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# प्राच्या PRĀCYĀ

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Vol. XII

CĀRVĀKA-JAINAVIŚEṢĀMKAḤ

चार्वाक-जैनविशेषांकः



Department of Sanskrit  
M.D.K. GIRLS' COLLEGE  
DIBRUGARH  
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धन्योऽयं भारतो देशो धन्येयं सुरभारती ।  
तदुपासकाः वयं धन्या अहो परम्परा ॥

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## FEMALE BODY, NUDITY AND SHAME IN JAINISM : A FEMINIST VIEWPOINT

Dr. Rizia Begum Laskar

### Abstract

This article explores the Jain concept of the female body with regards to renunciation and attaining *mokṣa*. The probing into the concepts of Jainism is primarily based on the *Digambara* sect of Jainism and the fact that the *Digambara* sect denies complete renunciation to women nuns specifically because of the female body while the same is available to men. The female body is not only considered to be inferior but also in denying it the option of nudity the attainment of *mokṣa* is also taken away from the women nuns. This paper argues from a feminist standpoint that the shame which emanates from nudity of the female body is because of the male gaze and that the subjugation of the female body relegates her to an inferior status. At the same time, the given identity of the female body is an irrefutable one and the denying of spirituality on the basis of one's sex is an attempt at erasure of the very concept of being female.

**Key Words :** Nudity, shame, disgust, gaze, female body

Serenity Young in a review of Padmanabh S. Jaini's *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women* says that both the sects of Jainism, the *Digambaras* (the sky clad) and the *Śvetāmbaras* (the white clad), agree at least that "being born a woman is having committed vices, such as cheating and crookedness, in other lives...[and that] once a person, female or male, is so advanced spiritually that they have generated the Jaina view of reality, called *samyaktva*, they cannot be reborn as a female. The highest wisdom, short of liberation itself, erases any

femaleness".<sup>1</sup> The ultimate aim of achieving deliverance or *mokṣa* from the relentless cycle of birth and death is believed to be achieved if one gives up the attachment to worldly luxuries and pleasures and lives an ascetic life. The problem is not one of easy dissemination of core ideals of Jainism to women to follow and assimilate them in their lifestyles but more of a conflict of ideology between the two primary sects of Jainism and in their conceptualization of attainment of *mokṣa*. One of the primary differences between the two sects lies in the concept of nudity. The *Digambaras* believe that ultimate salvation can never be achieved without nudity while the *Śvetāmbaras* do not consider nudity as essential for salvation. The *Digambaras*, through a logical implication, also therefore say that since women cannot or rather should not embrace nudity they can never achieve true *mokṣa*. One of the earliest texts to talk about salvation of women in Jainism is *Sūtraprābhṛta* (*Suttapāhuda*). Digambara Ācārya Kundakunda (c. 150 CE) is generally attributed to be the author of the text and he relates the necessity of nudity as also the biological factors due to which women cannot attain *mokṣa* :

According to the Teaching of the Jina, a person wearing clothes cannot attain *mokṣa* even if he be a Tirthaṅkara. The path of *mokṣa* consists of nudity (*nagna*); all other paths are wrong paths.

In the genital organs of women, in between their breasts, in their navels, and in the armpits, it is said [in the scriptures that] there are very subtle living beings. How can there be the mendicant ordination (*pravrajyā*) for them [since they must violate the vow of *ahiṃsā*]?

Women have no purity of mind; they are by nature fickle-minded. They have menstrual flows. [Therefore] there is no meditation for them free from anxiety.<sup>2</sup>

The reasons forwarded by the *Digambaras* for prohibiting nudity among women include the disgust generated in visualizing a naked woman and more importantly a naked, menstruating woman, the fear of sexual attack on women, as also inciting sexual

urges among men. This paper therefore contextualizes these reasons of negating nudity as emanating from the problem of male gaze which incites shame in women. This in turn paves the way for restricting women from attaining salvation and thereby depriving them merely on the basis of their sexual orientation which by itself is an irrevocable identity in this one cycle of life. The necessity to take rebirth as a man to attain salvation not only questions the status of the female body in itself but also relegates the necessity of a female body as a means to an end in itself. The paper will look into the ways in which the female body is construed in Jainism particularly among the *Digambaras* to come to an understanding regarding the limitations imposed upon it.

### The Male Gaze and Shame

The *Digambaras'* most important assertion for renunciation of this world is nudity as they believe that Mahāvīra also practised nudity. As a codicil to this argument they also argue that the female mendicant can never be completely a renouncer as she is incapable of nudity. Rather they insist that women should not adopt nudity as it can give rise to disgust and sexual desires in men along with possible sexual attacks on them too. Also, nudity gives rise to shame among women and therefore it is not a plausible option at all for women.<sup>3</sup>The fact that nudity gives rise to shame in the female body also posits the question of the visualization by the society. The male gaze is inextricably connected with the female body and thereby the body becomes a sexual identity which is then inscribed upon.

Shame as a human emotion is essentially derived from the judgement that a person receives from another person. Shame therefore is in many ways linked to visibility and arises from how one is seen by someone else to be doing something inappropriate. Aristotle cites a Greek proverb – *the eyes are the abode of shame* – to emphasize that shame is mainly associated with seeing and being



seen. Etymologically therefore, shame is connected with nakedness of the human body and somebody seeing the naked body.<sup>4</sup> The visual factor associated with shame is also associated with the concept of who sees and who is seen? The female body is not only grotesque but is also a site of shame as her nudity will eventually lead to humiliation and even sexual attack. However this conditioning of the female body is also a double bind as her nude body radiates shame while her covering of it is also because of her shame. The act of covering of her body originates from shame as otherwise it will display her body aroused in sexual desire. Only a body free of desires can be completely nude. On the other hand, the female body in its nude condition arouses sexual desires in others and therefore it cannot be nude. Digambara Ācārya Prabhācandra in the concluding part of *Nyāyakumudacandra* discusses about *strīmokṣa*. As regards to shame, the Digambara in a dialogue with an Yāpanīya says :

The same can be said about the presence of shame. It is not proper to say that shame is compatible with freedom from desire, for it is the nature of shame to wish to cover the loathsome parts of the body when one is aroused by desire.

A person who is free from desire will not feel shame; like a child; you consider nuns to be free from desire.

[However, since you maintain that nuns wear clothes in order to dispel shame, they therefore cannot be free from desire.]<sup>5, 6</sup>

The process of instigating shame and shaming someone includes a subject-object relationship. The object is invariably gazed at while the subject gazes at the object. Bernard Williams in *Shame and Necessity* posits his argument that shame necessarily entails a loss of power. The observation of the object in this state of weakness is the main element of inducing shame. The subject gazes at the object to remind it of its state of being shamed or shameful and also emphasizes a loss of power.<sup>7</sup>

Another important aspect associated with the concept of power relations is the condition under which somebody is gazed at. In this

regard, Max Scheler's concept of shame in "Shame and the Feelings of Modesty" provides an important parameter to understand how shame originates. He gives the example of a coy woman posing nude for a painter. In this case, the woman does not feel any sense of shame as she is posing as a model and her state of nakedness is essentially to serve the purpose of art. The artist views her as a model for his art and not as a naked woman leading to a negation of any feelings of shame in her. If per chance, he looks at her even for an instance without his artistic glance she will immediately experience shame. The purpose of her being nude has changed and with it the gaze has also changed. She is no longer an almost asexual model but a woman very much imbued with sexuality. The shift in her sexuality is not one of her own doing but one that has arisen from the shift in the painter's viewpoint or gaze. However, shame as an emotion arises only in the woman and not in the man as it her experience of nudity that has transformed the situation from an aesthetic one to a sexual one.<sup>8</sup> Scheler's example is a powerful one as it conclusively shifts the onus of shame from the woman to the man. It is not the woman's fault that she has been shifted from an asexual being to a sexual one through the shift in the male gaze. Feminist theory predominantly exerts, unlike Scheler, that no vision is free of judgement or opinion formation, not even an artistic one. The vision is always formed through the notions with which the world is viewed. Feminism is therefore in a way reiterating an argument forwarded by E.H. Gombrich that any visual impression is followed by categorization of the vision however mundane or unimportant the vision is. There is nothing called an unbiased vision and all observations are a result of one's outlook and beliefs. At the same time, the feminist assertion that any depiction of women is marked by a male gaze engages within itself something more crucial than just the negation of the innocence of the eyes. Gender plays a pivotal role in determining how gaze is formulated. The gaze is therefore very much conditioned by male needs, desires, and beliefs. The society,

inclusive of man and woman, sees the world through the male eyes and thus a deep rooted conditioning takes place which regulates how women not only visualize how others see them but also how they see themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The *Digambaras'* insistence that the nude female body is a shameful one is thereby a flawed one which does not take responsibility for society's or men's own desire and sexual feelings. It is interesting to note here with relation to Scheler's example that if the nude female nun's body is attempted to be visualized as a venerable figure who has renounced the world then the problem of shame or desire does not arise. The onus lies squarely on who gazes rather than who is gazed at. Shame emerges through an essentially negative impression that one forms of oneself and is primarily based on the gaze of the society. Shame or embarrassment is guided to oneself when the individual feels that the society negatively assesses them or there is a possibility of one's social status being undermined (Brown, 2006; Burton, 2015; H. B. Lewis, 1971). Therefore, unlike the female nuns, for the male monks of the *Digambara* sect, there is no societal backlash as their state of nakedness is looked upon as a necessary action towards attaining salvation and is venerable. Thus, for the male monks no shame emanates from their nudity.

Liz Wilson in "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed': Resistance to Indian Cultural Conventions regarding Female Nudity" comments on two examples of nudity in Indian scriptures. The first is that of Draupadi and the second is that of Akka Mahadevi. She posits the question of shame with regards to nudity and says that nakedness can be seen "as a means of resistance against culturally determined understandings of the body for someone whose values run counter to those prevailing in the culture,...[or] can also serve as a means of shaming those who look".<sup>10</sup>In the course of her essay, Wilson says that Draupadi's refusal in Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* to wash or tie her hair after her humiliation in the court by Duṣṣāna is a form of protest in order

to display her condition in its violated form. She has vowed that she will wash, comb or braid her hair only after her humiliation is avenged through Duryodhana's death and she will wash her hair with Duryodhana's blood. The actual instance of her avengement takes place after a long period and in the intermediate years she resides in a state of dishevelment. Having been exposed in the court, she displays her violated condition to highlight the atrocious act committed against her. On the other hand, Draupadi in Mahashweta Devi's eponymous short story is a revolutionary who is gang raped by her captors as a means of making her submissive. After the rape, she is presented with a pot of water by the guard to wash herself and clothes to cover her up and make herself presentable for the Senanayak. Draupadi knocks down the pot of water and tears the cloth given to her with her teeth. She presents her naked body to the Senanayak as a protest against the violence done on her body. She conceives of her nakedness as a means to make her assailants feel ashamed as it is the nakedness in their looks that makes her naked in turn. It is the shamelessness of her captors which has induced them to rape her and thus she feels no shame regarding her naked body. On the other hand, she also acknowledges that if the man standing in front of her is a man of virtue then she would feel ashamed of her condition. Wilson then focuses on Akka Mahadevi's story where the protagonist is married to the local chieftain of her village. The marriage is an unsatisfactory one and Mahadevi does not like the sexual interest of her husband towards her. He is also not appreciative of her devotion to Lord Mallikarjuna. It is believed that after a particularly difficult incident, Mahadevi leaves her husband's house in disgust and in a state of nakedness barring her hair which covers her. Such an act is of course looked down upon in society but surprisingly her husband, a Jain himself, understands her action. He realises her act as similar to that of the *Digambara* monks, as one of renunciation of family life and earthly attachments. Mahadevi considers her state of nudity as one of renouncing her

worldly life, especially her husband, and therefore frees herself from all forms of gaze and all shame. The Lingāyata saints' community, with whom she started living, on the other hand asked her as to why she covered her body with her hair to which she replied that it was to protect her from human weakness rather than any shame on her part. The problem of female nudity therefore lies more squarely on the feet of societal gaze as both Draupadī and Mahadevi feel inhibited by it albeit so in different circumstances.

Wilson's account of Akka Mahadevi's nudity and her subsequent residence with the Lingāyata saints prove that there have been religious sects in India which do not frown upon female nudity and accept it easily. This account also proves that female nudity by itself is not one which can ipso facto give rise to shame. It is the viewpoint or outlook with which a nude body is visualized that gives rise to shame and fear. Mahadevi covered her body with her hair not because she felt ashamed of herself but because she felt that society cannot control itself while feasting their eyes on her naked body. Mahadevi's character could absolve herself of all shame associated with nudity and the community into which she sought refuge visualized her as a renouncer and a nun rather than a sexual female body. Similarly, naked *Digambara* monks are not repulsive nor do they exhibit shame as their nakedness is primarily viewed from a religious perspective rather than a worldly one. The evocation of shame is thus a clever societal policy through which the female body is not only sexualized but also kept in control.

