

**Identity Crises Undergone by Women in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "Arranged Marriage"**

---

**Mrs. T. Manimegalai**

Ph.D. Research Scholar (PT)

Assistant Professor of English

Sona College of Arts and Science

Salem: 636005.

---

**Abstract:**

India is a multicultural oriented society, where patriarchal mind set is very prominent, this mind set does not provide equivalent place to women in this male chauvinist world, though women occupy nearly half of the population but still struggling to be recognized as a human being. Though God has created men and women with different biological characteristics, women stay unique never a weaker sex or inferior to the other gender. In today's world the technology and educational system had witnessed a phenomenal growth but women are denied by their basic rights. The present research work aims to portray women's identity dangling between traditional perception and the modern advanced culture; it also discusses the identity crises undergone by the womanhood in the novel *Arranged Marriage* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni. The research focuses on the women centric characters those who are in the midst of the tug of culture and their struggle to create their own individual identity. The theme of this paper is to bring out women's orthodox beliefs, her struggles between the cultures and tradition.

**Keywords:** Patriarchism, tug of culture and tradition, identity, immigrant experiences, multiculturalism.

Indian writing in English is one of the striking branches of English literature in the world. Many writers tried to show case writing talents in this field which leads to intellectual feasts. Many women writers have come forward to pen down about the identity of women their changing perception in this multicultural world. The present study aims at a thorough exploration of identity of women in Chitra Banerjee Devakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*. Further the paper also analysis the identity and cultural experiences of womanhood in the novel. It also dicusses the condition of women characters who feel the tug of cultures and their struggle to creat their own individual identiy weavering between old beliefs and new fond desires in America. The paper also delves the experiences and perspective of Indian immigrant women who have settled in US where they are absolutely disturbed between two cultures, Indian and western culture.

Chitra Banerjee devakaruni enriches the complex fermentation of diasporic writers who explores the uncanny condition of realities. The phenomenon of isolation, alination, culture identity with the world. The other aspects of devakaruni's life are, she has been a sensitive women, a consummate artist, a visionary endowed with exceptional humen sensibility and has a innovative vision.

She was very conscious for her problems of women and issues related to their life. She was also the founder president of 'MAITRI'IN 1991, a help line for south Asian women. This organisation works to redeem the sufferings of the victim of the domestic violence and other traumatic situations. As the president of this organisation she made rigorous effects to investigate the root cause of the problem that women suffered across the globe.

The literary career of Chitra Banerjee Devakaruni begins with the publication of her debut short story collection, *The Arranged Marriage (1995)* which reveals the realistic discourse of cultural conflict in the multicultural society. In *Arranged Marriage* most of the stories are the narrative experiences of the women immigrants and their resistance against cultural surroundings. The novel is designed on the basis of Magic Realism, an imaginative experience of woman, who is being well equipped. Apart from few notable novels Chitra Banerjee has also penned some beautiful collection of short stories. The first collection of short stories entitled *Arranged Marriage* contains eleven stories; THE BATS, CLOTHES, SILVER PAVEMENTS, GOLDEN ROOFS, THE WORLD LOVE, A PERFECT LIFE, THE MAID SERVANT STORY, THE DISAPPEARANCE, DOORS, THE ULTRA SOUNDS, AFFAIR, AND MEETING MRINAL, Devakaruni with these short stories explores the realities of Diaspora, where she delineates the condition of cultural identity, assimilation, in-betweenness and tug of culture, where she expounds major components of culture which constitutes the fulcrum of her epistemic construction.

*The Arranged Marriage*, of Banerjee presents the collection of short stories portraying the glimpses of longing women disillusioned by cultural conflict and crisis trying to adopt identity that barely tallies with the one in which she grew up. The paper exposes the conjugative identity conflict that women combat through prioritizing self over everything.

Identity is the awareness and knowledge of one's true self which is essential for the eventual achievements of self-actualisation identity relates to self-image, self esteem and individuality. Consequently, weinreich defines identity as "identity is defined as the totality of one's self-cultural in which how one construes oneself in the present expresses the continuity between how one construes oneself as one was in the past and how one construes oneself as one aspires to be in the future". The term identity crisis was coined by Erickson, which means when the characters are unable to extricate themselves from the conflict between whom they are and who they are supposed to be.

Usually a woman is the foremost victim of identity crisis in the Indian patriarchal hegemony. First she loses her identity after marriage where she has to adapt and acquaint with a new household system. The second phase of identity crisis arises in the women who are married abroad. They not only have to accommodate with the husbands' formulations of life but also to the new cultural set up of an alien land. Thus these women suffer dual identity crisis and to establish individuality out of it becomes a constant challenge. Parallel to it she confronts a cultural crisis which is a sense of disillusionment in an alienated culture absolutely contradictory to the one she has seen or known. The woman who have migrated, feel the displacement intensely in comparison to men, but few of them use migration as a step towards their freedom. Women, who never experienced the individuality in their homeland, are submerged in isolation.

Chitra Banerjee, a poignant Indo-American writer shows her major concern towards identity crisis and quest for woman. As an expatriate she is more conscious of her own identity which reflects in her work where she often portrays more powerful representation of women shaped out of cultural difference that reflect the sense of rootless existence and alienation, which are relevant to the Indian diaspora. We analyse that her novels the experience and social positioning of the author herself. These women in diaspora literature shows an inexorable awakening of identity in relation to western values of individuality where they are often confronted with dilemma and dejection. All these themes are subsequently discussed in Banerjee's heroines, where they are confronted with cultural clash leading to disillusioned identity and have to struggle in between the space of dual individuality. From virtually transferred form the image of Sita to an obliquely multicultural freedom, these women undergoes imbalance. In the story *The wine of Desire* Devakaruni portrays women challenged with multicultural facets of gender politics whose identity is achieved ones it is detached from their male counter parts.

Devakaruni's arranged marriage is an assortment of eleven stories, juxtaposing narratives of women India and abroad. In these collection of stories, Devakaruni beautifully tells the stories about the immigrant brides who are struggling to carve out an identity of their own. Focussing on post marital of longings, abuses and bravery of immigrant women, her works are fine examples of expatriate literature. Here most of the stories deals with the cultural disarticulation and identity clashes of traditionally conservative diaspora women living in America and the challenges faced in new freedom exposed to environment. The challenges further intensifies when their husband adapt to their pre-existing suppressed traumas. Devakaruni explains the power poignant experiences of life and culture.

In one of the short story '*The Clothes*' alludes to the challenging identity. Sumita is married to Somesh in America. Her life in America is not different from the life led by other daughter-in-law in Indian society of these days. She lives with her in-laws in America who follow traditional Indian culture and expects others to adhere the Indian customs. Her life as she says is a frozen small world, a glass world and America rushes by. It is this syndrome of playing Sati Savitri in the story Sumita's exchange of clothes at different phases symbolises a characteristics of hybrid identity formation. She is dressed in sari before her in-laws and tries on western clothes in her bed room in front of her husband within the small apartment, Sumita balances between two different identities of being an Indian women and a western lady at the same time, the one in which she wants to embrace either of them impossible to neglect. Sumita's husband is very much conscious about the American way of life of impartiality and emancipation. Unlike other Indian husband's, Somesh ushers in her the need of her self-governed individuality of her own, He tells her about the plans of sending her to college and work. But even he is trapped into the deep-rooted cultural bashfulness.

The fear to break the customary knobs does not allow him to articulate his views or disagree with his parents. In matrix, the story reaches its climax when Somesh is murdered by some unknown person. This is a sudden shock to Sumita as she realises that her life has also ended with the death of her husband. Finally she is confronted with two choice to opt a white sari and return to India or to don the American attire. With this she fulfils her late husband's dream of being an independent woman. She this of her new identity as she wears the skirt and blouse the colours of almonds and chooses to stay back in America where she is determined, empowered and ready to face the arguments against her decision.

---

In another story 'Affair' in the collection of arranged *marriage* the protagonist Asha's Husband Ashok is having an affair with Meena, wife of their common friend. While Meena's Husband Srikanth informs Asha about their divorce notice. He also hints at her to consider a possibility between them. While Meena feels that marriage for her is miscalculated choking error. Asha also feels the same bitterness, but their way of expression is different. Meena and Asha both are in search of their own identity. Asha who was a shy and introvert woman was broken by her husband's consistent taunts and cutting remarks. Asha as a secured woman feels detached and insecure is now being advised by Meena who makes Asha realise the importance of life and also makes her feel that convention gives no scope for transformation. Where her priority until now are husband and her family which resulted in a state of depression. She realises that her relation with her Husband was empty and vacant devoid of any intimacy to move on in life. She shackles the bonded relation to be broken. Then receives a job which makes her reach heights and shape her future in an environment of self- autonomy. After few years she writes a letter to Ashok stating that she wants separation, which not only restores her lost confidence but also ushers hopes of prospective opportunities. Thus parting from her Husband became a gamut of her self-identification.

**Conclusion:**

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's portrayal of women comes from her vivid observation of the patriarchal Indian communal setup, confines her to laws, lack of space and isolation, offering very less scope to acclaim individuality. In these changing scenarios writers like Divakaruni create women from the passive role model status of this male dominating chauvinist and explore themselves by fulfilling the vacuum and abolishing the redolent customs. Thus postmodern women like Banerjee's heroines are ready to alter the preordained gender roles giving a tough challenge to their male counterparts to combat the truth that their patriarchal insights might not work well with all women.

**References:**

- Divakaruni Chitra Banerjee. *Arranged Marriage*. London Black Swan. 1995.  
Wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity (social science)  
Cohen Robin Global Diaspora: *An Introduction*. London: UCL Press, 1977.

### Depiction of Woman Identity in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy

---

**Mr. J. Senthilnathan**, M.A., M.Phil.

Ph.D., Research Scholar

Govt. Arts College (A), Salem-7

---

#### Abstract

Literature has witnessed the roles of women evolving through ages and the portrayal of women in literature was without doubt biased by many writers. Literature in general, women were portrayed next to men. They were treated as physically weaker and nothing less than household commodities. Though women involved a quest to attain some higher knowledge, their attempt lost their ability to get back to the womanhood. Amish Tripathi's representation of women is quite different ambivalent. His characters rewarded with heavenly status after their death. His character Sati and her twin sister Kali and Lady Ayurvathi seem quite gentle and moral strictures. Amish unveils the image of the woman characters who possessed with mental strength against male chauvinism. This paper aims at exploring woman and their position in society in Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy.

**Keywords:** gender bias, female identity, social identity, mythology

India is the land of multi-cultural and multi-linguist since the ancient age. It is considered the cradle of civilization to the whole world. Its culture is made up of three intimate and related elements: religion - philosophy - art in which religion is the source of literature. In the process of constant movement and development of world literature, the Indian literature has a long tradition history of thousands of years with special achievements, becoming the common spiritual heritage of mankind. In ancient Indian literature, some typical works were introduced such as the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, the play *Shakuntala*, etc. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* particularly praise an ideal morality based on duty and honor. The good actions of the main characters are done at absolute level. In Indian mythology, one can argue that most women are single dimensional and lack complexity in their character. Although often contended, Sita is seen by many as an epitome of the ideal Hindu woman, as dictated by patriarchy. She is filled with loyalty for her husband, and even in the face of hardships, her love for Rama fails to waver. Meanwhile, others who were more vocal about their demands and desires, like Surpanakha and Ahalya, were vilified and insulted. Their names are even used as cuss words in cultures today.

Women are incredible in our Indian mythology. Throughout the history of Indian civilization; Women have battled to assert themselves as self-reliant individuals and to vindicate their identities in a patriarchal society. Again and again, these warriors have manifested their prominence in various myths; which are narrated and passed down by various generations in the form of folk traditions. The two great epics The *Ramayana* (500 BCE) and The *Mahabharata* (400 BCE) are radiant with many heroic female characters' distinguishing themselves through various skills. The *Mahabharata* is the story

of courageous men and eminent women whose lives are truly motivational. Women in the Mahabharata performed their various roles and responsibilities with their endurance, optimism, nobility, intellect, and faithfulness. Their assertiveness and self-confidence made them rebellious and tough enough to deal with the Patriarchy and Gender-discrimination. Draupadi, Gandhari, and Kunti are the leading ladies of Mahabharata, but there have been some lesser-known female warriors who were skilled in warfares, but not attained recognition in the epic. These women performed an important role in shaping the narrative of the epic and their contributions cannot be overlooked. This paper is an attempt to discover some of these forgotten female warriors in the novels of Amish Tripathi's Shiva Trilogy.

Hindu Mythology is enormous and we have various warriors with significant powers to conquer over their enemies. In our mythology, the Goddesses are seen as devoted and nurturing figures that remain calm and the figures of humanity. Women have always been viewed as the incarnation of 'Shakti'. Amish Tripathi portrays the character Sati in Shiva Trilogy as a human being. She is the daughter of Veerini and Daksha, Oder twin-sister of kali as well as the granddaughter of emperor Brahmanyak. She is also the Suryavanshi princess of Meluah. She is known as Parvathi because she is Parvatheshwar's goddaughter. The novel Immortals of Meluah, Sati is being showed as a Vikarma Woman. Since she delivered a still born child to her past husband, she was treated as a carrier of bad fate in present life which made her an untouchable woman in Meluha. Nadhi explains that "Vikarma people are people who have been punished I this birth for the sins of their previous birth. Hence they have to live this life out with dignity and tolerate their present sufferings with grace. This is the only way they can wipe their karma clean of the sins of their previous births" (IM-92). The author characterized her as a bronze-skinned woman and beautiful although the scar she got once in battle made her look ugly. She was very muscular and strong. Shiva describes her in the following lines, Her body, though covered demurely in a long angvastram, still ignited Shiva's imagination enough to sense the lovely curves which lay beneath. Her flawless face was a picture of concentration as she manoeuvred the chariot skilfully into its parking place. She dismounted the chariot with an air of confidence. It was a calm confidence which had not covered the ugly distance towards arrogance. Her walk was dignified (IM-34) As she is belong to a Kshatriya Princess of the brave SuryavanshiMeluhans, her skill in wielding a sword is admirable. She is brave and strong-hearted.

She exceptional in wielding knife, which further contributes to her swiftness, agility flexibility. She also has a rather rare skill: of swinging sword towards one's own body as most swordsmen would swing their blade away from their own their own body. Her fight is being explained when she was met with an attack from Nagas, As Shiva was about to retort, he was alerted by a quick movement from the cucumber seller. Shiva turned to see him pulling out a sword as he tossed his shawl aside. The shepherd and the man next to the chariot also stood poised in traditional fighter positions with their swords drawn ... She however deftly side-stepped his protective hand, reached into the folds of her angvastram and drew out her own sword. Shiva glanced at her, surprised, and flashed her a quick, admiring smile. Her eyes flashed right back, acknowledging the unexpected yet providential partnership (IM -35). She said at once very clearly that The Nagas are obviously the people who are evil, right? (Secret of the Nagas). Even Sati is being depicted with great courage and proved as dignified woman in Agniparisha. Tarak, a moral police from the northwest regions to Meluha opposes Sati not to attend the yagna platform. As the Meluhans follows the Lord Ram's rule, the law says no vikarma woman should be allowed otherwise yagna will be polluted, Tarak reminds the Meluhans. But Sati became enraged while Shiva

was insulted by Tarak. She proved herself to attain any cause for dignity if anyone not respecting fellow human beings. She says that “I invoke the right of Agniparsha” (IM-227). “Agniparisha, aduel unto death, enabled a contestant to challenge an unjust tormentor. It was called Agniparksha as combat would be conducted within a ring of fire. The duelists had to keep fighting till one person either surrendered or died. An Agnipariksha was extremely rare these days. And for a woman to invoke the right was almost unheard of”(IM-227). Shiva trained her for the combat and made sati to win in the dual fight with Tarak. Sati ruthlessly dug her knife into Tarak chest. He then stumbled back and collapsed onto the ground and motionless. The people in the stadium roared Jai Shri Ram! When sati raise her knife as the expression of her eight five years of repressed anger in her life was fulfilled in the magnanimous victory. Amish glorifies Sati's valor and praises her fighting spirit in a dual fight with Tarak in Karachapa.

Kali Sati's twin sister (Queen of the Nagas) who has been separated from her after birth by her own father, king Daksha as Kali was born with two extra functioning hands, hence she was ostracized from society and declared a Naga. She became denounced by her father then left in forest. A very hot-tempered woman, Kali assists and helps Shiva in his journey to destroy Evil. Later Sati brings her back to Kashi. Sati accuses her father as he denounced both Kali and Ganesh. Finally, Daksha confesses for murdering Sati's first husband and denouncing Kali and Ganesh. Kali comes to know that his father is behind the manufacturing of Somras. She sends Shiva safely Shiva to reach Panchavati where he meets Brahaspati (friend of Shiva), the chief Meluhan scientist in manufacturing Somras. Though Kali left by her own father and society, she had some vengeance to kill her own people because she is a kind hearted warrior with human limitations. Later she realized that it was against by law of nature. She forgives even Shiva for not accepting Ganesh as his step son Shiva once realized that Ganesh severely injured while saving Karthik from three lions.

Tripathi has created his heroine as a replica of the devoted wife as Sati and dedicated mother as Kali. He showed Kali as a blood consuming deity and portrayed the incarnation of Goddess Kali as in the Indian myth. As scholar David Kinsley states, “it is never Kali who tames Siva, but Siva who must calm Kali”. Amish is not replicate Kali as same as in Hindhupuranas. In Shiva Trilogy, Kali demonstrates her refusal to be controlled by those who think they understand her and her triumph over the attributes of ignorance and evil, as well as the absolute impartiality of her nature. Kali is the quintessential embodiment of *shakti*, female power. She emerges as an independent goddess after the death of Sati in Shiva Trilogy. ArundhutiSinghal, a critic states that Kali's ambivalent, and at time contradictory, nature is in line with her being an early female deity. She states that Kali the early female goddess is the expression of nature. Like nature, she has a destructive side as much as a benevolent one. In this, she isn't quite a *devi*, a full goddess, but shares the traits of what are known as *asuras* (demons, but just for lack of a better translation), different supernatural beings who don't always have the ability to keep their passions under control. As a female, the power of creation rests with her; and as a female, too, so does the sheer force of nature. This makes Kali the feminist icon with complex figure of many contrasting traits, all of which are equally worthy expressions of female strength. Amish represent Kali as nature at its rawest and most untamed. She is the culmination of all that is strength and power. She loves without being devoted. She is the ultimate mother—the mother of all power—without being reduced to the role of a mother. Amish skillfully uses the mystic characters as an instrument to convey the spiritual significance of gender equality though the character Kali.

