

National Seminar
on
**MYTHS AND FAIRY TALES:
TELLING AND RETELLING**
26TH AND 27TH NOVEMBER 2015

PROCEEDINGS

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Anju K.N.

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National Seminar on
“Myths and Fairy Tales: Telling and Retelling”

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PREFACE

“Deeper meaning resides in the fairy tales told to me in my childhood than in the truth that is taught by life”

Schiller.

Myths and fairy tales have forever captivated the human consciousness, often tapping into our darkest fears and deepest desires and illuminating to us the inexplicable depths of our psyche. The codified, authoritative, canonical texts have acted simultaneously as ideological tools and colossal fortresses padding a nation’s culture and civilization and reassuring the audience of the rhyme and reason of a chaotic world around them. Just as the individual and the national psyche is woven around the many mythical narratives and fairy tales, the tellings have transcended boundaries and acquired a universal significance too, constructing archetypes which have universal validity.

While the tellings unfold a fabulous world of heroes, supernatural beings, gods, demigods, magic, princes charming, fairy godmothers, evil stepmothers, a conflict between sides that are good and bad or a quest which ends with realization, the retellings trigger a textual decentring and recontextualizing. The repetitions of myths and fairy tales are intertwined with the varied discourses of multiplicity, gender constructs, politics, identity, displacement, resistance, subalternity and otherness. Disrupting a monolithic perspective and dismantling the dichotomy of opposites the revisions challenge the existing textual constructs and assumptions which have been glorified across the ages.

The two day national seminar on “Myths and Fairy Tales: Telling and Retelling” ventured to articulate the multiple dynamics of the negotiation of cultures and languages. It also attempted to focus on the ‘white spaces’, the changed voices and the shifted perspectives which explicitly interrogate and challenge the existing discourses and authorial positions and consciously decode the underlying ideology. The seminar could boldly brew discussions on the ways in which the characterisations and narrative structures were presented to create a distinctly coded mythic discourse or negotiated to repress cultural anxieties or even re-presented and recontextualised to lay bare the multiplicity of positions that remain unaddressed.

This publication is the outcome of the heated deliberations and discussions at the seminar held by the Department of English at T.M. Jacob Memorial Government College, Manimalakunnu, Ernakulam on 26th and 27th November 2015 under the sponsorship of The Directorate of

Collegiate Education, Government of Kerala. The seminar could provide a platform for problematizing such core areas of concerns as Myths and fairy tales as socio-cultural constructs, Comparative Mythology, Shifting Narrative Perspectives, Gender Politics, Identity, Politics of revisions, Subaltern Positions, Plurality, Intertextuality, Archetypes, Dreams, Fantasy and the Language of the Unconscious and also, Ethnicity and Collective Memory thereby providing valuable insights to the academicians and researchers. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my sincere thanks to all those experts who contributed to the reflections in this seminar either by presenting papers or by engaging in scholarly, thought provoking debates and discussions. I also acknowledge the efforts put in by the Directorate of Collegiate Education, Government of Kerala by way of sponsoring the seminar. I would also like to thank the college authorities and my colleagues in the department for putting considerable efforts to make this seminar a success. I hope this publication will open up avenues for researchers and academicians for further study.

Anju K.N.
Seminar Co-ordinator

SEMINAR REPORT

The Department of English of the college conducted a two day National Seminar on **Myths and Fairy Tales: Telling and Retelling** sponsored by the Department of Collegiate Education, Government of Kerala on **26 and 27 November 2015**.

The registration for participants began at 9.00 am on 26-11-2015. Renowned academician Sri. Josy Joseph, Associate Professor, S.B. College, Changanacherry inaugurated the seminar and delivered the key note address in the absence of Prof. A. Joseph Dorairaj, Dean, Faculty of English and Foreign Languages, Gandhigram Rural Institute (Deemed University), Tamil Nadu who was supposed to honour the session with his presence and talk on *Myth, Literature and Hermeneutics*. Principal Dr Benno Joseph presided over the inaugural function. The Head of the Department of English, Dr Lekshmi R. Nair accorded a warm welcome to the guests and participants. Ms Anju K.N., the seminar co-ordinator proposed the vote of thanks.

After the inaugural ceremony, the first session commenced at 11.30 am with the scholarly lecture of Sri. Josy Joseph on *The Politics and Poetics of Retelling Myths: A Genealogical Analysis of Select Ramayana Texts*. The second session of the day began at 2.00 pm. Dr Saji Mathew, Assistant Professor, School of Letters, Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam delivered his lecture on *The Supernatural as Political: Class, Caste and Gender in Malayalam Filmic Representations of Ghosts*. The first session of paper presentations began at 3.45 pm and concluded at 4.30 pm.

The first session of the second day commenced at 10.00 am with the lecture by Dr Jyothimol P., Associate Professor, Baselius College, Kottayam. She spoke on *Disparate Locations of Myth and Reality in the Indian Context: Reading Mahasweta Devi's BreastGiver and Draupadi*. The paper presentations began at 11.45 am and continued till 1.00 pm. The final session of paper presentations began at 2.00 pm and came to an end at 4.00 pm.

Thirty four teachers, four research scholars, nineteen students and three resource persons participated in the seminar. The seminar concluded at 4.30 pm with a brief valedictory session.

CRITICAL ARTICLES

The Politics and Poetics of Retelling Myths: A Genealogical Analysis of Select Ramayana Texts *Inaugural Lecture**

Josy Joseph

it spreads, ceaselessly various,
One and many at once
—Kampan

Myths, by their inherent nature, by definition and default, have to be retold and have always been retold. The possibility of revision and retelling is ingrained in every mythical narrative. What makes a story mythical is this ‘retellability’, its narrative flexibility, its semantic textuality, its formal malleability, its open-endedness. Sometimes attempts are made to close the narrative, to prevent its textual proliferation—as in the case of religious or scriptural texts. Even then, the mythical nature of such narratives resists those attempts at closure. The Ramayana stories are a good case in point.

In this lecture, I am trying to look at the ideological and aesthetic motives behind the never-ending impulse to retell and renew the Ramayana stories. The basic argument is that the Ramayana is not and cannot be a single/singular and fixed story. Rather, it is a story always told in the plural. And that the telling isn’t finished yet. There is no one Ramayana as such. There are many Ramayanas all around. As Valmiki himself tells the twins Lava and Kusha after teaching them the Ramayana: “this is a new poem. But not a new story. The Ramayana is the eternal history of the human race.” Later, the twins sing to their father Rama, the story of his own journey of life, the *Ramayana*, when he doesn’t quite recognise them. This is from the Uttara kaandam (*Uttara Ramayana*), a later addition, supposedly by Valmiki himself. Thus, even

*The text of the inaugural lecture.

Valmiki began with retelling. *The Ramayana* is already a retelling. Valmiki is also supposed to be the author of other retellings as *Adbutha Ramayana*, *Ananda Ramayana*— all with substantial differences with the so called original version.

Valmiki also offers the first instance of metawriting in literary history. Not only is he the author of *the Ramayana*, but also a character and player. In other words, Valmiki inaugurated the tradition of unstable signification. Not only did he construct his text of the Ramayana, but by problematising the nature of his text as also his role/function in it (author/character) he also provided the very logic to deconstruct it. ‘It is never traditional to be conservative’, goes an old saying. In this case, it is Valmiki himself who began the tradition of radical retellings of the Ramayana.

A word about my title. Genealogy is Nietzsche’s concept of history (*On the Genealogy of Morals*) that delegitimizes the present by separating it from the past. It is a form of critique that uses the principle of difference. Genealogy, as Foucault explains it, rejects origins and essences (it is anti-originary and anti-essentialist), highlights suppressed and discredited knowledges; and listens to local memories and tellings. It is history from below and around. Genealogy celebrates variants. It is polyphonic and carnivalesque. It is against hegemony or standardisation. It knows no reverence and therefore no blasphemy as well. In this paper, I intend to focus on those retellings of the Ramayana which employ a genealogical perspective.

Any reflection on the retellings of the Ramayana should begin by referring to A. K. Ramanujan’s classic essay on the topic—‘Three Hundred *Ramayanas*: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation’. This was a paper originally written for the Conference on Comparison of Civilizations at the University of Pittsburgh in 1987. We should also remember the pioneering work of Fr Camille Bulke, a Belgian Jesuit missionary who came to India in 1935 and fell in love with this land and its culture that he eventually became a citizen here and even changed his name to Bihari. He became a great scholar of both Sanskrit and Hindi, taking a Master’s Degree in each. He also obtained a PhD from Allahabad University for his thesis *Ram Katha: Utpatti aur Vikas* (The Rama Story: Origin and Development), later published as a book in 1950. He devoted his life to the pursuit of Ramayana scholarship, in addition to writing the definitive *English–Hindi Dictionary*. The nation honoured him with a Padma Bhushan in 1974. It was Fr Bulke who first

made an attempt to count the number of Ramayana texts or versions and it was he who arrived at a figure of 300, the number that Ramanujan refers to in his famous study. But Ramanujan also quotes two eminent scholars who have counted a thousand each in Kannada and Telugu. A certain number can never be arrived at, as new tellings will always emerge or be discovered. And this does not take into consideration the contemporary or future additions, adaptations and appropriations—all those inter-semiotic retellings. So, here are we dealing with a mythical text that has not 300, but 30,000 or more forms, and still counting. Much like the divine or mythological *astra* that is launched as a single arrow, but multiplies as it moves and hits every target.

Ramanujan's paper gave Paula Richman, Professor of South Asian Religions at Oberlin College, Ohio, the necessary scholarly trigger for her life-long obsession with the Ramayana. She is easily the foremost Ramayana scholar in the world today. The three books she edited, along with the numerous articles and research papers she wrote constitute some of the definitive critical and scholarly texts in the field:

Many Ramayanas: The Diversity of a Narrative Tradition in South Asia. Oxford UP, 1992.

Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian Tradition. Oxford UP, 2000.

Her latest work, *Ramayana Stories in Modern South India: An Anthology.* Indiana UP, 2008, is a collection of 22 modern retellings translated from the four major South Indian languages and from genres as diverse as drama, short stories, poetry, and folk song. The focus is on marginalized characters and themes.

This lecture is primarily based on the critical insight provided by Ramanujan's essay as well as the widening reach of retellings identified by Paula Richman. I have also looked at two important essays by Romila Thapar on the topic: 'The Ramayana Syndrome' and 'In Defence of the Variant' as also a few scholarly essays in Malayalam (Kuttikrishna Marar, N V P Unitthiri and others). I would also like to highlight some of the major attempts at retelling the Ramayana stories in Malayalam.

Both Ramanujan and Paula Richman point out that Valmiki's Ramayana cannot and should not be taken as the starting point or source. It is not some kind of an Ur-text on which every other version is based. Ramanujan prefers the word 'tellings' to the usual terms versions or variants for the same reason. He draws our attention to how

tradition itself distinguishes between the Rama story (Rama katha) and literary compositions of poets such as Valmiki, Kampan and others.

In addition to creative retellings, there have been critical or ideological responses to the Ramyana stories as well. Most of these responses are of a hermeneutic kind. That is, each commentary or interpretation can be regarded as an attempt to offer a new set of meanings and therefore constitutes a kind of retelling. The narrative may be the same, but its interpretation varies. For example, in the case of Periyar E. V. Ramaswami Naikar, his interpretation has been so radical and politically motivated that it is now referred to as his 'version' of the Ramayana like the creative versions of Kampan, Thulasidas, Ezhuthachan and many others. Or as Kathleen Erndl puts it, "every interpretation is also a telling, and every telling also an interpretation" (Richman, *Many Ramayanas* 69).

Ramanujan's essay looks at five major Ramayanas:

- 1) Valmiki's poetical epic in Sanskrit
- 2) Kambar's 12th C Tamil version Iraamaavataaram or Kamba Ramayanam as it is popularly known
- 3) Jaina tellings which provide a non-Hindu perspective on familiar events and themes
- 4) A Kannada folktale highlighting sexuality and childbearing, and
- 5) The *Ramakein* (Rama's story) or *Ramakirti* (glory), the 18th C Thai version

We also know that there has been one major (re)telling of the Ramayana each in most Indian languages.

Examples: Tulsidas' *Ramcharitamanas* (16 C, in Awadhi dialect of Hindi), Thunchaththu Ezhuthachan's (16th C) *Adhyathmaramayanam* in Malayalam – both based on the Sanskrit text of *Adhyathma Ramayana*, believed to have been written by Veda Vyasa and forming a part of Brahmanda Purana, but which many scholars attribute to some unknown poet of 14-15 centuries.

Gona Budda Reddy's (also called Ranganatha) *Ranganatha Ramayanam* in Telugu (13 C)

Madhava Kandali's *Saptakanda Ramayana* in Assamese (14 C)
 Kuvempu's *Sri Ramayana Darshanam Mahakavya* in Kannada
 Krittibas Ojha's *Krittivasi Ramayan* (also known as *Shri Rama Panchali*) in Bengali (15 C)

Sarala Das' *Vilanka Ramayana* (15 C) and Balaram Das' *Dandi Ramayana* (also known as the *Jagamohan Ramayana*) (16 C) both in Odia

Sant Eknath's *Bhavarth Ramayan* (16 C) in Marathi.

The Ramayana has been retold in Konkani, Urdu, Kashmiri and Santali. It has also crossed the Indian boundaries and found expression all over South Asia—in Balinese, Cambodian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Javanese, Laotian, Malaysian, Sinhalese, Thai and Tibetan. Many Western languages too have their versions, but these are mostly translations. The Ramayana story has been told in all literary genres and cultural forms—both classical and folk. Each retelling has its own logic behind the attempt—whether ideological or aesthetic.

Talking about the differences between Valmiki and Kampan in their respective portrayal of Rama, Ramanujan says:

In Valmiki, Rama is that not of a god, but of a god-man who has to live within the limits of a human form with all its vicissitudes. Some argue that the reference to Rama's divinity and his incarnation, ... the first and the last books of the epic are later additions. For Kampan, writing under the influence of the bhakti tradition of Nammaivar, Rama is a god who is on a mission to root out evil, sustain the good, and bring release to all living beings. (Dharwadker 142)

Now this distinction between Valmiki's more human Rama and the more divine Rama of the retellings finds its utmost manifestation in the *Adhyatma Ramayana*. As the very title suggests, this is about spirituality. The major difference between the two texts is the introduction, in the *Adhyatma Ramayana*, of a "Shadow Sita" throughout the period of her abduction. In this version of the epic, the fire-god Agni creates Maya Sita, who takes Sita's place and is abducted by Ravana and suffers his captivity, while the real Sita hides in the fire. At Agni Pariksha, Maya Sita and the real Sita exchange places again. The whole drama is preplanned and enacted at the bidding of Rama Himself. While some texts mention that Maya Sita is destroyed in the flames of Agni Pariksha, others narrate how she is blessed and reborn. There are versions where Maya Sita in a previous birth was Vedavati, a

woman Ravana tries to rape and who curses Ravana that she will be the cause of his ruin. Since she has taken birth in three yugas – Vedavati in Satya yuga, Maya Sita in Treta Yuga and Draupadi in Dwapara yuga, she is known as Trihayani, the one who appears in the three ages. The Maya Sita motif (an important ideological development in Vaishnavism, the Vishnu/Rama-centric sects) saves Sita – their chief goddess– from falling prey to Ravana’s plot of abduction and safeguards her purity. Sita is spared of the polluting touch of Ravana and thus retains her divine/racist purity. Similar doubles or surrogates of Sita and other goddesses are found in various tales of Hindu mythology. The Maya Sita motif is considered as the “most important instance of an addition” in the Ramayana. Tulasidas and many others follow the Adhyatma Ramayana in this respect. The Kurma Purana (c. 550–850 CE) is the first text where Maya Sita appears. Some versions of the Ramayana (such as the ones in the Mahabharata (5th to 4th century BCE), the Vishnu Purana (1st century BCE–4th century CE), the Harivamsa (1–300 CE) and several Puranas) omit the Agni Pariksha altogether to avoid questioning Sita’s purity.

Other differences in the Adhyatma Ramayana include:

*Rama is recast in the role of a spiritual teacher who gives philosophical discourses. On different occasions he teaches knowledge, devotion and detachment, methods of worship and the way of emancipation as also the three Yogas of Karma (action), Jnana (knowledge) and Bhakti (devotion).

*Rama reveals himself as four-handed Mahavishnu at his very birth, a feature that is not seen in Valmiki. The Ayodhya Kanda of *Adhyatma Ramayana* opens with a visit of Sage Narada to Rama to remind him of the purpose of his incarnation, which Rama acknowledges. All these incidents are not in Valmiki.

*The well known Ramagita is part of Adhyatma Ramayana. It contains teachings on Advaita Vedanta. The real contribution of this work is in its repeatedly propounding the doctrine that Rama is Brahman the Absolute and that Sita is His Maya-shakti or Prakriti, thereby raising the personality of Rama to the highest level and providing a firm base to the worship of Rama.

*According to *Adhyatma Ramayana*, Ravana is aware of the fact that Rama is Lord Vishnu incarnated in human form to kill him. Ravana is also aware of the fact that destruction at Rama’s hand is an easier way of gaining salvation than through spiritual practices (devotion

through confrontation - an example for vidvesha/vipareeta bhakti). He treats Sita with the respect due to a mother. Also, on his death, Ravana's spirit enters into Rama and attains salvation. There is nothing like this in Valmiki.

*In *Adhyatma Ramayana* — unknown to Lakshmana, Rama informs Sita that Ravana will be coming to abduct her, and that therefore he is handing her over to the Fire deity Agni for safe custody, till he takes her back again. In her place Maya Sita is left in Asrama, and it is this illusory Sita that Ravana abducts. This is unknown in the Valmiki. After the death of Ravana, Sita's fire ordeal is only to replace the Maya Sita by Rama in Adhyatma. The whole event is given the appearance of a real ordeal in Valmiki.

*A conspicuous addition in the *Adhyatma Ramayana* is Rama's installation of the Sivalinga in Rameswara, before the construction of Sethu for the success of the enterprise. Rama also talks about and promotes the pilgrimage to Rameswaram.

*In *Adhyatma Ramayana* everyone praises and chants hymns on Rama right from Vamadeva, Valmiki, Narada, Agasthya, Viswamitra, Vasishtha, Jatayu, Kabhanda, Sabari, Parasurama, Vibhishana, Hanuman etc. This is absent in Valmiki.

All these clearly indicate a conscious move to *re(-)present* Rama as an absolutely divine and flawless incarnation, rather than the more human and worldly version (of course, he is divine too) that we find in Valmiki. In a clear case of mediation, the compulsions of the bhakti tradition of the Vaishnavite sect must have played a decisive role here. So much for the ideology and politics of retelling. Though the *Adhyatma Ramayana* furthers the devotional cause, there are moments where the meta-fictional element of the Valmiki kind is manifested. The most glorious example is when Rama is exiled and decides to go alone at first. Sita wants to join him, but he refuses and they get into a heated argument. When all her regular reasons fail to persuade a resolute Rama, Sita takes out the trump card: "There have been countless Ramayanas before this. Do you know of any where Sita doesn't go with Rama to the forest?"

That clinches the debate and Sita accompanies her husband. Those intolerant fundamentalists who do not approve of the idea that there could be many Ramayanas only have to read their Ezhuthachan or even Valmiki ("This is a new poem, but not a new story. The Ramayana is the eternal history of the human race") carefully. Only a few years ago,

Ramanujan's essay had to be removed from the syllabus of no less an institution than Delhi University. Romila Thapar has this to say about it:

The collapse of the academic council is pathetic given that a university is precisely a place where students are expected to discuss variants and alternate readings, and to understand how statements of various kinds are to be evaluated. If various versions are going to be objected to, then we will be left with just a single received version. The richness of the theme and the ways in which it has captured the cultural imagination of the people of India through the centuries and why, are no longer legitimate subjects of research. (227)

Invoking this spirit (and logic) of academic research let me look at some of the non-Hindu tellings of the Ramayana. In the Jaina tellings, the Rama story not only is deprived of its Hindu values, but they even accuse the Brahmins of maligning Ravana, making him into a villain. One Jain text begins with a set of questions: "How can monkeys vanquish the powerful warriors like Ravana? How can noble men and Jain worthies like Ravana eat flesh and drink blood? How can Kumbhakarna sleep through six months...?" The most famous Jaina telling is Vimalasuri's *Paumacariya* (Prakrit for the Sanskrit Padmacarita (also known as Jaina Ramayana), in which Gautama proposes to tell the 'true' story, beginning with the following words: "I'll tell you what Jaina wise men say. Ravana is not a demon, he is not a cannibal and a flesh eater (Valmiki's Rama eats flesh, by the way). Wrong-thinking poetasters and fools tell these lies" (Dharwadker 144). Obviously, the Jaina telling is a *pratipurana* (counter-epic) that knows Valmiki's Ramayana and attempts to 'correct' or 'right' it. Ravana has a tragic grandeur about him. Rama has ascetic, non-violent Jaina values. So he does not kill Ravana. Lakshmana does and goes to hell for it. The text also contains numerous references to Jaina places of pilgrimage as well as to Jaina monks, legends and homilies. Some politics of course in the retelling there. In one of the Jaina tellings, Sita is Ravana's daughter, a text that also occurs in the folk traditions of Kannada and Telugu as also in several South-East Asian Ramayanas. In Malayalam, this alternative narrative was poetically explored by Vayalar Ramavarma in his 'Ravanaputhri' (Daughter of Ravana).

The Buddhist (Thervada) Retellings:

Narratives about the previous lives of the Buddha are collectively known as Jataka stories/tales. One well-known text is the *Dasaratha Jataka*, which sees Rama as a prior life of the Buddha. The Laotian retelling is known as *Phra Lak/Phra Lam* (the Laotian names for Lakshman and Rama, respectively). Both retellings highlight Buddhist values and teachings. Ramakein or Ramakirti (Rama's glory) is Thailand's national epic. Out of the many versions only three currently exist, one of which was prepared in 1797 under the supervision of (and partly written by) King Rama I. His son, Rama II, rewrote some parts of his father's version for khon drama. The work has had an important influence on Thai literature, art and drama. While the main story is identical to that of the Ramayana, many other aspects were transposed into a Thai context, such as the clothes, weapons, topography, and elements of nature. Frank Reynolds who wrote about Laotian and Thai texts in Paula Richman's *Many Ramayanas* finds a problem with the term 'Ramayana' being used for these versions because the term privileges a Hindu version over the non-Hindu ones (60).

The Dalit Critique of the Ramayana:

The Dalit critique of the Ramayana highlights the brahmanical hold over the construction of discourses and shared meaning in societies. It argues that the received version of the Ramayana is designed to perpetuate the brahmanical supremacy, the oppressive caste system and the demonization and marginalisation of the Dalit community. The elitist Ramayana legitimises this social injustice as well as institutionalised violence and thereby guarantees its continuation.

Ambedkar wrote a pamphlet called *Riddles in Hinduism* with a section on 'the Riddle of Rama and Krishna' which raises severe objections to Rama being considered a 'maryadapurush' let alone as the incarnation of God. He draws our attention to the issues pertaining to Rama's killing of Shambuka, a shudra ascetic for attempting to perform penance in violation of dharma. Rama kills him for reading the Vedas and scriptures which was the privilege of the brahmins. But this incident occurs in the Uttara kanda. Ambedkar also castigates Rama for murdering the popular folk king Bali. He questions Rama's act of holding Sita's *agnipareeksha* (trial by fire) and his patriarchal attitude towards her. After defeating Ravana, he tells Sita that he had gone to war with Ravana to get her released not for her sake but to restore his own honour. As expected, Rama banishing a pregnant Sita because he heard some rumours about her chastity comes for the severest criticism from

Ambedkar. Rama taking the help of Vibhishana, the younger brother of Ravana, in order to kill Ravana and his son Indrajit is also criticised.

Jyotirao Phule, thinker/activist, one of the pioneers of the Dalit movement in India, saw Rama as a symbol of oppression stemming from the Aryan conquest. Phule's critique of the caste system began with his attack on the Vedas, the most foundational texts of upper-caste Hindus. He considered them to be idle fantasies and palpably absurd legends as well as a form of false consciousness. He is credited with introducing the Marathi word *dalit* (broken, crushed) as a descriptive term for those people who were outside the traditional *varna* system.

In several folk, tribal, and peasant versions of the Ramayana story, Rama is not the idealised male or king—the *maryadapurush*, nor Ravana the demonised villain. And Sita is not the obedient and idealised woman of traditional expectations. These narratives reject the patriarchal constructions of Valmiki and his even more patriarchal and elitist successors such as Tulasidas, who, for instance, introduced the *Lakshmana rekha*. He also promotes the social ordering of *dharma* proclaimed in *Rama-rajya*, which Dalit scholars identify as nothing but an attempt to perpetuate the caste system. Tulasidas repeatedly highlights the religious message of *Rama-bhakti* and transformed what was basically a mythical story of the collective cultural consciousness of the whole of South East Asia into a religious myth of elite (Vaishnavite) Hinduism.

Sita is one character who has been the subject of numerous retellings. All kinds of permutations and combinations of relationships have been explored in these retellings. In a 14th-century Nepalese drama, *Shurpanakha* disguises as Sita, but Rama is fooled by her appearance. When the real Sita also appears, Rama is perplexed. However, *Lakshmana* tests the two Sitas and rightly judges the real one. Sita is Rama's wife in traditional texts, but radical retellings have also imagined her variously as Rama's sister, Ravana's wife, Ravana's daughter, even as the one who goes to war and kills Ravana. And then there is the concept of *Maya Sita* (illusion). A very interesting version occurs in Raveri in the Yeotmal district of Maharashtra. There is an old temple where Sita is the deity and legend has it that the abandoned Sita came and settled there to bring up his two sons. Because she was forsaken by her husband, the villagers refuse to take her in or help her. Sita curses the whole village and thereafter nothing grows on the fields there. As a penance, a later generation built the temple and also transferred all the

land titles to the women's names. Thus the Raveri Sita is not a symbol of patriarchal oppression, but of resistance to and triumph over it. And the identification with agriculture is so apt. After all, she is *bhoomikanya*, she of the furrow, daughter of mother earth. In some (eg Santal tribal) retellings Sita is a liberated woman who exercises her freedom.

The Dravidian Critique:

Periyar E. V. Ramaswami Naikar, the champion of the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu (he was also the hero of the Vaikom Satyagraha which demanded for people of the lower castes the right to walk on public roads) basically takes the same line as the Dalit critique (Periyar identifies no less than fifty instances of seemingly improper behaviour on Rama's part), but in his interpretation the North Indian upper caste onslaught and the South Indian resistance becomes the central theme. Periyar, the initiator of Self Respect Movement, was the pioneer of caste and gender equality in Tamil Nadu. In a now forgotten, but then significant incident, he planned to burn pictures of Rama, on the lines of Ambedkar burning the *Manusmriti*, because for him Rama symbolised the imposition of North Indian and upper caste norms on the Dravidian society of South India. The symbolic protest was scheduled for 01 August 1956 on the broad beaches of Marina, but Periyar and several of his followers were arrested and the event was averted. However, the message was proclaimed loud and clear. This was the centrepiece of Periyar's campaign against brahmanical Hinduism. And this, almost a decade after Gandhiji won India's independence on the promise of establishing Rama rajya here and died with Rama's name on his lips. According to Periyar, who proudly upheld his Tamil identity, the Ramayana was a thinly disguised historical account of how caste-ridden, Sanskritised, upper caste North Indians led by Rama subjugated South Indians. He identifies Ravana as the monarch of ancient Dravidians who abducted Sita, primarily to take revenge against the mutilation and insult of his sister Soorpanakha.