### Impurity and the Female Body

The female body in Jainism is also a source of negation as it is primarily the sexual functions of the body which denies a woman of attaining *mokṣa*. Integral to the notion of sexuality in Jainism is the concept of *veda* which implies sexual orientation but is not essentially related to gender. There are three basic kinds of sexual feeling, *strīveda*, *pumveda* and *napuṃśakaveda*, which are attributes of

sexual feelings of a woman, man, and a hermaphrodite respectively. In opposition to generally understood concepts of sexuality, in Jainism however these are not considered to be related to the biological gender of the person. Therefore, a person can be a male because of his anatomical makeup (*dravyapuruṣa*) but he can be a female due to his emotional or psychological makeup (*bhāvastrī*).<sup>11</sup>

The *Digambaras* not only harbour a distrust of the female body but also have profound disgust towards it particularly a menstruating body. Meghavijaya, acting as a representative of the *Digambara* ideology, postulated that the flow of menstrual blood each month is evidence of an impure body. Menstruation is a taboo in many patriarchal societies all over the world but Jainism inscribes the female body with violence in the process of menstruation. The Jain view looks at specific parts of the woman's body like the genital organs, the space between the breasts, the armpits, and the navel as breeding grounds to a large number of microscopic organisms termed as *aparyāptas*. These organisms are killed through the daily activities of the woman's body and at the same time the organisms give rise to an itching in her genitals which can be relieved only through intercourse. The situation therefore posits her in a double bind as she is not only guilty of not practising the fundamental Jain principle of *ahimsā* but also is never free from sexual desires which again act as an impediment to attaining spirituality.<sup>12</sup> A woman's body or rather anatomy is thus an immediate hindrance to the path of *mokṣa* and it is something which she can hardly shed in her lifetime.

The fact that the female body evokes feeling of disgust and repulsion is intricately connected to Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject in *Power of Horror*. The concept of abject was used by Kristeva to refer to things which give rise to disgust and repulsion and in the process of doing so those who are abject are placed outside the ambit of society, community etc. Kristeva thus looks at the process of menstruation not necessarily as one which is impure

or unclean but rather as one which disrupts borders. Mary Douglas carries forward the concept of impurity associated with the human body, particularly with the female body, and says that the concept of dirt depends on the diverse interpretations in different societies and culture. She refers to dirt as not an absolute concept but merely as "matter out of place" and relates the concepts of purity, cleanliness, pollution and taboo with a social order that determines what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.<sup>13</sup> In conjunction with Douglas' views, it is the conception of Jain society especially the *Digambaras* which visualizes dirt placed outside the female body as something which can be wiped or cleaned away with a simple *pišchi* (peacock fan). On the other hand, the same dirt when it is placed on the female body makes her ineligible for salvation in this life. With regards to bodily fluids emanating from the body, another feminist scholar Elizabeth Grosz argues that across societies bodily fluids are not given the same status.<sup>14</sup> Grosz thus criticizes Kristeva for looking at the menstrual blood as impure while categorizing semen or tears as non-polluting.<sup>15</sup> The same semen which flows from the male body to provide relief to the 'itching' that the female body feels is thus not categorized as disgusting by Jainism but the body into which it flows into is a disgusting one. Shauna MacDonald thus says that patriarchy visualizes the male body as ideal which is able to control within itself the flow of bodily fluids like semen. On the other hand, the female body is looked down as the 'other' as it is unable to control the flow of menstrual blood. The age old customs of hiding the fact that the female body is menstruating is a means through which the patriarchal structure and norms are maintained. MacDonald thus makes a very valid argument of differentiation of the female and male body where the 'leak' of the female body lays bare the fact that men and women are inherently different. Women are neither men nor can they exist as men.<sup>16</sup> The inherent difference in the male and female bodies is therefore a pure biological factor which is irrefutable by itself. The subjugation of the female body based on

her biological sex is in fact an inherent violence on her body and the accusation of committing violence because of normal bodily functions is thus a means through which the original violence remains hidden.

### Subjugation and Repression of the Female Body

The path to salvation as laid out by the *Digambaras* is a complete renunciation of earthly possessions and attachment to which they add clothing as a form of possession. Female prohibition to nudity however does not imply that Jainism does not have any woman renouncers. There a large number of nuns in Jainism who have renounced the world and have moved forward with their ascetic life. However, the female body has been looked upon as inherently sexual in nature which creates a host of problems for these female renouncers where their vow of celibacy is questioned. Texts such as *Bṛhatkalpasūtra*, *Bṛhatkalpabhāṣya*, *Niśītha Churni* and *Āvaśyaka-niryukti* describe the strict rules that women mendicants have to follow to keep their sexuality and sexual desires in control. Some of these rules include not allowing a nun from venturing out alone and also wearing eleven types of clothes while travelling. At the same time, some of the rules verge on the ludicrous and even prohibit nuns from using vegetables and fruits of an elongated or oblong shape. Such objects are phallic in structure and can give rise to sexual desires or can be used for fulfilment of sexual pleasures. Any stimulation of sexual organs or accidental touch of an animal is completely prohibited and strict penalties imposed in case of any aberration. The primary logic behind such an argument is that many women seek asceticism as a refuge from the chaos of life and therefore, by nature, unable to restrain their sexual urges. Complete renunciation on their part is not possible. The monk, on the other hand, is cautioned against such women lest he loses his chaste nature due to cunningness of such women. The dichotomy of the situation is evident from the



fact that nudity is prohibited so that the woman can be saved from the society and her clothed self needs to be saved from herself.<sup>17</sup>

The female body thereby becomes an abject existence which is forced into the process of normalisation. The body of the Jain nun is thus one which is attempted upon to overcome the very notion of being a woman, a body not only alienated from the society but also from itself. Judith Butler reconstitutes the concept of abject as different from that of Kristeva and says that what is considered as abject falls within the purview of outside and inside. The formation of the abject also necessitates "a domain of abject beings" who remain outside the "domain of the subject".<sup>18</sup> Butler further argues that the subjugation of the abject being is dependent "not merely through acts of overt prohibition, but covertly, through the constitution of viable subjects and through the corollary constitution of a domain of unviable (un)subjects".<sup>19</sup> The subjugation of the nuns is therefore also one where the nuns themselves co-relate to create a condition of being oppressed while remaining within the order of Jainism as nuns.

### **The Renouncer and the Temptress**

Some of the concepts on the basis of which the process of initiation (*dīkṣā*) takes place include a denial, rejection, or change of the earlier life and in the case of women this process is more pronounced than men. Historically in India, women have always been conceived to be unable to attain spirituality or live an ascetic life primarily because of their sexuality, emotional ties and family relations. The women are both glorified and censured because of their physicality. The attachment that a woman displays towards her family members is perceived to be a great deterrent to her achieving asceticism. The public imagination or the religious mindset of Jainism primarily views women as more attached to the worldly affairs which make renunciation of this life difficult for them. The very fact for which women are revered, her fecundity

and loyalty to family, makes her ineligible for renunciation and even if she does so it is viewed to be of a lesser degree than men. The Jain nun upon renunciation of an earlier life is not conceived to be wholly immersed in her religious life and is rather viewed to be in a luminal state or being within the Jain religious structure.<sup>20</sup>

Nalini Balbir puts forward another negative aspect that Jainism connects with women and it involves looking at the woman as a temptress. A woman is viewed as an obvious danger to the fourth vow among the five vows taken by the monk. The fourth vow is a vow of chastity which is one of the most difficult vows to adhere to and thus a woman always is seen as a threat to the monk. A woman is such a grave danger to a monk that even talking to her is prohibited and any talking done with or about women is termed as *vikahā* (bad talk). The five vows are interconnected to each other and thus breaking one vow signifies breaking others too which negates the state of mendicancy for the monk. The onus of the breaking of vows lies with the woman rather than with the man himself and there are lengthy treatises based on the wickedness of women who make monks break their vows. At the same time, Balbir also says that some scholars have pointed out that such tales about women's wickedness should be read only as means to warn the monks of the pitfalls involved in the process of renunciation and asceticism.<sup>21</sup> Balbir adds that the prejudiced mindset shared by Jains with other Indians visualize the woman as being erratic, deceitful, impure, and lacking determination.<sup>22</sup> She further points out that according to one Jain argument, a woman has been compared to an incurable disease and the birth of a female is the result of bad *karmas*.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

It would be wrong to say that Jainism is completely opposed to women or that women have only a subjugated existence. This paper has analyzed the position of women and that too only those

who renounce the world primarily from the perspective of the *Digambara* sect. The *Śvetāmbaras* neither consider nudity to be a prerequisite for salvation nor believe that women cannot attain salvation. At the same time, the position of a married woman and duties and functions associated with married life is different from that of the nun and those aspects have not been interrogated here. However, the Jain way of life in which renunciation is an option for many is not necessarily the only austere form of life. From the perspective of a laywoman pursuing her familial duties, life is full of duties pertaining to austerity and the onus of which lies predominantly on the woman member of the house hold. It is also to be realized that the harsh nature of the duties and regulations imposed on women renunciators do subscribe to the view that women are considered to be inferior than men as also impure and vile in nature. The innate defiling of the female body does prove that it is the sexuality of the female body which proves to be a source of fear and danger to the society.

At the same time, it is necessary to understand that the nuns by themselves may be complicit in their docile status and are desirous of the position that they have aspired to or have achieved. A feminist activist outlook might even be difficult to apply under such circumstances. It should also be asserted here that Jainism as a religion does have important women figures like Māllī Devi, Chandanbālā, Rājīmatī, Maru Devi, Trishala etc who are revered and held in high position. The fact however remains that like most religions in the world, Jainism and particularly the *Digambara* sect, is patriarchal in its treatment of women and there remains much space for improvement. Jain literature on *strīmokṣa* has visualized the female body as one associated with shame, sexual desire and violence. *Mokṣa* in the real sense of the term is difficult to attain in this *kaliyugā* but denial of even the possibility of doing so simply on the basis of one's sexual orientation is an attempt of erasure of the very essence of being born a female.

## NOTES :

1. Young, "Review: *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*, by Padmanabh S. Jaini." 206.
2. Translation of verses 6-8 of the *Sātraprabhṛta* in *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*, 35.
3. Goldman, "Introduction. *Gender and Salvation: Jaina Debates on the Spiritual Liberation of Women*." xix-xx.
4. Dolezal, *The Body and Shame*, 4.
5. Translation of verse 67 of the *Nyāyakumudacandra* Jaini in *Gender and Salvation*, 127.
6. *Strītmokṣa* in *Nyāyakumudacandra* is not only about shame and nudity. It discusses many other aspects of female salvation.
7. Williams, *Shame and Necessity*. 220-221.
8. Scheler, *Shame and the Feelings of Modesty*. 15
9. Devereaux, "Oppressive Texts". 337.
10. Wilson, "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed." 139.
11. Goldman, xviii
12. *Ibid.*, xix
13. Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 36.
14. Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, 199.
15. *Ibid.*, 207
16. MacDonald, "Leaky performances", 348-349.
17. Sethi, "Chastity and desire", 52.
18. Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, xiii
19. Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination". 126.
20. Vally, "Ambiguous Symbol", 134.
21. Balbir, "Women in Jainism", 130-131.
22. *Ibid.*, 129
23. *Ibid.*, 134

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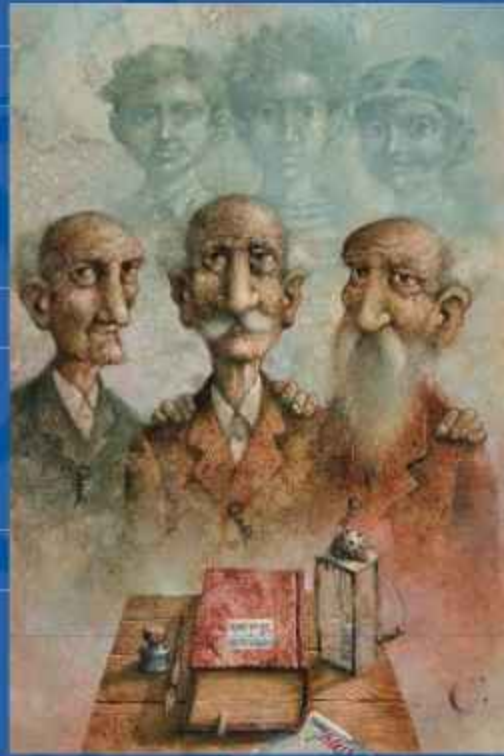
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Special Issue: Life Stages  
Guest edited by Alison Waller and Sarah Falcus

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Society for Children's Literature

Edinburgh University Press



*International Research in Children's Literature* aims to be essential reading for the literary scholar in the field of children's literature. The study of children's literature is increasingly being recognised as an integral part of literary studies, and the rapid expansion of the subject area highlights the need for a scholarly journal that is international in scope.