Amish expresses his opinion about women in an interview (Hindu)that he strongly advocates women empowerment and violence against woman. He says that our society is war with woman. So he creates his women characters very strong. Since he comes from a family of voracious readers, he usually debates any subject on women which may be their rights, power, equality, role in society etc., what he sees woman in society, he has just woven them as characters in his story. He introduces Ayurvati as the greatest doctor in Meluha. He says that the medical field highly dominated by Brahmins in those days. Ayurvati was highly described by the author as, “petite, wheat-skinned woman was dressed in a simple white cloth tied around her waist and legs in a style the Meluhans called dhoti” (IM-14). She maintains strict with hygiene standards in Meluha. Sometimes she loses her control and scold those fellows who are not obeying her advice. “Ayurvati walked into the guest house, muttering under her breath, ‘These uncouth immigrants’”(IM-16).

Once she is committed in her duty, she never shows any partiality towards her people. When Shiva and his tribes were seriously affected by fever after drinking some potion given in the medical camp, she took her effort to save all the people along with her nurses. “All the torches in the building had been lit. The nurses were going from room to room, methodically administering medicines and advising the scared patients on what they should do ... Ayurvathi turned to look at Shiva ... Don't worry. We're Meluhans. We are capable of handling any situation. Everybody will be fine” (IM-20). She even ordered Shiva to take bath not allowing him to ask any question. She told him that if he is not obeying her or else he may die. “controlling herself with great effort, Ayurvati said, ‘Shiva, you are perspiring. If you don't wash it off, it will kill you ... you cannot be of any help to your tribe if you are dead” (IM-21). Amish shows her that she sometimes is so kind to her patients and quite strict towards others those who are not obeying her words. Amish portrays her the epitome of service to the society especially a person who is in need of hygienic standard in her land.

Amish sheds light on women as who are closely associated with love, affection, loyalty to their family here. He constructs those characters have strongly belief in individualism and parental care. All of them became a worshipping god at the end of the novel because of their karma elevates them to godliness. He skillfully blends the Indian mythology into a fiction and narrates his own way style to the modern readers. He expressed his view in an interview that “when a man or woman becomes a God or s/he discovers within Him the concept that God exists within every single human being, in fact everything in the world (Tripathi). Amish strongly admits that these phenomenal women are fearless warriors and we cannot ignore their contributions in our society. Without them our patriarchal society will not be fulfilled. They are not just warriors, they are daughters, sisters, wives, and mothers also. These ladies are those who administrated the Meluhan society wisely, who fought alongside men in the battle-field, who nurtured their children alone and accept the challenges of hard-pressed life, who trained their children (Ganesh, Karthik) in warfare, who fight for their dignity and self-respect. These heroic women are the embodiment of strength, courage and dedication.

**Reference:**

<http://www.languageinindia.com/march2018/auseminar1/anjanamolshivatriology1.pdf>

<http://pubs.sciepub.com/education/6/6/12/index.html>

<https://rashmivj21.medium.com/discovering-the-forgotten-female-warriors-of-mahabharata-written-by-rashmi-vajpayee-20e7effacbf3>

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/books/features/depiction-of-women-in-literature-through-ages/articleshow/56084665.cms>

<https://shivatrilogy.fandom.com/wiki/Sati>

<https://kashgar.com.au/blogs/gods-goddesses/kali-a-most-misunderstood-goddess>

### **Delineation of Apartheid in Nadine Gordimer's short stories**

---

**Ms. S. Preethi Shalina**

Assistant Professor of English  
Sona College of Arts and Science

---

#### **Abstract**

Humans are constructed to be unique in their own way to mark their identity in the society they live in. A person is identified based on the race, religion, culture, language and ethnicity. In literature, the concept of identity has popped in the recent years to voice out those who are struggling for the identity they deserve. Nadine Gordimer, a South African writer has well captured the encounter of Black people's identity in her short stories. Petru's life in "Six feet of the Country" and Dr. Leinsdorf's lover in "City Lover" are the two characters that speculate the concept of Apartheid. This article scrutinizes the racial discrimination which paves way for the dehumanisation of the society.

**Keywords:** Identity, Apartheid, struggles, unlawful

#### **Delineation of Apartheid in Nadine Gordimer's short stories**

The creation of mankind has been designed in such a way that every person is different from each other. The variation in a person can be seen in the shade of the skin, hair, height, the way a person converse, the way a person think, etc. Though there is massive difference in Mankind they are termed in general as Human beings. Despite of being framed as common, each person wants to prove their individual identity. The concept of uniqueness is what the expectation of the creatures with six senses. In fact the humans are constructed to be unique in their own way to mark their identity in the society they live in.

Literature acts as a mirror to the society. It plays a major role in dealing with issues of the society. In the pre-independence India, people gathered information about the chaos situation only through the works of the writers that has been published in the form of Newspapers, Pamphlets etc. Literature not only puts forth the issues of the environment but also gives motivation to the mankind. Motivation is the major thirst of the mankind in the contemporary world who are struggling to prove their identity in spite of racial discrimination.

An individual person claims to be unique among others to showcase their talents. In groups, a set of rules has been assigned and followed by the majority. When there is an acceptance from the mass number of individuals the one with lower influence has been neglected. The negligence of an individual leads to hunt for the identity which is marginalised. The negligence happens because of the emphasis given to the colour of the skin, community, gender and religion, etc. Literature took the initiative to deal with the quest of identity of many who are under the circle of racial discrimination.

---

Identity can be categorised into social identity and personal identity. The former deals with social category which questions about being labelled and questioned by the deciding authorities. The latter deals with a person's self within himself. The concept Apartheid is grouped under Social identity.

The concept of Apartheid came into existence in the year 1948 in South Africa. It is an Afrikaans word meaning "separateness" or "the state of being apart". According to Merriam Webster dictionary, it is a former policy of segregation and political, social and economic discrimination against the non-white majority in the republic of South Africa. It was so austere that the non-whites were restricted from the whites' place. They are not supposed to live or wander around where the whites stay. The non-whites are given restriction even to earn. They were aloof from all the provisions in South Africa.

The separation of non-whites from the whites has been clearly portrayed by many writers in literature. The term Apartheid has been never used by the writers but it is interwoven in the characters. One such writer is Nadine Gordimer. She is a South African novelist, short story writer and essayist who witnessed the issues of Apartheid. She was against the inequalities of non-whites from her childhood. At the age of fifteen she published her first novel *The Lying Days*. Her words express the struggles of apartheid. Many of her works were banned by the government of South Africa. Her novel *July's people* was banned under the reason of apartheid. Though her works were not rewarded by her own country, she got the international recognition in the year 1961. She was awarded Nobel Prize in the year 1991, Booker prize in the year 1974 and she bagged voluminous awards for her writings.

This paper aims to discuss about Gordimer's two short stories "Six feet of the Country" and "City Lover" which highlights the struggles of the blacks for their identity they deserve.

"Six feet of the country" is a short story which was published in the year 1953. The story is set near Johannesburg. It revolves around the boy named Petrus who is working in the farm of white couple Baas, as the blacks name him and Lerice. The brother of Petrus dies of pneumonia. After the acceptance of Petrus, his brother's body was taken for post-mortem and was buried without his concern. When Petrus came to know about the burial, he requested his master to get the body for rituals. He was asked to pay twenty pounds to get the dead body of his own brother. Once he paid, the health officials gave him his brother's body. At the time of funeral it was found that the body is not his brother's. Petrus and his family kept waiting for the arrival of his brother's dead body. But the wait goes in vain. Petrus lost his brother as well as the money of him.

The short story Six feet of the country portrays the struggles of the black workers who are rejected by the society of whites. The non-whites fight for both social as well as personal identity. The brother of Petrus came to him in seeking a job. He reached Petrus illegally from Rhodesia. The denial of his identity in Rhodesia made him to cross so. He's portrayed as a robber stealing in a house. Even with prior permission he would have not been allowed for the reason he's black. Just because he is a non-white he's unable to wander wherever he likes to live.

The second issue arises when Petrus' brother fell ill. Since he came unlawfully, he was not treated in hospital. If taken for treatment then his identity will be questioned. Eventually, he breathed

his last. Unknowing the cause of death he was taken for Post-mortem. It was reported that he died of pneumonia. Without the concern the family his body was buried. And the reason the white master gave to Petrus was, his brother's unauthorised entry. The following lines are the witness:

“You see, he was a stranger. They knew he wasn't from here, and they didn't know he had some of his people here, so they thought they must bury him.” It was difficult to make a pauper's grave sound like a privilege. (Newyorker,n.pag)

The colour of an individual cannot define the status. In the apartheid situation, especially in the above mentioned lines, it is stated that a person without proper identity is identified as underprivileged and was not given proper funeral.

The third concern is to deal with Petrus' borther's funeral. Petrus and his father wanted to perform the funeral rituals to the dead person. He kept on questioning about the fetching of the body. The white master enquired the health officials and asked Petrus to pay twenty pounds to fetch the dead body of his own brother. With the support of the other workers, Petrus was able to collect twenty pounds and paid the officials. The master or any other neighbouring whites did not bother to help Petrus to get 20 pounds. The following lines are the witness:

“Please,Baas,” he said, awkwardly handing me a bundle of notes. They're so seldom on the giving than the receiving side, poor devils...There it was ,twenty pounds, in ones and halves, some creased and folded until they were soft as dirty rags, others smooth and fairly new...(Newyorker ,n.pag)

Petrus was begging his master that if he takes step then he can bring his brother's body because he is white. Petrus stares at his master with the thought that as follows, “He just kept on looking at me, out of his knowledge that white men have everything, can do anything, if they don't it is because they won't.”(n.pag)

These lines portray that if a white consider then he can sort things possible because of the domination. If thought Petrus' master could have helped him to get the dead body before the burial of the officials. But he did not bother about it.

Once the body arrived, the family of Petrus was performing the rituals on Sunday which off for all the workers. During the rituals, only the blacks were present. The master of Petrus peeps at the funeral from his home. Suddenly, arose a chaos among the people gathered in the funeral. In an eager the master went near them and found the father of Petrus approached him in agony. He uttered that the dead body doesn't belong to his son. “My son was young and thin,” he said at last.(n.pag) He gave the hints of his son's body which does not match. The dead body gave to them had a stitched scar on its forehead which was not there in his son. If an individual is black, then he will not be given an identity even after his death.

Petrus and his family are waiting to get the dead body of Petrus' brother. Every day the master gives them an answer that they will find the body soon. Once in irritation he poured out the words of hurt about the condition of the body. The harsh reply of the master is as follows:

At last, it became clear that we would never get Petrus's brother back, because nobody really knew where he was. Somewhere in a graveyard as uniform as a housing scheme, somewhere under a number that didn't belong to him, or in the medical school, perhaps, laboriously reduced to layers of muscle and strings of nerve? Goodness knows. He had no identity in this world anyway. (Newyorker ,n.pag)

The pitiful Petrus lost his brother, could not do the proper rituals, lost the money to fetch the body. On the whole, just because he belongs to the black community, they are not given place to live as well as the place to be buried after the death.

The next short story of Nadine Gordimer is "City Lover" which was published in The New Yorker Magazine in 1975. This story is set in Johannesburg during the period of apartheid. A European geologist working in South Africa becomes intimated with a coloured African girl. In the apartheid period it is illegal for a black to have a relationship with whites. Due to the law of illegal affair, they were arrested and forced for a medical test. The end was so pathetic that they shielded it up by fantasizing that she is a maid. The story began with the idea of love but ended in a political issue.

In the story, the woman is mentioned as coloured. In the sense of colour in Africa is fair than the blacks in South Africa. The following lines portrays about her skin shade "as a colored girl cashiers' punches the register(he has quickly accustomed himself to South African use of colored to distinguish pure African descent)" (Newyorker ,n.pag) The colour of a person cannot determine the character. But in the apartheid it was so. The whites think that the blacks are filthy.

The Coloured woman working in a super market as cashier met a geologist Dr.Von Leinsdorf searching for razor pocket which was unavailable. After two days she met him in a street and informed him to give the pocket in his house. Being black she hesitated because according to the law they are not supposed to enter whites place. The following lines express the situation that prevailed, "She had never been inside one of these big flat buildings. She lived a bus-and-train ride away, to the west of the city but this side of the black townships in a township reserved for people her tint." (n.pag)

The geologist and the woman began to be intimated with each other. Once he asked her to stay with him. Being a foreigner he did not know the law that the blacks are not supposed to stay in the place where whites live.

He was a foreigner...he didn't yet understand that where she lived people didn't have telephones in their houses..her face showed a fear and vacancy he could not read...she'll be scared. S'e'll be scared we get caught. (Newyorker ,n.pag)

The above lines show how the blacks were restricted and led a fearful life to do something that is their personal. They did not have liberty to do what they like. At the end of the story, both were caught red handed by the officials. They were taken to the hospital for virginity test. They were surrendered before the court. The woman accepted before judge that they had physical pleasure. In the next day newspaper the truth has been concealed to unfair saying that she is a maid. In contrast, the foreigner portrayed himself as higher class and it is not allowed for him to marry someone who is lower. The following lines are the witness of the bias shown between the whites and non-whites, "The girl said "I'm sorry for the sadness brought to my mother..."Even in my country it is difficult for a person from a higher class to marry one from a lower class," he said."(n.pag).The crime has done by both. But it affected the coloured woman rather than the foreigner. The whites think they are superior to the blacks. The non-whites are underprivileged. They were refused to get good job, education and human rights which they deserve. If not the political at least they should be given their personal rights.

Nadine has clearly stated the superiority of the white through the character of Petrus' master in the Six feet of the country and the officials in City lovers. Petrus and the woman are the victims who are facing the struggles of apartheid without being wrong. The superior thoughts of whites make them arrogant. The blacks don't want to be the subaltern but they are suppressed by imposing laws against them. The two characters highlight the tears of the whole black community. The two short stories discussed above gives the glimpses of the situation that prevailed during apartheid. Many writers have insisted an idea that colour doesn't play significant role to define an individual. Even though the apartheid has ended few decades ago, the very thought of racial discrimination is still persisting in this world.

### References:

<http://images.archives.newyorker.com&pagecount=184&v=v5> short story-City Lovers.Web.March 9 .N.Pag

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1953/05/23/six-feet-of-the-country> short story-six feet of the country.Web.March10.N.Pag

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apartheid> . definition-Apartheid.Web.March 9

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/apartheid>. Web.March 9.N.Pag.

### **Identity of Cultural Reminiscences in *Martha Quest* by Doris Lessing's**

---

**K. Rajesh,**

Ph.D-Research Scholar in English,  
Pachaiyappa's College, Chennai-30

---

#### **Abstract**

*Martha Quest* is first novel of *Children of Violence*. The paper analyses the novel with references of cultural memory studies. The novel analyses upon Lessing Reminiscences and her experiences in Southern Rhodesian country from 1936 to 1938. Martha is the chief protagonist of the novel and her character resembles the author's life. Martha like Lessing has been born at the end of World War I. It is a close portrayal of Lessing's introduces her family and friends circle introduced in the novel with the impact of her reminiscences. The novel based with the idea of nostalgia (sentimental longing for the past times) and shows that this can also be a part of cultural memory and she uses her own memories to create a story and of the way in which that past is now days remembered. Another respect of the role is nostalgia, it mean a deep and sometimes painful longing for the personal or past, as common experiences. Martha searches a freedom, equality, hatred of oppression, the sensitivity of mind and the visionary spirit. This paper reveals how the cultural memories link in African perspective also it brings the deep understanding of the colonial situation in Southern Rhodesia.

**Keywords:** History and Memory, Southern Rhodesia, Town, Clubs, Office and Marriage.

---

Lessing explains the identities of British settlers in South Rhodesia also the British who stayed in Great Britain are different from one another. British settlers have some different cultural practices like clothing and eating and even their cultural identities get change and develop from over the years. Whereas the British became more liberal in their idea about cultural (white) supremacy, the British settlers in South Rhodesia clung to their idea of superiority over the black residents of Africa. A brief History of Zimbabwe, introducing the theory of memory in cultural studies explains, it is important to combine factual history with collective or individual memories in order to create an objective and the study of Doris Lessing's work.

Lessing has born on 22, 1919 October in Kermanshah, Persia (now Iran). She is the daughter of British parents, Alfred cook Tayler and Emily Maude Mcveagh Tayler. Her father has served in British Army, who get a leg injury during his service in the world War-I. After the war her family moved to Kemanshah in Persia. Her father promised of getting rich, through maize farming, and her father

purchased around one thousand acres of bush, and the family moved to the British colony in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Doris mother adapted to the rough life in settlement. Lessing father work in the imperial Bank of Persia as a clerk. Lessing has married with Frank Charles wisdom in 1939 and second one to Gottfried Lessing in 1945. Both marriages are not success in her life and she decided to leave her first marriage children's in Rhodesia. In 1949 she has settled in London with her second marriage son. She started her carrier as a writer. Lessing has lived ninety-three and has artistically write about women's lives for well over the last fifty years. Lessing has honored the highest Nobel Prize in 2007 for Literature.