Ramayana in the Age of Culture Industry:

In 1987, Doordarshan, the then State monopoly of Television in India, imposed on the people its particular version of the Ramayana. 80 million people are estimated to have watched the Sunday morning telecast which began in January 1987 and lasted for more than a year. Many people in India bought their first TV set to watch this. The social relations of others improved or worsened based on whether they were let in by their neighbours. There were strikes and protests to continue

the episodes. Many bathed before the serial began and even offered incense to the Television sets which transformed into a diminutive shrine with the gods and goddesses appearing before the devotees. Philip Lutgendorf, (American Indologist, Professor of Hindi and Modern Indian Studies at the University of Iowa) writing in 1990, had this to say about the scale, nature and reception of the telecast:

The Ramayana serial had become the most popular program ever shown on Indian television—and something more: an event, a phenomenon of such proportions that intellectuals and policy makers struggled to come to terms with its significance and long range import. Never before had such a large percentage of South Asia's population been united in a single activity; never before had a single message instantaneously reached to so enormous a regional audience. (Richman, *Many Ramyanas* 3-4)

Such a phenomenon cannot be without its political and social consequences. 'Mahabharata' followed, and then the Ayodhya movement for the construction of a Ram temple got energised, culminating in the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992. The BJP which had just 2 MPs in 1987 added 280 more in 2014. Narendra Damodar Modi, the all-powerful Prime Minister today, was a relatively unknown member of the RSS who joined the BJP in 1987. There is much more than coincidence to the symbolism of it all.

Now the big question that concerns us today in the context of this seminar is—what text did the creators of the serial choose for their all important, most influential and historic version of the Ramayana? Romila Thapar answers the question in her famous essay 'The Ramayana Syndrome':

What was shown on TV and *has now become the received version* was essentially a mix of the Valmiki *Ramayana* and the *Ramacharitamanasa* of Tulasidasa. The choice of this version must have a reason: perhaps because it is best known among Hindi speakers and is therefore familiar to north Indians. Epic-type compositions need not be religious documents in origin. But some versions of an epic story can be transformed into religious statements as happened with the later version of the Valmiki *Ramayana*. (222)

I would say it was a heady cocktail of *Valmiki Ramayana* and Tulasidas's *Ramacharitamanasa*, seasoned with *Adhyatma Ramayana*. For the structure, style and idiom of the TV telling, it borrowed heavily

from mainstream films, ‘mythologicals’ and even from the Ramlilas (without the folk and comic elements, of course). What happened here is that the State (it was Rajiv Gandhi’s Congress government in power then) imposed upon the whole people, through the official and singular media, a certain version of the Ramayana that suited its ideological interests. In other words, the State, asserting its political authority chose a particular expression as ‘national culture’, ignoring all other possibilities. Thapar calls this approach ‘the Ramayana syndrome’.

Culture is not an object. It is among other things a way of conducting social relationships expressed in various idioms. State patronage and direction of culture tends to look for a single ‘national culture’. It tends to take on the perspective of the dominant group and the culture of this group is projected as the mainstream national culture. This happens where the state may not be the main patron of culture. The media for instance envisages the cultural ideal as that adopted by the middle class and it aspires to appropriate and project that culture. Cultural hegemony requires the marginalising or ironing out of other cultural expressions. (223)

An example of misplaced ideology: the legendary actor Ashok Kumar, like the sutradhara of the classical texts, introduced each episode, offering commentary and parallels with contemporary life (much like the interpretative readings of the Ramayana that we come across in the month of karkkidakam). When the young princes of Ayodhya are sent at a tender age to the gurukula for training, and their mothers are saddened by their departure, Ashok Kumar compares it to young children today going to boarding schools—hardly an experience the masses can relate to.

Critical and Creative Retellings in Malayalam:

Every major critic and scholar in Malayalam has written something or the other on the Ramayana. Critical readings that go against the grain of majority opinion (those which go beyond the obvious) include important studies by Kuttikrishna Marar, M. N. Vijayan, N. V. P. Unithiri and K. Sachidanandan. Even greater has been the creative or imaginative engagement with the Ramayana story by our poets, fiction writers, dramatists, artists and all. Sachidanandan in his preface to Sarah Joseph’s retelling of the Ramayana stories (*Puthuramayanganal*) gives a comprehensive list of such attempts at retelling over the years. I shall just mention some of the more important and recent ones.

Kumaran Asan. ‘Chintavishtayaya Sita’ (the Pensive Sita), who asks of Rama a few biting questions about dharma, righteousness and all. In the end, Sita forgives and exonerates Rama, but her (Asan’s) questions still remain. Vayalar Ramavarma has written two important poetical texts based on the Ramayana story—‘Ravanaputhri’, which portrays Sita as Ravana’s daughter and ‘Thataka enna Dravida Rajakumari’, which depicts the asura girl as a princess in love with Rama.

In 1972, Lalithambika Antharjanam published a book that re-examines perspectives on women from the epics. In *Sita Muthal Satyavati Vare* (From Sita to Satyavati), a reading of 13 characters from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, she tells us why this retelling is important: “The intense study of the epics reveals that the basic problems, experiences and the forces that drive women – and the whole of humanity – remain the same through ages. Only the names of the problems differ. Sita and Savitri and Tara and Kunti are within every woman. When you recognise them, you discover yourself.”

Sarah Joseph’s *Oorukaval* is a retelling of the Ramayana story from the perspective of Angadan, Bali’s son. Her *Puthu Ramayanam* (New Ramayana) gives radical feminist retellings from the perspective of marginalised women. ‘Thai kulam’ is particularly noted for the vigour of its subaltern idiom. Sachidananthan calls these retellings *Saraayanangal*. K. Surendran’s *Sitaayanam*, is a novel written from Sita’s perspective like M. T. Vasudevan Nair’s famous work *Randaamoozham*, which tells the Mahabharata story from Bhima’s point of view.

N. S. Madhavan’s *Panchakanyakakal* is a recent collection of five stories on Mythological women—Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara (the wife of Bali, who later marries his brother and successor, Sugriva) and Mandodiri.

C. N. Srikantan Nair has three Plays—*Saaketam*, *Lankalakshmi* and *Kanchana Sita*—now regarded as the Ramayana trilogy. G. Aravindan’s movie *Kanchana Sita*, is loosely based on Srikantan Nair’s play, and has all the major characters, except Sita, represented as tribals. Sita, on her part is conspicuous by her absence. However, her presence is evoked and felt throughout as *prakriti*, Nature. Aravindan’s bold attempt gave Malayalam cinema, one of its earliest eco-aesthetic and subaltern movies—even when it tells the perennial story of a familiar myth. Contrast this with Ramananda Sagar’s Ramayana where the demons are portrayed as tribals while the princes are all clean-shaven handsome North Indian gentlemen.

Other familiar cinematic texts that are based on the Ramayana characters include Mani Ratnam's *Raavan* and Ranjith's *Raavanaprabhu*. While the former follows the mythical narrative throughout, the latter only has a scene similar to the abduction of Sita. The heroine's name is Janaki, while *Raavanaprabhu* refers to the anti-hero played by Mohanlal. Sujoy Gosh's 2015 short film *Ahalya* offers a brilliant contemporary feminist subversion of the traditional Myth.

P. Balachandran's *Maya Sitaankam: Oru Punyapurana Prasna Naatakam*, is a Postmodern, metatheatrical parody of the Ramayana. A contemporary playwright, who doubles up as Valmiki in the performance, tries to stage a new version of the Ramayana story. His Sita isn't the docile and obedient ideal wife of tradition, but an empowered woman, conscious of her rights. When Rama, following the scriptural tradition, objects to Sita coming along to the forest, she readily agrees and decides to stay back in Ayodhya. And a perplexed Rama, along with Lakshmana and even Ravana, has to plead with her to come along because the story cannot continue without her. The destiny of all other characters hangs on Sita's decision. In the climactic turn of the play, the modern playwright tries his best to hold back his heroine, but the three male protagonists (Rama, Lakshmana and Ravana) gang up to defeat his purpose and eventually shoot him down. The play ends with the writer coming alive in the tradition (and logic) of mythological rebirths, but not without a brilliant meta-theatrical twist. A hilarious spoof of a subversive kind, Balachandran's play offers both philosophical and ideological undercurrents. It was staged several times around 2001 to considerable popular and critical acclaim. Irreverence is the hallmark of the play, and for the same reason one wonders if the play will be allowed to be staged in these intolerant times.

Genealogical retellings of Ramayana stories abound in folk and tribal lores as well. One popular folk song heard in and around central Travancore (particularly in Kuttanadu) begins thus:

(Cheeta girl is Janaka's daughter whom Rama guy married)

There is even a Muslim retelling of Ramayana in Kerala. Called *Mappila Ramayanam* or *Lamayanam* it sings the familiar story in the structure of a *mappilappattu*, with many folk and carnivalesque embellishments. For instance, Soorpanakha is asked to fill up the holes and patches on her face as well as prop up her drooping breasts, before she attempts to woo Rama and Lakshmana. The tone is humorous or naughty throughout.

There are several local myths about particular places in Kerala (as in other places in and outside India) which claim some Ramayana connection. Chadayamangalam on the M C Road to Thiruvananthapuram is supposed to be the place where Jadaayu, the mythological bird confronted Ravana on his way to Lanka with the abducted Sita. There's even a temple to the bird on a hillock there.

Ambukutthimala in Wayanadu looks like a woman lying down—it is Thaadaka fallen by Rama's arrow. In the Idakkal caves, there is a narrow vertical creek. It is believed that ramasaayakam (Rama's arrow) passed through it. In Tirunnelli, the most important spot for ritual bathing is where Sita cleaned herself.

I wish to end my presentation by reiterating the main argument about the inherent plurality of the metatextual nature of the Ramayana narratives. As Ramanujan points out, "in India and in Southeast Asia, no one ever reads the Ramayana or the Mahabharata for the first time. The stories are there, 'always already'" (Dharwadker 158). Ramanujan also mentions a folktale about Rama's ring slipping off his finger and disappearing. Hanuman goes searching for it and reaches the underworld. When he tells the people there why he has come, the king of the underworld shows Hanuman a platter full of rings (thousands of them) and asks him to choose 'his' Rama's ring. The reasoning is that there is one Rama for every age and when it's time for him to die and leave the world, his rings goes down into the other world. Ramanujan cites this folktale in order to highlight the plurality of the Rama narrative.

How do we offer a solution to the whole textual or discursive problem? I have two, in fact. One is to think of the Ramayana in terms of the Theseus' Paradox. Also known as the ship of Theseus, this is a thought experiment that raises the question of whether an object which has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same object. Plutarch asks whether a ship which was restored by replacing each and every one of its wooden parts remained the same ship. Even before Plutarch, the paradox was discussed by more ancient philosophers such as Heraclitus, Socrates, and Plato. Several variants are known, including the "grandfather's axe" or Aristotle's jack-knife, which had both its blade and handle replaced a few times separately, but nevertheless is considered the same old stuff. Seen in this vein, the Ramayana is a text that has changed completely and repeatedly, yet it remains the same. It is an unchanging *Signifier*, whose *Signified* keeps changing.

A second way of resolving the problem is by considering the Ramayana as an unfinished work, a book that is still being written, an ongoing project. The stories began to be told sometime in the remote past with Valmiki later giving the most influential rendering, while numerous other poets, singers and tellers have continued to—and in future will—add, adapt and appropriate these stories to suit their interests, for ideological, aesthetic or both reasons—that is, for their particular politics and poetics of retelling myths.

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Disparate Locations of Myth and Reality in the Indian Context: Reading Mahasweta Devi's *Breast Giver* and *Draupadi*

Jyothimol P.

Mahasweta Devi is one of the widely translated and read writers in India, much acclaimed for her literary works and widely acknowledged as the sustained champion of the oppressed classes. Her works call forth extensive theorization on the process of 'othering'. This paper is aimed at analysing the divergent locations inhabited by the women protagonists in *Breast giver* and *Draupadi* and how they continue to serve as signifiers of wronged womanhood simultaneously and significantly evoking analogies with the mythological parallels. Gayatri Spivak opines that Mahasweta's narratives are "history imagined into fiction" as her characters "could have existed as subalterns in any specific historical moment, imagined and tested by orthodox assumptions" (Spivak 76-77). In the light of the contemporary dichotomous notions of the Ideal Indian woman and the concept of Mother India juxtaposed with the discourses of subalternity as expressed through the selected texts, an attempt is made here to reread the canon and what it signifies for the average woman.

The eternal and infinite search to define the notions of ideal Indian Woman has been ongoing since the dawn of civilization. But the reductionist application of monologic concept of femininity was not simply possible with regard to the pluridivine, multicultural Indian society and religions. The Indian woman was a desirable combination of the devoted Sita, Savitri, the destructive Kali, the enlightened Saraswathi, the resplendent Lakshmi and the ever patient Bhoomi, with all or little of the seductive and the aesthetic cleverly combined. Even the voices from the nether world of the spirits like the Yakshis had turned destructive only after they had lured their male victims the romantic way. In this feminine cosmology the heavenly Apsaras had their own rightful share.

With the progress of civilization and with the emergence of Indian Renaissance and the 'unifying' and monologic concept of Indian Nationalist ideals, all these divergent visions of femininity came to be concentrated into one single signifier of 'Bharat Mata' - a power ridden signifier combining the glory and sanctity of motherhood and the grandeur of nationalism - two concepts highly explosive in the Indian Context. It is a strong symbol of resilient, long suffering and easily forgiving motherhood, infinitely trying to unite all her children even if it bleeds and hurts.

A skilful reading of the canons would reveal that efforts have been made to preserve the unwavering qualities of woman hood in the canonical examples whose namesakes have been incorporated into the text of Mahasweta with noteworthy deviations.

The concept of the Mother Goddess inherent in the Indian system of philosophy in turn crystallized into the concept of Mother land – which the discourse of Nationalism has converted into the concept of Mother India. An enquiry into our ancient history would reveal that the worship of the Mother Goddess is an ancient tradition. Manusmriti mentions that the mother is referred a thousand times more than the father, the adoration of the female principle in the creation. Right from the Vedic times there is worship of the Mother Goddess, and the Mother earth is also referred as Goddess, Bhoomi Devi. Vedic seers (in the hymns) perceive the heaven and the earth as father and mother and pray to them for protection. Vedic concept of the Mother Goddess is found best represented in Aditi who is more than eighty times mentioned in the *Rigveda*. She is considered as the womb of the entire future. In the *Atharva Veda* there is a hymn to the mother.

Not only in the Vedas but in the Upanishads also the Mother Goddess is mentioned (Mundaka Upanishad also speaks about seven female powers.)

In the epics and puranas, the concept of divine mother is celebrated in the form of Goddess Durga, Saraswati, Kali, etc, all various manifestations of the Supreme Goddess. From the abstract concepts of Shakti/Power or energy which they symbolized in the epic and the puranas, it had a more concrete manifestation.

So the cult of the Mother Goddess existed in India before the introduction of the Western model of the Modern Nation State which was much aided by the elaboration of the infrastructure for visual media around 1900, through which the discourses of nationalism could be very

well carried out. In 1900s the anti colonial slogans and poetry were spreading in plenty and the Mother Goddess and the Warrior Saint were combined into one single signifier- the dynamic narrative of national sovereignty. The narratives of nationalism generally thrive on the concept of a despondent nation giving birth to so many sons and inverting them with the task of lifelong obligation to the foster mother through the life blood. Homibhabha says that the nations are narrated into being through “performative and pedagogic strategies” (Bhabha 148). Stephen Greenblatt also comments on the role of narrative to create an illusion of presence. “It is one of the principal powers of narrative to gesture towards what is not in fact expressed, to create the illusion of presences that are in reality absent” (qtd. in Brosius 14).

Cherrie Moraga (Chicano writer) writes, “The nationalism I seek is one that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth” (260). Woman/Nation was the boundary figure to be protected against the colonialist discourse in anti colonial movements. Partha Chatterjee notes that Indian Nationalism equated the woman with the home by extension. Woman/home/nation was equated with the private and spiritual space, untainted by colonialism. Anti Colonial struggles were to ensure the sanctity of the position. In order to ensure sanctity of the position, the need for sacrifice and selfless service for the mother/land is necessary. It is coupled with feelings of the violations, loss of honour and pride when the mother/nation encounters external threats to its sovereignty to the health of its body politic.

Indian cultural readings on nationalism rely on the image of mother/woman as the guarantor/keeper of tradition and spiritual values. In the external representation of Bharat Mata, she is closely represented resembling Kali/Durga. The positioning of the figure was like a war Goddess motivating her sons to be patriotic, willing to sacrifice their lives. Through this strong image, the narrative of nationalism began to be made more visible. Aurobindo Ghose writes to his wife Mrinalini like this, “I look upon my country as mother – I adore her — What would a son do if a demon sat on his mother’s breast and started sucking her blood” (np). This powerful signifier combined within its sphere, plural attributes like the willingness for sacrifice, maternal unconditional affection, selfless service, self cancelling devotion to the traditional ethos, the monologous and homogeneous symbol that brings the divergent elements of culture together.

The figure of Mother India has to satisfy the patriarchal ideal of physical beauty and steadfast guarding of the ethos of chastity and modesty. The notion of the unbroken tradition is constant and attempts are made to write this notion of tradition on the body of woman to dictate its movements, needs, aspirations and spheres of existence even while the body moves in time and space and history. The wounds of nationalism, like partition, post and pre independent riots etc. were thought to be limited not only to physical body of the sons battling to uphold the honour and pride of the mother, it was also blood oozing wounds in the body of the mother. Partition and consequent strife were symbols for mutilation and rape of the motherhood.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee was one of the first to introduce this theme of the Great Mother into Indian Nationalist discourse, through the poem in Ananda Math – Vande Mataram. This poem is an appeal in its primary level to Goddess Durga and in its secondary signifier to the mother as land. This feeling of patriotism is reflected in Vande Mataram, the slogan Bharat Mata Ki Jai etc.

In short, politics was redefined to find its space in ‘the’ home. The difference between the sexes was explained in terms of natural differences, legitimising cultural roles for men and women. Mother India thus became the icon of homogeneous representation of Indian ness, exhibiting unity in diversity. It is against this back drop that Mahasweta Devi’s Jashoda and Draupadi, two women representing the plight of the subaltern in a decolonized India are placed challenging the notion of homogeneity of the Indian woman hood and the glory of the iconic Bharatmata. In “Breast Giver”, Jashoda is the protagonist whose economic subalternity is potently pitched against the independence and exposure of Haldar women as they signify the ethos of liberal feminism and the liberating potency of the movement of nationalism. Ironically the dominant in caste is subordinated to the dominant in class when the Brahmin Jashoda is commissioned to breast feed the children and grand children of the rich landlord Haldar who is a Kayastha. Paradoxically, in the end when Jashoda Devi dies of breast cancer, abandoned by her own and her master’s children, “she was cremated by an untouchable” (Devi 75). Inequality in all its wide scope is theorized in the scope of this story. Inequality of gender and that of the caste get doubled and its vicissitudes multiplied due to the unjust distribution of wealth in India, a sovereign, socialist republic. As Gayatri Spivak suggests the discourses of nationalism failed to deliver what it

promised, the promise of a sea-change or a transformation in the lives of subaltern women. The discourse of nationalism as we encounter in the Indian Subaltern scenario can be reductionist regarding the need for the plural voices.

According to Mahasweta, the death of Jashoda is a collapse and destruction of Mother India there by signifying another symbol of arbitrary unity. The reference to Jashoda “as a parable of India after decolonization” (Spivak, Reading “Breast-Giver” 79) is a critical juncture which in the scope of this paper is brought out to facilitate a discussion on the problematic of the concept of Mother India or Bharat Mata. It becomes a paradox when this figure represents the entire essence of Indian nationalism in one single image, thus displacing the claims of the discourse of the other, who fail to conform to the ideological expectations of the term. The resplendent visual image of Bharat mata is so strongly ingrained in the Indian Psyche that alterities are at the fringes and once again, the subaltern in caste, class and locale are forever outside the nationalist project. “Jashoda was God Manifest, others do and did whatever she thought. Jashoda’s death was also the death of God, when mortal masquerades as God here below, she is forsaken by all and she must always die alone” (Devi 75).

In Mahasweta Devi’s “Draupadi” subalternity is theorized in yet another way in which the dominant discourses have succeeded in displacing ethnicities with unique cultural heritage demythifying the image of a multicultural India. The subaltern Dopti is a deviant of Draupadi where even the name has been disfigured. No cosmic presence miraculously appears to clothe the disrobed Dopti Meihen. The subaltern locale is that of the displaced tribal who is denied their fair share of the earth, sky and livelihood and who is represented as the “menacing other” (Spivak, “Foreword” 2) on whom the dominant power structures in all its fury descend to destroy as they rise in defense of their cultural space in the fantastic tale of multicultural democracy. All state apparatus rise to keep such resistance under control so that the melting pot image of cultural unity remains intact and unopposed. The paper raises the interrogative stance of challenging the forced homogeneity and validity of the discourses of nationalism in the wake of the existence of the disturbing subaltern presences like Jashoda and Draupadi and searches for a space for the subaltern in the scope of the Mother India image.

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Myth, Pseudoscience and Contemporary Politics as envisaged In Amish Tripathi's *Shiva Trilogy*

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The beauty with our mythology is that there are so many interpretations and often contradictory ones. It is a very successful segment today as it changes our perspectives on the characters of Hindu mythology. They are deeply Indian in nature and speak of issues that go within the Indian identity in a way today's audience can relate to. To sum up, they bridge both the worlds. The core of the Shiva Trilogy is its philosophy. Amish Tripathi's attitude is what should be the plausible story behind the myth. In an interview conducted by Shashi Bhalinga, Amish elucidates why he has moved away from traditional myths:

For instance, the myth about Sati is that she jumped into a sacrificial fire. Another version is that she died of a self-created fire. What could have given rise to these myths? My theory is that she was shot by a poisoned arrow that creates a fever that never breaks and eventually consumes you. (Bhalinga np)

The aim of this paper is to focus on how Amish Tripathi has used "Pseudoscience" as an effective literary tool and the way in which the text resonates major political issues in India. The first section of this paper mainly deals with the mythological retelling genre of India and how it is becoming popular among the contemporary audience. While the second section deals with the brief summary of the trilogy, the third one focuses on "Pseudoscience" employed by the author, Amish Tripathi. The last part discusses the real identity of "Shiva" and how differently has Amish represented the Hindu God. It also analyses the work in a political context.

Myths and Changing Perspectives

Myths have been an inevitable source and subject of study in literature down the ages. They are hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true and which provide a rationale for

every happening in society. The main reason for this unquenchable interest of the writers in mythology is to figure out the meaning of their present in relation to their ancient past. Devdutt Pattanaik, the famous Indian mythologist, defines myth as "... essentially a cultural construct, a common understanding of the world that binds individuals and communities together. This understanding maybe religious or secular. Ideas such as rebirth, heaven and hell, angels and demons, fate and freewill, Sin and Satan are religious myths. Ideas such as sovereignty, nation, state, human rights, women's rights, animal rights, gay rights are secular myths. Religious or secular, all myths may profound sense to one group of people, not everyone. They cannot be rationalized beyond a point. In the final analysis, you accept them or don't" (Pattanaik xvi)

This definition is more of a liberal tone, the one that encompasses and accepts all the anomalies in life and what is myth to a common man. Myths have their roots in folk tale and songs and have been transferred through generations. We are familiar with these from our childhood and are enchanted by the stories in them. Mythical stories were interpreted in different ages in different ways, regardless of the criticisms and accusations directed towards myths questioning its authenticity and validity. Our epics Ramayana and Mahabharata which have been adapted in almost all languages spoken in India with innumerable variations have reinterpretations in the 21st century based on science and contemporary socio political events. The following article by Sangeetha Devi Dundoo says about the major authors of this new genre and their works:

From *Prince of Ayodhya* (2003) to the *Ramayana series: The Complete Omnibus* (2013) and the *Mahabharata* series from 2011 to 2014, Ashok Banker ... the go-to author for mythology retellings. Much later, Amish Tripathi presented a cocktail of fantasy and mythology in his *Shiva Trilogy* series. Ashwin Sanghi took references from mythological and historical texts and set them in contemporary thrillers (*The Chanakya's Chant* and *The Krishna Key*). Krishna Udayashankar's *Aryavarta Chronicles* series is a reconstruction of the *Mahabharata*. V. Ravi's *The Exiled Prince* blends Ramayana with science fiction while Anand Neelakantan's *Asura* and *Ajaya* narrate the epics from the point of view of the vanquished. According to him, oppressed characters in mythology should be looked in new perspectives. His work

Asura tries to answer this question, by seeing the whole events of Ramayana in Ravana's point of view. Ravana was not just a true devotee of Shiva, but a scholar as well. Neelakantan says that the hatred stereotype associated with the so called "evil" and "monstrous" characters should be broken. Neelakantan has already begun working on his second book *Ajaya*, presenting *Mahabharata* from Duryodhana's perspective.... The mythological characters in these books are not black and white and this reinterpretation is akin to walking on a razor's edge. "The idea of 'super heroes' was to push people to raise the bar. The story doesn't change; you can make Ravana a CEO of a multi-billion dollar international corporation and Rama a rural farmer. (Dundoo np)

The tale sells for an improbable victory of a primitive man over a powerful one. According to these 're-tellers', it is insightful to see the mythical characters with different shades by changing our traditional outlook associated with the character. Such innovative techniques keep the modern reader engaged. The common practice of retelling mythical stories involves reconstruction of stories and characters in accordance with the mythical context. For instance, when the feminist movement entered the academic realm, the classical texts in literature were revisited, to reinterpret them from the feminist perspective. Similarly, the attribution of feminist interpretations to the mythical stories has enriched its contextual meaning. Many of the modern day reinterpretations view Sita Devi as a proto- feminist, Krishna as a political strategist and Ravana as an intellectual who could think different things at a time. This strategy of viewing the supposed angels and demons as humans has been effectively employed by the author. In the epilogue of the concluding book, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, Amish says:

These Descendants beheld gods in what were great men of the past, for they believed that such men couldn't have existed in reality. These descendants saw magic in what was brilliant science, for their limited intellect could not understand with great knowledge. They retained only rituals of what were deep philosophies, for it took courage and confidence to ask questions. They divined myths in what was really history, for true memories were forgotten in chaos as vast arrays of *daivi astras* used in the Great War ravaged the land. That war destroyed almost

everything. It took centuries for India to regain its old cultural vigour and intellectual depth. (546)

The Kernel of Mythology

The first book in the series, *The Immortals of Meluha* reimagines Shiva, one among the holy trinity of Hindu Gods, as a mortal champion destined for greatness. He is a tribal leader who comes down from his home territory (Hilly areas of Tibet) to Meluha, in search of safety and shelter and for a life devoid of warfare. It begins with the arrival of Nandhi, a Meluhan general to Shiva's homeland. He offers a safe passage to his own land, Meluha. Shiva accepts it to save his men and women from frequent attacks by rival tribes. They arrive in the kingdom of Meluha where they are given a warm reception. They are checked for infectious diseases as they are coming from an unfavourable living condition. The Meluhans under Ayurvati, the Chief physician of Meluha's orders, starts the healing process on the tribes. As a reaction of the new medicine, they experience high temperatures and sweating. Ayurvati finds out that Shiva is the only one devoid of these symptoms and his throat turned blue. Later we learn that Shiva's throat turned blue due to Somras, a very famous energy drink offered by the Meluhans. We also learn about the legend of Neelkantha.

