



# **GNOSIS**

**An International Journal of English Language and Literature**

**Vol. 11 -No. 1 October, 2024**

**Abstracting and Indexing:**

Index Copernicus, SJIF, Citefactor.org, IJIF, DAJ, ESJ, DRJ, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, ResearchGate

**Editor**

Dr. Saikat Banerjee

Assistant Professor

Department of English,

St. Xavier's College, Ranchi,

Jharkhand, India

E-mail: [gnosisprintjournal@gmail.com](mailto:gnosisprintjournal@gmail.com)

**Publisher**

Yking Books

G-13, S.S. Tower, Dhamani Street,

Chaura Rasta, Jaipur - 302003, Rajasthan, India

Phone No. - 91-141-4020251, M.: 9414056846

E-mail: [ykingbooks@gmail.com](mailto:ykingbooks@gmail.com)

## Table of Contents

<i>Editorial</i>	2
------------------	---

## Research Articles

Exploring Homophobic Tendencies in the Contemporary Indian Cinematic Gaze and Representation	<b>Dr. Amrita Bhattacharyya</b>	<b>3</b>
Emotionally Disturbed Childhood in Arundhati Roy's The God Of Small Things and Manju Kapur's Custody	<b>Dr. Nitasha Malhotra Bajaj</b>	<b>13</b>
Critiquing Anthropocene with special reference to Naga Folktales	<b>Sanjeeb Kalita &amp; Dr. Prasenjit Das</b>	<b>23</b>
Will I marry a prince from a far-off magic land?": Unmasking Narratives of Postfeminist Diaspora and Regulatory Psychobiography in Selected Short Stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Shail Agarwal	<b>Aakshi Srivastava</b>	<b>29</b>

## Fiction

The Poster	<b>Rituparna Mitra</b>	<b>38</b>
------------	------------------------	-----------

<b>Our Esteemed Contributors</b>	<b>46</b>
----------------------------------	-----------

## **Editorial**

The October 2023 issue of GNOSIS had a very warm response from the readers in India and abroad that articles have been flowing in quick succession to fill the folder of this issue even before the deadline of 30 September 2024. The thumping reception of the journal shows the depth of multicultural issues in literature to which critics and readers are attracted. As a journal committed to quality research and writing, we are aware of the need to delink quality from publication cost. Hence, our decision is to charge no publication fee from the scholars whose papers will be published in the issues of GNOSIS. At the same time since GNOSIS is a self-financed venture, co-operation and support in the form of subscriptions are solicited from the readers and admirers of English Literature and Language from all over the world.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all the Academicians and well-wishers of GNOSIS who recommended GNOSIS for publication. This issue has five research/critical articles. Before concluding, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our esteemed members of the Board of Advisors and Review Editors for their selfless and tiresome efforts in assessing the articles very sincerely and giving their valuable remarks to bring out this issue in such a grand manner. I am also grateful to the revered contributors who have made this issue of the Journal a beautiful reality. Wishing all the readers a mental feast. Happy Reading!

**Dr. Saikat Banerjee**

Editor

## **Exploring Homophobic Tendencies in the Contemporary Indian Cinematic Gaze and Representation**

**Dr. Amrita Bhattacharyya**

*Submitted 22/09/2023 Revised 30/01/2024 Accepted 30/09/2024, Published 31/10/2024*

**Abstract:** Queer identity or practise of alternative sexuality by an individual is often misunderstood as criminal identity (an instance of homophobia) under the purview of law even in the imaginative cinematic world. There is a wide range of homophobia still existing in our society and culture towards the people with alternative sexuality. There are gaps and fissures in the dealing of law towards the queer people which I want to focus in my paper in relation to the Bollywood films. I have mainly focussed on three Bollywood cinematic products – ‘Aligarh’ (2015), ‘Made In Heaven’(2019) and ‘Forensic’ (2022). Even though Bollywood has come a long way from making caricatures or stereotypes or laughter stock out of the non-conforming characters (for example, ‘Dostana’), we still find homophobic tendencies in the cinematic gaze and representation.

24<sup>th</sup> August, 2017 was one of the landmarks in the history of the verdicts given by the Supreme Court which ruled that every citizen should have a Right to Privacy which is a fundamental right protected under Article 21 and Part III of the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court recognised the rights of the LGBTQ community and acknowledged that they existed and also needed some rights for existence. The section 377 of Indian law has a long legal history of its own which is getting addressed gradually by the Bollywood fraternity. While ‘Aligarh’ is a prominent film on this legal issue, homophobic tendency in general continues to be addressed in films like ‘Forensic’ which hurriedly draws to its end with no clear cut explanation regarding the psychology of the murderer who belongs to the queer community. The straight characters are unable to understand or identify the murderer due to his interchangeable sexual identity. The web series ‘Made In Heaven’ portrays a gay character Karan who is a wedding planner who runs the company along with his friend Tara. His landlord is shown to enjoy his camaraderie by filming his

intimate moments enjoyed with his male partners. The twist comes in the end when it turns out that the landlord himself is gay but had to bow down to social pressures and marry and settle down.

**Key Words:** Homophobia, Queer identity, law, criminality, Bollywood, cinema, web series.

Society has always posed a discriminatory attitude towards the marginalized or the queer people or people who practise alternative sexualities. Cinema or film has been an excellent medium to portray the lives of the marginalized people including the queer sections of the society. The queer sections of the society are also severely affected by the socio-economic and geo-political factors. Queer people's personal lives get intermingled with their professional lives which we find in the films under discussion here. Bollywood and its representation of LGBTQA+ community and its people with their narratives can be traced back to parallel cinema's creative approach towards representation of such characters on screen. Prem Kapoor's 'Badnam Basti' produced in 1971 is claimed as the first queer film of India. Other notable queer films are Deepa Mehta's 'Fire' (1996), Onir's 'My Brother Nikhil' (2005), Sanjay Nag's 'Memories in March' (2010), Shonali Bose's 'Margarita with a Straw' (2014), Suresh Narayan's 'Irattra Jeevitham' (2017), Kaushik Ganguly's 'Nagarkirtan' (2017), Geethu Mohandas' 'Moothon' (2019) and Neeraj Ghaywan's 'Geeli Pucchi' (2021). For my study, I have taken selected films based on queer identities and studied the cinematic gaze which is largely discriminatory towards these sections of the society.

Collective social homophobia towards the queer people had a legal sanction as well. Section 377 has a long impressive colonial history where the Britishers wanted to categorize and criminalise some groups (including the thugees and social outcastes) who were outside the heterosexual domain. This tendency can be noticed in the Victorian era where homosexuality was banned and prohibited and punishable in all forms. Homophobic tendencies still exist in our society where people who practise alternative sexuality are barred from social domain. In my paper, I would especially like to show how collective homophobia is practised in the cinematic characters who put the protagonists practising alternative sexuality in discomfiture. Homophobia is taken as a punishing tool to criminalise such individuals who according to the parameters of society have overreached their mark in some way or the other. Homophobia is not just

restricted to an inquisitive or curious neighbour but harming and scheming individuals who themselves have criminal instincts.

This part of the British law was applicable to many colonies and still is used to criminalise the LGBTQ groups. This criminal code was part of the larger British administrative way of making the subjects conform to the colonial authority. What is striking that the law did not include the word 'homosexual' but the same law is used to ban every act (termed as unnatural) outside the heterosexual activity. On September 6, 2018, the Supreme Court of India ruled that consensual homosexual activity between adults cannot be persecuted by the application of section 377. The highest court pointed out that the above way of persecution is against the constitution and the basic rights of the Indian citizen. But the law is still not abolished completely. It still remains in force concerning any unnatural sex with minors, non-consensual sexual acts and acts of bestiality. There have been several phases of movement against this colonial law. The first major landmark decision was taken by the Delhi High Court in July 2009 when it decided to mark some parts of the law as unconstitutional.

The above judgement was turned down on 11<sup>th</sup> December, 2013 in Suresh Kumar Koushal versus Naz Foundation. The court took a step back and said that amending the law should be handed over to the Parliament and not the judiciary.

The real trajectory of the laws can be contrasted or compared to the cinematic world where such different sexualities are treated in various ways.

Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) quotes from Michel Foucault about how society controls sexuality –

“In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault argues that the univocal construct of 'sex' (one is one's sex and, therefore, not the other) is (a) produced in the service of the social regulation and control of sexuality and (b) conceals and artificially unifies a variety of disparate and unrelated sexual functions and then (c) postures within discourse as a cause, an interior essence which both produces and renders intelligible all manner of sensation, pleasure, and desire as sex-specific. In other words, bodily pleasures

are not merely causally reducible to this ostensibly sex-specific essence, but they become readily interpretable as manifestations or signs of this ‘sex’.” (*Gender Trouble* 94-95)

Audrey Yue in her essay “Queer Asian Cinema and Media Studies: From Hybridity to Critical Regionality” charts the history of tolerance and acceptance of queer practices “With the exceptions of Japan, where homosexuality has been legal since 1880, Taiwan since 1896, and Thailand since 1956, the 1990s saw the spread of the de- criminalization of homosexuality in East and South Asia. In 1991, homosexuality was legalized in Hong Kong; by 2001 it was removed as a mental illness in China, and in 2009, it was decriminalized in India. These sexual law reforms heralded new media and cinematic practices that present alternative models to the rights-and-recognition discourse of the West.” (Yue 146)

Roksana Badruddoja in her essay “Queer Spaces, Places, and Gender: The Tropologies of Rupa and Ronica” notes the limitations of applying Western theory to Asian queer canon “Too often, the limitations due to undertheorized South Asian lesbian, bisexual, and transsexual histories – compounded by a queer canon overwrought with the East/West or tradition/modern equation – render queer South Asian-Americans as a monolithic homogenous category with little or no agency.” (Badruddoja 157)

I want to mainly focus on three Bollywood films – ‘Aligarh’ (2015), ‘Made In Heaven’(2019) and ‘Forensic’ (2022). ‘Aligarh’ is a 2015 film which wonderfully showcases the journey of a gay professor of Marathi language Dr.Srinivas Ramchandra Siras whose services were terminated as he was found having sex with a rickshaw puller in his quarter. A video was made of the incident and handed over to the media and public. The role of the professor is humanely portrayed by Manoj Bajpayee and the film portrays his special relationship with a journalist who arrives to interview him. The role of the journalist is played by Rajkummar Rao.

