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EDITORIAL

With immense pride, pleasure and happiness, we, *The Contour* Fraternity, declare that we have been able to own our own website i.e., domain instead of free domain and journal *The Contour* is published with the URL: www.thecontour.org. As promised by us, we have been able to have this within one year of its age. It is, no doubt, a big achievement on the part of the journal. It has, we can say unhesitatingly, become possible only because of the constant and enduring support and encouragement we received from the well-wishers and *The Contour* Fraternity.

The present issue accommodates **six** articles and **four** poems. We could not accommodate some papers submitted for this issue as those did not pass the review process. The articles included in the present issue address various issues/topics addressing several issues relating to literature, language and culture. We sincerely convey our hearty and sincere gratitude to the reviewers and advisers for their critical perspectives, comments and suggestions much needed for upkeep of the sound health of the journal. For several reasons we have not been able to accommodate all the papers submitted for the present issue.

The readers as well as the well-wishers of the journal are earnestly requested to give their valuable suggestions for the improvement of its future issues.

It is also declared that the views and observations presented in the writings are solely of the respective authors, not of the editor/editorial board of the journal.

Special thanks should go to Suman Saha and Samarpan Chatterji who with their expertise in computer have worked strenuously and sincerely for giving the present shape to the journal.

22.07.2015



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ARTICLE

Some Observations on the Characteristics of Assamese Language

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Abstract

The paper attempts to analyze and present some of the important phonological, morphological and syntactic characteristics of Assamese language. The paper highlights that there are thirty one phonemes in Assamese including twenty three consonant phonemes and eight vowel phonemes. It is noticed that the voiceless velar fricative /x/ is a unique development and typically indigenous to Assamese which is not found in any Indian language. It is observed that the relevant morphological inflections found in a verb phrase are aspect, tense and person agreement marker. It is noticed that aspect occurs before tense and is the closest element to the verb. The paper highlights that the verbs in Assamese are not marked for present tense whereas they are marked for past tense by –isil and future tense by –ib. The paper observes that negation in Assamese is expressed morphologically with the help of a negative morpheme –na by prefixing it to the verbs. It is claimed that Assamese has a small class of Negative Polarity Items (NPI) and they are marked by –O. The paper finally examines some other morpho-syntactic aspects of Assamese including definiteness, case marking, passivization, subordination and question formation.

Keywords: characteristics, phonemes, inflections, verb phrase, marker, negative polarity items, morphologically, morpho-syntax, syntactically, word order.

Introduction

Assamese is the major language spoken in the northeastern part of India. It is the official language of the state of Assam and is spoken and used by the majority of the people living in and around Assam. Assamese belongs to the Indo-European family of language. It is observed that in Assam, there are languages belonging to all the four major language families spoken in the subcontinent: Indo-European, Sino-Tibetan, Austric and Dravidian. Assamese is the major language spoken in Assam and a sizable population speaks it as a second language in and around the state. It is primarily spoken in the districts of Brahmaputra valley in Assam. Moreover, it also serves as a lingua franca among the different speech communities in the entire northeastern region. As there are numerous dialects and subdialects in Arunachal Pradesh which are mutually unintelligible, Assamese is used as a link language for inter-tribe communication. Many Naga tribes in Nagaland as well speak another form of hybrid Assamese, very popularly known as Nagamese (Naga + Assamese), a harmonious blend of Naga dialects and Assamese.

Assamese has historically originated from the Old Indo-Aryan dialects, but the exact nature of its origin and growth is not very clear as yet. It is supposed that Assamese evolved from a MagadhiPrakrit in the east that gave rise to four Apabhraṃśa dialects: Rāḍha, Vaṅga, Vārendra and Kāmarūpa (Chatterji 1970). The KāmarūpaApabhraṃśa spread to the east keeping north of the Ganges, and is represented in north Bengal at present by North Bengal dialects, and in the valley of Assam by Assamese. North Bengal and Assam did not get their language from Bengal proper but directly from the west. MagadhiApabhraṃśa, in fact, may be considered as spreading out eastwards and southwards in three directions (Kakati 1972). The impact of the Austric and Tibeto-Burman languages on Assamese can never be ruled out and the language as is found today is distinguished by many special features on its own and presents substantial modifications in the area of phonology, morphology, syntax and vocabulary.