The Meluhans who call themselves the Suryavanshi (the clan that follows solar calendar), werestaunch believers in the Neelkantha legends and believed Shiva would help them for victory over the Evil, the Chandravanshi (the clan that followsLunar calendar). Shiva without knowing the implications of such a forced title and the honour attached to it took the occurrence as a mere accident. Shiva and his comrades are taken to Devagiri, the capital city of Meluha, where he meets King Daksha. He was gleefully accepted by the King and his prime minister. However his lieutenant, Parvatheswar had his doubts. He was a follower of Lord Rama, the virtuous King and law maker, and was not ready to accept the supremacy of an outsider, taken for granted only because he had a blue throat.

The story takes a new turn with the introduction of Sati, the daughter of the King. Here we learn more about Vikarma, the untouchables. Nandi explains that Vikarmas are people who have been punished in the present birth for the sins of previous birth. Widows, people with incurable diseases, women giving birth to still born child etc. were considered as Vikarmas. Sati is also a Vikarma, because she is a widow. Shiva tries to court her, but she rejects his advances.

Ultimately Shiva wins her heart and they decide to get married, even though the Vikarma rule prohibits them from doing so. Enraged by the obsolete law, Shiva declares himself as the Neelkanth and swears to dissolve the Vikarma law. Daksha allows Sati to get married to Shiva, amid much joy and happiness. During his stay in Devagiri, Shiva comes to know about the treacherous wars that Chandravanshis are carrying on the Meluhans. He also learns about their medical science especially about Somras with the help of Brahaspati who invites Shiva and the royal family to an expedition to Mount Mandar, where the legendary Somras is manufactured using the waters of the Saraswati river. Shiva learns Somras was the reason why the Meluhans lived for so many years. Brahaspati and Shiva develop a close friendship and the royal family returns to Devagiri.

The plot takes another turn when one morning, the whole of Meluha wakes up to loud noises coming from Mount Mandar. Upon arriving, Shiva and his troops find out that a large part of Mandar has been blasted off and many inventors killed and Brahaspati missing. Shiva finds Naga crests at the site confirming their involvement with the Chandravanshis. Enraged Shiva declares war on the Chandravanshis.

The second book, *The Secret of the Nagas* speaks of Shiva's plans to decipher the motives of the Nagas, a race of deformed humans, who, according to Shiva has killed his friend Brahaspati and stalks his wife Sati. He concludes that they are evil. Parvatheswar his general gets mortally injured while trying to pacify a riot at Kashi. Divodas, a citizen from the Brangha kingdom helps the general in recovery. Later Shiva comes to know that the medicine could only be manufactured from the herbs in Panchavati, the Capital city of the Nagas. Divodas also informs Shiva that, his kingdom is suffering from a mortal plague; therefore they are forced to ally with the Nagas. Shiva decides to travel to Brangha.

Sati is the only person who stays back in Kashi as she gave birth to a boy, named Karthik. While fighting with a lion's pride in a village, a Naga woman and man comes to the rescue of Sati. They reveal themselves as Kali, her elder sister and Ganesh, Sati's son. Kali was denounced by her father Daksha since she was born with two extra functioning hands. Ganesh was also born with deformities, which led to his face resembling that of an elephant's. They are brought back to Kashi and they wait for Shiva's arrival.

Meanwhile Shiva confronts Parashuram, a bandit who knows the recipe of the Naga medicine. He leads a secluded life and kills anyone

coming near the abode of his jungles. Consequently Shiva defeats him and Parashuram joins Shiva's army and gives the medicine recipe to the Bhrangas. They return to Kashi. Sati introduces Kali and Ganesh to Shiva. Shiva immediately recognizes Ganesh as the Naga assassin who killed Brahaspati and leaves the royal quarters severely angered. The initial tensions move away and Shiva forgives Ganesh when he risks his life to save Karthik from a lion attack. They travel to Panchavati, to unravel the true "evil". On their way to the Naga capital they are attacked from the river side by a cache of ships containing the weapons of mass destruction known as Daivi Astras. They survive the attack and suspect the involvement of a much powerful person besides Daksha as the mastermind of the attack. In the next book it is revealed, that Maharishi Bhrigu is aiding Daksha. Shiva ultimately reaches Panchavati, where the greatest secret of the Nagas lie. Kali takes Shiva to a nearby school in the capital. To his astonishment, Shiva sees Brahaspati, perfectly alive and teaching a class. He learns that the chief scientist of Meluha fakes his own death to assist the Nagas in destroying the real evil, the Somras.

The *Oath of the Vayuputras*, the last book of the trilogy takes a scientific point of view of Ancient India. The missing Chief Scientist of Meluha reappears at the end of the second book. Through Brahaspati, Shiva comes to know that Somras is the real "evil" plaguing India. Brahaspati goes on to describe the long-term effects of the use of Somras. They are seen as the main reason behind the depletion of Saraswathi. Shiva, who is convinced fully to destroy the Somras once and for all, travels to the city of Ujjain, to meet the head of the Vasudevs, Gopal. Meanwhile, Shiva gains a base at Mrityukavati by defeating the Meluhan army lead by Vidhyunmali. However he escapes and persuades Bhrigu and Parvatheswar to attack Sati's army by a thousand Meluhan troops.

The scene shifts to Shiva and Gopal preparing for their journey to the Pariah, to procure the deadly weapon, Bhramastra from the Vayuputra tribe to threaten the Meluhans for peace with them. Gopal explains that the Vayuputras were an ancient tribe left by the previous Mahadev, Lord Rudra. He also discovers that his uncle Manobu was a former Vayuputra member. Shiva meets the Chief of the Vayuputra tribe, Mithra who turns out to be his maternal uncle. Mithra convinces the tribe that Shiva is the real Neelkanth and gives him the Pashupathiastra

which acts on a specific target, rather than annihilating everything like the Bhramastra.

Daksha and Vidhyunmali aid the assistance of Egyptian Assassins to kill Shiva. He frames a peace treaty for Shiva in his absence. Sati attends the conference and finds out the truth. She fights the assassins valiantly, but is killed. Although the war comes to an end, an enraged Shiva decides to use the Pashupathiastra to finish Devagiri forever. Patriots like Parvatheswar decide to remain in the city and die with it, but Karthik persuades Bhrigu to remain alive and share his vast knowledge with future generations. Shiva unleashes the Astra and finishes Devagiri, along with the Somras manufacturing units hidden beneath the city.

In the epilogue, thirty years later the destruction we find Shiva has retired to Kailash with a large number of followers. Ganesh, Kali and Karthik become renowned as Gods for their prowess, all over India. They take revenge for Sati's death by wiping out the whole clan of the Egyptian Assassins who had aided Daksha. Bhrigu continues teaching and collates his knowledge in a book called Bhrigu Samhita. In subsequent years we find Shiva becoming increasingly in isolation. Nandi was the only one allowed to meet him. The author concludes by saying that this long battles came to be known as Mahabharata.

Amish has taken core concepts of Hindu mythology and raises questions about what holds true and familiar, does his own bit of unique spin on them and thus contemporizes it. Definitions and norms are challenged. He inter mixes the mythic clans of the Suryavanshis and Chandravanshis into this mystery, represented by the people of Meluha and Ayodhya. He also uses various characters from puranic episodes to paint a fantastical version of Shiva's life.

Using Pseudoscience to engage Readers

Pseudoscience is a claim that is presented as scientific. It does not follow the accurate scientific methods to prove a theory. *Chem.com*, an authentic website on Chemistry defines pseudoscience in the following manner: A pseudoscience is a belief or process which masquerades as science in an attempt to claim a legitimacy which it would not otherwise be able to achieve on its own terms; it is often known as fringe-or alternative science. The most important of its defects is usually the lack of the carefully controlled and thoughtfully interpreted experiments which provide the foundation of the natural sciences and which contribute to their advancement.

It can be said to be a bridge between scientific literature as a professional medium of scientific research, and the realms of popular political and cultural discourse. The goal of the genre is often to capture the methods and accuracy of science, while making the language more accessible. Many science-related controversies are discussed in popular science books and publications. But in mainstream literature, instead of using valid theories and facts, authors have used their own interpretations of history and a popular/fantasy science to engage the modern audience. Amish has used many such instances in the work, the much hyped atomic warfare in Ancient India and the disappearance of the Saraswati River, for example.

In the trilogy, Amish has used pseudoscience effectively. For instance, the author uses the term “Daivi astras” to refer to high end weapons which were not in possession of the ordinary armies at that time. Interestingly, Amish describes in detail the weapon used by Shiva to destroy the city of Devagiri, the Pashupathiastra. The Daivi astras is first mentioned in the last book, *The Oath of the Vayuputras*, where Shiva and his troops were attacked while travelling to Panchavati, the capital of the Nagas. They are similar to modern day missiles, which takes the course of action like a paperile emission.

The Pashupathiastra or the Weapon of the Lord of the Animals described in the novel is a pure nuclear fusion weapon. Unlike nuclear fission weapons, this is a controlled one which only destroys the targeted area with minimal radioactive pollution ... mounted on launching towers which was a mixture of charcoal, sulphur and saltpetre which generated the explosive energy that propelled the astra towards the target. Another set of explosions would trigger the weapon. For this weapon to be triggered, archers were called upon to shoot flaming arrows from a distance. They normally used bows with range of more than eight hundred meters...that the city of Devagiri was built on three platforms, the Swarna, Rajat and the Tamara respectively. Therefore, the idea was to fire three missiles concurrently. The inner circle of the devastation would expand, since the weapons were to be triggered from great height. But the angles of descent were calculated carefully in such a way that their excess energies would be trapped within each other (*Oath of the Vayuputras*, 543).

Thus the author breaks yet another myth; that Bhagirath prayed and Ganga flowed down from heaven through Shiva’s hair locks. He convincingly uses an “engineering trick” to break this famous myth and

also a possible solution, which of course has not been proved, to the death of the Saraswati River.

The Idea called Shiva and the political echoes of modern India

For Millennia, Shiva has been celebrated in India through, philosophy, rituals, art, culture and literature. That he is very much alive and a flutter in the young and the old is evident in popular art and entertainment. Alka Pande describes the puranic Shiva:

The 1960s had seen Shiva being celebrated by the appropriation of ‘dum maro dum’ by a hippie generation, linking Cannabis to Shiva’s ‘prasada’. But who or what is Shiva? As Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram he embodies ‘Truth, Transcendence and Beauty’. He is Gangadhara, the bearer of the mighty Ganga. He is Nataraja ... the epitome of Indian Aesthetics, symbol of the perfection of human beauty. He is the ultimate non conformist ... as an ideal husband, to attain whom the ideal feminine beauty, Parvathi undertook the hardest of penance ... worshipped in the phallic form of ‘Linga’ which Shiva discarded in the forest of Daruvana, where he is the divine madman, the ash smeared destroyer of the ego, illusion. In his abode atop mount Kailas, he is the preceptor of Yoga, the first teacher, Adhinatha.

With Amish, Shiva is a Tibetan immigrant, who seeks shelter in a foreign land—the one who is forced to bear the identity of the “Neelkanth”. He is a person who uses uncouth language and smokes chillum. He is an alpha male who is romantic and humble, in contrast to the Shiva we know. He is lamented by the death of his wife and destroys a whole city out of grief. But looking more into the character of Shiva, represented by Amish, we realize he is reduced to the status of a ‘political goon’. The Meluhans mainly seek the help of Shiva because he’s a barbarian and has superior fighting skills. They manipulate him to fight the Chandravanshis who are labelled as “evil”. It is late when he realizes what the true evil is. The powerful puranic story of Shiva is reduced to names, vague references and symbols. The main thrust of the trilogy is that India is a divided state, run by corrupt leaders who have deviated from the laws of the past and who are dragging the nation down. This is a narrative that resonates with the modern Indian politics. The solution provided by Amish is Shiva. Initially Shiva protests, saying, “A new system is needed. I am hardly a god to perform miracles” (*The Immortals of Meluha*, 177). But eventually he takes on the role he was “supposedly” born for and destroys the old system and alters the society. The change that Shiva brings is a dramatic change of a massive

social order, but it is a change enacted by a single “saviour-figure” and his close group of followers. Most of the people it affects do not participate in the change. The hope for a saviour leader who will drastically save society by replacing the current corrupt leaders is what leads the multitude of Indians. The meteoric rise of AAP and Narendra Modi are part of the same political ideology the Shiva Trilogy was written in. In the trilogy, Shiva’s battle-cry is Har Har Mahadev, which was controversially shouted at the 2014 election campaign in Varanasi. Thus Amish has ‘demystified’ Shiva to suit the contemporary audience by deviating away from the myths associated with him.

Politics, when seen in a broad spectrum represents the personal reasons; ambitions and blind devotion is a common feature in the politics of any country. In a country, different types of political cultures exist. The major three of them are subject political culture, parochial political culture and active or the participant political culture. Though not stated explicitly by the author, the Suryavanshis and the Chandravanshis differ largely in this political culture. The Kingdom of Meluha is ruled by an authoritarian government where people are bound to live by the laws and where everything is near perfection while the Chandravanshis give space and freedom to their people. In *The Secret of the Nagas*, the Vasudev Pandit of the city of Magadh explains to Shiva how the Kingdom of Meluha represents the characteristics of an autocracy: “The Masculine way is “life by laws”... Laws that must be followed rigidly. There is no room for ambiguity. The populace will always do what has been ordained ... Meluha is a perfect example of such a way of life” (*The Secret of the Nagas* 47- 48).

The Meluhans lead an orderly way of life, of ‘truth, duty and honor’. They are society which is not open to changes. This type of society follows a set of laws that was coded by same great leaders or passed down as a religious tradition, or collective laws decreed by the people themselves. They are a typical example of subject political culture, where people are aware of the government and its institutions and are heavily subjected to its decisions.

Contrastingly, the Swadeepans are not “bounded” to any kind of laws and enjoy personal freedom. There is no black or white. People act on probabilities of different outcomes perceived at that point of time. They will follow a King, who they think has a high probability of remaining in power. The moment probabilities change, their loyalties do as well. If there are laws in such a society, they are malleable. The same

laws can be interpreted differently at different points of time. Change is the only thing constant. They are comfortable with contradictions. And the code for success in such a system? Passion, Beauty and Freedom.

Thus the two kingdoms are in constant conflict, accusing each other of who is “evil”. These contrasting cultures complement each other. The Vasudev Pandit differentiates this as two sides of the same coin, the masculine and the feminine. A masculine civilization at its peak is honorable, consistent, reliable and spectacularly successful in an age suitable for its particular set of laws. There is order and society moves ahead in a pre ordained direction. But when it declines, they cause horrible turmoil, becoming fanatical and rigid. They will attack those who are different, try to convert them to their truth, which will lead to violence and chaos.

“When fanaticism cause rebellions born of frustration, the openness of the feminine brings in a breath of fresh air. People of varying breaths can co exist in peace. Nobody tries to enforce their own version of the truth ... celebration of diversity and wisdom...renewed vigour and creativity ... tremendous benefit to society” (*The Secret of the Nagas* 49).

When viewed from a large perspective, the trilogy is essentially everything about politics of power and the struggle to control everything. Amish has used the contrasting nature of the two kingdoms to define political cultures.

Primordial, naked, *chillum* –smoking, accompanied by an assorted army of ghouls, goblins, demons and freaks, Shiva is the cool god of young India. Amish Tripathi in his trilogy interprets this popular iconography of “the rich mythological heritage of ancient India, blending fiction with popular science.” *In the Introduction to the Study of Literature*, W.H. Hudson spells out the elements of intellectual, emotional and imaginative aspects which the author contributes in his fashioning of raw material into this or that form of literary art (40). Our mythology provides a fertile land for the play of these elements by a competent author to do any form of reinterpretations of its stories. Each and every generation thus finds them reflected in these stories, providing ample equalizations to the contemporary socio-political scenario. Amish Tripathi allows 21st century reading of the mythology related to Shiva, based on popular science and present political situation and makes the works entertaining.

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Myth as Construct: Mythification and Demythification in Laurence's *The Diviners*

Anju K.N.

The power of myths to captivate and brace up the human consciousness remains unchallenged over the centuries. Myths as constructs and as residues in the collective memory have been employed as potent tools to channelize the conscious and even the subconscious states of mind. Margaret Laurence in her novel *The Diviners* resorts to mythification whereby she tries to frame a past and history for a nation devoid of ancestry and myths. In her attempt she also rewrites and reshapes the Canadian history from the point of view of the marginalised whose voice is never heard.

Canada being a settler's nation, the Canadian consciousness often finds itself in a curious predicament—the never-ending quest for a place of belonging. For the immigrants deprived of their homeland, and settling to a new pattern of life, Canada offers neither historical continuity nor any relevant ancestral past. Catherine Parr Traill's 19th century statement about Canada is relevant in this context: "Here there are no historical associations, no legendary tales of those that came before us . . . It is the most unpoetical of lands, there is no scope for the imagination... there is no hoary ancient grandeur in these woods; no recollections of former deeds connected with the country" (qtd. in Brown 5). This lack of tradition and the frustrated yet continuing search for a feasible alternative for an absent past get reflected in the literature of the country where the writers either lament the void or engage themselves in inventing a vibrant past for the country through such techniques as mythification, verisimilitude or conceptualisation.

In *The Diviners* Laurence deals and tackles with this Canadian imbroglio through the protagonist Morag whose "education in to her personal and cultural heritage" (Thomas, "Myth and Manitoba" 104) ultimately turns out to be a construction of the past and ancestry, not

only for herself, but for every Canadian. Here Laurence resorts to the technique of myth-making whereby she invests her characters with a solid past and heroic ancestors, the mental constructs strengthening and enabling them to confront a hostile universe.

The two large books of Ossian that Christie the town scavenger shows to Morag his foster-daughter introduce the thread of mythic inheritance in the novel. Christie denounces the English version that the Ossianic poems are mere forgeries—works of individual imagination rather than folklore transmitted to literature. More than a printed authority that Christie recognises, the import the work has for Morag is monumental. Christie's reading out of the passages in Gaelic and his description of the great chariot of Cuchullin give wings to Morag's imagination, raising her to the realm of creative process. Modelled on Cuchullin's chariot, she builds a chariot with words – the chariot that Piper Gunn's woman, Morag, creates for them and their child. As Clara Thomas opines in "Myth and Manitoba in *The Diviners*", here we have been offered a lesson in "myth's ongoing, dynamic function in the development of the individual" (106). The myths become a part of her, enriching and reinforcing her thoughts and imagination.

In the novel, Laurence interweaves three distinct mythic patterns merging fact and fiction with uncanny dexterity: Christie's tales of Piper Gunn, Jules' tales of Rider Tonnerre and the Prophet, and Morag's half humorous, half serious myth making of Catherine Parr Traill. While the first two form the solid buttresses of pride and confidence for Morag and Jules, the last act in shaping the woman in Morag.

Figuring out the orphaned child's emotional need for security and reassurance, Christie comes up with the tale of the most famous Gunn of all- Piper Gunn- who played his pipe and inspired the lord-forsaken people of Sutherland to escape from the land and embrace with will and might the far off land of Red River in Canada.

Piper Gunn, the great tall man with the voice of drums and the strength of conviction, and his wife Morag, a strong woman with the courage of a falcon, beauty of a deer and the faith of saints, enter the child's imagination and form powerful icons for the little Morag to anchor her forlorn, bewildered self. She goes to bed and falls asleep comforted by a bravery that she associates with herself: "Forests cannot hurt me because I have the power and the second sight and the good eye and the strength of conviction" (52).

Christie's second tale "Piper Gunn and the Long March," told when Morag is 12, narrates the long march of the Sutherlanders in the face of thrashing adversities. Morag is lured by the unwavering courage and fortitude of the first Morag who demands the pipes to be played when they enter the new 'Godforsaken' land. While Piper Gunn, who with his music inspired thousands to follow him, is now himself intimidated by the strange harsh land, it is the fiery words of his wife which empower him and gaud him on. "*We are going into the new country and your child is going along with us, so play on.* And he did that. Yes, he did that", Christie narrates to Morag (85). The tales of Christie endow her with a priceless possession – a powerful mythic inheritance to an otherwise disjointed broken past, setting a prelude to her growth and development as a mellowed person.

Christie also brings the tale of her ancestry right down to her father and narrates on Morag's persuasion, Colin Gunn's heroism at the Battle of Bourlon Wood in World War I: "Your dad saved my life that one time, then" (89). The invented drama of a bold young man miraculously saving Christie from the shell fire dragging him down to the dug-outs, again enlivens Morag's imagination and comforts her lonely childhood.

The third tale of Christie, "Piper Gunn and the Rebels," retold to Morag at the age of 15, narrates how the Sutherlanders were roused by Piper Gunn's music to take back the fort and save their farmland from 'Reel and his gang of half breeds' (130). But Morag now dismisses the tales with the factual knowledge she has assimilated from the history texts. She points out to Christie the stark incongruity between his version and history, and states that the government Down East sent out the Army from Ontario to suppress the rebellion and Reil had to flee. However, she does not trust history too: "The book in History said he was nuts, but he didn't seem so nuts to me. The Metis *were* losing the land – it was taken from them. All he wanted was for them to have their rights" (132). She reaches a point where she can interpret the text given to her.

The stories which Jules narrates to Morag make Morag the possessor of the tales of another tradition—of the Metis. Morag connects the adventurous tale told by Jules, of Rider Tonnerre and his men who attacked the 'Anglais and Arkanys' in ambush and defeated them, to the Battle of Seven Oaks where the Governor was killed by the Metis. In the second tale of "Rider Tonnerre and the Prophet," where the Metis took the fort from the whites, she identifies the prophet whom

Jules mentions, as Louis Riel. “He is like a prophet, see? And he has the power. [...] And he has the sight too”. “(You’re talking about Riel)” (146-7). Laurence ingeniously hints at the intricate intertwining of history and myth when the tales told explicitly put forth diverse standpoints. The tales differ as to the teller; the perceptions differ as to the perceivers. Louis Riel, in Christie’s last tale, is a “short little man” (130) with burning eyes, but in Jules’ tale, he is “a very tall guy, taller even than Rider Tonnerre” (147) revealing to Morag another function of myth – to sustain one’s faith and to inherit and assimilate a bravery which one can associate with oneself and his clan.

Though Morag rejects all the myths as rubbish at a point in her life, the role the myths have played in her growing up remains significant, the testimony being the tribute Morag offers to Christie at his funeral—the pipes playing “The Flowers of the Forest,” the lament for the dead, over Christie’s grave—mentioning what he had been to her both as a father and as bard: how he has carried out his functional role in providing Morag with her myths and past.

The child Morag in search of past and ancestors is substituted by the elder Morag who constantly tries and tests herself against a friendly adversary: the legendary Catherine Parr Traill. Morag’s constant attempt at appraising herself against the venerable matriarch, and her consequent feeling of incompatibility are portrayed in a lighter vein. When she is perturbed at Pique’s departure, she attempts to find solace from C.P.T.’s statement that one should be active and spirited in the face of an emergency.

Mythologizing the historic character aids in mitigating her anxieties in comparison with the adversities the pioneer woman faced. But she too is eventually dismissed as Morag touches upon the realization that her crises need to be resolved from her own inner strength and not from any external agency.

Though Morag dismisses at one phase, the myths that had strengthened her childhood growth, she later accepts them to relearn them in a different way. She perceives and internalizes the import with which Christie had made her the possessor of the myths—how he had anchored her childhood and her past with stories, powerful enough to act as an emotional fortress for her. Prin’s reversal of Morag’s father Colin Gunn’s story illuminates to Morag the existence of an entire other world – of tales untold: “He never done that for my Christie. Saved him, like. [...] He was a boy, just a boy, and that scared. [...]. He would cry,

and Christie would hold him. Sh –sh. There, there” (206). Essentially, the tales told were meant not merely as chivalrous episodes of grandeur and heroism; peopled with heroes to answer Morag’s needs, they insistently provide Morag with her ancestral inheritance. The tales of Piper Gunn told to the child Morag set her background and support her belief in her family’s and her own pride and honour. They become powerful myths for her on which she bases her identity; on whose inheritance her emotional development is made possible. Clara Thomas’s observation is accurate: for Morag the functions of myth have been “to give her strength to develop into her own person, to find her own place, and finally, to rest easy in it” (“Myth and Manitoba” 114).

As Morag assimilates the dynamic part Christie played in giving the myths to her, she becomes simultaneously conscious of her own bardic role—as the selector and shaper of the past for her daughter Pique—in providing her with the myths she needs to grow. And we find Pique to be the inheritor not only of the Tonnerre knife and plaid pin—the two talismans she gets from her father and mother, but also of the tales of two traditions—the Scottish and the Métis—transferred to her from Morag and Jules, to be incorporated to her psyche, to aid her in her quest for self- realization.

Also in the novel, Morag’s quest for her ‘hometown’ embodies the quest of every Canadian for a real home. The novel unravels the moment of epiphany when Morag undergoes a complex process of demythification whereby she comprehends the meaning of “where she really came from and where she really belonged” (qtd. in Swayze 14). One of the Memory bank Movies figuratively entitled “Beginning and Ending, or Vice - Versa” subtly hints at the cyclic nature of Morag’s ‘voyage of exploration’ and her startling rediscovery of her roots and origins.

The journey begins when Morag nearly 20, leaves Manawaka for Winnipeg as a University Student, with the absolute conviction that she is never coming back. All she wants is to throw away her past—her life as the foster daughter of Scavenger Logan and Prin, the jeerings and ridicules she had to bear at Manawaka – everything that had enraged and hurt her. The initial rejection of Manawaka and whatever it offered, Morag learns later, was only the beginning of understanding and acceptance.

The young Morag’s search for a real home finds her shifting from Toronto to Vancouver and then to London. But the stay in London,

her 'artistic home,' as she surmised, proves disillusioning, as also her need to visit Sutherland her 'ancestral home' (331). On a visit to Scotland, she looks to Sutherland and the realization dawns on her that she does not need to go to Sutherland after all. She finds the myths to be her reality, that Sutherland as she had always trusted, was not really her ancestral home. She confides her newfound realization to Dan McReith her lover:

"I thought I would have to go. But I guess I don't, after all." ...
 "The myths are my reality."..."It's a deep land here, all right,"
 Morag says. "But it's not mine, except a long long way back. I
 always thought it was the land of my ancestors, but it is not."
 (391)

As Gunnars points out, her roots have grown through the soil of myth which her adoptive father Christie has generated for her (*Crossing the River*, Preface X). Now she affirms with conviction that her home is "Christie's real country. Where I was born" (391), embracing the reality of myths. As Laurence herself, in a process of relearning, accepts Neepawa which she had once left for good, so also Morag, for every Canadian, initially disowns her land to accept and possess it later. Matt Cohen remarks that the Canadian novelist must "try to fill in with his consciousness that most bizarre gap – the lack of a country," by "continually re-inventing the country in which his novels would take place" (71). This is exactly what Laurence achieves through the Manawaka novels, especially, *The Diviners*, showing to us the power of myths.

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Finding Comfort in the Familiar: A Study of J.K. Rowling's Use of Fairy Tale Narrative in the *Harry Potter* Series

Anusha P.

Fairy tales are “narratives that have been shaped over centuries of retelling and that have achieved a basic narrative form that is a distillation of human experience” (Swann Jones 5). J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series certainly utilizes a modern setting, but it is by the use of traditional narrative forms, including fairy tales, that Rowling initially captures the attention of readers. The familiarity with fairy tales includes not only the names of tales and the storylines, but also an understanding of the cultural values presented through the tales. The use of fairy tales in the *Harry Potter* series allows readers to find comfort in shared cultural expectations.