Identity of cultural and memories has an interdisciplinary research studies, and it expanded in the period of Nineteenth century. *Cubitt* speak about *History and Memory* is the survival as reconstructing the past experiences in culture, religion and social identities. *Ricoeur* is also talks about *collective or personal memories*. Both writers are writes about the Nationality, Religion and Gender of past identity's of people. *Olick* reveals the form of *Collective Memory* and it classify about the official memory, family memory, vernacular memory. Those above the identities and discussions are based on the root of Colonial and post-colonial forms of theories. Jane Miller and Elaine Showalter in their article, "Doris Lessing and Millennium" published in *Raritan* volume of *contemporary literary criticism* explain the gradual growth of Martha as a person:

"Women often get dropped from memory, and then history, Lessing reminds us early in her autobiography as she explains what inspired this new project and what its scope will be for telling the truth and keeping her counsel. Her own memory is remarkable, especially in the first of these volumes, and it is something she is ready to trust partly because I spent a good part of my childhood fixing moments in my mind. Clearly I had to fight to establish a reality of my own, against an insistence from the adults that I should accept theirs. Her own life and the stories she comes to tell about it began and continued in this state of resistance to everyone and everything intent on containing her or explaining her to herself" (331-332)

Lessing has explains every woman has to face many social conventions, traditions and moral obligations in the life. She has shown in the novel of various personality and the forms of Martha, struggles with her parents from girlhood to adulthood in the farm in Rhodesia. Also Lessing describes the relationship between blacks and whites on African farms. Still, her childhood memories of the African landscape become connected in her mind with the black native of Africa and provide images of human beings in a simple and harmonious relationship with nature; she turns repeatedly to these memories in her later life as that of the Lessing reminiscences through all the five books of the *children of violence* series.

Lessing writings has related in the field of cultural memories in the novel itself written as a personal and collective memory by her imagination and experiences. *Martha Quest* (1952) has published in the volume of *Children's of violence*. The opening of the novel start with an epigraph: "*I am so tired of it, and also tried of the future before it comes.*" (1) This epigraph lines express a lot of

things and brings to the reader. The novel analyses the relationship between the parent and child and how it fictionalized in the authors memories.

Martha is a teenage girl and lived in a farming village seventy miles away from the town. She hates her mother Mrs. Quest, neighbour Mrs. Van Rensbergs. Both women's are gossiping the village activities of people and have a racist attitude towards the natives. They have the only entrainment to hear the radio and reading newspapers. Mr. Quest reading only a Tory newspaper from England, Mr. Van Rensbergs reading a Nationalist Journal from South African union. The two ladies are conversation about their experiences of politics and respective traditions, and they never talk or discuss about their memories or any other personal matters. Martha could not hear her mother and neighbour conversation, she said low voice "you are loathsome" and disgusting and entire into the bush.

There are certain rites in the talk of matrons, and Martha, having listened to such talk for a large part of her life, should have learned that there was nothing insulting, or even personal, intended. She was merely expected to play the part "young girl" against their own familiar roles. (4)

Martha is a typical girl, who dislikes her parents and thought herself, never become like them. She likes to avoid her parents, not supportive with them of debating and discussions. She has interesting in reading and her favourite book is Havelock Ellis. Martha has regularly lending books from Joss Cohen and Solly Cohen brothers from station; they are intellectual Jewish, she has been already lending the books for the last two years. Lessing express that the women's are following established patterns in their behaviour. Joss gives economics, psychology and sociology books, Solly gives psychology; from these books Martha gained a experiences to understand the society.

Mrs. Quest has an opinion that her daughter Martha should get properly married and have children. Martha need independence from the controlling grip of her mother who is seen as an enemy. Their relationship has so stressed and always fighting, arguing became a daily routine. She would approach everything her mother said with a lot of misgiving: "...at the slightest remark from her mother she was impelled to take it up, examine it, and hand it back, like a challenge..." (8). When Martha has invites a dance and party by her neighbour. Her mother nodded on dressing and to wear a childish frock. Mrs. Quest believes this would make her daughter unattractive before the boys. Martha resists her mother option and stitching a new party dress to wearing to the party.

Martha always thought of herself as a grown-up but her mother saw her as a sweet little girl. She wanted to dress in her own way but her mother wanted it another: "My dear, nice girls don't wear clothes like this until -" (30). Martha replies her instantly: "I am not a nice girl," broke in Martha and suddenly burst into laughter" (30). Mrs. Quest knows that Martha is intelligent and will make a career. She often boasts about Martha to Mrs. Van Rensberg: "... My daughter will be somebody, where as yours will only be married" (12). As Claire Sprague writes: "The two mothers, Mrs. Quest and Mrs. Van Rensberg, in the novel united against their children but divided against each other by nationality and religion and further divided when their daughters are compared" (5).

Martha feels that her mother has never loved her. Her mother follows the traditions and the ethical ideas, which Martha is unable to identify with herself. This impossibility of identification with her mother creates a huge emptiness in her daughter life. Martha confronts the absence of a model to follow. The daughter, therefore, seeks some kind of solace in the bosom of the Jung concept “earth mother”, which for her in the African veld. After quarrel with her mother, Martha “marched off down the garden, and ran into the bush” (9). Here she lies down in the long grass under a tree and keeps repeating to herself that “her mother was hateful” (10).

...she remained under the tree, whose roots were hard under her back, like a second spine, and looked up through the leaves to the sky, which shone in a bronze clamour of light. She ripped the fleshy leaves between her fingers, and thought again of her mother. (14)

Martha could not adopt their farm life, she get irritated of his mother and neighbor social gaff, and she feel live in Island “she grew through phases of fish and lizard and monkey rocked in the waters of ancient seas” (12). As a teenage girl she reacts with violence and opposition with her parents. A native man came with parcel of books from the Cohen boys, she felt tired to read half dozen of books, ignore to read. Lessing expresses in her writings about the reality of adolescent, who are the people in the stage. Mrs. Quest wants her daughter to be a different girl from the bunch of fast girls and “did not consider her daughter to be on a level with Marnie, whom she found in altogether bad taste, wearing grown up clothes and lipstick at fifteen and talking about boys” (13). Mrs. Quest, like all mothers, wants her daughter to maintain her dignity as she thinks, “a man will never marry a girl he does not respect” (12). She wants, like other traditional women, her daughters to follow the likes and dislikes of men.

Martha has thought and feels comfortable in her daydream of city, it built on the nearby hills where people of all colours live together happily and her vision in dream of a Golden city:

She looked away over the ploughed land, across the veld to the Dumfries Hills, and refashioned that unused country to the scale of her imagination. There arose, glimmering whitely over the harsh scrub and the stunted trees, a noble city, set foursquare and colonnaded along its falling flower-bordered terraces.... fair-skinned children of the North playing hand in hand with the bronze-skinned, .....Yes, they smiled and approved these many-fathered children, running and playing among the flowers and terraces, through the white pillars and tall trees of this fabulous and ancient city. (15)

Martha lives around with the homeland of native black African surroundings. The native African is everywhere in Martha's experience, yet because of the extreme separation of the races, she has almost no personal contact with blacks. Still, her childhood memories of the African landscape become connected in her mind with the black native of Africa and provide images of human beings in a simple and harmonious relationship with nature; she turns repeatedly to these memories in her later life.

---

Mr. Quest's personality is strongly shaped by his experiences in World War I. Holmquist points in his writing *From Society to Nature. A Study of Doris Lessing*, "His personality can be divided into a prewar and self, because after the war he does not consider him to be himself; most of the time he is engrossed in his thoughts about the impact of war. In world war-I, he has served as an ordinary soldier and has been the battlefields and flying shells which has killed his enemies" (41). He has been injured in the war. He suffers from diabetes and is "completely absorbed in being ill, he talked of nothing eye-his illness and the war, the war and illness" (24). Holmquist states that because of his war experiences, Mr. Quest has adopted a passive attitude and has gained a liking for suffering and the role of a victim. He indicates that these attitudes are also present in his daughter.

Even after the war is over long time ago, he still identifies himself with the war. His war experiences fundamentally changes his sense of identity. Nigel C. Hunt writes in his book *Memory, war and Trauma* when he says that many soldiers start identifying themselves with the armed forces, in which they lived then, with the family of which they are part of now. And this is what happens in the case of Mr. Quest, who in spite of living with his family, remains lost in the memory of war and keeps on narrating and recalling the incidents of war. He keeps muttering, to himself, the memories of war "We were out in no man's land, six of us, when the star shells went up, and we saw we weren't three paces" from the Boche trenches and...'(33). It is a cathartic act for the traumatized narrator that gives him a way to survive.

There is quarrel between Martha and her mother which leads a continuous hostility against her mother. Mrs. Quest resists her daughter friendship with the Cohen brothers, who she books to give to her daughter to read, her mother dislike of activities. Lessing identifies the impact of her own memories with her mother and it is very much evident in the novel. The battle between Martha and her mother is on the subject of the kind of clothes to be worn. Mrs. Quest does not like Martha to wear clothes like that of grown up girl because it makes the boys around Martha seem less dangerous.

Martha has strong determination to exit from home and mother's pressure and she decides to go city and find the job and live herself also search her identity. Lessing expresses Martha's feelings on leaving her old life by saying that, "a phase of her life had ended" (101) and "She was a new person, and an extraordinary, magnificent, an altogether new life was beginning" (102). She get the job in the city from Cohen's firm and has spend her evening time in Left Book club and go to night dance club with Donovan. Especially she feels different from other young girls like Marnie, a neighbour. Her relationship with Donovan, she looked like model and her dressing and hairstyles even minor matters have also changed by him.

Martha has joined another sports club, knave clubs. At end of the point she understands sundowner's parties and clubs women's are treated as secondary. Her mother's insists for marriage, also she meets Donovan's mother regarding their marriage. As Martha against of his parents decision and she need a sexual freedom to choose her life. She does walk down the way with Douglas conforming to yet another pattern of society that she had so derided. She have her an inability to decide that if she wants get married till the end, even though Martha is not take a positive decision, when her mother

wrote a letter that she want marry Douglas. Indeed Martha perceives her marriage to be an escape route from her mother's defiance's, and the new beginning of new life which she longs for.

The novel *Martha Quest* examines the dualism of author's life as resemble in this fiction. She openly reveals how she hates her parent's. It is clearly visible that Mr. Quest, Lessing own father, is a victim of the war who has made Martha's memory, making her participant in the trauma of the war in which she never participated. The concept of reminiscence keeping in mind to find themselves and it transferred into the writings for references to the generation after bears to the personal and collective experiences and they remember only by stores, books and photographs often become one of the sites of recollection. The paper brings the elements of Lessing reminiscences in the novel. All these integral experiences have been transferred in her life and from there into her fiction. The protagonist of Martha survives in different levels, Such as parenting family on the veld in South Africa, Secretary and typist in the private firm in the city, one of the group members in Sports Club and end with the marriage of civil servant, Douglas.

#### References:

- Lessing, Doris. *Martha Quest*. 1952. New York: Harper Perennial edition Published, 2001.
- Cubitt, Geoffrey. *History and Memory*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Olick, J.K. and J. Robbins. Social Memory Studies: From, Collective Memory"to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices." *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105-140.
- Holmquist, Ingrid. *From Society to Nature: A Study of Doris Lessing's Children of Violence*. Sweden: Act a University at is Gothonburgensis, 1980.
- Knapp, Mona. Doris Lessing. New York: Frederick Ingar Publishing Co-1984.
- Sprague, Claire. *Critical Essays on Doris Lessing*. Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1986.
- Sprague, Claire. *Rereading Doris Lessing: Narrative Patterns of Doubling and Repetition*. Chapel Hill; London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987.
- <http://www.dorislessing.org/biography.ht>
- <https://www.wikigender.org/wiki/doris-le>
- <http://www.browsebiography.com/bio-doris>
- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/lite>

### **The Surge of Xenophobia in the Autobiographies of Maya Angelou**

---

**Dr. Sindhu V. Jose,**

Assistant Professor of English,  
Sona College of Arts and Science College,  
Salem – 636005.

---

#### **Abstract:**

The term Xenophobia derives from the Greek Words “ Xenos” meaning “ foreigner”, “Stranger” and phobos meaning “fear”. Indicators of Xenophobia are prompted by penetrating dislike or hatred against people those are considered as outsiders. It may be based on their presumed or real descent, national, ethnic or social origin, race, colour, religion, gender and so on. Being an African American Writer, Maya Angelou portrays racism, racial prejudice and white illogical hate in her autobiographies. The present paper recounts the discriminating experiences underwent by Maya Angelou and her black people encountered with the whites and the struggles experienced by them.

**Key words:** Xenophobia, racism, gender, racial prejudice, white illogical hate.

Domna Stanton terms women's autobiography as 'autogynography' as a literary genre, autobiography unties the innermost feelings of a writer. It also provides self-exploration. The art of Autobiography began as a narrative of events. The ultimate aim of Black women autobiography by black women was to free themselves from the typical characteristics, humiliating and fake images which are given by the superior white race. The description of black women was so prejudiced and so they have decided to write an autobiography for themselves which gave them a self-determined identity. As bell hooks observes that the black male autobiographers focus only on the dual oppressions- race and class whereas the Black women autobiographers concentrate on the triple oppressions of race, class and gender. Maya's struggle is not the struggle of the individual alone and it can be viewed as the struggle of the entire race of black women. The struggles of the black women become universal to when the suppressions of the women as a whole being is taken into account. Maya espouses a tone of frankness and openness. Female auto biographers encounter the rough forces of the male world which leaves a marked scar in their life.

The term “xenophobia” comes from the Greek words ξένος (xenos), meaning “foreigner”, “stranger”, and φόβος (phobos), meaning “fear”. Xenophobia, or fear of strangers, is a broad term that may be applied to any fear of someone who is different from us. Hostility towards outsiders is often a reaction to fear. It typically involves the belief that there is a conflict between an individual's ingroup and an outgroup. The African American history states that, during the second voyage of Christopher Columbus, a group of people arrived in America in 1494. The European slave owners were in urgent need of the African labourers owing to their strong physical nature. Thus, the Africans landed up as

slaves in America. A fake-scientific literature promoted the principle that the Whites were in the state of being supreme in authority, power and rank during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But the truth is comparing to the whites, black people have stronger masculine power and intelligence and so they considered themselves as superior to Africans. Whites got fear of blacks and they treated them as inferiors and suppressed them in all fields. The final result is that the African race has been violently attacked. Their heritage began to be damaged systematically. Maya Angelou clearly depicts the racism, gender discrimination, white illogical hate and racial prejudice through her autobiographies.

This article establishes the perception of Simon de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* (1988) equation of woman as the "Other" (27). Irrespective of race, nationality or cultures since from her childhood to womanhood, a lady is fixed as a decorative object. In order to exist in the society, women have to identify themselves with the images created for them by the patriarchal world. This discrimination, dehumanization has been experienced beyond tolerance particularly by the African American black female.

As a child, Maya lived under racist Jim Crow Laws, a movement that reached far beyond the South and targeted many people's lives along with African Americans all over the country. White communists erected various kinds of hindrances between themselves and other racial and ethnic groups. Property owners signed in agreements called restrictive covenants. These contracts included not only African Americans and also other groups like Jews, Asians and Latinos. For example, one of the laws clearly depicts the racial discrimination as, "it shall be unlawful for a negro and white person to play together or in company with each other in any game of cards or dice, dominoes or checkers" (Jim Crow Laws.n.pag.). This clearly showcases that whites and blacks should not play games together.

Maya Angelou writes about several painful childhood memories involving racism both in her prose and poetry. For example, Maya's poem *The Calling of Names* records a series of the various names used to define African American people through the years – "colored", "nigger", "negro", "black".

Light, Yello, Brown  
and Dark brown skin  
were o.k. colors to  
describe him then,  
he was a bouquet of roses.(angelfire.n.pag.)

The above lines examine the noticeable effect of each name upon the African American psyche. In the same way, in her second novel *Gather Together in My Name*, the author narrates the names of blacks in various colours such as, "Buttercolored, honey-brown, lemon- and olive- skinned. Chocolate and plum blue, peaches-and-cream. Cream. Nutmeg, Cinnamon. I wondered why my people described our colors in terms of something good to eat" (GT 20). The whites have been addressed by their names in contrast blacks have called by different colours and objects.

Growing up in the world of Stamps, Maya Angelou's grandmother's place, remained to be a continuous struggle for the black women against the condition of surrenders. The first surrender has to be with the grown-up black men and the second one was with the white people. The struggle for

---

existence and dehumanization has been for a century of bitter experience. Families of powhitetrash (white people belonging to poor class) lived on Momma's farmland behind the school. The children of these white families would come to the store, would crawl over the shelves and into the potato and onion bins, twanging all the time in the sharp voices like, 'cigar box guitars.' They took liberties in Maya's store where Maya Angelou and her brother would be passive listeners.

The white children would also call her Uncle by his first name, and he would also obey their orders in his limping dip-straight-dip fashion. The discrimination and humiliation was executed even by white children to black men and women. They have pride of their own colour. Maya Angelou recalls an incident which she describes it as, "When I was around ten years old, those scruffy children caused me the most painful and confusing experience I had ever had with my grandmother" (CB 29). Poor white children had the authorization to address the blacks by their names or by any other they create.

Powhitetrash children would address the black woman arrogantly by her first name and would ape her. Black women had to either ignore or remain silent for such humiliations owing to their existence. Momma hums a song. As their actions produced no results, they started another kind of mockery. They started mocking faces at Momma whispering indecent languages and doing handstands. Momma's apron jiggled from the vibrations of her humming. Her knees seemed to have locked as if they would never bend again. Throughout the incident, Momma stood as a pillar of strength and dignity. The girls became tired of mocking Momma and turned to other means of agitation. Maya wished that she could shoot the girls, scream, or throw black pepper or even lye on them.