Linguistic Characteristics

In this section, we shall attempt to briefly discuss and present the morpho-phonemic and morpho-syntactic characteristics of Assamese language.

The number of phonemes in standard Assamese is drastically reduced as compared to Sanskrit, the root language of Assamese. There are twenty three consonant and eight vowel phonemes in

standard Assamese. Among the consonant phonemes, the voiceless velar fricative /x/ is a unique development and typically indigenous in nature which is not found in any Indian languages. Consonant clusters occur initially, medially and finally. Clusters of two or three consonants may be permitted initially and medially, while clusters of two consonants only may occur finally (Goswami and Tamuli 2003). Phonemic germination of consonants is also permitted in Assamese. Out of the eight vowel phonemes, three are front, one is central and four are back vowels. Assamese neither has short vowels nor has long vowels as it does not maintain the length distinctions among the vowels. All vowels maintain similar length depending on the positions in which they occur. There are twenty four possibilities of syllable structure out of which vowel nucleus with consonant clusters as coda or onset are very rare. The position of the primary stress is either the first or the second syllable.

Assamese morphology does not involve inflections for number and gender. Derivation is effected by various processes that include prefixation, suffixation, zero modification (Bloch and Trager 1942), compounding and change of consonant and vowel phoneme. As far as nominal inflections are concerned, the relevant categories are personal deixis for a small class of relational nouns and definiteness and case for nominals in general. The relevant categories for verbal morphological inflections are aspect, tense and person. Personal deixis is morphologically expressed in Assamese, as opposed to its expression through analytic means in other languages. The formal contrast is neutralized between the deictic centres of second person honorific and third person. Nouns of relationship can take regular case inflections – with or without the definitives – only after taking the personal deictic inflectional suffixes (Goswami and Tamuli 2003).

Definiteness in Assamese is expressed by a set of definitive morphemes that are suffixed to nominals, numerals and demonstrative pronouns. The definitive morphemes apart from signaling definiteness also function as classifiers to impose a classification on the nouns, demonstrative pronouns etc. to which they are attached. This classification is based on semantic features that range from animate-inanimate, male-female, dimensionality, and size to respect-gradation and emotional colouring. The definitive morphemes of Assamese belong to two classes – singular definitives and plural definitives, depending upon the definiteness relating to single or multiple referents. The singular definitives are mutually exclusive with the plural definitives in respect of distribution. Another important strategy that Assamese uses for plural formation is the use of an

indefinite plural morpheme *kei-* that is in a mutually exclusive relationship with the numerals and other plural definitives.

The grammatical category of case is both a morphological and syntactic category in Assamese that is correlatable with the various classes of nouns and pronouns. All nominals must undergo case inflections to become eligible for use in a sentence. Case inflections are affixed as the rightmost elements in the nominals. The case inflections for nominative, accusative, instrumental, dative, genitive and locative are *-e/∅*, *-ak*, *-re/di*, *-loi*, *-ar* and *-at* respectively. The genitive and locative cases allow certain postpositions to occur after the nominals and then express a variety of functions such as ablative, comitative, instrumental, adjectival comparative and adverbial comparative.

As far as verbal morphology is concerned, a finite verb in Assamese is marked for aspect, tense and person which occur in the sequence as: verb + aspect + tense + person. Assamese finite verbs are not marked for number and gender agreements. Aspect in Assamese is expressed both morphologically and periphrastically and it occurs immediately after the verb and before tense marker. Habitual aspect is not overtly marked in Assamese and an imperfective vs perfective distinction is maintained. The imperfective aspect is marked through the periphrastic expression *-iās* (e.g. *gmoilikh-iās-o* / I-nom write-prog be-agr / I am writing) whereas the perfective aspect is marked morphologically (e.g. *moilikh-il-o* / I-nom write-perf-agr / I have written). The perfectivity of perfect aspect is marked by *-il* whereas the perfectivity of resultative aspect is marked by *-is*.