Rowling's use of an actual fairy tale emphasizes the impact that narrative structure and motifs of fairy tales have on the Potter series. Rowling's fascination with fairy tales is made more evident through the use of a wizard's fairy tale as a key component for the conclusion of the Potter series. In *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, one of Beedle the Bard's tales provided the basis for the part of the story, but ultimately functioned as a unifying theme for the series as a whole. The tale, called “The Tale of the Three Brothers,” explains the creation of three extremely powerful magical objects – the Elder Wand, the Resurrection Stone, and the Cloak of Invisibility. In the fairy tale three brothers encounter Death who offers gifts to the brothers. The Elder Wand, the most powerful wand ever made, and the Resurrection Stone, used to bring loved ones back to life, led to the deaths of the first two brothers. However, the third brother who asked for the Invisibility Cloak lived to an old age because Death could not see him. According to the tale, “Death searched for the third brother for many years, he was never able to find him. It was only when he had attained a great age that the youngest brother finally took off the Cloak of Invisibility and gave it to his son. And then he greeted Death as an old friend, and went with him

gladly, and, equals, they departed this life” (92-3). Harry, his friends, and readers of the Potter books later learned that the Hallows existed and were crucial in the final resolution of the series.

In *The Tales of Beedle the Bard*, a collection of wizard fairy tales that Rowling published following the completion of the Deathly Hallows, Rowling also includes notes on each story written from Professor Dumbledore’s perspective. Following “The Tale of the Three Brothers,” Dumbledore writes of the connection between fairy tales, whether in the Muggle world or wizard world, and people’s desires and fears. He says, “But which of us would have shown the wisdom of the third brother, if offered the pick of Death’s gifts? Wizards and Muggles alike are imbued with a lust for power; how many would resist the Wand of Destiny? Which human being, having someone they loved, could withstand the temptation of the Resurrection Stone?” (107). As Dumbledore hints, whether Muggle or wizard, people have the same desires and hopes. In the introduction to the collection, Rowling explains that the tales of Beedle the Bard “have been popular bedtime reading for centuries, with the result that the Hopping Pot and the Fountain of Fair Fortune are as familiar to many of the students at Hogwarts as Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty are to Muggle (non-magical) children” (vii). Whether one is a young witch or wizard or a Muggle child, reading fairy tales shapes understanding of cultural values in the human world and in the wizard community.

Rowling carefully chooses to have her fairy tale creator use three magical objects, a common feature in fairy tales. When applying the number three to fairy tales, readers quickly recall “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” and “The Three Little Pigs.” The use of the number three demonstrates the influence of cultural expectations on fairy tale motifs. The number three demonstrates the influence that Christianity, as well as other religions, has on the literary development of the tales. Three, in biblical terms, is considered a holy number because it represents the Trinity of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. Other scriptural examples of the use of the number three include the three Magi who bring gifts to the Christ child (Matthew 2: 1-12), and most significantly in Christian doctrine, the resurrection of Jesus on the third day following his crucifixion (Matthew 28: 1-10).

As the fairy tales got incorporated into children’s literature, one constant was the role of the child protagonist. While the tasks and goals might be different, the child heroes shared similar qualities. The Russian

scholar Vladimir Propp attempted a structural analysis of fairy tales. In the 1920s, Propp reviewed numerous Russian tales, identifying patterns in narrative structure and character traits. Although he reviewed only Russian tales, the commonalities were observed in fairy tales of other lands as well. One of his primary interests in analyzing the tales was character, or the *dramatis personae*. He stated that “the names of the *dramatis personae* change (as well as the attributes of each), but neither the actions nor functions change. From this we can draw the inference that a tale often attributes identical actions to various personages” (20).

Due to the fact that Rowling relies on readers’ understanding of the narrative patterns within fairy tales, Propp’s analysis of the tales is fitting. Propp relegates fairy-tale characters to seven categories: villain, donor/provider, helper, princess (or the person being sought), dispatcher, hero, and false hero (79-80). In the case of the Harry Potter series, the development of characters centres largely on the hero and the villain, Harry and Lord Voldemort. Under Propp’s analysis, Harry fits squarely into the role of the hero. Propp suggests that the main actions of the hero consist of departing on a search, reacting to the demands of other characters, and eventually, getting married (80). After learning of the true nature of his parents’ deaths and his acceptance into Hogwarts, Harry departs from the Muggle world, seeking his true identity and learns magic along the way. In each book, he must react to the opportunities and crises around him. He must decide whether to pursue action of his own, such as attempting to rescue someone, or allow the events to run their course. Upon his defeat of his primary antagonist, another function of the hero, Harry earns the respect of the magical world and finds love in marrying Ginny Weasley. Thus, Harry meets the expectations of Propp’s analysis of the hero.

Other characters besides Harry fulfil specific character types. When looking at Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, Harry’s two best friends, parallels can be drawn to fairy tales. As a character, Ron would traditionally be viewed as the sidekick. Hermione can be viewed as a law-abiding ally. She is intelligent and cautious, but often relies on her knowledge from books as opposed to her own magical skills. When the three first meet, Harry and Ron do not befriend her because she appears to be a know-it-all. However, their opinion of Hermione changes after the troll episode.

Propp identifies 31 functions from his study of fairy tales. These are “considered the basic elements of the tale, the elements upon which

the course of action is built” (71). The functions begin with a member of the hero’s family leaving home, either voluntarily, by force, or by death. As a result, the hero typically lives in difficult conditions. He is abused, ignored, or somehow mistreated. Rowling uses these familiar plotlines and settings to help readers relate to Harry not only as a wizard, but also as someone they could meet in their own neighbourhoods. Harry’s role as an abused orphan also encourages readers to recall similar features in fairy tales.

As an abused orphan, Harry is a modern version of Cinderella. He is set apart from his peers because he does not belong to the same family structure as his peers. He is marked as someone different. He is raised by an aunt and uncle who show only resentment over having to take in their young nephew. Although not truly orphaned, Hansel and Gretel are abandoned by their parents, and in “Snow White,” the princess is forced to leave home after her step-mother orders a huntsman to kill the young Snow White. In each case, whether the child protagonists are true orphans or not, the sense of isolation which results from the lack of familial support causes readers to want the protagonist to succeed in his or her tasks. The fact that Harry is an orphan is significant because “orphans are outcasts, separated because they have no connection to the familial structure which helps define the individual” (Kimball 559). The lack of connection with family becomes a top priority for Harry as he enters Hogwarts. He desires to know more about his parents and longs for that relationship that he missed. This need for familial ties is demonstrated in the early stages of his time at Hogwarts when he discovers the Mirror of Erised. When Harry looks into the Mirror, he sees his parents, the family he has never known. Rowling writes, “The Potters smiled and waved at Harry and he stared hungrily back at them, his hands pressed flat against the glass as though he was hoping to fall right through it and reach them. He had a powerful kind of ache inside him, half joy, half terrible sadness” (*Sortcerer’s Stone* 209). Harry’s deepest desire is to know his family. As an orphan, he embarks upon one of the quests of his fairy-tale journey to discover his family, even if it is only through reflections and stories.

Harry’s role as an orphan allows him to relate to other characters in the stories, especially those who are deemed different or unpopular. Melanie A. Kimball believes that “orphans are clearly marked as being different from the rest of society. They are the eternal Other” (559). As an Other, Harry represents those on the margins of society, those who

are either physically, mentally, or otherwise different from what is considered normal. The Other is also represented in fairy tales. For example, in “Jack and the Beanstalk,” Jack is asked to sell the family cow because they need money for food. As a poor family, Jack and his mother do not enjoy the ability to support themselves financially. While Harry’s position as someone outside of social norms helps readers associate with him, especially those who feel a sense of isolation because of similar differences, his role also helps Harry show empathy for others. He befriends a half-giant (Hagrid) and a werewolf (Professor Lupin) because he understands what it feels like to be ignored and bullied. His best friends are a boy from a poor family and a Muggle.

Along with being an orphan, Harry’s connection to Voldemort revolves around a prophecy made just before he was born. Under Propp’s functions, “the hero’s birth is usually accompanied by a prophecy concerning his destiny. Even before the complication begins, he shows attributes of a future hero” (85). In “Sleeping Beauty,” for instance, a prophecy made when the protagonist is born indicates that upon reaching a specified birthday, she would prick her finger on a spinning wheel and fall into a deep sleep. In spite of her parents’ efforts to remove all spinning wheels from the castle, the prophecy is fulfilled. Rowling only hints at the prophecy until book five. The prophecy, as foretold by Professor Trelawney, the Divination teacher at Hogwarts, states:

THE ONE WITH THE POWER TO VANQUISH THE DARK LORD
APPROACHES. . . . BORN TO THOSE WHO HAVE THRICE
DEFENDED HIM, BORN AS THE SEVENTH MONTH DIES . . .
AND THE DARK LORD WILL MARK HIM AS HIS EQUAL, BUT
HE WILL HAVE POWER THE DARK LORD KNOWNS NOT . . .
AND EITHER MUST DIE AT THE HAND OF THE OTHER FOR
NEITHER CAN LIVE WHILE THE OTHER SURVIVES. . . . (*Order
of the Phoenix* 841)

As Dumbledore explains the prophecy to Harry, Harry realizes he truly is the Chosen One as Voldemort himself chose Harry as his equal.

Another of Propp’s functions seen in the Harry Potter series is the influence of magical agents. These agents can be animals, objects, or even certain qualities directly given to the hero (43). Magical agents provide the hero with the ability to complete a task or to gain knowledge, and in some cases, allow a villain to trick the hero. Diane

M. Duncan, author of “Love, Loss and Magic: Connecting Author and Story,” expands on Propp’s magical agent function:

Magic has long been an important motif in fantasy fiction, from the days of Homer’s epic tales through more contemporary authors like C. S. Lewis and J.K. Rowling. In a broad sense, magic can almost be seen as a synonym for fantasy where objects encoded with supernatural powers – like the sword in Arthurian legends, the ring in Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings*, the broomstick and invisible cloak in *Harry Potter* – all have the power to transform and change the fortunes or misfortunes of the protagonists. (276)

Rowling uses magical objects throughout the seven novels, beginning when Harry receives his wand and an owl he names Hedwig. Next to his wand, however, the agent that serves him best is the Invisibility Cloak that had belonged to his father. Other agents in the series, such as the Mirror of Erised, Tom Riddle’s diary, and even the Sorting Hat, provide Harry with insight that helps him in his quest to find himself and defeat Lord Voldemort. The use of such objects is common in fairy tales because “they communicate meaning beyond themselves. Countless objects from the natural world suggest extended meaning” (Ashliman 6). As a storyteller, Rowling develops these everyday objects and animals into agents that aid Harry when he needs such assistance.

Fairy-tale protagonists most often utilize magical agents either to gain access to means of improving their lives or in an effort to complete a task. In the Grimm’s version of “Cinderella,” there are several examples of everyday objects that improve the protagonist’s fortunes. Cinderella goes to her mother’s grave each day where she grieves beneath a large tree. Each time she weeps in remembrance of her mother, a bird descends from the branches of the tree and offers the girl whatever she wishes. Upon learning of a festival given by the king, Cinderella wishes to attend it. From the tree, the bird brings Cinderella a beautiful gown and shoes to wear (Grimm and Grimm 75-83). The shoes, made famous in the Disney version of the tale, also serve as a magical agent. When she accidentally leaves behind one of the shoes, the prince uses that shoe to locate Cinderella.

With the addition of magical agents, fairy-tale heroes are better prepared to complete the varied tasks, one of the hero’s functions outlined by Propp. In Harry’s case, he completes multiple tasks each year at school. In his analysis, Propp lists the proposal of a difficult

task and the resolution of the task as two primary functions with a fairy tale (26-650). Harry's ultimate task of defeating Voldemort, proposed in Professor Trelawney's prophecy, does not take place until the final chapters of book seven. It is in the variety of tasks leading up to that point where Harry proves his magical skills, his courage, and his loyalty.

Along with basic plot structure, the literary element of setting provides another link between fairy tales and the Harry Potter series. When reading well-known fairy tales, such as "Beauty and the Beast" and "Snow White," the grand castles, dark forests, and peasant huts provide familiar locations for readers. When writing of fantastical worlds and creatures, it is important to include "enough of the familiar, the mimetic, within the story so that the reader can understand the nature of the unfamiliar, the fantastic" and in order to add familiarity, stories "will take place in a familiar Western European, medieval landscape and will be acted out by people in familiar roles: knights, ladies, villains, wizards, elves, dragons, trolls, and the like" (Sullivan 281). Readers of fairy tales understand the association between castles and forests with mystery. In "Jack and the Beanstalk," the ogre's castle represents everything that Jack does not have – a nice place to live, access to food, and money. The Disney princesses, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, and Snow White, all marry princes and live happily in a royal castle. In contrast to fairy tales featuring the wealth and privilege of castles are tales in which the protagonists live in a small cottage. In these tales, such as "Hansel and Gretel," the protagonists and their families are poor, and the tales centre on the desire for wealth.

Both the castle and the cottage are seen in the Harry Potter series. The juxtaposition between the security and wonderment of the Hogwarts castle with the tiny cabin in which Hagrid lives shows Rowling takes these settings into consideration. When Harry first sees the Hogwarts castle, it is described as being high atop a mountain, vast, with many turrets and towers (*Sorcerer's Stone* 111). The castle has hidden passages, ghosts, moving staircases, dungeons etc., just as a proper castle should. The Hogwarts castle is also a place of great security. The castle is also protected against unwanted visitors. The spells and enchantments that surround the castle deter Muggles from recognizing the castle and prevent wizards or witches from Apparating onto the grounds. The Forbidden Forest serves as a barrier between Hogwarts and the nearby wizard communities.

In contrast to the Hogwarts castle, Hagrid's cottage is described as "a small wooden house on the edge of the forbidden forest" (*Sorcerer's Stone* 140). Hagrid, who was expelled from Hogwarts as a student, now serves as the gamekeeper at the school. He is undereducated and is depicted as wearing shabby clothes. Although Hagrid is a likeable character and assists Harry, Ron and Hermione in their tasks, Hagrid is clearly not among the elite or wealthy of the wizard world. The way in which Rowling incorporates both the castle and the cottage into the same physical location demonstrates her recognition of the significance of fairy-tale setting and how the castle and cottage motifs determine character traits and the central plot of the tale.

As the previous examples illustrate, Rowling's use of fairy tale character traits and actions throughout the series indicates her understanding of the influence fairy tales hold over readers. In addition to characters and functions, familiar themes and motifs from tales further illustrate her fascination with fairy tale. In fairy tales, the dichotomy between opposing forces is often represented in terms of a prince who is considered good simply by virtue of his royal birth breaking an evil spell placed on the princess by a witch, as seen in contemporary versions of "Sleeping Beauty" and "Snow White." Rowling's version of this battle takes a much darker tone than what readers may recall from watching Disney's versions of the tales. The prophecy pitting Harry and Voldemort against one another serves as the starting point for the central narrative of the series.

The conflict between Harry and Voldemort incorporates additional fairy tale motifs. One important lesson perceived to be learned through tales is self-discovery. Bruno Bettelheim believes that "fairytales, unlike any other form of literature, direct the child to discover his identity and calling, and they also suggest what experiences are needed to develop his character further" (24). The experiences, both positive and negative, shape the hero into the person he is meant to be and learn the skills he needs to be successful. The many challenges Harry faces, coupled with the joys of developing close friendships, learning to make choices on his own, and discovering his talents, lead Harry to the ultimate decision to fulfill the prophecy. Shortly after Dumbledore dies, Harry determines his course of action. He knows he must face Voldemort. In the final lines of *The Half-Blood Prince*, Harry thinks to himself, "in spite of everything, in spite of the dark and twisting path he saw stretching ahead for himself, in spite of the final meeting with Voldemort he knew

must come, whether in a month, in a year, or in ten, he felt his heart lift at the thought that there was still one golden day of peace left to enjoy with Ron and Hermione” (652). He accepts the path ahead of him, the path that will lead him to the final battle with Voldemort.

By incorporating the familiar structure and motifs of fairy tales, J. K. Rowling makes the Harry Potter series a modern version of a fairy tale. Contemporary fantasy writers, both those writing for adults and children, often utilize these same techniques because “fairytales, which speak a language well understood in the modern world, remain relevant because they present illusions of happiness to come, and because they provide social paradigms that overlap perfectly with daydreams of a better life” (Bottigheimer 13). While the Harry Potter books are not always happy, they do provide readers with hope for a better life. In the end, Harry fulfils the prophecy and defeats Lord Voldemort, thus, defeating evil. Younger readers relate to Harry as a peer, someone with whom they might be friends. Adult readers appreciate Harry for valuing friendship, loyalty, and courage. Rowling says that although she does not believe magic, at least as it is used in Harry Potter’s world, is real, she believes that the idea of magic gives people hope that they have power to change the world (“J.K. Rowling”). Harry’s ability to control his fictional world translates into a new generation of readers who believe they too have the power to overcome obstacles and who, like Rowling, are not afraid of imagination.

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Subverting the ‘Myths’ of Patriarchy: A Reading of Sarah Joseph’s *Ramayana Stories*

Emily Paul

Mythology refers to the collected myths of a group of people, their body of stories which they tell to explain nature, history and customs. Mythical literature depends upon, incites even, perpetual acts of reinterpretation in new contexts. The genres of myth, legend, folklore, and fairy tales have been interpreted from the varying standpoints of anthropology, social history, cultural studies, feminism, psychoanalysis etc. Each new generation of writers adopted familiar mythic templates and outlines for their story telling purposes. But a myth is never transported wholesale into its new context. It undergoes its own metamorphoses in the process. Myth is continuously evoked, altered and reworked, across cultures and across generations. To cite Barthes: “There is no fixity in mythical concepts: they can come into being, alter, disintegrate, disappear completely” (129).

Adaptations of myths, fairy tales or folklores can also be oppositional even subversive. In her essay “When We Dead Awaken : Writing as Re-vision”, Adrienne Rich made the much cited observation that for women writers it was essential to take on the writing of the past in order to move beyond it into a free, liberated creative space of their own (qtd. in Sanders 64) .

Subversion is one among the many methods used by feminist writers to retell or to rewrite what men said or wrote about women, to correct all the misconceptions and myths made by men and to say the unsaid from a female perspective. Subversion is an act of undermining patriarchal institutions and a process of decentring all existing forms of power. Feminist subversive writing came into existence by challenging all the established patriarchal institutions. Such a kind of writing emerged from a realization that all existing power structures are patriarchal in nature, and also from a desire to undermine these structures and to establish a new order.

In her poem, "Countess of Winchelsea", Anne Finch writes:

Alas! A woman that attempts the pen

Such an intruder on the rights of men,

Such a presumptuous creature is esteem'd

The fault can be no virtue be redeem'd. (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar

91)

Language, from the beginning, was a male domain and a means of self-expression for men. Women were denied of this privilege, by and large excluded from literary history. The very word 'author' bears patriarchal connotations like authority, power, begetter etc. Thus writing was strictly a male affair and writers used metaphors of literary paternity to describe writings. As Harold Bloom has pointed out, "from the sons of Homer to the sons of Ben Johnson, poetic influence has been described as a filial relationship" (qtd. in Gilbert and Gubar 93). In patriarchal western culture, the text's author is a father, a progenitor, an aesthetic patriarch whose pen is an instrument of generative power like his penis. According to Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert the belief in such a profoundly masculine cosmic author as the sole legitimate model for all earthly authors prevented many women from ever attempting the pen (94).

Pen, in the hands of men, became a powerful tool to denigrate women and pass judgment against her. Through patriarchal myths, fairy tales, stories, men propagated their own myths about women. To reaffirm this finding we have a Pandora, the fertility goddess in Greek mythology, through whom all the evils of old age, poverty and sickness came to the world. Similarly we have an Eve in the Judeo-Christian tradition, through her weakness woman is believed to have brought about the fall of humanity. Women are, therefore, considered as both vulnerable to temptation and a temptress herself, a threat to the moral welfare of mankind.

The idea that anatomy as destiny later became the focus of feminist contestation. There followed an unrestrained flow of feminist writings. This stream of creativity was motivated by the desire to discover themselves from the agony of the lives of women, and the wish to manifest what it is to be female, to declare the experience and perceptions that have been unheard. Their aim was not simply to fit women into the male-dominated literary tradition, but they wanted to write the history of a tradition among women themselves.

Feminist revisions of mythology belong to feminist literature informed by feminist literary criticism or by the politics of feminism more broadly and that engages with mythology, fairy tales, religion or other areas. Authors have used multiple methods of revising myths, including retelling them entirely from the point of view of the major female characters, recreating the story in a way that attempts to break down the treatment of women in inactive objects and telling the story with a feminist narrator who satirically pokes fun at the flawed view of women in the original text. Sarah Joseph's *Ramayana Stories* belongs to the tradition of feminist subversive writings.

This paper is an attempt to read Sarah Joseph's *Ramayana Stories* as a feminist subversion of Ramayana. Sarah Joseph's *Puthu Ramayana* was translated into English by Vasanthi Sankaranarayanan and was published along with C. N. Sreekantan Nair's play *KanchanaSita* in her book titled *Retelling Ramayana: Voices from Kerala*, published in 2005. Her *Ramayana Stories* is a collection of five stories or episodes taken from Ramayana and are titled as 'Black Holes', 'Asoka', 'Mother Clan', 'What is Not in the Story', 'Jathiguptan and Janakiguptan'. Sarah Joseph, through these five stories, tries to retell the Ramayana stories from the perspective of the marginalized, subaltern characters in Ramayana, especially from the perspective of apparently insignificant female characters like Sita, Soorpanakha, Manthara and Sampooka's daughter. Thereby she attempts to dismiss the age old signification attributed to Ramayana and thus opens up a new channel to question the patriarchal definitions of justice and injustice. Sarah Joseph has stated the purpose of her writing:

I have no compulsions to reproduce the values of the ruling class. The culture of the dominant class is against women, just as it is against those low of caste... My duty is to write fearlessly about the world of women—women who are denied self-determining rights over their own bodies by the oppressive gender regime. (Joseph 7)

The first story, titled as Black Holes, narrates the events occurred on the day of Rama's coronation in Ayodhya. In Ramayana, Manthara, the palace maid, is portrayed as a plotting woman, liar, scandalmonger, and a spy and as the one who played a major role in sending Rama to the forest. The story begins dramatically with Manthara, spying for Aswapathi, Kaikeyi's father and shown as a typical subaltern. Sarah Joseph portrays Manthara in a sympathetic light. She is the

representative of the underprivileged sect of people who are forced to do any menial jobs to earn a living. In “Black Holes”, we get a glimpse of this character who bribes Valakan in order to help her escape from Ayodhya. Manthara acts as the mouth piece of the writer where she criticizes those who are in power.

The well respected figures in Ramayana like Dasaratha, Rama and Aswapathi are presented as power thirsty and hypocrites:

All figures of clay made in the same mould. The moment they sense power slipping from their hands, they grow furious. When they meet each other, face to face they embrace and kiss. But when their backs are turned they do not hesitate to stab one another. (Sankaranarayanan 103)

Manthara was always loyal to Kaikeyi, the second wife of Dasaratha and the daughter of Aswapathi. When Manthara comes to know about the illegal coronation of Rama that is going to be conducted without the knowledge and consent of Aswapathi, she feels contempt towards all those power thirsty souls including Rama, Dasaratha, Aswapathi and attempts to overthrow the ceremony. She was faithful to her masters and to the royal family. She guarded the royal secrets without the slightest leak.

Sarah Joseph portrays Manthara as a loyal servant who is now tired of the hypocrisies and cruelty of the rulers of Ayodhya. For long years she remained as a mute, submissive maid, destined to serve Kaikeyi, enduring the wounds of humiliation. But now she decides to be independent and wants to shout aloud all the secrets that have been concealed.

Sarah Joseph's Manthara, unlike the mythical one, is strong, powerful and sensitive towards injustice and hypocrisy. She is contemptuous towards the power thirsty, lustful Dasarathan, ambitious Aswapathi and the prodigal son Bharatha who raises his sword against his own mother. Manthara is shown as a typical subaltern, a victim of power and intrigue. Ayodhya, to her, is a stage set for a game of power. The story brings out the injustice meted out to the doubly marginalized and also the dirty power politics that goes on in the interiors of palace.

The story “Asoka” gives the picture of a devastated Sita. After long days of suffering, her body is battered and destroyed by continuous onslaughts of snow, rain, sunlight and lustful gazes. Hair matted, skin drying and peeling off, nails grown long, Sita became the

embodiment of pain and suffering. Lanka also shares her sorrow, a Lanka devastated and ruined by war. The stench of fratricidal betrayal smothers Lanka. Vibhishanan, the ally of Rama, who betrayed his brother for power, is the new ruler of Lanka. The story exposes the futility of war fought by men. As Sita searches for the root cause of the war, she interrogates:

Whose was the sin? Was it that of Aryan virility that had slashed the nose and ears of a lower caste woman who dared to make the mistake of begging love? Or was it that of the justice of a subjugated, which seeking revenge, laid hands on the woman and the land of the dominated? ...was nature who filled the animal's heart with lust, the sinner? Or was it the persuasions of justice which mutilated the woman and the soil for not containing their passion? (112- 113)

Whoever be the sinner, the eternal sufferers are women, according to Sita. They are destined to bear all the consequences of men's actions. In this story Sarah Joseph tears down the sun image of the morally upright Rama. She presents Rama with a face darkened by the clouds of suspicion, as the one who ordered a bath for his chaste wife to cleanse off the dirt of Lanka from her body, as the one who humiliated his wife before everyone and the one who prepared a blazing coal-fire and asked her to jump into it. Rama stood before Sita as the mighty victor and his words pierced through her heart: "I did not win this war to reclaim you. The insult inflicted on me and my clan...how long would he have resisted the sight of a beautiful woman such as you in his possession? ...as for you - you stand before me as a woman whose chastity is suspect". (114)

These words indicate the way in which women are perceived in Indian society i.e. in terms of her body and sexuality. Once her chastity is lost, she is no longer worthy to be a wife, whereas men enjoy all the privileges of polygamy. The story exposes this double standard of Indian society. Sita reminds the reader of the cruelty of wars by pointing to the fierce scene of destruction, mothers' wail, children's cries. Sita in "Asoka" represents all suffering and humiliated women on earth. Sarah Joseph sympathizes equally with Sita and Ravana as the vanquished victims of an oppressive moral order of which Rama is the champion.

"Mother Clan" is based on the famous episode in the Aranyakanda of Ramayana that proves a crucial turning point in the whole story. The story is retold from the point of view of Soorpanakha

in the form of monologues. In the beginning we see Soorpanakha thirsting for revenge. In this story Soorpanakha's breasts grow into a metaphor. It stands for womanhood as well as motherhood. The Aryan virility butchered the root and source of her breast milk, the roots of her clan and blood and made her chest a bare field after the harvest, so vast, so empty. Soorpanakha's words expose the treachery and cruelty committed by Rama, the symbol of virtue and the embodiment of wisdom. Ravana would never have done such an unchivalrous deed: "King Ravana had never lifted his sword to turn a woman's body into a barren land. No one in my clan has posed as a hero after destroying a woman's shape and form" (118). Through Soorpanakha, Sarah Joseph problematizes Rama's image of a morally upright man.

Soorpanakha remembers her round and black beautiful breasts which suckled many generations. She can never pardon the two men who drew their sword to kill the woman and the mother in her. Soorpanakha blames Rama for his immaturity and lack of sensibility: "Filled with passion, if a woman approaches a man and he is unable to fulfill her desire, he should speak to her as he would to a sister and show her another direction" (118).

