent and at times graphic narratives of science fiction are normally set in futuristic dystopian settings where the society has collapsed causing mass disintegration of morality, empathy and propriety. In the works such as *Mobile Suit Gundum* (1979), *Bubblegum Crisis* (1987), *Akira* (1988), *Battle Angel Alita* (1993), *Armitage III* (1995) and *Ghost in the Shell* (1995) the pre-war sophistication of Japanese narratives was gone along with their "soft" subjects. The nuclear blast, war defeat and subsequent military occupation of Japan at the hands of the USA caused on oedipal relationship between the two countries. In Freudian terms the US-Japanese oedipal undercurrent has given rise to the Japanese libido for the "hyper". According to Alan Cholodenko, in terms of Baudrillard's "hyper real" theory, to supersede the American Disney's cuteness, Japan has created hyper cute or "kawai" (Cholodenko, 2003: 6) and to supersede the violence of Hollywood, Japan has given birth to the ultra-futuristic apocalyptic wastelands of hyper violent "mecha" culture.

According to J.C. Schaub 'cyberpunk' is basically the literary outcome of 'mecha'. Japanese cyberpunk, according to Saito however stopped producing hegemonically dominant male protagonists but instead produced "the general shift of the anime protagonist from male to female—cyborg women came to dominate anime, overpowering men in battle, intelligence, and/or political maneuvering" (Saito, 2020: 153). The female body thus stopped being an open playground of male libido and became a wider and more nuanced manifestation of the post-war psychosis of the Japanese psyche where the possible symbiosis between humans and technology became a major focal point as seen in Akira, Battle Angel Alita, Bubblegum Crisis and Ghost in the Shell. According to Saito:

> The plot often revolves around a female cyborg or, more precisely,
> a composite of the human brain and the female-model artificial
> body. The imagined presence of the brain is the sole physical
> evidence of an original human identity, but the content of the head
> remains unconfirmed. Like Deckard in Blade Runner, cyborgs in
> anime often live with internal doubts of their own originality and
> humanity. (Saito, 2020: 153)

The ambivalence of technology, the all devouring sense of losing control and eventual loss of biological existence to a symbiotic one are some of the main

concerns shown in the Cyberpunk genre. Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" revolutionized the posthuman turn in feminist studies with the focus on the permeability of a post gender world. For example, the body of the main character in Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* has an artificial body but her consciousness is in her 'ghost'. The sustainability of which depends upon post-sexualized bodies where the neutralization factor is brought forth by its own hybrid components. J.C Schaub comments:

> Along with the cyborg's status as a hybrid of cybernetic technology and organic matter, there is also a hybrid nature to the cyborg's gender. Although they may be amply endowed with sex characteristics, cyborgs do not have stable gender identifications. According to Haraway, The cyborg is a creature in a post-gender world.' (1991: 150) To the extent that gender identity and the fixed roles that gender creates for people are oppressive, then the cyborg's refusal to fit into a fixed category for gender is liberatory. (Schaub, 2001: 86)

Saito however argues that the female body in cyberpunk opens itself up to the subjectivity of the male gaze. The composite nature of the post-biological femininity, if we can consider it femininity at all, lends itself the subjective view point of being a canvas of uncontrolled libido for a genetically engineered product fit only for sexualizing freely. She further adds:

> The situation of Japanese cyberpunk, however, is not as simple as calling the female cyborg's objectified femaleness conservative and dissenting for feminism. Non-western viewpoints on this discussion have found more male subjectivity than feminism in the female cyborg. Rising from the defeat in WWII and deeply inscribed sense of inferiority to the west, postwar Japanese popular culture has generated a wide array of humanoid robots and cybernetic heroes who suffer from their incomplete being as monstrous human–machine patchwork. Japan's inferiority complex and blind mimicry of the west have resulted in stories about 'Japanoids,' who are not only metal-flesh chimeras, but also dilemmatic composites of west and non-west, or democracy and the emperor system. (Saito, 2020, 154)

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The post bubble economy of the 90s however also focused on another particular aspect about the female body in sci-fi anime, i.e. the interplay between individual and extended states of consciousness. In *Ghost in the Shell*, *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, *Akira* we see the question of a hive minded existence of the body, where the individuation of the body is completely destroyed in order to accommodate a much more integrated state of consciousness. The wide "Net" in Ghost, represents what Haraway envisions as a post-gender sphere where the 'merging' of the self with the other takes place. In *Neon Genesis Evangelion* we see the main antagonist plans to turn the whole human civilization into primordial soup. A liquefied return to the Neo-Darwinistic sense of unifomality. *Akira's* famous metamorphosis scene however gives us a much more violent picture of invasion of flesh by technology and its catastrophic consequences, yet *Ghost* and *Neon Genesis* put forward the symbiosis as a necessary step in evolution which echoes the late 90s turn of transhumanism. This huge wide unending schema of consciousness that is created by the hive mind trope is called "Cyber Sublime" (Gardner, 2009: 45) by William O Gardner where the self's individuation is engulfed by a greater sea of data.

Satoshi Kon's *Paprika* however (2006) marks a new landmark in anime where it doubles down on the "Cyber sublime" motif by the means of which Gardner has called "virtual mirrors" (Gardner, 2009: 45). This is a trapdoor like troupe that are strategically weaved into the narrative pockets to mark the descent of the character's body into the "data realm" (Gardner, 2009: 50). Just like the "Net" in *Ghost in the Shell, Paprika* uses the machine DC Mini to establish a bridge between the conscious and unconscious states of the self. The DC Mini is the machine used by psychotherapists to tap into the depths of people's minds by exploring their dreams. The visual modus operandi of the duality of ego and alter ego is the driving force of the movie where therapist Dr. Chiba Atsuko uses an alter ego called 'Paprika' to explore her patients' minds. *Paprika* embodies the desires, anxieties, phobia and fetishes of the subjects and metamorphoses according to the mentalscapes. The infinite interplay between of Nietzsche's void and the process of looking back raises the question of Paprika's representation about the fundamental break within the body and the self. The body that the self perceives is neither stable nor holistic. The continuous loss of the self in order to integrate with the subjectivity causes multifocal planes of existence blurring the line between real and representation. Gardner comments, "With this dual nature, Paprika suffers the same dilemma as many of Kon's other female protagonists,

who are unable to resolve the tension between establishing their own subjectivity and serving as the object of the male gaze" (Gardner, 2009: 65).

Ghost in the Shell:

Mamoru Oshii's 1995 cyberpunk masterpiece *Ghost in the Shell* is considered a legendary piece of work in anime due to its philosophical insight and artistic mastery of creating a hyper futuristic posthuman landscape of Niihama City. The story focuses on Major Motoko Kusanagi who is a biologically engineered cyborg who works for Section 9, a government agency dedicated to fight cybercrime and political espionage. The members of this agency are all cybernetically augmented beings with enhanced physical and mental abilities. Most of them have "cyber-brains", with the 'ghost' inside them as the only biological link to subjectivity or thought. The Puppet Master is the primary antagonist of the narrative who is eventually revealed as a cybernetic program created by Section 6 who seems to have developed sentience and escaped his creators through the 'net'. Kusanagi is tasked with capturing the Puppet Master, who can hack into human brains and create implanted memories called "stimulated experience" to manipulate them into doing its bidding. When Sector 9 finally confronts The Puppet Master, it reveals that it has stopped identifying itself merely as an AI and is asking recognition as a 'life form' because it has developed its own ghost which is a counterpart of the human soul. It describes itself as a life form "created out of the sea of data". The climax of the film reveals that the only reason The Puppet Master came into contact with sector 9 was to get close to Kusanagi whom it sees as a "kindred being" and wants to merge with her as the next step of evolution. Kusanagi whose cybernetically engineered body inhabits within itself an astonishingly introspective 'ghost', wonders about her origins and questions the authenticity of her subjective and cognitive responses early in the movie. In the climax she and the Puppet Master merge to create a higher form of existence and even though their outer "shells" are destroyed, Kusanagi's colleague Batou saves the new merged brain and supplies it with a new shell, that of a young girl. The film ends with Kusanagi wondering about the vastness of the 'Net' and her next destination.

In the tradition of Akira's *Neo-Tokyo* along with *Bubblegum Crisis and Neon Genesis* Evangelion's post-apocalyptic Tokyo, Ghost's Niihama city also represents the trademark cyberpunk's collapse of society and the capitalistic engulfment of sovereignty. Niihama City is a perfect example of the Superflat's apocalyptic "ground zero" (Looser, 2006: 95) where the flattening happens in an

eclectic mix of fantasy and distortion which represents a return to a new beginning. Thomas Looser comments: "The "Superflat" layering and juxtaposing of different worlds, in ways that retain the unique organization and coherence of each media world or each layer - though still grounded within some kind of common order - are already a new image of history, or a new way of imaging history" (Looser, 2006: 108). In other words, Niihama city's post-apocalyptic nature makes it possible to inhabit such a future which in Superflat terms advocates a reset point in history from where new beginnings can be imagined. The surface of Niihama city thus is a Superflat surface where history and future get flattened together.

In the famous opening sequence of the film, we see Kusanagi standing atop a tall building preparing to assassinate a high profile political target. She takes off her jacket to reveal a fully bare human female body with complete breasts but no genitalia. The opening credits scene however shows the construction of Kusanagi's technological body. Kusanagi's body clearly positions itself as a critique of capitalism where nothing exists outside the 'product'. The Superflat desire to blur the lines between body and commodity clearly echoes in Kusanagi's cyborg existence. Her 'existence' however is established by her 'Ghost', which is an internalized entity. On the surface, the much emphasized 'Ghost' as the qualifier of these cyborgs' subjective experience of the world would nullify the Superflat theory which propounds that meaning exists on the surface rather than the inside. However, the 'ghost' as the signifier of subjective experience is not a fixed centre of meaning for these bodies. The Puppet Master's ability to 'Ghost hack' and create 'Simulated experience' decentralizes the monopoly of the 'ghost' as the primary centre of physical and psychological meaning for these bodies. According to Susan J Napier, *Ghost in the Shell* depicts "fundamental concern or even unease with the body and thus implicitly with identity itself" (Napier, 2005: 115).

In *Ghost in the Shell*, the bodies of these cyborgs themselves are the source of their dilemma. It is their very creation/production that compels them to wonder about their 'authenticity'. Kusanagi's initially shows a rather cold view towards her own "shell" of a body. She recklessly dives in the ocean to contemplate about various feelings without regard for her shell and does not care about Batou's warnings. Her self-harm is also an indication of her predicament inside that body, the very internality of which is the source of her problems. Later we see that even though her body is destroyed the new merged brain is intact and the new shell

this time is that of a young girl thus resetting the body clock. Even though the brain is the source of her consciousness, the surface or the shell is not merely a protective layer but rather is a flattened layer where multiple focal points are created.

The body of a cyborg not only blurs the line between bio and non-bio but also male and female as J.C Schaub comments:

> By juxtaposing the fetishized body with the image of that body's construction, Oshii establishes the possibility for a critique of global capitalism. Unlike robots, which are completely mechanical, cyborgs are a hybrid of humanity and technology which, as has already been established, also disrupt the binary separation of masculinity and femininity (Schaub, 2001: 91).

This reinforces Haraway's exegesis that due to having no fixed gender the cyborgs are free from the gender related norms and tropes. But the apparently androgyne Cyborgs are also indicative of a post-apocalyptic world where gender neutrality is not only seen as something attainable but also something inevitable. In fact, it shows that the post-gender beings like the Puppet Master are the next step in evolution. According to Martin de la Iglesia and Lars Schemeink:

> In evoking this union of technology and spirit, *Ghost in the Shell* provides a uniquely Japanese perspective on cyborg identity, one that embraces the possibility of hybrid existence, of giving up a tenuous self in order to be integrated into a larger network. (de la Iglesia and Schemeink, 2020: 167)

This desire for integration into a wider network echoes the Superflat urge to lose the individuation for brutal assimilation yet retaining a uniquely Japanese identity. Kusanagi's lack of Oedipal issues with her creator, her acceptance of technology as an essential part of its structure and concerns regarding authenticity sets her apart from the Western cyborgs like the Terminator or even earlier examples like the Frankenstein's monster. Her body thus not only represents multiple layers of focal points 'flattened together' but also presents a critique of the all-encompassing capitalistic libido of the post-apocalyptic world, making her body a Super flat entity in a post-gender world.

Paprika:

Susan J Napier has asserted while commenting on Satoshi Kon's cinematic oeuvre that "Kon possesses a strong social/socio-cultural consciousness—several of his works are not only grounded in contemporary social issues but also serve as clear critiques of Japanese society—as well as what might be called a metacritical consciousness—a fascination with illusion, materiality, and cultural memory…" (Napier, 2006: 24). In several of his previous works such as *Magnetic Rose* (1995), *Perfect Blue* (1997) and *Millennium Actress* (2001), Kon has explored deeply into issues like memories, dreams, identity, mimicry, performance, fragmented selves and the blurring boundaries between real and illusion. His 2006 anime film Paprika is considered a pathbreaking contribution to Japanese and subsequent world cinema where he has delved deep into psychological depths of the self and self-image by collapsing the boundary between the waking and the unconscious self. The body of the psychological dream realm with its unstable physicality bleeds into the conscious or 'real' body causing a composite body to emerge. Napier adds:

> Transcending the strict boundaries of the patriarchal gaze, Kon offers his audience a world of fluidity and ambiguity in which the male and female gaze are both powerful and capable of uniting with other gazes (Napier, 2006: 41).

Paprika's story revolves around Psychiatrist Dr. Chiba Atsuko who uses the machine DC Mini to explore the dreams of her patients in order to treat them. She uses the alter-ego Paprika who is the polar opposite to Chiba's reserved, composed and brooding personality. Cheerful, energetic and brave, Paprika with her signature red hair transforms into various characters while exploring the dreams of the patients. She embodies their desire, fears, anxieties and also assists them to find out more about their unconscious mind. When the machine DC Mini is stolen, havoc breaks out as many doctors including the chief Dr. Shima are invaded by a 'rogue dream'. They are put in the dream while being awake similar to the 'ghost hacking' seen in *Ghost in the Shell* and are seen losing control of their bodies. Dr. Shima jumps off a high window and almost gets killed while others are also injured. Later, the inventor of the DC Mini, Dr. Tokita is also captured within the dream. The dream is that of a long parade led by anthropomorphic household items such as TV, microwaves, fridges with another doctor Himura sitting at the top.

Later it is revealed that the chairman of the Institution, Dr. Inui wants to take over the world of dreams and be a God like omnipresent figure. His misuse of the DC Mini causes the dream world to collapse onto the real world as the whole world seems to be under a shared psychosis. Chiba and Paprika are separated from each other and confront each other about their acceptance. Dr. Tokita transforms into a large robot like creature who wants to "ingest" Chiba, reflecting his obesity, eating disorder and repressed emotions towards Chiba. Chiba is consumed by Tokito's dream self but he feels that it is incomplete, and needs a little spice, indicating Paprika. Paprika then gets inside Tokita's robot and emerges as a baby girl. She starts to eat the whole dream weakening the huge naked God like figure of Dr. Inui. She grows into a mature woman, presumably a mix of Chiba and Paprika and vanquishes Dr. Inui to end the dream.

In *Paprika*, we see an extended use of Gardner's "virtual mirror" (Gardner, 2009: 35) which is the gateway to the other realm. In *Ghost in the Shell*, we see the cybernetic "transgression" (Schaub, 2001: 86) of the cyborg that professes itself as a new life form thus challenging the gender bias of a body. In *Paprika* however we see that the body in the unconscious realm is an extremely unstable entity. According to Alice Vernon, *Paprika* uses "the lucid dream as an opportunity for limitless personality performance" that causes the dream body to become "a medium, a kind of semi-fictitious avatar, for unlimited and unconstrained role-playing" (Vernon, 2016: 115). In the opening sequence we see that while exploring Detective Konakawa's mind, Paprika first shows up as a clown in a circus, then as a trapeze artist. After that as they chase the fugitive within the dream, the scenarios change rapidly from a scene in *Tarzan* to *from Russia with Love* and *The Roman Holiday*. In each of them Paprika inhabits the classical male gaze where she is sexualized as female lead in those movies. Her performativity indicates that the body of Paprika is a volatile mishmash of subjective desire and gaze. The scope for her body is limitless and unrestricted, she can move between extremely sexualized heroines to clown figures very easily. Takashi Murakami has talked about the hyper sexualization of the "kawai" (cute) culture in his Superflat manifesto. The 'Lolicom' genre where uniformed school girls are portrayed with huge bodily curves and large pie eyes is a mainstay of Otaku culture. Superflat sees this as a combination of shallow consumerism and a desire for amateurism. Michael Darling comments:

> The morally ambiguous territory traced by Superflat suggests the
> possibility of a broader social critique of the decline in Japanese

> mores and values-for which otaku are common culprits-and hints
> at the dangers faced by a society that has lost its economic might,
> its job-for-life company loyalty, and even its sense of security.
> (Darling, 2001: 83)

Paprika's 'kawai' body seamlessly transforms to Chiba's reserved and mature real body when the dream ends. But the divide between these two personalities causes them to bleed into each other as the film progresses. The mirrors in the film turn into virtual mirrors where Chiba sees herself as Paprika. The body's internality thus starts to melt with its externality. Thomas Looser sees this phenomenon as a part of the "new media" which "as defined by the Superflat may be little more than 1990s consumer capitalisms dream of an outside" (Looser, 2006: 107). The body which is slipping in and out of the dream constantly bears the risk of converging its conscious and unconscious self which ultimately happens in Paprika, where Chiba and Paprika face each other as the reality is invaded by the dream.

The bodies in the dream realm are entities of Napier's "fantasyscape" (Napier, 2005: 238) which according to Alice Tedorescu are, "the in-between territory where both imagination and identities are experienced, created and recreated" (Tedorescu, 2016: 65). The bodies in the dream defy standard gender related identities and performances. We see in Konakawa's dream that when a mob attacks him, all the faces of mob turn into his own face, Himura's body turns into a female doll with male voice and Himura's face reflecting his Otaku obsession of dolls. Later in the dream parade we see 'lolicom' girls with television screen as their heads. These are not only Superflat but also post-gender entities with no prominent or distinctive sexual or gender orientation.