The film ‘Aligarh’ is a sympathetic portrayal of a dignified and non-apologetic professor who cannot understand why society and his university are bothered over his sexual preferences rather than his services. He has served the university for over twenty years. It is later found out that his colleagues were not happy with his position of the director of the language department. They have plotted against him for a long time.



This is the story of both a struggling journalist and a humiliated professor who is suspended and high handedly treated just three months before his retirement. The professor is forced to vacate the university premises within a week and his electricity is cut off. The public humiliation that he has to suffer is beyond description. He always keeps his windows and doors shut and is appalled by the slightest noises outside his home. He takes recourse to drinking in order to ameliorate his condition which might be the reason for his early death.

The university accuses him of immoral acts. The film begins in the bylanes of Aligarh where a sixty four year old man returns home with a rickshaw puller at night. There is a significant suggestion by the journalist that may be the rickshaw puller named Irfan was an accomplice in the crime. Thus the door of the bedroom was unlatched by him and the lights were kept on so that the intruders could easily videotape the event and concoct the situation in the professor's disfavour. In the film, the journalist tries to find out the whereabouts of Irfan after the scandal but he fails. He only gets the information from Irfan's colony that Irfan is missing and the police had beaten him severely.

While they were sharing intimate moments, some people pounced on them with cameras and beat them severely, filmed them in forced intimate postures and handed over everything to the media who had surprisingly gathered in a short time. Professor Siras is immediately suspended by the institution. The professor is advised by his colleague to write a letter of apology to the Vice Chancellor of the university. But in spite of this Siras's suspension is not revoked. His effigy is burnt by angry demonstrators and he is banned from the campus. He has to move from one rented house to another as the court proceedings go on. While Monoj Bajpayee stars as Prof. Ramchandra Siras, Rajkummar Rao as journalist Deepu Sebastian. Ashish Vidyarthi acts as Avocate Anand Grover. Siras develops a beautiful bond with Deepu who wants to make a story on the professor's character. Deepu arrives at the door of the professor only to find it locked from outside. He waits outside his house and when he returns from the market the professor is so exhausted that he almost falls down. He is helped onto his feet by Deepu and escorted to his room. The professor feels grateful at this gesture and asks about his university which is Delhi University. But the

professor gets irritated when Deepu's colleague starts clicking pictures one after the other. Deepu is kicked out of the house. Deepu attends the university press conference where he raises some questions as to why did not the university take steps against those people who barged into Siras' room and invaded his privacy. Thus Deepu befriends a fellow university professor and through him he gets introduced to Prof.Siras.

The recent Zee5 Original film 'Forensic' (2022) portrays a queer murderer who is a serial killer of young girls of eleven years old on the day of their birthday. The murderer is an adopted boy who is pushed to murder just because he feels that his adopted father who is a psychologist suffering from cancer will get better if he keeps on murdering. The murderer also is jealous of any girl who gets the love of her father on her birthday. This film also focuses on juvenile serial killers and criminal child psychology. There is always a threat in the film that the killer might be someone different. The categories are drawn by the forensic officer. At first forensic study points out that he is a left handed person, a short person or dwarf, then an eleven year old child and at last it is found that a queer person hypnotised the children to be part of such heinous tasks.

The murderer was adopted from a juvenile home by the psychiatrist who raises him to a professional like him. The son goes for a sex change operation and transforms into the beautiful and attractive Dr.Ranjana. The father knows everything about his son turned into a woman's obsession with murdering young girls but keeps silent as he does not want to lose him. The father even staged the suicide of his son under the railway tracks five years ago to hide his identity. The story writer has intertwined all the phobias and horror imaginable against adoption, sex-change and ultimately queer identity. The film is seen through the gaze of the straight characters who are completely unable to understand the queer character's mind. The queer character reminds us of the dubious character Paul in Willa Cather's story "Paul's Case" who does not conform to any fixed notion of gender. Judith Butler cites this character in her book Bodies That Matter who cannot be identified under a predetermined gendered category. Butler explains this problematic – "The introduction to schoolboy Paul I 'Paul's Case' makes clear that he is a figure 'under the ban of suspension'. Suspended, then, but not quite expelled, Paul inhabits a temporary exteriority to the

law, he is set into that exteriority by the law. But what is also ‘suspended’ here is some decision about his status, an allegory of this fiction in which what Sedgwick calls Paul’s liminal sexual and gender status remains in question. As he is called in front of the local school authorities, his clothes are described as not quite or, rather, no longer, fitting the body within, and his incommensurability between the body and its clothes is recapitulated.” (Butler 162) Butler further substantiates the queerness of the body – “Paul’s body refuses to cohere in an ordinary sense, and the body parts which nevertheless hang together appear discordant precisely because of a certain happy and anxious refusal to assume the regulatory norm. Just as his coat in the first paragraph no longer fits, suggesting an appearance outgrown, even ‘frayed’, Paul’s body in the second paragraph is given only in parts, inhabited, separated from itself, and deprived by the ‘ban’ under which he appears.” (Butler 162-163)

The Amazon Prime web series ‘Made In Heaven’ portrayed a character Karan who is a wedding planner along with his friend Tara. Karan is gay and is therefore not accepted by his family. Thus he lives in a rented house where he brings his gay friends over. Karan’s landlord has secretly placed CCTV cameras in his bedroom and keeps an eye on his movements. His landlord is shown to enjoy watching the intimate moments of Karan and his lovers. One day the landlord’s wife catches her husband over this action and demands an explanation. The landlord saves his face by divulging to his wife and he was collecting proofs and hands over every evidence to the police who arrives and arrests Karan on non-bailable offence. Around this time debate is going on in the country about revoking of section 377 of the British colonial penal code which criminalized all kinds of so called unnatural sexual acts including homosexuality. Karan is eventually released by his friend Tara and seeks the protection of lawyers who advises him to sue his landlord over the invasion of privacy. His landlord gets scared and suddenly makes a confession before Karan (whom he threatens at first to turn out of his house) that he admires Karan that he had the courage to come out and accept his sexuality in front of everyone while he could not.

The above films which showcase repression of queer people from social and legal levels can be interpreted with the help of queer theory. Queer theory as an interdisciplinary field emerged in the early 1990s. It has

now become a very relevant area of research in humanities and social sciences. The broader domain of this theory goes beyond LGBT literature, film and art. Queer theory looks at how the people with alternate sexuality are affected by the power structures within the society.

Queer theory when applied to the films mainly points out its suppression as a discourse. At first queer characters were felt as absence in texts and films. They were also repressed or changed into socially acceptable characters. Eve Sedgwick has used the metaphor of the closet to talk about this repression.

Development of queer theory can be mainly attributed to three theorists – Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick and Michel Foucault. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990) forwarded the idea that gender was socially constructed through repeated performance of behaviours mainly masculine or feminine. Eve Sedgwick's *The Epistemology of the Closet* (1990) stressed the importance of queer theory as a tool for understanding sexuality and society at large. Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976) analysed the power structures in society which he theorized were interconnected with sexuality.

Eve Sedgwick uses the metaphor of the closet as a kind of oppression towards the gay people who are forced to hide their sexual preferences from the public purview. The secrecy of the closet and the coming out of the individual sexualities are transgressions or crossing of many political and social parameters which we find in the cinematic characters. Sedgwick argues "...the epistemology of the closet has given an overarching consistency to gay culture and identity throughout this century is not to deny that crucial possibilities around and outside the closet have been subject to most consequential change, for gay people." (Sedgwick 68) She also warns us of glamourizing or centralising this closet as there may be many variations or possibilities around sexuality. I would like to conclude by quoting from Sedgwick that the closet cannot be neglected and films related to this topic of queer identity should be investigated –

"The epistemology of the closet has also been, however, on a far vaster scale and with a less honorific inflection, is exhaustively productive of modern Western culture and history at large. While that may be reason enough for taking it as a subject of interrogation, it should not be reason enough for focusing scrutiny on those who inhabit the closet (however equivocally) to the exclusion of those in the ambient

heterosexist culture who enjoin it and whose intimate representational needs it serves in a way less extortionate to themselves.” (Sedgwick 68-69)

The closet gives an identity to the queer individuals and can be investigated or studied as alternative ways of practising/inhabiting/living sexuality. But Butler warns us that the closet should not be scrutinised by law for the purpose of criminalising or discomforting that section of the society. A particular practise of sexuality cannot be pitted or valourised or criminalised against another sexuality as Butler also finds so called heterosexual individuals who practise alternative sexualities keeping themselves cleverly within the rule of law such as the landlord of Karan in ‘Made in Heaven’. Alternative sexuality is not something to be ashamed of or fit to be hidden or criminalised. As the films under study here shows queer people in India will be truly empowered if they are sanctioned all the rights at a par with any other individual in personal space, society or workplace.