Soorpanakha is punished for openly declaring her love for an upper caste. She justifies her desire as natural by saying: "The trees blossom because of passion. The forest blooms and the sea melts because of passion. If a woman's passion is denounced as wrong and harmful, it is the fruit-bearing earth which will suffer" (120).

Soorpanakha alternates between the feelings of desire and ecstasy and anger and shame towards those who severed the roots of her clan, insulted her colour and her class, despoiled her body. According to Satchidanadan, "The politics of "Mother Clan" is the encounter between the upper class city dwellers and 'Adivasis' (original inhabitants) in the forests who are exploited and marginalized" (629).

Sarah Joseph's *Ramayana Stories* presents mainly three female characters namely Manthara, Sita and Soorpanakha. While portraying these three mythical characters, she deviates from their stereotypical images and presents them in a new light. Through her unique narrative style and through the de-standardization of language, Sarah Joseph provides her female characters a new space and a language of their own to speak out.

All these characters transgress the boundaries of womanhood, drawn by the patriarchal society. Women's sexuality has been

considered as a taboo and they were never allowed to express their passion. As Helene Cixous writes:

I was ashamed. I was afraid and I swallowed my shame and fear...Where is the ebullient, infinite woman who, immersed as she was in her naivete, kept in the dark about herself... who surprised and horrified by the fantastic tumult of her drives (for she was made to believe that a well - adjusted normal woman has a divine composure), hasn't accused herself of being a monster? (321)

By retelling the familiar stories from a different perspective, Sarah Joseph undermines patriarchy, creating fault lines and fissures in its foundation. She has adopted many strategies to subvert and decanonise the patriarchal narratives like the use of a feminist language, developing a bond of sisterhood instead of brotherhood, retelling and re-interpreting the stories from a female or a subaltern perspective etc. Thus she destabilizes the authority of the original myth or text through her act of subversion.

Here Sarah Joseph engages in a deliberate attempt of righting by giving these 'shadows' a voice to speak back at their masters in a different tongue, altering the submissive voices into assertive and praises into curses. She equips her female characters with a feminist language which is at once powerful and rebellious. By relinquishing a masculine, phallogocentric language, she frees her characters from the clutches of patriarchy and endows them with the privilege of an unbiased, feminist language. To question the sovereignty of male authors, feminist writings use oral culture as a part of its narrative technique. In the story "Thaikulam", she uses a language that belongs to oral tradition. Thus she dismisses the superior status of Sanskrit as an elite, patriarchal language.

Sarah Joseph's attempt to retell Ramayana from a feminist, subaltern perspective is a deconstructive process where she dismantles the patriarchal, mythical narratives to construct a new space where women are no longer subdued. Her female characters in the *Ramayana Stories* are not submissive but evolving or emerging from the abyss of patriarchy to the limelight of femininity where femininity is not an anathema but a source of power and wisdom. Thus the women in *Ramayana Stories* emerge as elements to disarm the sting of phallocentrism, to silence the sonority of patriarchy, and to construct a cosmos of feminine rhythm and power.

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Retelling Mythology in *The Chronicles of Narnia*

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Mythology Redefining Human Life

Mythology marks the development of human psyche and can be understood as the transcendence from emotion to imagination, where the latter implies creativity. According to Ulrich J. Mohrhoff, aesthetics of myth transcends unilateral experience of wonder as perceived in a magic performance, by creating pathways for human consciousness intrinsically as extrinsically. “The mythical structure is also distinct from the magic in that it bears the stamp of the imagination rather than the stress of emotion” (57). In “Consciousness and Literary Studies”, Susan Setzer and Terry Fairchild explain Joseph Campbell’s vision of mythology in literature, which elevates the latter far beyond the scope of modern political and psychological approaches. Thus, literature in the form of mythology contains cultural schemas that clarify consciousness beyond hermeneutic nuances. Beyond archetypal concurrence, myths have gained significance in contemporary world, “. . . the search for myths that transcend culture—have arisen as popular self-help medicine, an indication of what many want from literary interpretation: knowledge of how the mind can be made whole, how it fits into the cosmic scheme” (17). Therefore, Campbell School identifies human redemption and liberation as the essential discourses that highlight contextual cultural reflection within the text.

Studies in Practical Psychiatry reveal that myths can undertake the role of harmonizing human life by providing a sense of security and meaning for human existence. “Narrative and Life” by Davey Naugle clarifies that myths in the form of narratives shape and reshape explicit human behaviour and orientation of consciousness. Naugle identifies cohesive power of myths through examination of parallel studies. “A similar thesis can also be seen in recent thought about myths and fairy

tales. Psychiatrist Rollo May, for example, argues that myth, which he compares to the hidden framework of a house, is the very structure that imparts meaning and significance to life and thereby holds it together” (6). Narratives that mould individual and social interactive tendencies and determine human interactions in a real social scenario are determined by discourses of myths. Theoreticians like Lévi-Strauss and Barthes consider myth as a “metalanguage”, which would inspire active members of human community to define and redefine their roles in society. In “Mythological Translations”, Dave Kelman and Jane Rafe identify the necessity to remould the youth as inevitable for the development and progress of each society. “When they can translate the language of myth into their own terms, they can generate meaning that is local and culturally specific to their context through the process of translation” (10). Beyond the canons of materialism and economic determinism mythology initiates the cream group of human community; the youth to create their own meaning of life, identify their own identity and redefine the existing pattern of society.

Inverting Spirituality in Mythology

Contextual translation and assimilation of myths is relevant in a globalized world, especially in the case of Children’s Fantasy Literature which transcends limitations of age and cultural plurality. A turning point in Children’s Fantasy Literature was made by C.S. Lewis through the creation of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, which for the first time introduced fully developed independent child protagonists in textual narrative. He did not believe in the credibility of a canonical religion that was biased, dogmatic, and which was confined to any particular region or race. He problematized reality/fantasy and aesthetic/pragmatic by introduction of myths in fantasy texts that synthesized social progress and spirituality. David C. Downing explains in “Into the Region of Awe”, “Lewis’s spiritual imagination was every bit as powerful as his intellect. For him, Christian faith was not merely a set of religious beliefs, nor institutional customs, nor moral traditions. It was rooted rather in a vivid, immediate sense of the Divine presence—in world history and myth, in the natural world, and in every human heart” (2). Multidimensional aspects of spirituality made its interdisciplinary readings necessary in the socio-cultural context.

Lewis introduces the notion of “eternal gospel” which suggests that Gospel is not the monopoly of believers in Christianity; and has been revealed to all seekers of truth, regardless of times and space

variations. This fact is clarified in *The Problem of Pain*, where he includes the examples of Greek philosophy, heathen sensitivity, Huxley's "non-attachment" and Indian asceticism as clear reflections of the singular omnipresent gospel. Lewis further makes the statement "We cannot escape the doctrine by ceasing to be Christians" (103), which highlights spirituality as the underlying principle of each discipline of thought including theism and even atheism. Accordingly human beings can neither escape from the existence of a universal religion nor negate its redemptive potency. Alan Jacobs adds in *The Narnian The Life and Imagination of C.S. Lewis*, that the messages of spiritual oneness and the possibility of mystic experience from India had become the part of popular culture especially when faith of people had been shaken or destroyed in orthodox Christianity, by the aggressive "scientific" and philosophical agnosticism, and atheism following Darwinian and Marxian maxims. Since their childhood days, Lewis and his brother Warren were more familiar with India as their father was employed there. This inspired in the creation of mythical landscapes "Boxen" and later *The Chronicles of Narnia*, with anthropomorphic inhabitants. "What is curious—and especially significant for those who wish to understand Narnia—is that India and Animal-Land were eventually fused into a single world, called "Boxen".... In fact, a taste for syncretism is one of his cardinal traits, and it ultimately became for him a matter of theological principle" (12-13). This illustrates that, spirituality reflected in works of Lewis confirms to Indian mythography, and "universal inclusiveness" of Philosophy [Advaita Vedanta].

Revisiting the mythology of Narnia

The Chronicles of Narnia includes seven books which describe the long term struggle between good and evil that disambiguates the grey area. Anne-Kathrin Höfel reflects on the usual hermeneutics of writers, scholars and critics regarding the text, "Imbued with Christian faith, values and symbolism as the novels are, their allegorical character is paradoxically not easily detected by children" (58). Liam Neeson points out that these classics and the key character Aslan dissipate a universal message, in spite of the apparent confirmation with Christianity. "Aslan symbolises a Christ-like figure but he also symbolises for me Mohammed, Buddha and all the great spiritual leaders and prophets over the centuries. That's who Aslan stands for as well as a mentor figure for kids – that's what he means for me" (1-2). Statement by the eminent artist seems to have infuriated orthodox and evangelist

attitude of many Narnia fans who fail to acknowledge the concept “eternal gospel” emphasized by Lewis. In *Into the Wardrobe: C.S. Lewis and the Narnia Chronicles* David C. Downing confirms the opinion of Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, where knowledge about Christ, prayer dedicated to him and his mediation are not the singular criteria of human redemption (85). Sincerity is only necessary criteria for spiritual emancipation, as per the opinion of Lewis which transcends the contours of religion into the realm of spirituality. Therefore re-reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the light of *Ayyavazhi* becomes an efficient and effective process, due to their universal cohesiveness directed towards the establishment of a progressive egalitarian society.

Among various reform movements and schools of philosophy in India, *Ayyavazhi* highlights its uniqueness by creation and employment of mythology for mobilizing social reform movement in South India, as per the vision of the spiritual leader Ayya Vaikundar. This movement emphasized on the Human Values for “revival of the downtrodden”, which became instrumental in triggering Social Renaissance in Tamil Nadu lead by Sri Ramalingam Swamikal; and in Kerala by Chattampi Swamikal and Sri Narayana Guru. Primary textual materials of *Ayyavazhi* Mythology exhibit patterns of overlapping meta-narratives similar to traditional Indian epics. Disciples of Vaikundar gave scriptural format to the oral rendering and teachings of their master as seen in the following texts.

1. *Akhilattiruttu Ammanai* written by Hari Goplan Citar in 1841 and published in 1933.

2. *Arul Nool* written by Arulalarkal

The major inherent principles of *Ayyavazhi* intend to ensure social, religious, economic and political self-reliance of all human beings by foregrounding the status of subaltern along with the privileged sections of society. *Ayyavazhi* questions and problematizes all disciplines and power establishments, and this independent value is identified as the innate nature of its mythography which resembles the concept of Lewis. He defines myth in *An Experiment in Criticism*, “There is, then, a particular kind of story which has a value in itself-a value independent of its embodiment in any literary work....It is difficult to give such stories any name except myths, but that word is in many ways unfortunate” (41-42). Even though credibility of myths in the light of probability and reality is little, Lewis is convinced of their power to create deep influence in human consciousness. Subsequently, re-reading literary texts in the

light of *Ayyavazhi* familiarizes the present world with a myth that is re-creative and redemptive. Hope of an egalitarian world encourages common people to lead a self-motivated life by alleviating the regressive social tendencies.

Social Reformation

“Fighting For Hope” by Erin M. Brownlee describes autocratic oppressive rule of Jadis the White Witch which leads to marginalization of Narnian population. “The evil White Witch has come to power and engulfed Narnia in an endless winter, but Aslan returns, bringing spring with him” (31). Aslan like Ayya Vaikundar represents a social reformer who instilled fearlessness in the consciousness of common masses and became instrumental in upliftment of subaltern sections. Transformation of the external landscape from frigidity of winter to warmth of spring corresponds to revival of mindscape from oppressive canons.

Spiritual Evolution

Each Narnian book describes the evolution of characters as they face new challenges in the form of adventures. Social Reformation and establishment of a progressive society demands destabilization of regressive tendencies embedded in culturally transmitted value system. “The Chronicles of Narnia: Where to Start” by Wesley A. Kort substantiates the opinion of Lewis, “Rather, for Lewis conflict is called for when something has to be removed, something that has covered or denies what is truly basic ...” (109). *Ayyavazhi* mythology emphasizes that the manifestation of conflict as experienced by the present world marks the transition before transformation of society into an egalitarian one.

Reincarnation through Aeons

Ayya Vaikundar had undergone a series of reincarnations during each previous aeon in order to defeat evil and establish social stability. This is similar to Aslan who appears in each book of Narnia with different patterns of interaction and interventions with social contexts. Coincidentally both of them reincarnates seven times, where in the latter case each Narnian text does not follow the sequential pattern of the former, especially when there are various opinions regarding reading order of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Appearance of Aslan can be elucidated from contextual crisis and its resolution in each Narnian adventure.

The Magician's Nephew: Aslan is the omnipotent creator of universe to curb the pride of Jadis and utilitarian experimentation of Professor Andrew.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe: Aslan is the manifested facet of Divinity who ends evil of oppressive rule of the White Witch and invents "The Golden Age".

The Horse and His Boy: Here Aslan acts as an undercurrent power of sustenance and subverts power politics of King Tisroc and his son Rabadash.

Prince Caspian: Aslan acts as the governing force over covert and inherent powers of nature and employs them against the exploiters of environment.

The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader': Aslan represents the ultimate goal intended to be achieved by spiritual aspirants as the culmination of their inquisitive quest.

The Silver Chair: Aslan exists as the motivational force inherent in consciousness, thereby opposing hegemonic cultural indoctrination of Lady of the Green Kirtle.

The Last Battle: Aslan becomes ultimate destructive power that destabilizes religious monopoly and demonolatry of before comprehensive annihilation of his creation.

This is parallel and identical to incarnation of Ayya Vaikundar in previous aeons to fulfil the purpose of annihilation specific manifestations of evil and thereby establishing righteousness [*Dharmam*]. G. Patrick summarizes the nature and function of incarnation during each aeon, in the appendix "A Sequential narration of the Salient Episodes from the Mythography of Ayyavazhi", of his research work *Religion and Subaltern Agency* (203-221).

Nitiya Yugam: Mayon [Vishnu] with the blessing of Nathan [Siva] sliced the primordial evil [Kroni] to save the universe and decides to destroy it by sequential incarnation.

Chatira Yugam: First fragment of evil [Kuntomasali] in the form of a mammoth leech was captured and destroyed by Mayon to save the sages dwelling in "Tavalokam".

Netu Yugam: Second part of evil in the form of Thillaimallan and Mallosivahanan were destroyed by second incarnation to conclude their tyrannical rule.

Kreta Yugam: Surapadman and Simhamukhavahanan were destroyed by Lord Arumukhan [Subrahmanya] and reincarnation of the former as Hiranyan was killed by Lord Narasimha.

Treta Yugam: Fourth part of evil was born as the ten-headed Ravana who was killed by Rama incarnation of Mayon, to save the oppressed rulers of heaven and earth.

Dvapara Yugam: Fifth part of evil was apportioned into hundred beings [Duryodhana and ninety nine brothers] that were destroyed by Krishna with the aid of Pandavas.

Kali Yugam: The final part of evil [Kaliyan and his spouse Kalichi] infecting the entire creation as illusion, is in the process of destruction initiated by incarnation of Vaikundar.

Dharma Yugam: The egalitarian future characterized by global unity and harmony devoid of all ominous forces.

Mythology of Narnia and *Ayyavazhi* redeems Divinity from traditional concept of “a jealous personal God out there” unaffected by the suffering of the creation. Here Divinity itself undergoes a process of self-emancipation and redemption, which can serve as role model for value acquisition.

Manifestation of Divinity

Lewis considers polytheism not as a rival, but an evolved form of monotheism. Employment of speculative power would naturally lead to metamorphosis of polytheism into monotheism. Lewis further analyses Indian spirituality in *Allegory of Love*, “The principle, I understand, is well illustrated in the history of Indian Religion. Behind the gods arises the One, and the gods as well as men are only his dreams” (57). Inversion of Monotheism in Polytheism is characteristic of *Ayyavazhi* which recognizes “The One” or *Ekam* as the fundamental existence of Divinity, which lead to manifestation of various creations. Aslan and Ayya Vaikundar are considered as corporal manifestation of this Singular Divinity, which may be relatively acknowledged through contextual changes. The attributes of Creation, Preservation, Dissolution, Abstinence and Gratification are equally shared, especially when both of them represent inversion of the Formless into a form. Latter is considered as the son of Lord Narayana while regarding the physical body, at times equated with Lord Naranaya himself and also as Non-Dual Divinity. Similarly, Aslan is governed by restrictions imposed by physical laws and undergoes hardships, ““Work against the Emperor’s Magic?” said Aslan, turning to her with something like a frown on his

face. And nobody ever made that suggestion to him again” (Lewis *The Lion, the Witch* 176). This very character assumes the position Supreme Divinity while creating Narnia, in *The Magician’s Nephew*. Parallel reading of each Narnian text introduces the notion of ambiguity in Divinity, especially when divine interventions are palpable only in specific situations. Trials and tribulations are inevitable for each individual member of social schema, which is equally applicable for the Divine incarnations. Rationality is frequently questioned particularly when omniscience, omnipresence and omnipotence are not manifested.

Egalitarian World

Creation of “The Golden Age” in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* and *Dharma Yugam* as foreseen in *Ayyavazhi* are uniquely identical. These terms describe the invention of an egalitarian world by alleviating crisis faced by the subaltern sections and ensuring their resurgence through Human Values. R. Ponnu explains *Dharma Yugam* in “Vaikunda Swami – A Forgotten Reformer of South India” by illustrating the teachings of Ayya Vaikundar. “In *Dharmayuga* there will be no crimes or vices to the people. He assured the people that *Dharmayuga* must come shortly.... In this concept, Vaikunda Swami kindled the spirit of the people in *Dharma* and prepared the society on the principle of one Ruler, one Religion and one Caste” (257). Apart from similarity of nature, The Golden Age established as per the vision of Aslan in *The Chronicles of Narnia* lays emphasis on the Human Values internalized by human characters during their adventurous experiences in Narnia.

Lamp and The Mirror

The Voyage of the ‘Dawn Treader’ describes the journey of Lucy, Edmund and their cousin Eustace along with King Caspian on the ship Dawn Treader to the far end of the world up to Aslan’s country. The vast ocean represents a magnanimous mirror and sun the cosmic lamp where the former becomes Silver Sea and the latter turns iridescent finally. In *Ayyavazhi*, worship at *Nizhal Thankals* before mirror and lamp denotes self-rectification which would ultimately lead to Self-realization. Hsiu-Chin Chou in “The Problem of Faith and The Self” journey towards Divinity represented in works of Lewis is equally significant in contemporary world, “In view of this, it is discernible that the apologetic resorts suggested in Lewis’s allegory of modern pilgrimage include not just the paradoxical double strategies of the rationalistic and the Romantic but also the intervention offered by the Divine Himself” (59).

In the present world characterized by mad pursuit of cosmopolitan citizens for spiritual fulfilment, Reepicheep the mouse stands out as a specimen of Human Values like courage, fortitude and compassion which made him eligible to attain Self-realization.

Comparative Life History

Aslan and Ayya Vaikundar owe inseparable affinity to ocean which is used as a symbol of transcendental principle. Kadavil Chandran in *Ayya Vaikuntar: Jeevithavum Sandesavum* summarizes events leading to metamorphosis of Muthukutti into Ayya Vaikundar at sea shore of Thiruchendur. Lord Narayana converts the mortal body into an instrument of Divinity and gave specific instructions to his progeny, Ayya Vaikundar (52-53). Aslan similarly bears his nativity to oceanic realms which is testified in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* where his father is the great Emperor-beyond-the-Sea and *The Voyage of the 'Dawn Treader'* describes his country beyond surmounting oceanic waves.

Self-initiated willingness to undergo tribulations for uplifting the downtrodden is another common trait. "A Symbolic Character of Aslan the Great Lion" Angie Dessi Witantri points out that the character of Aslan trespasses Lewis's representation of Christ in fantasy. "Aslan's isn't betrayed before his execution. Although Edmund was a traitor to his family, he didn't betray Aslan as Judas betrayed Jesus. Aslan chose execution, rather than having it forced upon him. And the night before the execution, Lucy and Susan are faithful to Him" (10). These characteristics rather confirm to the trial undergone by Ayya Vaikundar which lasted for 118 days where several attempts on his life were carried out with little success. Resurrection of Aslan and unharmed emergence of Vaikundar from prison, both resulted in successful emancipation of the subaltern from shackles of oppression.

Asceticism and renunciation of power adds to re-definition of traditional notions regarding divinity. *Bhagavan Sri Vaikunda Swamiyum Pravachanangalum* by Thaliyil Lakshmanan translates the oral prophetic pronouncements of Ayya Vaikundar, which clearly indicates self-less nature of the latter. Vaikundar as per his promise would reincarnate in "The Golden Age" [*Dharma Yugam*] after the destruction of all manifestations of evil. Yet he would transfer the power to a young ascetic who would rule the unified egalitarian world, thus reaffirming the final renunciation Vaikundar (96-98). Unexpected retirement of Aslan after establishing "The Golden Age" and coronation

of Pevensie children in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, similarly reflects self-content and self-less nature of Divine Love.

Contemporary Relevance

Comparative reading of mythology in *Ayyavazhi* and Narnia provides aesthetic appeal to readers through the common element of fantasy and gives opportunity for every person to indulge in constant introspection and rectification of value system at individual, community and global levels. Education in Human Value constantly reminds us of our role and responsibility in invoking a flawless mind and a faultless world, which would actualize the advent of an egalitarian world. Super-Leader is a term that denotes the highest evolved form of leadership, which acts as a dynamic cohesive force. According to Manz and Jr. such leaders not only guide each individual team member but, achieve the conceived goals with perfection. Super-Leader moreover is instrumental in the transformation of each team member to leaders (19-22). Aslan and Ayya Vaikundar are refined examples of such leaders who create leaders out of each individual and equip the subaltern to live with self-respect and dignity. As pointed out by Rosemary Jackson in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, re-reading fantasy can initiate the process of real social transformation especially in case of high fantasy embedded in mythologies (10). The demystification process involved in reading *The Chronicles of Narnia* in the light of *Ayyavazhi* can undo the weight of textually embedded canons. When value crisis haunts the grownups more than juveniles, reading fantasy can benefit them more than the children who are the listeners, especially in the contemporary globalized world.

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Internet Urban Legends : A New Mythography

Jessy Varghese

Myths are metaliteratures. Explaining the term, Don Cupitt in his *The World to Comewrites*:

[M]yth is typically a sacred story of anonymous authorship and archetypal or universal significance which is recounted in certain community and is often linked with a ritual, that it tells of the deeds of superhuman beings such as gods, demigods, heroes, spirits, orghosts, that it is set outside the historical time in primal or eschatological (i.e. last, ultimate) time or in the supernatural world, or may deal with comings and goings between the supernatural world and the world of human history; that the supernatural beings are imagined in the anthropocentric(i.e. humanly formed) ways although their powers are more than human and often the story is not naturalistic but has the fractured, disorderly logic of dreams, that the whole body of a people's mythology is oftenprolix(i.e. lengthy, wordy), extravagant and full of seeming inconsistencies, and finally that the work of myth is to explain, to reconcile, to guide action or to legitimate. We can add that myth making is evidently a primal and universal function of human mind as it seeks a more-or-less unified vision of the cosmic order and social order, and the meaning of the individual life. The individual finds meaning in his life by making of his life a story set within a larger social and cosmic story. (Cupitt 29)

With the widespread literacy, mass communication and restless travel of the modern era, myth did undergo a change in their disposition. There is the emergence of a new oral tradition namely the urban legend, popular legend, urban myth, urban tale or contemporary legend. It is a form of modern folklore consisting of fictional stories with macabre elements deeply rooted in local popular culture. These legends can be

used for entertainment purpose, as well as for semi serious explanations for random events such as disappearances and strange objects.

Despite its name, an urban legend does not necessarily originate in urban area; rather the term is used to differentiate modern legend from traditional folklore of preindustrial times. For this reason sociologists and folklorists prefer the term “contemporary legend”. Because people frequently allege that such tales happened to a “Friend of A Friend” (FOAF), the phrase has become a commonly used term when recounting this type of story. Sometimes urban legends are repeated in new stories, or distributed by e-mails, or social media. Examples include the news stories of an alleged mass panic in America in 1938. There were rumours of Martian invasion and another one was the spread of a message that many people in America share common biological father. There is news about the death of a woman with large hairdo in which a poisonous spider was nesting without her knowledge.

The term “urban legend” as used by folklorists first appeared in prints in 1968. Jan Harold Brunvand, Professor of English at University of Utah introduced the term for the first time. The term got prominence in the books *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends & Their Meanings*. He points out that legends and folklore do not occur exclusively in so called primitive or traditional societies, and second that one could learn much about urban and modern culture by studying such tales.

Many urban legends are framed as complete stories with plot and characters. The compelling characteristics of urban legend are mystery, horror, humour, or fear. Some urban legends are morality tales that depict that if someone, usually a child, acting in a mischievous way would end up in trouble.

The teller of the urban legend may claim that it happened to a friend, which serves to personalize, authenticate and enhance the power of the narrative. Many urban legends depict horrific crimes, contaminated food, or other situations which would affect many people. Anyone who hears the story may warn their dear ones. The website www.snope.com is collecting such tales of contemporary myth. Some of the examples are given below:

1. Colleges put laxatives in their cafeteria food so it gets flushed out of student's system faster, supposedly to reduce the risk of food poisoning epidemic.

2. If your college roommate dies during the semester, some schools will automatically grant you 4.0A.

3. Never swallow your gum, because it takes seven years to pass through your digestive system.

4. Calling bloody Mary looking in the mirror, a ghostly figure will appear.

5. Facebook is planning to start charging customers a monthly subscription fee.

Many studies reveal that people are attracted to such type of stories that contain survival threats and social relationships. They contain social information basic for our existence.

This supports the theory that human intelligence and memory primarily evolved to deal with the challenges of living in large social groups with complex relations. They are about families, factions, friendships, and fallings-out as well as death and disease.

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The Inversion of the Father Myth in the Major Novels of Dostoyevsky

Liji Augustine

I. The Myth of the European Father

The myth is a social construct. It is made and retained in a society which has a common past and shared consciousness. Apart from its political diversity, Europe shares so many memories common in its social psyche. These common factors may contain local flavor at times. But once these scales are shed off, they provide clear resemblances.

Christianity has given Europe a common way of thinking, a similar way of understanding, and an indisputable way of believing. The biblical way of thinking made the father image powerful. The 'Father in Heaven' created the myth of the 'father, the provider'. This protector, provider father is an essential feature of the European culture as well as the European literature.

The patriarchal society is always in need of a role model or a deity to be treated as a parameter to compare the fathers of the contemporary society. They need a complete figure who is capable of carrying the alter role of God Himself. This typical father is always a tough but caring family man, who, in spite of all adversities, is capable of leading the family in a conservative manner. His decisions are unchallenged and his power is unquestioned.

The obedience and respect are the two essential requirements of always 'dutiful' wife and children. They should depend on him for their needs and should be faithful to him. The father is a picture of courage and chivalry. He is ready to support the members in their problems.

All these ideals were attributed to the 'father' in the European scenario. These created the European myth of 'the father'. This remained unquestioned till the eighteenth century. Due to the introduction of modern scientific theories like the theory of evolution, the firm religious belief of Europe began to shatter. People began to question the religious constructs like patriarchy. This resulted in the demythification of the 'father' in Europe.

II. The 'Father Myth' in Russia

The aristocratic family setting in Russia ensured the highest position of the father in it. The father is an omniscient ruler who wields his power and rules over the members. The Russian society is mainly consisted of orthodox Christians who are rather strict in their religious practices. So the essential patriarchal structure of the Russian society gives the father immense powers.

