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Mythopoesis: Reconstructing Subjugated Knowledges

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INTRODUCTION

MYTHOPOESIS: RECONSTRUCTING SUBJUGATED KNOWLEDGES

Mythopoesis/ mythopoeia in Hellenistic Greek meant "myth making". The word was popularized by John Ronald Reuel Tolkien, the English fantasy writer, author of the best known *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Hobbit*. In 1931 he wrote a poem, "Mythopoeia" where he calls the myth maker, "the little maker" who has his "maker's art" in him to wield his "own small golden scepter" and rule his "subcreation". An answer to C.S.Lewis's skepticism regarding mythology, the poem begins, "To one who said that myths were lies and therefore worthless, even though 'breathed through silver'"! And today we know, rather than being fantastical expressions of human imagination, mythopoesis is a strategic political tool that has permeated all fields of human knowledge – art, architecture, sculpture, music, history, philosophy, poetry, film, dance, culture and even science. These fields of study, among other things, make use of classical mythical archetypes to mould our understanding of the world. In fact, in James Macdonald's terminology the "mythopoetic" is one of the three methodologies together forming what he calls, the "hermeneutic circle"— categories to understand the world, the other two being, the "technical" and the "critical".

When mythopoesis becomes an academic and creative obligation it becomes politically empowering. The recovery of old myths and discovery of new myths that happen in its wake enrich our understanding of the present thereby enabling better perspectives for the past. Contemporary times increasingly demand such perspectives and hence the relevance of the same explains the choice of the topic for the current issue of **DIOTIMA'S**. Myths, legends, folklores, oral narratives and epics significantly mould the cultural psyche of communities worldwide. Distinctively spatio-temporal in origin, these have traversed both spatial and temporal borders, evolving in multifarious forms, yielding themselves to the demands of both space and time. Honestly open to reinterpretations by nature, these cultural artifacts today are subject to renewed political metamorphosis along the diverse points of the ideological spectrum. Keeping in view the contemporary challenges that manipulate, deconstruct and reconstruct mythology and classical narratology, this issue of Diotima's incorporates scholarly articles and research papers on the socio-political manifestations of mythopoesis in literatures, paintings and films recovering subjugated knowledges, thereby restructuring established norms and stereotypical images. Allowing space for papers from the disciplines of Law and History the issue has an interdisciplinary flavor.

The issue begins with a key-note on the topic by **Dr. Janaky Sreedharan,** a prominent member of the board of advisors for Diotima's**.** The editorial team thanks Dr. Janaky for the scholarly write-up that has demanded some of her precious hours in the midst of a busy academic schedule.

"The Myth of Gender Roles in Fairy Tales" by **Rinky Gupta** is a feminist study of classical fairy tales that seeks to understand how gender roles are manipulated and perfected into stereotypes thus conditioning the social psyche. Discussing the differences between myth and fairy tale at length, the paper proceeds to place the popular tale of "Cinderella" in a postmodern cinematic and literary framework aided by the concepts of "lesbian continuum" and "radical surgery".

Dr. Susmitha Ramakrishnan's paper, "The Goddess in Pre-modern Kerala: A Feminist Analysis of the *Theyyam* Legends" is a

scholarly article, the methodology of which follows the academic requirements of the discipline of History. Susmitha investigates into the verbal and literary traces of the *theyyam* legends in order to frame a dialogue between the past and the present. She has chosen for her analysis four *theyyam* goddesses representing four different castes in northern Kerala and the paper probes into the patterns of rituals and beliefs along with their impact on society in general and women in particular.

In **"***Wonder Woman:* A Compassionate Semi- goddess in Conflict with World War I Motives", **Neethu Maria Johnson** tries to discover how the myth of the Amazons employed as the background of the 2017 American superhero film, *Wonder Woman,* serves to bring to light the socio-political conditions of the world during the World War I. The paper discusses in detail the differences between mythology and history and touches upon the three different techniques used in the filmic adaptations of myth. Here again, the discussion winds up reiterating the significance of myths forming a part of the collective unconscious to which the human race holds on in times of trouble.

Dr. Sanil M. Neelakandan's "Critique of the Un/ known: On the Mediation of the 'Dominant' Analysis" takes for its subject the *Warli* paintings, which are the cultural expressions of the *Warli* tribe in Maharashtra. A faculty of Law, Sanil undertakes to read the political articulations on this art form to map the tensions between the "hegemonic interpreter" and the "subjugated interpreted". The paper examines the cultural capital of the indigenous community elbowed out even from the margins and in its wake critically questions the politics of knowledge in relation to the field of art.

Carl Jung's theory of universal archetypal patterns within the collective unconscious of the human race becomes **Alicia Jacob**'s

starting point for identifying allusions of Christian mythology in the movie *Charlie*. She reads the film as a mythopoetic revisiting of Christian mythology to fill the niche of the Christ figure in modern times. The differentiation between the concrete Rabbi Jesus and the constellated archetype is critically analyzed with a view to discover the self as it manifests in the primal memory.

Dr. C. Bhooma's paper, "Reconceptualizing Indian Myth in Amish Tripati's Shiva Trilogy" examines the notion of historicity evident in the said works to argue how Tripati has stretched Indian history to newer limits in his mythopoesis. Elaborating on the origins of myth, tradition, the differences between myth and logos and the uniqueness of the Puranas the paper proceeds to compare Tripati's work with the Puranas and argues that mythology is revisited to be made humanistic, historical and rational.

"The Voice of the *Lokavritta* in Mahasweta Devi's *After Kurushetra*" by **Amrutha Modcy** researches through three of the tales in the anthology to highlight how Mahasweta Devi reconstructs their own mythical domains for the subalterns. The article brings out how mythopoesis becomes academically and artistically fulfilling when epics are read from subaltern points of view.

Harsha Vincent's "*Ms Militancy:* Myth as a Counter Narrative" analyzes the use of myth as a counter narrative in Meena Kandasamy's anthology. More than 13 poems in the collection are subjected to close reading to drive home the significance of myth as a mode of signification creating new meanings in the present. The analysis serves to present the poet in her office as an activist aided by mythopoesis as an active strategy.

Anila Mohan's "Unleashing the 'Sur-real': Mythopoetic Imagination in Salman Rushdie's *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-*

eight Nights" explores Rushdie's novel to analyse the nested narration made possible in a mythical framework. Rushdie's characterisation of the mythical Jinn is critically overviewed to testify how this helps the novel politicize contemporary communal divisions. The paper concludes that the Jinn in the novel becomes a mythical archetype of the doubting self in human beings, thereby contextualizing the personal in the political.

Along with these research articles, the editorial team is happy to publish three poems in the issue – *Extant* by **Shivangi Shanker K**. and *When She Leaves* and *The Period* by **Shivshankar Rajmohan A.K.**, two budding poets with rich literary potentials.

Regards
Editor

RETELLING MYTHS

Dr. JANAKY SREEDHARAN

To begin with, I must appreciate this academic effort by *Diotima's* to bring out a special issue themed around Mythopoesis because this topic could not have been discussed at a more timely moment. Our literary markets are flooded with fictional and nonfictional rearticulations of ancient mythologies and epics which have come to be celebrated as classics, which in itself is a very contested category.

By classics , we mean generally those works of art and literature which have remained fascinating for the human imagination for such a long time, that every generation, every nation and every community go back to their favourite repositories of stories to make sense of the past, present and future.The characters, the plotlines and some of the central tropes in these stories have a tendency to become archetypes and stereotypes; but our narrative lineages are so inventive that these stories are never allowed to be fossilized. Epic situations, human crises, dramatic explosions, agonies and ecstasies have a way of relinking themselves to the lived experiences of each generation which make them perennially appealing. So, the mutilated bodies of an Ekalavya or a Shurpanakha continue to speak of a violent, gendered and casteist society.Draupadi's untied hair becomes a symbol of undying thirst for revenge/justice and the lakshamana rekha has gone beyond the *Ramayana* to speak of androcentric rules and regulations.

Even in contemporary times, whenever there is a hostile situation between India or any other country, there is an evocation of

war analogies from the *Ramayana* or the *Mahabharatha*. Kurukshethra has also come to metaphorize the inner battlefield in every human being, where the moral forces of good and evil are constantly struggling for supremacy. Needless to say, notions of good and evil are constantly shifting across space and time. We have been told from our chidhood to identify the good with the Pandavas and the evil with the Kauravas. But how many of us know about the evolution of the epic from *Jaya* to *Bharatha* to *Mahabharatha* in which journey the virtuous Kauravas got themselves transformed into the vicious, malevolent princes? Why is it that we do not know the process of Vaishnavaisation through which the whole story got inverted? The epic *Mahabharatha* becomes a mighty river constantly changing its shape according to the terrain in which it is moving. The story of the *Mahabharatha* is one of steady accretion and dynamic syncretism brought to light by probing research. These epics do not belong to a written tradition alone as there is this huge current flowing across the world in the form of orature. The epics are never the monopoly of the scholars as even the unlettered know the stories through songs, rituals, belief systems, dance dramas, ballads, theater and now through the world of cinema too. The epic narrative has been shaped and reshaped by the rivers of time — political time, historical time, ethical time etc. It is shaped by its singers and the people they sang for. Ordinary people relate to the stories on a very personal level even today.

The myths and epics form a part of the everyday experience in many Indian communities. As a living tradition they provide a daily manual for living. There were households which insisted that the girls ought not to wear their hair loose since it signified the plight of a humiliated Draupadi in the Kuru sabha—weeping, angry and not in control. Here, one can also read a larger anxiety over the figure of a militant irrepressible woman and a latent fear of a violated woman and her open sexuality.

It is interesting to reflect on the observation made by Wendy Doniger on the differences between the oriental and occidental societies in their relationship with myths and legends**.** "I don't know if anything in the Western world has that kind of currency anymore," said Wendy Doniger, a Sanskrit scholar and a professor of religion at the University of Chicago. "Maybe Adam and Eve."

She recalls an encounter in Harrods at Heathrow Airport in London, where she came across a small ceramic pillbox in the shape of Noah's ark. She mentioned this to the saleswoman, who gave her a blank stare.

"The shop girl said, 'What is Noah's ark?' " Ms. Doniger said. "In my world there are no longer stories everybody knows. In India people really know the stories."

Very often it is through the epic situations that contemporary injustice is addressed. The reknowned Malayalam poet Ulloor Parameshwara Iyer's poem "Karnabhushanam" written in the first half of the twentieth century critiques the present day caste system through an appreciation of Duryodhana in the way he honors and respects Karna knowing well that the latter comes from a lesser caste. When Drona insults a young Karna at the martial skills exhibition on the basis of his Suta caste, it is Duryodhana who upholds the nobility of the charioteer profession by these words in Ulloor's poem:

> Dik dhik ithentoru vaakkothi deshikan
> ithra meleramo chaaduvakyam
> nanmukhan innale soothanaay vaanavan
> naarayanan naale soothanaavon.
> (Fie! Fie! What has the master uttered?
>   Can anyone be so rude?
> Brahma himself was a charioteer yesterday
> And Krishna is set to be one tomorrow.) translation mine.

Another interesting literary anecdote is again from the same poet's "Chithrasala" that he wrote to counter Katherine Mayo's *Mother India* which slammed disgraceful treatment of women in India. Mahatma Gandhi called it a gutter inspector's report .There was widespread indignation and anger. Ulloor countered Mayo's critical narrative by invoking an illustrious tradition of women in the epics. In a gender bending expression, "Draupadi devi is the stage where masculinity danced its thandava dance", he tried to masculinize the resilience and energy of Draupadi .

Different philosophical and political positions have appropriated myths and legends for their own purposes and have tried to contemporize them from a current perspective. Revising myths through a feminist lens has been integral to the feminist cultural practice. But here too a word of critical caution and introspection becomes vital. Feminism has also stereotyped and in the process reduced the complexities of many a female figure. Sometimes a dangerous generalization glosses over discrete realities and multiple mediations through which womanhood is discursively constructed.

We just have to look around the book shops and we realize some of the best selling authors are Devdutt Patnaik, Kavitha Kane, Amit Tivedi, Ashok Banker, Karthika Nair, Samhita Arni, Anand Neelakanthan et al. They are precious to the literary market in India and abroad ; especially among the diasporic Indians who try to get in touch with their cultural roots through the folk tales, legends and classics told in English. Writers like Devdutt Patnaik happen to be a huge draw at literature festivals mixing adeptly management and mythology. He describes both books as "the template of Indian thought." Corporatisation of the *Mahabharatha* is a curious recent phenomenon. Gurcharan Das, a retired corporate executive, in his *The Difficulty of Being Good* also tries to make the epic relevant in management ethics. As he points out, the Hindu notion of doing the right thing is

astonishingly modern, emphasizing "the achievable, not the ideal." That kind of a blend would have been unthinkable twenty years back or so when epic narraives were associated with a hallowed tradition than a discourse of modernity. Which raises the question as to why techies and management students are being fed mythology? What are the pedagogic implications? How are they beng discussed in these highly privileged class rooms? Because there are multiple *Ramayana*s and as many *Mahabharatha*s. So which ones are we teaching? Valmiki's, Tulsi Das' or Chandrabathi's *Ramayana*? Or the *Ramayana* sung by women in villages as they go about their regular house hold chores and make some subtle hints at Sita's desire for Ravana? Leaders like Mahatma

Gandhi, Lokamanya Tilak and Annie Besant engaged with the *Bhagawad Gita* during the freedom struggle, each drawing out a different ethical position. To Subramanya Bharathi, Panchali becomes Mother India herself and the Pandavas, the men of India struggling to preserve her honour. But the myths and stories have always been retold. In our youth we discussed the regional retellings like the novels *Ini Njaan Urangatte*,the dramatic trilogy of C.Sreekanthan Nair (*Saketham,Lankalakshmi and Kanchanaseetha*). Interestingly many of the other *Ramayana*s and *Mahabharatha*s in other languages came alive through our mythological cinema which was a very significant part of our cinematic experience till television took over. We identified certain actors and actresses with certain divine or mythological figures. Sivaji's Karna is etched in the Tamil film history for ever. Also apart from the direct retellings we have films absorbing the spirit of epic conflicts. The iconic *Devasuram* is a stark case in point where the hero is a heady blend of Duryodhana and Karna and the heroine is tellingly named Bhanumathi.

Indian cinema has always had a particular affinity for the epics, legends and folklore; not only in the form of mythological cinema but

also in the mythic resonances in contemporary stories. Some of the films that immediately come to mind are *Kaliyug*, *Rajneethi*, *Ravan*, *Dalapathi* and *Agninakshathram*. Any kind of sibling rivalry over power invariably invoke the *Mahabharatha* and you don't have to be a scholar to do that.

Rewriting myths and epics is not our national obsession alone. In the west too there have been powerful renditions like *Cassandra* by Christa Wolf in the modern times, *The Penelopiad* by Margaret Atwood, *The Song of Achilles*, *Galatea* and Circe by Madeline Miller. In nonfiction the rereading of virgin Mary by Marina Warner makes a powerful cultural intervention. These retellings give a different spin to the epic in the light of new insights, current experiences and social movements.

Even as Buddhism finds a brilliant revival through black feminism and Dalit appropriations there is a resurgence of curiosity and interest in the otherwise shadowed figure of Yasodhara. We find a spectrum of positions opening up here; from depicting Yashodhara as a neglected wife, betrayed by a Siddhartha to imagining her as a co-traveller of Sidhartha as his soul mate in his journey. More than the retrieval of Yashodhara what you find in the retellings is the desire of the contemporary age where women are resisting and asserting at the same time.

These stories are infinitely familiar, you may say. What could be new in these retellings you may well ask. Then why do people still narrate these stories again and again? Because they all say it with a difference. And it is to this difference that we as research scholars need to pay attention to. Each telling arises from a context, or many contexts. There could be an immediate context of utteranace; there would be a larger culural context made possible by certain socio economic forces or interventions. Take for example, the manner in which the figure of

Shikhandi in the *Mahabharatha* is being invented and reinvented today in dance theatre and narratives. If not for the assertion of transgender rights these narratives could not have proliferated. If the research needs to be true to its name we will have to be more responsive to differences. Research is an adventure—perilous, seductive and intoxicating, for those who are daring enough. It also calls for a certain dedication, integrity and rigour.

When you revisit or reinvent a familiar story you are also rewriting your own world and the world of the story. In the stories "Thaikulam" and "Ashoka" by Sara Joseph, when she gives life to Shurpanakha she makes her speak a Malayalam heavily laden with Tamil. Politics of caste, race, language and gender intersect to unravel the many folds of Aryan imperialist patriarchy. And there is the subversive spirit behind a woman's tabooed desire.

In one way it is a happy scenario testifying once again to the infinite fertility of the epics to generate thousands of narratives, which highlights the fluidity and plurality of narrative traditions. It is a promising situation where all tellings are equally important and no single version is privileged. When epic meanings become monolithic and are narrowed to single absolute truths around some heroic figures, we realize how valuable and vital the multiple stories are because multiple stories signify multiple realities. As Chimananda Adichie so evocatively puts it, there is danger in a single story. Let there be as many stories as possible.

THE MYTH OF GENDER ROLES IN FAIRY TALES

RINKY GUPTA

Myth and fairy tale both belong to the oral tradition. They seem like stories but myth is more than a story whereas fairy tale is narrated for the amusement of a listener or reader. Bronislaw Malinowski, in his essay *Myth in Primitive Psychology*, defines myth as a "narrative resurrection of a primeval reality" that validates primitive faith, rituals, and moral wisdom helping in "expressing, enhancing and codifying" the belief systems of a community or a nation (177). He specifies that myth is not "an idle tale" but serves as a guide of "practical rules for the guidance of man" (177). Barthes interprets myth as "a second-order semiological system" (113). According to him, myth appropriates language to convey its message. He stresses that "myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by the way" it is mediated whether in oral speech or media (107). The term "fairy tale" is a literal translation of the French term, *"Contes des Fées"* which was used as a title by the French author of fairy tales, Marie-Catherine Le Jumel de Barneville, Comtesse d'Aulnoy. Fairy tale seems to necessitate "the presence of fairies" in it which may not be the case with every tale (Thompson 8). In order to better define the content in relation to an appropriate title, many critics of the genre suggest the German word, *Märchen*. Thompson defines "Märchen is a tale of some length involving a succession of motifs or episodes. It moves in an unreal world without definite locality or definite characters and is filled with the marvelous. In this never-never land humble heroes kill adversaries, succeed to kingdoms, and marry princesses" (8). J. R. R. Tolkien defines a fairy tale in his famous

essay, *On Fairy Stories*, as it does not "depend on any definition or historical account of elf or fairy, but upon the nature of Faërie: the Perilous Realm itself" that "could most nearly be translated by Magic—but it is magic of a peculiar mood and power" (4).