Paprika also extensively uses what Guattari has termed "a-signifying semiotic registors" that according to Andrew Lapworth bypass language and meaning to act directly on bodies of intensities (Lapworth, 2019: 191). He further adds that:

> Through these cinematic experiments with a-signifying intensities
> of colour, sound, and non-linear editing, Paprika thus expresses a
> different conception of dreams as no longer simply the private
> psychological state of an individuated subject, but rather as a trans
> individual process that connects heterogeneous signs, bodies,
> ideas, and affects in unforeseen ways. (Lapworth, 2019: 195)

Paprika blends the interior and exterior of self or self-realities by putting the distorted bodies of the "fantasyscape" (Napier, 2005: 238) in the 'real' world. The collision between the real and dream bodies causes a flattening effect of multiple superimposed layers onto each other. The visual motif of the dream melting into the world causes the internality of the bodies to be layered upon the externality resulting in creating a Superflat surface of bodies that defy heteronormative and anthropomorphic norms. The bodies of Paprika not only disintegrate the distinction between ego and alter-ego but also the inside and outside in a Superflat surface of multifocal origins.

Conclusion

The bodies of sci-fi anime thus not only defy their gender - oriented discourses but also pose a deep-rooted critique of the performance against the male gaze. The Superflat interplay between disorientation and extravagant fancy allows the grotesque, the hyper-cute and the hyper-cyborg to posit a multifocal surface of representation that acts not only as a Guattarian "desiring machine" (Lapworth, 2019: 194) but also supersedes the Western outlook of Cartesian dualism. The bodies of Kusanagi and Chiba/Paprika expand the horizon of new definitions, new creations and new scopes where the "delimiting" (Looser, 2006: 108) takes place. David Beynon comments that these bodies of animation give us "this idea of the machine being not only a friend (or enemy) but 'ourselves'" and "in the unthreatening anthropomorphic guise of the robot, technology- so overwhelming and sublimely menacing in high-tech- is blended into the world of humanity" (Beynon, 2012: 132). These bodies not only relive the distinct anxiety of the post nuclear Japan but also the ambivalence regarding the effects of technology/radiation on bodies and what it could mean for a chaotic, decentered future that these bodies might inhabit.

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IV

Ignored Voices: An Overview of the life of the Women with Disabilities in India.

Tinku Das

Abstract:

It has been held from ancient times that men and women are not equal. Some socially prescribed identities have been forced onto both genders. Based on people's biological or physiological differences, performances, competence, retention, and other capacities, society has developed some negative conceptions and established some binaries such as normal/abnormal, able/disabled, fit/unfit, etc. In order to oppress women, patriarchal society has created separate standards for men and women. It views women as weak human beings who serve as spouses, mothers, nurses, and sisters. In a culture that is governed by men, women lack freedom and safety. Men have always held a higher standing than women and are still are viewed as more significant than women.

There have been different waves of feminism with their own charter of demands regarding women's rights but there never was any charter of demands for women with disabilities. It seems that women with disabilities have no purpose in this world and are considered as useless in the society. Even at the very onset the women who struggled for their rights and identities did not raise their voices for women with disabilities. Harlan Hahn, a disability activist and political scientist has observed that disabled women often encounter "asexual objectification". Though the world of words masculine and feminine are categorized but women with disability have no category and have been deprived and treated as untouchables. The paper discusses this lack of voice in favour of women with disabilities that pushes them towards a more uneasy world.

Keywords*: Empowerment, Women, Gender, Discrimination, Society.*

Introduction:

One of the most influential philosophers, Jean -Jacque Rosseau, whose political philosophy influenced the whole world, has enlightened the human thought,

composed a book called *The Social Contract: Principles of Political Rig.* The 'Subject of the First Book' opens with a revolutionary line – "Man is born free; and everywhere he is in chains. One thinks himself the master of others, and still remains a greater slave than they" (Rousseau, 1762). Hobbes had asserted in *Leviathan* (1651) that there are no binding standards of right and wrong in the natural world. People took for themselves all they could since and human life was "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short." The state of nature, therefore, was in a perpetual state of war, which could only be halted if people decided (via a social contract) to cede their freedom to a sovereign, provided that sovereign authority also guaranteed their safety. Rousseau said that people live together in society in accordance with an agreement that establishes moral and political rules of behaviour. But he also believed in the possibility of a genuine social contract, one in which people in exchange for their independence would receive a better kind of freedom, a true political, or republican, liberty. By extending on Rousseau's notion we can say that people are born free, but, they are in chains in patriarchal society. Society has created different identities such as personal identity, cultural identity, social identity and so on but it is interesting to note that none of these identities are static. Being dynamic, these identities keep changing always, for example, we all are getting older, becoming wiser and are not the same person as we were. Even though people are not born with identity, it is constructed by others.

There are numerous traits that have been classified as disabilities. Among the list of "disabilities" are paraplegia, deafness, blindness, diabetes, autism, epilepsy, depression, and HIV. The term encompasses a wide range of conditions, including the congenital loss of a limb or sensory function, accidental loss of a limb or sensory function, chronic diseases like arteriosclerosis, progressive neurological conditions like multiple sclerosis, the inability or limited ability to perform cognitive functions like remembering faces or adding numbers, and psychiatric disorders like schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Even old age is that introduces infirmity is often seen as a kind of disability

A person with an amputee, is labeled as disabled by others even though he/she may not have adopted that identity for him/herself. The medical model describes the negative effects of disability in terms of diseased states of the body and mind. It considers the physical differences in people with disabilities to be the primary cause of the limits they experience. When health care practitioners, bioethicists, and philosophers disregard or undervalue the contribution of social and other

environmental variables to the restrictions faced by individuals with disabilities, the medical model is rarely expressly defended, rather components of it are frequently taken without reflection. The social model, in contrast, describes the distinguishing aspects of disability in terms of the relationship between an individual and her social environment: it points at the exclusion of people with specific physical and mental traits, or "impairments," from what is considered normal important spheres of social life. Their exclusion is evident in the fabricated environment and in its organized social activities that prevent or limit the involvement of disabled persons.

Comprehensive categories of disability may include categories, such as weak, ugly, derailed, deformed, feeble minded and so on. If we look into the conditions of persons with disabilities, especially into women with disabilities, we find them to be more vulnerable. Being women itself was and is still considered to be a burden on the family, especially in rural and economically deprived families, and moreover if they are with disability, they become even more burdensome for the family and the society.

From the ancient times it is believed that men and women are not equal. They were made to perform and practice some socially sanctioned identities. Society has created some discriminatory notions based on people's biological or physiological differences, notions of performance, notions of competence, retention and other capacities and has created some binaries such as normal/abnormal, able/disabled, fit/unfit etc. Patriarchal society has constructed dual standards for men and women that are oppressive to women. This kind of society is comfortable to consider women as wives, mothers, nurses, sisters and is looked at as weaker human beings. Women are not free as men in choice of living and in their roles and in a male-dominated society they are also unsafe. From the very beginning, men occupied a higher status than women and women were considered less important than men.

Aristotle thought that women were defective men, with rational and moral capacities inferior to men. Plato radically promoted equality of opportunity, yet he frequently contradicted himself by his disregard towards women. Manu treated women like property, with the owner having sole authority. He unequivocally asserted that women are like property who belonged to the father in youth, belongs to the husband when married and belongs to the son in old age. Women were occasionally regarded in Manu's code in the same manner as slaves or Shudras. Regardless of her husband's personality, she was required to treat

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him as her God. Society fixed women's duty as bearing children and taking care of their family.

As we know in 1948 at Seneca Falls Convention in the United States, a group of women gathered for the first time to officially discuss women's rights. They mapped out their problems, and they demanded for equal rights and for women's suffrage. This incident is considered as the first feminist movement, and it gradually spread all over the world including India. This wave of feminism gave birth to many other waves of feminisms but there were no particular demands made for women with disabilities. It seems that women with disabilities fall outside the purview of human rights and these women are considered negatively by the society. Even at the very onset the women who struggle for their rights and identities, did not raise any voice for women with disabilities. Though the words masculine and feminine belong to some category within the binary structure, women with disability have no category and has been deprived of mentions, often treated like untouchables. This lack of voice in favor of women with disabilities pushes them towards a darker world.

People with disability are associated with the ugly, the weak, the deformed, and with mental incapacity. This is more acute for women with disability. According to United Nation Population fund (UNPF)- "Marginalization, stigmatization, discrimination, social exclusion, inability to participate in public life are a few of the stringent hardships that women with disabilities face as compare to men with disabilities" (United Nation Population Fund, 2019). This paper will analyse different connotations of Gender, Disability, Identity, and Discrimination and how they are treated in society from the Indian perspective. The paper will look at how their lack of voices pushes them towards more oppression and exploitation in India.

Gender, Disability and Discrimination

The term gender has a different connotation than sex but it is closely related to sex which is related to the physiological and biological body. It refers to socially constructed differences between male and female body. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in our institutions, our actions, our beliefs, and our desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural. The world swarms with ideas about gender – and these ideas are so commonplace that we take it for granted that they are true, accepting common adage as scientific fact. (Penelope and McConnell,1) According to Judith Butler gender is not something we are born with and not

something we *have*, but something we *do* (West & Zimmerman, 1987)–something we *perform* (Butler, 1990). According to Raewyn Connell, - "Gender is the structure of social relations that centres on the reproductive arena, and the sets of practices (governed by this structure) that bring reproductive distinctions between bodies into social processes."

 Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1997) claims that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949) and applying this concept broadly it can certainly be said that one is not born, but rather becomes disabled in a society not sympathetic enough to the physical incapacities in men and women. Almost everyone in this world will experience some kind of disability, physical or mental, at some point or other in their life either temporarily or even permanently. It is a part of being a human not to be physically upright throughout our entire life span. Douglas Baynton has written, "Disability is everywhere, once you begin looking for it, but conspicuously absent in the histories that we write".

According to 'The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016' Person with a disability " means a person with long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his full and effective participation in society equally with others." Disability results from deterioration of health conditions, mental and physical, such as depression, cerebral palsy, and down syndrome, with personal and environmental factors such as negative attitudes, limited social support, inaccessible transportation and public buildings. There are many connotations and explanations about disability, but we should remember it is not a disease, rather, it is impairment, and it has different causes. A child may be born with extra fingers or with small legs or hands or other genetic defects. It may be hereditary or accidental. A person's environment also has a huge effect on the experience and extent of disability. If the environment is unfriendly and unapproachable, it will create different types of barriers like attitudinal, organizational or systematic architectural or physical, information or communicative barriers or technological barriers.

Under the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, person with disability has a responsibility to learn about accessibility for persons with disabilities and how it relates to the development and delivery of accessible programs and courses. The new legislation contains a schedule identifying 21 'impairments' for certification. There are some confusions regarding the terms like 'handicap', 'impairment' and 'disability' which are in use in disability studies. To solve this, World Health Organization (WHO) in the International Classification of

Impairments, Disabilities and Handicaps (1980) has made a distinction between the three terms. Impairment refers to "any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiological or anatomical structure or function.", on the other hand, Handicap is defined as "a disadvantage for a given individual that limits or prevents the fulfilment of a role that is normal" while disability means "any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being."

According to Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, "discrimination" about disability means "any distinction, exclusion, restriction based on disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal basis with others of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field and includes all forms of discrimination and denial of reasonable accommodation.

Sexual Assaults in India

According to World Report on Disability 2011 about 15% of the world's population lives with some form of disability, of whom 2-4% experience significant difficulties in functioning. The global disability prevalence is higher than previous WHO estimates, which date from the 1970s and suggested a figure of around 10%. This global estimate for disability is on the rise due to population ageing and the rapid spread of chronic diseases, as well as improvements in the methodologies used to measure disability. Globally 1 in 5 women live with some form of disability or other. Woman are facing different forms of adversity such as physical or verbal harassment, molestation, sexual abuse or sexual assault all over the world since a long time. India which is known as country of mothers (Bharat Mata) where motherhood is an ideal is not free from these burning problems. Although Indian Government has been taken some initiatives and passed laws for women to protect them, they seem to be not enough. Women and girls with disabilities also experience disparities and adversities with multiple intersecting discriminations and marginalization. I will refer to a few examples of the sexual assaults on women with disabilities in our country, which were published in various newspapers and journals.

1. In June 2013, Chandra, a 12-year-old girl with cerebral palsy, was kidnapped, raped and left bleeding in a field near her home in West Bengal state, India. [3] Chandra was unable to speak, sit, stand, or walk

independently, so she could not call for help or go home. After several hours, some villagers found Chandra in a field. She died a few months later due to health complications. (Bhattacharjee, 2018, p. 04)

2. In Delhi, Pooja, an 11-year-old girl with an intellectual disability, was taken to the police station in August 2013 by her father after she was allegedly raped by a neighbor. (India, 2022)

3. Maneka (name changed), a 15-year-old girl from Delhi with both an intellectual and physical disability, was reported to be raped by two men from her neighborhood in October 2015. (Bhattacharjee, 2018, p. 7)

4. In 2014, a 23-year-old woman with cerebral palsy was allegedly gang-raped and thrown from the rooftop in the eastern Indian state of West Bengal.

5. In August 2014, in a village in Herbertpur, Uttarakhand, Razia, a 13-year-old girl with an intellectual disability and difficulties speaking, was raped by her younger brother's 17-year-old tutor. (Bhattacharjee, 2018, p. 09)

6.   In the Banaskantha district of Gujarat a 12-year-old girl with speech and hearing impairments was abducted on October 16 and her body was found the next day. Her body was found in a field with her throat slit. The police started probing the angle of sexual violence. (Rogers, 2020)

7.   In a similar case in August, a 10-year-old deaf girl was kidnapped in Hodal near Palwal of Haryana. It was found that she was raped and murdered and her mutilated body was recovered from the fields.

8. Very recently, a mentally challenged girl was brutally raped by the father of the victim's brother's friend on 16 April 2022 in Posta, Kolkata. The culprit has been identified as 60 years old man named Raghunath Mandal. According to the report the accused man was asked to take care of her in the absence of her parents. But the man allegedly raped that mentally impaired girl and fled from the area. (Service, mentally challenged girl alleges rape in Posta, 2022)

9. On 23 April 2022, a policeman was arrested because he had allegedly sexually assaulted a specially-abled minor on a running auto at maniktala, Kolkata. The culprit was identified as a Debu mandal, a constable of Reserve Force of Kolkata Police. The complaints tell the girl was minor, and especially abled. She was traveling with her mother in the auto when she was sexually assaulted. (Service, Molests cuffs on the cop, 2021)

10. In Bihar's Madhubani districts, a girl with disabilities was gang raped. The girl was 15 years old, and she was suffering from deafness and muteness. The police said the eyes of the girl was completely damaged by the rapists so that she can would not be able to identify them. She was in critical condition. (Desk, 2021)

11. A thirteen years old minor girl was brutally raped and murdered in Jharkhand on 22 august 2020. The girl was suffering from speech impairment. According to the police the rapist raped the girl and crushed her face so that no one could identify her. Police has arrested the culprit and locked her in jail. (Raja, 2020)

12. A thirteen years old girl with disability was gang raped by three men. One of the culprits named Asif was arrested and other two rapist fled from the spot. The girl was taken to the hospital and the accusation was proved. (IANS: 2013)

The condition of women with disabilities has not improved in the twenty-first century in the era of technological advancement and AI. Since women with disabilities are physically, and sometimes mentally weaker, they are the easy to target. They are often raped, assaulted, and murdered but very few of those incidents are publicly revealed and get to see justice. Disability and Women's Studies provide a special space to look at women with disabilities.

The pervasive paradigm of discrimination alerts us about the recurring phenomenon of discrimination in the lives of women with disabilities. Feminist disability studies are now working on the lives of women with disabilities and trying to deliver their ignored voices to the masses. It discusses the overlapping relationship of identity of women with disabilities with other identities of women such as gender, sexuality, and ethnicity. Crenshaw reminds us that we are unable to think in terms of unidirectional theories of privilege and oppression. Rosemarie Garland-Thomson reflects that Feminist Disability Studies focuses on examining the patterns of meaning attributed to "those bodies" rather than "specific forms, functions, and behaviors." Feminist Disability Studies "…tends to avoid impairment-specific or medical diagnostic categories to think about disability. Certainly, feminist disability studies acknowledge communities of people based on shared disability experience, and it recognizes the differences among the wide variety of stigmatized forms of embodiment that constitute a

disability in its broadest conceptualization—from blindness to intersex to dyslexia, for instance."

4. Employment and Women with disabilities in India:

As we know there is this prevalent social perception that persons with disabilities are weak, deformed, unfit, and useless, therefore, it is very difficult to find employment for them. If we look at the history of employment of women with disabilities in private sectors, there is no data that shows woman with disabilities have been employed. Although Indian constitution talks about 3-4% reservations for the employee with disabilities in government and private sectors, this is probably not strictly followed. The new Disability Act which is the amendment of the former disability act of 1995, has increased the percentage of reservation from 3% to 4%, in our country, but it is not clearly mentioned what percentage of vacancy is allotted for women with disabilities. Our patriarchal midset is accustomed to think of women as mothers, housewives, caretakers, nurses and suitable for other domestic tasks, and perhaps women with disabilities are not considered as capable of performing outside work.

There is a big gap between Man and Women in employment whether is it private sectors or Government sectors. Although the participation rate of female in employment is increasing gradually but there remains a great difference. The Annual Bulletin of Period Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2019-20 data shows that the participation of women is way below that of men in India. FY 2020, shows that the men participation rate stood at 56.6 % but for women it was only 22.1%. From these data of employees of India, we can assume the poor percentage of women with disabilities in employment sector in India. Apart from these troubles, they face some more problems like, pay gaps, workplace harassment (if they get employed), domestic violence and tortures etc. Most of the organizations are not aware that an escort must be provided for the women with disabilities employees.

Provisions for Disabled Women in Indian Constitution: Indian constitution is the longest constitution in the world, it contains 448 Articles in 25 parts and 12 Schedules but it is an alterable constitution. Many amendments have taken place and it may be amended   further if it is required. Indian constitution theoretically never supports any kind of discrimination based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity and the other discriminatory terms but at the onset of the Indian constitution there was no particular Act for persons with disabilities. However,

Indian Government initially undertook the amendments of laws for persons with disability and this law came to be known as 'Persons With Disability Act,1995'. Latter this act was replaced as 'The Rights of Persons with Disability Act, 2016'. This new act increased the types of disability from 8 to 21. Under the Constitution the disabled persons, including women with disabilities have been guaranteed the following fundamental rights:

1. The Constitution secures to the citizens including the disabled, a right to justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, equality of status and opportunity and the promotion of fraternity.

2. Article 15 (1) enjoins the Government not to discriminate against any citizen of India (including the disabled) on the ground of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

3. No person in India irrespective of his belonging can be treated as an untouchable. It would be an offense punishable by law as provided by Article 17 of the Constitution.

4. Every person including the disabled has his life and liberty guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution.

5. There can be no traffic in human beings (including the disabled woman), and the beggar and other forms of forced labour are prohibited and the same is made punishable by law (Article 23).