One of the smaller girls performed a kind of puppet dance while her fellow clowns laughed at her. Momma changed her song and started to hum. Maya found herself that she was praying. While taking leave, the girls were yelling out in succession 'Bye, Annie' (CB 32). Momma never turned her head or unfolded her arms; she stopped singing and responded, 'Bye, Miz Helen', 'bye, Miz Ruth', 'bye, Miz Eloise'(CB32). In spite of their age, black women had to render their due reverence even to white girls which in return resulted only in mockery. posture and mannerisms. Maya began to burst like a "firecracker-July-the -Fourth burst." As she could not tolerate her elderly grandmother addressing the nasty as 'Miz', Maya started crying bitterly. The clear recapturing of the Black and White tensions in the South is depicted here. Three white girls are attempting to use their race as an overbearing instrument of power, treating middle aged black woman as another child, practicing the rituals of white power with the full sanctity of the white community. They attempted to reduce the Black woman to their level.

People in Stamps used to say that the whites of their town Arkansas were so prejudiced that a Negro could not buy a vanilla ice cream except on the fourth of July- the American independence and on the other days one had to be satisfied only with chocolate. During summer, Maya and Bailey went on barefoot, except on Sundays. Whites, for the most part, separated themselves from blacks, and black children developed a fear-admiration- contempt for the whites' cars, houses, children and women. Maya doubted her faith in religion and God and uttered, "I couldn't understand whites where they got the right to spend money so lavishly. Of course, I knew God was white too, but no one could have made me believe He was prejudiced" (CB 49). It is clearly depicted through Maya Angelou's words that, whites

---

have the rights to have icecreams and to wear shoes on all days but these rights have been denied to blacks except on the Independence day and on Sundays.

When Maya Angelou was eleven years old, she worked as an apprentice in the home of Mrs. Viola Cullinan, a white woman from Texas. The training was different to whites and blacks. While white girls learnt waltz, a kind of dance and sat gracefully with a tea cup balanced on their knees, the blacks were falling behind, learning the mid- Victorian(living concept in the contemporary society ) values with very little money to indulge them. Mrs. Viola Cullinan was a plump woman, living in a three-bedroom house. As she was from Virginia, Mrs. Cullinan kept up the tradition of her wealthy parents. The maintenance of her house was inhuman. For Maya, it took a week to learn a difference between a salad plate, bread plate and a dessert plate. She was fascinated with the novelty, with the fluttering Mrs. Cullinan and her Alice-in-Wonderland house.

With the arrogance of a southern white woman whom neither custom nor tradition had taught to respect a black person, Mrs. Cullinan considered Maya's name 'Marguerite' as too troublesome. "That's too long. She's Mary from now on. Heat that soup from last night and put it in the china tureen and, Mary, I want you to carry it carefully" (CB 109).The attempt of Mrs. Viola Cullinan to change Maya's name for her own convenience reflects the tradition of American racism and also prescribes the nature and limitations of a black person's identity. The refusal of Mrs. Viola Cullinan to address Maya by her proper name also symbolizes the whites' individuality and their uniqueness. Mrs.Cullinan also refuses to admit her humanity. Being sensitive, reflective in nature with an alert intelligence, Maya has been able to understand the nature of insult. Maya says, "Every person I knew had a hellish horror of being "called out of his name." It was a dangerous practice to call a Negro anything that could be loosely construed as insulting because of the centuries of their having been called niggers, jigs, dinges, blackbirds, crows, boots and spooks" (CB 109).

The racial discrimination had led the blacks to live in a world of lurking fear. For all the young graduates, the graduation ceremony would be an exciting and happy occasion. In Maya's life, it was a dramatization of the painful injustices of a segregated society and an underscoring of the powerlessness of Blacks within that society. Maya also describes her graduation exercises. Unlike the White high school, Lafayette County Training School for Blacks was distinguished because it had no lawns, hedges, no tennis court, nor climbing ivy. To the graduation class the students had to walk under the shade of few tall persimmon trees. There were no terraced shadowed pathways for them. There was sadness among girls as if they were bounded for higher ground but in contrast, boys were friendly and more outgoing. Maya would be one of the eighth-grade graduates at the age of twelve.

The highlight of the ceremony was that, White folks would attend it. Two or three persons would speak of God, home and the southern way of life. Mrs. Parsons, the Principal's wife, would play the graduation march so that the lower grade graduates would parade down the aisles and took their seats below the platform. The high school seniors would make their dramatic entrance in empty classrooms.

Maya's work had awarded her a top place and she was the first to be called in graduating ceremonies. Maya was pleased with everything, including her dress, her hair etc. After the School

Principal's address, M R. Donleavy, delivered his speech. While speaking, this featured speaker insulted the intelligence of Maya's class. He went on insisting that the white kids were going to have a chance to become Galileo's and Madame Curies and Edison's, whereas the boys of the black community would try to become Jesse Owens's and Joe Louise's. Maya became very upset and angry on the prediction of the white speaker that the blacks could be equated only to two heroes and only athletes. Even in predictions only the male gender was taken into consideration whereas the black females were discarded. On the other hand while describing the white community both the boys and girls were included in the list of heroes and heroines, but in the Black community only boys were included. Gender discrimination existed only amidst the black community.

Maya was unable to stand the invited white speaker's "dead words" which could systematically destroy the dreams and aspirations of the black children and their elders. Maya wished all of them to be dead.

Then I wished that Gabriel Prosser and Nat Turner had killed all white folks in their beds and that Abraham Lincoln had been assassinated before the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, and that Harriet Tubman had been killed by that blow on her head and Christopher Columbus had drowned in the Santa Maria (CB180).

Maya depicts the clash between Blacks and Whites even in common spaces of existence. Maya had two cavities that were rotten to the gums. The pain was severe. As there was no Negro dentist in Stamps, nor any other doctor, Momma had treated the previous toothaches by pulling them out by painkillers or by prayers. Few days and nights went for Maya in blinding pain and Momma finally decided to take Maya to a dentist. As the distance to the nearest black dentist was about twenty five miles away in Texarkana. Momma decided to take Maya to Dr. Lincoln, the white dentist in the nearby Stamps.

Dr. Lincoln never treated the Blacks, Momma was in belief that, once when he was in need of money, she owed it and so he would treat her granddaughter. When Momma knocked the back door, a young white girl opened it; and there was a mild surprise in her. Momma asked her to inform Dr. Lincoln that Annie was there. The girl closed the door firmly and went. They waited for more than one hour.

Finally, dentist Lincoln arrived and inquired for the purpose of Momma's visit. Momma explained her situation very clearly. He asked Momma whether she was aware of, that he would not treat the coloured people. When Momma insisted again and again, he firmly told that it was his policy not to treat the coloured people. The whites had distinct ideologies. To the contrary, blacks were not permitted to have their own opinion.

When Momma constantly pleaded that it was not for her but for her granddaughter the dentist immediately retorted that though he bought the money, he had repaid it. At last, he uttered, "Annie, my policy is I'd rather stick my hand in a dog's mouth than in a nigger's" (CB 189) and turned his back and went through the door. Momma and Maya were insulted; ejected from the office of a white dentist. Immediately Momma had to take Maya to the black dentist, in Texarkana.

Peggy McIntosh elucidates the racial discriminations as “In proportion as my racial group was being made confident, comfortable, and obvious, other groups were likely being made unconfident, uncomfortable and alienated” (amptoons. com n.pag). McIntosh coins the term “Invisible Knapsack” which she expresses in her essay as white privilege is like an invisible knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, code books, visas, clothes, tools and blank checks.

To conclude, white race considering themselves as superior race treats black people cold-heartedly. The surge of xenophobia in them urges whites to call black as light brown, black, honey and so on. Powhiterash children addresses Maya Angelou's grandmother by her name “Annie” but her Momma reports that children as “Miz” reverentially. The girls never consider the age or give due respect to the elderly people because they are black. They were prejudiced by the white people. During the graduation ceremony, young white graduates have been compared to scientists whereas the young black graduates to athletes. White people changes the christened names of black people according to their wish. The above things are happening only due to the xenophobia and hence the title is proved.

#### References:

- Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Ballantine Books, 2009.
- . *Gather Together in My Name*. Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2009.
- Domna L. Stanton. “Autogynagraphy: Is the subject different”. *Women, Autobiography, Theory A Reader*. Eds. Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson. The University of Wisconsin press, 1998.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Trans. H.M. Parshley. London: Picador, 1988.
- hooks, bell. “African American Women's Autobiography”. *Encyclopedia of Women's Autobiography*. Eds. Victoria Boynton and Jo Malin. Greenwood Press. 2005.
- <https://www.history.com/topics/jim-crow-laws> . Web. February 25. N.Pag.
- <https://www.angelfire.lycos.com/calling-of-names> – Web. March 1. N.Pag.
- <https://www.amptoons.co/peggymcintosh>. Web. March 1. N.Pag.
- <https://smithsonianmag.com/definition-xenophobia>. Web. March 2. N.Pag.

### **Quest for Identity and Recognition: A Study on Aravind Adiga's Novel "*The White Tiger*"**

---

**J. Keba Immanuel**

Research Scholar, Madurai Kamaraj University &  
Assistant Professor of English & Vice Principal (SFC)  
Arul Anandar College (Autonomous),  
Karumathur-625514, Madurai District.

---

#### **Abstract**

Identity is a social issue and a dream even for the twenty first century individuals. Technology is fast growing to make things easy and simple. On the other side, identity is denied for the deserving. The world expects human beings to do anything to be identified. Contemporary literature paves way to remind the world that many people are still fighting, struggling and expecting for proper identity. Aravind Adiga, a learned scholar and a renowned journalist attemptsthrough his maiden novel *The White Tiger* to tear out the struggles that a man faces to state that he is also a fellow citizen of the society and the country. This novel was written in 2008 and it won the most coveted Man Booker Prize. This novel is a masterpiece which has won the hearts of many readers and researchers. Balram Halwai is the narrator and main character of the novel, who ruthlessly acknowledges his struggles, difficulties and discriminations that the society has imposed on him in the name if identity. This novel is a voice of every unacknowledged citizen of the contemporary society. This article would try to bring out the struggles of Balram Halwai for identity and acknowledgement and how he was able to attain them.

**Keywords:** identity, social issue, contemporary struggles, discriminations, voice and acknowledgement

Indian Writing in English, ever since its beginning, has been echoing the social issues and problems. Early writers voiced the voiceless. The contemporary writers too do their best to portray the currents issues to make the society understand its weaknesses and problems. Aravind Adiga goes a step beyond to showcase the issues like identity crisis, ambivalence, privatization, globalization, unemployability, social discriminations, community discrimination, poverty etc., In his debut novel *The White Tiger*, Adiga clearly voices all the above-mentioned issues and problems. As indicated in the abstract, this article would explore the struggles and difficulties which the protagonist of the novel Balram Halwai faces to be identified and recognized. The beginning of the novel itself is a novel venture which arises the eyebrows of the readers. The novel does not begin like any other novel which would try to attract the attention of the readers by saying once upon a time or once there was a village etc., etc.,

The novel begins with the first night as it is an epistolary novel consisting seven confessional letters written by Balram Halwai to His Excellency Wen Jiabo, The Premier, Beijing, China. While writing these confessional letters, Balram Halwai mentions his Name as the white tiger, a thinking man

and an entrepreneur. Wen Jiabo who has a mission to visit India, especially Indian entrepreneurs. Halwai learns this news from the All India Radio which he considers reliable always. Halwai is presently residing in Bangalore, India, which is claimed as one of the world centers of electronics. He addresses The President as Sir, which shows that he has a huge respect on him. As the novel begins, the present of India is typically presented by Aravind Adiga alongside. He says whenever great leaders or men like Mr. Premier visit India, they would be informed about the greatness of India like its religion, architecture, tradition, culture, its morality and all. The leaders of our country would be waiting at the airport for the arrival of foreign leaders and they would do *Namastes* to show how saintly India is. This kind of beginning itself is a great attack on the Indian leaders who slowly destroy the country through their petty politics.

Aravind Adiga is not bothered about echoing what is happening in India. Through the main character of his novel, he addresses the world about the present India. This novel talks about the two sides of India in that are India in light and India in dark. The rich are portrayed as light and the underdogs as dark. Balram Halwai alias Munna pinpoints every single activity that an ordinary man does to become powerful or rich. There is a common saying in India that the rich become richer and the poor become poorer. The rich people are capable of doing whatever they desire and the poor still starve, suffer for their daily needs. Munna is different. He no more wants himself to be called as poor. He needs a change in his life. To obtain that change, he goes to the extent of killing his master. Finally, Balram Halwai becomes a white tiger from being a servant, murderer, philosopher and an entrepreneur.

Balram Halwai is basically from a poor family and he is a son of a rickshaw-puller. The depiction of his village by Aravind Adiga is the reality of Indian economics. The entire novel is a journey of the protagonist from darkness to light. To attain light, an ordinary rickshaw-puller's son has to meet lot of challenges. The following words of Balram Halwai in page number 14 in the novel exactly express this idea.

*“You see, I am in the Light now, but I was born and raised in Darkness”*

The whole of the novel is in the form of narration and the entire narration thrives for identity and recognition. Self-confidence could be the subtheme of the novel as Balram Halwai describes himself as follows in page number five,

*“I'm a man of action and change”*

Nothing gets stopped with words alone in the case of Balram Halwai. He keeps going until he gets what he wants. Balram was born and raised in Laxmangarh, which is an exact and typical Indian village. Though he wants to continue his studies, he is forced to give it up due to the economic condition of his family. The first identity denial takes place for Balram Halwai from his name. When his school master asks him for his name, Balram was able to respond to him with the name 'Munna'. Munna is not a name in the village, it simply means a boy as usually every language would have a pet name for boys. This makes Balram Halwai highly embarrassed. Having known that Balram Halwai has not been named by his parents, forcefully the school teacher names him as Balram. The teacher also gives a mention that Balram is the sidekick of Lord Krishna. The teacher is not rightful here naming the

boy as Balram, because he wants the boy to be his sidekick since the teacher's name is Krishna. As the boy returns home and tells his father that he has been named as Balram by the teacher, the father expresses no shock and he accepts the name. For Balram Halwai, getting a name from his parents is itself a failure and there starts his identity crisis.

As the novel progresses, Aravind Adiga travels with us around India in the name of Balram Halwai. In order to balance his family's economical hurdle, Balram Halwai gives up his studies and joins in a tea stall to support his family. But he is not satisfied with his present job. His zeal to become something else (identity) in the society makes him learn driving. To learn driving too fetches him an identity crisis. The old driver who taught him driving asked Balram Halwai about his caste. Caste is the inseparable curse in India through which people are measured about their quality. Aravind Adiga is not ashamed to portray this curse in his novel. Page number fifty-six in the novel, the question from the old driver goes like this,

*"The old driver asked, 'What caste are you?'"*

Balram replies that he is from the Halwai. Halwais are sweet makers. When the old driver understands that Balram is a Halwai, he underestimates Balram as they could only make sweets and they could not learn driving. The driver says the following to Balram,

*"Sweet – makers,' the old driver said, shaking his head. 'That's what you people do. You make sweets. How can you learn to drive?... 'it's like taming a wild stallion – only a boy from the warrior caste can manage that, You need to have aggression in your blood. Muslims, Rajputs, Sikhs – they are fighters, they can become drivers. You think sweet-makers can last long in fourth gear?'"*

Balram Halwai does not give up even after being discriminated by the driver in the name of caste. All the scolding of the driver makes Balram stronger and passionate to learn driving faster and sooner. Balram gives whatever the driver demands and learning driving. Once Balram becomes a learned and meticulous driver, the old driver does not fail to acknowledge the little boy's ability and skills in driving. He appreciates the boy as follows,

*"You're a better than I thought - you are a surprise package, little fellow"*

This identity as a matured gives lot of confidence to Balaram Halwai. He joins as a chauffeur in Dhanbad under Mr. Ashok, an americanised Indian rich man, son of the ex-landlord near Laxmangarh whom the whole village knows. Mr. Ashok, the employer of Balram is called back from America in order to settle certain tax issues. He is a committed gentleman. After sometimes, Mr. Ashok along with his wife Pinky, takes Balram as their prime chauffeur to Delhi, the capital city of India. The life style of Delhi changes the boy's mindset and he no longer wants to be a chauffeur all the time. He desires to live in the light. The light is the life of the rich people. Living in the light is not that simple in India. Making a small amount of money for the poor to run their daily life is a Himalayan task, but doubling or tripling the money for the rich is as easier than anything. People from darkness cannot put forth even a single step into the life of light. But Balram Halwai is something different and he does not satisfy himself with his present situation. Whatever he has witnessed in Delhi make him more enthusiastic,

aggressive and ambitious to get his identity. He wants to switch over from a chauffeur to an entrepreneur. To become what he wishes, he needs money.

Aravind Adiga showcases the inevitable role of money in human beings. Balram Halwai is clearly evident that money can demoralize even an innocent. Being ambitious and innocent, Halwai is confused. A cold war between ambition and innocence continues to strike Balram Halwai inherently. Finally, money in the name of ambition becomes victorious. When Balram Halwai kills his employer Ashok, he is not guilty of what he is doing. He has killed his master just for money but he is never sorry for that murder. It's a proof that in India many innocent youths become thieves, gangsters and murderers for the lifeless papers called money. An innocent man becomes cunning and cruel to grab a little amount of money. Aravind Adiga constructively satirizes the Indian society which needs a moral change. But the other side the rich people never let the poor become rich. Earning money is a lifetime target. Everyone in the country is selfish. Even multimillionaires do not share the excess money with the needy, rather they still become money minded.

This attitude makes the protagonist to become money minded than being morally good. Morality is kept outside compared to identity. Balram Halwai towards the end of the novel stands taller and higher without any guilt of killing his employer just for the sake of identity which he has been expecting from his childhood onwards. If ever had been given the identity at the initial stage itself, he might have not become a murderer. A single mistake caused him losing his whole family because his employer Ashok's family did not spare anyone in the family of Balram Halwai for the greater cause he committed by killing his employer Ashok. At the end, Balram is victorious as an entrepreneur and as a thinker. But, as a human being, he only knows his mind better than anyone in the world. When identity is denied, there would be greater protest, fight and expectation.