Bruno Bettelheim specifies the differences between myth and fairy tale in his book, *The Uses of Enchantment*. He states that myth deals with heroes or gods of the universe, for instance, the myths related to the heroes Achilles and Odysseus in Greek mythology. In a myth, the "events are grandiose, awe-inspiring, and could not possibly happen to an ordinary mortal like you or me" (33), while fairy tale features a familiar world of ordinary people as in *Red Riding Hood* or *Hansel and Gretel*. The heroes are always identified in relation to their godly lineage. We are even given specific information about their parents and even their grandparents. The characters that form a part of fairy tale are not named specifically. Even if the characters are given names, they are generic in aspect, like John in *John and the Beanstalk*. He finds myth pessimistic in nature as it often ends tragically. On the other hand, he finds "the fairy story is optimistic" as it has a happy ending or "eucatastrophe" (33).

Tolkien clarifies that the presence of Eucatastrophe does not reject the probability of dyscatastrophe – a term coined by Tolkien to refer to sorrows, failures, and defeats – but provides endless possibilities to hope for a better future, "the joy of deliverance" (22). Fairy tale allows us an escape from our everyday reality that is necessary to recover our sense of righteousness. It reminds us to see "things apart from ourselves…from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity—from possessiveness" (19). Bettelheim questions the pressure made on a child's psychological development by the heroes of a myth and declares that "Mythical heroes offer excellent images for the development of the superego, but the demands they embody are so rigorous as to

discourage the child in his fledgling strivings to achieve personality integration" (35). A child's identification with a fairy tale character helps him/herself subconsciously to deal with the childhood worries, like sibling rivalry and leads to "ego integration" (35). These differences can help us understand myth and fairy tale. However, they cannot be compartmentalized as they keep on intersecting each other's way. Fairy tale has been considered as stories for children. The history of the genre foresees that these tales were not intended for child audience.

Fairy tale is a part of folklore and oral stories are present amidst us from time immemorial. The establishment of the genre of fairy tale is accredited to the Italian writers of the novella from mid fourteenth century to late sixteenth century. The novella *The Decameron* (1349—50) by Boccaccio was an idealized work that was imitated by the first authors of fairy tale. Straparola published *Le Piacevoli Notti* (1550-53) translated as *The Pleasant Nights*/ *The Entertaining Nights*/ and *The Facetious Nights* and Giambattista Basile has written, *Lo cunto de li cunti* (*The Tale of Tales*) also known as the *Pentamerone* (*The Pentameron*). It was published posthumously in 1634–36 under the pseudonym Gian Alesio Abbattutis. He revises a few stories from Straparola's collections like Straparola's tale *Costantino Fortunato* as *Cagliuso* and *Pietro, the Foolish and the Magic Fish* as *Peruonto* in his collection. As these stories were aimed at the adult readers, they included "use of erotic and obscene riddles" (*Art of Subversion* 14) and Basile's stories are called "profane, scatological and obscene" (Teverson 49) and are acknowledged for "his relish of bodily functions with a Rabelaisian appetite" (Warner 52). Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia* is full of sexual content. Enchanted by the beauty of the sleeping princess and unable to hold his sexual desires, a passerby king rapes her in sleep. Consequently, she delivers twin babies but she is not awaken until one of the babies sucks at her finger and incidentally removes the prick from her finger. However, these stories were curbed on the segments of their sexual innuendos, rape,

defecation, bloodshed and usage of low language by the French authors, like Charles Perrault, to suit the readership of the French aristocratic class. Perrault not only stripped the sexual content of these tales but also made them didactic in nature. In his retelling of Basile's *Sun, Moon, and Talia*, he curbs its sexual content "by putting a chaplain in the princess's bedchamber to marry the newly awakened heroine and her prince" (Bottigheimer 68-69). The tale ends with the moral that it is wiser to wait for true love even if it takes too long to arrive. Other elements related to female sexuality were implicitly shown through metaphors. Grimm brothers' version of sleeping beauty, *Little Brier-Rose*, shows the revival of the princess by a kiss from the prince. The kiss can be considered as a symbol for her transition from her childhood innocence to adulthood. Another famous metaphor for menarche in the text is the princess pricking her finger on a spindle. Similarly, the process of conception and gestation is symbolized by "If only I had a child as white as snow, as red as blood, and as black as the wood" in *Little Snow-White* (pitt.edu.). These tales were reworked for the readership of the lower class. "Only after fairy tales had proven their success in the chapbook trade did the enterprising London publisher Mary Cooper and the renowned publisher of books for children John Newbery take them up for young readers" (Bottigheimer 103-104).

Gradually, these tales became a mode of indoctrination for children. But these revised collections of tales were not altered in their portrayal of gendered roles. They portray girls as a damsel-in-distress and teach them to be docile, submissive, patient, nurturer and wise in morality so that they can catch a good and nice husband for themselves whereas the boys are depicted as brave, adventurous and the forthcoming rulers of the kingdom. Thereby, the gendered roles seep down in the subconscious of the young mindsets and prepare them to be a damsel in distress waiting for the prince charming, to be saved. As a result, these roles are metamorphosized into myth. As Malinowski

states, "the reality of myth lies in its social function", the myth of gendered roles are used by the patriarchal society to propagate the message of male dominance and female submission, "to glorify certain groups, or to justify an anomalous status" (183). Zipes asserts that

> The fairy tale, which has become the mythified classical fairy tale, is indeed petrified in its restored constellation: it is a stolen and frozen cultural good, or Kulturgut as the Germans might say. What belonged to archaic societies, what belonged to pagan tribes and communities was passed down by word of mouth as a good only to be hardened into script, Christian and patriarchal (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 107).

The gender roles in the classical fairy tales and also their rendition in cinema were challenged by the contemporary feminist authors of fairy tales. They also call into question its other implications like the norm of heteronormativity and the neglect of the role of mother in the conventional tales. One such example is *Ever After*, a cinematic reworking of *Cinderella* produced by the Flower Film.

Ever After released in 1998 showcases strong female characters on two levels. The movie is in the form of narrative within a narrative. The first female character is an ageing queen who summons the Grimms brothers to her palace with a motive to intervene in the frame narrative. She is disturbed by their version of *The Little Cinder Girl* and therefore, wishes "to set the records straight". Being the marginalized class of the patriarchal society, women cannot raise their voice against the masculine authority, here represented through the Grimm brothers. In such a case, class also plays an important role as it allows one the power of being heard. The position of a queen here allows the old woman to question the authority of the Grimm brothers. It is also interesting to note that it is a woman who is not satisfied by the projection of the female characters in the tale and is eager to rectify the tale.

The projection of the protagonist, Danielle de Barbarac, as a willful agent who is intractable, strong and brave defies the image of a damsel in distress. She is not desperate to marry the prince; instead she detests him for his insolent attitude. Her presence of mind and intelligence helps her save the life of the prince from the dacoits. She becomes the civilizing agent in the relationship between her and the prince. Their meetings help him to grow from an immature prince to become a better ruler. Her insights into the matters of life help him understand the things from a commoner's point of view. "You have everything/and still the world holds no joy/ Yet you make fun of those/ who would see it for its possibilities". (script-o-rama.) She stands in contradistinction to the docile and submissive Cinderella of Perrault's tale due to the exercise of her agency within the circumscribed boundaries of the patriarchal order. While the plot of *Ever After* ends on the conventional note with a wedding, Emma Donoghue presents a homosexual relationship between her Cinderella and the fairy godmother in her story, *The Tale of the Shoe*. Rochère contends that "The heroine's transgressive desire for the female "stranger" thus enables her to radically depart from the traditional plot and explore an alternative to the pre-written script while rebelling against the socially approved attitudes propounded by the dominant discourses" (24). In contrast to Olga Broumas's Cinderella who repents her marriage with the prince and wishes to go back to her hearth, Donoghue's protagonist prefers to make a home with the old woman, "So then she took me home, or I took her home, or we were both somehow taken to the closest thing" (8). *The Tale of the Shoe* deflates the norm of heteronormativity as a patriarchal fantasy in order to proclaim the existence of homosexuality. Adrienne Rich contends the term lesbianism due to its restrictive meaning and suggests the term *lesbian continuum* in her essay, *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. She defines it as not an energy that is limited to the joy of sharing a female body. She further quotes Audre Lorde to support her argument, ""the sharing of

joy, whether physical, emotional, psychic," to deal with "resignation, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial"" in order to empower and strengthen one another (21). She is also concerned with the role of a mother in the psycho-socio development of a daughter.

The Second wave of feminist movement focuses on the issue of the mother-daughter relationship as it has been ignored in the canonical psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan. Freud mentions that "under the influence of a woman's becoming a mother herself, an identification with her own mother may be revived, against which she had striven up till the time of her marriage" (133). But this identification is negative since it is based on the "old factor of lack of a penis". For Lacan, "there's no such thing as Woman, Woman with a capital W indicating the universal" (72). Consequently, it becomes a necessity to reclaim the mother-daughter dyad for the feminist project as Adrienne Rich opines in *Of Woman Born* published in 1976. Often the mother is either absent or dead in the conventional fairy tales. In the absence of a mother figure to guide and a father who is busy in the maintenance of the kingdom, the young female protagonist of the classical fairy tales becomes a vulnerable character, a damsel in distress waiting for the prince to find her. In the case of the Sleeping Beauty, she sleeps for centuries until discovered by the prince charming. She gains sexual maturity that is implicitly mentioned through the symbol of a kiss and becomes a woman fit to become a mother. She becomes a subject of the patriarchal tradition, subjected to perform the pre-ordained roles for women. But she is denied the subjectivity of a girl child and later on that of a woman. Rich elucidates that "Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mother's; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery" (236). She indicates the problem of hazy ego boundaries between the identities of the mother and the daughter. The problem arises due to the position ordained to a woman in the patriarchal society. She is always seen/ known as the other of the man. The presence of the woman as an alter ego to man restricts her to gain subjectivity in

the symbolic order. She is reduced to her ability to procreate and thereafter, typed cast for the role of caregiver/nurturer. "Femininity fades away before maternity, is absorbed into maternity" (74). Her inefficiency to construct an identity for herself passes on to her daughter. Veronica L. Schanoes explains the role of the radical surgery in the mother-daughter dyad in her book *Fairy Tales, Myths and Psychoanalytic Theory: Feminism and Retellings the Tale*.

> The indivisibility of mother and daughter at first generates rebellion, a desire to perform what Adrienne Rich calls "radical surgery" in separating oneself completely from one's mother, then a reincarnating of the mother in the daughter, and finally a reunion based on the psychic fluidity between mother and daughter. (21)

Although radical surgery is similar to the intervention of a male figure of authority in the mother- child (male) dyad of the canonical psychoanalytic theories, it is focused principally on the mother-daughter relationship. The motif of radical surgery is used implicitly by the post modern writers of fairy tale to target the issue of gendered roles. In *Ever After*, Danielle's intervention in the life of Prince Henry allows him not only to evolve as a person but also to the status of a forthcoming ruler. He is shown as an immature prince fleeing off from a marriage of benefits. Instead of waiting to be discovered by the prince as in the conventional tale, Danielle discovers the prince and instructs him to be a ruler in communion with his republic. Donoghue targets the issue of homosexuality through the motif of radical surgery. The protagonist of the *The Tale of the Shoe* realizes her inclination towards the old woman after having met the prince and lived the conventional narrative. Although she seems to resist the pattern of the conventional tale, she undergoes the procession of the three nights to make sure where her interests lie. She sees through the artificial paradigms of the tale, "a clockwork ballerina and smiled till my face twisted" (6) and rejects the proposal of the prince. She concludes that "I had got the story all wrong" and

understands that she does not want to fit herself in to it as she throws away the emblematic shoe, "It was digging into my heel" (8). While she accepts her and proclaims her affection for the old woman, Broumas's Cinderella acknowledges the importance of her relationship with her mother and sisters after her marriage in the eponymous poem. To the contrary, many of the classical fairy tales neither show the mother-daughter relationship after the marriage of the female protagonist nor her acknowledgment of those relations as ever important to her. Cinderella realizes that she is a misnomer in "a house of men" that becomes a symbol of kingdoms ruled and inherited by men, "Apart from my sisters, estranged/from my mother" (57). She even gets nostalgic about her life before marriage, "A cold stove, a cinder-block pillow, wet/canvas shoes in my sisters', my sisters' hut" and longs to go back to it (58).

Conclusion

Cinderella is identified to "Cinderella complex", a psychological condition that corresponds to the "female fear of independence". The stereotypical docile and virtuous Cinderella awaiting a prince to be liberated from her drudgery infuriates the feminist sensibility. Thereby, they create Cinderella who is efficient both physically and intellectually as in *Ever After*. Danielle's sensibilities towards the ways of the world influence the naive prince. She directs him from an incompetent prince to an efficacious king. Donoghue creates a homosexual Cinderella to bring to the surface the intimidating norm of heteronormativity. She strives for the acceptance of homosexuality by the society through her revision while Broumas's Cinderella understands the importance of maternal relationships in her life. These tales are "anti-mythical, resist the tide of mythicization" (*Fairy Tale as Myth* 107). They not only break the moulds of gendered roles shaped by the classical tales, but also provide strong role models to guide the contemporary generation. They create female characters who do not shy away to reject the standards of patriarchal society and live a life on their own terms and conditions.

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THE GODDESS IN PRE-MODERN KERALA: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF THE *THEYYAM* LEGENDS

DR. SUSMITHA RAMAKRISHNAN

Through this paper an attempt is made to analyze the status of women in pre-modern Kerala as evident from the popular *Theyyam* cult[i]. Since the conventional sources of History like inscriptions, manuscripts etc. are silent on the status of women, there is a need to analyze other sources like myths and legends that reveal the milieu of a pre- modern age. Among the numerous Theyyam forms, the Goddess is very popular as a deity. She is worshipped as the family deity, as the guardian of the village, and also as the protector from dangerous diseases.

By investigating into the verbal and literary traces of the *Theyyam* tradition, legends, ritual performances, artistic depictions and modes of remembrance about the worship of the *Theyyam*, my intention is to create a dialogue between the past and the present and find out how this dialogue in turn constructs a portrayal of the past. The consciousness of the past and its portrayal are as much reflected in the myths and practices of the present day. Many of the ideas taken into consideration here cannot be put under a fixed chronological framework, except that they represent the social category and institutions of pre-modern Kerala. The present enquiry is aimed at an investigation of the pattern of ritual and belief along with their impact on society, in particular on women.

Methodology

The present topic does not confine itself to a small canvas, and it demands a multi-disciplinary approach. The *theyyam* cult itself is complex and varied. In order to probe into the topic, I witnessed many folk rituals and practices, and interacted with the performers. The topic enabled me to interact with many scholars not only in the field of History, but also from Folklore, Malayalam and Sanskrit. Approaches like psychoanalysis and feminist theory are applied within the general framework of cultural studies to ensure an in-depth analysis of symbols and myths.

The growth of cultural and feminist writings have developed ideology critique by seeking to explain how western Philosophy and Science have been constructed around phallocentric assumptions. Such insights can be used to analyze our own religious belief systems. The various myths associated with these Goddesses are not protests about the subordination of one gender by the other, and they do not even claim the autonomy for females. But it reveals the society of the period in which it originated. Since the tradition was transmitted orally, some transformation might have occurred in the language, but the basic idea of the legend was retained.

Theyyam myths and *thottam*[ii] songs represent a legacy in historical terms. Several similar terms and ideas recur and it indicates the nature of the authorship, and the social practices of the time. Such representations take up or discard a link between human devotional sentiments and the public realm of memory. These narratives serve the historiographical purpose because they tell the stories of the past, are interpreted and made relevant in the language of the historical present and is consumed primarily by the subaltern public. Understanding the aesthetics enables us to understand a folk epic better. Nowadays printed texts of the *tottam* songs are available.

Myths reveal that even though the Goddess was worshipped, society never permitted a woman to express herself. A normal woman lived her life and perished unnoticed, it was the aggrieved woman who was worshipped as the Goddess, and that too only after her martyrdom. Among the numerous *Theyyam* Goddesses, here I have analyzed four prominent Theyyam Goddesses whose legends reveal indigenous folk origin - the *Muchilot Bhagavathi, Makkappothi, Thottumkara Bhagavathi and the Neeliyar Bhagavath*i. Each of them was gifted in one sense or the other, but became martyrs for faults which were not their own. Another interesting fact in this regard is that each of these Goddesses represented four different castes of Northern Kerala. It was a gifted *Namboodiri*[iii] girl who became *Muchilot Bhagavathi.* The *Makkappothi* was an aristocratic *Nair*[iv] lady, the *Thottumkara Bhagavathi,* a *Thiyya* and the *Neeliyar Bhagavathi,* a *Pulaya* woman. The tragic death of each of these heroines haunts the reader for it indicates that women from all sections of society were subjected to severe control. On one hand, we find that the Goddess was worshipped, and on the other hand, we find that the women were oppressed.

Muchilot Bhagavathi

The legend goes that *Muchilot Bhagavathi* was a virgin Brahmin girl of *Perinchellor.*[v] She was a scholar in Sanskrit, and defeated most other scholars in discussions and debates. In order to challenge her, the male scholars asked her to name the greatest pleasure and the greatest pain. She replied that sexual pleasure was the greatest pleasure, and the greatest pain was labour pain. Her reply caused anger and unpleasantness among elders, and without verifying the veracity of her statements, they declared that she is not a virgin and made her an outcaste. Humiliated and disappointed the girl left the place, crying all the time and praying to lord *Raja Rajeshwara*, the presiding deity of *Thaliparamba.* She wandered and visited various temples, finally

reached *Dhayaamaranalath* temple, said her prayer to God and jumped into the fire, before the Goddess. A *vaniyan*[vi] reached there with oil. She told him to pour the oil in to the fire. Her human self transformed into superhuman soul. Thus, she proved her virtuousness. As blessed by *Dhayamarangalathu Bhagavathi* and *Karivallor Appan* she rose into Divinity and was known as eternal spinster. As a part of the performance of the *Theyyam* of the *Muchilot Bhagavathi*, there is a function known as *Thalikettal* which is obstructed, and she remains an unmarried woman forever. In contradiction, people worship her as Mother Goddess. This legend is a clear proof that men folk could not tolerate a woman scholar and devised tactics to suppress her. In the case of *Muchilot Bhagavathi,* it was the jealousy of the male scholars that led to her trial. The legend portrays that a scholarly girl, even among the *Namboodiri* community, had to face insult and was expelled from her community. Here the issue that arose was the issue of chastity.