### Works Cited

- Badruddoja, Roksana. “Queer Spaces, Places, and Gender: The Tropologies of Rupa and Ronica” *NWSA Journal* , Summer, 2008, Vol. 20, No. 2, Women, the Criminal Justice System, and Incarceration: Processes of Power, Silence and Resistance (Summer, 2008), pp. 156-188  
Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press Stable URL:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40071280>.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. Routledge, New York & London, 1993.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, New York & London, 1990.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *The Epistemology of the Closet*. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1990.
- Yue, Audrey. “Queer Asian Cinema and Media Studies: From Hybridity to Critical Regionality” *Cinema Journal* , Winter 2014, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Winter 2014), pp. 145-151 Published by:

University of Texas Press on behalf of the Society for Cinema & Media Studies Stable

URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43653576>.

## Emotionally Disturbed Childhood in Arundhati Roy's *The God Of Small Things* and Manju Kapur's *Custody*

Dr.Nitasha Malhotra Bajaj

Submitted 30/09/2024 Revised 03/10/2024 Accepted 25/10/2024, Published 31/10/2024

**Abstract:** The present paper reveals the dubious uncertainties related to the adolescent years and I have chosen to discuss this sensitive topic through the novels *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *Custody* by Manju Kapur. They display a complete understanding of children's psyche in their respective novels. A study of both the novelists reveals some thought-provoking similarities of the inner world of the younger generation.

**Key Words:** Emotions, inner-world, children's psyche.

The present paper reveals the dubious uncertainties related to the adolescent years and I have chosen to discuss this sensitive topic through the novels *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy and *Custody* by Manju Kapur. Both are the Indian women novelists who epitomize the pain and trauma through which the children of broken marriage go through. A study of both the novelists reveals some thought-provoking similarities of the inner world of the younger generation.

Arundhati Roy, a renowned novelist and an activist who speaks very strongly about human rights and environmental issues won the Booker Prize in 1997 for this semi-autobiographical novel. Daughter of a Bengali father and a Christian mother was a trained architect but chose writing as her career. The author Manju Kapur was born in 1948 in Amritsar, India. She currently lives in Delhi and has retired as a professor of English from her alma mater Miranda House College, Delhi. She was part of the migrant process when she studied at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, where she obtained her Master of Arts in English. These novelists portray an extensive study of the mental and physical pressure faced by the children in their novels.

*The God of Small Things* is a thought –provoking novel set in Kerala, India in 1969, Roy has presented the emotional and mental pain of the twins Esthappen and Rahel, the children of rebellious Ammu, who strongly protests against the customary patriarchal society. Being a girl child, she was always deprived of care and affection since her childhood and ruthlessly tortured by her father who always had a soft corner for her brother Chacko. The higher education was also denied to Ammu because “Pappachi insisted that a college education was an unnecessary expense for a girl. So Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them”. (38) Thus, making Ammu a stubborn character that frantically ached for her individuality: “There was little for young girl to do in Ayemenem other than to wait for marriage proposals while she helped her mother with the housework... All day she dreamed of escaping from Ayemenem and the clutches of her ill-tempered father and bitter, long-suffering mother.” (38-39) There was a patriarchal world (Ayemenem in Kerala) where women were looked down upon and had no right to accomplish her dreams. Simone de Beauvoir reveals the state of women in her remarkable piece, *The Second Sex*, “She –a free and[an] autonomous being like all creatures-nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men coupled her to assume the status of the other” (Simone, 13). She says, “One is not born a woman, but becomes one” (Simone, 13).

Thinking marriage as an escape route, Ammu entered in wedlock against the wishes of her family. Unfortunately her husband turns out to be a drunkard who believed in selling his wife to his boss for a rise in his career. Finally, she returns back to her parents place with her twins. These twins are portrayed as, “together as me and separately, individually, as We or Us. As though they were a rare breed of Siamese twins, physically separate, but with joint identities.” (4-5). The most attention-grabbing feature of the novel is how the novelist portrays the world from the twins’ perspective. Family atmosphere certainly plays an important role in providing an emotionally stable environment to adolescents which helps them in feeling safe and secure to express their emotions but the protagonists Estha and Rahel lose their innocence during the unpleasant happenings that took place in their lives, leaving an everlasting scars on their intellect and filling them with various fears. Estha’s sexual exploitation by the Orange drinks Lemon



drink Man, made him strangely fearful of everything in and outside his house. He started searching for some protection and finds a comfort in Velutha. Rahel, also follows Estha to the bank of the river to find some solace. In the turn of events, Amu enters in a sexual relationship with Velutha despite the fact that both of them belonged to different castes. When Vellya, Velutha's father reports about their physical intimacy to Amu's grand aunt, Baby Kochamma, she exaggerates the whole issue and verbally tortures Velutha and locks Amu up in the house. When Estha and Rahel meet their mother, she blames them for the entire episode. This in return gives a shocking effect to both the children who under the pressure of mental trauma decide to run away. Sophie Mol, their visiting cousin, Sophie Mol joins them to take a journey across the river. An accident happens with Sophie on this fateful journey and she dies. This also left a deep impact on children.

Rahel and Estha experience all kind of torment in the absence of love and warmth that originated from the divorce between their parents. They were even manipulated by their great grand aunt Baby Kochamma, who emotionally blackmailed and befooled them and forced them to blame Velutha, who was their constant companion and friend. The sense of suffocation, the fear of loneliness, mistreatment, oppression, distress and the constant manipulation of children by their own grandparents leaves them distorted.

Rahel and Estha's —dreams are captured and redreamed (306).

Estha and Rahel's bond with their mother and the river has been portrayed in a corresponding manner by the novelist as Ammu acts as the river, and both the children as frogs. Both the kids were helpless and susceptible but soon learnt to live without their mother, Ammu. Whenever they looked for some maternal love, they longed for river as they found something relatable between the both. The river also played an important role during the secret union of Velutha and Ammu, "She was as wide and deep as a river in spate. He sailed on her waters" (337). The river played a significant role in twins' life that they instantaneously dream of "their river" (122), as they tried to comfort each other at Hotel Sea Queen. This comfort zone served as a sentimental rumination of swimming together through "their mother's cunt" (93) during their prenatal survival. The longing and love for the river of both the children is clearly exhibited

by the novelist: “They knew the afternoon weed that flowed inwards from the backwaters of Komarakom. They knew the smaller fish” and it is here that they study “Silence (like the children of the Fisher Peoples), and learn(ed) the bright language of dragon flies (203).

Several illustrations are quoted by Roy that shows an association between Ammu and the river. After Ammu’s death, the novelist proclaims,

You couldn’t see the river from the window anymore. You could, until Mammachi had the back verandah closed in with Ayemenem’s first sliding-folding door. Though you couldn’t see the river from the house anymore, like a seashell always has a sea-sense, the Ayemenem house still had a river-sense. (31)

The rebellious and hard to bend dispositions that Ammu had in her genes, obviously transmitted to Rahel. Aleyooty Amma found it tough to unrestraint the river, the novelist says. “Through the holes in her ears, you could see the hot river and the dark trees that bent to it” (30). There are more indications to exhibit the river to be a representation of Ammu, the victimized woman:

The river was no more than a swollen drain now...It was choked with a succulent weed, whose furred brown roots waved like thin tentacles under water. Bronze winged lily-trotters walked across it splay-footed, cautious. (124)

Rahel after many years visited the river and is reminded of how Ammu was forced to die a painful and lonely death by the cold-hearted patriarchal society: things had happened. It had shrunk and she had grown. (124)

My paper is an endeavor to explain that lack of concern and love is the basis of abnormal behavior and depression in Rahel and Estha. They are confused and their lives are totally messed up in the absence of their parents love. Both the children experience pain and suffering in the course of action. The novel brings forth the issues of adolescent years and the novelist narrates the course of events from their perspective. Roy has very thoughtfully presented the limited outlook of Rahel and Estha and the consequences of their childhood sufferings, “Childhood tiptoed out. Silence slid in like a bolt.” (320).