6. Article 24 prohibits the employment of children (including the disabled woman) below the age of 14 years to work in any factory or mine or to be engaged in any other hazardous employment. Even a private contractor acting for the Government cannot engage children below 14 years of age in such employment.

7. Article 25 guarantees to every citizen the right to freedom of religion. Every disabled person (like the non-disabled) has the freedom of conscience to practice and propagate his religion subject to proper order, morality and health.

8. No disabled person can be compelled to pay any taxes for the promotion and maintenance of any particular religion or religious group.

9. No disabled person will be deprived of the right to the language, script or culture which he has or to which he belongs.

10. Every disabled person can move to the Supreme Court of India to enforce his fundamental rights and to move to the Supreme Court is itself guaranteed by Article 32.

11. No disabled person owning property (like the non-disabled) can be deprived of his property except by authority of law though property right is not a fundamental right. Any unauthorized deprivation of property can be challenged by suit and for relief by way of damages.

13. Every disabled person (like the non-disabled) on the attainment of 18 years of age becomes eligible for inclusion of his name in the general electoral roll for the territorial constituency to which he belongs.

Disabled Women and Education in India: Acquiring education from institution for persons with disabilities is no doubt a difficult task. Most of the parents keep their children with disabilities, especially girls with disabilities at home due to the stigma of shame of being parents of the disabled children. Moreover, we often come to know that girls with disabilities are not completely safe within the institution's premises. There are harassments form insensitive friends and associates. Most of the institutions have no ramps, lifts and other required infrastructure for the students with disabilities. There are very less number of institutions in India for the disabled students. Many schools have closed down due to insufficient teachers.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) proclaims education as a right for all children. This right mentions that disabled children require a special attention and it recommends some steps that could provide equal access to education to every category of disabled person. Indian government has approved some such acts such as Rehabilitation Council of India (RCI) Act, in 1992, Persons with Disability (PWD), Act 1995 and National Trust Act in 1995. The UN standards rules on the equalization on opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) has recommended improvement in the educational conditions for disabled students. The world conference on special needs of education in 1994 which was held in Salamanca in Spain, was marked as the golden year for the students with disabilities. In this conference the representatives of 92 Governments and 25 international organizations were present. They agreed for a dynamic new statement for disabled children in institutions to be normed. They decided "Those with special educational needs must have access to regular schools which

accommodate them with a child centered pedagogy capable of meeting these needs", among other statements. India also became signatory to these statements trying to implement them in our country. In 2002 through the 86th amendment Indian parliament made education a fundamental right. The right secures the rights of children to get free and compulsory education. Through this act child with all kinds of disabilities such as cerebral palsy, mental retardation, autism and multiple disabilities can pursue free education till the age of 18 years. But we find this has only been theoretically adopted.

Barriers in Development for Woman with Disabilities:

The things that hinder the development of an individual is called barriers. These barriers are created by the society, rather by a particular group of the society for a particular group of people. Women with disabilities undergo various types of barriers such as physical barriers, attitudinal barriers, social barriers, institutional barriers etc. which makes their lives difficult. Society never acknowledges their ability but it is ready to look at their impairments to put a stop to their developments. Women with disabilities are usually considered as a burden and society never grants the disabled women upward mobility due to these attitudinal barriers. Women with disabilities encounter huge problems. There is a general belief in Indian society that a disabled woman cannot give birth to a child, they cannot be a good wives or life partners or even a good friend. Being self–centered they cannot be a good nurses or care givers. There are and many other stigmas attached to men and women with disabilities.

Since they are differently abled, it is difficult for them to access public places such as buildings, markets. Due to unpaved, rough and mud roads and not having adequate mobility aids women with disabilities live a challenging life. The infrastructural facilities in India is not so developed yet for housing the disabled. Due to lack of especial facilities, especially for disabled women, they cannot access common toilets, common classrooms, common libraries and canteens. Organizational barriers also hinder the life of disabled woman. Like in some other countries like US and Japan, Indian disabled women do not enjoy technical apparatus and it's supports to live a better life. There are very few organizations, which demand especial rules and policies for disabled women, even feminist activists, and research works in this area is limited. All the above mentioned barriers surely are obstacles in the life of disabled women. Due to presence of these barriers in the Indian society women with disabilities experience a discriminatory unhappy life.

Schemes for Women with Disabilities in India:

The Indian Government started several schemes for persons with disabilities to encourage them to achieve their goals. The government provides for educational, economic, social, and psychological rehabilitation, creation of a barrier-free environment, providing assistive devices, special education, vocational training and early intervention program for persons with disabilities, including the women with disabilities. Some important schemes for women with disability are-

o   Deendyal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme (DDRS)

o   Scheme for Implementation of Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995 (SIPDA)

o   Scheme of Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage (IEDSS)

o   Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)

o   Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship Scheme for Students with Disabilities (RGNF)

o   Scheme of National Overseas Scholarship for Students with Disabilities

o   Scheme of Pre-Matric Scholarship and Post-Matric Scholarship for Students with Disabilities Gyan Prabha Scheme of National Trust

National Fund is allotted for the upliftment of all Persons with Disabilities including women's special provision for physically challenged women has been made in the following schemes: -

o   National Overseas Scholarship for Students with Disabilities: six out of twenty scholarships are reserved for women candidates.

o   Pre-Matric Scholarship and Post-Matric Scholarship for Students with Disabilities: 50% of the scholarships are reserved for girls.

o   Scholarship Scheme from Trust Fund: 30% of scholarships are reserved for female students with disabilities

Conclusion:

From the above discussion it can be said that people with disability, especially women with disabilities are very much marginalized in Indian society. Only barrier free environment can give equal opportunities for men and women with disabilities. This can be done by constructing new buildings keeping in mind the needs of the disabled or modifying the old buildings and other public places with

adding ramps, lifts and restrooms for persons with disabilities. Developed transport systems can also improve the lives of persons with disabilities.Public vehicles like trains, buses, and other modes of transportation could be modified to allow persons with disabilities to   access them comfortably. The Indian Constitution ensures equality, freedom, justice and dignity of all individuals and implicitly mandates an inclusive society for all including persons with disabilities, but in reality, persons with disabilities, are not considered equal or free.

Women with disabilities are often sexually assaulted or abused by others.The Government should look into this matter very sympathetically and should pronounce strict punishment for the culprits. We should be familiar with the notions defined by the different recognized institutions or organisations and scholars about impairments and disability. Indian government should train people including the employees so that they can also communicate with persons with disabilities. According to Desiree Sabuj, a deputy police commissioner, "We have had no training. When we meet a disabled woman, we may not know how to speak to her properly. The police are not cruel. In most cases, the police are simply ignorant. It is not that we don't want to believe them, but we also worry that if we make a mistake, the wrong person will be punished. The police need education and we need to be sensitized on how to handle these cases." Like the police, the society in general needs sensitization towards the disabled.

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V

Contribution of Muslim Women's Participation in Non-Cooperation Movement and Khilafat Movement with Special Focus on Bengal

Sabina Yasmin

Abstract:

In the aftermath of the First World War, indications of far-reaching changes in Indian politics became evident. Mahatma Gandhi's rise in national politics certainly brought novelty to the nationalist movement. The Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwala Bagh massacre and the martial law in the Punjab intensified the anti-British imperialism of the common people. After that came the Khilafat problem. Gandhiji associated himself with the Khilafat movement at its full height. Gandhiji associated himself and the Indian National Congress with the Khilafat movement in a sincere attempt to strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity. The decision to boycott British goods was taken based on this decision and the non-cooperation movement started and took the form of mass movement. This movement played a very important role in Bengal as well.

Keywords: *Khilafat Movement, INC, Non-Cooperation Movement, Hindu-Muslim-unity.*

A major historical event of the present era was the emergence of India as a nation and the rise of a powerful anti-imperialist and Nationalist movement. The foundation of the Indian National Movement was laid by the emerging group of the modern intelligentsia. Initially, the modern intellectuals adopted a very positive approach towards the colonial rule. They hoped that India's contact with Britain, even though in a subordinate position, would help transform India also into Britain's image. Politically they were enthralled by the heady concepts of popular sovereignty, democracy, of the freedom of the press. The wide hopes of the intellectuals were expressed in the widespread phrase that the British rule was providential that is God sent.

The second half of the 19th century saw the intellectuals gradually lose faith in the British Government as their expectations increasingly fell short of their

hopes. With the expansion of the Empire's strength, exploitation rather than industrialization followed. The colonialist's economy developed in place of the country's modern capitalist economy. The more astute Indians like Dadabhai Naoroji, Justice Ranade and R.C. Dutta soon saw that the poverty, economic backwardness, and underdevelopment of India would be the inevitable results of the Colonial relationship between India and Britain.[1] What is more significant, the period of the development of industrial capitalism in Britain witnessed underdevelopment of India.[1] The emergence of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi in the above backdrop is an unique phenomenon for the intellectuals of India.

Return of Gandhi:

On his return to India around 1915 after his long-drawn struggle for the cause of the Indians settled in South Africa, Gandhiji received warm and big welcome from the Indian's masses. His arrival in India was a turning point in Indian struggle for freedom. He was venerated as a messiah, a harbinger of peace and huge masses were drawn towards his charismatic personality from various sections of society irrespective of caste, creed or social status. His accomplishments in South Africa were well known to the Indian populace, and his straightforwardness, humility, and straightforward, down-to-earth aesthetic made it simpler and easier for people to recognize him. Little wonder then that when Gandhi made his non-cooperation program known to the masses the response was overwhelming with men and women from different sections of the society extending their whole- hearted support.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale had already hailed him as being," without doubt made of the stuff of which heroes and martyrs are made". The veteran Indian leader noticed in Gandhi more important qualities. He saw that Gandhiji had in him the marvelous spiritual power to turn ordinary men around him into heroes and martyrs. [2]

On Gokhale's advice and in keeping with his own style of never intervening in a situation without first studying in with great care Gandhiji decided that for the first year he would not take a public stand on any political issues. He spent the year travelling around the country, seeing things for himself and organizing his

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[1] Chandra, Bipan; Essays on Indian nationalism, Har-Anand Publication. Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 2005, p-64.

[2] Tendulkar, D.G.; Mahatma, life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, 8 volumes, New Delhi, 1969 reprint volume .2. p-52.

Ashram in Ahmedabad where he and his devoted band of followers who had come with him from South Africa, would lead a community life. His own political understanding did not concede with any of the political currents that were active in India then, his faith in moderate method was long eroded, nor did he agree with the home rules that the best time to agitate for home rule was when the British were in difficulty because of the first World War. He was deeply convinced eventually that none of these methods of political struggle were really viable. The only answer lay in *satyagraha*.[3] while discovering India newly, he realized that the *satyagraha* was the only way to integrate all the sections of the society including women and peasants in the National Movement.

During the course of 1917 and early 1918 he was involved in three significant struggles in Champaran in Bihar, in Ahmedabad, and in Kheda in Gujarat. The common features of these struggles was that they were related to specific local issues and that they were fought for the economic demands of the masses. Two of these struggles Champaran and Kheda involved the peasants and the one in Ahmedabad involved industrial workers.

Though Gandhiji had arrived in India from South Africa in 1915, the first political struggle was launched by him only in 1919. After the end of World War I there were renewed demands for self-rule. The British government passed the repressive Rawlatt bills at the beginning of 1919 prohibiting public protest and suspending civil liberties. This was when Gandhi began to develop a programme for women.[4] Gandhi formed a *satyagraha* sabha and announced that a *hartal* would take place on 6th of April. On this day, he addressed a gathering of women and impressed upon them the need to take part in the *satyagraha* movement.

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre:

On April 1990, at the orders of General Dyer, hundreds of peaceful protesters were massacred at Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar. Men, women and children were killed in this brutal massacre, unmasking Britain's civilizing mission forever.[5] The Government estimated that 379 people were dead, other estimates were considerably higher, and more than 2000 were wounded. The hunter enquiry

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[3] Chandra, Bipan India's struggle for independence ,1989 Penguin books, page-177.

[4] Forbes, Geraldine; The New Cambridge history of India, iv.2. women in modern India (Cambridge University press, 1996) P-124.

[5] Ibid, P.P -124-125.

committee report informed that as many as 400 people were shot dead and 1200 were injured. There were various atrocities where suffering was inflicted upon women and their modesty was outraged. According to a statement made by twenty-three women,

> We were called from our houses whenever we were and collected near the school. We were asked to remove our veils. We were abused and harassed to give out the name of Bhai Mool Singh as having lectured against the Government. This incident occurred at the end of Baisakhi in the morning in Mr. Besworth Smith's presence. He spat at us and he and spoke many bad things. He beat some of us with sticks. We were made to stand in rows and to hold our ears. He abused us also saying. Files what can you do, if I shoot you?[6]

The brutality at Jallianwala Bagh stunned the entire world. But repression was intensified by the British. Punjab was placed under material law and the people of Amritsar forced into indignities such as crawling on their bellies before the Europeans. Women in large numbers participated to protest the massacre.

Bengal was in the forefront to protest this act of barbarism. Women in Bengal took part in the protest against the massacre in great numbers. Noble laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore was strongly involved in protest against the Raj on a number of occasions, most notably in the movement to resist the 1905 British proposal to split the province of Bengal into two, a plan that was eventually withdrawn following popular resistance. A month after the massacre, Tagore wrote to the viceroy of India, asking to be relieved of the knighthood he had accepted for years earlier.

In retaliation, of Jallianwala Bagh massacre there was an outbreak of violence in different parts of the country in the form of arson looting and even assaults on Englishmen at the physical level. Gandhi felt greatly pained at the incidents, and on 18th April 1990 he called of his *satyagraha* campaign. He candidly admitted that his decision to launch the *satyagraha* campaign was a Himalayan miscalculation because the masses were not prepared for this.[7] Through the campaign was called off, it had become very clear by then that women had begun

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[6] Report on the hunter enquiry committee, Indian National Congress statement 581, p-868. M.K

[7] Gandhi. M.K; The Story of My Experiments with Truth, Navjivan, Ahmedabad, 1927 PP-356-58.

to actively associate themselves in the ongoing struggle for Indians Independence.[8]

Khilafat Issue: emergence of Gandhi as a leader of Hindu Muslim Unity

Another important incident to have taken place around the time was the Khilafat question which had enormously agitated the Muslims of India. This issue was related to the Turkish empire and the treatment meted out to the Khalifa who is held in high esteem by the Muslims, by virtue of his being the temporal head of the Muslims all over the world. The Khalifa, are regarded as successors to the prophet Mohammed, commander of the Faithful, the shadow of God on earth - these exalted titles convey the symbolic importance of Khalifa to the community of Islam.[9]

During the period of war, the prime minister of England had given an assurance to the Muslims that no harm would be caused to the Turkish Empire. A deputation of the Muslim Khilafat conference also paid a visit to England with the purpose of putting forward the point of view in regard to Turkey and the Khilafat. The British government however turned down the request of the Muslims. Fears of Muslim disunity were aroused by the decline of the Ottoman Empire—the preeminent Islamic power whose sultan, as caliph, was seen by pan-Islamists as the leader of the worldwide Muslim community. The caliphate was endangered first by Italian attacks (1911) and the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and later by the empire's defeat in World War I (1914–18). Fears of the loss of the Khalipha were intensified by the *Treaty of Sèvres* which dismembered the empire, not only detaching all non-Turkish regions from the empire but also giving parts of the Turkish homeland to Greece and other powers. On 14 May 1920 a draft treaty called the treaty of serves was published setting aside all the assurances given to the Muslims by the British during the war period.

Treaty of Sèvres, (August 10, 1920), post-World War I pact between the victorious Allied powers and representatives of the government of Ottoman Turkey. The treaty abolished the Ottoman Empire and obliged Turkey to renounce all rights over Arab Asia and North Africa. The pact also provided for an independent Armenia, for an autonomous Kurdistan, and for a Greek presence

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[8] Taneja, Anup; Gandhi women and the national movement, Har-Anand Publication, New Delhi, 2005, p-81.

[9] Mineault, Gail; The Khilafat movement, A religious and political mobilization in India (OUP, New Delhi 1982) P.1.

in eastern Thrace and on the Anatolian west coast, as well as Greek control over the Aegean islands commanding the Dardanelles.

A Khilafat committee was formed under the leaders of Ali Brothers, Maulana Azad, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Harshad Mohani .Mohammad Ali and his brother Maulana Shaukat Ali joined with other Muslim leaders such as Pir Ghulam Mujaddid Sarhandi, Sheikh Shaukat Ali Siddiqui, Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed Ansari, Raees-Ul-Muhajireen Barrister Jan Muhammad Junejo, Hasrat Mohani, Syed Ata Ullah Shah Bukhari, Mohammad Farooq Chishti, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Dr. Hakim Ajmal Khan to establish the All India Khilafat Committee. The company had its headquarters in Lucknow. They sought to foster Muslim political unification and use their power to uphold the Khalifa. They released the Khilafat Manifesto in 1920, which urged Indian Muslims to band together and hold the British government responsible for maintaining the Khalifa. The Khilafat Committee in Bengal included Mohmmad Akram Khan, Manruzzaman Islamabadi, Mujibur Rahman Khan and Chittaranjan Das.[10]

The main objective of the Khilafat movement was to force the British government to change its attitude towards Turkey and restore the Turkish Sultan (Khalifa) to his former position. A countrywide agitation was organized. In February 1920, Gandhiji suggested to the Khilafat committee to adopt a program of non-violent non-cooperation to protest the government's behavior 9th June,1920 the Khilafat committee at Allahabad unanimously accepted his suggestion and asked Gandhiji to lead the movement. The Congress leaders, including Gandhiji viewed the Khilafat agitation as a golden opportunity for cementing the Hindu Muslim unity and bringing the Muslim masses into the national movement. The Congress at its special session in September 1920 at Calcutta supported Gandhiji's plan for non-cooperation for three causes 1) redressal of the Punjab grievances, 2) rectification of the Khilafat wrongs and 3) the establishment of Swaraj. The people were asked to boycott Government educational institutions, law courts and legislature, to give up using foreign clothes, to surrender officially conferred titles and Honors. Many leading lawyers of the country like C. R Das, Motilal Nehru, Mr. Jayakar, Saifuddin Kichloo, Vallabhbhai Patel, C Rajagopalachari, T. Prakasham and Ashraf Ali gave up their lucrative practices, and their sacrifice became a source of inspiration for many. In numbers Bengal leaders were followed by Punjab, Andhra Pradesh, UP, Karnataka. Though India sought to refuse to corporate with the British Government, they incorporated progressive programs of the non-cooperation

movement included establishment of National School and Colleges, Panchayat, popularization of Swadeshi and Khadi, development of Hindu Muslim Unity, removal of untouchability etc.