Makkapothi

Makkam was the daughter of an aristocratic *Nair* household named *Kadavangot*. She was born as the fourteenth child of the *Unnicheri* couple, after lots of prayer. Till her birth her parents had only sons, and they feared that the matrilineal family would cease without a female heir. She was married to her cousin *Kuttinumber* and had two children *Chandu* and *Cheeru*. Her sisters-in-law were jealous of the power and influence that *Makkam* enjoyed in the family and they hatched a plot against her. When all the brothers had gone for an *ankam*[vii], *Makkam* was in seclusion. When a *vaniya* came to their house with oil for the rituals, no one was paid heed to the man. *Makkam*, who was in a state of pollution, asked the person to keep the oil inside the house and leave. The sisters-in-law who saw the man step out of the house spread the news that *Makkam* was of bad reputation and had some illicit relation with the *Vaniya*. When the brothers returned after *the*

ankam, they were furious and they decided to punish her. They declared that they would take *Makkam* and her children for a pilgrimage. When they reached a deserted spot the brothers said that they would show her a 'magic lamp' inside a well. They beheaded her and dumped her and the children in the well. Very soon calamities occurred. Their house was on fire and the brothers stabbed each other and died. Miracles occurred in the house where *Makkam* had halted during the journey and as per astrological calculations they decided to perform the *theyyam* of *Makkam* and her kids.

The story of the *Makkapothi* clearly reveals that the family cherished the birth of a daughter, because only a daughter ensured the continuance of a matrilineal line. It was the jealousy of the sisters-in-law over the dominance of the daughter that made them hatch plot against *Makkam;* and the issue they cooked up was the chastity of *Makkam.* Here we find that men folk were not always responsible for the fall of a woman. So also, the lower status of the sisters-in-law in relation to the daughter, did not prevent them from influencing the events in the family.

Thottumkara Bhagavathi

The legend goes that a *Naduvazhi* who was on a sojourn in the village, heard a woman reciting the Ramayana aloud. He enquired who it was. He was told that the woman was a Thiyya widow who had lost her seven children. The *Naduvazhi* was furious and exclaimed how a woman in such circumstances dared to sing. He demanded that the lady be brought before him. The lady had carried a handful of rice near her chest and by the time she reached the *naduvazhis'* place the rice had turned to flakes indicating the grief she carried in her heart. But the *naduvazhi* was not convinced, and ordered that she should walk carrying burning coal on her head. The lady carrying burning coal

collapsed and fell near a river. Lot of misfortunes happened at the *Naduvazhi's* household and after astronomical consultation, it was found that it was the curse of the lady and the solution was to enact the *theyyam* of the lady. This *theyyam* came to be called the *Thottumkara Bhagavathi*.

In the myth associated with the *Thottumkara Bhagavathi*, the landlord Janmi could not tolerate a widow who had lost all her children, reading the Ramayana aloud. Here we find that the society expects a widow to remain brooding, and in seclusion. This was perhaps not expected from a widower! Another reason in this connection may be that she was a person belonging to the Thiyya community, which was a backward community. Perhaps, because of this reason also, the reading of the religious text was forbidden for her!

Neeliyar Bhagavathi

The *naduvazhi* cast his eyes on a beautiful *Pulaya* girl who worked in his field. The girl however very tactfully withstood his advances. When the *naduvazhi* could not succeed, he bribed a *pulaya* lady named *Aayithira*, who spread the rumor that the girl was of bad reputation. *Neeli* was declared guilty and was murdered. But, after her death she was found a virgin. The village folk rushed to the treacherous *naduvazhi* with lighted country torches and burnt the whole village. She was later elevated to the status of a Goddess.

Thus in the *theyyams* we find the subalterns and the unfortunate women who had no voice in the society, express themselves with super human power. Thus, this area provides ample source material for feminist analysis. The recurrence of similar stories among the *theyyam* myths indicates that such incidents were very common in the then contemporary society.

The *theyyam* performances and myths reveal that these Goddesses were more than a mythical figure of the Malayali imagination.

Their forms today are the precipitates of many centuries of historical and cultural development. The paradox is that exclusively male performers portray the dramas of the Bhagavathi myths. The images of the dangerous feminine power turn out to be male constructions of femininity. Almost all folk performances on the Bhagavathi cult are enacted by men-folk mainly from the downtrodden section of the society. When the feminine becomes a metaphor for low status males, it also further displaces women. Sarah Caldwell asserts that male ritual performers while portraying the aspects of female sexual power they most fear and desire, they only master their ambivalent feelings and assert their dominance in the social sphere. The rituals rather than allowing women to express their distress and anger, model for women their own dangerousness and the need for them to continue to bind and control their bodies for the benefit of their husbands and sons.[viii]

In almost all nations, it remains true that the position of public power is overwhelmingly held by men; meanwhile, women as a group continue to work much longer hours than men, particularly within the home, and receive far less financial rewards. Added to this, fear of sexual violence restricts their life. Men always have kept in their hands all concrete powers since the earliest days of civilization. They have thought best to keep women in a state of dependence and their codes of law have been set up against her, and women have been a subordinate gender in most history that we know of, and they are still the 'second sex' in all the countries without exceptions.[ix] In this connection, we can recall the famous statement of Simon de Beauvoir that "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman".'Simone de Beauvoir in her famous book *The Second Sex* argues that psychoanalysis can establish its truths only in the historical context. Human privilege is not entirely dependent on anatomical privilege, but are dependent on the virtue of the total situation. Woman can be defined by her consciousness of her own femininity no more satisfactorily than by saying that she is a

female for she acquires this consciousness under circumstances dependent upon the society of which she is a member. Interiorizing the unconscious and the whole psychic life, the very language of psychoanalysis suggests that the drama of the individual unfolds within him. But, life is a relation to the world, and the individual defines himself by making his own choices through the world about him. We must therefore turn towards the world to find answers for the questions we are concerned with. In particular, psychoanalysis fails to explain why 'woman' is 'the other'.[x] Donaldson, a historian of women remarked that the definition 'male is a male human being, woman is a female human being' has been asymmetrically distorted and it is among the psychoanalysts in particular that man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female - whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male.[xi] There are different fields in which they are subordinated such as domestic, social, economic as well as political fields. To a feminist, the role of women in society as biologically differentiated sex helped develop patriarchy.

It was not until the development of feminist theory especially through the writings of Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, or in an earlier generation Simon De Beauvoir, that the direction of social theory began to change by bringing gender more prominently into an understanding of the social processes of classification. The issue of organic differentiation and its sociological importance gained significance. In the early 1970s, feminist students of religion, inspired in part by Mary Daly's critique of the patriarchal biases and exclusively masculine theological symbolism of Judaism and Christianity, began searching for evidences of religious tradition more sympathetic to women's needs.[xii] They soon discovered the relevance to their own work of the early–twentieth century classicist Jane Ellen Harrison who recognized her interest in the emotional rather than the intellectual aspect of the Greek religion. Harrison accepted J.J Bachofen's thesis that the first period of

human history was matriarchal, but unlike Bachofen, insisted on the superiority of matriarchy to patriarchy. The Jungian analyst Esther Harding hoped that the ancient near eastern Goddesses myths might help contemporary women move beyond identification with the traditionally feminine roles or attributes.[xiii] Marya Gimbutas whose works combines archaeology, comparative mythology and folklore, uses her sensitivity to reconstruct what the artifacts meant to their makers and users. Impressed by the enormous preponderance of female figurines found at worship sites and graves in Neolithic Europe, she concluded that despite the great variety of forms, all were aspects of one Great Goddess, worshipped not as an erotic object, but as parthenogenetic source of all life.[xiv]

More self consciously feminist scholars have tended to write more directly about the relevance of Goddess mythology to the religious and psychological needs of contemporary women. Merlinstone analyses the process whereby Goddess-centered religions in ancient near east were violently suppressed by patriarchal religion and argues for the close relation between changes in familial and socio-political organization and changes in mythology and theology. Consequently, she believes that changing contemporary patriarchal society requires remembering and recreating a non patriarchal mythology.[xv] Carol Christ's '*why women need a Goddess*?' describes what it means to women to grow up in a culture that sees the divine only in male terms and the joy of discovering an alternative. She affirms that we need the Goddess because they affirm the sacristy of the female body.[xvi] Goddess worship implies a non hierarchical vision of the relation among the divine, natural and human realms; the Sacred is viewed as immanent not transcendent; rhythm and change rather than static, harmony rather than domination and control, are the dominant values. Charlene Spretnak presents her longing for the lost oral traditions about the archaic Greek Goddesses. Her work was not intended as a discovery of prehistoric structures, but the

transmission of possibilities. Her anthology, *Politics of Women's Spirituality* makes it clear that the recovery of pre-patriarchal myths is the discovery of a history that is politically empowering. Christine Downing has explored how myths about the Greek Goddesses can help women see their own lives more richly, and how their own experience can help them enter more deeply into the myths. Rita Gross has attempted to analyze the female symbolism in the Indian myths. Wendy Doniger O' Flaherty analyses the Indian myths about gender and male–female relationships in ways that serve to challenge the western understanding of divinity.

Antiquity

Female figurines which date back to pre-historic times have been obtained from various parts of the world. In the primitive societies, the woman was not only the symbol of generation, but the actual producer of life, and the life producing and nourishing mother was the central figure of society and religion. In the early stages of human development when family life was yet to evolve, one could recognize only the mother. The role of the father in conception was not clear. Since the male played little or no part in feeding or tending the young, man knew only his mother in primitive times. The way of life of the Paleolithic people reveal that they worshipped the earth as their Mother Goddess, accompanied by elaborate rituals and sacrifices. The primitive mind should have easily recognized awfully the miraculous potency of the child producing and nurturing female or the 'motherhood'. It was indeed this identification of femininity in its exceptional capacity which consequently led to the evolution of the concept of the Mother Goddess. Thus among all religious beliefs, the first notion to appear was presumably the myth of motherhood. On human as well as cosmic levels, the primitive mind instinctively came to perceive in motherhood a power to be venerated and feared in its own right.[xvii] A step further he arrived at an abstraction of the mother principle and its further personalization

into several Goddesses-mother types. The images clearly indicate that the earliest concept of divinity was mainly related to the form of mother creating and nourishing the world.

Round the concept of motherhood, a wider symbol of sex and fertility evolved as recognizing her identity in creative manifestations of several natural phenomena, power and their functions. For example, earth, water, vegetation etc. still on a different level, as preliminary notions of femininity in terms of the diverse nature of mother's behavior were further analyzed through psychological evolution such as the producing mother, the nourishing mother, the benevolent mother, the punishing mother, the terrific mother, the killing mother, the ruling mother, the great mother and so on.[xviii] Such psychical or functional determinations prove to suggest differentiating archetypes of Mother Goddess, and came to be expressed when imputed to evolve deity images through a series of symbols of ideas, attributes and myth.

The earliest existence of Mother Goddess worship in pre-historic Kerala is clear from the representation of the Goddess in the pre-historic etchings in *Edakkal* cave that depicts a chief, and ritual dancers in festivity before a Goddess in the forest.[xix] The religious practices of Kerala unmistakably carry marks of primitive origin because the primitive mode of life is still visible in many parts of Kerala. A study of the surviving tribal religion may provide access to the understanding of the degree and extent of the prehistoric cults. Fawcet and R.C. Temple had mentioned about the *Mudiyambute Bhagavathykavu* at Edakkal mount. *Mullukkurumar,* an ancient tribe in the precents of Ambukuthimala, worship this Bhagavathy as their guardian deity for protecting them from tigers.[xx]

In addition to the references of worship of the Goddess in Sangam works, the availability of tridents and single or double edged

swords discovered from the Megalithic burial sites are proof for the existence of the worship of the Goddess during the megalithic period. Figures of Mother Goddess are reported to have been obtained from Malampuzha in Palakkad dist.[xxi]

The dominance of the mother, or the mother forming family centre in matriarchal societies, and the social and economic supremacy of the female in primitive social evolution perhaps made the Mother Goddess very dominant in most pre-modern societies. However, Eric Neumann in his psycho-analytical study of the Great Mother points out that the dominance of the archetype of the 'Great Mother' constellates the human psyche of the primordial situation in which consciousness develops only slowly. Only gradually does it emancipate itself from the dominions of the unconsciousness directing process. Further, he says that "it remains irrelevant whether the female or male group, or as we believe both, were the psychic vehicles of the archetype. The archetype of the Great Mother Goddess can take form in a patriarchal society, as conversely as that of the Father God can take form in a matriarchal society."[xxii]

The picture of the Mother Goddess portrayed in the *theyyam* myths are undoubtedly the religious symbols that the believer carries in his psyche. They are born out of man's experience, and have the capacity to speak to man of many things. Human beings attach great significance to symbolic expression in their day to day life. Even in situation such as untouchability, caste suppression, poverty and misery, men and women celebrate their life through symbolic expression revealed in mythology, folk songs and rituals. All through history, myths and symbols have inspired people, and have been dreams of paradise or a vision of a Utopia. It also reflected in their social life and institutions. No serious effort was made to correlate between women's status and the worship systems. Hence, this study assumes significance.

Conclusion

Analytical psychology speaks of the primordial images or archetype of the Great Mother, it refers not just to the image existing in space and time but to the inward image at work in the human psyche. The symbolic expression of this psychic phenomenon is to be found in the figures of the Great Goddess represented in the myths and artistic creations of man through the ages. The effect of this archetype may be followed through the whole of history, for we can demonstrate its working in the rites, myths, symbols of early men and in the dreams, fantasies and creative works, as well as the sound of the sick man of our own day.[xxiii]

Archetypes have the Jungian sense: all human beings possess similar inborn tendencies to form certain general symbols, and that these symbols manifest themselves through the unconscious mind in myths, dreams, delusions and folklore. A psychic entity can be a conscious content, that is, it can be represented, only if it has the quality of an image and is thus representable.[xxiv] As pointed out by Robert Briffault, "Although personified abstraction is foreign to primitive thought, the primal mother partakes from her very nature of an abstract character as a prototype of motherhood in general."[xxv]

The goal of feminist understanding of the society is not de-gendering or de-sexualization of the society. It is to think of differences without suppressing multiple sexualities and without demanding the conformity of gender to binary opposition and without subordinating all other differences to gendered difference. The feminist debate is about whether to claim power for the female, or to reject the idea of power or to recover power as empowerment. In the present context, power is not about an authoritative subject or power at the top, but power that is exercised flowing through our flesh and in the capillaries of our total network of social relations. Let us expect a world where patriarchy is

not internalized as the inner God and where there is an ethics of mutuality in relation to social relationships, economic and caste distinctions. Interpersonal relationships and political and religious currents of power are never value-neutral, but ethically accountable. But present day newspaper reports reveal that the condition of women has not improved even in the present. Women still continue to be harassed. Through the years the social scenario has changed quite a lot. The condition of women has also undergone transformation, but it is doubtful whether she always gets justice in reality.

i.   *Theyyam or Theyattam* is a vibrant, colorful and popular ritual dance of North Kerala. It is performed artistically according to prescribed rites and rituals, accompanied by vocal and instrument music. It has a special combination of symbols, rituals, art forms, particularly dance through which Gods and Goddesses are appeased and honored.

ii   *Thottampattu* refers to the first part of the *theyyam* performance .This is performed without any decorative costume or makeup. The performer wears a small red headdress on this occasion. The dancer in the company of the drummers recites a particular song related to the deity. The accompaniment of folk musical instruments gives a vibrant devotional atmosphere. There are about a hundred *thottam* songs which pertain to different Gods & Goddesses. These songs have a description of the myth and legend of the particular deity. They are poems of praise and appreciation of the particular deity and a dancer has to memorize these songs very well with the intonation and of course coordinate the music also.

iii.   *Namboodiris* are the Malayali Brahmins.

iv.   *Nair, Thiyya and Pulaya* are the various castes of Kerala.

v.   Perinchellur is a village in north Kerala presently known as Thaliparamba.

vi.   A sub caste of the Nair community who were basically traders.

vii.   Physical combats which were popular in Pre-Modern and Medieval Kerala.

viii. Sarah Caldwell ,*Oh Terryfying Mother,*Oxford University Press, 2001, p.189.

vix.   Serenity Young, (Ed) *Encyclopaedia of Women and World Religion.*vol.2, Macmillan reference, NY, 1999, P.705.

x.   Simon de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, I pub,1949(trans)I pub 1953,Pan books Ltd, London 1988,p.80-81

xi.   Ibid.,

xii.   Mary Daly, *Beyond God the father –towards a theory of women's liberation*, Beacon Press, Boston,1973.

xiii. Serenity Young, *Opcit.*,

xiv.   Gambutas Marya Alseikaite,*The Goddess and Gods of Old Europe 6500-3500Bc,*!974,p.74

xv.   SerinityYoung ,*Opcit.,*

xvi.   *Ibid.,*

xvii. Agrawala.P.K, *Goddess in Ancient India,* Abhinav Publications, New Delhi,1984,p.3

xviii. Ibid.,

xix.   Rajan Gurukkal,'Edakkal Rock Engraving: Morphology and Meanings', *Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences,Vol.IV,*No. I, 1997, Pp.48-49

xx.   Johny OK,*Wayanad Rekhakal*, Kozhikode,2006,p.34

xxi.   AjithKumar,'Mother Goddess cult: An Appraisal ofNew Evidences from Megalithic Urn Burials at Malampuzha',*Journal of Indian History* Vol.LXXXIV Parts1-3Dec 2005

xxii. Eric Neuman, *The Great Mother, (*trans) Ralph Manheim, Princeton University Press, Newyork,1972, pp.94-95

xxiii. Ibid.,

xxiv. Jung CG, *Spirit and Life: The structure and Dynamics of the Psyc*he, (Tr)RFC Hull, Coll.worksVol.8 NY,1960,p.322

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WONDER WOMAN: A COMPASSIONATE SEMI-GODDESS IN CONFLICT WITH WORLD WAR I MOTIVES

NEETHU MARIA JOHNSON

Greek mythology is a body of stories concerning the gods, heroes, and rituals of the ancient Greeks. Great critics like Plato, in the fourth century BCE, recognized that myths contained a considerable element of fiction. Greek mythology has subsequently influenced the art and literature of western civilization which fell heir to much of Greek culture. As noted in Wikipedia entry on Mythopoeia, according to Joseph Campbell, a famous student of world mythology, the present era is a Neitzschean world which has outlived much of the mythology of the past. He claims that new myths must be created, but he believed that present culture is changing too rapidly for society to be completely described by any such mythological framework until a later age.

Mythopoeia or Mythopoesis is a narrative genre in modern literature and film where a fictional or artificial mythology is created by the writer of prose or other types of fiction. The authors in this genre integrate traditional mythological themes and archetypes into fiction. As distinguished from fantasy worlds or fictional universes aimed at the evocation of detailed worlds with well-ordered histories, geographies and laws of nature, mythopoeia aims at imitating and including real-world mythology, specifically created to bring mythology to modern readers and to add credibility and literary depth to

fictional worlds in fantasy or science fiction books and movies. This paper aims to analyze the conflict that the protagonist faces when dropped into an all-consuming war zone.