*The God of Small Things* is an effort to depict the tangled mind set and brisk sensibility of the adolescents. The confrontation is between the elders and the adolescents of the society, where questions are raised and deep feelings are provoked to portray that the humanity survives with a sense. Baby Kochamma(the great aunt) releases all her bitterness of unfulfilled life on Rahel and Estha and their mother Ammu. Instead of showing some affection to her divorced niece and her kids, she believed that divorced woman is like a black spot on the family's name which can never be erased. This behavior of baby Kochama left an impressionable mark on twins' psychic for life time. Life had been quite unfair with baby Kochama and she in return fills Ammus life with bitterness, "She subscribed wholeheartedly to her commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter ñ according to Baby Kochamma, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from a intercommunity love marriage ñ Baby Kochamma chose to remain quaveringly silent on the subject." (45-46)

The novelist wonderfully sketches the sufferings of both the children who become the victim of patriarchal society, filling them with a perpetual sense of alienation. From their childhood, both of them share a different kind of bond with each other. But when they grow up they develop a special kind of feelings for each other. The association they both shared was very different from a normal brother sister bond. Roy portrays their relation in a strange way, "Perhaps Ammu, Estha and she were the worst transgressors. But it wasn't just them. It was the others too. They broke all the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the rules that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much. The laws that make grandmothers grandmothers, uncles uncles, mothers mothers, cousins cousins, jam jam and jelly jelly." (31)

They both return to Ayemenem after 23 years to be with each other as Roy has made it very clear that since their separation, Rahel and Estha thought of themselves as incomplete and two broken parts of a same body. The narrator lucidly mentions Rahel's physical and mental make-up like her mother Ammu

and this was clearly noticeable to Estha. When Estha meets Rahel after many years, she looked so much like their mother and for a few minutes he was drawn to the memory lane:

A nagging sound started up in his head. The sound of passing trains. The light and shade and light and shade that falls on you if you have a window seat. He sat even straighter, he could see her. Grown into their mother's skin. The light glint of her eyes in the dark. Her small straight nose. Her mouth, full lipped. Sometimes wounded-looking about it. As though it was flinching from something. As though long ago someone – a man with rings – had hit her across it. A beautiful, hurt mouth. Their beautiful mother's mouth, Estha thought. Ammu's mouth. That had kissed his hand through the barred train window. First class, on the Madras Mail to Madras. (300)

Their love making act in the end is a sign of broken hearts and depressed adolescent years. Even as adults, Rahel and Estha feel comfortable being around each other undressed, which nearly serves as a premonition of what would happen in the novel's final chapters: "it would have helped if they could have made that crossing. If only they could have worn, even temporarily, the tragic hood of victimhood. Then they would have been able to put a face on U, and conjure up fury at what had happened. Or seek redress. And eventually, perhaps, exorcise the memories that haunted them." (191)

The Twins were ensnared in the confines of the patriarchal world, and so Estha's "Yes" to save his mother, designated as a proof by the police in order to validate Velutha's death sentence is one of the many moments in the novel that are ceaselessly reconsidered because: "a few dozen hours can affect the outcome of whole lifetimes. And that-when\_ they do, those dozen hours, like the salvaged remains of a burned house . . . must be resurrected from the ruins and examined. Preserved. Accounted for. Little events, ordinary things, smashed and reconstituted. Imbued with new meaning. Suddenly they become the bleached bones of a story. (32-33)

Both Rahel and Estha encountered psychological trauma that is more spiteful than physical torture. The silent violence which they both experienced left invisible scars on their psyche and thus made them complex and introverts, "The young always have the same problem how to rebel and conform at the same

time. They have now solved this by defying their parents and copying one another.”<sup>3</sup>(Quentin Crisp-Brainy Quote)

Kapur's *Custody* (2011) mirrors the true picture of modern marriage, bringing the heart-breaking side of divorce that leaves a major effect upon the immediate and the connected families. Kapur portrays the story of two individuals Shagun and Raman who are married to each other. The novel reveals the dubious uncertainties of matrimony. The sense of suffocation, the fear of loneliness, mistreatment, oppression, distress and the constant manipulation of children by their divorced parents from one home to the other. *Custody* is Manju Kapur's fifth novel which presents a contemporary endeavor intended to determine the human relationships. The novel deals with men and women of urban selected class of metropolitan city of India and their fascinations, disillusionment, insecurities, the gleam, the emptiness, the hypocrisy, the pangs and the inner crumbling of fallacious life.

Kapur's novels either give an idea about the issues of marriage or unveil the married life of the woman protagonist. She is extremely concerned with the matters connected to woman. The novel commences with the ironical aspect of modern urban life where a married couple- Raman and Shagun, with two children eight year old Arjun and three year old Roohi, do not have anything in common. The novelist depicts, through Shagun, the picture of a woman, claiming her breathing space in post-modern era, who got married at a very young age and all her dreams and wishes are suppressed. Like Manju Kapur's other female protagonists, Shagun also thinks of marriage as the gateway to a liberated life but sarcastically it is the other way round. Shagun's predicament was beyond words. She is "unhappier than she realized" (26). Shagun's marriage was the primary purpose for her mother as she opposed the career of model that Shagun most wanted to take up. She tells her daughter, "Do what you like after marriage" (11). The feminist Simmon de Beauvoir is also of the same view, "Marriage is a destiny traditionally offered to women by society."

Although Raman and Shagun's "marriage had been arranged along standard lines, she the beauty, he the one with the brilliant prospects." (14) but after marriage Shagun was burdened with endless

responsibilities like claim of her husband, his family and friends, and above all children, which proposed no breathing space for her. The main liability is that of motherhood in which she is trapped soon after her marriage. In review of *Custody*, Mithu Banerjee highlights:

“Although marriage is well-trodden territory for Kapur, here her possession of the subject is complete. In the accumulation of detail, and her tone of emotional restraint, *Custody* becomes something more than just a social commentary, but a novel that is true to the universal angst of modern marriage, with its burden of individualism.”

It is uninteresting for Shagun to stay alone to look after the children when Raman is not at home as Raman travels a lot and stays away from home for many days on his job. His profession seems to have screened his domestic life in the clouds of ambiguity and this leads Shagun to feel drained and pensive. Raman is the predictable portrayal of the meticulous man in this family-arranged settlement for his determination. At the commencement of the story we see him in his conventional role of father and husband; of the head of the family who goes out to make money, but also who is not much concerned for his own wife or children. Shagun became conscious within no time that there is nothing hopeful in her married life. Thus, Kapur's *Custody* gives an account of unfaithful wife who is “sick and tired of being alone” (9)

It is in these circumstances, Shagun is fascinated to the handsome looking Ashok and his flirting style. He is appointed at the Brand where Raman has already been working for many years. He is also drawn in towards Shagun because of her astonishing beauty. They fall in love with each other. Consequently, when Ashok offers her to act as a model in an ad for the Brand, she agrees hurriedly, with a hope that it may offer her a chance to be a model and fulfill her dream. Thus Ashok Khanna, too much marvelled by Shagun's looks: “In her color, her greenish eyes and her demeanor, she was a perfect blend of east and west”(4) begins implementing his plan to persuade her.

Shagun was tired of her dull and boring life and to add some colour to her monotonous life started the extra-marital affair with Ashok but was pulled more and more into it. Shagun never thought of divorcing

Raman and her children to marry Ashok. “When she started her affair she had thought a lover would add to her experience, make up for all the things she had missed having married straight out of college.”(86)But manipulator Ashok was firm in his decision to marry Shagun and take her with him when posted in New York. Shagun tries to refuse-“Don’t bother you will finish and go I have to stay for my children.”(84)Ashok insisted –“I just want to take you away from here. This narrow social set-up all you know that’s why you are afraid. But it will be fine, fine. Trust me, darling.”(84)

Arjun and Roohi were traumatized after the divorce of their parents. Their childhood was ruined they were punished for the lack of understanding between their parents, “Roohi’s crying fits, Arjun’s traumas and sleep overs at friend’s houses, Raman coming home, late, late, late this was the norm” (105). Raman and Shagun got re-married and found a new partner for them but the children paid heavily for this, “Between two wrecked families’ children become mere objects in their hands. We can see calamitous effect of the pungent struggle for their custody. The brutal and familial disagreements had bad impression on the innocent mind of the children”. (404)

Arjun started avoiding going to school: “Arjun limped his way to the waiting room. I can’t find any physical symptom. Sometimes there is an emotional cause. Is anything troubling him?” (161). He wanted his sister to remember that Shagun was their mother by showing her old photos, “He sat near her and showed her something in his cupped hand. It was a small passport size photograph of Shagun”(324).

Thus, Arjun and Roohi become mere puppets in the ugly divorce drama of their parents, “Raman says, I am not going to give you a damn thing unless custody is decided and that too in my favour. If the children become too old, and the issue irrelevant, I will never free you. Never. So take the children and give me a divorce. What? Take them.” (229)

Thus, *The God of Small Things and Custody* are skillfully shaped tales of children who are mistreated, ignored and deserted. The spiritual guru Osho very poignantly says that parents can definitely help their children by playing an important part of sometimes a friend, sometimes a mentor and sometimes a parent,

“No, being concerned is not good, because if you are concerned too much, you will become tense. And if you become tense you cannot help.”

### **Works Cited**

Banerji, Mithu. (2011). A Review of Custody by Manju Kapur,

<http://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/feb/27/custody-Manju-Kapur-review>.

Beauvoir, S., (1953). The second sex. New York: Knopf.

<https://www.brainyquote.com/topics/social-media-quotes>

Kapur, Manju. Custody. London: Random House, 2011.

Osho, Rajneesh. Beloved of My Heart: A Darshan Diary

Roy, Arundhati. *The God of Small Things*. New Delhi: India ink, 1997.



## **Critiquing Anthropocene with special reference to Naga Folktales**

**Mr. Sanjeeb Kalita**

**&**

**Dr. Prasenjit Das**

**Submitted 30/04/2024 Revised 08/06/2024 Accepted 30/10/2024, Published 31/10/2024**

**Abstract:** Folktale is an important part of oral literature and it has considerable influence in addressing issues of the Anthropocene era which is characterized by human-induced environmental changes. Through a nuanced understanding rooted in research, it is evident that folktales serve as a conduit for conveying ecological wisdom, weaving threads of reverence for nature and stewardship for environmental protection. Prominent scientists conducted research in Canadian lake mud and they claim that the danger of the Anthropocene is very much real. Anthropocene, in a way, is unavoidable and hence needs to be negotiated. Through relatable characters and universal themes, Naga folktales offer insights into the complexities of human-nature relationships, by weaving environmental lessons into a captivating narrative.