Tense inflection in Assamese occurs immediately after aspect in the verb phrase if there is any overt aspect marker. Present is unmarked whereas past and future are marked for tense in Assamese. Past is marked by *-isil* (e.g. *glikh-isil-e* / write-past-3rdagr / wrote) and future is marked by *-ib* (e.g. *glikh-ib-a* / write-fut-3rdagr / will write). Even though there is no number and gender marker, there is person marker in Assamese. Person is inflectionally marked as the rightmost element in the verbal. The first, second and third person pronouns are all marked by the personal suffixes. However, the distinction between second person (honorific) and third person is neutralized in all the tenses. The alternation between *-e* and \emptyset (zero) marker in the third person is determined by the transitivity status of the verb.

Negation in Assamese is expressed morphologically by prefixing the negative morpheme *-na* to the verbs. An interesting and unique feature of negativization in Assamese is that there is

assimilation between the vowel of the negative morpheme and the first vowel of the verb to which the morpheme is attached. The first vowel sound of the verb is copied on to the negative morpheme when the morpheme is prefixed to the verb (e.g. na+māt = nāmāt (don't call), na+di = nidi (don't give), na+dekh = nedekh (don't see) etc.). The negative morpheme is always prefixed to the rightmost verb in the verb phrase. If there is one main verb, the morpheme is prefixed to that verb and if there is more than one verb, the morpheme is prefixed to the rightmost verb (e.g. na + likh + ib +a = nilikhiba (will not write), likh + ina + thāk + ib +a = likhināthākiba (will not be writing) etc.). There is a small group of words (e.g. kāko, kato, kono, eko, ketiyāo etc.) called Negative Polarity Items (NPI) which occur in a sentence only when negative morpheme is present. It is observed that the NPIs in Assamese are marked by – O as each NPI word ends with – O; and if – O is not present, each NPI word has different meaning and can occur without Negative morpheme (Sarma 2003).

Passivization in Assamese is done morphologically by suffixing the inflection *-ā* with the main verb. Unlike the tense inflection which is suffixed with the rightmost verb, the passive inflection *-ā* is always suffixed with the leftmost verb, that is, the main verb. Causativization is expressed morphologically in Assamese by adding the inflection *-uwā* to the main verb. Causative inflection *-uwā* is also suffixed with the leftmost verb, that is, the main verb. Assamese uses morphological causative for causativization process. In Assamese verb phrase, the main verb is always followed by the auxiliary verb and the order in the verb phrase is main verb, aspect, auxiliary, tense and person agreement.

Like the other Indo-Aryan languages, the pattern of word-order in Assamese is S-O-V but the pattern of word-order is relatively free. It is observed that the main verb always precedes the auxiliary verb. Assamese is a head-final language which is exemplified in various constructions of the language as for example noun phrase precedes postpositions and modifiers precede nouns. Subject in Assamese usually takes nominative case and is marked by the inflection *-e* when it plays agentive role but it is not case marked when it does not take agentive role. It is noticed that subject also takes accusative case with the verb *lāg* 'want/need' and takes genitive case when the subject acts as a possessor or experience. Object is marked accusative case with the inflection *-(a)k* when the object refers to a human noun. If the object does not refer to a human noun, it is not marked with the accusative case.

Subordinate clause in Assamese is formed by using the subordinators *je* and *buli* which occur at both clause-initial and clause-final positions. A subordinate clause can either precede or follow a main clause. The subordinator *je* is used when the subordinate clause follows the main clause. On the other hand, the subordinator *buli* is used when the subordinate clause precedes the main clause. Therefore, *je* and *buli* are in complementary distribution.

Question formation in Assamese does not involve auxiliary/wh-movement like English. An interrogative particle *ne* or *neki* is used after the verb to form yes-no question whereas K-words like *Ki* (what), *Kat* (where), *Kiya* (why), *Ketiya* (when), *Kenekoi* (How) etc. are used in a sentence to form wh-questions.