Wonder Woman is a 2017 American superhero film based on the *DC Comics* character of the same name, distributed by Warner Bros Pictures. Directed by Patricia Jenkins with a screenplay by Allan Heinberg, the movie has the Amazon princess Diana setting out to stop World War I, believing that the conflict was started by the longtime enemy of the Amazons, Ares. The American pilot and spy Steve Trevor crash lands on their Island Themyscira and informs her about it. The Amazonian people of *DC Comics* are a fictional matriarchal society of ethnically diverse super-humans, based on the Amazons of Greek mythology. They were bestowed with the duty of guarding the Man's World and providing a bridge for humans to obtain greater understanding. They founded the nation of Themyscira, adopting isolationist policies to guard themselves against patriarchy. For centuries, the Women thrived in safety and security away from what they perceived as a hostile, male-dominated world.

The mythical Greek Semi-goddess is inseminated into a World War I scenario when the young, strong and the most human of Amazons, Princess Diana, leaves her protective nation of sisterhood renouncing her immortality to fight the forces of evil in the Man's world as the Wonder Woman. The character Diana has all the qualities of a semi-goddess, be it in terms of her strength, her archery skills or determination. She is so motivated that none of her mother's concerns restrain her from moving forth towards saving the world from Ares, the God of War. Knowing there would be no return once she leaves Themyscira, she poses a rhetorical question, "Who will I be if I stay?", proclaiming her duty

to serve mankind, ultimately persuading her mother into letting her go.

The super-hero in Diana is brought out in two different sections in the movie. The first super-hero in her is brought out when in the Island and the next, when she is in war with the German General. It is in between these two scenes that we see a full-fledged woman in Diana. The director has chosen a female guardian over a superhuman male and bestowed on her the ultimate guardianship of mankind. It is as an attempt to break the omnipresent patriarchal power structure in the society. The moment she steps out with Steve Trevor into the world she is confronted with an all-dominating male patriarchy pushing her off to the margins. It is in London that Diana gets involved in the World War I as she identifies herself with the ones fighting in the war against Ares, who were in real the Allies waging war against the Central powers. London opened before her an all new world where she found it striking to see men alone taking decisions and executing it.

This part of the movie which deals with the war scenes puts Diana in conflict with identifying her true enemies. The myth that served as the background is merged with the socio-political conditions of the world during World War I. The great war which was triggered by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria by Yugoslav nationalist Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo was soon joined by the major powers of the world. The historical background of the war provides the movie with a medium to blend into the society to portray the ill effects of war. War preparations on both sides startles Diana often making her wonder what the real reasons are. She was told by her mother that it all occurred because Ares had triggered evil in the minds of men. The

destructions around and the wailing women and children in a barren land make her so uncomfortable that she starts doubting her own determination and courage. It is these scenes that enkindle the fire of resistance in her aided by her superpowers. The Allies' decision to do nothing about the release of the mustard gas makes Diana so furious that she reprimands them for hiding away from danger like cowards. We see the woman inside Diana in full fury when she sees the futility of humans fighting for no reason. The mythical goddess, here, is turned into a compassionate human female who finds it extremely difficult to understand the norms of patriarchy.

There are holocaust images of the war including mutilated soldiers, shattered families, orphaned children, refugees and prisoners evoking in her the thought that humans were much more disastrous than what she had perceived about them. Being with Steve she believes herself to be on the virtuous side, but having realized he is with one of the fighting countries, she questions, "What kind of weapon kills innocents?". In her Island she was fighting the enemies but never was she familiar with the tantrum of killing the innocents . For her every war had a justifiable reason and it was a fight against evil but with World War I all that she could find was massive destruction and evil. The dying innocents on both sides made no sense to her. Even a semi-goddess like her couldn't understand the complex human psyche of waging futile wars. Like philosophers and poets of that time she felt wars unnecessary if it was not for the triumph of a good cause.

Dr. Poison on the German side is another prominent female figure in the film in contrast with the super-heroic Diana. Both women seem to be brave in contrasting ways, one in redeeming

the world and the other in demolishing it. Striking similarities and contrasts can be identified in connection with these female characters. Diana hails from a matriarchal society whereas Dr Poison is a prominent chemist amidst the males in power. Both of them knosw about the atrocities caused by the war, but it is Diana who chooses to fight against it while Dr Poison chooses to intensify its fierceness. Virtuousness in mythological characters, especially in the goddesses of Greek Mythology is personified by Diana who is blessed with a 'God Killer Sword' and she finally realizes to be none other than herself. She does not give any afterthought about saving humanity even though there are hardly any chances for victory.

The script writer of the film Allan Heinberg's decision to place Diana in World War I scenario is prescient because of some of the similarities between the past and the present. He felt the war appealing while breaking down the story structure for the film saying, "It was the first time we had an automated war". The industrial revolution of the 1760s aided the coming of machine guns and the invention of gas that ultimately became weapons for the war. To fight with the automated weapons Diana has in possession the gold-hued armor, breastplate and girdle. She relies on the powers of her sword, shield, and *lasso of truth* for her victory. Then the weapons of the humans like guns and bombs massacre people, killing thousands of innocents in the process, Diana's sword and powers fight only her enemies sparing the innocents.

There is a mention about the "no man's land" in the film which seems to contain in itself all the agonies of the people suffering in the world. Historical accounts from around the world provide ample descriptions of people suffering on and off the

warfront. There are indirect references to World War 1 and its fatalities. There were food and water shortages, epidemics and exploitation of all means all over the globe. Even the countries that were not directly involved in the war had to face political and economical crisis. "The no man's land" becomes significant even in the contemporary world which confronts a lot of social, cultural and political setbacks. Like Diana, the common man feels estranged from the world and perceives it to be hopeless like in an existential worldview.

Diana is in shock when she realizes that even after killing Erich Ludendorff the war does not end though it is supposed to. She then realizes the treachery of Sir Patrick Morgan who has sent them to destroy the German plans of attack and also that he is Ares in disguise. It is in the climax scene between Diana and Ares that the morality in myths is unveiled. The words of Morgan reveal how little his part is in prompting humans into the war. He says they hated each other and that his task reduced merely into heating it up. The vision that she is shown of a better earth is equivalent to that of the image of the complete erasure of human beings from the earth's surface claiming to transform it into a peaceful place like it was said to be before the creation of human species. Even though she feels tempted upon hearing about a peaceful Earth, she stands stern in her mindset to help humans.

When analyzed for feminine characteristics, she is a full-fledged female with her own emotions and psyche. Diana is also sensuous when it comes to her relationship with Steve. She completely acknowledges Steve's sacrifice for his fellow beings and takes it as an inspiration to serve the world. Her bravery, confidence, determination and compassion makes her a complete woman and

her superpowers make her a well-liked superhero. Myths from all over the world have women like Diana as superheroes and she stands strikingly different from all of them for the dashing diva that she is. Diana can be taken as a symbol of resistance against all oddities. She is a true warrior against evil and a Gallant against male dominancy. She is 'the divine feminine persona' sent forth to redeem mankind. She is generous when she spares Dr. Poison with a heart of repentance. She is empathetic unlike the self-centered destructive man. She urges the viewers to retaliate against all oppression and inequalities of all forms and kinds. It is because of all these qualities that she stands equal to all other superheroes like Thor, Spiderman and Batman.

Mythology stands at the other end of objectivity, all of it is the product of imagination, much like fiction, with no objective evidence open to rational scientific scrutiny, but dependent instead on one's beliefs and faith. It is this characteristic feature that solidifies Diana into a super heroine. It is in this backdrop that the struggle to place mythological creations on par with history or objective truth, is best understood, for any concession to the imaginary nature of mythology relegates it to an inferior status, or so it is assumed. The chief casualty of the creation of this dichotomy is the attempt to understand the nature of both history and mythology. Both of these are creations of human imagination. History however is limited to the retrieval of verifiable 'facts' and evidence from the past, which is construed as a reality, even as it varies from one school of history to another or even from one historian to another.

Mythology on the other hand, has no such limitations. It is not bound by space, chronology and evidence that are indisputable. Space and time here are entirely created in the mind, just as in

a novel, even as it bears a semblance of reality. The nature of folklore is similar. Mythology, fiction and poetry relate to a different genre of reality which could for convenience be grouped under culture of which religion is also an important segment, even as the two are not synonymous. It has been argued that myths narrate events in primordial, spiritual moments which constitute sacred time and differ from the continuous profane time of daily routines. Therefore, by narrating myths, profane time is abolished. It is this abolition of time that helped Patricia Jenkins to place Diana in the World War I scenario.

The technique of adapting myths into films are mainly of three types; namely the Ancient world films based on myth, adaptations of myth into other times and places and film itself as mythic storytelling. The challenges of bringing the more fantastic elements of myth to the screen are a strenuous task before the filmmakers, which they achieve through technical innovations. Putting a myth into new genres as that of different eras, and different settings allows for greater creative leeway.

The movie, *Wonder Woman* can be heralded as a super hero film that knows precisely how to tell a refreshing original story, establish disputes and pathos in a fantastic world and champion a powerful theme of heroism, strength and love. While analyzing the film it is also important that we look at Patricia Jenkins as a director and creative scriptwriter. She had that vision about her character Diana who is inspiring, brave and challenging. She was successful in picturing Diana as an epitome of empowerment and a role model for modern women.

The theory of collective unconscious by psychiatrist Carl Jung represent a form of the unconscious common to mankind as

a whole, originating in the inherited structure of the brain. It is distinct from the personal unconscious, which arises from the experience of the individual. According to Jung, the collective unconscious contains archetypes or universal primordial images and ideas. We can see that Diana's collective unconscious is that vital force that urges her to learn fighting from Antiope, making her realize the motive of her birth. It is that feeling about herself that urged her to action without hesitation. Myths that are formed from the collective unconscious urge us to cope with situations of war and despair. So the concept of Wonder Woman represents an element of the collective unconscious that the director uses to lighten up during times of agony and hopelessness.

As a conclusion, *Wonder Woman* as presented in the Warner Brothers productions, is not simply a comic book retelling. It is not just an action adventure flick with a female protagonist. It is a compelling, empowering and dynamic exploration of divine feminine mythology. The myth helps us to understand that violence, especially the ones against humanity and society, must never be at any cost tolerated. Compassion that motivated Diana must motivate us to thrive in strength and perseverance. Beingvulnerable cannot take us anywhere except to ruin. Superheroes of myths can, indeed, inspire people to fight the anarchy of life and power let loose upon the world. Superheroes of life must be empathetic in the first place to serve the world. As rational beings, endurance should be made the agent of motivation and in this regard the film can rightly be praised for the best paradigm in the contemporary world. Like Diana, it is high time that modern social issues like religious and cultural intolerance, immigration and political extremism is fought against. Resistance and compassion should be made weapons against these deadly social predicaments.

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CRITIQUE OF THE UN/KNOWN: ON THE MEDIATION OF THE 'DOMINANT' ANALYSIS

DR. SANIL M. NEELAKANDAN

Domination and subordination on the basis of intellect has gained momentum in the current, global debates. Interpretation exists as a power of the dominant over the subjugated. The subjugated too indulges in interpretation. However, the legitimacy of their interpretation is in question due to their social locations. This paper explores the social spaces of academic enclosures that construct the world view of *Warli* paintings from Maharashtra. In other words, it examines the politics that determines certain ways of reading that are exercised on particular forms of cultural expressions. The politics of reading culture thus becomes a method that percolates the politics of othering.

Foregrounding the reading/othering

Readings on *Warli* paintings have to be explored in the context of the reading by the non-*Warlis* on *Warli* paintings. Such an attempt is important to articulate some of the orders that are prevalent in judging certain ways of cultural articulations and communities that are indulging in organic intellectualities. It is essential to analyze the responses of those experts/people who commented on the workshops on *Warli* paintings. It will be helpful for us to examine the outsiders' point of view on the cultural expressions of the *Warli* tribe. Such accounts may sound neutral and objective in a majoritarian world where art is viewed as grandiose, aesthetic discourse. However, an analysis of such opinions

on the *Warli* paintings enables us to understand the ideology of outsiders' reading. For instance, it is argued that,

> It is interesting to note that *Warlis* do not narrate 'mythology 'or 'any great epic'. Simply, painted on mud, charcoal and cowdung-based surface with rice paste for the color white, the art forms deal with themes that narrate their social life and activities. (Sangtam 17)

The aforementioned opinion foregrounds the idea that *Warlis* do not produce 'mythology' and 'great epic' but they are 'simple' in their articulations. Thus, the commentator legitimizes the ideology that *Warlis* have to produce mythology and great epic in order to reach to the levels of cultural hegemony. The question of simplicity is invoked here to neutralize the real nature of the ideological othering of *Warli* paintings and of patronizing the indigenous communities in every respect. A certain form of hegemonic emic/etic cultural gaze structures such ways of reading. At the same time, commentators emphasize on *Warlis*' 'close association with nature'. It can be argued that these opinions are determined by the ethnocentrism on tribals in India. Nonetheless, the motifs that abound in these paintings are explicated according to the meanings attached with their life worlds. Thus, analyses of these paintings are caught in the meanings related to their social location as well as the meanings that are derived from those which exist outside their life worlds.

In order to engage with this analytical dilemma, one has to engage with the standardized readings on *Warli* paintings. It is argued that the *Caukats* (square) are essential for wedding among Warlis (Dalmia 121). It shows the marriage goddess *Palghata* at the center. The small figure around her is *Deva Kauk*. *Pankasiriya* is the god who resides inside the *Deva Kauk* (Dalmia122). Motifs of *Caukat* and mother goddess are usually prepared by women whose husbands are alive.

They are called as *Savasinis* (Dalmia 127). This particular section of women is selected to draw such figures because it incorporates 'fertile function 'of the painting (Dalmia136). In other words, it signifies the purity notion which is assigned with compulsory heterosexuality. The emphasis on the fertile function of the painting raises questions related to the communitarian ethos and oppressed status of women in their society. The internal patriarchy exists within the complicated paroles of the community. The cultural specificity of gender relations of *Warli* community has to be equated with a liberating, though gendered critique from outside their gender relations. Thus, is it possible to universalize the gendered specificity of *Savasinis*? Is it valid to equate her identity with the identity of the women who belong to other tribes, religions, castes in India? These are some of the majoritarian intellectual impositions on such forms of art that declare a distinct notional space of its own.

The relationship between construction of knowledge and the marginalizedcommunities is patronized by outsiders who do not understand the hexis of the *Warli* tribes. *Savasinis*are conceptualized as those who possess intuitive knowledge that incorporates profound expression to their paintings (Dalmia 142).Their knowledge is essentialized in every respect. It is also asserted that *Warli* paintings share 'non-static world view of the universe' (Dalmia 141). The essentialist understanding undermines the impact of the bodily hexis of the *Warl*i tribes on their paintings. According to Bourdieu, bodily hexis is the conversion of "realized…… embodied political mythology"in to a permanent disposition. Bourdieu explores the bodily hexis through the location of agents in the "field" (Bourdieu 69-70).The absence of the perspectives on bodily hexis compares with the culture of literacy. Therefore, differences on the patterns are theorized as the ways of pre-literate societal expressions (Dalmia 145).

The recovery of pre-literary involvement is elaborated within the realm of standardized language. As a result, the assertions that do not agree with the dictates of the standardized language are pushed into the periphery of language cum power. The scales that are deployed to map the nature of these paintings too revolve within the circular logic of hegemonic understanding of tribal knowledge. It is argued as a result of the links between 'consciousness' and 'material culture' that determine their ways of engagement with nature and identity formation. Diverse agrarian systems within the *Warlis* condition their self-articulations. At the same time, *Warlis* undergo a process of alienation and negation of their culture due to their appropriation into caste Hindu identities (Dalmia 176). The reality of tribals becomes unified due to its representation of trees, moon and sun (Dalmia 156). The cross legged position of goddess *Palghatta*as, Yashodara Dalmia argues, signifies the merging of aestheticism and sexuality. Therefore, the paradox emerges by identifying themselves within the cultures of literacy and Sanskritization. In what ways do the assimilation of alien culture and culture as a form of resistance develop their thinking? The dual nature of deployment of space in *Warli* paintings reflects spaces without boundaries related to nature and spaces of darkness and danger outside their habitats (Dalmia 217). The notion of space is fixed within the binaries of inside and outside which reiterates the eclectic understanding of the tribal realm and the unknown outsider. Therefore, one can argue that the pristine nature of community that is isolated from the dominant forms of governance, consequences of the ideological and oppressive state apparatus is utopian in every respect. The next section probes how the liberal nature of readings on *Warli* paintings maintains the ethnocentric facets in a skewed fashion.

Erasure of Voices?

It is important to raise the question of contemporary tribal assertions in general and the questions related to the world view of

Warli tribal art in particular. It will be interesting to position tribals not only as 'bearers of community identities' but also as 'citizens of a republic' (Hoskote 2011).Consequently, it is important to explore 'the disjunction between the aesthetic and the political' (Adajania 2004).The tension exists between the cultural museumization of tribal art and the consequential exoticization of their life world. There is a sense of anti-modernist element creeping through the *Brahminic* ethnocentrism on tribals. Thus, the world view of *Warli* tribal art exists between contemporary-oppressive tribal conditions and the cultural interpretations imposed from above. The question is whether the tribal-epistemic priority has dominance with in the field of hegemonic-Indian art or not. The production of ideas and its power has to be mapped to engage with the interpretations of *Warli* paintings and the *Warli* community. Can the interpretations of *Warli* paintings by *Warlis* exist as a dominant form of intellectual articulation?

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argued that ruling ideas are the ideas of the ruling class. Ruling class, for Marx and Engels, is the class that possesses 'ruling material force of the society' and 'ruling intellectual force' (Marx and Engels 105). They are the class who has power over the material and mental production. Those who are excluded from the mental production are subjected to the power of ruling class (105). Hence, one can argue that the *Warli* tribals who live in a highly stratified, *Brahmanic*, Indian society are oppressed due to their lower social location. So, their ideas are interpreted by their 'dominant others'. In order to understand the politics of knowledge creation one has to travel from the ideas of Marx and Engels to that of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's category of social space is essential to unravel the powers that structure certain forms of knowledge and its creators. It is the space of the agent who possesses forms of capital. Thus, the space of the agents in the social space and their space of disposition play a vital role in their classification from the others (Bourdieu, 2001: 15).

The social space of the *Warli* painters and the interpretations of those paintings by non-*Warli* scholars push us to reflect on the plural and unequal forms of capital that condition their interpretation and subjugation to the interpretations of the other. Thinking about *Warli* artists in the Bourdieuan fashion does not reduce *Warli* production to the divisive, identity politics. On the other hand, it helps us to engage with the 'capital(s)' that differentiate the interpreter and the interpreted. How does the possession of capital demarcate the social spaces of the critic and the creator of the painting?