**Keywords:** Anthropocene, Naga Folktales, Natural Environment, Indigenous People.

### **Introduction**

In recent developments, scientists have found significant symbolic pieces of evidence of the Anthropocene era in human history. The lake is located in Ontario, Canada and it holds significance in the declaration of the Anthropocene epoch due to its role as a natural archive of the environmental history. The lake has some unique properties like its ability to preserve layers of sediment over time and provide scientists with valuable insights into past ecological changes caused by human activities. In a holomictic lake; deep and surface water mixes up at least once in a year but Crawford Lake makes a unique environment due to its lack of mixing between different layers. Local Canadian folklore suggests that lives are undisturbed at the lake bottom due to its stratification of water.

According to one local Canadian folklore; a few horses died falling into the lake and they lie asleep undisturbed at the bottom of the lake because the waters of the surface do not mix with the dense bottom layers of water. Thus the souls of the horses remain peacefully in the lake bottom and an unlucky man standing on the lake's shore may find the glowing red eyes in the evening because the horses are awakened

at the time of sunset as the folklore suggests. The local Canadian people believe the story because the lake water does not intermix and thus lives at the lake bottom are not deranged due to surface human activities. Each layer of water in the lake holds records of previous years because the lake preserves layers of sediments which is similar to rings of trees. In dendrochronology; the rings of a tree are studied to study the age of a tree. Similarly, scientists tried to study the layers of sediments found in Crawford Lake and its results are interesting.

### **Anthropocene and Folktales**

Folktales as an important art is passed from one generation to the other and many of our fundamental beliefs and archetypical values are continued and popular in masses thanks to folktales. The telling of folktales is something done especially by our grandparents and they not only weave dreams and aspirations through these folktales but also pass moral values through the medium of storytelling to the young ones. The noted anthropologist Dr. Verrier Elwin mentions that the North Eastern region of India is not only rich in natural resources but also endowed with a love for dance, music, and indigenous values. The folktales of this region represent cultural beliefs and pristine natural beauty. Owing to the region's richness and nearness to nature, the folktales of this region are entwined with nature. Thus folktales of this region fascinate the present generation to see how humans and nature coexist.

The naturally well-preserved sediment layers are studied by scientists and the lake mud bears significance in terms of environmental history and archaeology. The lake offers as a natural archive to understand past human-nature interactions in the region. Scientists found shreds of evidence of industrial pollution, extinction of species, and nuclear fallout in the exceptionally preserved sediments. Unprecedented human activities changed the climate of the planet after the 1950s and the golden spike found in the sediments of the lake suggests its formation after 1950 which scientists believed was the beginning of the Anthropocene epoch in geological time. The local story about the horse sleeping undisturbed at the lake bottom is still popular in Canada and it works as a conduit for preserving traditional ecological knowledge for future generations.

## **Naga Folktales**

Western perspectives on environmental issues are often shaped by their economic, cultural, and social contexts and they tend to prioritize issues that directly and indirectly affect their interests, such as pollution, climate change, and resource depletion, while also recognizing their global implications. In many Western cultures, there is a visible emphasis on technological innovation, individualism, and rapid industrial growth at the cost of the natural environment and this sort of environmentalism has made an absolute disregard for environmental problems faced by indigenous communities who are exposed to river erosion, floods, unprecedented loss of species and plants, air pollution, etc. The alienation from real-life environmental problems has distanced a few communities from the popular environmental discourse. Instead of following Western environmental discourse which is exclusionist because it views less on the indigenous view of the environment; the folktales of Nagaland make a completely different approach to different environmental issues.

In the contemporary context, the Naga folktales constitute a vital component of the region's cultural heritage and they work as repositories of traditional knowledge and ecological wisdom. As the Naga people are facing various environmental issues like climate change, deforestation, and loss of indigenous lands; their folktales provide unique frameworks for comprehending contemporary environmental issues and responding to these issues. By reminding communities of the importance of maintaining their cultural heritage and preserving their rich natural resources; the Naga folktales foster a sense of collective responsibility and guidance for sustainable living habits rooted in traditional ecological knowledge. In a way, Naga folk tales play a powerful medium for raising awareness and inspiring collective actions for the well-being of both humans and non-humans.

In one of the folktales of Angami Nagas; the conflict between humans and wildlife is beautifully described to undermine the Anthropocene and respect wild animals. Once upon a time, there was a farmer who lived peacefully with his wife and young son. He was helped by his wife in the paddy fields but his life was put in a difficult situation while hoards of boars encroached on his fields and destroyed his crops. His son

couldn't digest the pain inflicted on his parents by boars and he sharpened his dao and chased after the wild boars without informing his parents. He was so engrossed in his attempt at chasing the wild animals that he entered into the world of spirits without his knowledge. A young girl shouted at him and asked why he entered into the world of spirits and chased her boars. He explained his situation and soon they started to talk about life and love.

The young boy was kept hidden inside a stone when she saw her parents returning home and the very next day they again started to talk and soon they were fallen in love. The young girl told her parents about her love for a young boy and asked their permission to get married. The parents wanted to see the boy and soon she opened the stone; the parents were happy to see a handsome boy as their son-in-law. They got married with the blessing of her parents and the parents offered a mysterious box each to the boy and girl and suggested not to open the boxes until they leave the world of spirits and enter the human village. The boy opened the box out of curiosity before reaching the village and lots of animals came out of the box and they ran into the forest but the loyal girl opened the box only after reaching the village and many animals came out from the box and these animals became tamed animals. Thus it suggests the creation of domestic and wild animals that form an integral part of the environment.

Some Naga folktales articulate a profound advocacy for nature and equitable treatment of living beings by recognizing the intrinsic value of every creature that underscores the interconnectedness between humans and non-humans. And such folktales, spirits, and mythical beings work as guardians of the natural environment. According to one Mao-Naga folktale, Humankind (Human), Spirit, and Tiger were given birth by a mother through her miraculous coupling with the clouds of the sky. And thus the woman represents the reproductivity of nature. The three brothers along with the mother lived peacefully for several years but the woman fell sick one day and the three brothers started to nurse her but she observed that the three brothers developed animosity over the land rights. Each one of them wished to grab her mother's land. Seeing the adverse situation; the mother devised a plan to hand over property rights through a competition.

She asked them to prepare a grass ball and declared that the son who could first touch the grass ball would be considered to be the winner of the contest and subsequently, would be declared the inheritor of the land. All devised a plan but the plan of Humankind was unique and won the contest by preparing a bow and arrow to hit the grass-ball from a certain distance. The mother was happy to see Humankind winning the contest and instructed the Tiger to go forest asked the Spirit to vanish in the supernatural world and instructed all her children not to disturb one another. But in the Anthropocene epoch, humans are disturbing the animal kingdom by destroying their habitats, and overeating of animal flesh has also encouraged humans to exploit animals. These sorts of activities have created an imbalance in nature and loss of biodiversity will hurt humans in the days to come.

All share the same mother in the story and it suggests that there is only one earth for dwelling either men or animals. In her “How Man and Animals Lived Together and Spoke Each Other’s Language”, Temsula Ao discusses the peaceful bondmen and animals shared in the ancient past. There was a time when humans understood the language of animals and birds so thus the animals and birds. Several folktales talk about girls who fall in love with trees and tigers and get married subsequently. Some Naga folktales tell us about their traditional belief that after a person’s death, the soul becomes birds and insects therefore merciless killing of birds and animals is to be avoided because it will suggest cruelty to their near and dear ones. Thus these types of Naga folktales represent a perfect harmony between man and animals, unlike the Anthropocene epoch.

## **Conclusion**

In advocating for the preservation and protection of the natural environment, Naga folktales offer a compelling narrative of environmental justice rooted in their indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural traditions. They inspire communities to reconsider human-centric ideologies and recognize the inherent worth of all living beings by embracing reciprocity and coexistence within the natural world. Nagaland with its local tribal people is known for its intimate link with the natural environment that forms an inalienable part of the indigenous people. The Naga folktales not only represent their social, cultural,

and lifestyles but also their relationship with the pristine natural beauty of the land. It is said that the child is the father of mankind and through these folktales, children can be made aware of the eco-friendly culture of the community. By empowering children with environmental knowledge, the foundation for a generation of environmentally conscious citizens can be built.

### Works Cited

- “Can Folklore Play a Role in Environmental Conservation?: IDR.” *India Development Review*, 2 Feb. 2023, [idronline.org/article/climate-emergency/can-folklore-play-a-role-in-](https://idronline.org/article/climate-emergency/can-folklore-play-a-role-in-)
- Dabi, T. Inaugural address of a national seminar on folk culture and oral literature from North-East India. New Delhi: Mittal Publications. 2004
- Dey, T. Folk tales of north east India : A relook for environmental studies classroom transaction. Pedagogy of Learning. 2015
- Elwin, Verrier. *Myths of the North-East Frontier of India*. B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2018.
- Puri, A. The arts as education: Why arts education should be included in the curricular area. *Journal of Indian Education*, 33 (2), 2007
- “The Environmental Crisis: A Naga Folktale.” *MorungExpress*, [morungexpress.com/the-environmental-crisis-a-naga-folktale](https://morungexpress.com/the-environmental-crisis-a-naga-folktale). Accessed 21 July 2023.
- GoogleSearch, [www.google.com/search?q=causes%2Bof%2Bvultures%2Bdeath&btnK=Google%2BSearch&sxsrf=AB5stBgaDE4qng0Gnr\\_CW6h9qV5kP6PLTg%3A1689782966962&source=hp&ei=tgq4ZNDCOMmgseMPtI6ZqA0&iflsig=AD69kcEAAAAAZLgYxqz0gRSVM05N6OIWGNsgEDaMiWEt](https://www.google.com/search?q=causes%2Bof%2Bvultures%2Bdeath&btnK=Google%2BSearch&sxsrf=AB5stBgaDE4qng0Gnr_CW6h9qV5kP6PLTg%3A1689782966962&source=hp&ei=tgq4ZNDCOMmgseMPtI6ZqA0&iflsig=AD69kcEAAAAAZLgYxqz0gRSVM05N6OIWGNsgEDaMiWEt). Accessed 21 July 2023.