Conclusion

We have briefly discussed some of the characteristics of Assamese language in relation to phonology, morphology and syntax. It is noticed that /x/ is a typical and unique phoneme in Assamese which is not found in any Indian language. We have observed that the morphological inflections found in the verbal are aspect, tense and person agreement markers. Assamese does not show number and gender agreement. Perfective and imperfective aspectual opposition is observed in Assamese. Perfective is often marked morphologically whereas imperfective is marked periphrastically. It is noticed that present is unmarked whereas past and future are marked for tense in Assamese. We also observe that aspect occurs before tense and is closest to the verb. Negation is expressed morphologically and the negative morpheme – *na* is always prefixed to a verb. There is an assimilation between the vowel sound of the negative morpheme and the first vowel sound of the verb to which the morpheme is prefixed. It is noticed that Passivization is done morphologically by suffixing the inflection *-ā* with the main verb. The word order in Assamese is relatively free, although it follows SOV pattern.

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The Tradition and Modernity of/in India are at loggerheads: Reading Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger*

Pradip Mondal

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Abstract

In Arvind Adiga's The White Tiger (2008), modernity with all its treachery and sordidness comes out, breaking the shell of hoary Indian traditional beliefs. The family of the narrator Balram Halwai is poor but very traditional. Balram's father toils to nourish his family and now the only thing he wants is his sons' proper education. All members of the family adore and care for the water-buffalo, which is fed by women before they prepare meal for their husbands. Every member of the family works hard for the well-being of their family members and relatives.

Balram's perspective as a servant to the wealthy engenders hatred for his corrupt and arrogant masters. At the same time, Balram's perspective is one of yearning to live the life of the rich. This desperation leads him to cheat his master in every possible way. One day, he murders his master Mr. Ashok and starts his own chauffeuring business in Bangalore. He never bemoans his act; he justifies this immoral act as an act of desperation. The poor of India are often referred to by the narrator as roosters in a rooster coop. The poor are kept in poverty despite their desperation to have a higher standard of living because to break out of the rooster coop would involve acting very immorally.

This paper is going to show how the outlook of people alters in the changing scenario of urban India. Unlike "rags-to-riches" story that generally glorifies hard but honest ways to reach the acme of success, Balram's story tells about the journey of a Machiavellian opportunist who must grab all possible means to ascend the stairs of success.

Keywords: hoary, rooster coop, perspective, rags-to-riches, Machiavellian, opportunist

Arvind Adiga's novel *The White Tiger*(2008) is a brave attempt to show the interrelations among different realms of social life--economic, political, and cultural. In tech-city Bangalore, Balram

finds great success. He launches a taxi service for call center workers, which he calls “White Tiger Technology Drivers”. By bribing the police, Balram is able to garner influence and make his business successful. Demonstrating how far he has come, he is able to cover up a fatal accident through his connection to the authorities. He considers himself to be a quintessential entrepreneurial success story that represents the future of India, and presents himself as such to the Chinese Premier.

Adiga’s novel is framed as an epistolary narrative, written over seven nights to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao; it is a tale of servitude, economic prosperity, and murder. The novel employs a first-person narrator, Balram Halwai, whose unique, sarcastic voice carries the reader through his life in “new India.” Balram writes the letter in response to a statement he heard on the radio, “Mr. Jiabao is on a mission: he wants to know the truth about Bangalore.” Balram is an expert on the truth about the harsh realities and hidden cruelties of India.

At the beginning of the novel, Balram mentions to the Premier that China is the only nation he admires besides Afghanistan and Abyssinia because he read in a book called *Exciting Tales of the Exotic East* that these are the only three countries never to be ruled by outsiders. He dubs China the “freedom-loving nation,” a place that has never been subject to a master-slave relationship with the West. But although he hears on All India Radio that “you Chinese are far ahead of us in every respect,” Balram observes that China does not have entrepreneurs – hence the Premier’s visit to Bangalore.

China, then, becomes a foil to India, which Balram describes as a nation with “no drinking water, electricity, sewage, public transportation ...” (Adiga 4) but full of entrepreneurs. For this reason, he tells the Premier his story, believing that China and India are destined to become the next great superpowers: “In 20 years’ time, it will just be us brown and yellow men at the top of the pyramid, and we’ll rule the whole world.”