'Symbolic' and 'Cultural' capital are Bourdieuan categories which provide critical acumen to debunk the territory of the art critic. Bourdieu theorized symbolic capital as form of capital which has a cognitive base founded on cognition and recognition (85). Thus, art critics are endowed with symbolic capital that makes them think about their function within the world of art. Cultural capital emerges through the conversion of economic potential into hegemonic cultural practices. It is the permeation of social domination through the educational and cultural competencies. It provides the domination of scholastic capabilities and potentialities to the elites in the society. These forms of capital accelerate their symbolic efficiency as critics and scholars of art. What are the factors that decide the existence of scholars? How do they attain the power to legitimize their deliberations on culture? They are the product of *skhole*or, the leisure time (Bourdieu, 1996: 88). *Skhole*is, is the leisure/force that detaches one from the economic urgencies of the world. They are detached from the immediacies of the materiality.

However, in order to understand the scholastic autonomy and authoritarian interpretation on *Warli* paintings, one has to engage with the historical re-construction of the *Warli* tribes. What are the tropes of political imaginary that mark in the historical trajectory of *Warlis*? Did any ideology liberate them from their oppression? What are the tangible

and intangible elements of power which construed their social mobility? How does ethnocentrisms emanate in the appraisal of the *Warli* paintings? The reconstructions of *Warli* history demonstrate the impact of an exclusive form of historiography. Colonialists patronized oral cultures by privileging writing over the language. They classified men and beasts on the basis of the acquisition of language. The 'others' who wrote about pre-literate people deployed the language of the preliterate people (Heredia and Dandekar 4428). And one can analyze the colonial authority that classified tribals according to their imperialistic interests.

The existential predicaments of tribals in postcolonial India too are addressed by the ruling class in a protectionist fashion. The politics of classification was enacted as an essential premise for the governance. The category 'Adivasi' meaning original inhabitants, was earlier used in the Chhotanagpur area of Bihar during 1930s. A.V.Thakkar widened this category to include original inhabitants from other regions in 1940s. Gandhians coined 'polite' terms such as *Ranipaja*, *Vanyajati* and *Girijan.* They are named as Scheduled Tribes by the Indian constitution (4428-29).

In addition to these forms of naming, scholars who worked on *Warlis* produced the image that *Warlis* live in harmony without creating conflicts with others (Pereira and Seabrook, cited in Heredia and Dandekar 4430). Policies too reproduced inequality through adopting the outsiders' point of view on the *Warlis.* Those reflections of outsiders were abounding with subordinate stereotypes. Their 'economic non-conformity' became the impediment for the exploiters of their natural resources. Thus, the alienation of *Warlis* from their life worlds converted them in to 'criminalized proletariat' (4432). The notions such as 'folk' and 'scientific ways of expression' act as products of thinking that homogenize the specificity of cultural assertions. Folk as a notion moves

beyond the traditional classification of the social systems into dominant high culture and dominated low culture and shows the mediation of internal power structures (Verma 39). Indeed, the aforementioned schemata of power provoke us to reflect on the other dimension of the *Warli* political agency against the different forms of exploitation.

Readings on *Warli* paintings are conducted as one that is detached from the emergence of *Warli* political agency. Therefore, it reproduces all forms of prior stereotypes on *Warli* tribes. It is vital to engage with the different facets of *Warli* tribal assertions. One has to re-visit their political history in order to subvert the existing, depoliticized version of outsiders' reading of *Warli* paintings. *Kisan Sabha* and Communist Party of India (CPI) mobilized *Warli* tribes during 1945-47. Leaders such as Godavari Parulekar and Shamro Parulekar played a vital role in creating revolutionary consciousness among the tribals. Significantly, these movements challenged the diverse forms of oppression that were prevalent in tribal areas. In fact, colonizers introduced new forms of policies as part of settling the tribals. Due to poor agricultural systems, tribals have to depend on money lenders. Due to the legal sanction associated with the right of alienation of land, money lenders exercise their power over tribals. They create more tenants among the tribals. This has resulted in the emergence of debtors.

The forest policy of the government drastically altered the lives of hill tribes. Deforestation affected the dependence of tribals on the forest. Commercial contractors used the labour of the tribes. For instance, Forest Act which was passed in 1878 restricted the customary rights of the tribals. The landlords and money lenders acquired the status of money lenders and timber merchants. During 1940s, most of the tribals were converted into tenants and agricultural labourers under the dictatorship of the landlord-money lenders. Thus, tribals were forced to work due to threats of eviction. Tribal women faced sexual exploitation

from the land lords. *Kisan Sabha* and the Communist Party of India fought for their wages and self-dignity (Saldanha 41-52). The commentaries on *Warli* paintings become eclectic because these could not develop the arguments based on the perspectives of the above mentioned social movements. This premise forces us to think about the dissonance between theory and practice.

The 'field' of readings exists as the ground that calculates the existence of any discourse. Bourdieu theorized 'field' as a particular form of interest. Each field conceives the rules of the game or way of execution (Bourdieu 1996: 117). It is the field of power that is founded on the diverse capitals of the agents. It is the space of play and competition that occupies individuals and institutions of different capitals. The field of readings embody the rules that structure the gaze of the outsider-critic/scholar. Therefore, they manipulate a different logic that is undisturbed by the multiple struggles of *Warli* life worlds. Those 'outsider'-scholars as well as the statusquoist insiders share a certain form of 'interest in the disinterestedness' (Bourdieu 1993: 40) related to *Warli* paintings. These acts of 'disinterestedness' persist in the dominant fantasies on the *Warli* paintings.

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DISCOVERING THE SELF: ARCHETYPAL ELEMENTS IN *CHARLIE*

ALICIA JACOB

Myth is a literary genre that acts as the foundational tale of a society. Collectively, these tales form the basis of much of world's literature, philosophy and religion, and act as a powerful document of human imagination. According to Carl Jung,

> Myths go back to the primitive storyteller and his dreams, to men moved by the stirring of their fantasies. These people were not very different from those whom later generations have called poets or philosophers. Primitive storytellers did not concern themselves with the origin of their fantasies; it was very much later that people began to wonder where a story originated. (*Man and His Symbol* 87)

It is only then that the overlap of mythological qualities began to be noticed. Recurring with endless variation from culture to culture, myths utilize a universal language which demonstrates the timeless nature and the essential imaginative unity of the human race.

Carl Jung first applied the term archetype to literature. He applied the term to what he called "primordial images," the "psychic residue" of repeated patterns of experience in our very ancient ancestors which, he maintained, survive in the collective unconscious of the human race. He recognized that there were universal patterns in all stories and mythologies regardless of culture or historical period and hypothesized

that part of the human mind contained a collective unconscious shared by all members of the human species, a sort of universal, primal memory. According to C. George Boeree, "collective unconscious is what you could call your "psychic inheritance" (5). It is the reservoir of our experiences as a species, a kind of knowledge we are all born with. And yet we can never be directly conscious of it. It influences all of our experiences and behaviors, most especially the emotional ones, but we only know about it indirectly, by looking at those influences. Grander examples are the creative experiences shared by artists and musicians all over the world and in all times, or the spiritual experiences of mystics of all religions, or the parallels in dreams, fantasies, mythologies, fairy tales, and literature (5). The contents of the collective unconscious are called archetypes. In literature the term archetype denotes narrative designs, patterns of action, character types, themes and images which recur in a wide variety of works of literature, as well as in myths, dreams and even social rituals. Such recurrent items are often claimed to be the result of elemental and universal patterns in the human psyche, whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the attentive reader because he or she shares the psychic archetypes expressed by the author.

Among other mythical tales, literature has largely drawn its sources from Christian mythology. One of the recurrent images borrowed from Christian mythology is that of a Christ figure. A Christfigure, also known as a Christ-image is a literary technique that the author uses to draw allusions between their characters and the biblical Jesus. More loosely, the Christ figure is a spiritual or prophetic character that parallels Jesus, or other spiritual or prophetic figures. In general, a character should display more than one correspondence with the story of Jesus Christ as depicted in the Bible. For instance, the character might display one or more of the following traits: performance of miracles, manifestation of divine qualities, healing others, displaying kindness and forgiveness, fighting for justice, being guided by the spirit of the

character's father, and the character's own death and resurrection. Christ figures are often martyrs, sacrificing themselves for causes larger than themselves. Some of the earlier representations of Christ images are seen in movies like Superman and E.T.

Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst who founded analytical psychology. His work has been influential not only in psychiatry but also in anthropology, archaeology, literature, philosophy and religious studies. *C*arl Jung's ideas and writings about God, religion, Christ, Christianity, and the Christian Church have been both controversial and fruitful. His approach was to take ancient "thought forms that have become historically fixed, try to melt them down again and pour them into moulds of immediate *experience*" (*Collected Works* 148).

In *Aion,* Jung addresses Christianity's central figure, *Christ,* and unpacks the meaning of Christ as a symbol of the Self. According to Jung "Christ exemplifies the archetype of the Self" (37). One of the most significant insights of Jung is the differentiation between Jesus, the historical figure from Nazareth, and the archetypal Christ, the Redeemer. This distinction between the historical and the symbolical is essential if Christian symbols are to retain their power to touch the inner depths of the modern person. The Jewish rabbi and reformer, Jesus, lived a personal, concrete and historical life. However, it was the archetypal image of a Redeemer slumbering, so to speak, in the collective unconscious, which became attached to that unique life. This powerful collective image made itself visible, so to speak, in the man Jesus, so that seeing him people glimpsed the greater personality which seeks conscious realization in each person. Jung notes that it was not the man Jesus who created the myth of the "god-man." "Other Redeemer myths existed many centuries before his birth. Jesus himself was seized by this symbolic idea, which, as St. Mark tells us, lifted him out of the narrow life of the Nazarene carpenter" (*Man and His Symbol* 89).

Briefly stated, at an early stage Jesus became the collective figure whom the unconscious of his contemporaries expected to appear and Jesus took on those projections. In this way, Jesus' life exemplifies the archetype of the Christ, or in Jung's psychological language, the Self, which is a more inclusive word for the inner image of god, the *imago Dei,* which resides in every person. Jung concludes that the archetypal symbolizations of the Christ-figure are similar to the Self which is present in each person as an unconscious image. It was the archetype of the Self in the psyche/soul which responded to the Christian message, with the result that the concrete Rabbi Jesus was rapidly assimilated by the constellated archetype. In this way, Jesus realized the idea of the Self. Jung notes that the *experience* of the Self and what the New Testament describes as the "Christ within" are synonymous (*Collected Works* 229). As an empiricist, Jung was not interested in how the two entities may be different along rational theological lines.

As noted earlier, the differentiation between Jesus and the archetypal Christ highlights the distinction between literal truth and symbolic truth, or between historical fact and myth. There are multiple implications of preserving the distinction between the historical Jesus and the archetypal/symbolic Christ, both for individuals and religious institutions and groups. For the individual, the archetypal Christ is not limited to one man, Jesus, but can be seen as the potential "greater personality" in every individual. Understood psychologically, the life of Christ represents the various phases and expressions of the Self as it undergoes incarnation in an individual ego, that is, the various stages of the process of individuation. Jung speaks of the necessity to withdraw our projections from a historical or external Christ figure (Jesus, in this case) if we are to discover experientially the "Christ within," or the Self.

Charlie is a 2015 Indian Malayalam film directed by Martin Prakkat. It is a musical love story; a simple story about two people,

Charlie played by Dulquer Salman and Tessa played by Parvathy. The story is written by Martin Prakkat along with Unni. R, which tells the story of a woman who goes in search of a mysterious artist who formerly inhabited the apartment which she has rented. After much-awaited anticipation, the movie hit the theatres on December 24, 2015. Since its release, there were various speculations and analysis about the movie and the character. Some saw the movie as a replica of a bohemian lifestyle; while some took it as the story of a free-spirited young man whereas some viewed it as a work of fiction inclined towards Sufism. This paper attempts to analyze the character of Charlie as an archetypal Christ figure. The factors which highlight Charlie, the titular character, as a Christ figure will be discussed here.

A man whose age is thirty three

When Jesus began his work, he was about thirty years old. (Luke 3:23)

The initial instance of the archetypal pattern of Christ is revealed through the newspaper handed over to Tessa by Charlie's father David. Tessa is stunned to see Charlie's picture in the obituary, against which his life period is given; (1984 -2014). However, it is later revealed that this obituary notice is merely a prank played by Charlie on his friends. Here the focus should be on his age. The number thirty three has special significance in Christianity, especially for Jesus. According to history, the crucifixion of Jesus happened at 30 A.D and is widely believed that he was 33 years of age when it happened. Written evidences tell us that he rose again from the dead and presented himself to his dear ones. Charlie too presents himself before his family and friends, and is beaten up by them; a consequence of his prank.

A man who is a rolling stone

The picture of Jesus Christ as portrayed by history is of a rolling stone, a person who never minded to have a roof above him, the one

who traveled alone if none were around, the one who traveled in companionship with those who followed him, spreading happiness and love wherever he went, like a bird of passage. Charlie is no different from this image of Jesus Christ. He is a man with no materialistic possessions. Charlie adds to the mystery by calling himself a 'genie'. He has no address of his own. Charlie is a man with an open house as well as an open heart. This is evident in the scene were Tessa finds that there is no lock on the apartment door; we also have Abuttykka and the brewer Jose who comes in unannounced and goes about their work.

A man who changes names of others

Jesus looked at him and said; "Your name is Simon son of John, but you will be called Cephas" (this is the same as Peter and means "a rock") (John 1:42)

Over the course of the Bible, Abram became Abraham, Sarai became Sarah, Jacob became Israel, Saul became Paul and so on. The name of Simon who left his fishing net upon hearing the words 'Follow Me' from Jesus was changed to Peter. During the two hours and nine minutes of the movie, it is evident to the audience that Charlie also has a similar habit. The boat owner Mathai becomes Peter; Maria, the lady who was made a woman of the streets of Mattanchery by her husband becomes Queen Mary; KallanSuni becomes D'souza. Jesus through his way of giving people a new identity, gave them a new purpose and a new destiny in life, Charlie also does likewise. Even if he encounters someone for few minutes and if he feels that the person needs a new identity, Charlie gives it.

A man who is angry

Jesus Christ has always been portrayed as a man who is calm; a man who forgives but written evidences according to the Bible portrays

Jesus as a violent man in one situation, where he cleanses the temple by driving those men out who made the temple a house of trade.

There in the Temple he found people selling cattle, sheep and pigeons, and also the money-changers sitting at their tables. So he made a whip from cords and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the cattle; he overturned the tables of the money changers and scattered their coins; and he ordered those who sold the pigeons, "Take them out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" (John 2:14-16)

Charlie who is calm and mild mostly, cannot stop himself from whipping Mary's husband, who forces his own daughter into prostitution, just like he did with his wife. He also thrashes the client. A Charlie who is happy all the time cannot be seen angry anywhere else in the movie.

A man who is a friend of sinners

When the Son of Man came, he ate and drank, and everyone said, 'Look at this man! He is a glutton and a wine drinker, a friend of tax collectors and other outcast! (Mathew 11:19)

I have not come to call respectable people, but outcasts. (Mathew 9:13)

Jesus was often found in the company of tax collectors and women of the street. This association would later turn out to be an accusation of guilt by association - one among the string of pearls of accusations used by the clergy to waylay Jesus. The accusation was true, for Jesus was friends with people whom society had defined as sinners and he never denied it. Neither did the society accept it back then nor does it now. When he holds Queen Mary to his bosom, Charlie also, is in no way different. He takes her to the middle of the sea on Mathai's (Peter) boat to show her the paradise which she thought she would never see. He calls her Mariam when she kneels down on the

boat to pray. While Charlie addresses Queen Mary as Mariam of Magdalena, Peter asks him, 'Who are you if she is Mariam? Jesus Christ? And the reply from Charlie is laughter for he knows that he is not Jesus. He cannot be. But he has the same understanding which Jesus had.

A man who has love in abundance

Above everything, love one another earnestly, because love covers over a multitude of sins. (Peter 4:8)

For Jesus, love was the measure of all things, for it covered a multitude of things. He found patience and kindness in love, neither did it make him boast nor proud. Love according to him never keeps a record of wrongs. It protects, trusts, hopes and always perseveres and most importantly love never fails. Same is the case with Charlie. There is love in abundance with Charlie for all irrespective of age. The script-writers, through Charlie are asking humanity to rise above caste, colour, creed and religion like Jesus did.

A man who gives rebirth

Then Jesus six days before the Passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, which had been dead, whom He raised from the dead. (John 12:1)

Charlie comes into the life of Kani from above (the scene where Charlie and KallanSuni are at Kani's house), while the noose around her neck was getting stiff. When Jesus reaches Bethany, Mary and her sister Martha were weeping at the loss of Lazarus, their brother. He was brought back to life by Jesus. When the wind is blowing strong against Mary, Martha, Kani or you, when trials come, when the sky grows darker and courage turns to fear, it is the presence of characters like Jesus or Charlie that keeps people on their knees.

A man who is a zephyr

The wind blows wherever it wishes. You hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it is going. It is like that with everyone who is born of the Spirit. (John 3:8)

The epithet used by the writer of the movie is wind. The writer through another character tells the audience that Charlie comes and goes like the wind, a wind that reinvigorates those people which it touches; a zephyr. What better simile can be used to define his character? The same simile can be found in the Bible which is used to define the nature of Jesus as a wind which blows wherever it pleases and you never know where its origin and end but when it comes you will experience it for it is the breeze that reinvigorates.

The character of Tessa is a representative of you, me and the whole of humanity. Tessa represents every Christian who is engaged in a constant search of God. The God that they are familiar with is the image presented in the chapters of the Bible. She doesn't know Charlie directly. Neither has she met him nor does she know where he is. All she knows about Charlie is either through the book of his drawings and the stories which she has heard from others. The stories which she has heard about Charlie make her curious and attracted towards the character. Thus she sets herself on a path to meet him. As her travels progresses, she happens to hear more stories about Charlie which connects her to Charlie in a way which cannot be defined by mere words. But as she tries to get closer to him and makes sure that she has got a hold of him, he slips away farther, indirectly telling her that there is more depth to him than what she has understood. Their union represents the ultimate union of man with God.

The story of Jesus Christ, which happened 2000 years ago, is still a mystery. Whether he is a God, man or a myth, mankind has not understood the essence of Jesus in its true sense. The more we try to understand the essence of Jesus, deeper will we find ourselves, for it is beyond institutionalized definitions. For some it even becomes a conundrum. Thus he takes the form of a guru, a revolutionary, a mystic or as a God in the mind of the pursuer. In this context Charlie can be analyzed as a person projecting the Christ image. But to what extend? He clearly doesn't reach the perfection of Jesus. Not everything that Charlie does has a positive outcome, although his intentions are good. The movie tries to question the idea of Christ. If Christ remains outside us, either as an example of an ideal or as an external object of worship only, the deeper levels of the soul are never engaged. The movie calls on the viewers to discover the Christ or the Self within them for the greater good of humanity.