The Indian National Movement was quite radical by contemporary standards. It was oriented towards the poor from the beginning. The poverty of the people was the starting point of Dadabhai Naoroji's economic critique of colonialism. This pro- poor orientation was further strengthened by the advent of Gandhiji and the rise of a strong socialist current.

The national movement was based on the assumption that certain elements of structure, unity, and nationhood were present in India's history though it was not yet a structured Nation. From the very beginning Gandhi very consciously integrated various section of the society, such as peasants, Muslim and women and untouchables who are reprogrammed and included for the success of the national movement. Gandhiji observed

> I discovered the weapon of non-cooperation in the form we know while thinking about the khilafat. I feel very much about this issue because I am a staunch Hindu. If I wish to see my religion protected against 7 crores of Muslims, I must be ready even to die for the protection of their religion.... I do not believe that the Muslims will betray us once their end has been achieved.

> Those, who believe in religion do not betray anyone. I do not know of a single instance in history of a great sacrifice by the Hindus having gone unrewarded. What was done before now was a kind a bargaining. There is no place whatever for bargaining in our dealing today. The Hindus should help the Muslims as a matter of duty and look at God for reward. They must not ask anything of the Muslims I seldom mention the subject of Cow protection to the Ali Brothers. I have already published the conversation with Maulana Abdul Bari. He knows, all the same, that I have not concealed any hope of being able to melt the heart of Muslims, by dying for them, if need be. It is my conviction that God always regard a good. My prayer is to God. I have sold myself to the Muslims without demanding a price and I ask each and every Hindu to do the same. This is no policy, but plain dealing. I would not have been ready to die for Muslims if their case had

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been week. If knowing their case to be obviously just, I remained aloof through doubt or fear, my Hinduism would be disgraced and I would have failed in my duty as the neighbor.

I know that the khilafat agitation is not a political weapon. It is the duty of all Muslims to defend the khilafat. It is a different matter that Hindus may not regard it as their duty as well. The Muslims will not accept cow protection as a religious duty. But all Muslims know that for the Hindus it is so. In the same way, all Hindu's must know that to defend the khilafat is a religious Duty for the Muslims. I have a great respect for the devotion of the Ali brothers to their religion. They would not have become fakirs just for the sake of political benefits. Of course, fighting for the khilafat will increase the powers of Islam.

It is no crime to rejoin at this. The Muslims cannot but big glad, and if we wish that people of other faiths should be happy at the awakening of a new spirit in Hinduism and its regeneration, we Hindus should also be glad at the regeneration of Islam" [10]

While inspiring the Hindu and the Muslim women to take up the weaving as an integral part of the movement, Gandhi observed that if Hindu and Muslim women take to spinning and Hindu and Muslim weavers take to weaving then within a short time the country will be able to produce all the cloth it needs.

I wish, therefore to draw the attention of all, specially of women, to the example that Damnagar has set. But what can women do about it, so long as men do not provide them with spinning wheels and silvers of cotton by getting cotton carded by local carders? I trust, therefore, that at least and few public-spirited men will come forward in every village, who at a little trouble to themselves, will undertake to procure cotton, get it carded and turn into cotton rolls and supply them to women who may be prepared to spin. This is a business in which no loss is possible. Only last week we saw the instance of Dhasa where men and women not only spin and weave but for the most part use cloth made in their own village and sent

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[10] Ref. Razzaq, Rana. "Khan, Mohammad Akram". Banglapedia. Bangladesh Asiatic Society. Archived from the original on 6 July 2017. Retrieved 16 July 2016.

out the surplus, if any, to other villages. There is no starvation, there cannot be any in that village. With a little effort, things can be planned in a similar way in every village in India .[11]

Gandhi sternly warned the government that if justice was denied to the Muslim, he would be left with no other option but to resume *Satyagraha* Urging the Hindu and Muslim women to adopt Swadeshi goods and to start using the spinning-wheel, Gandhiji made it plain that the Khilafat agitation will benefit the cause of Swadeshi.[12]

But the resolve not to use articles made in Europe only so long as the khilafat issue remained unsolved did not a seem to proper to him.

Muslims ought not to use European goods even if they get full justice on the Khilafat question. Moreover, it is not enough to boycott European goods alone. No foreign goods, including Japanese goods, should be used. The Swadeshi Movement was intended for a permanent change. According to Gandhiji, no matter how justly or unjustly the Europeans dealt with the Indians it was the duty of the Indians to use only Swadeshi goods so that India may prosper and get perfect justice. The country could prosper through the spinning wheel and the Handloom.[13]

Nagpur session: A move towards inclusive mass movement:

At the special session of the Indian National Congress held on 4th September in Calcutta the Congress decided to give full support to Gandhi's noncooperation. The decision of non-cooperation movement was endorsed at the annual session of the Congress held at Nagpur in December 1920. Thus, the stage was prepared for the first struggle to be carried out in a purely nonviolent manner against one of the mightiest Imperial powers known to the history of mankind. Gandhiji promised that if the program was fully implemented, Swaraj would be ushered in within the year. The Nagpur session committed the Congress to a program of extra constitutional mass action. Many groups of revolutionaries, especially in Bengal, also pledged support to the movement.

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[11] Navjivan ,30 January ,1921. Gujarati Navjivan, 4-7-1920 CWMG, Vol. XVII, P-8.

[12] Manmohan Kaur, Women in India's freedom struggle, sterling, New Delhi ,1985, p-140.

[13] Ektaa Jain, Khadi and Contemporary Fashion: The National Movement and Postmodern Context (Unpublished M.Phil dissertation CSSS/ SSS, JNU. New Delhi) (2014)

To enable the Congress to fulfill its new commitment, significant changes were introduced in its creed as well as in its organizational structure. The goal of the Congress was changed from the attainment of self-government by constitutional and legal means to the attainment of Swaraj by peaceful and legitimate means. The new constitution of the Congress The handiwork and Gandhiji, introduced other important changes. The membership fee was reduced to four annas per year to enable the poor to become members. The Nagpur session empowered the Congress to integrated every section of the society in the national movement.

Muslim women in the Khilafat:

Women constituted a powerful group within the Khilafat movement. They extended their support to the movement both morally and financially by giving their ornaments in Charity. In a letter, sir Harcourt Butler to Lord Harding, underlined the important role played by women in the movement. He writes," The priests and women are the most important influences in India ...... and I am not very much afraid of the politicians until they play on these two."[14]

As the Khilafat movement gained momentum, Gandhi deputed Sarala Devi Chaudhari , nice of Rabindranath Tagore and founder of the Bharat Sri Mahamandal in Lahore to visit Bareilly . Writing about her experience in Bareilly to Gandhi in May 1920, she recorded that she had made considerable headway in her promotion of chakra and Swadeshi among the Muslim women. At one place, ladies - a wife and a sister took the vow. It was a family of Kutchi Vohra's, very rich and culture settle down here since the days of the mutiny. She wrote to Gandhi she was so encourage by the response to her efforts that she reported, "I find I can do the Swadeshi and charkha propaganda to perfection in these provinces."[15] At a meeting in Bareilly organized by Begum Hazrat Mohani Mohammadan ladies took the Swadeshi vow.[16]

Gandhiji made special effort to secure the Muslim women's participation in the non-cooperation movement. To ensure this he deftly avoided making references to Hindu mythology and scriptures which he generally employed to draw the Hindu women. When he appeared with Maulana Shaukat Ali to address a Muslim women's meeting at Patna, he deliberately avoided mentioning Ram, Sita Ravan,

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[14] Mineault, Gail; The Khilafat movement, A religious and political mobilization in India (OUP, New Delhi,1982) p-429

[15] Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Volume- XVII, p-429.

[16] Ibid, P-429.

Draupadi and so on. He urged the Hindu and Muslim women to unite together in a split of harmony and to strengthen the movement by taking to charkha and spinning. In order to gain their whole heart support, he told the Muslim women that whatever was written in the Holy Quran was all good and there was truth in all religions. He told them that British rule was the rule of Satan and exhorted them to renounce foreign clothes to save Islam.

In order to make the Khilafat and the non-cooperation movements popular among the Muslim women religious items and anti-British sentiments were skillfully used. Indeed, Muslim women become a powerful opinion group within the Khilafat movement, supporting it m morally with their firm religious faith and functionally, with their ornaments. The women who played an active role during the movement was the indefatigable Ali matriarch Bi Amman. She was the mother of Ali Brothers and commanded to great respect in political circles. She was vehemence opposed to the idea of women remaining confined to their home and not associating themselves with political activities. She had earlier been associated with women through meetings to support the work of the Anjuman-e-Khuda-e-kaabaa collect of funds to maintain the house of the Kaaba and other Muslim holy places and to defend them again non-Muslim aggression, purpose which they emphasized were strictly religious, having nothing to do with politics.[17]

Women in Bengal

One of the basic tenets of philosophy of Ahimsa or nonviolence is that it is necessary to build moral power. As Gandhi emerged as the country's political leader, he called for the people to arm themselves morally and declared that the eradication of untouchability, the acceptance of equality for women, liberation from creeping superstition and fear, and the cultivation of Humanism were critical to this argument. Gandhi directly declared the equality for women would be one of the central objectives of his political program. With all the persuasiveness and charisma at his command, he urged women to step out of their homes and join him. In the first non-cooperation agitation itself, the participation of women become very much evident. In different parts of Bengal women joined the procession, propagate the use of khadi and charkha and some of them even took the extreme step of leaving Government schools and colleges.

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[17] Chaudharani, Maitrayee Indian women's movement, Reform and revival Radiant publishers, New Delhi ,1993, p-129.

Deshbandhu Chitranjan Das and his wife Basanti Devi took the leadership of non-cooperation Movement in Bengal. On 7th December 1921, along with Urmila Devi (the sister-in-law) and Sunita Devi (nice of C.R Das) was arrested for selling khaddar in Calcutta. Meanwhile they were release with few hours. The arrest of these ladies inspired the women and youth of Bengal to do any sacrifice for the nation. When news of their arrest spread, a huge crown of Marwaris, Muslims, Bhatias, Sikhs, Millhands and school boys gathered around until the police release those women. Muslim women support the program of selling khaddar by the women of the Das family. When C. R Das was in prison, Basanti Devi become the President of the Bengal provincial Congress during 1921- 22 and presided over its session in Chittagong in 1922.Thus a Bengali women for the first time came to occupy a prominent position in the political leadership of the country. In her presidential speech she insisted upon the reconstruction of rural India. She called upon the people of Bengal to make politics and integral part of their life. She expressed her believe that human excellence in its totally only could enable want to get near the truth.[18]

At that time Nari Karma Mandir was centre of Satyagraha movement established by Urmila Devi in Bhawanipur Calcutta. The main object of it was to popularize the use of charkha women. Many Satyagrahi women of 1930 movement came from the centre. Mohini Dasgupta wife of Raibahadur Tadak Chandra Dasgupta (a government servant) entered into Nationalist politics after the death of her husband. Along with her daughter, daughter-in-law and granddaughter. She had volunteered herself in spinning charkha, motivating the ladies to use Khaddar and selling it door to door in Calcutta. Another brave lady was Jyotirmoy Ganguly, the daughter of industrial parents Dwarkanath Ganguly and Kadambini Ganguli. She completed her master's degree and taught in different school and colleges all over India. After resigning from the teaching profession in Ceylon, she joins the movement and organized the first woman volunteer crops in Calcutta Congress 1920.Throughout 1921-22 she actively participated in the agitation. Popularly known as Devi Chaudharani, she had great contribution in 1930 movements. She was a great pioneer of female education associated with Vidhyasagar Vani Bhavan and Mahila Atmarakh Samiti. Hemoprabha Majumdar, wife of Congress leader Basanta Majumdar was the most compared women complete women leader. She was one of the Founder members of Swarajya party, established by CR Das in 1922, she established Mohila Karmi

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[18] Forbes, Modern women in India, P-126.

Samshad. The main object of this organization was to give vocational training to women and infused the spirit of nationalism among themselves. A women's hostel for the destitute was also run by the samsad. Hemoprabha had played a significant role in steamer strikes of Chandpur and Goyaland (1921), letter she went to Narayanganj and established a women's organization there. After returning to Calcutta, she became injured by police while leading a woman procession.[19] In 1925 when Sarojini Naidu became the president of Congress, Hemoprabha extended helping hands to her.

The women of mufassil area did not tag behind. Boycott of union board in Midnapur became successful because women supported it.[20]

The women of Calcutta have obstructed the gentleman of Calcutta by trying to sell Khadi and a telegram in the newspaper has announced that they have been consequently arrested. The company includes that devoted partner of the president elect, his widow sister and his niece. I had hoped that in the initial stages, at any rate women would be spread the honor of going to jail. They were not to became aggressive civil resisters. But the Bengal Government, in their Imperial zeal to make no distinction even of sex, have conferred the honor up three women of Calcutta. I hope the whole country will welcome this innovation. The women of India should have as much share in winning Swaraj as men. Probably in this peaceful struggle women can out distance man by many a mile. We know that she is any day superior to man in her religious devotion. Gandhi was overwhelmed when girls and young married women in Bengal had come to him and told him that they could not use jewelry for they were at present in a state of widowhood without Swaraj.[21]

Muslim women's participation in the non-cooperation movement in Bengal

Role of women in the history of the freedom movement of India is remarkable. Though women did not take part directly in politics in the early stage of the freedom movement, yet they helped the movement indirectly, many women of remote villages of Bengal also took part actively in the movement and helped the movement directly and indirectly about whom we do not know. Role of Muslim women in the freedom struggle is very important and also in the Bengal, the

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[19] Anandabazar Patrika,17th April,1922.
[20] Anandabazar Patrika,17th April,1922.
[21] Dainik Basumati ,9 February ,1922

Bengali Muslim women participation also very important in the history of National Movement in the history.

It was not very easy to task for the revolutionists to win freedom. It took long time to prepare the ground for the movement. At first male volunteers participated in the movement. But gradually the women of villages and towns were inspired by the revolutionists. Many women leavings their happy life joined the movement and spent hard life during the movement. This hard life was felt to them like bed of roses. Their main moto was to win freedom from the British Government.

Many women were illiterate. They could not write and read. Yet they could understand the importance of the independence of motherland. They bored with the harassment of the public, hanging, jail, beating by cane and boot, bullet and revolver and other such type of repression of Government. They did not care such type of repression. During the first half of the 20th century there were so many superstitions in our society in respect of women. During these time Muslim women did not take general education and even there was no ample scope for female education in villages of Bengal gradually women took education and Society was changed. The leaders of the country at this time instructed the women that women had certain duties in the society in respect of freedom movement. They may change the society and even they may win freedom. In this connection we may say that, along with British rule, came a link with the West, and modern ideas, which were first developed in western Europe, made their entry into India. The winds of change, which took place in the west in the 18th and 19th centuries, would certainly have reached our shores, because India had never followed a closed-door policy. Though trade and travel should have for centuries established channels of communication not only with the countries of Asia but also with Europe. Though these sources, news of events and happenings in Europe and elsewhere and details of new thinking taking place in the west were reaching India since 18 centuries.

The intellectual life of Indian people began to understand revolutionary changes influenced by such ideas and nationalism, democracy and sovereignty These new Idea's help the people of India to think about their own society, economy, Government and even about the true nature of British imperialism in India.[22]

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[22] The Search Light, 9.2.1921., CWMG, Volume-XIX, P -335.

The spirit of nationalism had been the greatest contribution of the English education and culture in India and the people who first took the advantage and reaped the benefits of the English education were the Bengalis. The freedom struggle in Bengal in particular and for that matter in India therefore began as the movement of the educated middle class and it was not until after the second decade of the present century that the common people had taken any part in it.[23] The most important and creative role in the development of Nationalism in India was played by the modern intelligentsia. It was the first social group in Bengal led to movements for social change. In the beginning of the 19th Century men such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy deeply felt that the main causes of the defeat of such a vast country as India by a handful of foreigners lay in the weakness of its internal social-economic, political and intellectual make up.[24] Gradually the intellectual group began to understand the basic character of British rule. By the end of the 19th Century, they had come to realize the British interest in India. So, they began to build up a Nationalist political movement against imperialism.

During the second half of the 19th Century, we can see we see the flowering of national political consciousness and the foundation and growth of an organized national movement. During this period modern intelligentsia not in Bengal but throughout India created by political associations to spread political education and to initiate political work in the country. This work was to be based on new political ideas. A new intellectual perception of reality, new social economic and political objectives, new forces of struggle and resistance and new techniques of political organization took more than half a century of bring the common people within the fold of modern politics.[25]

Razia Khatoon (daughter of Naseeruddin) was the first Muslim lady of Bengal who shoot up against the British. She was arrested and sent to Kalapani where she took her last breath. Akbari Begum was the mother of barrister Asif Ali. She inspired Muslim women through had speeches to join the non-cooperation Movement. In May 1920 she delivered a historic speech in which she said, "we should hold our religion firm and socially boycott the people who oppose it."

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[23] Freedom struggle by Bipan Chandra, Amalesh Tripathi and Barun De. P-25-26

[24] Indian history Congress journal (34th session) The Socio-Political roots of nationalism by Dr. Hitesh Ranjan sanyal. pp-52-53.

[25] Freedom struggle by Bipan Chandra, AmlesTripathi and Barun De p-34.

The history of freedom movement would be incomplete without mentioning the contribution of Asgarhi Begum (mother of Kazi Abdul Rahim) of Thana Bhawan, Muzaffarnagar who fought the British valiantly and was burnt alive when defeated. Habiba and Rahimi who obstructed the advance of English forces, were hanged. Zehida Khatoon Sherwani wrote patriotic poems to encourage freedom fighters. Khadija Begum joined the non-cooperation movement and went from home to home to inspire women to wear Khadi.

Begum Sakina Luqmani, Fatima Taib Ali, Hizra Begum also participated in the freedom struggle and made rich contributions in various ways. Some of the Muslim women imprisoned, fined and suffered at the hands of the British for freedom movement and their contribution cannot be denied.[26]

Conclusion:

Although women's participation in first non-cooperation movement was not on a mass scale and was mainly confined to those whose husband, father, brother and sons had already joined this struggle and were in jail,28 there can be no denying that Indian women and especially in Bengal had made significant contributions both to the khilafat causes and to the non-cooperation campaign initiated by Gandhi. A government of India Publication observed that the growing interest displayed among middle class women in political and social questions, there increasing prominence on this platform and in the press... must be taken as the dawn of a new era, and the fact that the number of women who take part in public life is a still very small, affords no reason for questioning it's significance.[27] Margaret cousin also pointed out that the non-co-operation movement gave a gave a big boost to the awakening of Indian women, and that Women's ardent desire for the freedom of their country has given them such personal freedom that they are now welcomed into the open Street as volunteers, as pickets, as politicians. They do not naturally move towards fighting for their own liberation. The Indian National Movement cannot progress without the aid of women, the Liberation of women will be aided by their devotion to the national movement. At the end of the day, they proved themselves as equal partner for the nation's independent. The real significance of non-cooperation movement was that the Indian Nationalist movement acquired real mass base for the first time with

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[26] Ibid-p-52.