Perhaps Balram’s favorite motif is the duality of “Light” and “Dark.” From the very beginning, he attempts to navigate from his hometown in “The Darkness” to become a member of urban society. Light, then, becomes a multifaceted symbol of time (the future), wealth (lots of it), location (Bangalore), and obligation (none) – while Darkness represents the past, poverty, rural

India – and most importantly – loyalty to family and master. Balram feels that there are two Indias--the impoverished “Darkness” of the rural inner continent, and the “Light” of urban coastal India: “India is two countries in one: an India of Light, and an India of Darkness. The ocean brings Light to my country. Every place...near the ocean is well off. But [the Ganges] river brings darkness to India—the black river” (Adiga 12). A mechanism that he dubs the “Rooster Coop” traps the Indian underclass in a perpetual state of servitude. It involves both deliberate methods used by the upper class and a mentality enforced by the underclass on itself.

Balram Halwai can be understood in the literary tradition of the Nietzschean “*ubermensch*”. Nietzsche’s concept of the “*ubermensch*,” usually translated as “super-man” or “over-man,” is a central concept of Nietzschean philosophy, most significantly discussed in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883-85). Nietzsche’s *ubermensch* is a man of superior potential who has thrown off the shackles of the traditional Christian “herd morality,” instead constructing his own moral system. Having moved beyond the confines of moral thought, the *ubermensch* furthers the interests of humanity by pursuing the realization of his own singular moral code, and hence acting as a model for those who follow.

The most famous iteration of the “*ubermensch*” in literature is found in Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Rodion Raskolnikov, aspiring to be an “extraordinary” man unbound by ordinary morality, commits an act of murder. Like Raskolnikov, Balram’s actions in *The White Tiger* can be understood within the framework of the Nietzschean *ubermensch*. Balram considers himself to be superior to his fellow men, an extraordinary and rare “White Tiger” in the jungle of the Darkness. He believes his fate to be separate from others of his background, since he has awoken while they remain sleeping. Accordingly, he breaks free of the system of morality that binds the other people of the Darkness to the Rooster Coop. He constructs his own system of morals, in which theft, murder, and a deadly betrayal of his family become acceptable and justified actions. Finally, he rationalizes his choices by believing that he will serve as a model to those who follow.

Nietzsche says in his *On the Genealogy of Morality*(1887) that “We need a critique of moral values, the value of these values should itself, for once, be examined - and so we need to know about the conditions and circumstances under which the values grew up, developed and changed

(morality as result, as symptom, as mask, as tartuffery, as sickness, as misunderstanding; but also morality as cause, remedy, stimulant, inhibition, poison), since we have neither had this knowledge up till now nor even desired it. People have taken the value of these 'values' as given, as factual, as beyond all questioning; up till now, nobody has had the remotest doubt or hesitation in placing higher value on 'the good man' than on 'the evil' , higher value in the sense of advancement, benefit and prosperity for man in general (and this includes man's future). What if the opposite were true? What if a regressive trait lurked in 'the good man', likewise a danger, an enticement, a poison, a narcotic, so that the present lived at the expense of the future?" (Nietzsche 7-8).

Believing he is the only one who has truly woken up to the truth of the "Rooster Coop," he feels compelled to change his life. In this sense, Balram has become a version of Nietzsche's "ubermensch," or over-man, who believes himself to be above the moral and legal limitations of society. Adiga poses a question through Balram: do we blame a criminal for his decisions, or do we try to understand those decisions as reactions to an overly oppressive and restrictive society? Assuming that a reader does not have a definitive answer, Adiga suggests then that morality is a fluid and unfixed concept.

The India described by Balram is in the throes of a major transformation, heralded in part by the advent of globalization. India finds itself at the crossroads of developments in the fields of technology and outsourcing, as the nation adapts to address the needs of a global economy. Balram recognizes and hopes to ride this wave of the future with his White Tiger Technology Drivers business in Bangalore, but this force of globalization has a darker component for him as well. It threatens and disenfranchises those adhering to a traditional way of life, such as his family in Laxmangarh. Hence, he must change who he is in order to compete in this new world. Adiga thus vividly conjures the tension between the old and new India, suggesting that succeeding in this world (as Balram does) requires a spell of ethical and personal compromises.

The White Tiger is a social commentary on the effects of the yawning gap between the wealthy and the poor in India. This large gap creates instability that often leads to morality being compromised for individual gain. The poor are so desperate that they are willing to do almost anything to make it out of poverty. At the same time, the rich are so far removed from the plight

of the poor that they become desensitized and corrupt. The point of view from which the story is told, the use of humor, the patterns of imagery, and the end of the novel emphasize the disparity in wealth and the immorality that ensues.