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RECONCEPTUALISING INDIAN MYTH IN AMISH TRIPATI'S SHIVA TRILOGY

DR.C.BHOOMA

Introduction

Myth is a traditional story from the prehistoric civilization of any culture or it may even explain a natural or social phenomenon. The word 'myth' inhabits a twilight zone between literature, philosophy and anthropology. It means both a supremely significant foundational story and a falsehood. Sometimes it involves supernatural beings or events. By 'tradition', we mean a belief system or behavioral pattern passed down within a group or society with symbolic encoding with roots in the past. A myth is neither completely true nor completely false. A good myth is one that artfully represents human experience. Yet no myth can completely represent all of human experience because human experience is so multidimensional and varied. "At best, a myth captures some important aspects of the domain of human experience it is meant to represent, just like a map, which captures only important features of the terrain, not every detail of the terrain it represents" (Johnson).

The word "tradition" has its root in the Latin word "tradere" which means "to transmit", "to handover", "to give for safekeeping". Myth is always the story of Gods. In Greek, it is termed as "mythos". Ancient Greek philosophers knew myth as mythos. They distinguished mythos from logos: from mythos came intuitive narrations, from logos reasonable deliberations (Pattanaik). When myth is an idea, mythology is a

transforming agent of the codes, symbols and metaphors pertaining to a particular culture; only through mythology does myth become a tangible entity. But in Sanskrit "mithya" means "a lie", hence none of the narratives pertaining to Indian prehistoric traditions comes under this canopy known as myth. In Indian tradition it is otherwise termed as "Purana". It is any of a class of Sanskrit writings, recounting the birth and deeds of Gods and the creation, destruction or recreation of the universe. Etymologically it means "ancient" or "old". They are encyclopedic texts that cover various topics such as cosmology, cosmogony, folktales, pilgrimages, minerology, genealogies of gods, goddess, kings, heroes, sages and demigods. Puranas are dateless, their origin is not finite, Puranas or Vedas are acquired and passed over by listing in Indian culture, which is termed as Shraavana (to listen). Puranas are the body of Hindu texts containing myths, legends, and ritual instructions through sheer listing it has been travelling across centuries. They are by nature didactic.

There are eighteen Puranas. The avowed purpose of studying Puranas according to the sages is the righteous and balanced effort to achieve the prescribed worthwhile goals of humanhood. Amish's Shiva trilogy is based on Shiva Purana, Linga Purana and Skanda Purana which glorifies Lord Shiva. He makes an effort to reconceptualize the concept of myth in terms of pragmatic and existential perspective, but in this process, he never derogates popular sentiments and beliefs. His characters at no point of time perform miracles and vanish into thin air as it happens in fantastic narratives. This study will analyze and compare Amish's work with the Puranas and state how far he has revisited the aspect of mythology in the current scenario.

Puranic Perspective

Puranas are Post-Vedic in nature, since they are word to mouth narratives, carrying varied perspectives according to the skill of the narratives. Shiva Purana, Linga Purana and Skanda Purana have Lord

Shiva as the central figure. The glory of Shiva is sung all through these descriptions, to stir interest and promote devotion. Elements of the super natural were added to the text. In Shiva Purana, the Rudra compendium, the episodes of Shiva and sati take place. This is where Shiva meets Sati, daughter of Daksha, and they both fall in love. Against the wish of her father, Sati marries him. When Shiva is denied his share during a yagna Sati, who fights for it, kills herself. Shiva in wrath destroys everything that comes in his way. Shiva, the protector of good, and destroyer of evil restores equilibrium. Daksha Prajapati, the father-in-law of Shiva, is a selfish, underplaying weakling who disobeys normal rules and breaks all conventional behaviors. Sati represents feminine energy as the consort of Shiva, who equally reinstates balance and terminates evil. Such primordial images are unique to every culture. These narratives carry sociological, psychological and realistic perspectives, nevertheless perceptual problems increase the dimension of such accounts. Each of such stories is loaded with enormous symbolism.

Amish's Reconceptualization :

This will be analyzed on various perspectives namely:

- Thematic
- Characteristic
- Geographical
- Psychological

Thematic Reconceptualization

Theme becomes the strength of any narration. In mythological writing the process of reconceptualization should not spoil the spirit of the existing narratives. Amish has rather handled it prudently, giving a different dimension and creating a plausible comprehension. The purpose of the hero's visit is to destroy the manifested evil. Where is it that the quest begins? Is it personified or symbolic? Is it metaphorical? Irrespective of the status it occupies, it is manufactured by man: his greed, lust, incompetence, timidity become the cause of all evils that surround him. To achieve the above he adopts means such as deceit, manipulation etc. Hence the evil imminent is the by-product of human action and is supposed to be the greatest enemy that has to be defeated.

The greatest evil of all is the "Somras", the preparation of which endangers humans at large. This aspect is dealt with in greater detail without spoiling the historicity of the narrative. The slow extinction of the river Saraswathi is also symbolic: Saraswathi is not only a perineal and life-giving fertile river, it is also the greater source of knowledge, whose knowledge is manipulated and exploited indiscreetly. A river's extinction is a great threat to any civilization. Amish amalgamates the present predicaments with those described in mythology. Mythology ever remains a teacher which teaches worthwhile lessons but it is very often misinterpreted and misconceived by the humans. The War techniques employed by the armies and the struggle to re-establish the lost glory have a contemporary dimension in Amish's narrative technique. The constant clash between the Suryavansis and the Chandravansis is a recurring motif throughout out the fiction. The former represents the male and the latter represents female, thus conceptualizing it as a struggle of the matriarch to survive in the patriarchal society. When Devagiri becomes the ideal capital, Ayodya is depicted as a chaotic whole. While one follows and lives by higher ideals driven by rules laid by Lord Ram who chose to live as a Suryavansi, the other has a practical sympathetic outlook where Ram actually belongs. Though disordered and unorganized, the Ayodyans live a happy life, their aesthetic customs would be proof of their living. Amish's existentialism is evident in his descriptions of the way of life lived by those people. The author here reconstructs the philosophy of living free and showing more benevolence

even at adversaries encountered, which is missing in the methodical Meluhans.

Character Reconceptualization

Shiva takes a newer dimension in Amish's fiction. Not only Shiva but also every other character which have been read or heard takes a laudable center stage in the fiction. As anthropology gives new life to the study of ancient religions and myths, with comparative study, researchers are able to recognize unsolved puzzles of ancient religions and their relationship with traditional social structure. The description portrays Shiva himself as a pragmatist who trusts more on human perseverance. Unlike other mythological heroes, Amish's hero is sans miracles. His steadfastness in abolishing the vikarma practice, which makes people live as an outcast in their own land, exhibits Amish's conscious deliberations about society and the role it plays in shaping human existence. Amish portrays Shiva as more of a common, simple, down to earth personality— a graceful dancer, passionate lover, dutiful husband, caring father, above all a savior of mankind who never does anything supernatural. The Neelkanth (blue throat) is symbolic of the fact that he will withhold evil and save his people. He is a trustworthy friend who wishes to take revenge, but when reality unfolds itself, he consumes it with gentlemanly ease. In the Puranas, Shiva is known as the destroyer of evil. Amish's Shiva too destroys evil and maintains equilibrium in the universe. Sati, the consort of Shiva, princess of Meluha, and daughter of Daksha, depicts the women of ancient Indian civilization. The courage manifested is unveiled on various junctures and it strengthens the female characters alongside Sati. Women of Amish are not whimsical. They shoulder accountability beside men in every endeavour. Encountering adversity is the hallmark of Amish's women. Though a minor character, the chief minister of Meluha, lays down her life in saving her nation and her credibility. None of the characters have

lost their real identity in the process of recreation. Deformed Nagas as ,specimens of social stigmas are yet another notable contribution of Amish's fiction. Though treated as a disgrace, they guard a secret of the most dreadful kind, and fight in the battle with valour. The treatment of these Nagas in his fiction converts the notion of mythology to be more humanistic and rational.

Geographical reconceptualization

Mountains, rivers, and cities get a newer distinction in Amish's fiction. Meluha, the former Kashmir, has been depicted as an ideal kingdom with all civic requirements, a model kingdom by itself, with state-of-the-art and enhanced medical facilities. The rivers Saraswathi, Ganga, and Yamuna remain as symbols of knowledge, compassion and amalgamation respectively. Landscapes and human emotions are bundled up and the geographical entities describe the nature and predicament of its people. While Banaras stands for her divinity and peace loving, Branga region displays valour and absolute strength, Devagiri stands for its steadfastness and Ayodya for its freedom and open-mindedness. Thus, Amish in every sense blends the past with the present and gives the readers a future perspective. Description of Jam Shed (now Jamshedpur) which traces back to another civilization also reaffirms the fact and logically establishes a rationality behind every geographical portrayal. River and seafaring techniques and the marvelous combating practices take the narration far away from the mythical frameworks.

Psychological reconceptualization

According to the Vedas, the human psyche was never separated from the physical self, and consciousness was absolutely blended with one's actions. Retribution and reconciliation were inner battles fought by every human self. In the inner battle, one elevates oneself to the

level of the divine when one forgets and forgives. Godliness isn't a manufactured commodity; it is actualized by every individual. The wonder is the characteristic efficacy to be touched and inspired by deep creative centers that dwell in the smallest nursery fairy tale, as the flavour of the ocean is contained in a droplet or the whole mystery of life within the egg of a flea. "For the symbols of mythology are not manufactured; they cannot be ordered, invented, or permanently suppressed. They are spontaneous productions of the psyche, and each bears within it, undamaged, the germ power of its source" (Campbell). Amish's symbolism of the blue throat and the third eye are psychological attributes, which represents accountability and wisdom. The unconscious mind records the primordial remains which instigates the human to perform what he or she are destined to do. Mythology is a vehicle which transforms all these emotional conflicts and guilts into a concept. The formless becomes a formula, a rather didactic lesson for the peaceful establishment of the universe. Shiva, driven by the inner guilt of his childhood nightmare, pushed by his conscience, emerges as a harbinger of change, a destroyer of evil, and becomes a people's man. Adulation is not because of his godliness but for being so human. Amish skillfully unmasks the inner psyche of his characters. A newer and practical outlook is achieved.

Conclusion

Amish's attempt to reconceptualize Indian myth fetches a far-reaching perspective and reconstructs the notion of fantasy or mythical narratives. Religion at the outset remains as the strength of any civilization; an attempt to deviate from the rationale behind it would destroy the central core of existence. This is common for every religion of the world. Mythological narratives, though exaggerated, leave a lasting impression at the unconscious level, preventing humans from indulging in behaviours that the society does not warrant. Authors who attempt to

reconstruct or revisit mythology create newer portals for the reader to venture into and emerge with better rational explanations. Amish has reconceptualized Indian myth in a more realistic manner and from an existential standpoint.

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THE VOICE OF THE *LOKAVRITTA* IN MAHASWETA DEVI'S *AFTER KURUSHETRA*

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Myths and epics are known to reflect the culture and ideologies of a nation. These "universal and timeless stories" of mythology "reflect and shape" the lives of people as these were considered a reality and a means of living by the primitive society (Armstrong xi). Myths are known to deal with the culture of a particular society and with their "flexibility, adaptability and resilience" they have helped writers throughout the ages to "transpose and transplant" these stories with new interpretations (Dorairaj 9). The society undergoes changes in the course of time which leads to a new understanding of the early myths by "transfiguring" it through the question "What if?" (Armstrong 7).

In India, epics and myths are considered as an integral part of the cultural ethos of the nation. These myths have been the recurrent vehicle for spreading social, political and spiritual messages to the people which led to generating multiple narratives and perspectives. Through this trend of transforming ancient narratives through the development of various postmodern theories the writers aimed at recovering the silenced voices in the grand narratives.

Mahasweta Devi is one such writer whose works are found to aim at lending space and voice to the subalterns or the silenced members of the grand narratives and thus recovering their marginalized and suppressed voices. "Mahasweta Devi", writes Nandini Sen, "belongs

to that small number of writers and social activists who have chronicled the oppression to which adivasi populations and other "untouchable castes" have been subjected: the insufferable living conditions ,caste bias , denial of benefits of education and scarce employment opportunities" (Sen 12) .

In her work *After Kurukshetra*, a collection of three stories, she presents a few events of the epic through the eyes of women, both royal and underprivileged, which provides alternative narratives that question the dominant discourses of the *Mahabharata*. Along with providing voice to the silenced, Mahasweta Devi assigns to them a dignified status within the society. As the narrative shift takes place from the rajavritta to the lokavritta the subaltern women are found to be more determined as they "chart out their own paths of self-realization" than the women of the palace, who are helpless victims of social orders (Sen 15). This asserts the idea that by focusing on the subalterns, Mahasweta Devi is fighting against the dominating "Puranic history of India" (Gupta 68). By articulating the silenced stories of the lokavritta through narrative episodes, Mahasweta Devi subverts the existing discriminations and thereby encourages the subalterns to free themselves from the margins.

The Mahabharata epic is a vital component of Hindu Mythology, where the war of Kurukshetra is the centre of all actions. Similar to all grand narratives, the narrations of *The Mahabharata* are focused on the narrative of the privileged class and have left out the voices of under privileged. Through the book *After Kurukshetra* Mahasweta Devi reflects and examines the aftermath of this war by bringing forth the silenced voices of the epic. Even from the earlier times, the marginalization and discriminations of the subalterns were taken to advantage by patriarchy to exploit and torture the female body. So in an attempt to bring forth the silenced voices of the epic, Devi gave narrative voices to three

subaltern women who represent the subaltern psyche and the inborn contravene between the lokavritta and the rajavritta.

Dalit studies aim at initiating a new understanding of the marginalized members of society. These new changes and shifts that took place in the society later helped in the new readings of old texts and new understanding of the oppressed. Even when the community of the subalterns as a whole remained oppressed, the women remained further marginalized not only on the basis of their caste but also on that of gender. They are doubly oppressed as they face oppression from patriarchal society and the elite women of the society i.e. both androcentric and gynocentric modes of oppression. The three women who are bestowed with the duty of narration are oppressed due to their position in the society as the janavritta who are prohibited from crossing the line of the rajavritta. Mahasweta Devi blurs the margin between the janavritta and the rajavritta in order to question the pitfalls of the dharma-yuddha that neglected the dharma towards all humankind.

Mahasweta Devi begins the collection with the story "The Five Women" where she depicts the truth the five women face on entering the royal palace to empathize with Uttara, the widow of Abhimanyu. In this story Devi does not attempt at a glorification of war but instead depicts the desolation and brutality of war, the women's quarter of the royal household suffering the loss of their men folk. She presents most importantly what the war signifies to the common people. The five women "are from the families of the hundreds of foot soldiers who were issued no armor. So they died in large numbers" (1). These five women and Uttara are found to undergo the similar trauma of losing their husbands. Widowhood is considered as the most tragic and tormenting state in the life of a woman and this feeling is never found different among the elite and the poor. The five women who are called by the rajavritta to console Uttara too are facing the same dilemma in their lives but the

royal household seems to be ignorant of the human feelings of the subaltern.

The conversation between the royal princess Uttara and the five women portrays how the woman of the elite group is more traumatized by the harsh realities of life than the women from the deprived class who face the traumas of life with strong determination. During their duty of consoling Uttara, they taught her a truth that all those who had perished in the "holy war of Kurukshetra" are not destined to go to *divyalok,* or heaven. "No chariots came down from *divyalok* . They did not go to heaven. The foot soldiers died fighting in the very same dharma-yuddha. But no funeral rites were held for their souls" (16).

Through the bond that develops between Uttara and the five women Devi depicts the human relationship that developed beyond the boundaries drawn by society thereby merging the different worlds. The guidance and thoughts of the five women not only question the realities of the marginalized who took part in the war but also hint to the women of the royal household to re-think about their positions.

Within the unknown spacial boundaries of the rajavritta, the lokavritta is found to strongly hold on to their views not controlled by the elite. Being members of the lokavritta, they are found to have an unfettered attitude towards the trauma of widowhood and are strong unlike the royal women. Throughout their time at the palace these five women are found to be engaged in works like making dolls, fetching grass and vine and weaving baskets, mats and ropes. Their lively talks and use of language makes Uttara long for the world that they represent which is in opposition to the world royalty inhabits. Their unaffected nature helps them to develop a power over the princess and thus take care of Uttara's health.

As these five women belong to the janavritta they are indifferent to the practices of the rajavritta. They strongly question the great war of good against evil which the epic has its base on and depict Kuruksheta as just a power game that resulted in many people losing their lives. They view the dharmayudha as an inhumane act carried out by the rajavritta and they raise their voice to protest against it as "This, a holy war?! A righteous war? Just call it a war of greed" (3). As observed by Nivedita Sen and Nikhil Yadav,

> Its focal story looks at the post-war scenario in the Mahabharata, conferring identity and voice to its womenfolk, salvaging subtexts about them that have gone unwritten, unheard and uncared for. The female protagonists penetrate the patri-centered narrative, critiquing its valorization of war and bellicosity. The Chandal women's counter narrative debunks the heroism of the Pandavas and condemns the fratricidal war that menacingly claimed the lives of their husbands. (29)

While the epic marginalizes the experiences of the subaltern classes, Mahasweta Devi focuses on the discriminated members and gives the women a superior role of narrating their grief and views on the great war the royal family had fought. By shifting the narrative rights to the women from discriminated sections of the society, Devi portrays their greater grief that their men were issued no protective armour and hence died in thousands everyday while trying to protect the rajavritta who were seated on the chariots. Thus for them, Kurukshetra is only a "savage war…a sin" (22). Thus for the women from the lokavritta, the war symbolized "death, devastation and ruin" (Gupta 70). As they leave the royal household, the binary between the women of the lokavritta and the rajavritta is subverted "as the women leave behind the white clad widows of the ruling class …to bring to life the earth ravaged by the destruction of the dharmayudha" (Lucas 97). Thus while royal women

are devastated by the trauma of war, the lokavritta women record their rebellion against everything the war stood for.

The encounter between the royal queen and the untouchable Nishadin in "Kunti and the Nishadin," is a moral conflict that reflects the torture of the elite on the poor. The Nishadins are the most marginalized members of the society but when Kunti confronts the old Nishadin woman, she is broken as she is reminded of "her greatest crime" (130). The Nishadin is a grieving mother, who has lost her five children in the fire at the House of Lac, an episode from *The Mahabharta*. She and her five children die in order that Kunti and the Pandavas could live. Kunti is considered a "sinner" because "to sacrifice or harm innocents in one's own self-interest is the most unpardonable sin" (131). The subaltern is given the power to punish Kunti "for her heinous crime against the low caste tribals" (Gupta 70).The untouchable Nishadin brings Kunti to a tormented recognition of her crimes, that of abandoning Karna and murdering six innocent tribals. The Nishadin's final judgment shatters Kunti as even a customary apology cannot tell off her sins, "You couldn t even remember this sin. Causing six innocent forest tribals to be burnt to death to serve your own interests. In our eyes, by the laws of Mother Nature, you, your sons, your allies, are all held guilty" (Devi 38).