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# 'Never Just a Game': Storytelling, Gaming, and Death in *Luka and the Fire of Life* and *Joseph Anton*

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RIZIA BEGUM LASKAR 

*Salman Rushdie's Luka and the Fire of Life and Joseph Anton both reflect on his concerns with death along with an attempt to keep the process of storytelling alive. This article explores Rushdie's addressing of the literal threat of death in the memoir and the metaphorical death of storytelling abilities in the children's fiction. The emphasis of this article is on Rushdie's usage of gaming and virtual reality to retain his authority in the storytelling world.*

**Key words:** *Rushdie, storytelling, gaming, virtual world, ageing, death*

In 2012, Salman Rushdie published *Joseph Anton*, a memoir about his life living under the shadow of the *fatwa* imposed in 1989 in response to his novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988). The memoir serves as Rushdie's attempt to present his version of life during the *fatwa* years, departing from the media representation of what has been termed the 'Rushdie affair'. Using the pseudonym 'Joseph Anton' and written in the third-person, it is Rushdie's attempt to tell the 'story' of his life as he wants it to be told, even under constraints that restrict him from storytelling and under the recurrent threat of death. Two years earlier, Rushdie had published his second children's novel, *Luka and the Fire of Life* (2010). Like his first, *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990), *Luka* was written for one of his sons and the narrative deals with intergenerational themes: specifically, how a father and storyteller can remain relevant to the next generation. *Luka's* father, Rashid Khalifa, now a relatively old man, becomes sick and falls into a coma, and *Luka* is sent on a quest through an imaginative game world to save him. Unlike the immediate external silencing and threat of death under the *fatwa* explored in *Joseph Anton*, *Luka* reflects on the possibility of death as an inevitable part of ageing and the challenge of keeping the art of storytelling relevant in a fast-changing technological world.

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through the figure of the father-storyteller. This article will examine the ways in which Rushdie the author and the father confronts the possibility of ageing and death, first in memoir and then in children's fantasy. At the same time, the article will show how Rushdie uses gaming and virtual reality as a medium to maintain authority in the storytelling world. In both the narratives, Rushdie exhibits his ability to control the storytelling world and thereby to posit the superiority and the necessity of storytelling, even in the face of death. While *Joseph Anton* explores Rushdie's assertiveness over the literal threat of death in a personal manner, *Luka* symbolises Rushdie's attempt to control death in a metaphorical way, through storytelling.

#### STORYTELLING, AGEING, AND THE DEATH OF THE FATHER

The *fatwa* against Rushdie for writing *The Satanic Verses*, announced on 14 February 1989 by the Ayatollah of Iran, became a period of censorship and restraint for the author, when he could not engage with the very thing for which he was known—writing. In order to save his life he had to go into hiding and the British Special Forces asked him to choose a persona by which he would be known. Rushdie chose the first names of two of his favourite authors—Joseph Conrad and Anton Chekov. Salman Rushdie 'died' and Joseph Anton came into being. This notion of 'dying' to start living as Joseph Anton is identified by Geetha Ganapathy-Doré as an example of 'autogenesis in which the individual came into being by re-embodiment in a new name that endowed him with a different lineage' (15). Rushdie's selfhood was lost not only in the *fatwa* but also in the media furor of the 'Rushdie affair', and he became Joseph Anton—a 'he' rather than an 'I'. As Benaouda Lebdaï suggests, this process acted as a 'mirror [...] in which Joseph Anton, his double, plays his part' (6).

The first thought that crossed Rushdie's mind when he came to know about the *fatwa* was 'I'm a dead man' (*Joseph Anton* 3, original emphasis). However, despite this thought, Rushdie survives and the omnipresent figure of portending death is replaced by a resolve to be in command of the narrative of death. In *Joseph Anton*, Rushdie charts not only the darkest phase of his life but also the circumstances that led to him beginning to write again. In the process, he took 'his first awkward steps back towards himself [...] towards literature again and away from the bleak, defeated idea of becoming *not a writer*' (*Joseph Anton* 166, original emphasis). The memoir in many ways is therefore a means through which the almost tragic and powerless figure of Rushdie is transformed, 'an attempt to fix a (self)image while chronicling a struggle for survival and regaining visibility, or, rather, a particular kind of self-controlled visibility' (Hoydis 166).

For Rushdie, a central question throughout *Joseph Anton* is 'Who shall have control over the story?' (*Joseph Anton* 360, original emphasis). Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson refer to Jean Starobinski, who says that the third-person narrator in an autobiography is used to present the hero in a glorifying manner as he or she takes on the role of an impersonal historian (185). However, Rushdie's

representation, despite being in the third person, is more in the form of what is termed an apology, a 'self-presentation as self-defense against the allegations or attacks of others, an apology [to justify] one's own deeds, beliefs, and way of life' (Smith and Watson 183–4). Rushdie confronts the death of his authorial self, which was lost in the 'Rushdie affair', to give birth to a figure who was victimised by the Ayatollah, the media, and his own friends and family members, and also to posit his own version of death-like existence and his resurgence as a storyteller.

In writing *Luka*, Rushdie was similarly forced to recognise 'the wearing of the body and to [...] accept [...] the definite intimations of his own mortality' (Bharat 310). The novel deals with the relationship between storytelling and death, but it also explores the possible irrelevance of storytelling in the face of technology. Like Rashid, who is also known as 'the Shah of Blah' for his storytelling powers, Rushdie fears that his art may be old fashioned and therefore not appreciated by his children's generation. Rashid is gradually slowing down in his activities and, most importantly, 'the stories he told seemed to move more slowly than they once had, and that was bad for business' (*Luka* 15). The figure of Rashid as an ageing father and storyteller is thus used by Rushdie to reflect on his own predicament as an ageing father and storyteller.

The concept of ageing as connected to a decline in one's abilities is very much a cultural construct. As Margaret Gullette remarks, 'Ageing is a lengthy process involving gains as well, but "ageing-as-decline" may flare up suddenly—especially in fiction, which adores epiphanies—as a sudden loss of privilege. Decline, also an ableist and looksist discourse, invokes all the disabilities and losses linked to being no longer young' (22). Rashid's decline of storytelling abilities is thus very much situated within a social milieu that undermines an ageing father. The decline of the author as a father and the father as an author of stories is equated to a gradual progression towards death, which will completely put to an end the storytelling tradition. The ageing figures of both Rushdie and Rashid not only need to hold on to their storytelling powers but, more importantly, need to stay relevant. In *Luka*, this process is established and interrogated through the elaborate creation of a virtual reality that posits the author and the father as the ultimate storyteller.

#### ALTERNATE REALITY, GAMING, AND STORYTELLING

When Luka curses the Ringmaster Aag for mistreating his circus animals, the Ringmaster punishes Rashid by sending him into a sleep from which he might never wake up. The only antidote to Rashid's illness is to steal the 'Fire of Life' from the 'World of Magic'. Luka takes on this quest and is accompanied in his adventure by his father's sinister doppelganger, Nobodaddy, who gradually becomes more human-like as life seeps away from Rashid's body. His adventure takes place in an alternative reality that functions very much like a video game, with levels to negotiate and multiple lives allowed. The world of video games in this novel thus provides an ideal medium where death is confronted and even



subverted through the process of storytelling. It is also a medium that allows the coming together of traditional forms of storytelling with technologically advanced ways of gaming through stories.

One of the primary concerns of many parents, including Luka's mother, Soraya, in *Luka*, is the persuasive power of video games, which transports the player to an alternate reality removed from the 'real' world. This division between the real world and the alternate world and Luka's engrossment in the virtual world is also a point of difference between Rashid and Soraya. Soraya emphasises the difference between the real world and the virtual world when she reprimands Luka for his lack of interest in schoolwork and says, 'In the real world there are no levels, only difficulties. If he makes a careless mistake in the game he gets another chance. If he makes a careless mistake in a chemistry test he gets a minus mark. Life is tougher than video games' (*Luka* 15). As a parent, Soraya visualises an alternate reality as apart from her real life and sees Luka's obsession with it as a direct assault on what she understands and conceptualises as reality. Rashid, on the other hand, defends his son and looks at Luka's activities as another form of education: 'But see how well he is developing his hand-eye coordination, and he is solving problems too, answering riddles, surmounting obstacles, rising through levels of difficulty to acquire extraordinary skills' (*Luka* 15). For Soraya, the real and the make-believe have clear demarcations, and life cannot be founded on the basis of imagination alone. Rashid, on the other hand, being a professional storyteller, believes in the power of imagination and in the creation of alternate realities.

The novel explores the ways in which alternate worlds of gaming and storytelling converge. This is a convergence that has been widely discussed by theorists. Janet Murray defines game-story as the various new formats of gaming that have a rich storyline. More importantly, Murray conceptualises games as stories that are primarily concerned with winning and losing, where the protagonist or hero is pitted against various enemies. Games and stories both reflect upon basic human experiences – games enact this basic experience, stories dramatise and narrate such experiences. Murray thus says that instead of a game-story there should be a story-game. She prioritises the story over the game and says that it is the story that came first, which in turn has led to the development of games. Murray thus represents the line of narratologists who find the story to be prior to and even more important than the game.

As opposed to narratologists, game theorists (ludologists) argue that gaming is inherently different from storytelling, as gaming requires an ability to interpret the platform provided for the game and act accordingly. Therefore, gaming involves agency as opposed to the passive involvement of the reader in storytelling. Ludologist Espen Aarseth takes the argument further by positing that gaming is older than storytelling, as even animals play games, while it is only a human tendency to tell stories. Aarseth argues, 'You don't see cats and dogs tell each other stories, but they will play. And games are interspecies communication; you can't tell your dog a story but the two of you can play together' (46). Ben Bunting, Jacob Hughes, and Tim Hetland posit a third

view through their understanding and reviewing of Tadhg Kelly's theory of 'worldmaking', where they put forward a 'storytelling model in which the story of import is the nonlinear, non-narrative unfolding of a player's experience of a game world as it is co-created by the game maker and the player' (148). Such a model allows both the player and the designer a role, and the player is not necessarily only a character created by the designer but rather has their own agency.

Rushdie, in many ways, takes up this third view in *Luka*. Luka's father's stories help him in winning each level primarily because Luka realises quite early on in the game that it is his father's created world he has entered as a player. In the first hurdle, where Luka meets the Old Man of the River, while the latter boasts of his powers, Luka has an epiphany that the world he is in '*is not just any old Magical World, but the one [his] father created*' (*Luka* 53–4, original emphasis). His eventual defeat of the Old Man of the River in a contest of riddles makes him value the significance of the stories told to him by his father all through his childhood. With the realisation that the alternate world is actually his father's story world and he has heard stories about all the inhabitants of this world, Luka understands that he knows 'secrets about everything in it' (*Luka* 54). Luka remembers from his father's stories that the Old Man is a riddler and he shouts 'Riddle-me-riddle-me-ree!' (*Luka* 53) because Rashid has told him that this is the way of challenging a riddler to a game of riddles. At the same time, Luka knows that the Old Man cannot answer the ultimate riddle question: 'What ... goes on four legs in the morning, two legs at noon, and three legs in the evening?' (*Luka* 55). This is because Rashid himself could never remember the answer to this question when he told the story of the Sphinx, with whom the riddle is associated, to Luka. The Old Man is Rashid's creation and therefore the Old Man of course cannot know the answer. On the other hand, Luka knows that the answer to the riddle is man in his various stages of life, which proves that Luka is not merely a player, without any individual agency. Luka's adventure therefore becomes a father's desperate attempt to make his son realise the value of the world of stories—a world of his own creation. Both designer and player are co-creators of the game. Rushdie here tries to engage both the designer, Rashid, and the player, Luka, to arrive at a meaningful understanding of the relation between games and storytelling, along with a reassessment of the notion that games are all about play while life signifies serious activity.