[27] Basu, Aparna; Op.cit.p-22

participation of peasants, urban women and workers. At the end of the movement, the women proved themselves as equal partner of national consciousness.

The purpose of the work is to reconstruct the role of Muslim women in the National Movement in Bengal during the non-cooperation and Khilafat movement Bengali Muslim women's also a special position in the history of the freedom movement in India. Women in large scale in Bengal took part in these movement. Though the majority portion of women of Bengal where illiterate, yet they showed their courage and took active part in the freedom movement.[28] At the end of the movement the women proved themselves as equal partner of national consciousness.

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[28] Coucins, M.E.,The Awakening of Asian Womanhood (Ganesh and co. Madras,1922) P-8 and 59-60.

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6

Subjugation and Emancipation: Women Characters in the Select Works of Girish Karnad

Santosh Mahaldar

Abstract: *A feminist perspective explores and analyzes among its other themes, the theme of gender inequality. It talks about the discourses of patriarchy and sexism that have kept women oppressed and marginalized economically, politically, socially and psychologically. Lois Tyson asserts: "Feminist criticism examines how literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women." (Tyson, 2019, p. 79) Disparity against women based on gender distinction has been the core preoccupation of feminism. The role of women in our society has been confined within the boundaries of daughter, wife, and mother, which are suggestive of the restrictions that almost all women face in their homes. This paper draws on gender discourses to discuss the theme of subjugation of women in some select plays of Girish Karnad. The paper discusses four plays of Karnad to explore the issue; Naga-Mandala, The Fire and the Rain, Hayavadana and Yajati. Discussion on women's subjugation requires a proper theoretical and philosophical perspective. The essay refers to some deliberations and convictions of feminist critics like John Stuart Mill, Simone de Beauvoir, Kate Millet, and Michel Foucault. Girish Karnad was well aware that the sexist oppression of women is a feature of patriarchal dominance. We know the adage, "power sets the agenda for patriarchy." The research aims to pinpoint how Karnad seeks for means of atonement in the select plays.*

Keywords: Feminism, Subjugation, Gender Discourses, Sexist Oppression, Male Power and Hegemony, Emancipation and Freedom

"The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and feminity is the political difference between freedom and subjection" (Pateman, 1988, p. 207)

> A wife must always be a few feet behind her husband. Women's magazines will tell you that a marriage should be an equal partnership. That's nonsense. Rubbish. No partnership can be equal. It will always be unequal, but take care that its' unequal in favour of your husband. If the scales tilt in your favour, god help you, both of you. (The Dark Holds No Terror, 2004, p.135)

Girish Karnad's contribution to Indian drama will remain unforgettable. Not only in India but also in the world forum of theater, he is a name will never become an oblivion. In all his plays he seems very immaculate, and perspicacious in portraying the dominant and inimical issues of contemporary Indian society. He has directed and acted in several feature films, documentaries and television serials in Kannada, Hindi and English. He stands as a galaxy in the periphery of Indian Theatre. In the 1960s his emergence as a playwright set the beginning of an advent of modern Indian plays in Kannada, contemporaneously what Badal Sircar did in Bengali theatre, Vijay Tendulkar in Marathi, and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. Among the well-known plays to Girish Karnad's credit are *Yajati* (1961), "Maa Nishaadha"(1964), *Tuglaq (*1964*), Hayavadana* (1971*), Anjumallige* (1977), *Hittina Hunja* aka *Bali* (The Sacrifice) (1980) *Naga-Mandala* (1988*), Fire and the Rain* (1998), "Taledanda" (1990).

As already mentioned, among Indian modern playwrights such as Mahesh Dattani and Vijay Tendulkar, Karnad is a bright name. Through his writings, he shows his utmost dexterity in portraying the position of women in Indian society. We know about Western playwrights Bertolt Brecht and Jean Anouilh who used folk stories of other cultures as a source for their own plays. Karnad also employs folk tales in some of his dramas.

A feminine perspective explores and analyzes the theme of gender inequality. It talks about the discourse of patriarchy and sexism that has kept women oppressed and marginalized in all sections of the societal level, economically, politically, socially, mentally and psychologically. Lois Tyson asserts: "Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women." (Tyson, 2019, p. 79) Women's confinement within stereotypical roles defines a kind of life where there is torture and violence, both psychological and physical. Women have faced such violence and disparities since ancient times. They have been objectified, treated as objects of enjoyment. Our society is not individualistic, and especially in the case of a woman her claim to

individuality remains out of the question. The emphasis is more on duty than on individuality, and the resultant effect is the repression of individuality. A woman can either be a slave or a goddess but never an equal.

We know the dictates of *Manusmriti* laid grotesque rules against the true and free lives of women in our society for a long time. Manu said that women have to be dependent first on their father, second on their husband and towards the end on their son "father protects her in childhood, husband protects her in youth, and sons protect (her) in old age. A woman cannot be left unprotected." *(MS9.3) [1].*

 The notion of women's empowerment is a strong discourse in almost every field of humanities. Woman empowerment is the process of empowering women in all strata of life – art, education, social identity and finding an expression for equal opportunity. Feminist theorists believe that our cultural structures are ideological where women are thought to be subordinates, to be the 'other'. They are determined to unpack the 'ideologies of dominance'.

John Stuart Mill in his essay *The Subjection of Women* (1869) advocates for women's equal rights and freedom. Mill goes against the conventional social system where women are placed in lower status and presents his convictions for women's rights and emancipation in all strata of life. Mill holds that despite having potential manpower within them, women are unable to fully contribute to the advancement of society because they are confined to their homes and subject to numerous strict restrictions. Due to this discrimination and inequality, women suffer from cultural patriarchy where they are treated as objects. Mill writes:

The legal subordination of sex to other is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other. (Mill, 2006, p. 3)

Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) talks about the treatment of women during her times. She put forward the question; "what is women? (Beauvoir, 1953, p. 8) A woman's destiny depends on man's hand. Men are considered as subjects and women are like "other". In a family tree men are clearly marked as privileged while women are the additional, the underprivileged. A man can recognize himself on his own but a woman has to depend on her father, husband or son in the matter of her identity. Beauvoir refers to Greek writer Pythagoras's observation on women to bring out centuries of prejudiced conviction: "There is a good principle which created order, light, and

man, and an evil principle which created chaos, darkness, and woman."
(Beauvoir, 2011, p. 8) Kate Millet in her path-breaking work *The Sexual Politics*
(1969) asserts that women are the victims of society's repressive ideology, which
favors male choices. Michael Foucault has pointed out that power is established
through unequal dynamic circumstances. From this vantage point, power
connections are internal to processes like economic ordering, networks of
knowledge relations, legal reforms, and political reforms. Higher institutions,
like state and politics are not the only ones that play suppressive roles there are
institutions like family that follow the patriarchal model.

We will now proceed to analyze the theme of women's subjection and
emancipation in the select works of Girish Karnad. We will look into the
situations of Karnad's women's characters and their literary representation.

Karnad's play *Naga-Mandala* (1988) begins with the man (the failed
playwright). The man is cursed to die if he fails to spend a sleepless night.   The
play *Naga-Mandala*, or play with a cobra is based on two oral anecdotes from
Karnataka. Karnad heard one a few years ago from professor A.K. Ramanujan,
while he was staying, at the University of Chicago, and he wrote Naga-Mandala.
The play recounts the story of a girl named, Rani. Her husband, Appana treats
her atrociously keeps her locked in her house. Karnad here explores the theme of
women's incarceration and women's emancipation. The play revolves around
three main characters, Rani, Appanna and the Cobra. In the starting scene of the
play, we see that Rani gets married to Appanna (who represents any man). Rani's
parents consider Appanna as a suitable bride for her because Appanna is rich and
wealthy. Since she is a single daughter, her parents called her Rani, Queen of the
whole world, Queen of the long tresses. One day her husband Appanna comes
and takes her with him to his village. The worst days of Rani start after her
marriage. Now Rani is "Beyond the seas and the seven isles.'' Appanna, Rani's
husband, starts torturing her physically and mentally. He locks her and goes to
spend time with another woman. He departs after lunch and returns the next day.
Rani wants to share her pains and sorrows but she has no one to talk to. She is
miserable and frightened to pass the days and nights alone. At her own house,
Rani used to sleep between her mother and father. But here Appanna does not
even care for her and rebukes her all the time. He says " I don't like idle chatter.
Do as you are told, you understand?" Thus Rani starts living her life like a "caged
bird". Kurudavva, a blind woman, through her son finds out about Appanna's ill-
treatment of Rani and that he visits the house of his concubine. She makes a

connection with Rain and after hearing Rani's painful tale, Kurudavva feels pity for Rani and gives her a magical root to be mixed with curry to make her husband fall in love with her. But instead of feeding her husband, she pours it into a nearby ant-hill where a Naga eats the curry. Naga falls in love with Rani and visits Rani every night in disguise of the real Appanna. They make love and eventually, Rani becomes pregnant. When Rani shares the fact with the real Appanna and he gets shocked calls her a traitor, a harlot, prostitute, " Aren't you ashamed to admit it, you harlot? I locked you in, and yet you managed to find a lover! Tell me who it is, who did you go to with your sari off?" (Nagamandala,33). Thus Appanna in turn blames Rani for adultery and insults her. At the verdict of village elders Rani must undergo a chastity test. As suggested by Naga Rani offers to take a snake ordeal. She has to put her hand in a snake pit. If assumed pure, the snake would not bite her. The Naga does not bite her, instead, it raises its hood over its head and gently coils around her neck like a garland. This incident is a miracle. The village elders hail Rani as a Goddess, " she is not a woman. She is a divine Being, a Goddess-" (Nagamandala, 39). Now, Appanna repents, is made to accept Rani's domination, and mends his ways of life. They start living a happy conjugal life. But Naga cannot forget his love for Rani. He decides to visit her. The ending of the play is multi-layered that provides a space for the lover within Rani's household as Rani considers Naga as the symbol of her marital bliss and tells him to live in her hair. The brutal treatment of Rani by Appanna before to the miracle is malicious. She is confined by Appanna like a caged bird. She lacks control over her own life and the ability to communicate her problems. During a discussion of the play, Nagamandala Aparna Bhargava Dharwadker says:

By making Rani almost a pure embodiment of feminine simplicity, innocence, and powerlessness, Karnad pares his drama of gender relations down to an elemental level. Marriage for Rani means the loss of the secure world of childhood and parental love, and she has to reimagine the world in her fantasies merely to keep herself from psychic collapse. (Karnad, Collected plays, Vol. 1 xxx).

After her experience with the snake, people begin to revere her as a goddess. This too points out at the society's evil that cannot see the real plight of women but has to place her on a pedestal and be worshipped in order o be accepted. In *Naga-Mandala*, Karnad depicts the twofold oppression of women in society.

Karnad's another play *The Fire and the Rain* which is based on C. Rajagopalacharis's prose retelling of the *Mahabharata,* especially on the myth

of Yavakari in 'Vana Parba' is also a prominent play that speaks of women's emancipation. Besides the theme of feminine, spiritual crisis, belief and disbelief Karnad presents women's issues in contemporary society. Through the characters such as Raibhya, Paravasu, Yavakari, Nitilai and Vishaka Karnad brings forth the subjection of women in the society. The theme of women's oppression can be studied in two ways, one through the sufferings of Vishaka, the wife of Paravasu and former lover of Yavakari and the other through Nitilai the tribal girl and the lover of Aravasu.

In the play, we see how Yavakari and Paravasu have used Vishakha to their own satisfaction. To them, she seems to be an object of sensual enjoyment only. In Vishakha's words, "my husband and you! He left no pore in my body alone. And you think a woman is a pair of half-formed breasts." (*Fire and the Rain*, 40) Yavakari had left Vishakha alone to gain universal knowledge for ten long years. Vishaka felt alone, helpless and dejected. When Yavakari returned from long perseverance with magical power he meets Vishakha. From the conversation between Yavakari and Vishakha, we can grasp, and perceive the sufferings of the lonely Vishakha. Vishakha had to marry Paravasu, though she had no interest in him. Her opinion did not matter. In their conjugal life, Paravasu gave her a luxurious life of love and happiness but it lasted only one year. Paravasu had to left for fire sacrifice and did not come back for seven long years. He had used her body like an experimenter or like an explorer. Vishakha says: "He used my body, and his own body, like an experimenter, an explorer. Shame died in me. And I yelled. Alone, I have become dry like a tender." (FR,39)

Throughout the play, we see how Vishakha becomes the victim of patriarchal domination, the harsh treatment of Paravasu and Yavakari and also Raibhya. Just as Yavakri uses Vishakha as a abit to draw the attention of Paravasu, the character of Raibhya is another patriarchal representation. Raibhya, the father-in-law of Vishakha treats her in a ghastly and vicious way. His behaviours and gesture towards Vishakha and women, in particular, is ill-mannered and disdainful. He compares Vishakha as a filthy object, buffalo and shit. He uses abusive language to slur and to incriminate Vishakha. When Vishakha returns from the nearby forest Raibhya anticipates about the nexus between Yavakari and Vishakha as he has an evil eye on Vishakaha. He starts beating her. He shouts: "You whore. You roving whore…!" (FR, 43)

Nitilai, another woman character in the play has suffers a lot due to the vigilance of a male-dominated society. The male society has fixed the duties and

boundaries and choices of women. Amongst the multiple social barriers that a woman faces, male surveillance is the most unbearable. We live in a society where a group of people try to control the lives of others through the use of ideology and language. In this society the vulnerable become the victims of repression and marginalization. In the play, *The Fire and The Rain* Karnad depicts women's subjection and subjugation in Indian society. We find Nitilai's submissive and docile nature, her submission to her father, brother and husband. It seems she has been taught to behave in an inclined way in front of dominating in the society. Nitilai loves Aravasu and wants to marry him but social barriers become a pivotal issue. Aravasu is Brahmin and Nitilai is a tribal girl. She has to take permission from her family and community. They do not approve it and Aravasu to fails to turn up for permission due to complications in the plot. They marry Nitilai to a boy from tribal community. She is a helpless and an ignorant girl who has no right to make a decision of her own because she is a woman. Her life meets a terrible, tragic culmination when she flees from her husband's house to assist, nurse, and support Aravasu when he is in danger. Her father, brother and husband chase her like a hunter. Nitilai is afraid of her life and expresses her fear to Aravasu. She pines:

> I've run away...from my husband. From my family. From everything… (FR 61) They're after me…I'll disappear. Go and hide in the jungle… you think I want to be hunted down by my brother and my husband… Aravasu, I am still young. I don't want to die (FR, 69)

Finally, they find her kill her brutally. Nitiali's scream becomes representative of all the collective screams of all the oppressed women of our society.

"Please, brother… husband ... please, don't." (FR,77)

Karnard returns to the theme of women's oppression and emancipation in another play *Hayavadana* (1975). The character of Padmini is vibrant in representing women's choices and preferences. Padmini is not like Karnad's Rani in *Nagamandala* or Vishakha and Nitilai in *Fire and The Rain* but almost a free woman   who rejects the domination of Devadutta and Kapila in many cases.

The play revolves around the characters of Devadatta, Kapila and Padmini. Devadatta falls in love with Padmini and marries her. His friend Kapila also falls in love with Padmini and thus begins the problems. Devadatta is an intelligent, and wise poet. He has a very sharp brain. On the other hand, Kapila has a strong

physique. Devadatta and Kapila are the best friends, Bhagavata describes them as "one mind, one heart" (Hayavadana, 4) Padmini becomes impressed with the strong body of Kapila and begins to desire him.   Although Kapila warns Devadatta, he says: "…she is not for the likes of you. What she needs is a man of steel. But what can one do? You will never listen to me…?" (Hayavadana, 19)

The characters fall into a complex intricate circumstances where they offer their heads to goddess Kali with a sword they find inside her temple and kill themselves. With the blessings of goddess, they can be brought back to life if Padmini attaches the head to their bodies and presses the sword against their neck. In confusion Padmini gets their heads mixed up. Kapila's head gets Devdatta's body and Devdatta's head gets Kapila's body. The play then puts forward the question, whom does Padmini belong to? Is Devdatta the body Devdatta who has Kapila's head or is it the head Devdatta who has Kapila's body? Does the woman get married to the body or to the person? Where does the person reside in the body or the head? Padmini decides to go with Devdatta's head who has Kapila's strong body. "I know what you want Padmini. Devatta's clever head and Kapila's strong body…" (Hayavadhana 148) But Padmini is not as settled as we think, the men change, the head rules the bodies. Padmini is the only one left unchanged as the head wins and the bodies adopt to their new masters. But bodies have their own memories too. Who does Padmini love then? Who of the two is Devdatta? Who of the two is Kapila? To resolve the problem both fight and kill each other again. In the relationship and the complication between man and man it is Padmini who is left out. Ironically she decides to become a sati. The play is ironical in its comments:

> Thus Padmini became a sati. India is known for its pativratas, wives who dedicated their whole existence to the service of their husband; but it would not be an exaggeration to say that no pativrata went in the way Padmini did. And yet no one knows the spot where she performed sati. (Hayavadana, 63)

Padmini is a kind of "modern Sita", an overriding character. She does what she wishes without fearing the male order. She knows her choices. Dharwadker rightly observes:

> The ambivalence of Padmini's position in the triangular relationship, however, appears in her many challenges to masculinity and male friendship, which create frictions

> contradicting her apparent power. She dominates both men in shrill, shallow way and resents any sign that their mutual bond might override their interest in her. (Dharwadker, 2008, p. 338-9)

Padmini seems to have achieved emancipation within the patriarchal framework. She is not a submissive woman. In a sense she represents modern women. Inspite of the fact that she is married, she is not afraid to speak her mind out about Kapila, saying that "No woman could resist him". (26 Hayavadana) The play is also a commentary on the social construction of masculinity.

Yajati's plot, adapted from the Mahabharata's "Adiparva", centres on King Yayati, who is a king obsessed with youth and material pleasures. He marries Devayani, Shukracharya's daughter, but molests Sharmishtha due to his untamed lust. This makes Shukracharya curse him that he would lose his youth and become decrepit. He finds the curse extremely agonizing since he is unable to curb his sensual pleasure. When his son Puru, reasons with Shukracharya, the severity of the curse is lessened. If anyone else wills to trade their youth for Yayati's old age he will once more experience youth. Puru, decides to trade off his youth for his father who readily agrees. The decision causes his wife Chitralekha to kill herself. Yayati's sense of reason is awakened and he gives Puru's youth back realizing that time has passed. Karnad deftly connects the figures, events to the conditions of modern man. In the play we see king Yajati's ill-treatment to the women namely, Devyani, Sharmistha and Chitralekha.