**"Will I marry a prince from a far-off magic land?": Unmasking Narratives of Postfeminist Diaspora and Regulatory Psychobiography in selected short stories by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Shail Agarwal.**

**Aakshi Srivastava**

**Submitted 30/07/2024 Revised 08/09/2024 Accepted 30/10/2024, Published 31/10/2024**

**Abstract:** Within the domain of Diaspora literature, the status of South Asian immigrant women bears the burden of being accosted with double displacement and subsequent marginalization. Coming to the west as the spouses of Non Resident Indians, not only are these women isolated in a foreign land but they are also made victims of patriarchal ideologies and structural oppression. Postfeminism, as an emerging ideology, reveals the process of how women combat their conservative indoctrination while also somewhat supporting equal rights. Postfeminism, as a thought experiment, can be examined in the narratives of said immigrant women through positioning their representation within global discourses as they interact with the dynamics of situated traditions.

Consequently, this paper seeks to examine the social formulation of abuse as a normalized part of marriage and determine the way postfeminist rhetoric in diasporic narratives exposes this dynamic. As Spivak's idea of regulative psychobiography analyzes grand narratives to be the foundational stereotypes of the indoctrination of patriarchy in women. Within this context, the following research question arises; how does regulative psychobiography work when it is placed in "the subject-constitution of the woman in post-modern neo-colonialism" (Spivak 9) through the stories written by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Shail Agarwal?

**Keywords:** Postfeminism, Domestic Violence, South Asian women immigrants, Diaspora, Neo-colonialism, Regulatory Psychobiography.

## Background and Introduction

Historically, the worth of a woman is determined by the social position of her husband. In the traditional sense of community, a married woman is representative of her husband's pride, the honor of her husband's family and the source of subservience of her own family. While contemporary feminism locates the source of sexism within the variable discourses of race, caste and religion; the universality of violence against women as a complacent form of 'normalization of terror' cannot be underwritten (Coppock et al. 14).

As such it is through the absence of established agency, that primal masculinity reserves its authority in the ideological premise of Postfeminism. The central idea reads into the implicitness of biological essentialism, that women can only be liberal to the extent which is allowed by the patriarchal constructs. Postfeminism prescribes the role of the woman in the domestic sphere, it reinforces the myth of a female identity which is separate but still lesser than her male counterpart (18).

For the purpose of this paper, I found Payal Basu's essay "Helping Women Help Themselves in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage* and *The Unknown Errors of Our Lives*" integral to my understanding and development of my research question. While providing a brief analysis of all the works on Domestic Violence written by Banerjee, Basu speculates that the author draws inspiration from her own foundation Maitri. Her involvement with Maitri allows her to represent the unvoiced challenges of the women immigrants, as Basu mentions:

Their physical and emotional alienation leave them confined to the domestic space with no one to confide in. Divakaruni depicts violence in the domestic sphere in order to create awareness among the readers about the victims. In her short stories, she explores the concept of control, both in a traditionally structured India and in the diasporic space of the United States. (22)

Since Basu compares Banerjee's stories, in both Indian and international contexts, the purpose of her study facilitates the conjecture of representing the abuse faced by women collectively. Therefore, my paper



wishes to locate the immigrant woman as the site of a hybridized and postfeminist sub-identity which demands recognition.

Roksana Badruddoja's work "'Third World Woman,' Family, and Marriage: South Asian Diasporic Fiction as a Site for Consolidation of the American Nation-state" situates the question of class, gender, family and cultural roots in the works of diasporic women writers. Her critical inquiry probes into the intricacies of identity formation which get neglected by the generic stereotypes set by these writers for their South Asian women characters. As such, I wish to import her specific examination of filial dynamics and domestic violence into the overtures of arranged marriages. While Badruddoja argues against Banerjee's subtle denigration of arranged marriages through her short stories, I will serve to demonstrate the dichotomy of South Asian women's tolerance as a sign of their regulative psychobiography.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's essay "The Political Economy of Women as Seen by a Literary Critic" has been foundational in my hypothesis formation for the following reasons; Spivak dissects the postmodern neo-colonial hindrance of heterogeneity as a means from escaping empiricism. Spivak argues that for certain marginalized sections, such as women, the subject-effect is often blindsided by the process of regulatory psychobiography. In simpler words, we cannot consider the existence of a third world woman without stressing the structural fealty to her patriarchal roots. Taking this into consideration, I would like to parse through Banerjee's and Agarwal's selected stories to elucidate how their characters' sense of 'I' effaces through the aforementioned notion.

### **Archiving Domestic Violence in "Silver Pavements, Golden Roof" and "Good Morning, Mrs Singh".**

While domestic violence and patriarchal terrorism are global issues, the accumulation of racial discrimination and social alienation escalates the isolation faced by South Asian women immigrants who get abused behind closed doors regularly. Much of research on the grounds of family violence suggests that structural inequalities, dictated as per the socio-political consensus, perform as an added incentive for domestic violence.

In Divakaruni's short story "Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs" Jayanti Ganguly, a young woman, dreams of a bright future in America with her very own Prince Charming. However, this illusion is broken when she arrives at her Aunt Pratima's house, where her husband Bikram is a garage mechanic. Pratima accepts Bikram's abusive behavior as part of her obligations, implying her acquiescence to postfeminist ideology and female subjectivity. Pratima feels she deserves the 'punishments' doled out by her husband, and she appears quite practiced with quickly placating Bikram when he admits to his guilt upon hitting her. By having Jayanti narrate this whole episode and juxtaposing it with her sudden desire to go back home, Divakaruni addresses the diasporic abandonment faced by South Asian women immigrants who are battered despite their subservience to the core mentality of regulatory psychobiography.

In Indian cultures, the name of the husband supersedes that of his wife. She becomes an extension of him, and he becomes a buffer between her and the rest of the world. When a wife wears Sringaar, the bindi and the bangles, they are representative of her married status. They become a junction of camaraderie between other married women, a communal belonging and devotion towards one's culture. However, in a foreign country, the significance of these cultural markers are lost on the majority of their population. Similarly, in many circumstances South Asian women immigrants are sidelined, neglected and outright scorned as they try to live by. In India, the point of refuge for an abused wife remains at her parents' house, this is not the case in western countries.

Hence South Asian women immigrants, often victims of abuse, face discomfort and struggle to find safe spaces in Crisis Centres due to their status. Giving voice to these overlooked women immigrants, Shail Agarwal's story "Good Morning, Mrs Singh" unleashes the disassociation faced by Kanak Lata, the wife of a successful and famous psychologist in England. Through the eyes of the narrator Shai, the story paints a bleak light on the severe abuse of Kanak Lata when she is found by the narrator in the crisis center. As Kanak bitterly unfolds her story to Shai, her undertone emphasizes the liminal space in which South Asian women immigrants exist.

The battered South Asian woman performs as a punching bag, as a maid, and as an emotional crutch for their husbands. They undergo this abuse silently to safeguard the honor and dignity of their families as such is the censored custom of Indian marriages. Women who violate the expectation that family secrets be kept private are seen as disloyal rebels who should be expelled from the family as well as disappointments. These cultural norms govern women's behavior when confronted with abuse from intimate partners and control their interactions inside the family (Roy 1110).

In the story “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs” Pratima conceals her predicament from her family to uphold the dignity of her husband Bikram. She spends all her days cooped up inside their small apartment cooking food and preparing for her husband's return from the garage. In return, Bikram acts as an entitled and taciturn man who drinks beer and refuses to let Pratima outside of the apartment. He hits her when he is at his emotional peak and then apologizes frantically after the act. Pratima, for her part, seems tranquil once she has been subjected to violence therefore signifying that this is a regular occurrence in her household.

By the end of Shail Agarwal's “Good Morning, Mrs Singh” Kanak Lata has committed suicide since she was assured in her son's continued future of a prosperous education (as Hari was obligated to do so, under the orders of his family). Unable to find another alternative of financial freedom in a foreign country, away from the emotional support of her family and the emotional support of her son, she sees no other way out. It is only after her death that the narrator laments how she could have trained as a nurse and provide for her son. In India, women have no other option than to endure the cruelty being dealt by the hands of their husbands. So for Kanak, who has been raised in the traditional backwaters of Bihar, the idea of fending for herself seems unthinkable.

The fact that her son was never in the school to begin with, signifies a staggering indictment of the domestic traditions of Indian marriages, where the exploitative nature of the in-laws and the violent husband are deceptive and manipulative. Kanak underwent physical and emotional torture in the hopes that her husband was funding their son Rakesh's education, this practice of holding the wellbeing of

children hostage is a common tactic in abusive Indian marriages where women stay with their violent partners. Kanak, a sheltered girl turned domesticated wife, has never been cognizant of her rights and her fundamental dignity as a human being. She is a victim of double displacement as the only people who provide her comfort in this foreign land are strangers from the Crisis Centre.