More importantly, Rushdie also delves into the intergenerational divide in gaming along with a questioning of the concept of play. Luka's world is different from that of his father's and this distinction is not only that of a real and virtual world but more necessarily that of a generational difference. Despite Rashid's apparent support for Luka's gaming capabilities, it 'was not surprising that Rashid Khalifa was useless on the Muu' (Rushdie's fictitious name for the gaming console Wii) (*Luka* 14). The narrative emphasises that his skills lay in storytelling but his hands were never capable of handling anything. Soraya, too, views Luka's gaming world with suspicion, and more importantly a distrust of technology, and 'worrie[s] that the various magic boxes were emitting invisible beams and rays

that would rot her beloved son's mind' (*Luka* 14). Megan L. Musgrave explores the question of generational rift that the world of gaming brings to the fore and the prioritising of the younger generation over the older generation. She says that, on one hand, there remains the anxiety of the parents' generation that video games have a negative impact on young people and do not prepare them for the real world (as seen in Soraya's reaction to Luka's gaming). On the other hand, Musgrave cites a growing body of literature that argues that engagement with video games helps young people to develop and become more prepared to take on social roles in the future. Musgrave makes the important point that such scholarship on the importance of video games prioritises individual agency and does not always take into consideration co-operation with a previous generation. In *Luka*, the world of alternate reality is one not only through which Luka builds his interpersonal and problem-solving skills to find a solution to his father's illness, but where he also realises the importance of stories and his own identity as the son of the 'Shah of Blah', that is Rashid. It is also through the intergenerational intermixing of games and storytelling that the subversion of death, both literal and metaphorical, takes place.

#### GAMING, LIVES, AND DEATH

Death, or the threat of death, is a central part of Rushdie's experience. While the metaphorical death of Rushdie leading to the birth of Joseph Anton underpins his memoir, death also appears in *Joseph Anton* in its literal sense. Rushdie describes the deaths of his first wife, Clarissa, and of Susan Sontag and Edward Said, along with the death of his Japanese translator. The memoir also includes references to bombs being placed in publishing houses in London, Denmark, and Norway, along with other references to people dying because of *The Satanic Verses*. Rushdie describes often feeling on the verge of suicide with only the presence of the police stopping him from taking action. He also reports an instance when he thought that his son, Zafar, was dead. He has visions of 'bodies sprawling on the stairs in the front hall. He saw the brightly lit rag-doll corpses of his son and his first wife drenched in blood. Life was over. He had run away and hidden like a terrified rabbit and his loved ones had paid the price' (*Joseph Anton* 159). Though his son and wife were not dead and it was all a misunderstanding, the scene emphasises Rushdie's repeated engagement with death and, more importantly, the fear of death.

Death often remains a taboo topic in children's literature, and specific instances of death are glossed over. Kathryn James argues that since children's literature focuses on the identity and psyche of the child, 'representations of death (the end of life) can have especial relevance' (2). In *Luka*, Rushdie deals with death in a realistic sense with Rashid in a comatose state and death gradually creeping towards him. Luka is initially unable to accept the state his father is in. He rushes outside his home and meets Nobodaddy, a phantom-like figure who resembles his father. Nobodaddy explains that he is Rashid's death, but Luka

categorically refuses to even hear the word 'death' being uttered. The following exchange between Luka and Nobodaddy explicitly displays Luka's reluctance and unpreparedness for death:

'I am your father's dea-'

'Don't say that word!' Luka shouted.

'The point I'm trying to make, if I may be allowed to continue,' the phantom insisted, 'is that everyone's dea-'

'Don't say it!' Luka shouted.

'-is different . . . No two are alike. Each living being is an individual unlike all others; their lives have unique and personal beginnings, personal and unique middles, and consequently, at the end, it follows that everyone has their own unique and personal dea-'

'Don't!' screamed Luka. (*Luka 27*)

Luka's harsh denial of the word 'death' is a display of his fear that speaking the word will conjure it in reality.

The gaming world that Luka inhabits is replete with death, but Luka has never looked at this virtual experience as having any connection with real death. His is a world of inverted reality where death is not associated with risk and thus hardly holds any meaning for him. The virtual nature of the gaming world provides a cover of safety and security where death is just part of play and is thus not taken seriously. 'Lives' are there to be collected, sometimes by completing specific tasks, and the experience of dying in the gaming world is not one that brings closure to the act of gaming itself. Lisbeth Klastrup explains:

In online worlds such as *World of Warcraft*, characters in game worlds die repeatedly, whereas the players playing them never (normally) die. The experience of 'death' is thus not one of termination, though it may definitely cause a player grief. In most game worlds, dying is an activity similar to a number of other repeatable activities that occur as part of the everyday life in the world [...] dying is a risk-free endeavour. (144)

Depending upon the structure of individual games, players need to start over again or pay a small penalty or complete a task to gain a life or lives and be active in the game again. Death is therefore just a small obstacle in the flow of the game, which is unpleasant to experience but in the long run does not stop the player from participating in the game itself. What dies is a version or *avatar* of the player and, as David Myers argues, the presence of death in the structure of the game is simply a disruptive feature that restricts the enjoyment of the game (130). The conception of death as a mere hindrance that needs to be overcome to retain oneself in the game also hints at the irreverence towards death in the world of gaming. It does not involve much risk and therefore death can be accepted, even though it restricts enjoyment. At the same time, life exists in its plural form (lives) in the world of gaming, which reconceptualises life as an easily available resource rather than a precious commodity made available only once. Both life

and death are mundane within the structure of the gaming world and all activities are part of a great adventure.

In *Luka*, however, the banality of death in a game in the alternate world is set in stark contrast with the slow creeping of death in the real world. The world that Luka actually inhabits and the world that his games provide for him are not mutually exclusive, as Luka has already realised that the latter exists because his father in the real world has created it. The adventure that Luka embarks on to save his father and the world he enters into ultimately prove to have been the elaborate set-up of Rashid himself. The story of Luka's adventure is therefore Rashid's story, where he displays to Luka that, despite his advanced age, he still has the ability to be in charge of the storytelling world, be it a traditional one or a technologically advanced one. The problem is that Luka has not been able to acknowledge these worlds properly because his virtual world has dominated the real world all the while. It is only when he is literally thrown into this magic world that he understands the connection between the two worlds and specifically the significance of his father's stories as a form of life itself, a way of overcoming death. At every step inside the magical world his father's stories have helped him, but at the end of Luka's search for the Fire of Life he faces resistance from the fire gods and the guards of the Fire of Life. 'They believe that such an important thing as the Fire should not be allowed to cross into the world of reality to be used by Luka. The Fire of Life bestows immortality on the user and it belongs only to the gods. Luka is annoyed at such an attitude and vehemently reminds them that the mythical gods do not really matter any more in the world of reality. It is only his father's stories that have kept them alive: 'Listen to me: it's only through Stories that you can get out into the Real World and have some sort of power again. When your story is well told, people believe in you [...] You want Immortality? It's only my father, and people like him, who can give it to you now' (*Luka* 182). Luka's earlier complacent rejection of the notion of the Fire of Life that can save his father from death as 'just a story' brings a vehement protest from Nobodaddy. Nobodaddy's retort is poignant here, as it sums up in a few words the very essence of storytelling and Luka's own part in this: 'You of all boys should know that Man is the Storytelling Animal, and that in stories are his identity, his meaning and his lifeblood' (*Luka* 34). The significance of engaging in play with all seriousness is then stressed when Luka says to Nobodaddy that the quest for the Fire of Life is all just a game to him. Nobodaddy replies, 'Never *just* a game. It's a matter of life and death' (*Luka* 197). The character of Nobodaddy is in fact Rashid's persona in the game world and signifies an inversion of the rules of the game world: Rashid will live if his character dies and vice versa. Therefore, Nobodaddy's interest in the game is actually a matter of life and death because Luka's win will be his death.

Father and son team up to win a race against time, and both of them come to individual realisations of their own. Rashid, through his created world, is able to bridge the generational divide and establish the authority of storytelling with the realisation that play is serious activity. When Rashid ultimately wakes up from his sleep, he tells Luka that in his dream he has seen Luka stealing the Fire

of Life and asks if it really happened. Luka replies that his father should already know, as he has felt his father's presence throughout his adventure and he would not have been successful without his father and his stories to guide him. Rashid's reply sums up his understanding of the importance of his son's alternate world: 'That makes two of us, then [...] because I'd be lost right now if it wasn't for your little exploit, that's for sure' (*Luka* 210–11).

Rashid has also secured the future of storytelling through Luka's understanding of the importance of stories. Luka, through an engagement with his father's world, not only understands the importance of carrying forward the tradition of storytelling but has also been able to subvert death, both the literal death of his father and the metaphorical death of storytelling. His speech regarding his father's stories keeping the gods' world alive and relevant made them give him the Fire of Life, which resurrects his father and at the same time keeps the storyteller's world alive. He has become aware of the legacy of his father, the 'Shah of Blah' and thus makes an impassioned speech where he asserts the authority of his father in the creation of the world that all the magical creatures inhabit:

I know something you don't know about this World of Magic [...] *it isn't your World!* [...] *This is my father's World.* I'm sure there are other Magic Worlds dreamed up by other people, Wonderlands and Narnias and Middle-Earths and whatnot – and I don't know, maybe there are some such Worlds that dreamed themselves up [...] but this one, gods and goddesses, ogres and bats, monsters and slimy things, is the World of Rashid Khalifa. [...]

And I know about it [...] because I've been hearing about it every day of my life [...] So in a way it's now my World, too. (*Luka* 180–1, original emphasis)

Luka's acknowledgement of his father's created world in so many words helps him arrive safely into the real world, which also brings closure to Rashid's attempt to bring his son back home. In defying death and bringing back the Fire of Life, Luka and Rashid have existed in each other's reality.


Rushdie, too, through the success of the power of storytelling in a medium favourable to today's generation relieves his fears of redundancy and death. Rushdie, the author, gains a kind of immortality both through his stories and through his children, who love and inhabit the stories he wrote for them. Tawnya Ravy argues that, unlike many authors of Rushdie's generation, Rushdie has been successful in embracing new technology to reach out to new audiences and in writing new kinds of stories that explore the changes in technology. Ravy contends that by positioning *Luka* within the narrative of a video game, Rushdie has enabled a new generation of readers to participate in the process of storytelling along with a reshaping of his own position as an author (194–5).

## CONCLUSION

Walter Benjamin in 'The Storyteller' says that 'Death is the sanction of everything that the storyteller can tell. He has borrowed his authority from

death' (94). Benjamin's concern was about the death of oral narratives and older forms of storytelling that he saw being replaced by more compact forms of communication whose main aim was just to inform. Falling back upon the Aristotelian theme of being delightful as well as instructional in nature, Rushdie, through an interrogation of the relationship between storytelling and death, identifies that the prospects of storytelling include both teaching and delight. In the face of the death, literal and metaphorical, of the storyteller, Rushdie too borrows his authority from death to reinscribe the story world. In *Joseph Anton*, the character of Rushdie died from public memory and Joseph Anton was born. However, for the storytelling world to survive, Joseph Anton has to die and Rushdie, the author, has to come into existence. In *Luka*, Rushdie attempts to subvert the relationship between ageing and decline, thereby leading to 'a more nuanced reading of the relationship between age and creativity' (Falcus 55). Rushdie very deftly uses the fear of death through the figure of the comatose Rashid to make Luka realise the importance of his father's art and the necessity that it is carried forward as a tradition. Rushdie, through Rashid, thus manages the decline narrative associated with ageing to posit an authorial figure who is very much in tandem with the technologically advanced times. In doing so, Rushdie merges his storytelling world with Luka's alternate world as an attempt to reduce the schism between the children's and the parents' worlds. However, the authority is not just derived from death: more importantly, it is the authority of death that Rushdie wants to circumnavigate. Death is a reality, be it in the real world or the alternate world, and cannot be escaped from. However, Rushdie's (and Rashid's) primary status is that of a storyteller and, even in the face of death, 'this [...] was who he was, a teller of tales, a creator of shapes, a maker of things that were not' (*Joseph Anton* 629). The storyteller survives and the storytelling world survives through the realisation that different worlds can be created and indulged in through the power of imagination, which in itself is not a game but serious business.

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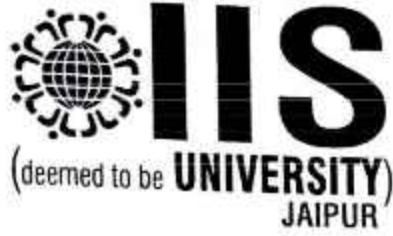
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## Finding Home in Children's Literature: Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea*

Rizia Begum Laskar

### Abstract

The concept of home in children's literature is very often examined through the pattern of home – away – home where the child protagonist returns after an adventure outside home with the knowledge that home is the best place. But what are the reasons for which a child desires to leave home and is the return always possible? How does the adult author configure the return home to bring in a happy ending? This paper looks into the concept of leaving home and coming back to it within the context of Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* to interrogate the reasons for the child leaving home and the possibility or impossibility of return to home.