The theme of women's conditions and subjugation is evident in Karnad's another play *Yajati*. The play is adopted from the Indian mythical anecdote 'Adiparva' of Mahabharata. In the institution of marriage, home and family all the women characters in the play have suffered from masculine domination. We will excavate how the king, the ruler Yajati has penetrated his pervasive power of male domination over the female counterparts in the form of wives and daughters- in law in the play. The king first marries Devyani, then he develops an illicit affair with Sharmistha thus openly expresses his desire to marry her.

When Shukracharya, Devayani's father curses Yajati, we see some of the prominent issues of men–women clash. As a consequence of Yajati's bad situation his son Puru wants to take the curse upon him just to reverse Yajati's youth as he was before. But Puru's wife Chitralekha protests and appears as a new woman. She is entirely unsatisfied with Puru's decision and rejects all pleas of Yajati. She does not allow Puru to enter her bedroom, she says: "I will not

allow my husband step back into my bedroom unless he returns a young man."
(Hayavadana, 61)

Feminism explores the various cultural dimensions of women's lives. feminism holds that the discrepancies between men and women are not natural but socially constructed. Karnad through the presentation of the female characters as discussed above has focused on the situations of women in the Indian context. Karnad was aware of the patriarchal power which is about the sexist oppression over others. Through his depiction of women characters, he represented women the domination present in Indian society and offered some ways to deal with it. He tried to find out the ways of liberation and agency for women from the clutches of male power and hegemony.

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Shades of South Asian Women in Rasheed Jahan's Writings: Navigating Patriarchies, Spaces, Regime Control, and Colonialism

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&

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Abstract

Women in South Asia had a different colonial experience compared to that of men. Colonialism liberated indigenous women from traditionally restrictive practices, expanding their mobility opportunities. It also introduced indigenous women to newer forms of colonial patriarchy and sometimes resurrected older forms of masculine privilege. Women attempted to overcome obstacles to education and healthcare, forced marriages, and restrictions on their freedom of movement. A group of women actively participated in the nationalist movement and advocated for women's rights. Writing allowed colonised women in South Asia to convey their thoughts and experiences and to challenge the oppressive structures that confined them, ultimately leading to women's liberation. By drawing attention to the intersectionality of gender, religion, and culture, women writers in South Asia, particularly the Islamic women writers have contributed significantly to the feminist movement. These writings have given Muslim women in the region a voice and have challenged patriarchal norms and stereotypes. The writings of Rasheed Jahan, Ismat Chughtai, and Qurratulain Hyder continue to serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for future generations of women.

The present study delves into the literary works of Rasheed Jahan, with a focus on the portrayal of South Asian women and their experiences in overcoming various forms of patriarchal oppression, their navigation through regimes and their mechanisms of control, their struggle for establishment of identities in diverse social settings, resisting authoritarian regimes, and recovering from the aftermath of colonialism while carving out spaces for their survival.

Keywords: *Rasheed Jahan, South Asia, Women, Muslim, Spaces, Writing, Voice, Colonialism.*

I

Shades of South Asian Women in Colonial Times

The experience of colonialism varied among women in South Asia. Initially, colonial interventions served to liberate women in South Asia from various types of subjugation and bias prevalent during the pre-colonial era. These included impediments to education and healthcare, coerced marriages, and limitations on their freedom of movement (Burton 2003; Hasan 2006). These were some of the methods by which women were subjected to oppression. Furthermore, colonial interventions facilitated noteworthy advancements towards gender parity in the area, as evidenced by a rise in female involvement in political spheres and heightened cognisance of their entitlements (Beck &; Keddie (ed) 1978; Hasan &; Menon (ed) 2004). Despite the gendered experience in the colonial encounter, a cohort of women actively participated in the nationalist movement and championed the cause of women's rights (Chakravarty 2008; Farooqi (ed) 2011). Writing provided the colonized women in South Asia a platform to express their thoughts and experiences and challenge the oppressive structures that confined them (Ali 2000; Anagol 2005). This ultimately resulted in women's emancipation. A compelling inquiry that has yet to be fully addressed pertains to the ways in which the practice of writing contributed to the liberation of women who had been previously subjugated in South Asia during the colonial period (Hardy 1972; Alavi &; Siddiqui (ed) 2007; Ghosh (ed) 2007; Hurley 2007).

Writings in Urdu by women, particularly Islamic women writers, showcase the shades of South Asian women and the intersectionality of gender, religion, and culture. Women writers in South Asia who wrote in Urdu have brought this to light, which has been a significant contribution to the feminist movement in the global south (Lateef 1990; Khanam &; Samiuddin 2002). These writings have also assisted in eliminating generalisations and promoting a more nuanced understanding of the experiences of Muslim women in the region.

Not only did these writings give voice to their struggles, but they also brought attention to the intersectionality of their identities, which included gender, religion, and culture (Husain 2006). These women, through the writing that they produced, paved the way for subsequent generations of women to continue the fight for their rights and equality. These writings were instrumental in challenging the patriarchal norms and stereotypes prevalent in society, and they paved the way for women's empowerment in South Asian countries like India

and Pakistan (Lateef 1990; Kumar 1994; Khanam &; Samiuddin 2002; Khanna 2018, 2021).

Rasheed Jahan's, Ismat Chughtai's, and Qurratulain Hyder's writings, among others, continue to serve as a source of motivation and encouragement for countless future generations of women. This article examines how Rasheed Jahan's writings depict South Asian women and their struggles as they attempt to overcome patriarchal norms, establish their identities in different social contexts, fight back against authoritarian regimes, and recover from the legacy of colonialism.

II

Shades of the Doctor, Writer, and Political Activist

Doctor Rasheed Jahan (1905–52) belonged to the second generation of family and community reformers. The eldest of five daughters of Shaikh Abdullah and Waheed Jahan Begum of Aligarh, she attended the Aligarh Girls School and grew up in a household where all women pursued educational and literary endeavours. Her mother and aunts taught at Aligarh Girls' School and contributed to Urdu periodicals, including their own publication, Khatun. Born into a family that championed Muslim women's education, she was exposed to discussions on women's education, curricula, purdah, and the significance of secular education at the Aligarh women's meetings. Their home became a centre for activities and discussions concerning women's education and women's rights (Jalil 2014a, 2014b; Singh 2014; Noor 2020). Rasheed Jahan's friend and sister-in-law, Hamida Saiduzzafar, recalls in her autobiography that Rasheed Jahan once remarked, 'We have slept on the mattress of women's education and covered ourselves with the quilt of women's education from the time we first came to consciousness.' "It is evident that her household was not a traditional Muslim household," writes Hamida. She grew up reading Rashid-ul-Khairi's and Maulana Hali's works, as well as articles published in periodicals such as Tehzib-un-Niswan and Ismat. At school, she was exposed to the work of nationalist authors like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, and Gandhi, as well as English writers like Jane Austen and the Bronte sisters. It is therefore not surprising that her writings demonstrate both an investment in and a questioning of these competing traditions. Over time, she also applied this critical examination to the figure of the female reformer—women like herself who

inherited a legacy of 'education and uplift' from their fathers and brothers. Rasheed Jahan's progressive views on women's education and her non-traditional household were reflected in her writings, which challenged the patriarchal norms of society. Her work continues to inspire and empower women in South Asia and beyond. She was receptive to both the intellectually stimulating environment and the political turmoil of the time (Khanna 2018, 2021). Rasheed Jahan, who was introduced to the nationalist movement by a school teacher, remained devoted to the nationalist cause throughout her life. In 1919, when she was only 14 years old, she decided to wear white khaddar (Gandhi endorsed 'Khadi' as the national handloom of India) and sing patriotic songs aloud whenever nationalist processions passed (Jalil 2014a, 2014b). Considering that her parents remained aloof from the political movement, her support was especially noteworthy. In 1922, she graduated from high school and enrolled at Isabella Thoburn College in Lucknow to study science. While there, she distinguished herself as the author of Urdu and English short stories that were published in the college literary magazine. In 1924, she enrolled at Lady Hardinge Medical College in Delhi, where she organized her fellow medical students to conduct literacy classes and free medical clinics for the city's poor women. She earned her medical degree in 1929, specializing in obstetrics and gynaecology, and then joined the UP medical service, which brought her back to Lucknow. She became acquainted with the group of young Urdu writers who were politically aware, which included Sajjad Zaheer, Ahmad Ali, and Sahibzada Mahmuduzzaman. In 1934, she married Mahmuduzzafar. During her time in Amritsar, she interacted with a group of Lahore-based Marxist intellectuals, including the renowned poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. She was instrumental in organising the first meeting of the All India Progressive Writers Association (AIPWA, henceforth PWA) in 1936. In 1937, she and her husband relocated to Dehradun, where she became deeply involved in PWA activities. From that point forward, her life was divided between her career as a gynaecologist, her political activity in the Communist Party, her literary career, her role as editor of the political magazine 'Chingari', and her family life. Physically weakened, she recovered from a thyroidectomy in 1944 with difficulty. In 1949, she was arrested alongside other prominent Communist Party members. Her life ended prematurely in 1952. After her untimely death from cancer in 1952, many of her works were published posthumously. Her stories are notable for the social themes they depict. The position of women in the family and society, as well as the relationship between people and disease and medical care (or the lack thereof),

are recurring themes in Rashid's writings (Jalil 2014b: 1-51; Khanna 2018, 2021; Mukherjee 2018).

The literary works of Rasheed Jahan frequently raise inquiries that parallel the renowned reflections of Frantz Fanon regarding the potential drawbacks of possessing a collective sense of national identity. Rasheed Jahan's multifaceted professional pursuits, including political activism, literary endeavors, and medical practice, frequently converged as she advanced her comprehensive feminist and socialist objectives during the 1930s (Jalil 2014b: 52-107). It is noteworthy that the author's literary pieces are characterized by the convergence of race, religion, and politics, which serves as a fundamental motif. In the absence of a genuine nationalization movement that encompasses wealth redistribution, the establishment of novel social relations, and tangible improvements in the populace's quality of life, the nation, which played a pivotal role in the struggle against colonialism, will swiftly devolve into an oppressive entity. According to Fanon, the intellectual's efficacy in fulfilling their role is contingent upon their engagement in a dialectical process. This is a crucial aspect. This process must establish the prerequisites for agency and facilitate greater awareness among individuals that the ultimate source of power lies with the people themselves rather than any mystical or supernatural force. Rasheed Jahan's narratives elucidate the challenges and possible drawbacks inherent in the endeavor of cultivating feminist awareness among the middle class. Utilizing her medical expertise and prior experiences, she composed literature pertaining to the health and societal predicaments faced by women, particularly those who were subjugated and victimized by the patriarchal establishment. In addition, she leveraged her medical expertise to produce written works that were characterized by authenticity and precision in their portrayal of the human anatomy and sexual behavior. The complexity of comprehending Rasheed Jahan's narratives is heightened by her interactions with individuals from diverse social strata (Gopal 2005: 9; Jalil 2014b: 52-107).

<div align="center">III</div>

The Progressive Writers' Association, the Communist Party and Jahan's Writings

This section of the study aims to investigate the motivational factors that underlie the writings of Jahan, with a particular focus on the influence of the PWA and the Communist Party. Behind the veil, Muslim women have a unique perspective on the world. Finding out what drives or inspires people to have such a worldview

is crucial. At the cusp of nationalism, the Communist-inspired literary and cultural revolution of the post-1930s sparked the imaginations of Muslim women, most of whom came from privileged backgrounds in Lucknow, Aligarh, and the surrounding areas, where Muslims were not rigidly bound to their own traditions and were open to the shifts in society brought on by colonialism (Mahmud 1996; Jalil 2014b: 1-51; Loomba 2019; Mukherjee 2018). Socialist ideology has been quietly creeping into the intellectual arena of those trying to analyse India's social, economic, national, and international challenges ever since the Bolshevik Revolution broke out. As this understanding expanded, it rippled out into the intellectual and cultural spheres. People whose worldview was shaped by Soviet propaganda were inclined to the left and self- identified as Communists (Coppola 1988; Ahmed 2006; Jalil 2014b: 52-107; Khanna 2021). Their study aimed to compare the socioeconomic causes of India's poor with the impact of imperialism and fascism on the independence movement. The Communists, in their fight against fascism, amassed a slew of prominent authors and thinkers who sought to define freedom for the masses via their writings, performances, and activities (Roy 2014; Singh 2014; Jalil 2014b: 52-107; Mukherjee 2018; Noor 2020).

In the intellectual climate of the mid-1930s, the PWA arose as a front for writers who adhered to Communist ideology. Membership in the PWA was limited to Communists. Anuradha Roy (2014) describes: "It was a broad-based movement, consisting of left-radicals and left-liberals, but also many not-so-left and non-left intellectuals and writers standing against fascism and to that extent believing in the interconnectedness between arts and politics and aligning themselves with the Communists. Thus, the new culture was given an organized shape and gradually crystallized into a cultural movement with strong national and international links. It was a movement in the sense that it was based on the perception of a set of common goals by a collectivity, at least a sense of collective commitment". A large number of writers and intellectuals spontaneously engaged themselves with the movement in response to the political turmoil India was going through. Realizing the grimness of socio-political veracity and connecting it with creative practices, they launch the PWA project to resist fascism and for human welfare in particular. All these political activists and art practitioners usually called themselves 'progressive'. It is important to note that, though they hailed from a highbrow walk of life, they paid utmost attention to the problems of the poor and ordinary people. With their thinking faculty, they prefer to not only confine themselves within the intellectual and aesthetic

exercise of educated ones but rather reach down to the masses through their cultural activities and inspire the fight for a better society (Roy 2014; Jalil 2014b: 52-107; Mukherjee 2018; Noor 2020).

However, the type of "progressiveness" these authors' activists intended to convey in relation to and for whom remains open to debate. The term "progressive" was defined in two different ways by Talat Ahmed (2006) and Priyamvada Gopal (2005). While Gopal characterizes the Marxist or Progressive as belonging to "North Indian Muslims from Urdu-speaking middle- and upper-class families. They were English-educated, fluently bilingual colonial subjects strongly committed to anti-colonialism; members of relatively elite social groupings invested in a variety of Marxist and socialist projects; littérateurs who were devoted to the literary craft while urgently concerned with social and political transformation; and, last but not least, Muslims who were engaged in a critique of Islamist orthodoxy even as Hindu majoritarianism threatened to exclude Muslim communities from the life of the Indian nation" (Gopal 2005:7). Ahmed elaborates, "PWA defined progressivism by the position one took in relation to the key questions of the day. As a body of radical writers, they stood in opposition to the colonial project and therefore identified with a rising nationalist movement.… The essence of progressivism also defined what type of society would emerge post-independence, and in this respect their vision was for some form of socialist society" (Ahmed 2006:8). To summarize Ahmed's and Gopal's perspectives, we can say that the Progressive Writers' Movement emerged as a literary collective agenda centered on the leftist intellectual and literary culture in colonial South Asia. Under this rubric, authors tackled anti-imperialism, economic exploitation, misogyny, and other social ills in their works. The women of the PWA epitomized the organization's values and ideals, while the men are more often recognized for their impact on the development of the Urdu literary canon. Rasheed Jahan's progressiveness is evident in her writings and activism, both of which were designed to tap into the zeitgeist of the masses by rejecting dogma (Ali 2000; Anagol 2005; Ahmed 2006; Bano 2012; Jalil 2014a).

Once again, Jahan's writings show the dominance of the intertwined effects of PWA and Communism. There is no denying the inextricable historical and necessary connection between women's liberation and the communist movement in India, as evidenced by numerous first-person accounts. Gopal (2005), Ahmed (2006), Loomba (2019), and Khanna (2018, 2021) are just a few of the literary

and critical authorities who attest to the ways in which Jahan's writings challenge accepted understandings of individual freedom and gender roles. Her political upbringing and professional knowledge have such a profound effect on her fictional world that the colonial government has banned her short story on the grounds that literature and politics are inextricably intertwined in it. In her writings, she investigates the potential enslavement of women of all social backgrounds by marriage and housework.

Ania Looomba (2019) calls Jahan a "new kind of communist woman who was attracted to a canvas larger than the ones women had been hitherto allowed to paint." Further, Loomba (2019) mentions that a communist woman like Jahan, who actively fights against inequality and for her own social and personal freedom, has the potential to serve as a model for female protagonists in works of criticism and fiction. Jahan's political, personal, and professional life served as inspiration for Yashpal's female protagonist Shailbala in Dada Kamred and Faiz Ahmed Faiz's poem "*shadab*" (romanticism) and "*inquilab*" (revolution).

After Angaarey (Embers/ Burning coals) was released in 1932, the campaign against It adopted Jahan as its primary symbol (Jalil 2014: 108-145). The published volume was then banned, and she received a "fatwa" from extremists. That a Muslim woman would have the courage to not only offer a stern disparagement against Islamic notions of culture and orthodoxy but also to spontaneously flag out the female oppression relating to her body in writings seems indigestible to the religious zealots. Her work in Angaarey paves the way for a new literary public sphere in Urdu literature by establishing her as an authority on topics like women's bodies and sexuality and on modern, scientific, progressive, moral, and epistemological ideas. The book's radical content has earned her the sobriquet "Angaareywali." Her unconventional path in the Urdu literary world makes her a role model for progressive women but a danger for traditionalists. She was appropriately dubbed the first "angry young woman" of Urdu literature due to the echo of her unconventional views in her writings and the phonetic similarity between "Angaarey" and "Angry" (Coppola & Zubair 1987; Bano 2012; Jalil 2014b: 108-145).