### **Atrocity Narratives and Postfeminist Diaspora**

The genre of atrocity narratives maps the register of trauma, horror and injustice to illuminate the emasculated feminine in the larger discourse of survival stories. Stories, like the primary texts of this paper, compose a territory of uncharted and undocumented web of abuse suffered by an individual which arises due to unchecked systematic misogyny (Nayar 29). Moreover, as the primary examples of being victims; characters such as Pratima and Kanak Lata stress the “dichotomy between the ‘material west’ and the ‘spiritual east’” as they unsuccessfully restrain their agency to appeal to their postfeminist inner selves (Badrudodoja 86). Their internal misogyny is an instinctual projection of their regulative psychobiography; they are dictated by the grand narratives of the American Dream.

For Pratima, the elusive nature of her American dream began with her wedding and ended the first time her husband raised a hand at her. On the other hand, Kanak Lata has surpassed the stage of dreaming and is only now thinking about the future of her son. Given the fact that her being as a wife was denied to her, her last resort is her aspirations as a mother. Both Pratima and Kanak Lata epitomize the paradox of the Non Resident Indian wife caught within the “structures of colonial subject-production” which is imported by their husbands (Spivak 13). Thus, postfeminist diaspora refers to the transcultural rhetoric of the existing tensions between the teleological binaries of the immigrant/native, the abuser/abused, the husband/wife and the East/West. The point of no return as recognised by Jayanti as she muses, “I want my room in Calcutta, where things were so much simpler... I want my childhood again. But I am too far away for the spell to work, for the words to take me back, even in my head.” (Divakaruni 22)

It is the realization and the disillusionment of the West as the magical dreamland where the South Asian women immigrants are living in abundant luxury with their rich, doting husbands.

In Shail Agarwal's story "Good Morning, Mrs Singh", the author correctly anticipates the outcome of Kanak Lata being an abused South Asian immigrant/victim in a Crisis Centre. Since none of the other social workers are able to garner a response from Kanak Lata apart from Shai. It is later revealed that Kanak Lata has an excellent command over her English, even though Shai is confused about her refusal to interact with the other workers. The presence of Kanak Lata's silence is indicative of her deluded sense of 'I' in the foreign country. This phenomenon is not uncommon as Basu remarks:

The acknowledgment of domestic violence is highly shameful in case of South Asian women immigrants who regard the failure of their marital relationship to be entirely their fault. There was no mainstream shelter in the 1990s which could provide them a platform to share their problems. Communication problems and the ignorance of the diverse cultural practices of South Asia and issues of race and ethnicity posed severe hindrances for the volunteers of the shelters in assisting them. (Basu 21)

Similarly, Pratima from the short story "Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs" performs as an recipient of triple marginalization, as an immigrant having a hard time coping with cultural displacement, then as a victim of racial prejudice in the United States and finally as a dependent wife who endures domestic abuse resignedly (25). The act of intimate partner violence in these particular atrocity narratives unveils the untrodden path of resistance which few South Asian women immigrants ever dare to take. As Jayanti and Shai bear witness to the battered Pratima and Kanak Lata, the narrative of atrocity extenuates the mythical subject-effect of the postmodern neo-colonial woman immigrant enmeshed with the ethics of postfeminist diaspora.

## **Conclusion**

As a result, the bodies of these women become the site of embodied subjectivity. When these women suffer through multiplicities of abuse, their body also manifests the effect of these batterings on their physical, psychological and emotional being. Repeated offenses of trauma imprints itself on the body

of the abused, it becomes “the swelling spreading its dark blotch across Aunt’s jaw” (Divakaruni 21) on Pratima and “the wounds and scars on her arms and the back of her neck” on Kanak Lata (Agarwal 3).

Hence, through “Silver Pavements, Golden Roofs” and “Good Morning, Mrs Singh” the cycle of abuse inherent in the implied double displacement of women immigrants is apparent to our understanding. Furthermore, the nuances of the postfeminist diaspora faced by women through the narratives are employed by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni and Shail Agarwal to determine the way both these short stories focus on the rise of initial neo-colonialism through regulative psychobiography and the fall of the same with the realization of postfeminist diaspora. The narrative of these immigrant women, when taken as a subject, has been compared to elucidate the extremities of abuse which is justified through the tacit weight of heterosexist agenda using regulative psychobiography and Postfeminism.

### Works Cited

- Agarwal, Shail. “Good Morning, Mrs Singh.” *Desi Girls: Stories by Indian Women Writers Abroad*, edited by Divya Mathur, Great Britain, HopeRoad Publishing, 2015.
- Badruddoja, Roksana. “‘Third world woman,’ family, and marriage: South Asian diasporic fiction as a site for consolidation of the American nation-state.” *South Asian Review*, vol. 35, no. 2, 8 Dec. 2017, pp. 81–103, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2014.11932972>.
- Basu, Payal. "Helping Women Help Themselves in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni’s Arranged Marriage and The Unknown Errors of Our Lives". *Critical Perspectives on Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni*. Ed by Amritjit Singh, Robin E. Field, Samina Najmi. Lexington Books, 2022.
- Coppock, Vicki, et al. *The Illusions of Post-Feminism*. Routledge, 2014.
- Divakaruni, Chitra Banerjee. *Arranged Marriage*. Anchor Books, 1998.
- Nayar, Pramod K. “Trauma, Testimony, and Human Rights: Women's Atrocity Narratives from Postcolonial India”, *South Asian Review*, 29:1, 27-44, 2008.

Roy, Debjani. "South Asian Battered Women's Use of Force Against Intimate Male Partners."

*Violence Against Women*, vol. 18, no. 9, SAGE Publications, Sept. 2012, pp. 1108–18.

Crossref, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801212461431>.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "The Political Economy of Women as Seen by a Literary Critic",

*Coming To Terms: Feminism, Theory, Politics*. Edited by Elizabeth Weed. Routledge, 1989.

## The Poster

Rituparna Mitra

“There’s nothing odd or bizarre about the flowers,Lizzy. Please stop seeing things where there are none.”

It had become a ritual of sorts. Every night before going to sleep Lizzy would ask Devashit the same thing. And every night he would reply in the exact same manner. It has been going on for two months now. Lizzy wondered when Devashit's patience would run thin and she would be thrown out without a single consideration or a second glance.

She had bought that poster from a thrift store located somewhere inside an alley Devashit had strictly forbidden her from entering. But she had been terribly bored that day. Having stepped out in search of tiny bursts of excitement, her feet had ended up taking to a place her mind had often drifted off to.

Lizzy could distinctly hear the disapproving murmurs, the annoying clicking of tongue of her mother inside her head. How she wished Mrs. Elinor would understand a tad bit more and not dismiss anything as nonsensical fits of misguided teenage vitality.

That was the problem with Elinor. She was more teacherly than motherly. A little scholarly too. She tried explaining everything in the most reasonable, the most logical way possible. And in doing so, she ruled out all sorts of emotional considerations.

Not to say that she never engaged in any sort of motherly display of the emotions she harbored towards her own daughter. But they were few and far in between; leaving Lizzy craving and pining for more. In her defense, Elinor would say nothing better could be done for she was to play both the dual roles of a mother as well as a father. Its strange how we train our minds to come at our defense at the slightest of prompts. As if it knew, we had nobody else to rely on. It knew that everybody else would be pointing fingers.

Sometimes, Lizzy wondered if that's all she had done all her life.Pointed her fingers towards Elinor and blamed her aloofness and practicality for everything that went wrong in her life. How she couldn’t go to Berlin! How she had to leave all her school friends! How she had to run to Europe leaving Aditya behind!



Aditya...The name still left a sour taste inside her mouth. She tried not taking his name lying beside Devishit at night in the same bed. She prayed to a God who had never listened to make her forget everything. The day she had first met Aditya, the day they were caught kissing in the back of his father's car, the day she discovered she was pregnant with his child and , most importantly, the day she had run away to her grannie's home in Missouri tired of the endless fights with Elinor.

Missouri had been a dream at first. A safe haven. A personal slice of heaven. A home she had always pined for growing up. But things had taken a turn for the worse the day grannie had brought those damned flowers home.

She didn't even know the name of those flowers. Only that they were the brightest shade of red she had ever seen. Brighter than blood itself. Those would bloom so fast and take very little care and attention.

*Effortless beauty. No fuss and only charm. These are kids that never show tantrums.*

Grannie would never tire of praising those flowers. The more she praised the more her hatred grew towards those flowers. Lying on her small bed inside her equally small room, she oft wondered if grannie wished for her to be like those flowers.

It wouldn't be surprising in the least if she did. For everyone had always some issue or other with her. Elinor, Aditya and perhaps grannie too. All of them always made her feel as if something was deeply upsetting about her. As if she carried some scar on her that made her look hideous. As if there was some dark shadow looming over her; plunging them into an absolute kind of darkness by the virtue of proximity and association.

She had struggled to find acceptance with any of them. Looking back at her life, she realizes it has been an endless quest to find acceptance. She had drifted from one end of the shore to the other in search of her oyster but never found any. She did stop at one point realizing how distorted her vision of the oyster had become. All thanks to the many ways she had been interpreted by people around her.

To them, she had always been a self-centered escapist who could never see beyond the self. Never love beyond the self. How did one love! By listening to every piece of complaint that was carelessly thrown one's way? Or by accepting faults when there were none to name? Or by becoming a vessel into which every bit of anger, respite and hurt could be poured? Was there no love above and beyond that?