**Keywords:** Adult Nostalgia; Children's literature; Home; Return to Home.

The necessity and desire for home is a universal one and an ideal home plays an important role in the development of the human psyche, especially that of the child. In literature too, the quest for home has been interrogated time and again to arrive at conclusive definitions of what constitutes home. In children's literature, the subject of home is a veritable ground to base the narrative where the child finds security, love and care in the process of its becoming an adult. It is also the place in children's literature where the child starts and ends its journey, returning with the knowledge that home is the best place in the world. But how do adult constructions of home in literature differ from that in children's literature? Virginia L. Wolf in "From the Myth to the Wake of Home: Literary Houses" makes a crucial distinction between home in adult's fiction and home in children's fiction. She says that children's literature can be differentiated from adult literature basically on the myth of home. In adult fiction, the knowledge of being stranded alone in the world is what the protagonist struggles with but children's fiction is a celebration of home and reaffirmation in the

myth of home (Wolf 54). However it would be naïve to assume that the celebration of home in children's fiction is without any ideological baggage because children's fiction by itself is an adult construction and therefore adult shaping of personal hopes and aspirations take place through it. In fact, the history of childhood, and knowledge and beliefs regarding the child and children's literature too, are all adult constructions where the child's performing agency is negated and it remains a site of power play where mainly the adult's reconstruction of an ideal self takes place. Home, thus, is also the lost phase of childhood where the adult author returns to celebrate the constructs of the innocence, joy and carefree world of childhood. This paper will interrogate the concept of home in children's literature with particular reference to Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* to understand the need of a child for the security and sanctity of home. The paper will make use of the pattern of home - away - home in children's literature to question the reasons for leaving home and whether return is possible or not? At the same time, it will also examine the adult author's nostalgia for the secured base of home in children's literature which is often not available for the adult author.

### **The Disruption of Home**

Anita Desai's *The Village by the Sea* (1982) is set in a small fishing village called Thul in coastal Maharashtra. Hari, Lila, Bela and Kamal are four siblings who live at Thul with a drunkard father and a bedridden mother. The running of the dysfunctional home is on the young shoulders of the two eldest children, Hari and Lila. Their poverty compels Hari to leave his home in search for a job at Mumbai (Bombay). The security that home should have provided for the children is done away with at the very beginning of the novel with the children left to fend for themselves. Jon Stott and Christine Francis argue that the notion of being at home and not being at home forms the core of all children's stories. They therefore define home for the child as "not merely a dwelling place but also an attitude. For a real child or a fictional character, it is a place of comfort, security, and acceptance - a place which meets both physical and emotional needs. Conversely, "Not Home" is a place where needs are not met, for any of several reasons" (223). For the four children, "not home" is what characterises their existence. Anita Desai juxtaposes the idea of "not home" on the homeland also, the village of Thul. Not only is the home of Hari not able to provide him with the security needed for a child but also his homeland is fast disintegrating in the face of industrialisation. It is at "not home" therefore that Hari and Lila begin their journey and therefore the necessity to embark outside to find home. The journey does not necessari-

ly mean that the outside world will take over as home but rather it reflects on the capability of the protagonist to reconstruct "Home" from the vestiges of "Not Home". For Hari, this journey is a literal journey outside his home and village to Mumbai (Bombay) in search of employment and a possibility of securing a better life for his family members.

The village Thul represents in a miniature form the common picture of poverty in India which tears apart homes and families due to the daily struggle to just stay alive. The population of Thul basically depends upon fishing as a means of livelihood. In such a scenario, owning a boat is very much necessary for sustenance, Hari's father however does not own a boat as he has to sell his own to pay off his debts. The drunken nature of Hari's father and his lack of responsibility towards his household is symbolic of the absent father habitually portrayed in Victorian children's literature. Hari and for that matter all the children have been neglected both physically and psychologically by the father. Hari's resentment against his father is therefore justified. His sense of inadequacy is all the more exacerbated in an environment where affluence is measured by the number of boats owned. Neither does his father own a boat nor does he take responsibility for his family.

This same responsibility has been shifted to Hari who is deprived of his education in the process of doing so. The disruption of a proper family life is the primary reason behind the disintegration of home for Hari. An ideal home secures the family members through love and respect for each other. Such a scenario has been interrogated often in children's literature. Kimberley Reynolds thus remarks that in general "the family in question begins as a complete, loving, nuclear family with two happy parents and a happy comfortable life. The story usually charts what happens when family life is disrupted by, for example, the absence or death of one or both parents, a financial crisis. . . ." (85). The disruption of home and family life in children's fiction is addressed usually through the child leaving home. The child does so in order to rectify the wrongdoing that has led to disintegration of life at home. This attempt to regain home is a wish fulfillment by the child who desires to regain what has been lost. The return home on the completion of a successful venture outside home also signifies a return to a familiar signpost or milestone, from where disruption starts and ends too.

Alongside Hari is his sister Lila who is also worried about the situation at home. Both Hari and Lila try to make do with whatever resources they have in hand. They are however aware of the fact that it is not going to be

enough for them. Their mother is sick and lack of money has prevented her from getting medical help. On the other hand, the younger sisters cannot be sent to school next year as there is hardly any money to meet the expenses. Hari is also worried about the dowry that he needs to arrange for his sisters when they get married in the future. Lila's frustration regarding the circumstances makes her prod and nag Hari to do something. Hari thus eventually decides to find work outside his native place and go to Bombay. Lila is happy with Hari's decision but she knows that a definite change in the fortune of their household is a long way off.

Despite this, Lila believes that hard work will pay off. Hari is however filled with doubts and uncertainties regarding his own decision. Poverty thus forces many people all over the world to find employment elsewhere and leave their homes. Harriot Beazley in a survey of Malaysian boys who, like Hari, have not received proper education for any job says that the boys are aware of the restrictive nature of employment in their native place. A job overseas provides an opportunity to escape poverty as well as a change in their powerless status within their own community. The freedom they perceive to be made available in a job outside home also puts into stark reality the grim chances of succeeding within the locally available resources (116).

Hari is restless and very much desires for a change. He knows that the factory coming up at Thul can provide opportunities for employment but it also brings forth the problem of disintegration of his native place. The factory will exhort a heavy toll on the environment and Thul will never be the same again. His immersion in the place is also his cause of concern for the place. However, poverty forces him to find employment at the cost of environment. He knows that his limited education is his handicap but still hopes that the factory will need people like him to run machines. He will teach himself how to run machines and this will allow him to sustain his family. Hari's dilemma however lies in choosing between his own home and his homeland. Hari's difficulty in choosing between the two gives rise in him a desire to inhabit a third space where he feels a sense of belongingness. Hari's frustration and feeling of being squeezed out in a place where he does not belong is described thus: "Everything blended here, everything blended together-except for himself . . . he couldn't settle down to belonging" (59 - 60).

### **The Leaving of Home**

Hari had hopes that he could somehow sustain himself and his family



through some work at Thul. However, his hopes of finding a job at Thul itself are dashed when he overhears a conversation between Biju, the smuggler of the village and the caretaker of the upcoming factory. The caretaker makes it clear that there will not be any jobs for the locals like Hari. Instead engineers and skilled men will be at the helm of affairs. Hari realizes that it is now time to find an alternate space which will accept him as its own. Bombay turns out to be the space where Hari ultimately goes to in search of a job. Hari does not inform anyone of his departure and leaves behind all the problems associated with his home. In children's literature, the theme of the child leaving home to embark in adventures outside the security of home is one which has been repeatedly explored. Children leaving home in a quest and then returning to the love and security of home has formed a staple plot of many children's literature texts. This has been termed by Lucy Waddey as the Odyssean pattern in "Home in Children's Fiction: Three Patterns" terms this pattern.<sup>2</sup> Perry Nodelman selected six novels for analysis in *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*.

The analysis done from the perspective of an adult reader reveals the exit and return to home as a persistent theme in children's literature. Nodelman thus emphasizes that "the pattern can usefully operate as a cognitive tool" (223).<sup>2</sup> Prominent examples of this pattern include Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* where the character of Max leaves home for fun and adventure and Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* where Alice leaves home in a dream sequence. A different sort of leaving home is depicted in Frank L. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* where Dorothy is swept away in a cyclone and travels to the Land of Oz. As opposed to these romantic notions of leaving home is a novel like Kimberly Brubaker Bradley's *The War that Saved My Life* which bases itself on the basic premise that what happens when home itself is not secure or for that matter home does not exist at all? Bradley's work highlights the fact that the pattern of leaving home and coming back to it is not always justified primarily because home does not provide enough love and belongingness for the child to not desire leaving home:

For Hari, home like Bradley's protagonist, does not exist in the first place. His childhood has been taken away by his responsibilities and therefore he is determined to "get away...And never come back to this sad house, his frightened sisters, his ill mother, his drunken father. He would leave them and run, run as far away as he could go" (102). This willing abandonment of home is what characterises a departure in late twentieth century children's literature as opposed to earlier children's literature. Hari's

predicament is his hopelessness that perhaps even a job at Bombay will not be enough to change the fact that home can never be regained. Mavis Reimer therefore in "No place like home: the facts and figures of homelessness in contemporary texts for young people" says that "[w]hile children on the move have been at the heart of children's literature for a long time, what is different about these recent narratives is that the central child characters do not move inside or settle at the conclusion of their narratives. For them, it appears, there *is* no place to call home" (n.pag). Home therefore exists more in a disrupted state rather than a paradise of security and stability. Tony Chapman says that despite the imaginative notion of home as a haven of security and privacy, in reality home is signified by change. In the process of changes in life we change various homes too. At the same time, certain factors like natural disasters, war, migration and similar things also affect our homes and therefore compelling us to leave homes. Chapman further says that the fact that there is no home to go back to give rise in people the understanding of home in its deepest sense. This understanding is not necessarily of home as a mere physical structure but home also as a security, as a right to be enjoyed but which has been violated now (136).

While home itself is non-existent at Thul, life in Bombay is also fraught with difficulties and therefore the possibility of finding roots there is also negated. Hari yearns for the familiarity of his village in the busy streets of Bombay. Having found a small job in an eatery which also serves as his dwelling place, Hari decides to save his earnings and take them to his mother. This, in a sense, obliquely refers to the possibility of Hari's return home at some later period of time. The same home from which he was so anxious to run away now seems to be his destination. His life at Bombay brings forth a myriad of instances which constantly remind him of his life back at home. Hari longs to "remember the soft sounds of the sea or the wind in the coconut palms or the feel of the clean sand between his fingers and under his feet - it was all so long ago and far away.

He had only been away for one season, just the few months between winter and summer, but it seemed like a lifetime" (166). At the same time, Hari's nostalgia is surprising as there were hardly any pleasant memories associated with home. Hari's reminiscing of home is what Theano S. Terkenli refers as human beings understanding the value of home very often only in those circumstances when home is in a state of disappearance or when it has vanished (328). Roberta Rubenstein, on the other hand, argues that the home left behind exists only in memory and not in actuality and therefore this nostalgia for a return to home can never take place in the

exact terms (4).

Hari's realization that he has never been able to sever ties with his native place takes place when he overhears a Sikh driver say that search parties are being sent to Alibagh to search for the lost fishing boats during the monsoon season. Hari cries out, "Alibagh! . . . That's my home! That's my land!" (196). The desperate situation makes Hari understand his ties to his native place despite uprooting and dislocation from home. In a fishing village his father does not own a boat and thus there is no possibility of him being drowned. Despite this, Hari feels anxious for his fellow men from Thul. Hari revisits Thul in his mind's eye and realizes the intensity of his connection with the place and the understanding that despite having no land or boat, the place is his own, it is his home, the ties of which are yet not severed. This necessity to forge a sense of belonging despite the ties being very fragile echoes Maria Nikolajeva's argument in *From Mythic to Linear* that "(h)ome in idyllic fiction is the foremost security. Home is where the protagonists belong and where they return after exploration of the outside world" (24-25). Nikolajeva's concept buttresses the importance of happy endings which is the only way to justify home as a refuge of return.

### The Return to Home

Hari eventually returns home on Diwali and his approach reveals to him the change that the place has seen in his absence. The only unalterable landscape is probably Thul itself and he sits under a casuarina tree to feel the static rootedness of his place. He wants to revive his memory of the place but his eyes fall on his house and its sorry condition. He desires to change it which is reflective of a new mentality where change is started from home itself. Home remains static, at least the physical nature of it, and this sameness is what he wants to change. However the passage of time during Hari's absence from Thul has also made him realize that it is difficult to exactly remember what has been left behind. Hari's one small utterance, "I forgot too much", encompasses within itself the migrant's pain and inability to connect on return.

Anita Desai's neat tying up of loose ends of the story where the family is reconciled through a recuperative mother, a sober father and just enough money for them to get through reinforces the necessity of happy endings in children's literature. Ann Alston thus states, "Happy endings in children's literature often consists of homecomings, and this is a disciplinary technique for it instills in children that home and the family it represents

is the only place in which to find solace and that ultimately, the successful character and family can be recognized by the return to a happy home" (73). The return to home for the child also embodies an understanding on the part of the child that home is a repository of families and family values. As such, home is not only a place which conserves but at the same time needs to be conserved. Anne Lundin says that "the adult author often reveals a deep nostalgic need for the stability of home that becomes woven into a utopian domestic drama. Womb-like homes with their fantasy of return offer adult-oriented nostalgia and a circular pattern of reinforcement. Home, Away, Home" (247).