#### **References:**

Adiga, Aravind. *The White Tiger*. New Delhi: Harper Collins Publishers, 2018. Print.

Jadhav, Prashant. "Arvind Adiga's The White Tiger: A Search for Identity." *New Man International Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies* 1.4 (2014): 36-41. Newmanpublication.com. Web. 17 Aug. 2020.

Samarao, Shakate Bharat. "The White Tiger: Quest of Existence." *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publication* 2.6 (2012): 1-2. ijspr.org. Web. 17 Aug. 2020.

**Mahesh Elkunchwar: Exploring Identities of Women in “*Flower of Blood and Garbo*”**

---

**Ms. Amy Gracelyn Paul & Dr. Apsara Stanley**

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences

---

The very term ‘identity’ is a paradox in itself. Merriam – Webster dictionary through its two definitions illustrates this paradox best. Identity is defined both as “the distinguishing character or personality of an individual” and also as “the condition of being the same with something”. The psychological need to identify with something like a person or a group to feel accepted and the need to belong is strong. The increasing tension of the opposing forces to conform and to assert oneself as an individual results in individuals undergoing an identity crisis. An individual may also face difficulties in reconciling with the various identities thrust on by their self by the society. They may choose to give precedence to their existence over their essence, usually with violent results. Elkunchwar’s plays focus on exploring these individuals and their situations, resulting in the plays taking an existential tone.

Shanta Gokhale, Marathi critic and writer, in an interview to Salil Tripathi, calls Mahesh Elkunchwar a consistent experimenter whose contribution, she considers, is second only to Vijay Tendulkar’s. The popularity of Vijay Tendulkar has so overshadowed the contributions of other Marathi playwrights that in spite of being considered the successor of Vijay Tendulkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar remains largely unknown. In addition, his themes are seldom mainstream or conventional. Themes ranging from life, death, fertility, sterility, truth, perception of truth, art, creative energy, tradition, etc., are derived from the fragmented society and its dysfunctional individuals struggling with their selves, families and the society at large. Individuals and their tortured psyche remain the core of his plays.

Many factors are involved in the process of identity formation. One’s community, location, the wider society, both nature and nurture play vital roles in the development of one’s identity. But the indisputable fact remains that a strong sense of identity lends meaning and purpose to life and is essential for the psychological well-being of an individual. The social world around us offers various roles and relationships which allow us to find meaning by providing identities but it also threatens individuals with disapproval, guilt, ostracism or ex-communication, violence and even death, when the rules, traditions and practices of the society are challenged. The personal inner world of an individual also plays an important role in identity formation. Sullivan in his book *Cultural-existential psychology: The role of culture in suffering and threat* points out the possibility of nihilistic despair—the complete loss of value—that arises when the personal world is overwhelmed by the social (Sullivan, 2016). The issue central to the idea of existentialism is the question of identities – existence over essence, and the freedom of choice.

Traditional societies, like Indian societies, are configured around communities and families, with religion and patriarchy as regulating authorities. Individuals in such societies have their life mapped out for them by the elders of their family or community and by religion. From one’s clothing to one’s life partner there is barely any room for choice. When caste and gender politics are incorporated

into this already rigid structure, women become the victims of the society and their position in the society becomes an irrelevant matter. The existence of women as beings in themselves becomes an alien concept. With rapid urbanization, capitalism and globalization, traditional societies clashed with modern ideas and sensibilities. The novel ideas of individual freedom and individuality crept into the minds of people. Elkunchwar in his plays portrays characters who, consciously or unconsciously, make a choice to explore their personal identities - existence over the roles prescribed by the society - essence. Especially, the women become aware of themselves as a person. The anguish of these characters and the result of their 'revolt' is explored in everyday settings by Elkunchwar.

This paper attempts to sketch the breakdown of two female characters – Padma from *Flower of Blood* and Garbo from *Garbo*. Padma, a wife and mother, would generally be considered a good woman in the society. Garbo, an aging B-grade actress in a relationship with three men at the same time, would be considered a disgrace and ostracized in a more traditional setting. Though these two characters are diametrically opposite, they meet the same violent end. Padma is so emotionally traumatized by the breakdown of her identities that she loses a sense of herself and experiences, what Sullivan calls, the complete loss of meaning—(that) arises when the personal world is unmoored from the social (Sullivan 2016). Garbo, on the other hand, is murdered when she finally makes a choice for herself by rejecting the roles of wife and mother. In the situations of both these characters in the plays, society plays an inextricable yet invisible role. The social world and the identities it thrusts on the individuals, along with crushing feelings of guilt and hopelessness, overwhelm them. The responses of these two characters are different, where Padma succumbs to despair, Garbo rebels against the society and stands up for her.

The play *Flower of Blood (Raktapushpa)* revolves around a nuclear family, Bhau (father – husband), Padma (mother – wife), Shashi (dead son) and Leelu (daughter), that had lost the son, Shashi. This tragedy breaks the mother, the husband – wife relationship and the mother-daughter relationship. For the mother, Padma, her social world had broken down. The play opens on the birthday of Shashi. Padma is sitting “doing nothing”. (*Flower of Blood*, 29) The conversation between husband and wife then reveals that Padma is on medication and has grown cynical and apathetic towards everything other than Raja, the 16-year old paying guest. Her roles as a mother and wife had dominated and dictated her actions for the majority of her life and the death of her son results in an identity disorientation. That she ceases to be a mother to her daughter, Leelu, at the death of her spoiled, head-strong son shows the male privilege in the Indian society. Rather than focus on her remaining child, Leelu, she tries to find a replacement for Shashi in Raja. Even her identity as a mother is linked more to her son than her daughter. The discussion between Bhau and Padma about Shashi reveals more about the mother-son relationship. Bhau could neither take any decision nor discipline Shashi. Shashi “failed his matriculation exams – from sheer irresponsibility. All that I (Bhau) did was to give vent to my displeasure. And you? (Padma) You didn't eat for eight days.” (*Flower of Blood*, 58). Her relationship with her 15 year old daughter is completely affected by her loss and she views Leelu more as a rival than her daughter.

Her menopause, in the face of her daughter's puberty, makes her rethink her repressed sexuality. In a traditional society as India, the role of a woman as a mother is glorified over that of a

wife. The only requirement as a wife is that she be dutiful to her husband and her in –laws. Any mention of sexuality and the act of sex itself are considered taboo. In the play, it is revealed that in the beginning of her marriage she was disinterested in the physical aspects of the marriage. This can be attributed to conditioning by the society and internalizing the societal attitudes towards sex. Bhau, her husband, says “I used to feel guilty. I couldn’t get rid of the thought that I was forcing myself on you.” (*Flower of Blood*, 59) Even the appeal to her husband to resume physical relations merely is a legitimate way regains her identity of mother. Raja, becomes the focal point of her identity disorientation. Raja becomes her replacement son and the recipient of her maternal affections. At the same time, he also awakens her sexuality. She beautifies herself for him and tries to emotionally bind him to her. In the beginning of the play, she chastises Bhau and Leelu for talking about silk saris “on the birthday of a lost son” (*Flower of Blood*, 36) yet she talks about her beautiful younger self to Raja and wears a gold-embroidered silk sari. The play ends when Leelu finds a stack of letters, written by Padma, that are apparently scandalous in nature. Leelu screams, “...You are no mother. You’re a dirty woman. Look at those letters. ...Dirty, dirty woman, that’s what you are. I don’t sneak into that Raja’s room. It’s you that go in there. You go there a thousand times a day.” (*Flower of Blood*, 60)

*Garbo* is an indecent play by societal standards. The play is set in a cramped Mumbai flat featuring three men, Intuc, Shrimant and Pansy, and the woman they are in a relationship with, Garbo. Intuc, a college professor, Shrimant, maybe an officer or a business man, and Pansy, a 17 year old art-school dropout, make Garbo the focal point of their fantasies and dreams. Like Garbo, the names Intuc and Pansy refer more to the roles they play than the name of the character. Samik Bandyopadhyay in the Introduction to the *Collected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar* calls Garbo a dramatic construct who is a petty actress and also a sex goddess to the three bored, cynical men. To each of the three men, she represents different things. To Shrimant, she is “a sex machine”. (*Garbo*, 16) Intuc perceives Garbo as “a challenge... (who) grows old but never stale” (*Garbo*, 18) To Pansy, Garbo is also a mother figure. In turn, Garbo calls Pansy “pet”, “child”. (*Garbo*, 21, 22) The real nature of Garbo is not part of these relationships. With each man, Garbo seems to play a role. As Intuc puts it, “Even after fulfilling the needs of all three of us, a part of her still remains untouched.” (*Garbo*, 19) The needs are not just physical, but also emotional and mental in nature.

When Garbo’s pregnancy is revealed, the men try to shirk responsibility. That is only till they realize that fatherhood gives their directionless lives a purpose. They talk about motherhood in glowing terms. They call Garbo ‘sun’ and ‘life’, compare her to the flowers and earth. In short, Garbo is elevated to the position of a goddess, the vessel of salvation. Garbo, desires motherhood, but rejects the idea for practical reasons. She also reveals her desire “to love somebody one day.” (*Garbo*, 41) When she intentionally induces abortion, commits foeticide, she does it out of a sense of self – preservation. This rejection of motherhood disillusioned the men about Garbo. To hide his lost manhood, Shrimant proposes to marry Garbo but she hesitates and yet again she becomes the focal point of the futile rage arising from that disintegration of their dreams.

Garbo, an ordinary woman, forced by circumstance to fight for her livelihood, retains hopes of finding love and having a stable life. She feels guilt for the pain and disillusionment of the men, only

because she feels responsible. Her fight to retain her identity as an individual with dreams results in her being called “a coward” and “a whore” (*Garbo*, 63) She defends herself by saying,

“You deceived yourself. You should never have expected so much out of me. I’m an ordinary woman of flesh and blood. You burdened me with all sorts of imaginary virtues. I carried on for as long as I could. But I couldn’t keep up the pretence forever. That doesn’t mean I have done any wrong. And anyway, who are you to make demands on me?” (*Garbo*, 65)

This outburst reveals her awareness as an individual with free will and choice. Garbo tries to conform to expectations, yet never surrenders her ‘self’ in the pursuit of acceptance and approval of the society. The above defence of herself could be directed to the society around her, a society that burdens women with expectations and rules to the extent that they lose sense of themselves.

Through Padma and Garbo, Elkunchwar encapsulates the struggle of Indian women in maintaining their identities. Padma reveals the dangers of losing one’s existence to the essence as dictated by the society. Elkunchwar also reveals the struggle of a woman in a traditional society to assert herself. Even in this twenty – first century, women are still defined primarily in relation their family and their contribution to society.

#### **References:**

- “Identity.” *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity>. Accessed 10 Mar. 2021.
- Bandyopadhyay, Samik. Introduction, *Collected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar*. New Delhi, Oxford UP, 2009, p. xii.
- Elkunchwar, Mahesh. *Garbo. Collected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2010. pp 3-66.
- Elkunchwar, Mahesh. *Flower of Blood. Collected Plays of Mahesh Elkunchwar Volume II*. New Delhi: Oxford UP, 2011. pp 29-60.
- Gokhale, Shanta. “Tribute: Silence, half pauses.” Interview by Tripathi, Salil. Mint. 8 November 2014. <https://www.livemint.com/Leisure/DSvBmnojNpW3dWrBiikf2N/Tribute-Silence-half-pauses.html>
- Sullivan, D. (2016). *Cultural-existential psychology: The role of culture in suffering and threat*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

### **Identity Crisis in Jean Rhys' "Wide Sargasso Sea"**

---

**Dr. M. Sathyaraj**

Guest Lecturer & Head/c

Department of English

Periyar University Constituent College of Arts and Science

Sendamangalam, Namakkal, Tamilnadu.

---

#### **Abstract**

Jean Rhys was a British novelist whose first four novels were published during 1920-1930s, but it was not until the publication of *Wide Sargasso Sea* in 1966, that she emerged as a significant literary figure. Her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* which is said to be a prequel to Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* won a prestigious WH Smith award in 1967, and Rhys belongs Creole heritage, and experienced as a white Creole woman, both in the Caribbean and in England, has greatly influenced her life and writing. Her fictions are often autobiographical in nature, mainly dealing with theme of a hopeless female, an outsider, who is victimized by her dependence on an older man for support and protection. Rhys writing often revolves around the lives of women transplanted from their roots and left to die at the whims of unfamiliar societies an obvious reflection of her own life. Her life is often noted for this distinctive blend of modernist techniques and West Indian sensibilities.

Identity crisis is one of the prominent themes dealt with post-colonial literature as the colonized nations suffer from rootlessness, alienation due to oppression, discrimination and marginalization by the colonial powers. They suffer from constructing their identity as they were under the impact of power in the form of race, culture and gender. Rhys in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* establishes the identity conflict through her setting the novel in Caribbean region as this part of country faced many problems of identity as it underwent different kinds of colonization which resulted in different forms of culture.

**Keywords:** Social Ideologies, Alienation, Exploitation and Oppression, Racism

Jean Rhys' first novel *Postures*, later published as *Quartet* reflects, closely her misadventure with Ford Maddox Ford. The novel largely reflects the women trapped into social ideologies. The central figure in the novel is a woman who suffers from alienation, exploitation and oppression. They are merely left penniless and treated as an outsider. Rhys another significant novel *Voyage in the Dark*, the novel contains of Rhys experiences of her travelogue with a musical trope. All these novels centers on the female characters who are subjected to financial, sexual, racial and social domination by men and society. These novels are just opposite with her other contemporary modernist writers, who seemed heavily influenced by the worldly and political issues of that time.

Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea* which she wrote after years of relative obscurity seemed to be a ground breaking novel. Like her previous novels, *Wide Sargasso Sea* goes deep in male-female

---

relationships; it also stands alone for its uniqueness as Rhys most famous work. Jean Rhys being a Creole belonged to a generation of slave owners, a part of her History that becomes a subject in *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

This combination of betrayal by both place and lover prevails in *Wide Sargasso Sea*, where the protagonist Antionette is deceived by what should be her protectors her husband and her mother country England. *Wide Sargasso Sea* might be an answer to many questions raised in the novel *Jane Eyre*. As a nineteenth century Victorian novelist, Bronte succeeded in demolishing the commonplace image of a heroine by advocating a plain Jane as a protagonist of *Jane Eyre* as she is an unconventional heroine in the background of the Victorian social life which celebrated patriarchy along with capitalism. In *Jane Eyre* the protagonist Jane faces many trials and tribulations in life's lonely road. But in *Wide Sargasso Sea* the character Antionette embodies a direct challenge not only to patriarchy, but also to colonialism, race and gender roles.

Identity crisis is one of the prominent themes dealt with post-colonial literature as the colonized nations suffer from rootlessness, alienation due to oppression, discrimination and marginalization by the colonial powers. They suffer from constructing their identity as they were under the impact of power in the form of race, culture and gender. Rhys in her novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* establishes the identity conflict through her setting the novel in Caribbean region as this part of country faced many problems of identity as it underwent different kinds of colonization which resulted in different forms of culture. Gender is the major role which falls under identity conflicts and women are the major victims. They face the double sides of discrimination one through patriarchy another through colonizers. They struggle to create an identity where they are considered to be respected but what they merely gain is oppression which leads them to madness and loss of self-control.

Rhys being a Creole woman explores the problems of women who struggle to build identity by her own experiences through painting the character Antoinette. One of the effective features in post-colonial literature is giving voice to the voiceless and in the same way Rhys has made the marginalized Creole community to speak about their sufferings and their feelings by using Antoinette.

Antoinette, the female protagonist in the novel *Wide Sargasso Sea* struggles with the questions of identity all her life. She meets the break of her identity and has several questions about her belonging where race, class and gender blocks her in creating her own identity. She is a Creole, an identity which refers to descendants of the original European colonists in Louisiana. The people who belong to this identity may be white or black, slave or free. The girl lives in Jamaica during the post-colonial period of the nineteenth century, in a British owned Jamaica after the emancipation of slaves. She and her mother represent the white minority and are despised by the black Jamaicans. Antoinette finds herself caught between the two identities not sure of where she belongs. She is struck between the black community which she is familiar and grows up with, and on the white community which she and her mother try to be a part.

Thus, in her novel Rhys tells the story of this woman Antoinette and how her identity was oppressed, questioned and mistaken, eventually leading her to complete madness, and loss of self and sanity. The concept of identity is complex and cannot be defined easily, because it constantly changes according to individual's environment. The novel largely shows the identity crisis forced on the Antoinette due to external problems such as race, gender and colonial politics.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first line of the part one starts with the question of identity; it establishes Antoinette and her family as outsiders. She explains that her mother and her family are not accepted by the Jamaican community. As she is from a Creole identity, she falls apart from both the races, so that she suffers from her childhood without knowing where she belongs. This origin of hers is neither accepted by the white nor the black population of the island. It shows how class plays an important role in constructing an identity as Antoinette doesn't feel one among them nor safe and security with them.

They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks. The Jamaican ladies had never approved of my mother, because she pretty self. (1)

In her childhood Antoinette experiences certain depression, betrayals and loss due to racial conflicts, which affect her and her family. After the death of her father the estate where the family falls into despair and the family struggles from financial support. Due to the freed slaves there is resentment toward their former masters, the white people. The conflicts raise to the level where the horse in the Antoinette house gets poisoned and killed by the blacks mysteriously which leaves her mother feeling stranded.

Meanwhile Antoinette's brother Pierre's sickness impacts her mother greatly, her grief causes her to grow thin and silent and she refused to leave the house. Antoinette is left alone as she is not cared by her mother; she is rejected and pushed away from her. Antoinette spends time in the garden or walking to the pool and returns home late. One day Antoinette meets a black girl who insults her by commenting her as 'white cockroach' and this hurts Antoinette very much. Being a little child, she stumbles in defining herself properly as she was neglected for her mixed race. She explains how the blacks hated her.