The Nishadin refers to Kunti by her name which is the direct subversion of the codes of action according to the hierarchy in the society and questions her actions without fear, "Drunk on so much wine, that Nishadin mother and her five sons lay there senseless. You knew this, yet you escaped through your secret tunnel, didn't you?" (42). As the epics depict the narration on the basis of the cultural codes of action where the ways of forest are to be restricted, Mahasweta Devi uses the forest space to empower the marginalized narrator. The royal queen Kunti is found to be scared not just because of the Nishadin's questions on her deed but also by the use of the rajavrittta language by the

lokavritta. This mastering of the rajavritta language shows the empowered image of Nishadin who is determined to gain answers for all the brutal deeds the royal folk carried out on them. This is also symbolic of the ignorant behavior of the rajavritta who fails to accept or understand the lokavritta. This empowered narrator shatters the grandeur of the royal queen and exposes her fear and weakness. Vandana Gupta notes that the "natural space of the forest gives the subaltern power and agency to rip apart her guise of grandeur and hold Kunti accountable for her heinous crime against the low caste tribals" (Gupta 70).

The story is aimed not only at questioning Kunti on her deeds but also a declaration of the lokavritta's power over the rajavritta in terms of humanity as they had never stooped down to injustice for self interests. The lokavritta are found to respect the life of others and condemns Kunti for her act of taking away lives of innocent people as "In our eyes, by the laws of Mother Nature, you, your sons, your allies, are all held guilty" and leaves Kunti with a note of warning (43).While the original versions of the epics are found to suppress the voices of the subalterns, Mahasweta Devi looks upon the forest fire as Nature taking up a stand for the Nishadins against their oppressors and to punish them for their deeds. Thus Mahasweta Devi is found to invent and reinterpret "the popular history to empower the subaltern with their own symbolic mythical domain" (Gupta 73).

The third story focuses on "Souvali" a dasi of the royal household who bore the child of King Dhritarashtra but was not accepted within his domestic premises nor his son Souvalya was accepted in the race for the next King due to the social positions. Mahasweta Devi portrays the character of Souvali as one who rejects the position of dasi granted to her by the King. Her strong refusal to follow the rites of widowhood showcases her anger against the one who fathered her son but deprived them of any rights like any other dasi of the royal household. She argues "I am just a *dasi*. Was I his wedded wife, that I should undergo the death rites?" (Devi 53). The protagonist's voice projects her strong rejection of the dasi system of the rajavritta where the dasis were treated as meager objects for sexual pleasures by the rajavritta.

Though her son was denied all princely status ironically it was Souvalya who did the last rites for Dhritarashtra. Through Sauvalya's act of carrying out the Tarpana Devi has merged the boundaries of the lokavritta and the rajavritta, thereby downplaying the social superiority of the royal king. Thus Devi grants not only voice to the subaltern but also a privileged position equal to the elite group. The conversation between the mother and son reveals that Souvalya's identity as the dasi putra was a blessing as it resulted in the mother- son bond they celebrate. Through this pair of mother and son, Devi questions the rajavritta system of the male children being taken care of by the dasi's, thus denying the mother the right to shower her affection on her child.

Souvali's decision to break free from the relations of the rajavritta and the rejection of her son's name Yuyutsu given by the elite displays the strong will and determination of the maternal power. Being free from every limitation forced upon the royal household, she follows the will of her own psyche. She boldly declares "I'll feast…I'll sleep peacefully…In the royal household the other *dasis* would be roaming around in white widow's clothing, eating only the prescribed meagre fare… I left that place of my own free will. Today too I'll let my own dharma tell me what's right" (53). Souvali's social position which led to her and Souvalya's rejection by the rajavritta helped her evolve to a position to formulate her own rules to grant herself the peace and comfort unlike the royal counterparts who continues to pine away in misery. Thus Devi raises the marginalized women to a position of the driving force for the

royal women who teach them the truth of existence, "I was nothing but a *dasi* in the royal household but here, amongst the common people, I'm a free woman" (49).

These stories by Mahasweta Devi have focused on providing a new and varied outlook onto the ways of the rajavritta and thereby break-free from the margins of the grand narrative of the epic by Vyasa. In order to bring forth a social change, it is necessary to instigate a collective consciousness among the people as the societies from the earlier times have based their consciousness on the paradigm of the privileged. Through the narration of the untold stories of the unknown heroes of the epic, the readers are compelled to listen to the vulnerable condition of the lokavritta who were ignored by the grand narratives. Thus the stories ignite a fire in the readers to focus on the forbidden untold boundaries of the epic. By recovering the lost voices of the women from the marginal existence, Devi subverts the norms of the rajavritta and the lokavritta that silenced them into the margins. The narratives of the subaltern wipe out the grand narratives "of colonialism, patriarchy, monarchy, dogma and class division. It presents a multiplicity of discourses whereby marginality and perpetrated otherness are sources of energy and potential change" (Lucas 101). By the subversion of norms between the lokavritta and the rajavritta, Devi subverts the system and norms glorified through the epic.

Thus the weakness becomes their strength, the bane transforms into boon. By so disallowing the royal characters to overwhelm the underclass women with their power and grandeur and instead by making the hitherto silent presences to constantly undermine their authority, Mahasweta Devi inverts the whole system of signification the brahmanical narrative of the epic is premised upon.

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MS MILITANCY: MYTH AS A COUNTER NARRATIVE

HARSHA VINCENT

"My language is dark and dangerous and desperate in its eagerness to slaughter your myths"- MeenaKandasamy

The paper makes an attempt to reread *Ms Militancy* (2010)*,* a poetic collection by Meena Kandasamy in the light of myth as a counter narrative. The aim is to understand how myth is used as a counter narrative by Kandasamy. *Ms Militancy* is characterised by the use of myths. A myth is a traditional story, especially one concerning the early history of people or explaining a natural or social phenomenon, and typically involving supernatural beings or events. Roland Barthes, in his work *Mythologies* (1957) clearly defines the role of myth today. According to him, myth is a type of speech. It is a system of communication (10). Thus a myth is a mode of signification used to create certain meanings in society. For Barthes myths are part of a semiologic system and the speech of a mythologist is a meta language. Even in this digital age mythologies are very relevant and are very much part of the Structuralist, Post- Structuralist and Archetypal modes of analysis. India has a rich mythological tradition and Kandasamy uses Indian mythologies so as to create new meanings. Kandasamy employs this retelling of myths as an attempt to question the consciousness of the Indian society which she calls a Hindu society. She makes it clear in the preface of the text itself.

You are the repressed Ram from whom I run away repeatedly. You are Indra busy causing bloodshed. You are Brahma fucking up my fates. You are Manu robbing me out of my right to live and learn and choose. You are sage Gautama turning your wife to stone. You are AdiSankara driving me to death (8).

Kandasamy's *Mahabharatha* is shifted to Las Vegas and her *Ramayana* is retold in three different ways. According to Kandasamy's claim, she employs this deconstructive approach to mythologies so as to make the voice of the marginalized prominent. To achieve it she employs a very powerful language in *Ms Militancy.*

"Big Brother: An epic in eighteen episodes" is a poem in Kandasamy's collection. The poem is a deconstructed version of the epic *Mahabharatha*. In the title the word 'epic' is not capitalized thereby destroying the status given to an epic. The poem presents a sinful city full of slot machines. The city can be understood as Las Vegas and the slot machines refer to gambling machines. In this place the Big Brother in the poem loses everything as a result of his gambling. The Indian epic *Mahabharatha* consists of eighteen parvas and Kandasamy's epic is told in eighteen episodes. The Big Brother is a deconstructed version of Yudhishtira, the elder brother of the Pandavas. The Big Brother loses everything; his wife, his bonds, his brothers and his villas. As a result of the bond his wife becomes a 'stripper queen', an erotic dancer, common in Americanized societies. The war plotted by his brothers is equated to Mafia Shootouts, the modern day gangster games.

Jailed and exiled, the brothers served their term
Plotting slick war that lasted eighteen days
 With mafia shootouts on the street, and then.
There were none but the storyteller and the slumdog. (7-9)

The equation of war of Kurukshetra to modern day games places the war in a virtual world. In the modern day society virtual reality is more accepted than the actual reality. Here Kandasamy employs the mythical thread to depict a modern day society and its lifestyles.

In the poem "Moksha", Kandasamy deconstructs the myth or the notion of *Purusharthas*. It literally means an object of human pursuit. According to the tradition it is considered to be four proper goals or aims of human pursuit. The first three *purusharthas* are *dharma, artha* and *kama* which stand for righteousness and moral values, prosperity and economic values, pleasure and love respectively. The pursuit of the first three finally leads to *moksha*. In the poem titled "Moksha", Kandasamy gives a modern day interpretation of the first three *purusharthas*. She equates *dharma* with 'word plowers', the people who are skilful in handling language. They profess morality and righteousness but most of the time they remain only as advisors not the practitioners of *dharma*. In the era of fast moving technologies and nuclear weapons *artha* is equated to 'warmongers'. In a society where atrocities committed against women increase day by day, she equates *kama* with 'womb raiders'. Kandasamy, by deconstructing the myth of *purusharthas* makes fun of the deterioration of values in the present day society.

In the poem "Passion Become Piety"*,* the story of Andal in Tamil mythology is used. Andal is the only female *Alvar* among the twelve *alvar* saints of south India. They are Tamil poet saints who propagated *bhakti* to the Hindu God, lord Krishna or Vishnu. According to the myth Andal is the incarnation of goddess Lakshmi. She one day wears a garland before dedicating it to the deity. Her father becomes desperate but lord Vishnu appears before him and asks him to dedicate the garland Andal has worn. Kandasamy's poem depicts a woman who is frightened by force to succumb to the needs of her lover.

the guilt-glazed love lay on andal's breasts,
thick and heavy as him
frightened with force
and locked away, she conjured him every night. (1-4)

She is in a state of imprisonment and her lover's way of treating her is maniacal. The relationship ends up in marriage and Kandasamy equates this marriage to 'murder' and their consummation to 'execution'. Finally, what remain is her poems celebrating 'those fucks'. Here the myth of devotional love between Andal and Lord Vishnu is retold as a maniacal relationship. Thus Kandasamy deconstructs the myth of devotional love and presents a relationship in which the female partner is 'imprisoned' and oppressed.

"Prayers to the red slayer" portrays Brahman, the Hindu God of creation in a new light. According to Hindu mythology Brahman is the creator of the four *Vedas*. One of the first mentions of Brahman is in *Maitrayaniya Upanishad*. According to myths Goddess Saraswati is emerged out of Brahman's mouth, hence his daughter. After her creation Brahman is enchanted by her beauty and she tries to escape from his sight. But whichever way she moves Brahman grows a head in that direction. She curses him that he will be worshipped only in very few temples. Later Brahman convinces her and marries her. In the poem the poetess addresses Brahman as a villain, the one who instilled in the minds of people the evils of casteism and the one who created this tumultuous and chaotic universe. Kandasamy accuses him of raping his own daughter. Thus the myth is distorted in such a way that the creator of the universe becomes an incestuous maniac. "son- of- a-guest" who scribbled it on our forehead / Maniac who birthed this chaotic universe and the castes" (2-4). Here the God is presented in a negative light, as an enemy to humanity and as the one who created casteism and social hierarchy. Thus the poem questions the Brahmanic hegemony and it is also a blow upon fake intellectuals and civil right activists.

The poem "Princess in Exile" is a retelling of Sita's story in the *Ramayana*. In

Valmiki's *Ramayana* after her husband abandoned her, Sita spends the rest of her life in Valmiki's hermitage. In the poem Kandasamy depicts a princess who is scorned by the society and who seeks refuge in spirituality. A new age guru with 'caramel words' offers help. When her husband tries to win her back she walks out and vanishes. Unlike the devoted Sita in the mythology, the poem presents a protesting woman. The portrayal of the modern day guru is a blow upon those who make spirituality a business.

"Eating Dirt"is a retelling of the story of Krishna eating dirt. According to the myth one day while playing, Krishna secretly eats mud. His friends reveal this to Yasoda. When he returns, Yasoda scolds him and asks him to open his mouth. As he opens his mouth, Yasoda gets a visual experience of the whole cosmos. When Kandasamy retells the myth she portrays the act of eating dirt as a symbol of the impoverished situation of a young boy. Here the mother Yasoda is depicted as a famished woman. The son of the famished woman is caught by her for eating mud. As in the myth she asks him to open his mouth and there she sees the truth of the world.

she saw in his cloudy mouth
 the truth of the three worlds
 sand everywhere, everything
 turning to sand. (16-18)

The revelation that the famished woman acquires about the world is a negative one. It even expresses ecological concerns like draughts confronted by many countries and gives the vision of a world on the verge of destruction.

The poem "Flesh finds a form of address" juxtaposes three different stories. It uses the story of Thirumal and Andal, Mira and Krishna as well as Akka Mahadevi and lord Shiva. Thirumal is lord Vishnu who is the most popular deity in Tamil Nadu. Tamil Sangam literature mentions him as the dark one, the supreme deity who creates, sustains and destroys the universe. Kandasamy addresses the story of devotional love between Thirumal and Andal, who is believed to be an incarnation of Goddess Lakshmi. She also talks about the devotional love between Mira Bai and Lord Krishna. Meera Bai is a sixteenth century mystic poet. There are a lot of devotional poems in passionate praise of Lord Krishna to her credit. It is believed that a *sadhu* once gave her a tiny statue of Krishna when she was a child and there begins Meera's passionate love for Krishna. Akka Mahadevi is one of the early female poets of the Kannada language and a prominent personality in the *Veera Shaiva bhakti* movement. In search of her eternal soulmate, Lord Shiva, she rejected family life and other worldly attachments. Kandasamy retells these stories in a different fashion where 'devotional love' is depicted as mere physical love pertaining to the flesh. The devotional songs by these poets, thus, are described as 'siren-songs'. She questions the *devistuthis* in which the female goddess or *devi* is praised in terms of her physique. She also points out the irony of calling this woman 'the mother'.

The myth of Ahalya in Valmiki Ramayana is retold in the poem "Jouissance". In the *Ramayana,* Ahalya is the wife of sage Gautama. Indra seduces her disguising himself as Gautama. As a consequence, the furious Gautama curses Ahalya and she becomes a stone. Later in the story Rama saves her from the cursed existence as a stone. In the poem Kandasamy portrays sage Gautama as an angry philosopher. He gives passivity as a punishment to her promiscuity and thus she becomes a stone. The angry philosopher travels across the globe with his Power Point presentations on women's pleasure. Though in the

myth Rama becomes a liberating force, Kandasamy concludes by saying that no man would ever let a woman be free or live with her own identity. The poem suggests the contradiction between what one preaches and what one really is and illustrates how certain patriarchal structures argues for women's liberation and at the same time act as an oppressive force. "They knew no man would ever/ Let them be, ever set them free" (20-21).

The poem "Traitress" retells the story of Shoorphanaka in Valmiki's *Ramayana.* In the epic she is a demonic character and her evil nature is partly due to her *rakshasa* heritage. Her representation is in stark contrast with that of Sita who is the ideal wife and paragon of all virtues. In the legend she is depicted as incessantly wooing Rama and Lakshman, both highly devoted to their wives. Furious Lakshmana finally wounds her and sends her away. The image of Shoorphanaka as depicted in the *Ramayana* undergoes a dramatic change in the poem. In the poem she is a widowed woman with no fortune of her own, other than her body. The helpless woman flees to a foreign land and there she meets two men. The two who are brothers use her and exploit her and in the end fearing his wife, the elder brother plots against her and wounds her. He accuses her as a cruel woman, a traitress, before the world.

> Bros-in-bed, they made her wear leather, wield whips.
> Teased her, pleased her, for what seemed like forever.
> She sought a licence, a contract, fixed hours of fuck.
> The married man, the taller one, smelt something fishy.
> Bigamy and a phobia of bickering wives made him plot. (6-10)

"The noble eightfold path" is a poem which uses the Buddhist philosophy to criticize the society. Buddhism is part of the Eastern spiritual tradition. According to Buddhism eightfold path leads to liberation. The eightfold path teaches that by restraining oneself, cultivating discipline and practising mindfulness and meditation one can attain *nirvana* and end their craving, clinging and karmic accumulations, thereby ending rebirth and suffering. The eightfold path includes right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration. As per the Bhuddist notions eightfold path is the way to the end of suffering. Kandasamy's poem begins with an epigraph which says "This is the middle way, this is the eightfold path. This is the way to the end of suffering" (1- 2). In the poem Kandasamy says that right view is the precursor to the entire path but it comes only at last. She proclaims that everything causes suffering so the right intention to stop suffering requires bombing the masses. Every terrorist group might have a story to tell but they find out a solution for their suffering by bombing the masses. Right speech has the potential to break bonds and start wars. So it is better to keep quiet. Here Kandasamy makes fun of silent sufferings. She then goes on to define right action. The sarcastic element is that Buddha and his monks never spilled any semen and to compensate it men should rape every woman. In the poem she addresses men in second person and offers a powerful criticism of increasing rapes. In the Buddhist perspective, right livelihood demands forsaking violence and weapons. In the era of nuclear weapons Kandasamy asks India and China to gift 'those toys'. Right effort, according to Buddhist philosophy, requires a wholesome form of energy and it can dispel dullness. The desire which is the cause of misery can be avoided through meditation on impermanence. This Buddhist philosophical notion is subverted by the poetess. Kandasamy proclaims that it is easy to get rid of dullness in the modern society where one country creates lights in another country through luminous bombs.

> The first step in right mindfulness involves
> the contemplation of the body and the last step

in the mindfulness of the body involves a series

of cemetery meditations which necessitates dreaming

of death and decomposition of the human body. (54-59)

As per the noble eightfold path the first step to right mindfulness is the contemplation on death and the poet asks to meditate on the mass graves in Chemmani. Here Kandasamy is alluding to the massacre in Jaffna peninsula after government troops retook the land from the LTTE. The last section of the poem deals with right concentration. The Buddhist notion of seclusion from sensual pleasures so as to achieve concentration is dismantled here. Kandasamy opines that right concentration can be achieved through working hard to destroy others, it is something that will grant *nirvana*. Through this poem Kandasamy derives a new meaning to the noble eightfold path suitable to the contemporary society.

"Massacre of Innocents" presents Lord Indra in a different light. Indra is the most celebrated *Vedic* God. There are more than two-hundred and fifty hymns addressed to him. According to the mythology Indra is the most powerful foe of various demonic powers. In the myth it is said that, Diti, mother of Maruts, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakashyapu, once dreamt of having a son more powerful than Indra. She kept herself pregnant for one year through magic. When Indra came to know about it he used a thunderbolt to splinter the foetus into many pieces. Kandasamy uses this myth to address the problem of genocide common today. Indra murders the 'Other', the demons. Here the 'Other' can be interpreted as women in the context of female foeticides, an evil practice that exists even today. She compares Indra's act to the tortures unleashed by Hitler and announces that Indra is the one who perfected the art of slaughter, the worst *karma* ever, killing the foetuses. Kandasamy employs the myth as a tool to question an evil that exists in the society. "indra, indra, narindra./ the genocidal god of gods"(24-25).