### The Impossibility of Return and Adult Nostalgia

The possibility of Hari's return to his home despite the adverse circumstances is a reality engineered through the adult author's desire for a happy ending. It is also the adult author's longing for a home which is in actuality only a *hiraeth* - a longing and yearning for a home forever lost in the labyrinths of time. Hari returns not necessarily as a child because childhood for him and his sister Lila is effectively over when they have taken on the onus of their home instead of their parents. The fractured structure of Lila and Hari's family life has already pushed them to the fringes of childhood and propelled them into an adult world where they are misfits. Hari's return home can be contextualized as not a return to the notion of a unified family eagerly waiting for him to be reintroduced to the folds of security and love that home signifies. Instead he returns with the understanding and knowledge that home is there with all its problems, dissatisfactions and grimness of poverty. Melissa Wilson and Kathy Short say in this regard that:

In a postmodern metaplot the child leaves from a place the child doesn't (or can't) consider home to go on a journey, psychological or literal, to a new home that the child has constructed. The children don't return to the same home, if they return home at all. The child protagonist constructs a new home because of an absence of home at the beginning or because the home is untenable. The postmodern metaplot signals that childhood is not an idyllic time. . . . Children in these stories can't go home again because their home isn't where they want to dwell. . . . Children must set out to make sense of the past in order to construct a better home, a place of their own creation. (134)

Hari returns and in doing so he actually returns to a memory of home

which has compelled people to return home across places, time and cultures. The dismal and poverty-ridden nature of home does not deter Hari and many others like him from returning because it is the one place with which they can associate a sense of belongingness and rootedness. This return home, essentially nostalgia, is to a memory of home where the perfect family life exists. For Hari, this of course does not happen although the narrative does emphasize that his father is on the mend and his mother is also recovering from her illness. Hari's return home is in reality a change from one dreary situation to another and the narrative emphasis that children like Hari can never find complete freedom and luxury of home highlights the impossibility of reclaiming home in its ideal state. The poverty which has driven his father into the vicious circle of drunkenness and irresponsibility and held his mother in the grip of illness and unable to receive proper cure is detrimental to construction of any proper home. The temporary succour is actually just that – brief repose in the endless cycle of poverty and its subsequent problems. Hari thus returns just to the concrete structure called home, albeit one which is in ramshackle. The adult author's imperativeness to construct a happy ending does signify a possibility of an ideal home for the child protagonist but a large number of postmodern texts actually are rife with broken homes instead of secured homes.<sup>3</sup> The child is placed very often in a precarious position of indecision and uncertainty from where it embarks in search of a home within the vastness and emptiness of "not-home". Thus, while the return to home seems to be a very plausible ending, very often this return is not possible at all. The child does not return home and is therefore probably lost forever amongst the labyrinths of adult spaces or constructs a home for itself where it no longer performs the role of a child but that of an adult and like Hari even when it returns, it does so not as a child but as an adult.

#### End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Lucy Waddey identifies three patterns where home functions as "a frame, home as a focus, and home as an evolving reflection of the protagonist" (13). The home as a frame is termed as Odyssean pattern and the home as focus is termed as Oedipal pattern. The home as a reflection of the protagonist is termed as Promethean pattern.
- <sup>2</sup> The six texts that Nodelman takes up include Maria Edgeworth's "The Purple Jar", Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Hugh Lofting's *Dr. Dolittle*, Beverly Cleary's *Henry Higgins*, Ezra Jack Keats' picture book *The Snowy Dog*, and Virginia Hamilton's

*Plain City.*

2. See novels like *Ruby Holler* (Creech, 2002), *The Tale of Despereaux* (DiCamillo, 2006), *Millions* (Boyce, 2004), *Crispin: Cross of Lead* (Avi, 2004), *Helicopter Man* (Fensham, 2005), *The Higher Power of Lucky* (Patron, 2006), and *Dragon Keeper* (Wilkinson, 2003). Indian English novels like *The Village by the Sea* (Desai, 1992), *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (Rushdie, 1990) etc.

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# The Voice in the Diary: Moni Mohsin's *Butterfly Diaries*

Rizia Begum Laskar

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- 1 Moni Mohsin's *The End of Innocence* (2006) begins and ends in 2001 but primarily depicts events set in the past, in 1971. Both years are significant in Pakistani history, in defining Pakistan as a nation and a reconfiguration of the concept of nation within the national and international arena. The overarching plot structure of the novel deals with the relationship between Rani, a 15-year-old girl belonging to the lower class of society, and Laila, a child belonging to the upper classes of society. The division of East Pakistan and West Pakistan into Bangladesh and Pakistan respectively forms the background to Rani's murder because of her illicit pregnancy at the hands of Mashooq, her stepfather, and Mashooq's later acquittal as her murder was considered an honour killing. Laila's role in the novel is one who remains in the margins in the unfurling of this tragedy but eventually loses her innocence considering the overall decay of society and the nation. The bleak scenario that Mohsin paints in the work is completely subsumed in her other substantial work which is, coincidentally, again set in 2001. *Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008) starts in January 2001 as a series of diary entries and spans some of the most turbulent years in Pakistani history, ending in January 2008. The disparity between the two works is reflected not only in the tone but also more importantly in the context in which the latter work is set. The upwardly mobile character of *Butterfly* belongs to the same privileged social class as Laila, although it is her husband rather than her father who belongs to the landed gentry, which is the case of Laila's father Tariq. However *Butterfly*'s character is scripted in completely different times in the history of Pakistan as a nation, with changes in its social and economic structures, although politically the nation still remains volatile. The silencing of Rani and the marginalization of Laila in a patriarchal and overtly religious society is in stark contrast to the world of *Butterfly*: she is vociferous to the extent of being ludicrous. At the same time, Mohsin uses the format of diary writing to give space to a female voice often denied within a patriarchal setup. This article analyses Mohsin's *Butterfly* diary series to locate the freedom provided for a woman's voice to be heard and interrogates the format of diary writing within the perspectives of Pakistani society.

## The World of Butterfly

- 2 The Butterfly series consists of three works: *The Diary of a Social Butterfly* (2008; hereafter referred as *DSB*), *Tender Hooks* (2011; hereafter referred as *TH*) and *The Return of the Butterfly* (2014; hereafter referred as *RB*). The first book in the series was actually a column in the newspaper *The Friday Times* which was later published in a book form. The other two books were conceptualised in book form. The world of Butterfly is populated by Butterfly, an upper-class socialite, her husband Janoo, an Oxford graduate conscious of the social and political malady of Pakistan and desirous for change, and their son Kulchoo who shares the same sentiments as his father. Along with these characters are a host of other characters including Butterfly's immediate family, her friends and her in-laws whom she detests. The urbane life of Butterfly is one long string of party-hopping and designer clothes along with summer holidays in the UK or the USA. It is also a world of one-upmanship in the struggle to acquire the latest fashion or to be seen in the most happening dos in the city. Butterfly represents the extremely shallow upper-class socialites whose concerns remain restricted within the social bubbles of their luxurious lives. The first work, *The Diary of a Social Butterfly*, is a loosely structured record of Butterfly's life from January 2001 until Benazir Bhutto's assassination in January 2008. Each entry in her diary is headed by references to two important events – one of national or international importance, and one referring to her own social circle. The first entry is headlined: "Taliban threatens to destroy all statues/ Floozie runs off with her best friend's husband" (*DSB* 1). The apparent incongruity of the headline notwithstanding, the diary entry clinically refuses to engage with anything regarding the Taliban but focuses more on the elopement. Read in conjunction with Rani's pregnancy in *The End of Innocence* and the rise of Taliban, such a situation would have actually entailed harsh consequences for her friend Floozie. However, Butterfly renders the situation hilarious with her description of the "decrepid" [sic] (*DSB* 1) husbands and her ultimate realisation that in this world one cannot trust anyone else than one's plastic surgeon and *darzi* (tailor). The diary entries progress in a similar manner with skirmishes between Butterfly and her husband on basic ideological differences forming the basis of many entries. With her signature flair to just ignore events, Butterfly flits from one party to another get together, and, in the midst of it, Pakistan faces the heat of international pressure after 9/11, teeters on the brink of a nuclear war with India, experiences one of the worst earthquakes in the history of the nation, and confronts a steady growth of Islamic fundamentalism. Interestingly, all these events along with others of significance find a place in her diary headlines but, except for a handful, most never find any more attention in her life. The only thing that puts a halt on her fluttering life is the assassination of Benazir Bhutto in January 2008 which ends the first diary.
- 3 Butterfly returns in *Tender Hooks*. Here the time period is much shorter, comprising roughly three months from 27 September 2009 to 18 December 2009. The plot structure is more tightly knit with the main plot focusing on finding a bride for Butterfly's cousin Jonkers. Jonkers, also known as Jehangir, is twice divorced, and the onus of finding a bride who matches his "bagground" [sic] (*TH* 19) falls upon Butterfly. The diary format has undergone an interesting and positive development: the headlines of Butterfly's entries no longer refer to her personal problems and tribulations. They are absolutely

about the situations prevalent in a national or international level, and some of them have a bearing on Butterfly's own daily events. At the same time, Butterfly develops a more humane outlook towards marriage and its importance even in her glittering world leading to the more toned-down wedding of her cousin Jonkers.

- 4 The third book in the series, *The Return of the Butterfly*, is problematic in terms of time frame: it returns to January 2008 as its starting point and continues up to December 2013. Like the first book, here too the headline entries of Butterfly's diary mix social and political events with events from her personal life. The changes in Butterfly's character are more profound here than in any of the other works as she develops a better relationship with Janoo, along with an interest in politics. Her tastes in soap operas and movies also improve, but, more importantly, Butterfly faces the same problems as other commoners. The more the country deteriorates the better Butterfly's character develops along with her rootedness to the country.

## Satire and Tragedy

- 5 M.H. Abrams defines satire as the "literary art of diminishing or derogating a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt, scorn or indignation" (Abrams 2005: 284). Conal Condren (2012), in a detailed study of the definition of satire, finds it difficult to put forward an exact definition which fits all criteria. However, he does highlight a definite characteristic of satire that in some sense alludes to Abram's definition: censoriousness. Despite the connection between censoriousness and satire not being completely straightforward, Condren says that satirists have conventionally asserted moral seriousness as one of the more specific features of satire which even overrides the exposition of humour (Condren 2012: 391). This moral seriousness again stems from a genuine understanding of the complexity and often the hopelessness of the situation that the satire addresses, which is why Northrop Frye famously contends that the "satire at its most concentrated [...] is tragedy robbed of all its dignity" (Frye 1994: 86). Satire as a genre, despite its overt comic implications, has a deeper connection with tragedy in its ability to highlight the absurdity of human existence in the face of the horrors of the world. Ihab Hassan (1964) argues that satire and also irony serve a few of the purposes of classical tragedy in the present world where authentic tragedy is out of place. The farce of the present scenario "shocks and shames us into ironic laughter" (Hassan 1964: 638). Hayden White posits the view that satire arose out of the necessity to direct human understanding towards the fact that the attempt by other genres of literature to provide resolution are inadequate given the chaotic situation of the world. Satire emerged out of the awareness of humanity in general, and literature in particular, of the tiredness and exhaustion of a "world (that) has grown old" (White 2014: 10), a world incapable of making sense in itself.
- 6 Salman Rushdie's *Shame* (first published in 1983), set in turbulent Pakistan, uses this same concept of tragedy to satirise the epic nature of the trials and tribulations of a fledgling nation. Rushdie thus says:
 

And it seemed to me that what one should do is to write a story which in its shape is tragic, because there's no doubt that what is happening in Pakistan is a tragedy, it's a tragedy on a national scale. So it was correct to write a story whose form was tragic, but then to write it with all the language of comedy and farce you could

muster, because that was what the people merited, and that would be the way of creating a description of the world as it really was. (Rushdie 1985: 15)

- 7 This concept of satire being used to reflect upon tragedy is reiterated by Lisa Colletta in the context of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*. Colletta says that Woolf's use of humour does not give rise to "deep laughter" but rather a wince at the irony of the situation because "the ironies touch upon things of such penetrating humanness that one laughs at the quirky twists of humanity while being at the same time aware of sadness, tragedy, or great seriousness" (Colletta 2003: 54). While Woolf in her fiction contemplated the tragedy of World War I along with a questioning of the core values of Western culture, Mohsin questions, more in the lines of Rushdie, the apparent farce that Pakistan as a nation is experiencing and the shamelessness of people like *Butterfly* unwilling to take responsibility for their actions (Knight 2004: 113). The author's satire is directed at the narrator as part of a particular apathetic societal group while at the same time displaying an understanding of the wrongs in Pakistani society and nation at large. On the other hand, the narrator, in retaliation, directs her own guileless satire against a world which hardly makes sense in a post-9/11 scenario.