I never looked at any strange negro. They hated us. They called us white cockroaches. Let sleeping dogs lie. One day a little girl followed me singing go away white cockroach, go away, go away.' I walked fast, but she walked faster. 'White cockroach, go away, go away. Nobody wants you go away.' (9)

Antoinette soon befriends Tia a daughter of black servant. Antoinette feels safe with Tia and tries to construct her identity. She wants to be part of something and holds Tia to be like her. She spends time with her playing and taking bath in the pool at midday. One day Tia bet Antoinette to do somersault knowing that she has money. Antoinette accepts the bet, she does the somersault and came

up chocking hard, but Tia cheats her and speaks ill of Antoinette family as poor as and worse than black niggers. Tia leaves her wearing Antoinette dress and leaving her to wear her old one. Antoinette reaches home wearing Tia's old dress.

Antoinette's identity crisis occurs at an early stage of her life. Using her friendship with Tia, her only childhood friend, as a means of knowing herself Antoinette begins to gauge her ethnic and cultural identity. Being black, Tia shows Antoinette the extent to which black people do not like her and her Creole family. Intending to torment her friend, Tia calls Antoinette a "white nigger", a hybrid who does not belong to any specific race. Tia refers to Antoinette as poor and dirty; she also tries to underestimate her by cheating on her and by taking her clothes. After the betrayal from Tia Antoinette never meet her. She took another road and stayed away from her house till dark. Antoinette cannot identify herself by attaching herself with people as they hate and cheat her. This mistrust on the people makes her to identify herself with other things around her. She felt that everything around her is better than humans.

I was never long at the bathing pool, I never met Tia. I took another road, past the old sugar works and the water wheel that had not turned for years. I went to parts of Coulibri that I had not seen, where there was no road, no path, no track. And if the razor grass cut my legs and arms I would think. 'It's better than people.' Black ants and red ones, tall nests swarming with white ants, rain that soaked me to the skin once I saw a snake. All are better than people. (12)

Meanwhile Antoinette mother Annete marries Mr. Masson. The marriage creates a little hope for Antoinette in resolving her identity conflicts. She thinks that she will be happy with a caring family which will make her safe and it shows her weakness and lack of identity.

I have not brought her, she has brought me, or so she thinks...Dear father. Thirty thousand pounds have been paid to me without question or condition. No provision made for her ... I have sold my soul or you have sold it and after all it's such a bad bargain? The girl is thought to be beautiful; she is beautiful. And yet... (42)

Besides, the setting of marriage between Antoinette and Rochester sets on racial inequality and gender inequality. On the one hand, Rochester is characteristic urbanite state while Antoinette represents that of the colony.

Antoinette at last has a dream which actually shows her motive and upcoming action. In the dream she is lost and scared. She creeps down the house from the attic holding a candle. She goes to a room and starts to light all the candles and suddenly feels herself in her aunt's room. She angrily set the curtains fire by knocking one of the candles down. The fire surrounds her and she goes out to the battlements calling Christophine. She imagines herself in the pool with Tia and jumps down without turning back at the voices in order to get back to Jamaica.

In my dream...I saw sunlight coming through the window, but I saw the wax candles too and I hated them too...I laughed when I saw the lovely colour spreading

so fast...I called help me christophine ...then I turned around and saw the sky. It was red and all my life in it...I called 'tia!' and jumped and woke. I was outside holding my candle, now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do.  
(124)

Thus, this instability and loss of control over one's self has rooted in Antoinette from her very young age, not able to fit into any community. She is not able to find a peaceful place for her and often longs for such kind of surrounding. Antoinette's decision to burn the house and commits suicide seems her the only way to withdraw from all the crisis and to revenge against her husband for bringing her to this state of mind.

Antoinette imagining of jumping into the pool of Coulibri clearly shows that at last she manages to construct her identity and goes back to where she belongs and loved. In feminist perspective this act can be considered as a moment of triumph as she has released herself from all the various factors which stopped her from an aspiring her goals. Antoinette thinks of liberating herself is the only solution to her problems and sets the place on fire. She frees herself by destroying all the power, roles and limits made by the others.

### Conclusion

At last Rhys has clearly pictured that even though Antoinette is not able to build an identity but she creates an imaginary world for herself where she is with her loved people and place. She somehow succeeds in going to the next state which involves search for identity as she chooses death for her identity exploration.

### References:

- Rhys, Jean. *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Ed, Angela Smith. England: Penguin books, 1997.  
Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory*. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002. Print.  
H. Identity: Youth and crisis. New York: W.W. Norton, 1968. Print.  
Harold Bloom, Harold. *Caribbean Women Writers*. New York: Chelsea House, 1997.  
Jaspir, Jain and Supriya Aggarwal. *Writers of the Caribbean Diaspora, shifting homelands, travelling identities*. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers pvt. ltd, 2008. Print.  
Pollanen, Lida. "Abject by Gender and Race": The Loss of Antoinette's Identity  
In Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Vol 2(1): 9-17. 2012.

**The Journey for Self and Cultural Identity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "*One Amazing Thing*"**

---

**R. Renuga**, M.A., M.Phil, M.Ed., (PhD)

Research Scholar (Part -Time)

Department of English

Government Arts College

Melur, Madurai, Tamilnadu.

---

**Abstract**

The present paper entitled "The Journey for Self and Cultural Identity in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *One Amazing Thing*". This paper plainly depicts the personality of the characters. Identity is simply the projection and it shape and changes into self-revelation. Social character is about the gathering of individuals' shared their convictions and practices. Social character speaks to the individual's self-origination and self – recognition which is identified with religion, social class, ethnicity, and territory and its particular culture. The characters find their 'Self' all through the novel.

Indian English Literature discovers its starting point in the rich Indian culture. India is well known for stories and tales. While the prior Indian writing included legends, strict works, verse, and so forth. The Indian English writer evidently exhibited the social, political and social, strict and profound side of India. Divakaruni is an Indian who has settled down in America. She is a short story author, writer, teacher, artist and book analyst, socialist and extremist. The agony, injury are a procedure of the revelation for her characters. Her topics depict character's encounters the history, fantasy and Cultural Identity. In her works characters' involves in different experience all through the novel that encourages them to discover their identity. The epic paints the characters' battle to discover their identity.

At that point all had squabble with one another to carry solidarity with the gathering Uma, was the one recommends that all had disclose to one story from their own lives, in any event one amazing thing in their life. "We can each tell an important story from one lives" (65). Uma needs them to recount to ground-breaking stories. In addition, she says "Everyone has a story... I don't believe anyone can go through life without encountering at least One Amazing Thing (65). Uma is the person who takes the choice in an appalling circumstance. Uma was propelled and pulled in by Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, which is the book she is perusing around then of *Earthquake*. From the outset nobody acknowledges to recount to a story yet later they uncover their story individually. The individual's story uncovers something about who is the person in question, and the purpose behind their need to get go visa to India. All the characters are moved away to new place to rediscover one's identity and it is appeared in the character's story.

Mrs. Pritchett lost her way of life as Vivienne when she got hitched to Mr. Pritchett. She feels that he needs sentiment and energy; however we find that he thinks about her and is prepared to make a trip to India only for his significant other. Before long time she has gone to the bistro there she experiences an old couple's glad life in mature age. She sees them with frustration. After that she changes herself and says "There was nothing like that tenderness in my life. And without it, what use

were the things I'd built my days around?" (170). It is the medical attendant in the emergency clinic who causes her to understand this. "Stop blaming your husband' she said. 'And yourself. Accept. Forgive. A path will open". (174) Then she comes to realize modern life would not make each individual life as important. Culture just forms the individual's life.

Uma came to apply visa to going to country India. She does not favour an excursion into her local land. In the other land she needs to tussle to locate her genuine character. Uma's folks are moved their expert to Calcutta. One day they think about their little girl has a living in transgression culture with Ramon. They are completely stunned. Her mother begins to feel for her act. After certain days her father makes her a call and discloses to her that he is going to separate from her mother. She did not have the idea what to do next. Uma feels that her father has betrayed her mother. This occurrence of her folks is a truly astonishing thing in her life. Divakaruni uncovers the absence of culture just as demands that it is an amazing thing since her father lost his social identity in the new country. Finally, Uma gets the decision to shape her life.

Malathi and Mrs. Lola are depicted as having the business people soul and they will remain on their own feet. Malathi is recollecting the time spent in India where her folks and her parents want her to marry but she wants to be a beautician at last she understands her fantasy in her life. At the point when she has failed in her tenth grade for the subsequent time, her folks choose to join her. . "If they could provide her with one in which I looked better than normal, my chances of finding a husband-husband- and theirs of negotiating a smaller dowry- would be highly improved." (103). She and her mother have gone to Lola's 'Stunning Ladies' salon to enhance themselves. Later destiny has decided her to join as a beautician in the parlour.

There she meets Mrs.Vani Balan, an Industrialist spouse who consistently visit this parlour alongside her hireling house cleaner Nirmala. She experiences passionate feelings for Ravi. Mrs. Balan sees their adoration and compromises Ravi, and says "Had he lost all sense of proportion, living in America? Had he forgotten that servants needed to be kept in their place? Couldn't he see a low class girl like Nirmala had probably been planning to trap him?" (111). Divakaruni distinctively features the racial segregation through the expressions of her characters. Later he has engaged with Kumaraswami's girl. One day Malathi has erroneously applied conditioner to Mrs. Balan's hair. So she loses all her hair. Lola prescribes her to go to her nephew's place and gets a new line of work in Abroad Indian Consulate. Consequently, she gets a one stunning thing in her life. At that point just she understands the importance and method for her life and culture. Divakaruni did stress the social characters between upper and lower standing individuals.

Cameron was an African, he takes numerous endeavours to spare individuals from the catastrophe, however others makes him disturbance yet he relaxes and he just attempts to quiet him by saying that, "He repressed the urge to add, I am not a violent man" (13). He plays out the obligation of a catastrophe chief. Cameron starts to recount to his story. He recalls his sweetheart Imani who sings a tune musically. He becomes hopelessly enamoured with her. They build up their physical relationship and she gets pregnant. At that point he has a renowned sports scholarship. Cameron advises her to prematurely end it. So Imani leaves him by reviling. Cameron feels frustrated about demonstration of

premature birth. Before long he chooses to embrace a youngster and to get evident for the kid. Here he fortifies his social qualities. At that point he understands the identity of his way of life and that makes him as an individual. Cameron is genuinely and truly upset, yet he attempts to make an excursion to receive a young lady Seva in India, this makes him to affirm his self-identity.

Jiang a Chinese by birth, she lived in India before her marriage, since her folks had settled there. Her dad possesses a shoe store names "Feng's Fine Footwear". She encourages her father by visiting each cloister schools in Calcutta and peddles them to purchase the foot wears. One day Mohit goes to her store alone with his Sister Meena. Mohit likewise proposes and chooses to wed her. Besides, he enlightens her to uncover regarding their relationship to her family. At the point when she begins to reveal to it her grandma undermines her. Her Grandmother arranges all customary and social qualities. At that point her father says "Can fish love birds?" (73). At the same time Mohit's family additionally emphatically opposes and says "Devout Hindus and staunch Bengali's, they were devastated the prospect of their only son, carrier of the generations proud Das name, marrying a Chee- Nay heathen" (73).

Chitra Banerjee presents the contention of their way of life and their strict qualities. Jiang had to acknowledge her destiny. . "Or did she tolerate him with resignation, because what choice did she have?" (79). The manner in which she forms herself into another existence with Curtis Chan in another nation US. Jiang came to office to get visa for excursion to India. Previously, she had to leave India in light of the Indo-China war and she breaks with her adoration. Jiang had no way out in her life, yet she does not flop in her marriage. After four years, Chan has been influenced by influenza. His eyes move back and he is kicking the bucket. Jiang yells "Don't die, don't die, I shouted. I love you". (85) Then only Jiang realizes the meaning of her life and she really loves his husband then she says "When had it happened? Looking back, I could not point to one special time and say, There! That's what is amazing" (85). Then just Jiang understands a mind-blowing importance and she finds her adoration for her better half finally and she thinks it is her astonishing thing in her life.

Mangalam is in double-crossing undertaking with Malathi, marriage with Naina for cash, love for Latika, and teases different young ladies who are the companion of Naina, he is simply the man who draws in censure. "I started the cycle of wrong doing. I used her to get what I wanted... Karma's wheel is intricate" (164). One day during his eat at the Posh Imperial Hotel, he meets Naina, the main girl of a significant level government official and charms her by giving adoration sonnets to her. Naina advises her father thought that, she might want to wed him. Her father encourages him to get a new work. At that point not long after their wedding happens yet Naina has totally experiences a change in view of her rich humility.

Divakaruni outlines the social difference in Naina and her loss of personality and her change. She abuses his family by not going to his sister's marriage rather she has gone to Cannes Film Festival with her companion Rita. This occasion causes a major issue in their life. Later on, his folks like to visit his new level however Naina shrugged and repulses "They could come if I really wanted it, but she wasn't going to have them staying with us. I could put them up at a hotel. Not to worry, she would pay for it "(157). Mangalam feels that it is an affront for the Indian conventional family

Divakaruni shows how the Western culture has changed Naina and she has totally overlooking her conventional qualities. At that point Mangalam starts to shares his own assets with his bookkeeper office Latika. Her consideration and concern causes him to feel lovely and he says "Maybe to adjust my adversity, the universe had offered me a companion" (159). He asks separation to Naina. In the meantime, Latika has an issue of abusing enormous whole of cash from the workplace bookkeeper. Mangalam thinks about it's a Naina's arrangement yet he spares her. Despite the fact that Naina has squashed her way of life yet Mangalam keeps his social character by goes with her.

Tariq begins to recount to his nostalgic story. Farah, his mom's closest companion's girl who originates from India to seek after her renowned investigation in abroad by getting grant from Delhi University. Despite the fact that She comes to abroad, she abides in an Indian Belongings and furthermore she blends with other Indian Muslims. In the interim Tariq's dad has been caught by African-American. Following three days he has been discharged by them. Divakaruni investigates the collective and social obstruction through these characters. Divakaruni has impressively picturises the characters and how they mission for their strict and social qualities throughout their life after the mutual smash has been occurred in America. Farah speaks to the young people of today who are cognizant, cautious and worried about their profession, family and home.

The Novel closures with Uma deceiving her companion about observing an Aurora is the One Amazing Thing for her companion. The Novel finishes on Hope. Aurora is a Latin word signifying 'first light' it likewise symbolizes an entry to other world. This epic is seen as an open door for changing self-declaration. The energy with which each character spills out the facts is an endeavour to accomplish their identity.

#### **References:**

- Agarwal, Beena. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni: A New Voice in Indian English Fiction. New Delhi: Authors press, 2016. Print.
- Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. One Amazing Thing. New Delhi: Hamish Hamilton by Penguin Books India, 2010. Print.
- Roland, A. In Search of Self in India and in Japan: Toward a multifaceted brain science. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton UP, 2008. Print.

**Quest for Identity and Self-Discovery in Anita Nair's 'Ladies Coupe'**

---

**E. Princy**

II MA English Literature

Parvathys Arts and Science College

Dindigul

---

**Abstract**

Self-Discovery means understanding one's own character. Quest for Identity means seeking for Identity. Anita Nair's *Ladies Coupe* illustrates Self-Discovery and protagonist's quest for Identity. The protagonist of the novel 'Ladies Coupe', Akhilandeshwari or Akhila is about forty -five years old single Indian woman , seeking for her identity even in her quadragenarian years. Anita Nair skillfully express Akhila's quest for Identity, Self-Discovery and gender discrimination when she travels in ladies coupe to Kanyakumari along with five different women. They express their position and state. This makes Anita Nair's to questioning "Whether a woman needs a man to complete her or whether she can stay single and happy?" – a kind of dilemma. Literature is a mirror of society. In this twenty first century, even the equality scenario between men and woman who facing some identity crisis and gender discrimination. This paper attempts to analyze how woman in modern time receiving identify struggles and self discovery crisis through the novel Ladies Coupe.

**Keywords:** Identity, Gender discrimination, Self discovery etc.

Contemporary Literature is fixed as a literature between world war II and the current era. When we analyse the beginning of our Indian Literature, mostly it depends on Vedas, Religious and great epics like Ramayana and Mahabharata. But in the twentieth century, most of the Indian writers have categorized themselves from others by using English language which is inherited from the British. About two decades, many changes have occurred in Indian Writing in English.

Most of the writers use their writings as a tool to show the exact happenings of the society. Generally, Literature is a mirror of society. But they do not explain the society of other regions. They illustrate their own regional problems and the problems which are undergone by their regional people. A handful of notable works has written during the nineteenth century. But in the twentieth century it deals with India's social structure, realities of political, culture of the modern people along with the sufferings of the people.

Ever since India got freedom, seventy five years have passed, even now, people suffer from the conflicts like identity crises, modernism of people, political issues, feminism etc. When we compare both the male and female writers, Indian female writers have mostly drawn these themes in their works.

The Indian Female writers like Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Shashi Deshpande, KamalaSuraiyya, Mahasweta Devi, Shobhaa De, Anita Nair, Ismat Chughtai widely deal with the 'Women's Literature.' These Female writers are not bashful to

share their opinions more on political and begin more attention with the Women's World. They emphasize the importance of feminism.

Post –colonial nations like India, comprehend Bharati Mukherjee and Anita Desai, wrote about the experiences of people who are Eastern immigrants to Western countries. At present, period Indian woman writers produce from experimental. Their ideas not only change the Literature but also integral part of the Women's movement.

Indian woman writers have the necessity to reflect the reality of the society. As female writers, they have numerous responsibilities in the literary world. They are not sacred about society. They have many obligations in the world of literature. Through they be with theoretical, textual, intellectual experiments, they explicit the Women's world.

There are many successful Indian Female writers. Among them Anita Nair is famously known for her notable works. Anita Nair's remarkable works are *Mistress*, *Ladies coupe* and *Lessons in Forgetting*. *Mistress* focuses on the theme of man – woman relationship. *Mistress* is her third novel, in which she concentrates more on modern woman in a male dominated society and how woman's life full of sufferings in the name of marriage. The main theme of *Mistress* is husband – wife alienation, resulting from lack of communication and temperamental compatibility.