The other side of the powerful position is also important here. In order to wield his authority the father should carry out his numerous responsibilities to the family members. He should provide them with enough money, should be aware of their needs and necessities, and should be courageous enough to defend them in adversities.

This universally powerful image of the father is questioned by the later Russians. The orthodox society found elements of negation of the father myth in The Bible itself. Dostoyevsky, in his famous novel *The Brothers Karamazov*, quotes the Biblical phrase, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger"(1002).

The demythification is taking place first in the society and then in the world of fiction.

III. The Demythification in the Characters of Dostoyevsky

The image of the traditional father is shattered using different methods by Dostoyevsky in his novels. The writer creates various father characters that are totally in contrast with the fathers of traditional fiction. In this paper, we are analyzing the different father images in the three major novels of Dostoyevsky and how they reveal the author's clear cut humour and ability for manipulation of human situations. The father figures include General Epanchin (*The Idiot*), Marmeladov (*Crime and Punishment*), Captain Snegirev (*The Brothers Karamazov*) and Fyodor Karamazov (*The Brothers Karamazov*). We can analyse how the author uses these fathers as a contrast to the traditional image of the creator, protector father.

A. The Meek, Obedient Father

General Epanchin of *The Idiot* appears to be a wealthy land owner and a retired army general. He is a typical aristocratic family man who enjoys an apparently happy life with his wife and three grown up daughters. Outwardly, the family appears to be a patriarchal one. The immense wealth of the General makes him well received in society. The colonial setting ensures the necessary back up through providing material as well as manly support for the drama of family life.

Though he provides for the needs of the family, he is not the 'absolute ruler of the family'. That title goes to his wife and he submits to her wishes very often. The author finds several reasons for this 'apparent perversion' of behaviour. He says that she comes from a better family and this makes him feel inferior in manners in front of her. Her 'much aristocratic origin' justifies her strange, rather ridiculous behaviour. She is neither meek nor obedient but he often takes it as his duty to satisfy or submit to her wishes.

The lady often flares up in public, scolds people and openly talks against the wishes of the men folk in the scene. She is a clear cut inversion of the silent, suffering mother myth though she often proclaims to be suffering internally. The General is an inversion of the chivalrous father who often seems to be afraid of his wife and daughters. The daughters too are outspoken and independent.

The author's portrayal of this father figure in a dim shade was not accidental. Apart from the necessity of the fiction, he was clearly undermining the mythical concept of the chief spokesman of the family with the purpose of liberating the character from the clutches of the orthodox tradition.

B. Father as Manipulator

The most ridiculous condition of a father is presented by Dostoyevsky in his *Crime and Punishment* through the character Marmeladov. He is introduced as an utterly poor drunkard. He speaks in grandiloquent style when he is introduced. He is a total failure as a father and as an officer. The failed, defeated man finds solace in drinking and often ignores his family. He takes advantage as the head of the family, wields his power over his eldest daughter to squeeze money out of her, acts as a good for nothing before his second wife and lives as a sponger throughout his life.

Dostoyevsky creates this character in contrast to the 'myth of father as provider, protector of the family'. The reckless father stoops to such a depth as to send his daughter for prostitution and to boast about it in taverns (*Crime and Punishment* 13). He says that the girl is very sympathetic and provides for her stepmother and her two children now. The ultimate manipulation comes to the scene where the father takes money from the daughter without any feeling of shame.

C. Father as a Weakling

The powerful image of the father is shattered by Dostoyevsky through the character of Captain Snegirev in *The Brothers Karamazov*.

As a very romantic person, he seems to be fluctuating between boyhood and fatherhood. He too, is a poor man like Marmeladov but not an unfeeling one. He loves his family too much, cares for his ailing wife and is always concerned about their well being. Still, he is unable to restore their happiness.

Captain Snegirev's love for his son seems to be ideal. He loves his child and is never reluctant to show it in public. This is totally against the idea of the tough, reserved father of the traditional notion. He is very emotional, sympathetic and often seems to be ridiculous when compared with the rigid, conservative fathers. That is why even his son's friends find him peculiar. Dostoyevsky portrays this father as a challenge to the mythical father who is always 'so reserved and silent'.

D. Father as Evil Incarnated

The total inversion of the father myth takes place in the portrayal of the character Fyodor Karamazov in the novel *The Brothers Karamazov*. He is introduced as a muddle-headed land owner who held several shady financial deeds. The author hints that most of Fyodor Karamazov's eccentricities were shared by the Russian countrymen. The author clearly denies the 'good father myth' here. At the same time, he raises doubts about the unquestioned authority of the father in a family. As far as he fails to stand for the unity of the family, he has no right to claim absolute obedience from the members.

The traditional notion of the father is deconstructed in the character portrayal. As the defense advocate Fetyukovitch states, "Father is the man who has begotten you and then deserved your love" (1003). Fyodor Karamazov is the stark opposite of the father myth upheld by society. He is cunning, lecherous, cruel and manipulating. The author states the presence of similar fathers in the contemporary society and thus challenges the hollowness of the social construct.

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Mythology Reimagined: Multiple Voices/ Perspectives in Anand Neelakantan's *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice*

Lekshmi R. Nair

Mythology, as the body of inherited myths in any culture, is inextricably linked to language, narrative, culture, history and imagination. Hence it is always in the process of being recreated or reimagined. Literature can be regarded as a means of extending mythology since it tends to create or recreate mythical narratives from time to time in an effort to perceive human characters and the world itself in a new light. Thus “the mythic is an important dimension of cultural and literary experience” (Coupe 4).

The great Indian Epic, *The Mahabharata* transcends time and space as a reflection of the socio-cultural matrix in which it was developed. Over centuries this grand epic has repeatedly been the object of several tellings and retellings. It is at once a mesmerizing saga of the grand exploits of Gods, Heroes and bewitching women and an inquiry into the concepts of power, justice, duty and equality as dictated by the patriarchal brahminical culture that wielded absolute supremacy in matters of life and death, dharma and adharma.

Anand Neelakantan's *Ajaya: Roll of the Dice* is an attempt to view the Mahabharata from the vantage point of the side that lost the epic battle of Kurukshetra. It narrates the story of the legitimate Crown Prince of Hastinapura, Suyodhana - the most reviled villain of Indian mythology - and his fight to claim his birthright, the throne of Hastinapura. Derogatorily referred to as 'Duryodhana' by his detractors, Suyodhana is determined to hold onto the legacy of the Kuru clan which is legitimately his. The story of Suyodhana, as narrated by Neelakantan, encompasses within its folds the stories of the unsung heroes of the *Mahabharata* and the other less glorified or marginalised characters like Karna, Ekalavya, Aswathama, Bhishma, Drona and Shakuni." It is the narrative of the Others – the defeated, insulted, trampled upon – who fought without expecting divine intervention; believing in the justice of

their cause” (8). The author has confessed to finding the flawed antiheroes more like human beings, rather than the perfect, celebrated heroes of the great epics. Popular culture and literature always glorifies the victor rather than the vanquished. Neelakantan claims that he felt impelled to narrate the stories of the vanquished and the damned and give life to those silent heroes who have been overlooked in our uncritical acceptance of conventional renderings of our epics.

Looking at Suyodhana through the eyes of the villagers of Poruvazhy in Kerala, where this Hastinapura Prince is the presiding diety of a temple, the scheming, roaring, arrogant villain of popular television serials and traditional retellings become the honest, self-willed, brave Prince who fought for what he believed in. Neelakantan introduces Suyodhana as the Prince of the Blood. The author establishes Suyodhana’s claim to the throne as the true inheriter of the Kuru bloodline. In the initial pages, Suyodhana is the pale and wispy ten-year old, tormented and abused by his fat cousin, Bhima. He is sad and confused at Bhima’s treatment of his uncle Vidhura and Vidhura’s own embarrassment at Suyodhana’s show of affection. He is hurt when Vidhura is insulted in his father’s court by the learned brahmins who question his lineage and authority to quote from the scriptures. The little boy wished to grow up quickly so he could find answers to the questions that troubled his mind and which all the elders evaded. He finds comfort in his uncle Shakuni’s presence though he could never understand the Gandhara Prince’s interests, motives or his hostilities. With the arrival of Drona and his explicit support of Yudhishtira’s claim to the throne, Suyodhana is suddenly awakened to a realisation of the kind of conspiracy his Uncle Shakuni had always warned him against.

Suyodhana is portrayed as the benevolent prince who unhesistently gifts the hungry Nishada boy, Ekalavya with ripe mangoes from the royal gardens. He is pertrubed by the hungry, tired face of the urchin and the poverty that had made him tresspass into the royal grounds. He feels an intense urge to learn more about the Nishada boy and his people. The crown prince of Hastinapura was a figure familiar to the ordinary people as he often visited their dwellings and was seen on the streets. They clamour for their Prince during his duel with Bhima. But the bards of Hastinapura were paid to depict Suyodhana as the arrogant Prince and Bhima as the Hero. All the efforts of the priests to plant stories about the villany of Prince Suyodhana was going to waste.

He stood his grounds against the priests who always tried to protect their selfish interests by denying even basic dignity to the majority of the commoners. He dreamed of a world where all barriers would crumble and people treated each other as equals. He pledges to wipe out hunger, pain and ignorance and the curse of caste and inequality from his kingdom. "I see my country breaking free of the grip of irrational beliefs and superstitions. I see a tomorrow where there will be no limits placed on what one can achieve. The accident of birth will not stand in the way of achievement There are forces in our society that want to cloister everything, corner every privilege, and treat others like dust under their feet" (262).

Suyodhana is reluctant to attack a vassal state of Hastinapura without provocation and imprison the Panchala King, Dhrupada under orders from guru Drona. He is chided for bringing dishonour to his Guru and his land. With each day passing the circle of hatred around the Kauravas was growing bigger and bigger. He is clearly frustrated when the brahmins and nobles of Hastinapura accuse him of murdering the Pandavas and their mother by setting them ablaze in a palace of lac at Varanavata. A man of honour, he would never have stooped to the level of causing his cousin's deaths even though they had nothing but hatred for each other. The nickname 'Killer Duryodhana' steadily increases his torment. Suyodhana is heart-broken at Subhadra's betrayal of his love in favour of Arjuna. Knowing that he will be the butt of ridicule by refusing to win her back, Suyodhana decides not to fight her or use his kingdom's resources to settle a personal account. He cherished his relations with his guru, Balarama and his state Dwaraka too much to let his personal grief take its toll. The Grand Regent Bhishma feels immensely proud of his grand nephew. Suyodhana felt worthless and used. He was the fool who lost his bride to his cousin. "Son of blind parents, I too, did not have the vision to see Subhadra was making a mockery of my love. I have been blind" (341).

Suyodhana agrees to Shakuni's plans to roll the dice and invite Yudhishtira for a game of dice. For a King can conquer another kingdom, by marriage, war, payment, or dice. It was the perfect way to exact revenge for all the insults he had suffered. He could conquer the Pandava kingdom without firing an arrow or spilling a drop of blood. He did not wish to be the cause of a devastating war with the Pandavas that would claim thousands of lives. Yet he sits pale and withdrawn,

clearly not enjoying the sorry plight of the thoroughly defeated Yudhishtira at the hands of his devious Uncle.

The Prince of Gandhara, Shakuni offers another compelling narrative perspective in *Ajaya*. The youngest sibling of the Hastinapura Queen, Gandhari, Shakuni's only ambition is the destruction of the Kaurava clan and their kingdom. He wants to avenge the killing of his father and brothers and the abducting of his sister and the destruction of his Gandhara kingdom by the then Grand Regent of Hastinapura, Bhishma. Shakuni teams up with the Naga leader Takshaka and offers all support in his mission to capture Hastinapura. Shakuni is proud of the fact that he could deceive people so easily. Deceit came naturally to him and nobody, except for Gandhari, Vidhura and Bhishma, saw past his smile. A master in the game of dice and intrigue, Shakuni had meticulously placed his men in key locations in Hastinapura to carry out the task of destroying India. The most important piece of this game of dice was his nephew, Duryodhana. Gandhari is suspicious of Shakuni's designs and orders him to stay away from Suyodhana. Shakuni could deceive anyone, but his sister. "It did not matter that she had chosen to be blind like her husband. She still saw through him, the silken bands covering her eyes notwithstanding. She could strip his soul naked with just a tilt of her head" (137). Shakuni sponsors the building of the palace of lac for the Pandavas and devises the plan to burn them alive and put the blame on the unsuspecting Suyodhana. Shakuni's actions reveal that he has no genuine love for Suyodhana and the rest of his nephews. He considers them as his pawns in the big game of dice that he is playing with the sole intention of destroying the Indian kingdom and the men responsible for the death of his family and the sorry state of his birth place. He skilfully lures his enemies into a cleverly laid trap and a game of dice ensues where Yudhishtira loses his kingdom, his brothers and his wife. "Everything looked perfect to the Gandhara Prince. This land was finished. Shakuni could almost hear the voices of his slain people, echoing around him. He wanted to cheer with them. But this was not the time for triumphant displays. There was still work to be done. He waited for the inevitable" (432).

Another prominent narrative voice is that of Karna, the charioteer's son. Despite his skill in archery that shamed even the Pandava Prince Arjuna, Karna is ridiculed and scorned by the likes of Drona, Dhaumya and the five Pandava brothers. He even contemplates ending his miserable, worthless, Suta life. He travels to the deep South to become

a warrior par excellence under the training of the great Parasurama. Duryodhana instinctly realises the potential of the Suta youth and takes him under his wings. Generous, charitable and exceptionally gifted, Karna is Suyodhana's answer to the third Pandava Prince. When spurned and insulted by the Pandavas, Suyodhana staunchly stands by him. Duryodhana deems him as truly deserving of becoming a Kshatriya and a King. He shows remarkable poise when openly insulted by Draupadi in her father's court. He is depicted as a generous and noble being willing to help the poor and the down-trodden, giving away all his priceless gems, jewels and gold in charity. He stands by Suyodhana and is prepared to lay down his life for his dear friend who had honoured him with wealth and title when the rest of the world derided him as a 'Suta'. At the game of dice he pays back every insult that he had suffered, double fold.

The tribal youth, Ekalavya is yet another vantage point from which the author offers a critique of the ancient times. He is an untouchable Nishada boy who steals fruits from the royal gardens to satisfy the hunger of his extended family. He unexpectedly finds himself in the favour of the Crown Prince Suyodhana. Even though Drona refuses to take him as his disciple, Ekalavya worshipped Drona and secretly watches the training sessions of the Guru. He trains himself into a skilled archer, an expert at shooting in the darkness. He was like a man possessed. He realised that it did not matter whether the hands that held the bow were those of an untouchable or a Prince as long as the arrow was shot with dexterity. "They pierced their targets without prejudice" (118). Though he resented the way Drona treated him, in his mind, Drona became the father he had never known. Drona is impressed by Ekalavya's skill in archery and the human in him wanted to embrace the boy and celebrate the achievement of a poor Nishada boy against all odds. But caste prejudice and his notions of *dharma* forces him to ask Ekalavya to offer his right thumb as his *gurudakshina*. Ekalavya pays the "required fee with shattered ambition, for the knowledge he had stolen" (201). He could not claim the privileges of being born into luxury and wealth. Years later as he witnesses Karna's sudden turn of fortune, he feels the bitterness of his loss intensify: "I could have been in Karna's place had Drona not cheated me of my future" (264). He decides that a thumb will no longer stand in the way of his dreams. Ekalavya and Karna stand out as two poignant reminders of the victimisation of the less privileged in the

prevalent frameworks of knowledge production where skill and scholarship are directly linked to birth.

Ajaya begins with an account of the Grand Regent Bhishma's war exploits. He had conquered the neighbouring Gandhara in a bloody battle. He seeks the hand of the beautiful Gandhara Princess in marriage for his blind nephew, Dhritarashtra, the Prince of Hastinapura. He feels frustrated that fate had deigned that "a celibate like himself should hunt women and spill blood for them" (15). He was weary of it all. His fate had been to bring unhappiness and ruin to the women in his life. For him life had been a series of battles, treachery, politics and intrigue. ". . . the bloody defence of others – his father, his country, his brothers, his nephews, but never for himself" (16). He is undoubtedly the greatest warrior in the whole of India. Yet the gravest mistake the Regent of the Kurus made in his long and illustrious life was the pity that he had felt for the Gandhara Prince, Shakuni. He allows Gandhari to take him along with her to Hastinapura. He doted upon him, repentant about what he had done to Shakuni, his sister and his people. Shakuni's sweet ways, skill at arms and a perfectly deceiving demeanour won the affection of the old patriarch who trains him personally in warfare.

The old Regent has great love for his grand nephew, Suyodhana whom he sees as a reflection of himself in his youth. "The emotions he expresses, the sympathy he shows, are all qualities I admire", says Bhishma to Balarama (162). Though he despised the caste hierarchy prevailing in his own kingdom he had been always careful to take a balanced view, not acting out of haste to topple it in one strike. He is apprehensive of Suyodhana's future. He considers Suyodhana as impulsive and incorrigible who fights with the wrong people for the right reasons making strong and powerful enemies. Bhishma is furious at his nephews for the way they treated King Drupada on orders from Drona and apologises profusely for the misdemeanour of his people. He is highly critical of Kunti's actions and her interest in pleasing the priests, brahmins and nobles of the kingdom to garner support for the claims of her sons to the throne of Hastinapura. Bhishma refuses to interfere when the game of dice takes an ugly turn as Yudhishtira wagers his wife: "If a man is a fool, not even God can save him. How can we entrust a kingdom to a gambler? Nobody forced him to play. He played because of greed and he is now paying the price. That is nature's way of eliminating the undeserving" (423). Bhishma regards Yudhishtira who is hailed as the son of *Yama*, the God of *Dharma* as a greedy, irresponsible,

fool who is ready to wager his kingdom, his brothers and his wife for wealth.

Neelakantan also explores the narrative potentials inherent in the voices of the marginalised characters of the popular renditions of the *Mahabharata* like Gandhari, Aswathama, Drona, Balarama and Takshaka in *Ajaya*. In *Ajaya* the history of the Kuru clan is told and retold from multiple perspectives, from the points of view of people belonging to different strata of society. It is clearly an attempt at reimagining a mythical tale of epic grandeur with the specific purpose of recreating the old times for the modern reader. Neelakantan nonchalantly demolishes our conceptions of the notions of the ideal and *dharma*. He offers a glimpse into an alternate reality that might have existed and had conveniently been overlooked, sidelined or even silenced in culturally sanctioned renditions of the grand epic. As Thomas Mann writes in his essay on *Freud and the Future*: “Such is the gaze which the mythically oriented artist bends upon the phenomenon about him – an ironic and superior gaze, as you can see, for the mythical knowledge resides in the gazer and not in that at which he gazes” (Mann 291). *Ajaya* is an attempt to view the history of the *Kurukshetra* from the perspective of the vanquished, the side that lost the war, the people that sided with the antihero, ‘Duryodhana’ of popular tellings in recognition of his integrity, nobility, loyalty, chivalry and manliness.

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Reconstructing Archetypes in Animation – A Study of *Ice Age* Series

Manchusha Madhusudhanan

Old myths, old gods, old heroes have never died. They are only sleeping at the bottom of our minds, waiting for our call. We have need for them. They represent the wisdom of our race.

Stanely Kanitz

The first movie in this series appeared in March 2002. From then on new movies in this series have appeared at regular intervals enthralling the old and the young alike. The fifth sequel to this series *Ice Age: Collision Course* is expected in 2016. This computer animated comedy is directed by Chris Wedge and Carlos Saldanha. The series brought out by 20th Century Fox was critically acclaimed and was highly successful at the box office. The whole series is a celebration of life and has Paleolithic mammals at its centre stage. This artifact taken up for study here will be analysed from a myth critic's point of view to prove that archetypal images are a chief reason behind the success of these movies.

At the surface the movie appears to be a simple animated animal fable created for light entertainment. At the centre we have a 'herd' who call themselves a 'weird herd'. This 'weird' herd consists of a mammoth, a sloth and a tiger. The size of the herd increases as the story progresses. They display all the potential features of a herd even though their ideologies and 'ethnic' backgrounds differ. Their 'motifs' are different but at the end of each movie they reach a complete circle and resolve their difference. So there is harmony. But like a 'refrain' we have a voiceless character 'Scrat' whose search continues. The aesthetic appeal, vivid characters, interesting twists and turns in the plot all add to the beauty of the movies. Apart from the fact that this series is an animal fable the paper proposes to show how myths and archetypes are resurrected to reinforce the unconscious similarity in human thought.

Even in the myths of cultures widely separated in time and locale, common elements with common meanings recur - symbols, motifs, story arcs, and themes elicit similar responses. When we become caught up in the atmosphere of a compelling book, myth critics say, it is because of the mythic elements. Archetypal literary criticism took root in the rich soil of other academic fields mostly anthropology and psychoanalysis. In this regard Sir James Frazer's book *The Golden Bough* is a seminal work. The main conclusion of Frazer was that there is an essential similarity of man's chief wants everywhere and at all times. Though the stories and rituals differ in detail from time to place we still spin the same stories that our primitive ancestors shared over the tribal fire, with the only change of settings and costumes. Ever since we have found that many popular works employ archetypes. The deep seated psychic meaning was searched by another great thinker Carl Jung. Jung believed that wisdom and good mental health result when humans are in harmony with the archetypes and universal symbols in the collective unconscious. He worried that modern human relying too much on science and logic, intellectualized and having domesticated their primitive impulses and non rational natures might lose sense of the essential purpose of life. Archetypal images occur in rich abundance in literature. This must be seen as an unconscious appeal. A third important angle to this edifice was given by Northrop Frye. He declared that literature is a kind of displaced mythology and even the most innovative of contemporary literary works return to the same pattern. According to Frye the main job of the myth critic is to awaken an understanding in the reader of the mythologies behind literature and thus their societies, freeing the reader from narrow thinking with a vision to appreciate the artifact taken up for study in its totality.

Movies and films have now become rich sources of cultural archetypes. I would like to discuss five main archetypes in relation to *Ice Age* series. The first one would be **the heroic quest archetype**. In 1949 Joseph Campbell in his well known text *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* called the 'monomyth' the mother of all myths. Campbell felt that this essential story with all its time worn elements—lost paradise, perilous journey by the hero, accompaniment by comic sidekicks, the help of a mentor, obstacles and villains to face, a triumph and a return home—conveys important universal truth about the relationships of one's personal journey of self discovery to one's role in society. Thus versions of this story are found repeated in literature. Some writers

actively subvert archetypes for ironic effect. Manfred the main character in *Ice Age*, is a loner who is moaning the death of his family at the hands of human hunters. During this confused state of mind he decides to go against the world by moving south when the whole animal kingdom is moving north in search of a warmer weather. But this is thwarted when Sid the talkative sloth decides to befriend ‘Manny’. Sid, the sloth can be seen as the mythical representative of the “wise man” though with a humorous touch. Diego is the ‘other’ of Manny. He is dishonest, untrustworthy and on revenge spell. They all come together to return Roshan the human child to his herd and in the course become a herd themselves. They fight villains, save each other and test their own inner powers. Each one is on his own course of self discovery. This mythical element can be found in the *Ramayana*, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as well as in many of our popular movies. But an important question is whether Scrat’s antics to attain the acorn a more complex heroic quest. This open ended angle left by the script writer enables the series to find a connective link between the different movies in the series.

The second striking archetype in this movie is the **flood**. The flood in all mythical stories is sent by the gods of as a form of divine retribution. The water is usually depicted as a cleansing agent. To recall some familiar flood myths across the world, the Mesopotamian flood, the genesis flood narratives and the reference in the Hindu puranas where the *matsya* avatar of Vishnu warns the first man Manu of the impending flood and also advises him to build a giant boat (*Úhatapatha BrâhmaGa*). In the Hebrew Bible we have Noah being instructed to build an ark and make a home for representatives of all animals. In Plato’s *Timeaus* also we have a similar story where Zeus decides to punish mankind by sending a flood. That is when Prometheus, the titan instructed Deucalion to build an ark. The water in this case receded after nine days. Similarly in *Ice Age* we have a flood because of the melting of ice. The vulture here warns Manny and his friends. He also tells them there is a boat at the end of the valley. Even though there are certain differences, the ark, here a huge piece of trunk, does save the animals and Scrat’s greed for the acorn helps the water to recede. So we can see that the ark, the flood, the herd of animals and the final escape are all recurring ancient stories.

The third image this paper would like to analyse is the **world tree**. It is a motif present in several religions and mythologies. The world tree is represented as a colossal tree which supports the heavens thereby

connecting the heavens, the terrestrial world and through its roots, the underworld. It may also be strongly connected with the motif of the tree of life. To be more specific we can find similar trees in Modun in Mongolian mythology, oak in Slavic Kalpavriksha and the Ashvattha tree in South Asian mythology. Here in the third movie we have Sid taking up the responsibility of looking after three dinosaur kids. The world of the dinosaur can be viewed as the underworld, that is past the real world. The world of Manny and his herd from where they go in search of Sid can be seen as the real world or the terrestrial world. The future or the world of hope is the one above to which we can find Scratt falling many a times. Scratt is the real hero of the film, who moves with ease from the world of the real, to the past and to the future.

The fourth one, the **Belly of the Whale** is a representation of the passing into the unknown or a process of death and rebirth. The belly of the whale is usually depicted as a dark narrow place in myths and fairy tales. Examples would be the belly of wolf in red riding hood, a tomb or a cave in Aladdin etc. The darkness symbolizes the lack of knowledge of what's really there and the narrowness might represent the way this lack of knowledge closes us in. In the fourth story we have Manny falling in the turbulent river and being brought back by a whale. Sloth and the squirrels are seen in the belly of a whale too. Ellis, the she elephant gets stuck inside a cave. So does all the friends in labyrinth while taking a short cut. There is also a huge carnivorous plant that sucks Manny and Diego into its belly. After each such experience the morale and the energy of the characters increase. The reader/viewer familiar with the Bible will soon connect these images to Jonah and the whale image from the Bible. Even Krishna's *Kaliyamardhanam* episode has much similarity to this image.

The **leviathan** meaning 'twisted', 'coiled' denotes any large animal that moves by writhing or wriggling the body. The whale, the monsters of the deep etc. can also be included in this category. This word is also used figuratively for a cruel enemy. In *Ice Age* two there are two reptiles Creteceous and Maelstorm who attack Manny's herd. The herd is rescued by Manny who was a weak, timid, indifferent character till then. Rudy the cruel dinosaur who took Buck's right eye can also be seen as an evil spirit from the past. When confronted with evil, the hidden goodness of the hero is forced out. This is a recurring image in many stories in our collective unconscious.

Apart from these major images we can also find other images like

1. Drift of the continents: where the whole belief system about formation of continents is subverted. In this case the archetypes are subverted.

2. Ritual dance around Sid: Rituals are manifestations of our inner psyche. Sid is hailed as a hero on one occasion and then the same hero is sacrificed for the benefit of the very tribe he saved. History has given us many examples of heroes who have laid down their lives for the sake of others like Christ, Sita or Buddha.

3. Step mother image: Stories about Mogli, Romulus and Remus, Lord Krishna, Oedipus etc. are based on doting step mothers. Here we have the character Sid looking after dinosaur kids just like his own. Ellis the she elephant believes she is a squirrel because she was brought up by two squirrels.

4. Acorn can be compared with Manna, *Amruth* etc from the religious scriptures. Just like Scrat on his never ending chase for the Acorn, many men have been on a chase for the unattainable from prehistoric times.