## Satire, Apathy and Diaries

- 8 Dorothy Parker, a famous satirist of her time, used the genre of diary writing to portray the monologue of a society lady during the Great Depression of the 1930s in "From the Diary of a New York Lady" (1933). The unnamed lady who writes her diary chronicles a week in her busy social life amidst the turmoil of her personal life. Her personal life is also very much a reflection of her social life and many upheavals occur within just one week. The absolute dissociation of the lady from the stark reality of the despair of the working class during the Great Depression is what cuts off the reader's sympathy for the society lady. Despite her gripe against the injustices that she faces in her personal or social life, the author directs the sympathy of the reader at the cost of the narrator. The very fact that the lady diarist does not reflect on the horror of the times she is living not only highlights the disparity between social classes but also cuttingly emphasises the desperate situation. The lady therefore becomes a caricature of everything that is wrong in New York during the Great Depression. Mohsin uses a similar technique in her *Butterfly Diaries* series where the unnamed narrator (despite the series being named the *Butterfly* series, the actual name of the narrator is never mentioned anywhere and the term *Butterfly* is rather used to depict someone who flits around parties) engages in a monologue to make the reader aware of her high society problems that make life so difficult for her in spite of, or rather because of, the huge political changes in international relationships amongst countries, and especially Pakistan, and the rest of the world. In Parker, her anger against the world in general has made her create a world where her anger is not just "against a philistine world that closes its eyes to freshness and joy, but loathing for the inhabitants of that world" (Janeway 1970: 31). This anger is reflective of Rushdie's concept of shamelessness and the utter apathy of a class of people. The absurd scenario effectively satirises and reflects on the tragedy of life during the Great Depression.
- 9 Mohsin also makes use of satire as an efficient tool to direct the attention of the readers towards the malady of society through a character who categorically refuses to engage with the same problems. While Mohsin's *Butterfly Diaries* are obvious social and political

satires which go beyond their initial scope as a column in a newspaper to uphold the chaos in Pakistani society, they can more importantly be read as the conscience of a nation on the verge of social change. Though the character of Butterfly remains unabashedly herself throughout the series and what changes in the process is the society around her, the nation as a whole does affect her in significant ways. Mohsin's satiric representation of Pakistani society through the form of diary writing is an attempt to highlight the tragedy of a nation riddled with problems and the apathy of people like Butterfly unwilling to change according to circumstances. The *Butterfly Diaries* therefore present a microcosm of a society and a nation caught between the diverse ideologies of the likes of Janoo, Kulchu, and Jonkers, and Butterfly's circle of family and friends. While Butterfly's upwardly mobile social class and her idiosyncrasies represent the apathy of societal figures who have the capacity to bring about change, Janoo and other characters like him represent the other part of the nation who are quietly engaged in changing it. Mohsin's work therefore reflects on a fast changing social and political scenario where the diary acts as the monologue of the nation and voices the unsaid which can only be voiced within the pages of the diary. The very act of writing the diary is an act of chronicling the mundane and the frivolous nature of daily lives in a nation where the lower classes are only seen but never heard. The diary therefore is a record-keeper of Pakistani society and the dated entries in the diary are also a record of the direction in which the nation is progressing. The conjoining of the events of national or international importance with the frivolous events of Butterfly's life in the diary headlines is a means through which Mohsin correlates the humdrum of daily existence with the newspaper headlines. Life as it is lived on a daily basis is not necessarily connected to media sensationalism and while Mohsin does emphasise that the headlines events have an impact on the ordinary lives of people, it is also true that a large number of people are hardly affected more than by momentary dismay. It is when the public events affect the private sphere that private citizens decide for change and therefore the *Butterfly Diaries* series acts as a medium where the private and the public intermingle.

## Writing the Diary

- 10 A diary in itself is personal in nature and meant for the perusal of the person writing it. However, there are various instances in literary history of famous diaries being published where the life of the chronicler is held for public view. In fact, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, diary writing, especially for women, was in many ways a collaborative process meant for the public eye as a means for collective understanding and analysis of individual lives (Culley 1989; Huff 1989; Bunkers 1990). It was only the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Romantic emphasis on the self that gave rise to the concept of diary writing as a private experience and an opportunity for self-analysis (Gannett 1992: 141). The notion of writing for the private experience is debunked by Butterfly at the very beginning of the series when she addresses the implied readers of her diary by asking them how come they do not know about her. Accepting grudgingly that they might not know about her, she embarks on a long description of herself, her family members and her friends. The introduction not only sets the tone for the rest of the diary but also makes the reader aware that here is a diary writer who writes for the public eye and whatever she describes is meant for public approval rather than criticism. This self-

congratulatory tone along with her flair for malapropisms presents before the reader a figure who is very comfortable, even proud, in being herself.

- 11 Mohsin also pokes fun at the concept of writing, reflecting on the Self, caught amidst the patriarchal setup of Pakistani society. The book that Butterfly thinks she will write is to be named *My Urban Fraud*, a pun on the internationally acclaimed *My Feudal Lord* (first published in 1991) by Tehmina Durrani. Durrani's work is a stark mirror of the ways in which the social, political, and patriarchal are enmeshed in a society which is still feudal in many ways. While Durrani is a victim of circumstances and often indulges in self-pity and self-loathing but remains fundamentally compliant, Mohsin's sly take on Durrani's work reflects Butterfly's refusal to be a victim and to take her destiny in her own hands despite societal disapproval. At the same time, Mohsin portrays Butterfly attempting to take up writing seriously and thus she takes advice from a friend of her mother's who is a writer. The writer friend gives her advice by telling her, "Write about something you know" (DSB 17). Butterfly takes this advice to heart as she feels that her mother's friend thinks she knows nothing, but she does know many things, including the underbelly of sophisticated, high society, only she is "too khandani to say" (i.e. well bred) (DSB 17). Butterfly therefore, in her own way, divulges what she knows not in the form of a book but in the form of a diary where she records her innermost thoughts about everything and everyone in her immediate society.
- 12 Butterfly's endeavour to write brings forth some important questions regarding writing and, more importantly, diary writing. Firstly, what function does the category of fictional diary serve in the overall concept of satire that Mohsin uses in her works? Does the genre of fictional diary allow the ordinary self to be revealed? Despite the apparent 'real' nature of her diaries, the diaries are fictional in nature and fall within the genre of novels rather than non-fictional diaries. Secondly, one can wonder whether diary writing is an essentially feminine genre which allows space for the woman to speak, whether it provides a space which is otherwise denied to her. Thirdly, and most importantly, whether the 'self' created through the use of language in the diary is a socially constructed one or an individual entity not necessarily connected to society.

## The Fictional and the Real

- 13 One of the primary distinguishing qualities between a diary and a fictional diary or novel written in the form of a diary is the author's ability to control the narrative and mould it in the fictional form. Valerie Raoul, speaking in the context of Sartre's *La Nausée* (1938) says that an actual personal diary begins *in medias res*. While the doubts and conflicts (the 'representations') that the diarist goes through while writing
 

are unconscious and in conflict with the purpose of the text (sincerity, authenticity, self-knowledge), in a fictional diary (the representation of a representation) the double negation produces an affirmative, the self-conscious mimesis of a process reveals its structure and mechanisms. (Roul 1983: 704)
- 14 Lorna Martens (1985) argues along the same lines that real diaries record events from daily life while fictional diaries have a general plot in place which the author develops through the use of various literary techniques. Another important characteristic of the fictional diary is the concept of the mirror, a recurrent motif in the fictional diary genre. The mirror acts as the image of the self and is "symptomatic of the attempt at

self-exteriorization and self-contemplation in the diary" (Raoul 1983: 704). Similarly, H. Porter Abbott argues that one of the primary objectives of the diarist in fictional diaries is to find reflection within the diary. The subject of the diary becomes the object of scrutiny and the technique used is the mundane mirror in the room of the diarist. Abbott goes on to point out that this attention to the mirror remains the primary difference between the fictional diary and 19<sup>th</sup>-century diaries where the diarist is mostly confined to the room. The diarist in the fictional format is directed by the author to look into the mirror at least once throughout the narrative (Abbott 1984: 18).

- 15 In the context of the *Butterfly Diaries*, the concept of a structure imposed by the author does not exist for the first book. It only appears through the sense of events in the life of Butterfly suggested by the headline in each of her entry which highlight an international or national problem. As mentioned earlier, the novel was originally conceived of as a newspaper column, which corresponds to the loose structure of an actual diary. The second book has a more focussed plot construction, but the third book returns to the informal structure of the first book, with unrelated entries describing sundry events of her life. Thus, Mohsin's works do not exactly fall into the characterisation of a fictional diary. They also do not follow the definition of a fictional diary by Lorna Martens: "a fictional prose narrative written from day to day by a single first-person narrator who does not address himself to a fictive addressee or recipient" (Martens 1985: 4). *Butterfly* does away with this definition at the very beginning by asking the implied reader if they have heard about her and if not why? She very much assumes a fictitious reader through such self-aggrandisement. Lastly, the mirror motif is missing in the three works. Instead, the mirror appears in Mohsin's constant use of satire to reflect on the tragedy of the country and for *Butterfly* to reflect on herself and society. Instead of the tangible physical object of the mirror, satire is the mirror that Mohsin uses to reflect on the follies, foibles and idiosyncrasies of the world. *Butterfly's* diaries are therefore in many ways the product of an ordinary person reflecting on the circumstances that she finds herself in. Thus, both the author's and the narrator's satire are means of reflection of an ordinary self.

## The "Ordinary" Writing the Diary

- 16 Philippe Lejeune delves into the question of ordinary people writing diaries and their importance in society. He points out that the ordinariness of a text is transformed through the act of publishing and, more importantly, that the originality of a diary or journal is somewhat lost in the act of publishing as it is nearly impossible to publish such works unedited. Lejeune did publish ordinary diaries, but the question remains for unpublished diaries. As exemplified earlier with *Butterfly*, the authorial stance through the narrator implies in the introduction that the diaries have been published as there is an implied reader. However, the implied reader is the reader of a fictionalised account of diary writing rather than 'real' diaries written by 'real' people. On the other hand, despite their publication is there anything in the diaries which make them important enough to be read by the implied reader? *Butterfly*, by her very ordinariness, her social status notwithstanding, is actually a representative, an Everyman, of the Pakistani society that she both criticises and indulges in. Her reflection on the condition of Pakistan is also a reflection of the common man even if the rose-tinted glass of *Butterfly* glosses over many social evils.

- 17 On hindsight, however, this attempt to gloss over circumstances and people who are unpleasant for her does highlight the ability of a society or a nation to turn a blind eye and remain self-satisfied within cocoons of luxury houses, cars, and foreign holidays. Butterfly's complete disassociation with the real world, except when it hurts her own lifestyle, is emphasised in her reaction to the Twin Towers being demolished on 9/11. She was planning a trip to New York and the timing could not have been worse. She has no problem with the destruction of the Twin Towers but is miffed by the awkward timing. Her anguish is reflected in her retort to her husband who has been glued to the TV since the event, "Kya tha if they'd waited for another two weeks? Main ho hi aati New York" (DSB27). While her husband represents the majority of the population of the world who has been driven to a frenzy by the event, Butterfly represents the select few whose life is hardly affected by such events of international importance. At the same time, she muses about the possibilities of who else might have been involved other than Al-Qaeda and her thoughts reflect many of the conspiracy theories at the time claiming George W. Bush and Mossad, the Israeli Intelligence Agency, were responsible. She is clever enough to realise the implications of the attack on a Muslim country like Pakistan with close ties to Afghanistan, and her diary entry which discusses the attack the most highlights that she is not totally immune to circumstances of such powerful implications on the world. However, Butterfly's initial response to the crisis which has directly affected her travel plans to New York also reflects on the common man's reaction to situations and circumstances beyond the control of ordinary human beings. Neither her husband's uninterrupted viewing of TV nor her insensitive reaction is going to change the situation. Mohsin's ability lies in directing the reader's attention to the fact that, in society, the male interest and reaction to political situation is prioritised while the female interest in fashion or other such things are considered banal in nature. Butterfly's own unique take on circumstances, despite her 'ordinary' stature, is reminiscent of Nirad Chaudhuri's *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian* (1964). The autobiography charts the life of an unknown Indian, a very ordinary person like Chaudhuri and his take on the sweeping changes in India, and particularly in Bengal, during his lifetime. Chaudhuri is able to look at the social, political, and economic changes in Bengal from the perspective of a common man and how these changes affect his own life. It was a very turbulent period in Indian history and Chaudhuri successfully merges the personal and the political in erudite English to posit his own take on history. In the process, Chaudhuri charts his individual growth from a small village in Bengal to the man of the world that he later became because he felt that it was important to understand history from an intellectual standpoint rather than only the political implications of it. Chaudhuri's attempt therefore answers Lejeune's question regarding the necessity to write one's life history in autobiography or in diaries. Lejeune asks, "Does one write out of a situation of need or crisis, out of a situation of well being? And does writing lead to a deterioration, or to an improvement, or perhaps something in between these two, of the writer's existential situation?" (Lejeune 2009: 36).
- 18 Why does Butterfly write in her diary? She writes because it is her prerogative to voice her opinions. Unlike Chaudhuri who takes an intellectual point of view, Butterfly brings to the fore the inane, the mundane and the ordinary who also have a stake on history in the process of its making. While Chaudhuri's intellectual outlook can be one way of looking at present history, Butterfly's diametrically opposite standpoint verging on the ludicrous is also another way of looking at things which themselves are incongruous,



particularly because of their ludicrous nature. What is more, her outlook changes as she progresses in the process of diary writing. While in the first book she records her obtuseness to the destruction of the Twin Towers and her free association with the conspiracy theories, in the third book she categorically refuses to look at Islamic terrorism as only the fruit of a Western conspiracy. When one of her friends suggests that America is behind one of the recent bombings, her biting sarcasm comes to the fore when she asks if the bombers were blonde and blue-eyed. The diary where she records such interactions and musings thereby becomes also a repository of the change that Pakistan, as a nation, and particularly the likes of Butterfly are experiencing. The second book also brings about a social change in Butterfly as on Janoo's suggestion she decides to leave aside her obsession with background and rather search for a girl who is mutually compatible with Jonkers. The small but considerable changes in Butterfly's character is reflective of the fact that through her, or rather because of people like her, there is a possibility of change.