What about that love she had given to her collection of figurines over the years? Each piece was faulty in some way or other yet she chose to make it her own. She chose to love them, care for them and build them a home too. She carried them wherever she traveled. Even if she forgot her medicines, she could never forget her figurines.

There was a beauty about them that went unnoticed by everybody else except for her. They were rejected pieces nobody wanted to put their money into. People would laugh at her foolishness- for only a foolish would buy something imperfect. But to her, they're pieces she had lost to other people- people who mattered to her. Even if she didn't to them.

She had bought the first piece in 5th standard in memory of Alvisha. Alvisha had been the prologue to the novel of her life. In her she had found everything a twelve year old could ask for- playfulness, delight and mischief. And , more than all these, that fresh and blossoming maturity which everybody found to be lacking in her. Especially her mother.

She had met her outside the infamous basketball court on a windy Saturday afternoon. Basketball had been nothing more than a pipe dream for her. Every day, she would see her classmates soaring high in the air and scoring one after another point for their respective teams- cursing her short and visibly weak stature. She secretly hoped for nobody to see her. Not that anybody would focus much outside the game. Yet she kept on praying silently to go undetected by all pairs of wandering eyes- if any. But that day all her prayers had fallen on deaf ears for she had been spotted by Alvisha.

Alvisha was the captain of the Blue House alongside being a state level champion. She was around 5'8'' and looked stronger than most boys her age. She had an air of authority about her that nobody dared to

question. Although she enjoyed an enviable social life yet there was an unmistakable touch of aloofness to her. It was like she would stand out even if three other girls in the same room as her were wearing the same shade of pink that she had chosen for herself.

Lizzy had always found her a little intimidating. Although she had never given her any reason to. How could she for they'd never even have the briefest of encounters. Until that day of course. Everything had changed that day. It was one of those unforgettable encounters that one could never put behind themselves.

"You want to play?"

Her voice had a certain laziness to it- as if she had all day to talk and get to know about the person who had somehow managed to pique her interest. Lizzy wondered if she spoke to everyone in the same tone. If everyone felt as special to be on the receiving end of such a sudden onslaught of interest as she was. Or perhaps, it was all workings of her overactive imagination. Perhaps she was cooking up romantic tales that had nothing to do with truth, or at least , what is known and accepted to be the truth.

"No, I like watching."

"And how do you know you won't like playing? Have you ever tried?"

"I can't. I'm too short."

She had burst out laughing at her confession. Lizzy wasn't offended in the least. For her laughter was not of mockery or ridicule. It was a pure one stemming from a childlike amusement. Her entire face had transformed before Lizzy- from curious to delighted. It had felt refreshingly wonderful to be able to make somebody- somebody important like Alvisha- laugh.

Lizzy had taken an instant liking to Alvisha when she chose not to pressurize Lizzy to learn basketball. Neither had she subjected Lizzy to an endless stream of motivational pep talks. Instead, every day after game practice when the court would be empty, she would play with Lizzy. Except their play was more of a mock play than the real sport. For Alvisha would lift little Lizzy up in the air so that she could make the ball pass through the netted basket.

Every time she would score a point, they would both burst out laughing. Taking a leap of faith in Alvisha gave immense joy to Lizzy every day. It was difficult to explain from where she drew such unshakable faith that Alvisha would never allow her to fall. No matter what. It went on for days until it all stopped for she did fall. And how.

That fall had fractured their relationship beyond healing. Alvisha had stopped talking to her after that day. She had even stopped playing basketball- something she enjoyed the most. In short, she had stopped living. That accident had reduced her to a mere shell of what once she used to be. After a couple of months, she had moved out of the town as well. Nobody knew where to. Just like they didn't know what had caused her sudden, unexplainable downfall.

At times Lizzy felt an all encompassing need to shout out to anybody who would listen that she was the real culprit. She had entered Alvisha's life like a jinx and ruined it irreversibly. That she had taken away the effervescent champion and left a lifeless dummy in its place. She deserved the worst form of punishment for the havoc she had wreaked in Alvisha's life. But had she not already? In losing the only friend, the only companion she could make in a long, long time.

Two months after the abrupt and tragic demise of Alvisha from her life, Lizzy's mother had taken her to a fair. She felt no joy in all the fancy rides her mother encouraged her to mount. Or all the candies and treats her mother was more than willing to buy. All she wished for was to go home and hide inside the comfort of her room. To fall back on the endless memories of Alvisha that played on an endless loop through her mind. Nothing else could ever make her so happy, so alive as she once had. No ride. No cotton candy. No fancy lights.

Breaking into the impenetrable wall of her limiting thoughts, an obscure figurine peeping out of the makeshift window of one of the display stalls caught her attention. She felt an immediate pull towards the obscure figure. Her feet took her to where it rested without asking for permission from her mind.

On closer inspection she found the figurine to be slightly cracked. The stall owner pointed her in the direction of many other colorful figurines that she could choose from for they held no imperfections. She couldn't take her eyes away from the "imperfect" figurine. It was that of a girl with short hair holding a little ball in her hands. She had big round eyes and a strong chin that spoke of authority and leadership. Just like her Alvisha.

Despite repeated interference (on both the shopkeeper's and her mother's part) she had taken the tiny figurine home. She would take her to school and sit outside the basketball court placing her gently on her lap. She would sit with her for hours at home and say nothing at all. She would simply hold her. In a fashion similar to how Alvisha would hold her hands while watching horror movies on Saturdays. Saturdays would be their movie night. And they would mostly choose horror movies- movies they shouldn't have been watching at their age.

But with Alvisha, Lizzy found strength to do everything she couldn't do alone. Playing basketball (albeit in an eccentric manner), watching horror movies and even enjoying silence from time to time. When Alvisha deserted her, she violently snatched everything from her. She was hurt, confused and angry beyond words. *Talking always helped*, she had heard and read too. But she didn't want to share Alvisha with anybody. She didn't want anybody else to enter their sacred space and contaminate it with their well-balanced and rationally deduced answers and explanations.

Of course, she didn't understand things so intellectually at the tender age of 12 as she did now at 24. All she knew then was Alvisha couldn't be shared with anybody. Especially not her mother who never kissed her while tucking her to bed. Or made smiley faces with chocolate syrup while serving her waffles on Sunday mornings for breakfast. Lizzy knew her mother would never understand the depth of the relationship she shared with Alvisha. Nor the vacuum, the chasm her absence had left in her life. And if she couldn't approach her mother, who else could she really talk to in this world of nameless faces and cold handshakes!?

But time taught her not to complain much. For whoever had the time or patience or even the desire to listen. So, she kept to herself mostly. Until she no longer had to. After Alvisha, she had given up on people entirely- accepting she was born to survive alone in a world full of familiar strangers and unknown associates. But Aditya had cracked the password of her heart, tearing through the defenses of her solitude. It never took him much. Just an assemblage of a few carefully chosen words and a desire to listen to all she never spoke.

The affair-the word seems highly inadequate to describe what she had with Aditya-was like one of those wines that have to be fermented over a longer period of time. The start was painstakingly slow; but gradually it gained momentum. She was sure- almost sure- it would lead her to nowhere. But nothing could've prepared to the forced abortion that it eventually led her to. Having erased most of his memories, Lizzy also remembers the ending. Devishit had come to deliver the news. Aditya had finally decided to succumb to parental pressure and married this Brahmin girl, Advija, leaving her to the mercy of an impeccably logical mother who took straight to the clinic and had the baby aborted by an associate secretly. The associate had agreed for Mrs. Eleanor owed her a huge favor from a distant yet unforgettable past.

The next figurine in her collection was purchased from Europe where Mrs. Elinor had sent her to forget and heal. And most importantly, move on. Strange how Mrs. Elinor knew things related only to the end of relationships and nothing about how to make one successful. The figurine was that of a newborn soldier peeking from inside the cape of his mother. His head was bald and eyes round. On his forehead was a star shaped scar. It reminded her of what her grannie used to say:

*On dying you become a star and keep a watchful eye on all those you love.*

The poster had a lone bright star shining in the gloomy black sky streaked with a scattered hues of some adamant blues. And a little girl was staring up towards it with a deflated ball lying beside her. She had a crumpled piece of paper in her hands. A photograph probably or it could be a letter too. Something- some unnecessary memory that no longer served her purpose- that she wished to crush under the strength of her

tiny fists. The poster was everything her life had been all about so far. How could Devashit still see nothing in it!

A little voice inside her always reminded her it was because she could visualize everyone in that picture except for Devashit. His denial was a mirror response to her own exclusion of him. And she would always laugh aloud at that voice.

*In life you always win some and you lose some.*

At least Mrs. Elinor was right about something.

\*\*\*\*

### **Our Esteemed Contributors**

- **Dr. Amrita Bhattacharyya** . Assistant Professor & Head of the Department of English, Vidyasagar Mahavidyalaya, Mosat, Hooghly, West Bengal.
- **Dr.Nitasha Malhotra Bajaj**, Assistant Professor in English, DAV College for Girls, Yamunanagar, Haryana
- **Sanjeeb Kalita** Assistant Professor & Head, Department of English, PNGB Govt. Model College, Tinsukia, Assam.
- **Dr. Prasenjit Das** Professor, PNGB School of Humanities, Krishna Kanta Handiqui State Open University, Assam
- **Aakshi Srivastava** Independent Scholar, India.
- **Rituparna Mitra** Research scholar at North Eastern Hill University, Tura Campus, Meghalaya.