5. Cave paintings are stories of our ancestors. They always reveal our past. This helps us to understand the collective past of our race. Both Manny and Ellis are reminded of their past when they see cave paintings.

6. Revenge is a common motif which has not lost its eternal appeal throughout the centuries.

All these prove that it is traces of these stories and images in our collective unconscious that help us to appreciate and enjoy animated comedies like the one taken up for the study. All the four movies have enough instances where archetypal patterns resurrect themselves to add charm and depth to this work of art.

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The Language of Unconscious and Retelling of Myths in Raj Kamal Jha's *Fireproof*

Raseena K.K.

Language exercises as a political activity in the text. The concealed intentions within the language elements are very particular in *Fireproof*. The poststructuralist criticism of the fact/fiction dichotomy has pointed out that every narrative representation is a human construction and that it is a model projected onto reality. The problems involved here are the matters of balance between factual details and fictional elements and the demand for authenticity and accuracy. As a text, that focuses on the consequences of real incidents *Fireproof* fails to include the symbolic meaning and interpretation of events and thus misses the variety of social constructions associated with the incidents. Originality of fiction is not associated with objectivity of narration. As an attempt to analyse the impact of violence on common and apolitical masses the choice of narrative itself becomes apolitical activity. Integrating these pitfalls become specific with the analysis of the common network of myths and pattern of language used in the text. Some universal archetypes are easily identified in the text.

Myths are well proved techniques as socio –cultural constructs. Raj Kamal Jha's particular narrative strategies and technique in *Fireproof* unfold the self over comings of the text from the subject focused. As a significant source witnessing the shifting nature of social identities, *Fireproof* offers a viable study about ideological construction of narratives. Political, cultural, religious differences have an important role in Gujarat riots. The idea of communal violence as the outcome of specific socio-economic and political causes is simply not taken into account. The illustrious slogan of cultural diversity itself is metamorphosed as a weapon here.

In *Fireproof* the author speaks in terms of so many characters. First person descriptions of eyewitnesses and original victims add flavor to the plot. In the very next sentence the text assumes a language of

the unconscious, which bridge the plot in to the style of a fantasy. This juxtaposition of fact and fiction creates an atmosphere of fairy tale inside the text. The dead procure evidences in the form of several pictures and objects like watch, book, towel etc as eyewitnesses to make the trial as objective as possible. The entire plot works upon the idea of conducting a trial and punishes the culprit, represented through Jay. The idea itself becomes more feeble juxtaposing fact and fiction. Many dead victims of riots talk about their sufferings and unfulfilled dreams. What compels the dead to take the task of delivering justice is itself an evidence for the escapism. *Fireproof* recaptures contemporary incidents squeezed out through the speech of the speechless. Violence has its own language-a language of mystery, disaster, confusion. What continually interrogated, interpreted, and explained in *Fireproof* in different ways, is an attempt to mark the shades of violence. Specific sociohistorical background stimulates the language inside the text.

The plot itself is structured as detection between good and bad. The narrator Jay named his deformed child as ItHim, to signify the dilemma whether to call his child it or him. Carrying the baby in a bag Jay reached in a land made of water. It was a land for who have phobia of water, obviously the victims of communal riots. Miss Glass, the custodian of the water land adjudicates amidst several strictures passed by witnesses that Jay is a culprit. She discloses that Ithim, the deformed child, is not actually Jay's baby born to his wife in the hospital the previous night; it is rather the unborn child of a woman who has been mutilated and murdered by Jay and his cronies during the riots. Jay's taking care of Ithim as his own child for a whole day is pronounced to be his punishment by the dead. After realizing the eerie nature of the people around him in the tent, Jay runs away instantly from there reminding the reader never to believe the word of the dead as they are meant to entrap the living. Jay has hallucinations of falling down in the fathomless hollows. Out of terror, he confesses his crime. Jay becomes his normal self again and joins his wife and the newborn baby. The story presents a world of victims and their language is the language of dead.

Gujarat riots and its aftermaths, with fact and fiction, are complicated and complex. Anonymity is the dominant motif in this fiction. Violence is meticulous and grotesque here but the book is not about violence. Description of violence assumes the style of a popular fiction. It is about the self and the other, the bridging of fact and fiction is notable. In the very first page itself the author states that he is trying

to fictionalize the fact. Raj Kamal Jha used the language of the unconscious to narrate the incidents; the whole plot revolves around fantasy. *Fireproof's* prologue gives a joint statement by riot victims speaking to us from beyond the grave. These anonymous dead continue their testimonies in little footnotes fretting about their families, wondering if the provident fund will be enough for those left behind, the older ones musing stoically that they at least got to live a full life. Jha tells about the nature of universal guilt and the strange workings of conscience and redemption. The plot examines the interior lives of disturbed people. These disturbances share a language of unconscious. Most of the characters involved in the action and their language are abnormal in their own way. There are innumerable fictional passages in *Fireproof*. Episode near the movie-hall counter is an example. Jay encounters a pleasant young couple who sees the baby inside his bag and makes fun of it, calling it a monkey. Jay hurries away from them, enters the near-deserted hall and drifts into a dream, where he imagines having the two youngsters at his mercy. Such violent fantasy loses the authenticity of the plot as a literary construction.

The Prologue in the novel seems to be a parody of the Preamble to the Constitution of India. The opening phrase of the Prologue "We, the undersigned, do solemnly affirm" brings to mind the famous opening of the Preamble to the Constitution of India—"WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved . . ." The way the dead in the novel refuse to give themselves any name, any religion or any other identity is set as a cry against the failure of the state in protecting people along with their different identities. Apart from the parody used in the prologue the whole plot worked in effect as an escape from the reality. The novel, if it is considered as an attempt to satirise present political situation in India, becomes a failure in terms of the language used inside in it. Efforts to expose the failure of the state in fulfilling the lofty promises of equality, safety and liberty enshrined in the constitution and guaranteed to every Indian citizen are lost its effect. The foot notes, provoking prologue and an epilogue is actually interspersed to the simple plot. The narrative is built up like a discourse on justice. But the technique adopted for the same slips the plot in to a didactic perspective.

In a email to Jay, Miss Glass attaches three documents-Tariq.Doc., Shabnam.Doc. and Abba.Doc. Tariq.Doc contains the story of a teenage boy Tariq, whose mother is first raped brutally and then burnt alive in front of his eyes by four men. The rapists are named as A, B, C and D.

Shabnam.Doc. narrates the atrocities inflicted on her parents before her eyes. Abba.Doc. is about Abba, an old retired teacher, before whose eyes the gangs of four rape his pregnant daughter-in-law, rips the unborn child from her belly and throws it on the oven before strangulating and burning her. These names-Tariq, Shabnam, Abba, A, B, C, D, and angel have some political resonance. The three victims bear particular Muslim names, while others are nameless in a way. Names, the first hand proof of religion, have not been attached for many characters. Bright Shirt, Curtain, Old Bird, The Towel are some of the nameless figures portrayed as characters here. As a political text, this type of characterization becomes ambiguous and creates a notion of political escapism. Narrator is skeptical about any stable relationship between violence and its symbols. The unnatural naming of characters shows the instable political position of the fiction. Comparatively new technique of naming thus proves the ideological blindness of the plot.

Water and fire are two symbols interweaved as net work of purification inside the text. These two images have clear mythological background. In religious terms these refer salvation and purification. Jha tries to create the same mythological solution inside the text using these two images. ItHim is only a tool or connection maintained in between sin and redemption. Language used here is the language of unconscious. The assertions inside and outside the text about the factual convictions are questionable in this respect. Sin, sinner, purgation, trial, confession and forgiveness complete a circle of highly religious centric inner current in the fiction. The final hide out of victims set in water. They are all burned and lost their life and dreams in fire. The final Act of a two act play enacted on the stage floating in water. Book, watch, towel...all lost their 'life' in the riots play their part in the play and speaks about their experience in detail. "And unlike us the people, who were killed, these three objects. That's why their story will be objective"(310). The objectivity made possible through the speech of the unspeakable. The elliptical fragments accumulate senses while incidental things and words are considered only for effect. Apart from all these tools of writing the text lost sight of any original outrage. With two over used symbols of literature-water and fire, purification and rebirth are effortlessly referred. In the case of *Fireproof*, the language of the unconscious becomes a language of reestablishment of what the entire plot assumed to represent.

Violence transforms and even deforms not just as language but as fictional conventions. The characters conceived in terms of doubling

and grotesque fail to reflect how violence conjoins the contradictory. The wrapped body of ItHim exposes the way of violence disguised. Impossibility of using any particular group as metonymy for “the people” is not artistic problem, but a political one. Construction of a common national identity by appealing a religious consciousness in terms of fiction is only an attempt to make a nationalist solution.

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Of Sex, Stones and Stories; Sujoy Ghosh's *Ahalya* as Feminist Subversion of a Familiar Myth

Reshma Sarah Easo

This paper is an attempt to analyze Sujoy Ghosh's short film *Ahalya* as a feminist subversion of the familiar myth of Ahalya. Divided into six parts, the paper contains detailed sections on Myths, the Ahalya Myth, Representations and retellings of the Ahalya Myth, Sujoy Ghosh's *Ahalya*, comparing and contrasting both the myth and movie and the usage of Feminist subversion in the short film.

Myth narrates a shared history; it relates an event that took place in primordial time, the fabled time of the 'beginnings'. In other words, a myth tells how, through the deeds of Supernatural beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole of reality, the cosmos, or only a fragment of reality—an island[...] a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution. (Eliade 56)

Myths have always been a part and parcel of Indian culture. Traced back to the Vedas, myths and Indian culture have been intertwined from time immemorial. A myth can simply be defined as a story handed down through history often through oral tradition that explains or gives value to the unknown. Especially linked to religious beliefs and rituals, myths were used as a token to establish stability in the land. Myths were also used to teach humans behaviour that helped people to live in concert with one another. Often about Gods, Goddesses, great men, heroes and battles—their adventures, triumphs and tragedies were passed down by storytellers from generation to generation. Due to this oral tradition, stories were often distorted and have hence resulted in several variations of the same text, but all having the same moral however. Barthes defines myth as "a type of speech", "a system of communication" and "a mode of signification, a form" (Dorairaj 30). In classical Greek, 'mythos' signified any story or plot, whether true or invented. In its central modern significance, however, a myth is one

story in a mythology—a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group and which served to explain why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions of the rules by which people conduct their lives (Abrams 230).

The varied definitions of myth take into consideration the substantive elements on the one hand and the accidental features which may vary with differing disciplines and their respective standpoints on the other. The substantive or essential characteristics include its narrative aspect its sacred origin, its etiological character, its relation to ritual, its communicative and normative dimensions, its pre-historical and pre-logical nature and its fabulous character (Dorairaj 25). Myths are used in literature in three major ways: mythical narratives and figures are the overt basis on which plot and character are created: or they are submerged beneath the surface of realistic characters and action: or new mythical structures are invented that have a remarkable resemblance to traditional ones (Feder 53).

First mentioned in the Brahmapuranas, the Ahalya myth is a Hindu mythological story of the first of the Panchakanya, Ahalya. Accordingly, Ahalya was created as the most beautiful woman in the world by the God Brahma. It is said that she was made of the purest elements and ashes of scared fire. Ahalya was placed under the charge of Gautama Rishi until she reached puberty and she was gifted to Gautama Rishi for his faithfulness. Lord Indra desires her and he disguises as her husband Gautama and makes love to her. This narrative part varies from scripture to scripture. In Ramayana, it is stated that even though Ahalya sees through Lord Indra's disguise she does not stop his advances due to her curiosity. In some other scriptures, Lord Indra is seen seducing her as her husband and she does not recognize the foul act until Lord Indra is caught by her husband. In almost all scriptures, both Ahalya and Lord Indra are cursed by the great hermit. As a result Lord Indra develops 1000 vulvas on his body and Ahalya is cursed to be a stone. This narrative too varies from scripture to scripture. While some mention the curse to be that of a stone there are versions in which she is cursed to be a skeletal hag and a dry river. However her redemption through Rama is described in all versions of the myth. In the most circulated version, Rama of Ayodhya along with sage Vishwamitra and Lakshmana pass along the ashram of Gautama

and Vishwamitra recounts the curse of Ahalya to Rama. And she is restored after Lord Rama touches her with his foot. Myth also has it that Ahalya regains her beauty and lives happily with sage Gautama. The Ahalya myth is a tale that is found in many of ancient Indian writings. In fact, it is mentioned twice in the Mahabharata and twice in the Ramayana. The Bhil Ramayana of Gujarat begins with the tale of Sage Gautama, Ahalya and Lord Indra. (Wikipedia)

The Ahalya myth has been variously represented over the centuries as retellings, poems, movies, short stories, paintings and at times as traditions and customs too. Ahalya appears as a symbolic black grinding stone which in Hindu Tamil weddings in India and Sri Lanka the bride touches with her feet, promising to be not like her. Ahalya's curse has always been a topic of interest to poets and artists. The story has been told and retold from different perspectives over the centuries and in different ways. Raja Ravi Varma has captured the beauty of Ahalya in his famed painting titled the same. The television serial of Ramayana depicted the redemption of Ahalya by Rama in a supernatural way. Not just in television adaptations but Ahalya and her curse is also a preferred theme for stage enactations too. Ahalya is a popular motif in the Mahari temple dance tradition of Odisha. Mohiniyatam and Ottamthullal of Kerala have depicted her story through their performances. Rabindranath Tagore in his poem *Ahalya Prakrit* (1914) beautifully depicts the curse of Ahalya. Translated into English by Joe Winter as *The Return* the poem starts from the curse and ends in her redemption. The opening lines of the poem are as follows:

‘Ahalya, sinning against the purity of married
Love, incurred the curse of her husband and
Was turned into a stone, to be restored to
Her humanity by the touch of Ramchandra’

(Tagore 61)

In one of his essays, *Three Hundred Ramayans; Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation*, A. K. Ramanujam tells about the two tellings of the same Ahalya episode. The first one is from the first book of Valmiki's Sanskrit Ramayana; the second from the first canto of Kampan's *Iramavataram* in Tamil. Both narrate the story of Ahalya. In Valmiki, Indra seduces a willing Ahalya. In Kampan, Ahalya realizes she is doing wrong but cannot let go of the forbidden joy. Indra bears the mark of what he lusted for, while Ahalya is rendered incapable of responding to anything. In technique, Kampan is more dramatic than

Valmiki. Rama's feet transmute the black stone into Ahalya first; only afterwards is her story told. The black stone standing on a high place, waiting for Rama, is itself a very effective, vivid symbol. In Valmiki, Rama's character is not that of a God but of a God-man who has to live within the limits of a human form.

The short film *Ahalya* which was released on You Tube on 20 July 2015 with the description Epic thriller is perhaps one of the best and varied retellings of the Ahalya myth. Directed by Sujoy Ghosh, *Ahalya* is a feminist take on the Ahalya myth. This 14-minute thriller is set in a middle class Bengali family. In the first shot Inspector Indra Sen is seen ringing the bell of a multi storied house, after which the stunning Ahalya opens the door. Tongue tied at first by her beauty, the inspector reveals his purpose of the visit, which is to meet artist Goutham Sadhu. He goes in and we clearly see that Ahalya's seductive looks and her titillating walk have mesmerized him. The next shot shows us an artist's room that is filled with sculptures and paintings. Suddenly one stone doll placed on the mantelpiece falls down and Ahalya goes to pick it up and mockingly warns the doll not to be naughty. She tells the Inspector that this is a sort of weird mystery and that whenever someone new entered the room, some dolls would fall down. She then leaves the room to make tea while Inspector Indra scans the room. It strikes him soon that one doll on the mantelpiece is the miniature replica of the person who has been missing for a month and whose case he has been investigating. While he checks a stone that is encased in a glass jar, the doll again falls down. Just before he is about to pick it up, artist Goutham Sadhu enters the room and they exchange greetings, introducing each other. The artist tells the inspector about the weird mystery of the dolls falling down when Ahalya enters with tea. Inspector Indra is surprised to know that Ahalya is his wife and not his daughter. While serving tea, Ahalya accidentally touches his hand and on sitting her legs brush past his ankle; both the acts along with her seducing looks seem to arouse the inspector. After Ahalya goes upstairs, the Inspector mentions his purpose of his visit which is the case of a missing man named Arjun. Sadhu tells Indra that Arjun had come there a month ago and knew about the magic stone which had the powers to turn a person into anyone as he wished. Even though Inspector Indra does not believe him he accepts the challenge to take the phone that Ahalya left behind to her, assuming the identity of her husband Goutham. On entering Ahalya's room, the Inspector is greeted by Ahalya and he is surprised to see himself as Sadhu in the

mirror. Even though he leaves the room, Ahalya was too seductive to resist and he goes back and hugs her. After a blank dark shot we are shown the Inspector, trapped somewhere in the dark and is unable to move his head or arms. All that the inspector can do is scream for help. The Inspector sees that the couple has a new visitor and tries to draw attention by screaming aloud, resulting in his stone doll falling down. Ahalya comes and picks the doll up and mockingly warns him to stop being naughty.

A contemporary take on the myth of infidelity, Ghosh's *Ahalya* is a bold and modern version of Ahalya who is neither melodramatic nor does she weep because she had sex with a man other than her husband. Depicted in a fairly simplistic narrative, Ghosh's *Ahalya* is an interesting inversion of the Ahalya myth by viewing it through a more female-oriented perspective. The Ahalya myth has been told and retold many times and in many ways before, but Ghosh's *Ahalya* is a thriller and it ends with a reversal of the ordeal the mythical Ahalya had to go through. The Ahalya myth has been well blended into the contemporary times, reiterating the notion that "myths are not unchanging and unchanged antiques which are simply delivered out of the past in some naked original state. Their specific identity depends on the way in which each generation receives or interprets them according to their needs, conventions and ideological motivation" (Dorairaj 142). Right from the time Ahalya (played by Radhika Apte) opens the door, we see a very gorgeous woman in a flimsy slip with seductive mannerisms. While the original myth depicts Ahalya as the most beautiful woman ever created, the movie presents us with a beautiful and seductive Ahalya whose very presence on screen is intended to give her viewers tingles. Ghosh sets his ravishing Ahalya in a middle class Bengali family that is well furnished and equipped, thus giving the film a more contemporary touch. Inspector Indra Sen played by Tota Roy Chowdary is indeed a modern version of Lord Indra who can't resist his feelings for the wife of another man and makes love with her, just like how Lord Indra tricks and makes love with Ahalya, the wife of hermit Gautama. Artist Goutham Sadhu is a modern version of hermit Gautama who traces no inherent traits of the hermit except for his age and surname. In Brahma Puranas, sage Gautama is an old rishi just like Ghosh's artist but unlike the hermit, Goutham Sadhu has no problems with his wife having sex with another man. In fact he himself encourages her and sends her prey to devour

and fill her appetite. Here the old artist is the master brain, schemer and co-conspirator of Ahalya's sexual exploits.

As in the mythical story, the three cluster together to tell a wonderful tale of lie, deception and punishment. Beautifully shot, the film can be seen as one of the most clever retellings of Ahalya myth and has an eerie charm in itself from the very beginning that the door bell rings. The myth has been used in an entirely different perspective in the movie. Barthes, in *Mythologies*, refers to the semiological structure of myth. He treats myth as an elastic term that can be stretched to include "photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity" and adds in a justificatory tone that it "can serve as support to mythical speech" (Barthes 110). The mythical Ahalya is a woman who is cursed for having sex outside marriage by her husband whereas Ghosh's Ahalya celebrates sexuality and chooses partners outside her marriage. A tussle between the young and old seems to run in both the myth and the short film in which the latter seems to have an upper hand over the former. Ahalya of the myth and Ahalya of the movie, both seem to be in love and in good terms with their husbands. The magical stone that artist Gautama uses to lure men for his wife is certainly the highlight of the movie. Set inside a glass jar, it's with the help of the stone that the artist spins his tales. Gautama Sadhu tells inspector Indra about the story of Lord Indra who possessed a stone which enabled him to transform into any person as he wished, clearly echoing reminiscences of the old Ahalya myth. The stone is seen as a very strong metaphor both in the myth as well as in the short film. In the Ahalya myth, the stone is the symbol of punishment. She is punished according to one narrative to become a stone. In the short film, Ghosh uses stone as a metaphor for deceit and temptation. Artist Goutham tempts young good-looking men to his wife through the stone that he has. Said to be possessed with magical powers that can transform a person into the artist's form, the stone is the boundary of deceit where men are made to fall. Assuming the personality of the artist, men make love to Ahalya and in turn they are transformed into doll figures of stone. The stone figurines that artist Goutham makes are the crux of the movie. Just like how Ahalya was cursed to be trapped as a stone for 60,000 years by her husband hermit Gautama, the men who make love to this young and seductive wife also follow the same fate as that of Ahalya; they turn into stone figurines. We see Ahalya arranging the stone figurines on their mantelpiece, which are doll versions of the men she has lured. The

six dolls on the mantelpiece are her previous preys. If in the myth she is trapped by Lord Indra for sex, here in this retelling she traps Indra. Deception that was used on Ahalya by Lord Indra is inverted in the movie, here we have a sexual predator who disguises as a charming wife who attracts men and finally traps them.

From the beginning of the 14 minute thriller we see the heroine arousing the inspector through her seemingly accidental touches and her seductive stares. Even though the inspector resists himself initially, soon he finds himself in an embrace with her. Here it echoes a version of the mythical Ahalya where it is said that even though Ahalya knew through her powers that the one she is embracing is not her husband but someone disguised as him, she does not resist him and goes on to make love with him. Another striking aspect is the fact that the mythical Ahalya was redeemed after 60,000 years by Lord Rama when his feet brush past her. She turns back into the woman she once was, shedding her stone avatar. But the movie closes with a dead end, the inspector trapped in the hands of this killer couple and turned into a stone doll. While Indra Sen the Inspector looks innocent at a glance, all through the movie we see him being mesmerized by her beauty. In the first shot when she opens the door the Inspector is overwhelmed and hence easily turns into a vulnerable target. It is evident from his looks that he has fallen for her charms. Furthermore, the touches that Ahalya gives him seem to tempt him further. But the end for this man is pitiable and is a knock on the knuckles for all men who lust after other man's wife. Even though lord Indra was cursed in the myth by the sage and had 1000 vulvae sprouted in his body this turns into advantage for him as when he worships the Sun God all the vulvae turns into eyes, according to the myth. But here in this retelling we see an Indra who is suffering. It seems he is trapped inside the dolls and is in a very tight position as only his mouth seems to move. Through the gap he can see that the couple has yet another prey at their hands. Unlike Lord Indra who flees, here we have an Indra who is bonded for his lust. The chances of inspector Indra being redeemed are nil hence making the viewer's sympathetic to the fate of the poor man. All through the movie we see the couple, Goutham and Ahalya exchanging sly and knowing smiles with each other. It is only by the end that we understand the reason behind their exchanges. While it was Ahalya who was punished for sex outside marriage in this version it's the men who are punished for desiring another man's wife. Sage Gautama of the Puranas is melted in

artist Goutham who actually provokes his models by tempting them with his wife's beauty. He openly talks about how beautiful she is to Inspector Indra. Here we have a Goutham who unlike his other namesake is a person who deliberately celebrates female beauty and has no personal grudges in his wife being shared with another men; in fact it is something he himself encourages. Goutham confesses to the Inspector that, all his creations which made him one of the best artists in the world are because of his wife and that he is nothing without her. He is in fact an artist who makes miniature dolls inspired by real life models. The artist traps people using his wife and makes dolls that exactly resemble those people. We already find six dolls on his mantelpiece and Inspector Indra becomes the seventh doll. The sixth miniature doll is that of Arjun, who was a model and regarding whose missing case Inspector Indra comes to see Goutham. And interestingly, according to the mythology, Lord Indra is the father of Arjun. It is towards the end of the movie that we realize that the kind looking Goutham Sadhu and his beautiful wife Ahalya are nothing less than serial killers. While one weaves a tale of deceit, the other seduces the person. Together they work in perfect unison to achieve their ultimate aim. While Ahalya seduces young handsome men to bed, Goutham uses them as models for his dolls. This couple perfectly depicts a modern society where sex outside marriage is not a problem anymore. Choice has become a personal thing and here it is individuality that matters more. A brilliant subversion to an age old myth, Ahalya is not just a celebration of sexuality it is a warning too.

The film gives a critical view on the new age Ahalya who showcases that she is a human, has her own choices and craves an identity. The camera shots and movements just add to the mood of the film and indeed the film has many close-up shots throughout. The setting of the movie also adds to its eerie situation, Ahalya takes Inspector Indra to a room, definitely that of an artiste that is well stocked with pictures, portraits, sculptures and antique pieces. The use of soft colours in the background also sets the tone of the film. Every time Ahalya is shown on screen, there is a mesmerizing charm that hooks the audience up in the way she looks and sits. (Wikiquote)

The film is a brilliant adaptation of the age old myth. "Adaptation can be a transpositional practice, casting a specific genre into another generic mode, an act of re- vision in itself. It can parallel editorial practice in some respects, indulging in the exercise of trimming and pruning; yet it can also be an amplificatory procedure engaged in addition, expansion,

accretion and interpolation. Adaptation is frequently involved in offering commentary on a source text. This is achieved most often by offering a revised point of view from the 'original', adding hypothetical motivation or voicing the silenced and marginalized" (Sanders 18-19). All of the actors have done a commendable job. Radhika Apte pulls a very mature act all throughout the movie. Attractively Indian, Apte uses her body language to communicate more than her words. She syncs perfectly into her character as Ahalya. And it is very apt that Goutham remarks about her, 'every inch of her inspires me'. Veteran Bengali actor, 80 year old Soumitra Chatterjee as Goutham is also a flawless delight to watch. Toto Roy Chowdhury plays his part with competence as Inspector Indra. The music in the short film is by Anupam Roy who is famous for his music scores in *Piku* and the background score is by Clinton Cerejo who worked in Ghosh's *Kahaani* too.

Every woman has the right to live her life, to develop her qualities, to be independent and to make her own decisions, to be in charge of her destiny. In the Indian society where patriarchy prevails as the dominant force, women lead lives of dependency—a complete parasitical existence, contented with their husband's nonreciprocal emotions. A woman who refuses to fit into stereotypes and is intent on shaping her life according to her needs and perceptions is often looked down upon. Breaking of stereotypical and assertion of identity often raises brows in our society. Female subversion is against forceful sexual tolerance. It is patriarchy that often decides female gender roles and expects the role to be enacted properly. 'The archetypal woman is conditioned to her sexuality in order to attain 'womanhood. Patriarchy has always involved in shaping the image of a woman as sacrificing mother, an obedient daughter and lawful wife. All these are specifically the means to restrict the movement of feminist instincts. Breaking the rules of stereotyped 'gender role' like infidelity is an important thread in female subversion (Bhagira 4).

It is often argued by feminists that almost all cultures are dominated by ideologies that largely deny women the right to express their own sexuality. Men under patriarchy feel that it is their entitlement to define sex in their own terms. Kamala Das in her work, *My Story* has tried to focus on the untold version of female sexuality that to a certain extent talks about sensuality and a forceful sexual toleration as an outcome of her own sexual relations. Das believes in breaking the rules of stereotyped 'gender role', therefore she boldly accepts infidelity and

justifies it by saying, “I was ready for love...rite for sexual banquet.” Das has tried to subvert the male ego as she propagated the celebration of female ego. Das sketched the confrontation of female desire with feminine modesty. The marginalized archetypal woman is conditioned to suppress her sexuality in order to attain ‘idealistic’ womanhood. Patriarchy has always involved in shaping the image of a woman as sacrificing mother, an obedient daughter and lawful wife (Baghira 3).