IV

Construing Rasheed Jahan's Works and the Characters therein

Rasheed Jahan's literary works, including *Mera Ek Safar* (One of My Journeys), "Sadak" (Street), "Chor" (Thief), "Safar" (Journey), "Faisla" (Judgement), and

"Mujrim Kaun"? (Who is the Culprit?), demonstrate a prolonged involvement with women as political and civic entities and provide a critical analysis of the colonial encounter, in contrast to some of her other narratives (Rasheed 1937, 1947, 1988; Bano 2012; Jalil 2014a). The literary work *Mera Ek Safar* (Jahan 1937) commences with a depiction of a female protagonist (the narrator) in a state of haste, endeavouring to board a train. As she arrived at the station, she witnessed the train departing and proceeded to elevate her sari and engage in a sprint. Thus the first scene depicts the narrator, a woman, rushing to catch a train. In the first few lines, we learn that everyone on the bridge is staring in amazement as she sprints down the stairs in only two or three strides. Her sari trailing behind her, and she breathing like an ironsmith as her hair whips crazily behind her and her clip falls off, sending strands of hair lying into her face. She trips and falls while trying to skip the final flight of stairs. She's aware that people are staring and laughing at her the whole time; when she trips, people rush to help her, but she gets up quickly, saying, "Taking my red face out of my hair, I shrieked, "The Train." She rushes into the first carriage, which is full of men, as the guard smiles and holds the train up for her. Even though she is the target of leering and laughter, she maintains her focus on the outside world until the train pulls into its first stop. She descends here, buys a ticket, and makes her way to the ladies section. At that location, she is exposed to unwelcome gazes and ridicule, prompting her to maintain a fixed gaze towards the outside scenery until the train reaches its initial destination. Upon arrival, the individual disembarks from the transportation vehicle, procures a ticket, and proceeds to occupy a seat within the designated women's area. The introductory scenario is of considerable length. It's only a few paragraphs long, but it goes into considerable depth about the narrator's relationship with her body, from her perception of how others see her to her knowledge of how she moves and how she fits into the urbanised and mechanised space around her, such as the platform, the bridge, the staircase, and the train. She faces new kinds of questions and comments in the ladies section, such as "you are a student?" 'Yes'. Do you have a spouse? 'No'. I'm curious about your caste. 'Chamar'. I responded with a hearty belly laugh. Upon entering the densely populated women's compartment, the narrator promptly observes two distinct clusters of women, one comprising Hindus and the other Muslims, seated in diametrically opposite positions. The small space in the zenana (lit., ladies) carriage is a pressure cooker where differences of class, educational level, gender, religious community, and caste come to a boil. It is possible to read this space as symbolic of the public spaces of the nation. Both the questions posed by

the fellow travellers to the narrator and her own observations point to the salience of identity and difference in these spaces. When the Muslim woman with the nose pendant rises to go to the restroom, the edge of her long scarf touches one of the Hindus sitting on a piece of luggage. In the compartment, there erupts an explosive turf battle that is resonant with other kinds of conflicts. The metaphors and imagery are drawn from established discourses of power and possession, and soon the language of religious and communal identifications— "we Hindus and we Muslims"—enters the fray.

The narrator reads the scene as a 'field of battle' that is fueled by nationalist sentiments:

> The woman who was sitting next to me wanted to reach the field of battle but couldn't find space. She was going mad with patriotic zeal. One by one, even those who are on the sidelines enter the war zone, jostling to get a piece of the action. Even those who had been taking only a verbal part in the fight finally lost control and entered the enemy's territory. As the conflict spreads, the narrator sits tight and keeps watching: 'If anything was missing, it would be cries of "Allah-ho-Akbar" and "Har Har Mahadev". As beef flies in the direction of the Hindus and the possessions of the Muslims are thrown out of the windows, one woman is pushed and falls on the narrator, while another's hand descends on her short hair. She gets up and leaps towards the emergency stop chain. 'Ah, my dear Shakuntala. If only you could have heard me. You would hear that Zubeida too can lecture.' The proliferation of metaphors of war, nationalism, patriotism, and leadership in the narrator's critical observations suggests that Rasheed Jahan sees the manner of women's emergence into colonial public spaces as problematically influenced by patriarchal and masculinist discourses, in particular by religious and communal chauvinism. The narrator's initial passivity is transformed into an intervention that is simultaneously problematic and fantastical. Zubeida threatens to hand all the fighting women over to the police at the next station, a threat that strikes immediate fear and subservience into her listeners. She asks them to examine their own condition— clothes torn, some of them half naked now, others with their ears red from being pulled. Shouting at the top of her voice, she berates the Hindu women for hypocritically practicing 'untouchability' while wearing Gandhian clothes and the Muslims for waging Jihad.

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Asserting that it is really those women who cannot put their moral authority to good ends who are useless to society, Zubeida addresses the oldest Muslim woman:

> Had you scolded them in the first place, why would this situation have even come about? As a final act of punishment, she asks the fellow travellers to ask forgiveness of each other. If they don't, she will turn them all over to the authorities when the train comes to a halt. As she oscillates between persuasion and intimidation, Zubeida is always conscious of the situation as a spectacle and of herself as involved in a didactic performance. As she tells her friend, 'it was a scene worth seeing'. The repeated use of the English terms 'lecture' and 'scene', drawn from educational and cinematic vocabulary, respectively, indicates that the activist is aware of both the didactic and performative dimensions of her actions. The narrator is confident of her own moral and intellectual superiority. To one of the women who challenges her authority with the question, Why? Are you the government? Zubeida's reply is 'I wish I was'.

Her account is an uncompromising fantasy of disciplining, punishing, and reforming the less intelligent, less cultured, and, crucially, the rural women steeped in false consciousness. As she makes them ask forgiveness of each other, she actually marvels at her own powers in getting them to do so (Gopal, 2005:55-59). Almost all her literary female protagonists bear the real life of Jahan, which ultimately confuses her reader to separate the writer from these women characters who are the counterfeit of the personality she is or aspires to be. Zubeida in Mera Ek Safar exemplifies the same. She speculates how the ladies compartment of the train immediately turns into a space for communalism with a slight provocation, but with her amazing presence of mind, she has been able to control a volatile situation with emotional appeal that convinces the women to realise their shortfalls. Jahan here pleads for female solidarity and sisterhood, which later emerge as a feminist agenda in women's writings. Neetu Khanna (2018) tries to postulate Jahan's smart use of gender-segregated train compartments as the epicentre of communal violence as well as class conflict. Zubeida's movement from the first carriage to the small zenana carriage, surpassing the disciplinary male gaze to the middle-class gaze of female passengers to that of her own elitist gaze of female flaneusede, notes the class consciousness and Communist influence frequently traced in Jahan's writings. Zubeida's

experiences of male gaze and social and gender difference in the micro-space of a train signifies the macro-cosmic representation of the country itself.

The story "Sadak" (Street) (Jahan, 1937:74-80) is written as a reply by Shakuntala to Zubeida. The female characters in both stories are intellectually appealing, for these women are role models who fulfil the writer's intrinsic urge for self-assessment and social change. Shakuntala is visiting her maternal uncle's home in Amritsar during her Dussehra holidays. She describes the scene visible from the house as a theatre continuously providing the enactment of different incidents. There would be a recurrent thumping of drums, either because a religious procession was passing or because a marriage party would be bellowing (even in the middle of the night). How could anyone possibly sleep if Seth Jamuna Lal's son or Sheikh Jamaludin's daughter were getting married? The ruckus caused by horse carriages and songs full of abuse in the local language kept one awake all the time. Last night, a maulvi (lit., expert in Islamic Law) was addressing the people, and his high-pitched speech attacked everything. Schools, colleges, women's education, husband-wife relations, prayers, purdah, sexual permissiveness, and women's vulgar appearances—nothing was spared! These are our religious instructors, who find space even in their religious sermons to refer to women's bodies in the most obnoxious manner (Jahan, 1937: 76). As the sermon continued, the scene was suddenly transformed into a zone for religious sloganeering. The cries of "Allah-ho-Akbar" ("Allah is the greatest") were matched by cries of "Sat-Sri-Akaal" ("God is truth") from the other end: "Mussalman Ka Bedha Ghark, Sikhon Ka Bedha Paar" ("Let the Muslimship sink while the Sikh ship sails") (Jahan, 1937: 77). The narrator does not identify with the religious metaphors, and her civic responsibility and communist leanings are expressed in the following manner: nobody says: "down with exploitation, down with poverty, liberty for the poor Indians, liberty for their children, freedom from hunger." Her consciousness of linguistic chauvinism along with religious and communal identification is discernible when the narrative highlights that even children are hauled into the encounters. The Hindu children shout, "You will now have to become proficient in Hindi," while the Muslim children yell back, "We will now have to pull down Hindi." No facet of the social order is spared from this communalization. Hindu and Muslim women ridicule each other: "Muslim women must surely be suffering from deficiencies, or else why would they be hiding themselves under the burqa?" Muslim women spew scorn on the Hindus, saying, "They have neither beauty, prestige, nor respect. They have loose morals! See how they go about exposing themselves."

She questions that, given this extremely volatile environment, what progress could be possible from shallow attempts such as Hindu Muslim Unity Conferences? (Jahan, 1937: 79). Standing on that porch, she not only saw the spectacle of religious frenzy but also the economic divides: men with sweat flowing from their bodies carrying heavy loads, those who have no employment, and those who live a life of plenty and zip past them in cars. When I see the appalling state of affairs, I tremble, but I console myself by saying, How long? (Jahan, 1937: 80). Her message emerges sharp and clear—there would only be negative implications of these developments for the nationalist movement and the women's movement in India.

Rasheed Jahan's critique of colonialism and its oppressive legal and administrative apparatus, as well as her commitment to social transformation, emerge passionately in the story entitled "Chor" (Thief) (Jahan, 1977: 49). Her forays into the public sphere as a respectable upper-class woman, a professional, and a lady doctor with access to knowledge and opportunities to interact with people from all classes enabled her to bring a good deal of pragmatism into her writing. The story, like most of her other narratives, is precise and sharp, offering an insight into the psyche of a thief and his reading of contemporary society. It is ten at night, and the lady doctor (by now all alone!) sat in her clinic browsing through the pages of a medical journal, interrupted suddenly by the arrival of a man with a child in his arms. Feeling considerably annoyed at her nurse for having left the entrance door open, she blurts angrily at the unwelcome visitor that her schedule for visiting patients was over and that he could either come the next day or see another doctor (Jahan, 1977: 50). The man's businesslike attitude that he would pay for her services and that she had once cured another of his ailing relatives, and his blatant reply that his routine of work did not permit him to come earlier, leave her speechless. While examining the child, she interacts with the visitor and discovers that he was a thief who had burgled her house as well. She asks him bluntly, "Why do you steal? To which his reply is, Madam, we all have our different vocations! "His tone is rustic and colloquial, and what emerges from their dialogue is a criminal's account of the corruption in the law enforcement agencies. Vehemently rebuking the police, he asserts: All these police officers are corrupt. It is they who inform me every time a raid is to take place (Jahan, 1977: 52). The lady doctor's anger in the narrative is surpassed by her amazement at the thief's professionalism, the lack of a moral sentiment, and his disclosures that the police, fully aware of his actions, would actually demand a share bounty boon. The lady doctor, with all her access to modern scientific

knowledge to the legal apparatus, appears powerless before the thief. The loss of agency, the failure to seek redress for the loss she had incurred, the shift in her emotions from anger to revulsion, and then to curiosity and inaction, reflect the writer's dilemma as a colonial subject.

The lady doctor's ambiguities were in fact conditioned not by a simplistic project of punishing the thief but by a much more developed understanding of how social and political relations could be radically transformed (Gopal, 2005:43). Her subject position as a professional healer simultaneously assumes the role of a social critic when she looks around at the sickness of society: 'What about those criminals who go scot-free without the possibility of a warrant ever being issued in their name? Thefts can be of various kinds: black marketing, appropriating the value of other people's labour, colonising other lands... are these also not thievery, in different forms…..though?' (Jahan, 1977:55). The process of elaborating the symbolic role of the medical practitioner, concerned not only with human sickness but the sickness of society as a whole, portrays her stance that the fight against colonialism had to be fought on several fronts. Her anger at the exploitative nature of colonial rule and frustration with mainstream nationalists emerge subtly when she seeks to rationalise her actions by stating: 'There are those bigger thieves who reside in plush and sprawling homes, enjoy high positions, and exercise (or are preparing to exercise) power in the future. Kaman was arrogant for having bribed the police with only a meagre sum of money. These exploiters were several steps ahead of him; the police and the army drew salaries from them. They not only behave haughtily but also issue commands from above. A thief is not only the person who steals in the darkness of the night, but all those white collar people who oppress and deprive others of their rights.' Rasheed Jahan's writings highlight the multiplicities of intersecting conflicts.

She does not merely emphasise women's experiences within the home and family or portray anti colonial sentiment but poses the question as a choice between political freedom on the one hand and radical transformation on the other. One of her narratives that offer a scathing indictment of the status quo is "Safar" (Journey) (Jahan, 1977: 114-122). The story opens with the remarks of a disgruntled father, Chief Justice Sir Ataullah, about the behaviour of his younger son, Sayeed. In the narrative, colonial contact is reflected not just as a backdrop or context against which human dramas are enacted but as a central aspect of what the account has to say about identity, relationships, and culture. The narrative uses a multi-pronged approach to unravel the tensions, complexities,

and nuances within colonial cultures. Rasheed Jahan explores colonial contact through the anxieties of Sir Ataullah, who has risen to the position of a judge under the colonial state as a result of the strenuous efforts made by him ever since his childhood. He recapitulates the difficult days when he took responsibility for his own education and, despite all odds, has been able to make a position for himself in society. While Sir Ataullah's attitude reflects his smugness, the son is a rebel, and one may read their conversation in terms of the eternal conflict between unbridled individualism and social responsibility. The story illustrates the father's controlling and civilising role, as well as what he perceives to be his parental obligation to discipline and provide for his children.

His son views this as oppressive, dehumanising, and desolate in nature (Jahan, 1977: 115). The colonial experience is being challenged here not simply at the political or intellectual level but also on an emotional level. There are similarities between the "civilising mission' of colonialism and the father's patriarchal benevolence, both of which are regarded as repressive by the son. The son's disparagement towards colonialism is reflected in his outright rejection of all that the patriarch claims to have done for him; rather than having the rebel son narrate the encounters, the disclosures by the father depict the impact of the son's comments on the father's psyche (Jahan, 1977: 116).

In her story "Faisla" (Judgement) (Jahan, 1974: 39-59), Rasheed Jahan presents the image of a housewife who is educated, strong-willed, and nationalist in spirit and who easily moves within clearly modern settings. Safiya is the wife of Husn Mirza, who is a deputy superintendent of police. Safiya's mother had been widowed at an early age, and despite opposition, she had educated her daughters. Safiya was an educated, well-read woman brimming with individualism and self-confidence. She was incredibly committed to her ideals and was often teased by her husband as "usoolanbi" (Ms. Principled). She expresses her disapproval when her husband reads her letters without permission and argues with him that playing cards in the club was the same as the gambling that was so common on street corners. Aware of the prevailing tensions within the country, she views communalism as a social malaise that could not be treated by short-term measures like intensive policing and surveillance just to prevent a communal outbreak. She wanted a cure, a permanent solution. It was a disease that had infected society at large and required a long-term strategy for its amelioration (Jahan, 1974: 45). This was only possible with education and greater social awareness. Rasheed Jahan's depiction of women as enlightened and responsible

subjects emerges prominently when Safiya accompanies her husband on one of his official tours. An efficient manager of domestic accounts, she maintains meticulous records of their expenditure on food, travel, and other purchases and is outraged when they are charged practically nothing for their stay in the village. The disclosure that British officials as well as Indians who frequently came on tours with family and friends demanded services for which they were never adequately reimbursed leaves both Safiya and her husband feeling considerably guilty. Rasheed Jahan brings out the hypocrisy of the colonial state, which could not live up to its own ideals and the values it claimed were so dear to it (Jahan, 1974:51).

When Safiya confronts the collector's wife on the issue, she blurts out, "They are rogues; I always reduce their bills by half! All natives are dishonest...I mean the lower orders, the servants, coolies, etc." This racist statement becomes too much for Safiya to bear, and she snaps back at her in the presence of the collector's subordinates, exposing their hypocrisy (Jahan, 1974:54). In the concluding part of the narrative, even though her husband faces the wrath of his seniors, they remain determined, not yielding to the pressure of an apology by the authorities (Jahan, 1974:59). Jahan's writings illustrate the exploitative nature of British rule, where coercion and exploitation proceed along racist lines. Racial hierarchies provide the magic formula that allows capitalism to expand and find all the labour it needs, yet pay lower wages and allow even fewer freedoms than those given to the white working class (Loomba, 2005:109). The racial ideologies aimed at suppression express themselves not only through the economic sphere but also through the legal system. In her story, "Mujrim Kaun"? (Who is the Culprit?) (Jahan, 1977; 100-113). The violence and racism towards the colonial subject are predicated not on a ruthless universalism but on an inequitable relativism that justifies racial and geopolitical hierarchies (Gopal, 2005: 63). The narrative opens with the colonial perception of the colonised as 'galeez hindustaani' (filthy Indians) and "ghulaam (slaves), who were to be tamed by the coloniser. Two episodes are narrated simultaneously.

Robbins is an acclaimed judge, known and respected for his impartiality and honesty in the application of the Imperial laws. Robbins is, however, having an affair with one Mrs. Sylvia Black, who was the wife of Colonel Black. Their affair becomes the subject of fervent controversy when the Colonel launches a bitter tirade against the judge and even threatens to sue him. Such an open act of confrontation between two British officials becomes a source of embarrassment

for the government, and it is only after an intervention by the governor that the issue is finally settled. The colonel would divorce his wife, and until then, Mrs. Black would be sent to England, after which Robbins could marry her. The second part of the narrative opens in the courtroom with Judge Robbins issuing a verdict inflicting a three-year punishment on the villager Bhola (for having eloped with Gujariya, the wife of Mitro).

> Mitro! Gujariya is given back to you! Take the criminal away!"
> The verdict is announced, leaving the woman to wail inconsolably. There is an element of sarcasm in the story when the writer states that with an unfaltering judge like Robbins, what else could possibly be expected? (Jahan, 1977: 104). The third part of the narrative outlines the course of events at the party organised for Robbins, who is going home to wed Sylvia. The racist streak in the thoughts of most Europeans is expressed in Robbins' observation: "The natives are emotional, like animals! Had there not been the fear of death sentences in this uncivilized country, a murder would be committed every minute... Thanks to our laws and our administration, there is peace in this barbaric land! It is our legal system that has provided a sense of equality in the administration of justice in the country". Robbins adds that "I can say for myself that I do not distinguish between British and natives, and that law is applicable equally to all." Rashid shatters the hypocrisy of the "civilised/colonial rule" when news reaches that a woman had first set her husband's house on fire and then set herself on fire on account of an unfair judgement imposed upon her (Jahan, 1977: 112). To evoke irony in the story, Robbins is innocently questioned by his British friend about whether, if there had been an Englishman in place of the native, he would have been subjected to a similar treatment. Robbins is rendered speechless, and the story concludes with officers scurrying away so as not to discuss the matter further in front of the "uncivil natives" (Jahan, 1977: 113).