"Random access man" retells the story of Sita's abduction. Kandasamy presents Rama as an impotent husband and Sita, his wife, as a woman deprived of all the sexual privileges. Continuous denial creates an uncontrollable desire in her. Expecting that he won't return she sends him for a chase, begging him to bring the musk of a deer so that his manhood can be roused. After that she picks a man for herself, in Kandasamy's words a 'random-man', a man with a lot of hands. It is very evident that the allusion is to Ravana. In the mythologies Ravana is depicted as a man with twenty hands. It is from him that she learns everything about love. Thus Rama is depicted as an impotent husband and Ravana as a man full of masculine vigour and Sita, a neglected wife who finds out her identity and asserts herself when she leaves her husband. The poem retells the myth of Sita's abduction in such a way that it depicts a woman who escapes from a meaningless marital relationship to find out her true self.

She picked herself a random man

For that first night of fervour.

This one was all hands and

all heads and he spoke only

in whispers. (16-20)

There are a lot of stories associated with the birth of rivers in Indian mythology. In all those Myths, the rivers such as Ganges, Yamuna and Tapti are all goddesses who belong to heaven and are brought to earth for one reason or the other. Kandasamy, in the poem "Celestial Celebrities" retells the myths associated with the birth of rivers. According to the poem most of the rivers in India bear the name of fallen women exiled from heaven to earth. It is simply because the rivers are wild and unrestrained. Kandasamy deconstructs the myths so as to question a society which always alienates and suppresses the women who try to deviate from their expected code of conduct.

the rivers here bear the names
of fallen women exiled to earth
when the heavens found them
too bloody hot to handle. (25-28)

The poem "Mrs Sunshine" uses the myths associated with the relationship between the Hindu Sun-God and his wife Sanjana. These myths can be found in early Epics and *Vedic* legends and also in certain *puranic* legends with slight variations. The story retold by Kandasamy is likely to have taken from the *Markandeya Purana* or the *Vishnu Purana.* As per the myth the Sun-God marries Sanjana, the daughter of Vishwakarman. She bears him three children. Unable to bear the heat of Sun, Sanjana decides to go away from her husband and she leaves Chaya, her handmaid, as a substitute. Later the Sun-God goes in search of his wife and finds out her meditating in the wilderness disguised as a mare. Vishwakarman reduces the high intensity of heat and effulgence of the Sun-God and he reunites with Sanjana. In the poem Kandasamy retells the myth focusing on the character of Sanjana whom she calls Mrs Sunshine. In the poem Mrs Sunshine leaves her husband even without a word.

The depiction of Mrs Sunshine resembles that of a modern day woman rather than a goddess. Lovesick and desperate her husband goes in search of her and he gradually loses his fiery temper. Towards the end of the poem Sanjana returns and offers a truce. Sanjana also whispers to him that she will hallucinate about his holiness for the sake of tradition. Unlike the myth, in the poem we find an assertive woman who runs away from an unbearable married life and returns with terms and conditions. Though in the myth Sanjana's father comes to help her, in the poem she herself finds out the solutions for her problems. The poem sarcastically criticizes the tradition in which husband is seen as equal to God.

She left him without warning.
she left him because she didn't fancy
the way he flaunted his fire, his fist
and his million blistering fingers
that were always in heat. (1-5)

Kandasamy employs mythical threads as the backdrop of her narrative poems in *Ms Militancy.* Thus the poems in the anthology create deconstructive readings of mythologies. Kandasamy proves that even today mythologies and the "myths" they create are very much part of the society. The strategy of retelling the myths thus becomes a powerful articulation of her discontent with the contemporary society. Thus the retelling of myths by Kandasamy creates powerful counter narratives that challenge the power structures in the society.

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UNLEASHING THE 'SUR-REAL': MYTHOPOETIC IMAGINATION IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S
TWO YEARS EIGHT MONTHS AND TWENTY-EIGHT NIGHTS

ANILA MOHAN

The words of renowned Persian poet Rumi, "Don't be satisfied with stories, how things have gone with others. Unfold your own myth" (Barks) becomes an impeccable reality in the context of Indian Literature. India, over the centuries unveiled distinct varieties of tales that can entice the whole universe with its enchanting spirit and novel perspectives. Salman Rushdie, one of the finest contemporary Indian-English writers, belongs to this group of writers who always with anthropological precision unfolds mythical stories of unique and fantastic grandeur. Reading Rushdie is like entering a phantasmagoric world of reality with a plethora of human characters and contemporary issues.

In *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights*, Rushdie adopted a peculiar mythological narrative strategy in which he centres the whole narration on the mythical uncanny creature, the Jinn. He fore-grounded his knowledge of the Jinn in the classical tales of Arabian nights as well as in the traditional religious myth of the Jinn that is depicted in the holy book of the Quran, that is even now believed in by various Muslim communities in the world. Rushdie with the aid of the mythical character of the Jinn, tries to portray the age-old religious conflicts that are still lurking in the society, making divisions and riots all over the world. He skilfully blends the mythical story of the Jinn with

certain historical elements to form a new narrative style that could enhance the problems depicted in the novel.

Jinn are metamorphic powerful beings in early Arabian and later Islamic mythology. They are creatures made of smokeless fire. In the Middle Eastern and Islamic lores, Jinn are depicted as monstrous, invisible creatures having free will but slowly the oriental world started to construct Jinns as supernatural wish-granting beings trapped in objects. Mark Allen Peterson in his article titled "From Jinn to Genies: Intertextuality, Media, and the Making of Global Folklore" rightly observes that "[…] in the process of traversing time and space through repeated entextualizations, the free-willed, potentially dangerous jinn of Arab folklore have become the enslaved gift-giving genies of global folklore" (Peterson 93). The Quran tells us that like angels are made up of light and humans of clay, then Jinn are made up of "smokeless fire". Rushdie begins the novel by giving a long description of the characteristics of the Jinn. He sets forth an imaginary environment of the Jinn in the very beginning of the novel itself to make the reader involved in the entire process of narration. The narrator describes the qualities of the Jinn, "they are whimsical, capricious, wanton; they can move at high speed, alter their size and form and grant many of the wishes of mortal men and women should they so choose, or if by coercion they are obliged to do so; and their sense of time differs radically from that of human beings" (3). In Islamic tradition, our Universe is divided into two – the real world where human beings live and the unseen world where angels and demons occupy. Genies have a special liminal space. They live on Earth but are unseen and can see and hear invisible angels. In the novel Rushdie creates a different world for the Jinn, which he calls 'Peristan' or 'Fairyland'. It is an upper world separated from ours by a veil and these creatures come to earth only when the slits between these two worlds open up. There are different varieties of genies. The narrator

very exclusively gives an account of the features of distinct varieties of Jinn. He says

> Some of the Jinns can fly, but some slither on the ground in the form of snakes, or run about barking and baring their fangs in the shape of giant dogs. In the sea, and sometimes in the air as well, they assume the outward appearance of dragons. Some of the lesser jinn are unable, when on earth, to maintain their form for long periods. These amorphous creatures sometimes slide into human beings through the ears, nose or eyes, and occupy those bodies for a while, discarding them when they tire of them. (4)

Dunia, the princess of the Jinn, is at the heart of the book. Rushdie shows the courage to bring a Jinnia princess as the protagonist of the story. The entire novel revolves around the deeds done by this Jinnia. Rushdie exquisitely weaves into the mythical background of the Jinn, the contemporary political scenario as well as various issues lurking in the society. These issues have the potential to become a great threat in the future. In this manner he succeeds in fantastically opening up a scope for a new narrative technique of mixing fantasy with reality. Dunia is actually the great Lightning Princess, Aasmaan Peri, who has a great mastery over the thunderbolt. She falls in love with a mortal man and lives with him as Dunia. She becomes the mother of the vast tribe 'Duniazat', in which all the children inherit her most distinctive feature of having no earlobes. Dunia is an exception among the Jinnias as she possesses the most wonderful power for love. Usually Jinns are not good in love because they are heartless, soulless beings made of fire and smoke. They are marvellous in having lust. But Dunia is an unusual figure in the world of the Jinn. She, by living a long time among human beings, absorbed the emotion of love and started loving the human race for its ability to love. She is a bright Jinnia who stands for the

goodness of humanity and even in the War of the Worlds she abandons the world of the Jinn for supporting the human world. Rushdie intentionally makes a connection between Scheherazade and Dunia. Unlike Scheherazade, Dunia is a listener, not a storyteller. She has the great power of listening.

Grand Ifrits are powerful, giant dark genies who are excellent whisperers. The narrator says "the dark genies are whisperers. Becoming invisible, they placed their lips against the chest of human beings and murmured softly into their hearts, overpowering their victims' will" (94). In the novel, Rushdie brings in four Grand Ifrits against Dunia. These dark Jinns, the antagonists of the novel provides incidents that could develop the entire plot. They stand for religion as they are instigated by Gazali to instil fear in the minds of human beings as he knows that only fear will move sinful men towards God. Zumurrud Shah is bottled up for half an eternity and possesses a wild wrath for destroying the entire humanity. Zabardast, another mightiest member of the tribe of the dark Jinn, has a special gift regarding levitation. Along with them comes Shining Ruby, the greatest of the whispering Jinn and Ra'im Blood-Drinker to wage the greatest of wars against humanity.

Rushdie, by creating the characters of genie,s tries to convey the idea of mythical archetypes in literature. Jinn is a mythical archetype which symbolizes our mind itself. Myths are verbal rendering of symbols and therefore Jinn in the novel can be identified as certain symbols carrying a bundle of meanings. They are creatures causing psychological problems and paranormal activities. In the novel we can trace out certain characteristics attributed to Jinn that are very similar to the archetypes in modern psychology. Genies have the power to 'possess' human beings causing severe mental illness and psychotic problems. With their extraordinary psychic powers, genies force the possessed humans to do all sorts of outrageous things. For instance, in the novel the dark

Jinn Shining Ruby possesses Daniel Aroni, boss of the world's most powerful non-governmental financial institution and makes him do all sorts of crazy things. The narrator says, "Ruby released 'Mac' Aroni's body after four days of possession, leaving him a poor husk of a man sprawled like a broken puppet on the finely carpeted floor of the great lobby in the sky of his corporate headquarters" (129). Jinn unleash things in people which are perhaps there to be unleashed. The possession power of Jinn could be compared with the most normal kind of possession that happens to every human in the day to day life. We humans are possessed by certain powers or ideologies or religion, which pushes us to behave in appalling ways, in a way similar to what a Jinn would also do. May be, the writer intentionally uses the archetype of the Jinn to reveal such social realities to the entire world. Even if Jinns exist in another dimension of reality they have the ability to change shapes according to their will and exist in our dimensions as well. That's how the lightning princess of Qaf Mountains changes to Dunia and later on takes the form of Ella Elfenbein, the dead wife of Geronimo Manezes.

In the novel, Jinn are categorized as 'bright Jinns' and 'dark Jinns'. The bright Jinn, especially Dunia is benevolent to mankind. She stands up for reason and helps human to win the war of the worlds. The dark Jinn, Zummurud Shah and his cohorts are in support of religion and they try to instil fear in the minds of human beings by doing all sorts of atrocities that they could do. The construction of the archetypes of bright and dark is very evident in the novel. In the literary lineage it is apparent that bright/ light always represents good and dark symbolizes evil. At a certain point in the novel, we are struck by the revelation that the Jinn is not a separate entity but the mind itself and the bright and dark Jinns that we encounter in the novel are the two different versions of our minds. Every one's mind possesses a good/ bright side that we want to disclose in public, which is like the Jinnia Dunia in the novel and also a dark/ evil side that we always consciously conceal from the

external world, which is represented by the dark genies Zumurrud Shah and his accomplices. Rushdie throughout the novel attempts to disclose that the Jinn could be seen as the manifestation of our own doubting selves. May be, we can assume the Jinn as our id made actual. In fact, the portrayal of the rebellion between reason and religion in the book is just a representation of what is happening in our minds. Rushdie through the voice of the narrator adds,

> Mr. Geronimo experienced a sort of inner vision or epiphany. The doors of perception opened and he saw that what was evil and monstrous about the Jinn was a mirror of the monstrous and evil part of human beings, that human nature too contained the same irrationality, wanton, wilful, malevolent and cruel, and that the battle against the Jinn was a portrait of the battle within the human heart, which meant that the Jinn were somehow abstractions as well as realities, and sent to the lower world served to show that world what had to be eradicated within itself, which was unreason itself […], the irrational in man as well as Jinn had to be defeated so that an age of reason could begin. (274)

The narrator yearns for a world of unreason where there will be no more fights in the name of religion. He actually dreams of a peaceful future in which humans realize the importance of rationality so that he could embrace more and more technological innovations.

There is also a possibility to categorize the genies in the novel under Jung's 'archetype of the trickster'. A trickster according to Jung is a "bold and daring rule breaker who puts his or her desires above societies dictates" (Garry 160). The characters that have the ability for invisibility usually exhibit dynamic and powerful features. An invisible person shows the liberty to do whatever comes to his mind. He can

easily deceive others by doing cheap tricks and also possess the tendency to destroy others or else can indulge in sexual acts. Jung views the trickster as the "unsocialised, infantile, and unacceptable aspects of the self" (160). In the novel the dark Jinn play a lot of tricks before humans to make their desire fulfilled. They can be called tricksters as they intentionally violate all the laws established by the humans. For instance, the dark Jinn in the novel have the ability to inhabit human bodies, make them levitate, can change shape and possess a great power of whispering but still they carry childish behaviour with them. The narrator says "the competitiveness of even the mightiest of the Jinn is often petty and childish, and leads to childish feuds" (Rushdie 138). This shows the petty nature of a trickster. A trickster can be cunning or foolish or both like in the case of the dark Jinn. They are the manifestations of our collective unconscious.

Thus we can conclude that *Two Years Eight Months and Twenty-Eight Nights* is a rich and versatile work that coalesce history, mythology and an abiding love story that has been engulfed by an abyss of unreason back to life. The narrative technique of inculcating historical facts with a wide-ranging imagination is one of the factors that make Rushdie distinct from his fellow writers. Myths are individual stories, which are part of the inheritance of one's memories. They reflect deep reality rather than being mere fiction. Myths are indeed part of a Pre-historical era, but they always reoccur in different ages, cultural contexts and become part of our contemporary society as well. In the novel Rushdie deliberately used the mythic character, Jinn as his protagonists for making his task of the blending of magic with reality too original and natural. The narrator in the novel puts in a strenuous effort of discussing the political and social upheavals in the society due to the age-old conflict between reason and religion within the range of a mythical framework. To instigate a consciousness of the very contemporary issue regarding reason and religion, the writer diffuses elements of magic that has the

capability to intensify the seriousness of the theme, which he employed. In the novel, Rushdie attempts to interpret the most intricate and multi-layered reality of the socio-political life in India through the juxtaposition of reality and fantasy. He also endeavours to depict the reality of individual life and how it responds to change when suddenly something above reality sweeps in.

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EXTANT

SHIVANGI SHANKER K.

I have been long dead.
Carcass-fed maggots now rest
On my bare, skeleton breasts.
Filth metamorphosed over
My neatly-laid knuckles, and
Wriggly worms knocked at the
Enamel of decayed teeth.
I had become one with the earth,
Or so others said-
But I had only disappeared,
Washed away like the once rigid stain
That had clung onto the shirt for too long.
An abyss of the dead, the unmissed, the forgotten,
Garlanded my broken neck
(for I had fallen too hard from life to death).
The way I wore my *pottu*, the way I sat cross-legged,
The one strand that fell over my wrinkly eyes,
Sable eyes, much like *kari*,
Petite fingers and their nails I'd paint red
(or white when I can feel merry)-
All undone in the minds of people I've known-
Dismantled pieces, worthless tit-bits
These have become.
I've been long dead,
But I hope my verses are alive, breathing;
Gasping for breath, but living;
Broken, but existing;
Smeared, but impassioned.
I, I hope my verses are extant.

THE PERIOD

SHIVSHANKAR RAJMOHAN A.K.

A week of endless turmoil

Days of unbridled orgies of pain

Vagaries of intentional emotions

Soaked in the redness of tears

Bestowed, bequeathed and bereft

You my Darling is life's longing for love

This pain is not yours

But our longing for eternity

A gentle reminder

Of the impending union

Of creation and belonging

Pain is memory- yours and mine

Residues of the unborn

Mysteries of the Being.

WHEN SHE LEAVES

Alive, aware and awake

Not when she leaves

Indifferent; there bathes the Monster

Quick, tyres rolled into sudden action

Slithering, and squeaking

Leaves my world I thought

Smell; mine and hers

Squeezed and mixed

Into the blue-bottle

I gave up my smell

Close your eyes

Let me come in

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Diotima's: A Journal of New Readings (ISSN: 2319-4189)

The Department of English, Providence Women's College, Kozhikode invites papers for its Annual Journal *Diotima's: A Journal of New Readings* 2019 issue on **Popular Culture.** We welcome well-researched and theoretically grounded research papers from academicians and research scholars from departments of English, Women Studies, Philosophy, Social Sciences and other interdisciplinary areas pertaining to the broad area of Popular Culture. There is no publication fee and the papers will be selected based on peer review process.

The site of Popular Culture has always escaped rigid social definitions and this has simultaneously helped in bringing about a more fluidic exchange of meanings and ideas, cutting across established disciplines. It captures a wide array of everyday practices, beliefs and attitudes and defines itself continuously in accordance with the evolving concerns and processes characterising a dynamic society. More importantly, Popular Culture has remained a subject of critical analysis, grappling with questions about power and social hierarchies. This also inevitably leads to suggestions about conflictual strands of political thought that emanate from and also sustain the cultural system. In other words, Popular Culture also provides space for a reformulation of existing social codes of conduct, thereby facilitating the creation of new identities and subjectivities, through resistance and negotiation between different dominant and subordinate groups existing within society. As

John Fiske notes, Popular Culture is made by "various formations of subordinated or disempowered people out of the resources, both discursive and material, that are provided by the social system that disempowers them. It is therefore contradictory and conflictual to its core". Therefore, it becomes pertinent to examine the varying dimensions associated with the representations of Popular Culture along with the theoretical underpinnings that such critical explorations necessarily entail.

The contemporary era, which is witness to a confluence of images, signs and symbols emerging from the 'Popular', offers innumerable instances for understanding the ideological formations characterising processes of meaning production, dissemination and consumption. The impact generated by these cultural expressions would certainly enhance existing ideas about the construction of social realities and about the possibilities for social renewal and transformation. So for the next issue of *Diotima's* we invite articles that would open up new discussions about this vibrant and rapidly evolving sphere of culture and would also present fresh insights about its different ramifications.

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