In Ghosh’s feminist perspective, we have an Ahalya who is a representative of the 21st century. She has her choice and has no scruple in expressing them. Unlike the story of the mythical Ahalya that is an epitome of patriarchy, Ghosh’s Ahalya is a bold woman who subverts margins and norms. In a way, the short film is an ode to feminism. The film subtly shows that for a woman, sex is the ultimate essence for liberation. But very often women are not allowed to express or even talk about their sexuality. Sex often becomes a hushed affair where the satisfaction of a woman is given not much importance. Women, especially married woman, are supposed to be faithful to their husbands. This is the norm that we have been handed down over the generations. Any extra-marital affair and the woman is quickly branded as an adulteress. Sexuality has always been a subject of taboo in India. Sujoy Ghosh’s *Ahalya* subverts this very notion of sexuality and we are presented with an Ahalya in the contemporary setting who brings life and rhythm on screen through her sensuous movements and display of her skin. Seducing men to her bed, Ahalya is a thirsty predator who is willing to go beyond her conformity. What she wishes is liberation and she attains this through her sexual encounters. Ahalya is an autonomous woman who thwarts patriarchal norms. A woman’s right to control her sexuality is a key issue of feminism. Ghosh’s text subverts the existing norms and rules of the patriarchal society in which the female body and her sexuality are often controlled by men. The film is clearly an example of feminist subversion. The unfairness with which the Ahalya myth was passed on through generations is being challenged and corrected in the film. While the traditional texts present Ahalya as the victim and Lord Indra as the seducer, Ghosh gives a complete role reversal to their characters. The film tells the tale of a woman who has her own rights and her freedom. She is not dictated upon, whereas she joins her husband with equal rights for the same motive. We have an Ahalya who celebrates her body and its desires.

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Femininity as Socio-Cultural Construct: Applying Judith Butler's Gender Performativity into Joseph Jacob's *English Fairy Tales*

Sabitha S. Babu

A farfetched story or tale, often termed as fairy tale, is noted for its fluidity in temporal and spatial dimensions. It often deals with certain unreal or impossible substance. The term 'fairy tale' was first used by Madame d'Aulnoy in the late 17th century. The ultimate aim of a fairy tale is to provide unusual happiness. It is a little tale from a long time ago when the world was still magical.

The historical survey of fairytales would unveil the two categories viz. Aarne-Thompson classification system and Morphological analysis of Vladimir Propp. The term fairytale has its roots in German 'Märchen' where *mar* denotes a small story. Since 'märchen' is a diminutive term it came to represent a little story gradually. The fairy tale as a genre started to exist in Renaissance. Joseph Jacobs, Charles Perrault and Brothers Grimm were the noted figures in the field. It is interesting to note down that before the arrival of the genre 'fantasy' some works were treated as fairytales. George Orwell's *Animal Farm* is an example.

The mid seventeenth century is termed as salon era where a vogue for magical fantasies exists. The era includes those intellectuals who frequented salons, hosted by aristocratic ladies. They discuss a myriad number of prominent and pertinent issues. In course of time the aristocratic women begin to gather in their own closets discussing and debating issues concerned with financial autonomy, education, equality before law, marriage as an institution etc. In the meanwhile they deliver lectures elaborating certain magical themes, taking any romantic thread. Usually these performances are particularly stressed for their verbal agility and imagination, mode of delivery, decorative language etc. The women characters are very clever but their lives are always controlled by the whims of their male counterparts.

Joseph Jacobs is an Australian folklorist and one of the most popular writers of fairytales for the English language. His works include *Fables of Aesop* (1889), *English Fairy Tales* (1890), *More English Fairy Tales* (1894), *Indian Fairy tales* (1912). *English Fairy Tales* (1890) is the subject of scrutiny in this paper. The text consists of total 43 tales. The initial tales deal with the male characters and their macho activities. In the preface of the text the writers make it clear that even though the title is *English Fairy Tales* only a few of them speak of fairies or women. Given title is the result of close introspection to make the work a captive and fascinating one. This incident itself is a testimony of the commercialization of the femininity.

Like all other male writers Joseph Jacobs is also not free from the so called virtues like Eurocentric and Masculine dominated world view. Such selected fairy tales of Joseph Jacobs would be getting unveiled through this paper. Various methods of the subversion of female identity are the chunk of this attempt. The entire focus will be devoted to expose the laws and rules which are constructed solely on the basis of anatomically different bodies.

The women's movement of 1960s is a renewal of the old tradition of thought and action already possessing its classic books which have diagnosed the problems of women. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), *Women and Labour* (1911), *A Room of One's Own* (1929) are some of the flowers in the orchard of feminism. *The Subjection of Women* (1869), *The Origin of the Family* (1884) are some of the famous male contributions.

Judith Butler is an American philosopher and Gender theorist specifically noted for her theory of GENDER PERFORMATIVITY. She argues that the gender identities are a kind of impersonation and approximation... "a kind of imitation for which there is no original" (Butler, *Undoing Gender*21).

The concept of gender like sex and desire is an effect of specific formation of Power. In the words of Foucault it is termed as Genealogy. It considers gender as a product of certain institutions, discourses and practices. To decentre such institutions is the aim of genealogical critics.

Butler speaks about the normal gender categories which promote gender binary, gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality within a masculinist sexual economy. It is impossible to separate out gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is variably produced and maintained. There disseminated a notion that the gender

exists only in the 'Third World' or 'Orient' because gender discrimination is the effect of essential non-western barbarism.

Sex appears to have a biological intractability. Gender is neither the result of sex nor is fixed as sex, but a socially constructed idea noted for its multiple interpretations. There exists a discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Stability in binary sex assumes a mimetic relation between sex and gender where gender mirrors sex and vice versa. Gender itself is a performance and "can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier within the domain of corporeal legibility" (Butler, *Critically Queer* 24). Gender is

The act that one does, the act that one performs, is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene. Hence, gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again. (*Critically Queer* 25)

Female body is the medium upon which culture is inscribed by patriarchy. The difference between the male and female gender has biological, linguistic and cultural grounds. The hegemonic cultural discourse and the binary structures disseminated through fairy tales are very much to be questioned. The major obstacle in the path of the emancipation of women is phallogocentric language itself. The universal rationality activated by male showiness prevents a female writer from creating any path breaking changes. Female body is the curtailment of freedom whereas the male body becomes the synonym for freedom.

The representation of women in literature is one of the most important forms of socialization, since it provides role models of feminine and masculine concepts. The representation (always an operating tool within a political system) of women is always taking place within the pervasive cultural condition to make them politically visible. She is confined within the hegemonic Western cultural Representation. The relation between the masculine and feminine is not represented economically where masculine constitutes a closed circle of signifier and signified. Female subject is a masculinist construction, prerogative and which excludes the structural and semantic possibility of a feminine gender.

"Earl Mar's Daughter", "Kate Crackernuts", "Princess of Canterbury" and "The Old witch" are the stories chosen for study. They

are commendable for the presence of elements like Regulative discourses, disciplinary regimes and masculine frameworks of intelligibility. These structures are often inviolable, fixed and eternal. Natural binary sex is the fact. But keeping in harmony with this writers started creating binary gender and heterosexuality natural.

The Earl Mar's daughter has no name throughout the story. She remains a shadow under her father. Later she is named as "mother of my Seven boys" by her husband Florentine. She is pictured as a person who falls in love with a sweet voice without any identity. Her character is just a thread in the hands of the male writer who simply weaves her as he likes. Whereas the same author makes his male protagonist Jack (in other stories) think logically and critically before doing anything.

The next story "Kate Crackernuts" portrays a lady Kate as the embodiment of female virtue of sacrifice and suffering. After reading the story one would definitely step into the shoes of Amelia Jones who argues for creating female images as "enactments with embodied subjects rather than objects for men's viewing pleasure" (Jones370).

Kate undergoes many hardships or struggles to regain her sick sister and cure the prince. She expresses her choice only in the case of marriage as 19th century women have done. The character of step-mother is the other devilish figure which again showcases the rude treatment of women by men.

"Princess of Canterbury" has the same story of an innocent beautiful girl who marries a foolish Jack. At the outset it is made clear that Jack is a fool and he never excels his two brothers. The nameless daughter is very clever but married to a man who is a good for nothing fellow. This incident shows that even a clever girl from the whole female society would stand behind the most foolish person of the male world. This is a clear instance of hegemonic discourses existing in the society.

"The Old Witch" is another story which bears testimony for the dominance of men over women. The female protagonist -again has no name- passes through a lot of ordeals on her way to make her own fortune. To an extent she succeeds, but her success is marred at the end of the story where she makes use of the accumulated wealth only to marry a rich person. Her sister who is wicked undergoes the same hardships and fails. This accounts for the importance of good nature in girls. Above all, the good natured girls are going to get only one faith- the faith of being a loyal wife to some rich, handsome lad.

Power functions and shapes our understanding of womanhood not only in our society at large but also within the feminist movement. The very word 'gender' itself reveals concealments, exclusions and regulations within the hegemonic heterosexual standards of identity. There should not be any connection between sex and gender. One must inculcate the idea of gender as a free floating concept and not as an effect of any external factors. Identity is free and flexible and gender is performance. It is a free floating surface where man and masculine can very well identify with female body and female and feminine can be one with male body.

In short body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated through time.

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Performative Narrativity and Popular Memory in the film *Bombay*

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Films are considered to be the most popular of cultural practices reflecting a plethora of social, economic and cultural phenomena in modern societies and are hence an inevitable part of our everyday life. Our life styles have increasingly been associated with films in one way or the other which in turn makes it a part of our popular culture. Narratives of memory and collective identity and the academic discourses that examine them and construct them have experienced enormous growth in recent years, and film- popular film in particular- has been supportive to its advance. By documenting “othering” film functions as counter-memory to the ‘official’ versions of history, by representing a very broad range of subject positions, the events and ideologies depicted are released from the confines of stereotype. But above all, this liberatory technique of a film helps in constructing popular resistance to an event which must never recur. In this context, through an analysis of Manirathnam’s film *Bombay*, I would like to suggest how films act as sites of performativity and memory simultaneously. It is interesting how the politics of memory (in its diverse manifestations as mourning, nostalgia, counter-memory, and forgetting) is inextricably linked to the politics of films, thus becoming a site of struggle for cultural definition. What animates the interconnection between “performance” and “performativity” is the understanding of performance as an act of theatrical enactment that has at the same time the performative power to trigger new signifiers and meanings beyond the present act itself and through these, a change of identity.

Memory is a highly selective process which registers some processes and discards others. It directs our attention, not to the past, but to the past present relation. In one sense, almost all narratives and performances are evidence for the forms of popular memory; they are all about the relation of the past to the present. Memory is closely akin

to the province of history with its disposition towards 'knowing' and interpreting the past. But memory suggests a more dialogic relationship between the temporal constituencies of 'now' and 'then'. It draws attention to the activations and eruptions of the past as they are experienced in and constituted by the present.

Despite the clear entanglements of history and memory, there remain important differences between them. These differences have been mapped politically. Michel Foucault has discussed the tensions between official histories and their contestation in 'popular' or unofficial memory. He analyses the bearing of historical and memorial knowledge on formations of identity and operations of power. In a discussion of 'film and popular memory' in French Cinema of the 1970s, Foucault suggests that memory is a 'very important factor in struggle...if one controls people's memory, the other controls their dynamism' (Grainge 2). Memory, in this context, is seen as a political force, a form of subjugated knowledge that can function as a site of potential opposition and resistance, but that is also vulnerable to containment and 'reprogramming'.

We usually make ourselves intelligible to others through performative acts. Of course, the scenario of Indian film industry bearing on constructions of memory and identity are not constrained to the domestic sphere alone. Many Indian films have succeeded in advancing discussions about the degree to which its products proceed, adumbrate or even 'Indianise' the memory of events and people. What needs to be underscored, however, is how our acts can narrate and account for catastrophic events and traumatic experiences. This type of storytelling facilitates the travelling of the narrative between the present of the (re)telling of the (fictional) stories of the event and the (documented) past happening of the event itself. The viewer finds himself having what greatly resembles a memory—an accurate memory of an event she did not see firsthand. Does film make it possible for us to remember in "real time and motion" something we never saw? People and events of the nineteenth or twentieth century are screened before us as vividly and convincingly as we screen them in our mind and call it 'the past'.

What would it mean to remember something you never saw? In a familiar sense, of course, human beings do this regularly, having always wished or succumbed to groundless remembrances. But this is at odds with the literal meaning of "to remember." By contrast, filmic "remembering" is not so easy to detach from literal remembering. A film

is of the past-the *real* past-as is a legitimate memory, a remembrance of things past. Accurate filmic representation can and does bear witness to past events in the same way human memory can and does bear witness to past events.

Several theories of memory have become particularly useful for the study of popular memory in cultural studies. It is worth remembering two important aspects of Maurice Halbwachs's classic theory of collective memory, which privileged the social dimension of remembrance. On the one hand, he conceptualizes memory as a social construction, with his tenet that "individuals always use social frameworks when they remember" (Bond 24). On the other, his notion that the memory of the past is a reconstruction, more than a recovery which is re-enacted from the present and always informed by that present: "Even at the moment of reproducing the past our imagination remains under the influence of the present social milieu"(Bond 24). The past is recovered from the present, but it is not simply past, since the process of recovery of the past can have direct and indirect repercussions for actions in the present.

Indeed, what we refer to as collective memory, is a present collective consciousness of the past, rather than personally lived memories. Pierre Nora acknowledges "the embodiment of memory in certain sites where a sense of historical continuity persists" (Bond 26). These new spaces of remembrance are "'places' where memories converge, condense, conflict, and define relationships between past, present, and future". Monuments, museums, commemorations, symbols, books, documentaries, all can be considered collective "sites of memory", and the meanings taking shape in those sites have potential impact in the formation and consolidation of modern collective identities (Bond 26).

Many contemporary critics have noted how collective memory and identity are mutually supportive cultural constructions following a continuous process of selectively forgetting and remembering. Under this light, the constructions of memory and collective identity have to be seen side by side. Memory forms the basis for a sense of cultural collective identity marked by those contingencies of difference such as class, gender, language and ethnicity. The construction of national identities is directly shaped by the recollection of collective memories of a common past. As such, memory has an important function as a site of struggle and resistance for oppressed groups (ethnic and linguistic minorities, political dissidents, women, exiles, migrants, etc.) in their

construction of alternative cultural identities, against official narratives of the past that has excluded them.

Bombay is a critically acclaimed and national award-winning 1995 Tamil film set in the backdrop of the traumatic riots of 1992 and its aftermath. Directed by Mani Ratnam, starring Arvind Swamy and Manisha Koirala with music composed by A. .R Rahman, the film is centred on events, particularly during the period of December 1992 to January 1993 in India, and the controversy surrounding the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya, its subsequent demolition on 6 December 1992 and increased religious tensions in the city of Mumbai that led to the Mumbai riots. Shekhar (Arvind Swamy) is the son of a traditional Hindu father in a seaside village in Tamil Nadu and studies journalism in Bombay. On one of his visits back home to see his family, he falls for Shaila Bano (Manisha Koirala), a Muslim schoolgirl in the village. Initially shy, Shaila seeks to distance herself from Shekhar. But after frequent run-ins, and days of pursuit, Shaila begins to like Shekhar. They both fall in love in spite of their different backgrounds and the fuming societal clashes on interrogations of religious identities.

A marriage proposal is vehemently opposed by the caretakers on both sides. Shekhar's father refuses to accept Shaila as his daughter-in-law, telling Shekhar to find another partner, whilst Shaila's father announces the need for an immediate marriage between his daughter and a Muslim man. Shekhar's father even threatens to cease talking to his son if the two ever get married. A disappointed Shekhar reacts angrily to his father's refusal to accept Shaila. He leaves back to Bombay breaking his familial associations.

Shaila, who is under increasing pressure from her father to marry a man of his choice, finally elopes and joins Shekhar at Bombay. Having relocated for the first time from rural surroundings to a city life, Shaila finds it difficult to adjust to the new state of affairs. However, with time she adapts to her new lifestyle. The two get married and move into a new apartment. A few months later, Shaila becomes pregnant and gives birth to twins, Kabir Narayan and Kamal Basheer. The twins are raised in both religions. Shekar continues to work as a journalist, while Shaila remains a home maker, looking after the children. They start settling well and after six years, they begin the process of repairing relations with their respective families. The ice starts melting and the relatives visit the family in the city for the first time. They are overjoyed to see their two grandchildren and all seems to go well again.

Meanwhile, in India, religious extremism launches each community against the other, causing a wave of Hindu/Muslim riots leaving hundreds dead in Bombay. Shaila and Shekhar are the targets of violence from both sides. They worry increasingly over the safety of their children, whom they raised in both Hindu and Islamic traditions. They are constantly under threat. The growing tension threatens to bring tragedy to the family and how they cope with it forms the crux of the story.

The highly chronicled historical event, the demolition of the Babri Masjid at Ayodhya and the riots that follow it shatters many of their dreams. They are in the midst of the city when the riots occur, and the twin boys are lost in the mayhem and confusion. They are encircled by a group of unidentified men who douse them in kerosene and almost set them on fire, but fortunately they are saved. The trauma which they experience is presented in such a manner that it is sure to arouse empathetic reactions in the viewer.

Both Shekar's and Shaila Bano's parents arrive in Bombay after hearing about the riots. There is a second wave of riots, due to which both Shekar's and Shaila Bano's parents die in a house fire. The twins are lost once again and this time they are separated, but eventually find one another in the continued rioting. In the end, the riots are brought to a halt by Shekhar and various other people, notably a eunuch and a Muslim woman, who make impassioned speeches to their own religious groups, urging them to stop the violence. Finally, all is well that ends well, the parents are reunited with their children, and the film ends with the different communities coming together in peace, as they drop their weapons to hold hands.

The innovation in the film relates to the representation of love and marriage between a Hindu man and a Muslim woman. Hindu-Muslim relations in general had been dealt with in a fairly consistent manner over the past fifty years: the promotion of "a generic Pan-Indian identity" through the elimination of conflict and an emphasis on 'communal fraternizing'. While the theme of love transgressing boundaries of class and caste had previously been addressed on screen, inter-religious love had never been portrayed in Indian popular cinema before *Bombay*. The film that came closest to the representation of Hindu-Muslim love prior to the release of *Bombay* is *Henna* (1991), also a story between a Hindu man and a Muslim woman.

The induction of nonfiction film fragments related to Mumbai riots is a sort of narrative performativity which actually does the purpose of historical witnessing. In this way, *Bombay* is a significant film not only because it represents love between a Hindu and a Muslim, but also because it goes beyond romance by portraying the possibility of having a family despite religious differences. But more important is the way in which the film tries to closely knit the various loose threads of the violence and its aftermath so subtly that the director could gain wide acclaim for it as a blockbuster popular film. Being a popular film, *Bombay* could create in the mind of the masses a re-created picture of the horrific and fear inducing violence and bloodshed following the 1992 Mumbai riots, thereby making the film itself a site of memory. The film could create a collective memory, a collective consciousness and above all a collective identity. But its effect as a site of resistance is to be more crucially considered because on the other side, the film could succeed in creating an aversion and anger against violence and bloodshed in the name of religion. Hence the film, in my opinion stands as a site of resistance too. To conclude, the widely acclaimed film *Bombay* could brilliantly portray the universal theme of love, couched in an affair between two people belonging to different religions, in the backdrop of the Mumbai riots, simultaneously acting, both as a site of memory and as a site of resistance. It thus performs, narrates and acts as a performative trigger in creating new hitherto unexplored dimensions of popular memory. It thus presents an elegant kaleidoscope of intersections.

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Myths and Fairy tales as Socio-Cultural Constructs: With Special Reference to Robinson Jeffers' Poems

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Myths are stories that represent fundamental beliefs, convictions and values of society. People try to imitate the heroes—gods and demigods—in myths. Legends are a form of social myths based in part on historical facts. There is a greater degree of imagination in legends than in myths. Where as fairy tales are about magic or fairies, usually for children to promote their curiosity, imaginative power and fantasy, it can have some shade of historical facts. It can also be purely imaginative and wonderful, typical of something in a fairy tale like a fairy tale castle on an island or a fairy tale wedding in the cathedral to inculcate and to construct socio-cultural values in children as well as in readers, irrespective of their age, caste, colour, creed and education.

Culture is the efflorescence of civilization. It includes all that man has made in the form of customs, traditions, institutions, religion, laws, myths, legends and material goods. Culture is not inborn in individuals; it is formed as a result of interaction with other individuals. The culture of the race is preserved, transformed and transmitted from generation to generation. This transformation and transmission of culture is made possible through art and literature. Implementation of this mission is made sure through the application of myths and fairy tales in the literary works. Poets and other writers try to construct and reconstruct the socio-cultural values in the society. Robinson Jeffers being a committed poet also applies myths and legends in his celebrated works with the same purpose, vision and mission.

Culture is cumulative. That is, every generation adds something of its own to the existing culture so that it becomes the cumulative treasure-capital of the succeeding generation. From this we understand that culture undergoes constant changes in its flow. The change may be slow or rapid; it depends up on the mental set up of the group. The

change is well marked in the material aspects, rather than the nonmaterial, intellectual, aesthetic and spiritual ones. For instance, the computer technology may very readily and rapidly be accepted by the people, while capitalism or Marxism or atheism or theocracy, may receive a bitter blow in the course of its propagation. Cultural evolution is uniform, gradual and progressive, though the rate of change may be uneven. Culture is diffusive in the sense that cultural factors tend to spread from one group to another, depending upon the contact they make. It is the behaviour pattern of a group. Myths and fairytales either try to modify the behaviour of the readers or to construct some desirable socio-cultural factors.

The functions of myths and legends are to mould the individuals in the matrix of society, in accordance with its customs and traditions. Transmission of culture and the building up of personality in tune with the culture of the society are some other functions of them.

Any living being undergoes changes. So it is with culture. Had culture been without change, we would have been living our primitive lives in the caves of the forests. Any how, the transformation of culture should be in tune with the values of the society. Myths and fairy tales play a major role in constructing a socio-cultural transformation in literature and in ever day life.

One of the tasks of myths and fairy tales is to make children as well as the readers adapt themselves to the contemporary culture and familiarize them with the past. For this they must be given very clear ideas about the contemporary values, beliefs and customs. Then they must be given opportunities for self expression, or critical evaluation of those customs and beliefs. Myths and legends give us opportunity to learn about the different cultures and civilization of the world over and choose whatever they prefer and teach them to feel the common factors in each and every culture. There is an international exchange of culture right from the ancient days onwards (*Evolution of Indian Culture* 234).

Myths and fairytales enable one to lift the mind from the blind alleys. As we know blind alleys is a way of doing something that seems useful at first but does not produce useful results, like following a path that suddenly stops. They try to teach the readers to dispel error and discover truth. They create a favourable attitude in them for positive changes in life. New patterns of life should be evolved so as to ensure the good of all rather than the good of the majority. This is possible

only when the literary men themselves open their minds to admit liberal ideas that elevate them to an enlightened plane.

Values are caught rather than taught. Values are references for some thing cherished. There are attitudes related to standards of conduct; they are part and parcel of the philosophy of a nation and its educational system. They are the guiding principles of life which are conducive to the development of a balanced personality. They are concepts heavily weighed with emotions. They include important religions, moral attitudes, philosophies of life, political ideologies etc, which promote culture of the society. Values are classified into aesthetic, spiritual, moral and social. Aesthetic value expresses itself through arts and crafts, music, dancing, painting, dramatization etc. Spiritual value leads one to idealism, moral value to ethical life and social value to social sensitiveness and social efficiency. It is the function and purpose of myth and fairytales to inculcate the social values to the readers in depth (*Social Science* 425).

Some of the leading and desirable values which are inculcated in and through fairy tails are: love or affection, truth, courage, reverence to elders, compassion, respect for all religion, dignity of manual work, humility, purity in word, thought and action, tranquillity of mind, cooperation, sustainable life style, sustainable approach to nature, environmental preservation etc. These values become internal as a result of socialization. Myths, legends and fairytales set good examples of conduct and behaviour to the readers. They give worthy models. They exploit our tendency to imitate great heroes and the greatness in them. They encourage their good behaviours and discourage bad ones (*Myth and Tradition* 138).

Robinson Jeffers the American poet was profoundly influenced by the region where he dwelled. He was strongly bound to the majestic coast of southern California and the mountains towering behind it. The recent interest in environmental literature and in eco criticism has made his works popular among critics and scholars. Guided by his philosophy of inhumanism which he defines as a shifting of emphasis and significance from man to not man (*Seeing and Reading* 28) Jeffers contrasts the strength and enduring beauty of nature with a tragic vision of human suffering and inconsequence. Nature takes on more serious meaning in his poems. He believes that man can achieve grandeur and nobility only by shuffling of his humanity and uniting himself with the universal forces in nature. Incorporating structures and themes from

Greek drama, the Bible and eastern mysticism he also draws upon science, history, nature and contemporary events for subject material. It is not the meaning of a text which changes, but its significance.....meaning is that which is represented by a text; it is what the author meant by his use of a particular sign sequence ... significance ... names a relationship between that meaning and a person or a conception, or a situation ... always implies a relationship and one constant, unchanging pole of that relationship is what the text means (*Validity in Interpretation* 8). He is deeply fascinated by the beautiful granite which serves as a symbol for philosophic detachment for the peace of death and also for scientist's god.

The famous lyric "Science" is apparently a rather straightforward lament for the humankind's perilous domination over the natural world, a concise elegy for the human species in advance of our annihilation. Man's oversight in breaking a knowledge barrier which seems to be quite insignificant in the total process of an evolving natural world has indeed a very significant role in bringing about the ultimate extinction of the species . The allusion of Actaeon has provided a mythical focus for the expression of his grief. The complex rhetoric in the opening lines – the speedy shift from one metaphor to another- suggests the intricate ways in which man has intervened in nature's course.

Now he's bred knives on nature turns them also in ward: they have thirsty points though

His mind forebodes his own destruction;

Actaeon who saw the goddess naked among leaves and his hounds tore him.

A little knowledge, a pebble from the shingle,

A drop from the oceans: who would have dreamed this infinitely little too much? ("Science" 134).

In the last line of the first stanza the poet vehemently criticizes man's greed and avarice which lead to reckless exploitation of natural resources. Scientific devices destroy nature and nature retaliates vehemently in several forms. Man being very reasonable is able to foretell that as he has a pre sentiment that he is digging his own grave. The poet uses the myths of Actaeon from Greek mythology to warn the wrath of nature of man on his exploitation. Actaeon a hunter according to Greek mythology who makes Artemis, called Diana by the romans, angry by watching her bathe. She changes him into a stag and his hounds tear him to pieces. In this extract he uses his myth to

construct the socio-cultural aspects of man either in the east or in the west; it is our culture to honour and respect nature. Man has forgotten this great duty with the advent of hybrid machines. He has become so self-centred that he never pays attention to the biosphere. It has made man, once a true friend of nature, a maniac.

The poet uses the myth of Actaeon in order to give emphasis on the immediate consequence of a random visual discovery. Nature personified as goddess is sure to punish man for breaking the laws of nature and abusing her, it reminds the readers as well as the modern man of the need of going back to nature and keeping a friendly relationship with the nature, to stop exploiting the nature and practice a sustainable life or to face the fate of Actaeon. So it reveals that Robinson Jeffers like any other poet uses myths and fairy tales in his works for constructing socio- cultural elements among the readers of all sorts and time.

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