V

Some Closing Observations: New Possibility in Jahan's Writings

Rasheed Jahan's writings, which questioned the status quo, reflected her liberal views on women's education and her unconventional family. It was Rasheed

Jahan who penned the first novels and short stories by a Muslim woman in the Urdu language. Ishmat Chugtai considered Jahan her mentor. Just as her first book, *Angaarey* (Embers) inspired and empowered women across South Asia and beyond, so too do her later works. Her works trace a crucial lineage of transnational feminist thought, straddling the divide between Muslim feminist activism and a Marxist anti-colonial perspective. Jahan's signature style in her feminist writing is her embrace of socialist materialism and the incorporation of that ideology within the framework of Urdu literary forms infused with gender perspectives of colonialism and Muslim rigidity. Her writing reveals a feminist phenomenology of resistance, disgust, and social transformation in the face of colonialism. Her 'progressive' quality is reflected in her often-criticising depictions of women's gynaecological health, sexuality, hygiene, and childbirth. According to Khanna (2021), her feminism "constitutes a renewed engagement with materialist articulations of the revolutionary consciousness" (Khanna, 2, 2021). This allows for the possibility of materialist thought at the intersection of historical and politically gendered experiences. Jahan, a committed feminist, sees revolution and reformation not merely as a transformative tool for social awareness, but as a predictable instrument for a better society. Feminist writing by Jahan, however, sheds important light on the development of Urdu literature and on the different shades of struggles of variegated women for recognition and autonomy in a literary field where such things are often contested. She is a progressive writer whose works, because of their contemporary relevance, generate a brazen modernity that aids in foreseeing the future, proclaiming its contemporaneity, directly ushering a better future, and inspiring the future.

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"No response is a response": Interrogating 'Silence' and Woman question in Select Indian Tea Narratives

Sabuj Sarkar

Abstract: *In spite of the apparent contradictions, silence can be interpreted as a form of significant voice in various discourses. Silence is often found as a reflection of an anti-establishment sentiment that provokes enquiry and questioning of the authority, power, and hegemony. There is no doubt that silence is also the last recourse of the weaks and of the marginals. As a medium of communication, silence is found to develop a strong sense of defiance, and it attempts to distort the pre-fixed texture. A subtle inherent power structure, silence tries to materialize a new cultural and social condition. The binary in silence attempts to redefine the homologous as well as heterologous power relations. The idea of silence is often put together from a gendered perspective. Women, especially in Indian contexts, are seen as silent characters for a considerable period of time. Due to their lack of access to education and financial dependence on their male counterparts, most of the female characters are zoomed in as victims of patriarchal authority.*

The purpose of this study is to argue, with specific tea narratives as a point of reference, the influence of silence in various social and cultural contexts. It also seeks to show how the nature of silence gets distorted in various conditions. The most impacted victims in tea gardens are the female tea workers, who are purposefully silenced by both the male partners of the families in which they work and by the owners of the tea plantations. The study also makes an effort to investigate the situation of the male workers, who are also shown to be in a pitiful state and are unable to express themselves properly and are also silenced. In this article, there is also an attempt to consider the status of the planters' wives who were, in most cases, silenced by their planter husbands.

Key words: *Anti-establishment, defiance, submissive, tea narrative*

There is a significant role that silence plays in both life and literature. Silence can frequently speak louder and more meaningfully than words can. It can also be more metaphorical. When it comes to internal communication, silence is used in

a more psychologically operated way than the commonplace way of connection that is most commonly seen. Silence is the last resort for most people, and it may be used as a weapon by both the powerful and the powerless. Silence, which is both symbolic and dynamic in various ways, is elevated to a higher level of eloquence when employed as the medium of protest. Silence, like many different coloured domes, provides an advantage to the speaker, who uses it to prepare well to transmit his ideas clearly and complicates the entire process of communication from a variety of different viewpoints. Greek playwright Euripides rightly said, "Silence is true wisdom's best reply" ("Silence is true wisdom's best reply"). Emily Dickinson is found to be more poetical when she wrote to her aunt in 1874, "Saying nothing sometimes says the most" ("The Power of No").

The idea that silence can serve multiple functions in the context of social and cultural interaction is the primary focus of this article. In addition, as is the case with all other types of literary works, it has been discovered that silence is one of the best techniques surrounding tea narratives. There is no question that most stories about tea centres primarily on tea farming in India and the journeys of tea planters in other parts of the world. The discussion is true for the vast majority of tea narratives. However, it is necessary to point out that apart from the operations of manufacturing tea, the tales also chronicle the passing of stillness that looms huge in the broad canvas of the green tea valleys. This chronicle is something that needs to be mentioned. It is not always the stories of two leaves and a bud but the unasked-for and unspoken tears of the workers, as well as the silence that reverberates in the tea narratives.

The power and authority of the tea garden owners, in the majority of situations, keep the workers quiet. This long-practiced tradition leaves the workers with no alternative for speaking out and demanding the long-sought justice they are entitled. In the book titled *The Elephant in the Room: Silence and Denial in Everyday Life*, written by Eviatar Zerubavel, the author discusses the concept of a "conspiracy of silence" (Zerubavel 2) to provide further explanation of the concept of keeping one's lips shut even after being aware of the truth. According to the tea literature, a cultural norm among the workers involves suppressing the facts to preserve the status quo. It has been discovered that the voiceless workers in the tea gardens have found "silence" to be a necessary and only weapon of protest for them while fighting against their authority and owners. In the plays of Harold Pinter, such a technical device of silence is found with a similar sort of

effectiveness. However, history and literature demonstrate that the overall situation of the tea workers has remained the same as it was in the past, both throughout the time of the British colonial administration and after independence. In addition, it is becoming increasingly violent and intolerable here and now. When the proprietors of the tea gardens find it difficult to satisfy the demands of their employees, it is now simple for them to close the gardens.

Teatime for the Firefly, written by Shona Patel, is the perfect example of a tea narrative that deals with the silences of human existence in various ways. *Teatime for the Firefly* is a novel set in the backdrop of the Colonial India. It captures the moments of tea plantation in the distant Assam Valley by the British planters and the hurdles they had to face while braving all of the difficulties. The history of plantations is filled with examples of power and authority exercised over the workers. The point of convergence has always been on the part of the planters to acquire more benefits and create more output. *Oroonoko: or the Royal Slave*, written by Aphra Behn, recounts the same epic struggle between power and authority. *Oroonoko*, written by Aphra Behn, has a record of dominance over the mute workers. When the protagonist *Oroonoko* tries to rise from the position of an average labourer to his former royal position, he is found to be speechless whenever he remembers his previous life as a monarch. Several times, he was hushed in the plantation area of Surinam, and then he was slaughtered, murdered, and butchered horrendously. The whole event in Surinam was showy business by the authority to make it an example that others would learn from, hoping that other plantation workers would not stage similar protests in the future.

The narratives of silence in Shona Patel's *Teatime for the Firefly* present the socio-cultural nexus in a multifaceted manner. It is very important to note that the narrator, who has the mentality of a researcher, makes it clear early in the text that the young planters who join the tea plantation estates are required to put their signatures on a contract paper. The narrator provides this information. According to the information provided by the narrator, the young planters "were not allowed to marry for three years so that they could concentrate on their job without distraction and, more specifically, female whining" (Patel, 2013, p. 118). The problem of silence arises in this context in a myriad of ways, the primary one being the young tea planters still in the training phase of their employment. They are expected to live an extremely regimented existence marked by punctuality and discipline, and their ability to effectively supervise the tea workers is often called into doubt. Young tea planters are put in various difficult and unexpected

situations and are required to find solutions to these problems. Most significantly, they are quiet. If employees of the Tea Company did not adhere to the company's policies, terms, and conditions, they risked losing their jobs.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of silence is brought into the sharpest focus when considering the situation of women. When it comes to the situation of the women workers, their voices are rarely heard. They keep their roles as silent, obedient onlookers and continue to work throughout the trip. They can perform high-quality labour in the gardens, which is to the advantage of the tea garden proprietors. They work in the garden for hours, risking the presence of cheetahs, snakes, leeches, and other insects by working carefully and skillfully to remove "two leaves and one bud" from each "flush." However, their needs are frequently disregarded; in most instances, even the most fundamental requirements are rarely met. Their position is almost like the blind Samson working on the enemies' ground: "Where I, a prisoner chained, scarce freely draw/ The air-imprisoned also, close and damp, / Unwholesome draught" (Milton 750).

When the story's protagonist, Layla, first debuted in it, she was completely clueless about the tea trade, in contrast to the other female characters who would be working directly in the tea garden. Other than that, however, Layla knew nothing at all about the tea business. However, it is rather noteworthy to point out that Layla, a character who would later be a part and parcel of the tea plantation along with her husband and would play some crucial roles, stays a character who is mute and hesitant for the majority of the time. This is a trait that she maintains throughout the majority of the story. In the beginning of her appearance in the story, it was discovered that she spent the most of her time hidden behind a curtain. Her chance encounter with Manik Deb places her in a position where she cannot adequately articulate her thoughts and information and instead forces her into a position where she must remain silent. She is portrayed as an introvert and a character who is content to spend time by herself enjoying her own company. Even after they were married, there was no break in the stillness. When using a pen and paper, she is more articulate and verbose in her writing. However, she is at her most reserved while talking with Manik Deb or the other male members of the family. The fact that Layla is being silent has a lot of significance and symbolism. Not only does it discuss one particular person, but it also discusses the majority of the female characters. The precarious position of the women in society does not improve during or after the time of colonial rule since it never did throughout that time. The image of women as passive objects

controlled by males in patriarchal societies is still highly prevalent. The growth and development of Indian women was not significantly supported by either the British administrations or the British tea planters throughout the colonial era. During the time of the British Raj, the state of education in general, as well as the education of women specifically, was in a pitiful condition. The British had little interest in fostering the intellectual development of any Indian subjects. When it was the views of the British or Indian males, then it is easy to assume the kind of attitude the British had for the Indian women.

The narrative of tea is told in a way that emphasises the facts of the tea industry and the state of the tea plantation, as well as the tradition of drinking tea and the people whose lives are intertwined with all of these different functions. The tea narrative basically involves a lot of different things and has a lot of different angles. It entails an enormous quantity of literature of a wide variety of genres and possesses a transnational character of its very own. The expansion of the tea narrative welcomes concepts that are, by their very nature, both contradictory and founded on agreement. This applies to everything from mythology to history. Because tea develops and changes over the course of time and gains a new slant and viewpoint every time it is viewed from a different angle, a story about tea will always be focused on a specific viewpoint due to the fact that tea is constantly evolving and adapting. The diverse ways in which people approach it are what lead it to change over the course of time. The perspectives of a planter and a labourer on a plantation are, in the vast majority of cases, entirely different from one another, despite the fact that there are certain parallels between the two groups. A plantation owner is always of the notion that he is under constant threat of extinction and is under pressure with a thrust for better performance and exhibiting skills in his job. On the other hand, a worker is always of the opinion that he is under constant threat of existence. However, he believes that he is always paid less and is perpetually put in the position of having to choose between being exploited and being provoked at the same time. This dichotomy persists for an unspecified period of time and can be seen in any plantation region. In the perspective of tea plantations, this one is just as significant and meaningful as the previous one.

Women who work in the tea industry face two challenges. The men in the family are the first to stifle their voices, which is the first step. In the working ground, the male workers are also suppressed similarly. If it is discovered that male workers have raised their voices or begun protesting when staring eye to eye with

the employer planter Sahib, the male workers are subjected to horrific bullying. In the movie *Sagina Mahato*, directed by Tapan Sinha, a sequence is extremely difficult to see. One of the movie's characters says, amid a fit of utter misery and exasperation, that despite the fact that he has been employed at the factory for the better part of the past three decades, he is now being let go for trivial and inconsequential reasons. However, it is impossible to avoid mentioning that this movie also captures the powerful voice of protest that the group has been missing for a significant amount of time, which Sagina leads. In the movie, the workers in the mute tea garden are represented by Sagina, a metaphor for their voice. In actual life, however, working conditions like these are extremely uncommon. The workers are sacked at the whims of the tea planters.

Most of those who have their voices stifled in this region are women working in the tea industry. At home, in most cases, their spouses or partners will mistreat and bully them, and they will live their lives in constant fear of the threats their abusers will make. Most of the time, the husband or the partner will return from the garden inebriated, and the intoxicated individual will find his wife to be an easy target for the days' worth of abuses that he has received from the planter Sahib. It was almost like having a cathartic impact on the mind of the male tea garden worker because, psychologically, he releases his mind and inner frustration to get healed by beating his wife. This kind of story can almost always be found being told in the tea garden.

In addition, there is no one left to consider the emotional well-being of the female tea workers because there is no one else there. She hides her face most of the time by hiding behind the curtain and hiding behind the veil. When things become too difficult for the female worker to stomach, she may resort to getting drunk to cope. For the women who worked in the tea industry, the procedure was a way to temporarily remove themselves from all the nastiness and challenges of the outside world. Such articles in the newspaper are rarely unusual. Handmade liquors become poisonous due to some mismanagement in the production process. People who take it as an antidote to mental pressure do not draw attention to themselves and are not concerned by their silence. There are a few more considerations that should be highlighted as well. The daily earnings of the female workers in the tea garden are lower than those of the male labourers.

Nevertheless, the job and the daily responsibilities that come with it require patience, competence, and a delicate touch when handling the tea leaves. She instantly decides which leaves and buds to choose right then. Despite the

strenuous labour she performs and the many hours she spends standing in the garden, what she receives is never sufficient. The inequality between the sexes is quite apparent. The passion of the Aarkathis and the planter Sahibs frequently leads to female tea workers' sexual exploitation. They choose to keep their mouths shut and suffer the awful psychological upheavals rather than risk losing their jobs. Such instances of contempt for a living individual are rarely documented, and society makes a concerted effort to cover up such law violations.

The wives of the tea planters are additional major characters who are ignored on purpose in the narrative of the tea garden literature. In addition to this, the majority of the time, they are kept silent and left alone in the enormous palatial bungalows while they are instructed to keep their mouths shut. The life of a tea planter is constantly frenetic. A common thread runs through all of the stories about tea: the tea planters would leave their homes in the wee hours of the morning. At the same time, their wives and children were still soundly asleep, and they would return to the bungalow after a whole day of hard work when the kids were already tucked into bed. The worried woman is counting off the minutes till she can eat dinner with her husband. Almost every tea garden has experienced something along these lines at some point in its history. An excerpt from a memoir may be used as a starting point for the debate. Within the context of this discussion, M.P. Verma's book *The Teetotaler: Reminiscences of a Tea Planter* is the ideal story. M.P. Verma had a long and successful career as a tea planter, during which he worked in a variety of tea gardens in Dooars and Darjeeling, as well as in some of the most difficult tea gardens in Assam. Working in many tea gardens led to an outstanding career for M.P. Verma. Mr Verma records: "While the hours at work increased, the time spent with my new wife decreased. Sometimes I wouldn't get home until eight or nine in the evening... Poonam did acknowledge that she was anxious about something" (Verma, 2020, p. 60).

However, the concept of being silent is brought up numerous times in his writings. Throughout his long experiences of working in several different tea gardens, he encountered a number of different scenarios in which he was forced to reflect on the significance of silence in his own life. As a result, he became interested in spirituality at one point in his professional life. It is clear from reading the memoir that Verma experienced unanticipated feelings of solitude when he was assigned to work in the tea gardens during the early stages of his

career. After a hard day's labour, it was more difficult for him to return to the Bura bungalow because most of the tea plantations were located a significant distance from the town and the typical human interactions that take place in everyday life. Life was exceptionally quiet in the Bura bungalow because only a few workers lived there at any given time. The decade of the 1960s is the one that Mr Verma chose to recount in his autobiography. The concept of Jane Brox is the best way to make sense of the eloquence that can be found in Verma's book. He thinks, "Engaging in meaningful conversation requires silence" (Brox 58). This kind of isolation and emptiness in the life of a planter's wife may also be seen in Shona Patel's novel *Teatime for the Firefly*. After getting married to Manik Deb and moving into the tea planter's bungalow, the main character, Layla, continues to battle the same feelings of isolation and emptiness she had before. Most of the time, these periods of silence in an individual's life go unnoticed, regardless of whether the story is fictional or a vivid biography.

Another important and noteworthy work of literature on tea, Two Leaves and a Bud by Mulk Raj Anand, illustrates the precarious position that women find themselves in generally. This early novel that deals with the status of women working in tea farms recounts the unhesitating presentation of the homeless labourers, which is much more violent and terrible than anything else in the narrative. In this work of fiction by Anand, female characters are portrayed as passive observers of their male counterparts' actions. This story exhibits the actual essence of the early efforts made by British planters, including how and under what conditions they began planting tea in the Assam region, as well as how, with cunning and cleverness, they used to collect labourers and their family members for the tea gardens. Additionally, this novel exemplifies the true essence of the early efforts made by the British planters. They were promised lucrative positions and financial baits to sign a contract before getting situated in the tea garden. With the assistance of the secret operatives, the labourers from different parts of India were befooled. It was undeniable that the tea coolies used to get involved in a cycle of destructive behaviour, and along with them, the female members were doomed to a similar kind of unfortunate end. In some instances, the female members were forced to contend with a variety of additional challenges. The coolie ladies undoubtedly faced one of the most serious barriers in the absence of privacy in their living conditions. Persistent financial instability and unhygienic living conditions, both of which were just makeshift in pattern, and the female characters were truly, in the full sense of the term, the quiet participants of the whole set up. Inconsistent temperatures, the onslaught of

mosquitoes, malaria and a number of other diseases, and hunger were only a few of the factors that contributed to the high mortality rate that was observed in the tea gardens of Assam during the early days of tea plantations in various regions of the state. According to Mulk Raj Anand's novel *Two Leaves and a Bud*, the British planters targeted the native coolie women and they were the easy prey. A significant number of the bachelor British planters spent their time with native girls, either out of love for them or by forcing them with constant threats.

Jay Winter's article "Thinking about silence" in the edited volume *Shadows of War: A Social History of Silence in the Twentieth Century* raises some significant issues regarding the social construction of silence. The introductory article helps in sketching the redefinition of 'silence' as society generally looks on it. According to Winter, silence is a "socially constructed space in which and about which subjects and words normally used in everyday life are not spoken" (Winter 4). Winter also reiterates there are always a strict and perfect differentiation between the "sayable" and the "unsayable" and at the same time the "spoken" and the "unspoken." The condition is similarly applicable in case of the tea narratives. Most of the much discussed areas in tea narratives are kept in silence, either by force or by practice which go on in course of discussion for a time immemorial. And the most significant part to be mentioned here is that being silenced for a long time, the characters involved in this part have forgotten to raise their voice anymore. They have accepted their lot patiently and have taken everything considering those aspects of life as nothing but normal course of events.

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