In the end of *Ladies Coupe*, the protagonist' eternal dilemma creates a whole sense of the work – Whether a woman needs a man to complete her or whether she can stay single and happy?. Anita Nair draws many themes through this work, but particularly the theme of Self discovery and Quest for Identity plays a major role.

*Lessons in Forgetting* are a story which sets a women's quest of her identity. Through this work, Anita Nair depicts the search of self of her woman characters and their assertion of the individual self.

Most of Anita Nair's characters come out of their struggles in their quest for Identity. When we analyse all the female protagonists of her works, more over it discuss about the Women's struggles, particularly protagonist's self discovery and Quest for Identity.

Koman is the protagonist of *Mistress*. Issues of Identity and Self-Discovery are the uppermost theme in the novel. In those days marriage is an ultimate goal for all Indian women. With this assumption, Radha in *Mistress* suffers in her traditional marriage life. She is forcefully married to Shyam by her father's compulsion. She is not happy with traditional life. Therefore she decides to lead her life as her own wish. She seeks her own individuality. She never wants to live in tradition and society so breaks the limitation and family customs of tradition.

The protagonist of the play '*Lessons In Forgetting*' is Meera – a female protagonist who lives with her grandmother, mother along with her two children. Women wants to be free to unburden their life and woman's confrontation against ancient traditions. This story is fully covers a theme of women's quest to move on in life.

Meenakshi is one of the characters of Anita Nair. Meenakshi falls in love with Balan the Kathakali dancer. When she is deserted by her husband, she does not want to depend on others. She finds herself a job and become financially independent. She is projected as the woman of the twenty first century. Modern women are aware of their potentiality.

In Ladies Coupe, Akhila the protagonist of the play makes a trip to Kanyakumari in order to search for her freedom and identity. Anita Nair's marvelous understanding of the minds of women is depicted beautifully in her novel Ladies Coupe. Women continue to be victims of circumstances though they live up to the varied roles they are expected to uphold. Patriarchy, in various forms tries to repress, and humiliate women. Women should not be ashamed of their status in life for e.g. widowhood, divorcee status, spinster status etc. Instead they should realize their true potential and strength. They should have the willingness to face new challenges and come up with innovative ideas to tackle issues around them. Though Patriarchy is a common concept, Anita Nair deals it with variety of women in different situations. She has portrayed her women characters who rise against patriarchy to find their identity

Similar to many other writers, Anita Nair wants to break the patriarchy. Most of Anita Nair's writing themes comes around self discovery and searching for Identity and identity crises. Thus, we need to identify why Anita Nair mainly deals with these themes.

Anita Nair was born in Palakkad, Kerala. She was educated in Chennai and pursuing her B.A. in English Literature in Kerala. Nair was working as the creative director of an advertising agency in Bangalore when she wrote her first book. She has chosen her own way of writing. Anita Nair's writing style is some what different from the others writing style. She was not always urge her ideas. Her novels reflect the struggle and conflicts in the modern time.

Anita Nair is a Indian Female writer. She was grown up in Chennai and now settled in Bangalore. So definitely she know how the modern women's world were. Though it looks like modernism, several women lost their identity by the male. Perhaps she may affected by these bitter suffering in her life. As a Female, she know the exact happening that undergone in the Women's society. She not hesitate to show it to the world. So she mainly took these concepts in her writing works.

Anita Nair elaborately discuss Self discovery and Quest for Identity in Ladies Coupe. It portrays the conditions of women in a male - dominated society.

Akhilandeswari or Akhila is a 45-year-old single Indian woman from a Tamil Brahmin family who works as an income tax clerk. She feels that she has never got the chance to live her own life, always fulfilling the roles of the daughter, sister, aunt and the provider. Until the day that she resolves to break free from her conservative Brahmin life and buys a one way train ticket to the sea side town of Kanyakumari to start a new life alone. During the process of her journey, she tries to find out an answer to the basic question which has been in pursuit throughout her life – 'Can a woman stay single

and be happy, or does a woman need a man to feel complete?'. She shares her ladies compartment (coupé) of the train with 5 different women:

- Janaki, a pampered wife and confused mother;
- Margaret Shanti, a chemistry teacher married to the poetry of elements and an insensitive tyrant too self-absorbed to recognize her needs;
- Prabha Devi, the perfect daughter and wife, transformed for life by a glimpse of a swimming pool;
- Fourteen-year-old Sheela, with her ability to perceive what others cannot;
- And Marikolanthu, whose innocence was destroyed by one night of lust.

Janaki, is portrayed as a happy woman, been taken care of by her father and brother in her parents' house and in her marital life. She is a pampered wife who prefers to live only for husband. She is significant character in this novel by being a confused mother treating her children selfish; comparing them to her husband. She has developed a 'friendly' love with her husband. She used to see stuck with the conventional role of women and she calls the home as the kingdom of women. She talks about a time when she felt a sudden disinterest about the same home and later she realizes that, a woman is always a subordinate to man and she needs a man to complete her.

As they all swap stories on their lives, Akhila questions them of her eternal dilemma - whether a woman needs a man to complete her or whether she can stay single and happy? In the space of one night, the women change her life with their stories, while at the same time, reminding her to think for herself.

Ladies Coupe is an attempt to study the identity, self discovery and a voice against female oppression and the problems of women. She portrays different stories through her characters in the novel Ladies Coupe. The novel switches over from past to present and present to past. Nair has presented her women struggling side by side because of patriarchy. Her women characters have been portrayed as intelligent and questioning. She analysis six women characters in this novel. Akhilandeshwari, the protagonist is a forty five years old spinster. She takes various roles of a daughter, sister, aunty and the care taker of the family. The narration of the tales is presented in the form of case studies. The novel unfolds itself against the background of a train journey, and each of these characters narrates the story of her life as the train chugs, trundles and troops to its destination. The remaining five female characters also portray women problem and oppression. Thus this study depicts the Identity and Self discovery of Anita Nair's Ladies Coupe.

Anita Nair, like many other writers of mainstream literature, has chosen self-discovery as the central theme of her novel. Ladies Coupe the novel takes its title from the second class reservation compartment for women. In the compartment all women were middle-aged. These women started talking about their lives and they swapped stories with absolute abandon. Akhilandeshwari, the chief protagonist has watched her father lionized by her mother while she and the other children were made and offered first to him. It was only after he had eaten that the children were allowed to taste. She understood that the females are dominated by the males in the patriarchal society. So they felt that they need to come out from such kind of society. But after her father's death, being the eldest child, she takes her father's place as the bread winner in the family. She does not get the same sort of Importance. She might have got equal pay for equal work, but she certainly does not receive equal respect even though

---

the family survives only because Akhila brings home a decent pay packet. She shed all the tears that she had been allocated for a life time.

Akhila is the savior of the family members, but the act of their rescue implies a sacrifice on her part. She is a silent worker, entirely behind the scenes, while all the younger children get their moments understate. Even her own mother carefully avoids wondering about her longings. She understands and feels for her mother, but her mother, having internalized made ideological systems for years, finds it convenient to ignore Akhila's womanhood. Akhila lives not by her own desires but according to the expectations she senses. A woman should depend upon a man from her cradle to grave and should never live as an independent entity: During childhood, a female must depend upon her father, during youth upon her husband; her husband being dead, upon her sons, if she need no sons upon the near kinsmen of her husband, in default, upon those of her father, if she had no paternal kinsmen, upon the sovereign, a woman must never govern herself as she likes.

For twenty six years, with her job in the Income Tax Department, Akhila was able to give everything, time, money and care to her mother and siblings. Her behavior was ideal according to the deepest promptings of culture which appealed to the role she had to play and not to her identity. This accommodating self-denial was a painful experience often at tremendous psychic cost to her. Akhila wonders whether a woman can manage without a man indefinitely or whether she is missing out on something that is vital to a woman's satisfaction. Sheela is bewildered by her father's disapproval of the cheeky wit. Akhila is as confused as Sheela, but with help from her childhood friend Karpagam and, later, the co-passengers in the coupe, she realizes she must live for herself. Through the given narrative fragments concerned with Akhila we see her growth and her discovery of a voice and a will. There was no time to clean her up. She had always wanted to die in her own bed and they had a long drive ahead before they reached home. Through a haze of pain and humiliation, Sheela watched the brothers and sisters get into the van and huddle around their mothers dying body. Daddy stood by Sheela's side, stern with disapproval and disappointment. She didn't care. She knew Ammma would have been pleased.. Akhila determines to break free of her conservative TamilBrahmin life by travelling to Kanyakumari by train where she meets five other women, Janaki, Margaret Shanti, Prabha Devi, Sheela and Marikolanthu. The train journey becomes a symbol for an introspective journey within each character. The individual journey into these six lives gives us a picture of society.

**Reference:**

Nair, Anita. *Ladies Coupe*. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2001.Print.

- <https://www.encyclopedia.com/arts/educational-magazines/nair-anita>
- <http://www.gujaratresearchsociety.in/index.php/JGRS/article/view/1238>
- <https://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/anita-nair/ladies-coupe/>
- [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anita\\_Nair](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anita_Nair)

**Legacy of Racism and Indigenous Aborigines: A Postcolonial Study on Leah Purcell's "*The Drover's Wife*"**

---

**Valan Anusha J**

II MA English Literature

Holy Cross College (Autonomous), Nagercoil

---

**Abstract**

Social bigotry and cultural prejudices have been an unceasing issue and still perpetuating even after the availability of ample texts. The proclivity towards anti-racism relies on the constant survey and study on native Aborigines to end at least in a little way. Racism starts with the notion of dominating or looking down on a particular group or a person who is considered to be different and peculiar in a way that slowly evolves into a phase of excluding or terminating them. Indigenous Australians have been classified into two types. The former are the ones who have already inhabited Australia before British colonization and the latter are those who have migrated from Torres Strait Islands. Aboriginal Australians have lived on the continent for over 50,000 years and there are 250 distinct language groups spread through Australia. This paper examines the global issues that are being faced by Australian Aborigines, their misconception and their dogmatism with reference to Leah Purcell's *The Drover's Wife*.

**Key Words:** racism, marginalization, post colonialism, indigenous

The Native Australian origin befell because the ones who uproot themselves using primitive boats from Asia to Northern Australia. The theory incorporates the fact that these early migrants relocate themselves before 70,000 years from Africa, which frames the Aborigines to be the oldest human population living outside Africa. *The Drover's Wife* displays the Native Aborigine Yadaka who lost his identity and by escaping himself from his tribe and acquaintance with Molly Johnson, the female protagonist. Throughout the novel, Leah Purcell portrays Yadaka as a Black slave. Both verbally as well as physically, he has been berated and scorned for his complexion.

Leah Purcell introduces Yadaka as a soft personality, beseeching and unassertive contrast to the aborigines which the early western texts have presented them. He had been accused for murdering a white woman but none believed no matter how many times he revealed. The mindset of the whites has been perceived in such a way that colour determines one's personality. Edward Said's *Crisis in Orientalism* says "a relation between Western writing and its consequences and Oriental silence the result of and the sign of the West's great cultural strength, its will to power over the Orient" (94). The very early western literature presented the paradigm of the writers who never had any close proximity with the coloured natives and provided the preconceived fantasies about them in their texts. The same transferred to the readers' minds as well. Purcell brings the scene of Molly detesting Yadaka seeing his rogue appearance and changed her despicable thoughts about him after his act of assisting her in delivering her baby.

YADAKA: Please let me help you

DROVER'S WIFE: A White Woman... lettin' a black man touch her... is bad

Enough...let alone deliver her baby...Another contraction hits.

YADAKA: Please missus! You don't want ya baby to die. (7)

Yadaka is introduced as a tough hostile man in the beginning of the play by Leah Purcell but when the play proceeds he is known for his vulnerability and obviously not a pathetic man. In spite of being brutally scourged to death he never flinched and it did not change his good qualities to help others who were in need. Molly is referred as a White Woman who patronized Yadaka and helped him from the eyes of officials. Yadaka knew his place and helped her in household chores and also he treats himself as a mere servant. When Yadaka revealed that she was the seed of a black heritage as Molly's mother was a black woman who fell in love with a Scotsman. We could see Molly's agitation though her support towards him in all possible manner. This strictly exasperated and troubled Molly to an extent and so she slapped him. This shows that even a helpful white woman gets jitters to play the victim role as that of Aborigines. He unraveled all these secrets of Molly with a good intention of letting her know about her family and Ginny May as Molly had been living all alone with her children. This actually haunted Molly more than being detached and recluse from everyone. As Stuart Hall's *Cultural Identity and Diaspora* says "The past continues to speak to us. But it no longer addresses us as a simple, factual past, since our relation to it, like the child's relation to the mother, is always-already 'after the break'" (Rutherford 226). One cannot change one's past. Though it is dormant, it shows the real origin "It is not a fixed origin which we can make some final and absolute return" (Hall 226). It can be applicable to text passage where Molly says after realizing that she was a half breed,

DROVER'S WIFE: [...] Miss Shirley McGuinness once said, 'Danny was quite brown...He might be a throwback?' Throwback, didn't know what that meant... I told her I was workin' hard in the paddock... Danny still in my belly, 'He got some sun too...' (53)

The reason why being the aborigine started affecting even the White woman Molly is the silence of the Aborigines who think of themselves as uncivilized and barbarous as stated by the West. As Edward Said rightly opines "the dimensionless silence of the Orient mainly because the discourse of Orientalism, over and above the Orient's powerlessness to do anything about them, suffused their activity with meaning, intelligibility, and reality" (Said 95). Leah Purcell disowns the idea of judging a person by his physiognomy and countenance by presenting Yadaka as a man of warm hearted with rough appearance. The idea of savage antique men, without unsophistication, has come from the repressed anger. After their extreme suppression and subjugation by the people, he is executed by whom he think they own them. Such shown anger is pointed and have been named as primitive barbaric men because they no longer accept what they are going through as dominant survivors. This idea can be compared to Eugene O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape*. Yank lived his life searching for a place to fit him in but could not get one since people had presumable thought about him as a filthy beast without actually getting to know him as a person. He behaved as a normal human as that of everyone in the beginning but the repeated marginalization pushed him to the end of actually being a beast. "He slips on the floor and dies. The monkeys set up a chattering, whimpering wail, And, perhaps, the Hairy Ape at last belongs." (O'Neill). The subaltern are more than their appearances as that of Yadaka who did not try to revenge against the Whites who poisoned his entire tribe and killed every women and children and even was put out of his own tribe because he was not ready for paying them back.

YADAKA: [...]’cause I woudn’t go with them for payback. I knew no good would come out of it (31).

Yadaka is shown as entire representation of Native men who are unlike what texts have presented them to be. This was finally realized by Molly who misjudged Yadaka before. “The mind learns to separate a general apprehension of the Orient from a specific experience of it” (Said 101). Consecutively, to understand them completely one must be in acquaintance with them to know the real them. This paper talks about the continuation and existence of racism inspite of us reaching for the meta-modernistic lifestyle. Though we are advanced enough to succeed in every field, we are not ready to unlearn the racist ideologies. The study on Native men exposesthe broad view that we shouldn’t carryour needless ideals to the future generation in order to make available solidarity and integration among nations.

**References:**

- Blackmore, Erin. “Aboriginal Australians.”*National Geographic*, 31 Jan. 2019. [www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/people/reference/aboriginal-australians/](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/people/reference/aboriginal-australians/). Accessed 12 Feb. 2021.
- O’Neill, Eugene. *The Hairy Ape*.A Comedy of Ancient and Modern Life in Eight Scenes: The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Hairy Ape*by Eugene O’ Neill, 4 June 2009. [www.gutenberg.org/files/4015/4015-h/4015-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4015/4015-h/4015-h.htm).Accessed 11 Feb. 2021.
- Purcell, Leah. *The Drover’s Wife*.Penguin Random House, 3 Dec. 2019.
- Rutherford, Jonathan,editor. *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. Lawrence &Wishart, 1990.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*, Pantheon Books, 1978.
- .

**Retold Myth and Change in Attitude towards the Womanhood in Indira Goswami's "The Blue Necked God"**

---

**Dr. S. Nagalakshmi**

Assistant Professor of English

Saraswathi Narayanan College

Perungudi, Madurai

Tamil Nadu

---

**Abstract**

Dr. Indira Goswami, one of the eminent North East writers, who belongs to Assam is known for her writings based on her own life experiences. She has authored more than twenty five novels and more than hundreds of short stories in English. Dr.Indira Goswami received Jnanapeeth award for her stupendous contribution towards English Literature who has given many translated and non-translated stories, fictions and novels. She is known for her innovative style of narrating stories related to the human plight of social phenomena and she has created herself a new alcove in the field of English Literature in her early age. Dr.Goswami has done her research works on the great Indian epic Ramayana and tried to explore the intrinsic structures of Myth and Religious faith that have become the most vital part of human life. At the same time she concentrated on portraying the pathetic condition of woman in the society and the realistic attitude of the people towards the womanhood in her novels. She tries to make change in the attitude of every human being towards the womanhood and also to reframe the mythical concept which sometimes leads to the truth. One of her famous novel *The Blue Necked God* is a typical example for the strapping faith of the people in their religion and God. The novel was originally written in Assamese as *Neelkanthabraja* and was translated into English in the year 2013. It was written intellectually by the author describing the pathetic condition of the widows in the conventional Indian society. The current paper is an attempt to explore the mythical concept and religious beliefs that are portrayed by the author in the novel and it focuses on how the women are treated in the society in which they live. As the name suggests, the Blue Necked God refers to Lord Shiva whereas the holy city of Lord Krishna 'Vrindhavan' serves as the backdrop of the whole novel.