## A Space to Speak

- 19 The reason why Mohsin chose the form of diary writing rather than something more self-obsessed like the fictional autobiography for her character remains an open question. Is it because diary writing is an intrinsically feminine form of writing in which Mohsin is able to lend a voice to Butterfly? Rebecca Hogan elaborates on diary writing as a feminine form in "Engendered autobiographies: The diary as a feminine form" (1991). Hogan writes that the attention to details in the diaries written by women makes it a feminine form of writing if details are considered to be feminine. At the same time, she posits the same question regarding the choice of diary writing over autobiographical writing asked here with respect to Butterfly. Hogan contends that women write diaries while men write autobiographies. For the feminine figure who is secluded from the public sphere and finds expression only within the confines of home, diaries provide a space to be oneself, away from the prying eyes of society. In such forms of diary writing, the diary is a private artefact not meant for public consumption. Having posited that diary writing is in many ways essentially feminine in nature, Hogan analyses the apparent loose structure of diaries and the disparate nature of entries in diaries: the discontinuity between events recorded in diaries stems from the fact that the diarist treats small or big events, events which are recorded as they occur to the memory. In such a perspective, diaries "are not so much inclusive because they contain everything from a given day, as they are inclusive in the sense that they do not privilege 'amazing' over 'ordinary' events, in terms of scope, space, or selection" (Hogan 1991: 103). This explanation makes Butterfly's apparent mixing of the events of national or international importance along with her own petty incidents of life an illustration of the way in which women write diaries. There is nothing inherently wrong in her doing so, as she is describing events in a manner which she deems to be important. While the reader might not agree with her viewpoint, her description prioritises events which she feels affects her life more than others. The disassociation that Butterfly brings about between her own self-centred world and the outside world is positioned at the core of diary writing.
- 20 Moreover, despite her social standing and perceptible freedom, her individual voice can be heard only within the confines of the diary, and it is the narratorial voice which

displays her stance in society. The authorial stance is one of caricature and this dichotomy between the authorial voice and the narratorial voice runs throughout the series. Having said that, the objective here is not to project Butterfly as a victim but rather a product of the society in which she lives. The Pakistan inhabited by her is still very much a patriarchal nation, and the likes of Janoo are an aberration rather than a commonality. Her disregard for things which do not matter to her is symptomatic of the society in which she has been moulded and at the same time it is the same society which inhibits her in many ways. The diary therefore provides her a space for her to be her blatant self without the possibility of societal censure. Sara Suleri's *Meatless Days* (1989) does in fact highlight that Pakistan was "a place where the concept of woman was not really part of the available vocabulary" (1). In a society where women do not find representation within the established male-dominated language, they can only seek recourse to a private activity like writing a diary to find a voice. It needs to be reiterated here that neither the author nor Butterfly herself present her as a victim, but the circumstances that prevail compel even women like Butterfly to exert their voices. These voices can be heard within the private domains of diaries but they at least go against "received stereotypical image of Asian women upheld generally by the rest of the world as passive, impoverished or anaemic" (Kumar and Lal 2009: xxiii).

## The Self in the Diary

- 21 This brings us to another important question regarding the necessity of writing diaries and the outcome of it. Who is the self that evolves through the process of writing: is it just a disjointed process with no end in sight? Who is it that we find in the *Butterfly Diaries*? An evolved individual or a Self represented through the use of language, in this case a particular usage of malapropism? The reader gets to know Butterfly and her world through her diaries, a written expression of herself in which the usage of language plays a crucial role. Is Butterfly then only an individual who expresses herself through her idiosyncratic mannerisms, notably her language, or is she part of the larger community of individuals who determine how she acts and speaks?
- 22 Butterfly describes herself through a plurality of existence. She is a Lahori without a landed background but her marriage has positioned her as one. Her social status is that of "the khandani, khaata-peeta types" (well-bred and wealthy) but she is also convent-educated. She is "very sophistry, smart and socialist" and then she goes on to define the community to which she belongs which includes her husband and son, her in-laws, her mother, aunts and uncles. It is this community which determines how she speaks and what she says. Butterfly therefore, through the course of the three books, speaks first with conviction regarding her own immersion in her exclusive bubble but gradually, as the community from which she draws inspiration from changes, her speech act also changes. She goes to a rally against religious fundamentalism and says:
- (T)he fundos are not prepared to live and let us live. They tau are control freaks, yaar. Like class monitors they want to tell us when we can talk and when we can't [...] Today they are saying that I can't wear sleeveless and must wear dupatta on my head. Tomorrow they will say I must wear chaadar. The day after that I must cover my face [...] Then they will say I can't go in mixed company. (DSB199)
- 23 Just before the wedding of her cousin Jonkers, Butterfly again reflects on the situation of Pakistan and her own uncertainty in the comfortable bubble that she usually finds herself in. She says, "Between you, me, and the four walls, I was a little bit edgy about

the security. More bombs burst last week. One in DG Khan that killed twenty-four. Another in Peshawar that I don't know killed how many. And more shootings in Karachi" (TH246).

- 24 While the outside space denies her voice, the space within the confines of her home — where her voice was never denied — moulds her to reflect better on the usage of her voice. So far as actual language usage is concerned, her malapropisms and neologisms are a means to get back to the very world from which she has derived her literal language. Butterfly's use of language is hilarious because her malapropisms make the reader attentive in anticipation of her distortions. In other words, the reader tries to not only decipher her distortions but also anticipates her distortion of words of perfectly meaningful words which, in the process, lend them a completely new meaning. Examples include her mother-in-law having a "vagina attack" (DSB 12), "jump cues" (TH 8), "one of the most illegible girls" (TH 20), "self-defecating sense of humour" (RB 38). Malapropisms like these are used along with words in Urdu like "khaata-peeta", "khandani" and colloquial words like "uff", "hain", "bhai", "tau" etc. The colloquial words are peculiar to the Indian subcontinent and native speakers can immediately understand the context; a literal translation would make the diaries even stranger for a non-native speaker. Butterfly is oblivious to her infelicities and, through her, Mohsin satirises the linguistic idiosyncrasies of Pakistanis and even Indians where English words are liberally interspersed in daily speech but often are either wrongly pronounced or used. At the same time, English has become so much a part of the subcontinent's diverse languages that Butterfly's speech hardly seems surprising to the readers from India and Pakistan. Butterfly, therefore, appropriates the English language without hesitation. As postcolonial Pakistan is steeped in English but also indigenous languages like Urdu and Punjabi, this has an effect on how language is used. Mohsin's and, through Mohsin's, Butterfly's seamless enmeshing of the English language with Punjabi and Urdu, requires a glossary for foreign readers and exhibits her comfort and confidence in using the languages she knows. Kamila Shamsie remarks that the work, "is so steeped in bilingual wordplay and untranslated Urdu expressions that it simply wouldn't make sense to most anglophone audiences" (Shamsie 2010: 111).

## Conclusion

- 25 The attempt to read the *Butterfly Diaries* as satire as well as from the perspective of diary writing stems from the understanding that, consciously or unconsciously, Mohsin projects a new way of understanding Pakistan. The diary is a restrictive and personal space but it is also a space of freedom: the development of Butterfly is also the development of Pakistan. When Janoo suffers from clinical depression in *RB*, it is Butterfly who takes him to a psychiatrist and also cares and understands him during this period. Janoo's depression, he who is a representative of the educated and conscious Pakistani, reflects on the predicament of this section of the population who feel hopeless in the face of the changes, particularly political, the country has undergone. The history of post-independence Pakistan has been mired in military coups and attacks at democratic forms of government. This remains one of the major differences between the twin nations of India and Pakistan born out of British colonialism. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism is another issue which has sucked Pakistan into a quagmire of depravity and violence. Janoo's wholehearted opposition to

such circumstances ultimately, within the framework of the diaries, remains inconsequential, as the narrative prioritises Butterfly's apparent indifference along with a covert understanding of the underlying issues. Throughout the diaries, Butterfly refers again and again to the sweeping changes across the region despite them not affecting her personal life significantly. At the same time, this awareness is symptomatic of the fact that it is not so much ignorance but indifference which maligns Butterfly. However, the narratorial voice within the diaries does highlight that the ludicrous and the incongruous can be faced with an equally if not more preposterous voice. The voices of the likes of Janoo and Kulchoo are necessary because they steer Butterfly towards the path of reason, but her insistent voice within the pages of the diaries reflect that she is a Pakistani woman who refuses to be silenced. Despite her fondness for foreign fashion, she never harbours the intention of staying abroad permanently, which would strip her of her luxurious lifestyle. In *TH*, when she is attacked by a terrorist-looking fellow, Butterfly requests Janoo to move away to a safer place abroad, to which he replies that their move would make her miss what is their home. Without Pakistan they would be homeless. While Butterfly says that she hardly cares about it, Janoo insists that she would. This remains the most redemptive feature of Butterfly. She remains within the violent space and consistently raises her voice against Islamic fundamentalism and political excesses which often determine what women should wear, how they should behave, whether they should receive an education or not. Her voice might not be the voice heard in rallies and protests but it is a voice which insists and asks to be heard, and makes itself heard in an unapologetic manner. In the light of the recent Talibani takeover of Afghanistan and its implications on Pakistan, Butterfly's insistent voice acquires even deeper significance. This forms the base of *Naya Pakistan* if there ever can be one.

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## ABSTRACTS

Moni Mohsin's *Butterfly Diaries* (2008, 2011, 2014) present the character of Butterfly who is immersed in her own luxurious world with hardly a thought about the actual world in which sweeping social and political changes are taking place. Her lopsided, privileged view of the world is balanced by the voice of her husband Janoo who represents the voice of sanity. Yet Butterfly's vantage point also allows for sporadic self-retrospection and analysis, and these are moments of surprise not only for the reader but also for her immediate family members. This paper argues that Butterfly's voice which finds itself portrayed through the diary in the series is an insistent one which despite glossing over certain things still allows her to position herself in the changing society. It is this voice which can be posited as the voice of new Pakistan.

*Butterfly Diaries* (2008, 2011, 2014) de Moni Mohsin met en scène le personnage de Butterfly qui est plongée dans son propre monde privilégié et ne pense guère au monde réel dans lequel des changements sociaux et politiques radicaux ont lieu. Sa vision biaisée et privilégiée du monde est contrebalancée par la voix de son mari Janoo, qui représente la voix de la raison. Cependant, le point de vue de Butterfly permet aussi une forme d'introspection, et une analyse en pointillés, moments de surprise non seulement pour le lecteur mais aussi pour les membres de sa famille proche. Cet article démontre que la voix de Butterfly, qui se trouve dépeinte sous forme de journal intime, est une voix insistante qui, bien que passant sous silence certaines choses, lui permet de se positionner dans une société en mutation. C'est cette voix qui peut être considérée comme la voix du nouveau Pakistan.

## INDEX

**Keywords:** diary, voice, language, privilege, Pakistan, Mohsin Moni, literature

**Mots-clés:** journal intime, voix, langue, privilège, Pakistan, Mohsin Moni, littérature

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