**Keywords:** Myth, Religion, Faith, Womanhood, Blue Necked God, Vrindhavan, Attitude

**Introduction**

Dr. Indira Goswami is one of the renowned writers of North East India who contributed various valuable realistic stories in the literary field. *The Blue Necked God* is her most intellectual novel which was written at the backdrop of Vrindhavan in Uttar Pradesh. The plot of the story revolves around the miserable plight of the poor Brahmin widows who spend their life in the holy city with the hope of 'mukthi' or salvation. When Dr.Goswami was selected for the Jnanapith award, the selection board stated about her that,

---

“Indira Goswami is one of the top Indian writers who have made a significant contribution to various branches of literature. Her canvas is wide and includes impressions of life and people in all their spectacular varieties and richness” (22).

Most of the feminist writers focus on the frustrations and miseries of the life of women in their writings and they deal mostly about the domestic brutality in every ordinary family. But there are certain women writers like Dr. Indira Goswami who focused on the myth and religious faith apart from the attitude of the society towards women in their stories. Dr. Goswami is a brilliant writer who tries to portray the pathetic situations of women in the society in the contemporary age through her characters in the novels. The mythical concepts are dealt in her novels as the prominent factor at the same time when the patriarchal domination takes the first position in the list of themes in her stories. Myth and Religion have become two major parts of the human life which can be attached to moral philosophy and political backdrops. The novel *The Blue Necked God* is a typical example that shows how strong is myth and faith of people in relation to the religion. Especially, India is a country with most of the people who believe in the Hindu religion which is deep rooted in the concept of Myth. The hypotheses such as holy river, holy water and holy land have made the people of our country believe in purity and in ‘mukthi’ or ‘moksha’. The cultural politics and corruptions are referred as the pollutants in the mythical concept.

The intellectual notions like myth and religion are recreated in the works of Dr. Goswami and the society's attitude towards the women is depicted in a unique manner in her writings. The so called shrewd way of writings made her the number one writer in the age of modern literature in the arena of Indian English writing. Women are made victims by the society easily and the rituals by the Hindu religion has laid down certain conditions for her life in the society that she should be inside those conditions and she should not cross the limit of ‘Lakshmana Rekha’. Her life will be more dismal and hazardous if she dares to cross the limit and Dr. Indira Goswami tries to portray this pathetic scenario of Indian women in her novel *The Blue Necked God*. Her research on Ramayana has helped her a lot in bringing the mythical concept into the work and to make it a great social document.

### **Recreated Atmosphere of ‘Vrindhavan’**

The backdrop of the novel *The Blue Necked God* written by Indira Goswami is the beautiful garden of Vrindhavan in which she has conscientiously recreated the atmosphere of combination of Lord Krishna and Radha and their devotees. She has recreated the ambience with all of its contradictions in the magnificent and glorious tradition of Hindu religion. *The Blue Necked God* is a novel which was written using the beautiful philosophical mythology of Hindu religion, its art and devotion to the Hindu Lords. It also sheds light into the misery and dishonesty that was happening even in the period of Lord Krishna and his challenges to fight against all these injustices. Dr. Goswami describes in the novel about all the unstable history of the city, the profusion of Hindu relics dishonored by the Muslim invaders and the plethora of small and large temples in the Vrindhavan city. The history of the city is described using the poetic language that can catch the minds and hearts of the readers yet in simple and understandable lexical usage.

The story of the novel surrounds with three major women characters, trying to adjust with their circumstances in their life. Mrinalini is a matured unmarried girl who carries a very big burden of

---

responsibility of her family on her shoulder. Her father is a blind and crippled man and her mother is half insane. His father's property and wealth was misspent and he was forced to sell off all his wealth due to his immoral character. As her mother is insane, she makes the things perplex every time and gets them into agitation frequently. At this scenario, Mrinalini has no dream of her own life and her vision of marriage and motherhood fades away day by day and she decides herself that it would happen only when her old parents pass away. Sasiprabha is another major character in the novel who is the only friend of Mrinalini and also a young widow who apparently in the same condition of Mrinalini. She does the service of an old and impotent priest named Alamgadhi and also at the same time she falls in a hopeless love with a young swamiji whom she can only keep the love in her heart. Sasiprabha is one of many widows in the Vrindhavan who are connected with the temple priests and united in prayer with them expecting a respectable funeral when they leave the life from this world.

The woman who is a widow is the symbol of humbleness and she is also grateful to Alamgadhi for giving her protection physically and morally whereas her younger mind and soul is in search of a stronger and affectionate relationship. In the Vrindhavan she suffers a lot when she was threatened to sent out from the place by the old ladies while the priest lost his position in the temple. The novel describes in a beautiful and touching manner the sufferings of a widow who is forced to survive in the society without the support of her family or after her husband's death. Women are always unprotected in the society in the absence of men and they are equally carrying the burden of the family even though they live without the support of a man. Sasiprabha's life goes more miserable after the death of Alamgadhi and her frenzied and fruitless try for searching a kind partner faces a crisis in the city of Vrindhavan. Finally she was forced to reach at the door of her friend Mrinalini who despite her unsteady situations offers her comfort and solace even though it is temporary. The consolation receives each other is portrayed in these lines,

“The two women badly battered by circumstances and scared by the prospect of grim and uncertain future lay on the damp floor, embracing each other, as for assurance, like two infants” (BNG,32).

The protagonist of the novel *The Blue Necked God* Saudamini is another young woman who is a widow but has fallen in love with a Christian man and violates the stringent code of the Hindu widow woman. She was brought to Vrindhavan by her parents in the hope that she would get serenity in the calm environment of the place and she would be out of the misfortunate life. Her father was a doctor and he starts a hospital for the destitute patients in the expectation that the suffering of the people would arouse Soudamini's compassion and he actually wanted her to join in that organization willingly. Soudamini's mother takes her to various temples and holy places in search of peace of mind and she hopes she would be convinced in that atmosphere of tranquility.

“They sit at the gates of the Tortoise temple at Rangaji and sometimes they sit in front of the temple throughout night hoping for the Malcha offerings” (Bhattacharya, 21).

But Soudamini was getting deep into the loneliness and despair with a secret noncompliance inside her heart. Her living could not find harmony in the surroundings of Vrindhavan and she wanders

restlessly there, talking to all the people in order to find out answers to all her questions that trouble her mind. At the same time she could not find answers to her questions and she is keeping on seeking the enlightenment in the atmosphere of Vrindhavan. The various events in the garden reminds her about her past for instance the beads of the prayer reminds her the blossoms of the youth, desire of the sight of young students when she passes through the Vrindhavan.

The novelist portrays the feelings of the widows, her hopelessness and guilt when she meets other people in the story with the fullest form of their sufferings through the artistic expressions. According to the Hindu religious rules, the untouchable widows are banned to enter into a temple and when she suffers such insult in the society she dances in the bank of river in the ecstasy of devotion. Though there are no buyers for the creations, the artist Chandrabhanu finds pleasure in carving such beautiful images. The novel ends with a conventional climax when the shadowy lover of Soudamini comes to save her and takes her into a boat when there was a big storm outside.

The three women characters in the novel are meant to recreate the atmosphere of Vrindhavan by the writer Dr. Indira Goswami while it celebrates the youthful love of Lord Krishna and Radha in the Vrindhavan. Vrindhavan is portrayed as an old and decaying city that gives refuge to the destitute people at their last stage of life. Mrinalini, Sasiprabha and Saudamini – these three women live in the shadow of death with sufferings and struggles at the verge of depression and extermination.

“But if you had become radheshyamis singing bhajans in the temple, you would have been assured of at least two square meals a day” (BNG,65).

Most of the characters belong to educated and honorable families but have been besmirched by starvation, incurable illness and are subjected to other kinds of indignities. They wait for a decent death in the holy land of Vrindhavan while their corpses are plundered by the pandas or their own mates into the bank of Yamuna.

“Give us some donation to keep us alive. You people live to eat, but we need to eat something in order to live. Give us something to keep us alive” (BNG, 21).

### **Conclusion**

The poignant ending of the novel proves that how difficult and how hard for a widow to survive in the society because of the superstitious beliefs of the religion and the society. The novel is a true example of the real life of how women suffer in the society and it tries to recreate the mythical perception and thoughts of religion in the present generation. We think that people have changed after acquiring cultural transformation from generation to generation but the truth is that the impositions of the moral rules on women is returning to the society in the name of rituals and in the form of ritual and mythical rites. Women are always the susceptible victims of this superstitious society and it is high time to change the attitude of the society towards the women and the myth should be retold in a new perspective in order to make the world in harmony and peaceful.

### **Reference**

Goswami, Indira. *The Blue Necked God Trans.* Gayatri Bhattacharya, New Delhi: Zubaan, 2013.

Bhattacharya, Gayatri. *Relive Indira Goswami; The Legacy of her Stories*, New Delhi: Vintage Publishing Pvt. Ltd. 2014.

Khaund, Malaya. *Indira Goswami(Mamoni Raisom): A Critical Study of her Writings*; New Delhi: BPRC, 1994.

Thriveni M.L. *Myth and Religion in Indira Goswamy's Blue Necked God*;International Journal of Research in Humanities: Vol 6, issue 1, 2018.

**Cultural Scramble for Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's "*The Namesake and The Interpreter of Maladies*"**

---

**T.Umaa Parameswari**

Assistant Professor of English Rajapalayam Rajus' College  
Rajapalayam

---

**Abstract**

Every individual in their life has a search for their identity either consciously or unconsciously. Their identity search is closely related with their culture. Culture is an indivisible part in the life of human beings. A person struggles a lot to maintain his identity with his cultural background in a society which demands a person to leave his cultural identity in order to become successful in their life. In the case of expatriates who are of Indian origin and for some reason settled in another country, the maintenance of cultural identity gets even worse. These expatriates are left in a condition to leave their cultural identity and adopt the culture of the country where they have settled at present. Jhumpa Lahiri, is once such expatriate who struggles a lot to maintain her cultural bond and also finds it difficult to fit into the new culture. As she belongs to the category of second generation immigrant of Indian origin, her emotions and feelings related to her own culture of India and the new culture of America where she was born is clearly recorded in her novel *The Namesake*. Born of Indian parents and grown up in other culture the experiences of Jhumpa Lahiri finds a place in her debut novel *The Namesake* which consists some elements of autobiography from the life of Lahiri. Her short story collection *The Interpreter of Maladies* too some of the characters express their loss of identity due to cultural alienation.

**Keywords:** Expatriate, culture, Identity, bond.

**Introduction**

Jhumpa Lahiri born in London to parents of Indian origin has travelled to India often and has seen the effects of colonialism in India. She always feels to have a strong bond with India, United States and England. Often writers like Jhumpa Lahiri are left with the bicultural mode of living. Expatriates write about the class displacement and they also focus upon the cultural travel from their 'Home' to the host or adopted country. Lahiri, as an expatriate tries to write and reunite the two cultures in which she is expected to live. Traditions and customs are interchanged by these type of writers as they try to assimilate the new culture.

In her novel *The Namesake* and her short story collection *The Interpreter of Maladies*, Lahiri's main characters are also portrayed as people who undergo the effects of biculturalism. By the way Lahiri explains the Indian life, its rich and cultural traditions shows that the author is very much closely related to the home of her parents. This paper focuses on the study of bicultural problems faced by the characters of Lahiri's literary works.

Bicultural aspects in *The Namesake*

The Namesake is a 2003 novel by Lahiri. The novel largely focuses on the Bengali family from Kolkata, the Ganguli's who settle in America for over 30 years. The novel depicts the dilemmas of the parents and the children in different angle related to culture. While the parents are insisting on Indian culture to be followed, the children who are American-born find it difficult to follow the culture to which they have never been used to. They have been born and grown in an environment which demanded them to be American. As expressed by Salman Rushdie, immigrants always face the problem of understanding the culture as to which one is theirs.

Migrants straddle two cultures ... fall between stools, who suffer from a triple dislocation, comprising the loss of roots, the linguistic and also the social dislocation”(16)

The novel, The Namesake is a story of Ashok Ganguli who is an emigrant from India to America. He is undergoing a research in 'fibre optics' in America. When Ashok marries Ashima, a young girl of nineteen and is forced to leave India, her relatives advises her not to turn to the western culture. Ashima's own worry related to her homeland is also the same. She has to cut off her bond with her motherland in terms of culture, tradition, etc..When she reaches America she was seen differently by the host country because of her way of wearing saree. The only link with India is the newspapers and letters in Bengali language which she used to read and reread many times. It became her usual habit to wait for the mail. In the words of Lahiri the waiting of Ashima is best expressed as,

Keeps her ears trained between the hours of twelve and two for the sound of the postman's footsteps on the porch, followed by the soft click of the mail slot in the door. (16)

Ashima considers these letters as a means of cultural bond with India. She knows it very well that she has to adjust with the new land. Even then cutting off from one's own culture and following a new culture is not an easiest way in one's life. Assimilation of a new culture has to be practiced step by step. Though Ashima tries to relate her life with the Americans, she is not able to cut off totally her attachment to India. Like Ashima there are many expatriates who feel it to difficult to forget or cut off their ties with their homeland. Such expatriates try to form different community circles of their own. These circles provided them a sense of belonging to India though they are physically far away from it. Ashok and Ashima too try to enlarge the circle of Bengali acquaintances. After they get acquainted to the circle, Ashima feels that she has got back her Bengali environment. They also gather together for occasions like naming ceremony, birthdays of their children, and deaths. They used to observe all the religious rituals like Durga Puja and Navaratri as they are very special to Bengali people. They share their traditional way of exchanging sweets on those days.

They observe all these traditional practices in order to make their children know about their own culture. By wearing traditional attires they try to establish the cultural importance to their children. All the members in that Bengali circle act as relations to the children of each Bengali family. In all the weekends they gather at any one Bengali family's house and participate in the get together party where they are served with Indian foods especially Bengali special foods. In the entire manner possible the first generation immigrants expect their children to have a link or to grow up with their own cultural background. This is the reason that Ashima is so stubborn to make her children learn Bengali language

and she always insists that though they speak English outside their house, at home they should communicate only in their mother tongue. Though Ashima takes necessary steps to make her children familiar with Bengali tradition and culture, she is also aware of the fact that she cannot restrict her children being American as they had their birth there in America and all around them they see only Americanism.

The trips to India can be considered as a way of providing cultural link to the younger generations by the elder generations. But these trips results in two different attitudes of the expatriates. The elder generations feel themselves very close to the motherland and feel a sense of protectiveness. But the second generation children feel this trip as a duty that should be finished at the stipulated time. They are quite indifferent to the culture and the people living there though they happen to be their blood relations. Their response to the native land is quite different when they visit India. Though they are instructed about the culture in every possible way during their living in the host country, still children of Ashima and Ganguli react to the new environment as something new and they could not even adapt themselves to the situation as they think that this native land to be alien to them.

Trauma of self-transformation in Interpreter of Maladies

Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies is a collection of nine short stories published in the year 1991. The stories are about the Indians and Indian Americans who find it difficult to cope up with the new culture of the host country as well as they struggle a lot to maintain their native culture too.

Sanjeev and Twinkle in "The Blessed House" are of different opinion when they come to their new house which is full of Biblical figurines. The house with all the portrait and figurines of Christian religion appears to be blessed to Twinkle. Whereas Sanjeev feels discomfort to keep all the objects as they are Hindus by birth. Moreover he is concerned with the party which he has arranged for his coworkers. He is much worried about the response of them concerned with these objects of Christianity as they might think it to be something indifferent to their culture.

"Mrs. Sen" is a story in which the emigrant Mrs.Sen tries to identify her culture through her narration of past stories in her life. Her past life is almost connected with Calcutta, which is full of cultural relevance to her. Her act of preparing food including list of ingredients and descriptions all show that she is still in remembrance of her own native land. She acts as a complete house wife just like all Indian women in India. Mrs.Sen shows a strong affinity to her homeland that she does not take effort to assimilate into her new culture.

The narrator in the "The Third and the Final Continent" travels to almost three countries in his life time. He lives in India, moves to London, and finally to America. At first he lives with an elderly old woman to whom he has a concern for she is the only woman he knows in America. After getting married to a young wife, she moves to a big home where he thinks of making a home with his wife like in India. This story too provides the hardships faced by the protagonist through the way of adjusting with the diet food like cornflakes and bananas which is very much connected with the Indian food. The story ends on an acceptance of cultural tone of tolerance and adjustment with American society. Ketu

H.Katruk reads *The Interpreter of Maladies* as portraying the trauma of self transformation through their settlement in other country.

Lahiri's stories on the whole try to highlight the diasporic struggle faced by the characters who want to keep connected with the culture. Though they settle in other country their main aim is to realize, respect and rebound oneself with the homeland from where they have emigrated.

Ronny Noor of the University of Texas reviews *Interpreter of Maladies* and asserts, "The value of these stories- although some of them are loosely constructed – lies into fact that they transcend confined borders of immigrant experience to embrace larger age-old issues that are, in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'cast into the mould of these new times' redefining America".

Through her stories, Lahiri expresses the ideas of isolation and identity of self and culture through her characters. Lahiri does not give a solution to these problems of Identity crisis. All the stories have the background of Indian culture and myth. In their isolation the characters feel that they miss something that is related to their identity. And that naturally connects them with culture.

### **Conclusion**

Lahiri's work *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* share a close similarity with each other. Six of the stories in the *Interpreter of Maladies* and *The Namesake* have characters from South Asia who immigrated to America for various reasons. Both the stories have characters that with their background of Indian culture collide with the American way of life. They find utmost difficulty in managing the two cultures as they are left in the situation to find their life in the new host country assimilating it as their own.

### **References:**

- Agrawal, Anju Bala: *Post Independence Indian Writing in English*, New Delhi: Authors Press, 2008.  
Champeon, Kenneth. "Exiles of the World Unite: Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*".  
*Things Asian Literature*. 26 March 2001. <http://www.thingsasian.com/stories-photos/1508>  
Lahiri, Jhumpa: *The Namesake*, India: Harper Collins, 2003.  
Rushdie, Salman: *Imaginary Homelands*, London: Ganta Books, 1991.