Through Balram's account of his own "rags to riches" story, readers learn about unlawful activities at the top and the bottom. When Balram goes back to his village to visit his family, he complains bitterly about his family, who exploited his father for his paltry salary until his death. Balram justifies the school teacher who steals the food and uniforms provided by the government to the village school children: "The teacher had a legitimate excuse to steal the money—he said he hadn't been paid his salary in six months. He was going to undertake a Gandhian protest to retrieve his missing wages...Yet he was terrified of losing his job, because though the pay of any government job in India is poor, the incidental advantages are numerous..." (Adiga 28). This teacher is so desperate that he is driven to stealing from people just as poor or poorer than himself. As someone who is equally desperate, Balram very well understands this.

However, the new social structure promises the possibility of social mobility, but actually only offers two social divisions: the rich and the poor. The poor are kept in an eternal state of subservience and servitude to the rich by the mechanism that Balram dubs "The Rooster Coop." However, they are now more unhappy because there is a possibility of social mobility that nevertheless remains out of their grasp. Balram ultimately finds a way to break from the Rooster Coop, but it requires him to compromise his ethics and personality -- he has to kill his master and betray his family. That social mobility is a specter captured only through such difficult means is a comment on the unfortunate reality of a world built more on limitations than possibility.

Balram's feelings about the rich are conflicted. Balram's perspective as a servant to the wealthy engenders hatred for his masters, who are corrupt and arrogant. Balram's chauffeuring job brings him in close contact with his master's everyday activities, which include bribing politicians and paying large sums of money for prostitutes. While their masters sleep in huge mansions with ample servants, the servants themselves sleep in basement rooms infested with cockroaches. The rich are so far removed from the situation of the poor that they no longer even think of the poor as human. Balram's position in society, a personal servant to a wealthy man, allows him to

uncover the immorality of the rich. The personal account of Balram makes the immoral choices of both the rich and the poor seem more understandable; they are the outcome of disparity in wealth, not innate human evil.

It's a thrilling ride through a rising global power; a place where, we learn, the brutality of the modern city is compounded by that of age-old tradition. "In the old days there were one thousand castes and destinies in India," says Balram. "These days there are two castes: Men with Big Bellies, and Men with Small Bellies." (*The Independent*, 11 May 2008)

This is largely a story of self-fashioning, as Balram undergoes a transformative journey to construct his own identity. Inspired by his childhood hero, Vijay, who also rose from a humble background to achieve success in the upper echelons of Indian society, Balram dedicates himself to self-improvement, so much so that he is willing to destroy who he once was. He sees identity as fluid and malleable, a fact articulated through the many name changes he employs throughout the story. Ultimately, he even chooses a new identity for himself in imitation of his master, calling himself Ashok Sharma. In order to break free and live the life of a successful entrepreneur in Bangalore, a city representing a New India, Balram must sacrifice his family. This conundrum seems to suggest that in order to thrive in the modern world and embrace the potentials of a New India, this traditional attachment to the family must be relinquished in favor of a newfound emphasis on individualism.

One night, a drunk Pinky Madam insisted on driving the car, and she accidentally killed a child in a hit-and-run. The next morning, the Mongoose arrived and announced that Balram would confess to the crime, and serve jail term on Pinky Madam's behalf. Balram was terrified by the prospect of going to jail, but was relieved when the Stork arrived and casually mentioned that they got the case lifted through their police connections. During this time, Balram's political consciousness grows more intense, and his resentment towards the upper class more violent. Much of the novel traces his growth from a meek peasant to an inflamed individual capable of murder in pursuit of his own success.

At the same time, Balram's perspective is one of yearning to live the life of the rich. Balram makes clear to the reader how much servants long for a way out of poverty, yet cannot find it. This desperation leads Balram himself to cheat his master by siphoning off gas from the car,

taking the car to corrupt mechanics who overcharge and then split the extra with the chauffeur, and using the car as a taxi on the side when the master is away.

Adiga uses dark humor frequently in *The White Tiger* to emphasize the immorality of the rich and the poor. Balram gives many satirical accounts of immorality he encounters. He describes the voting fraud: “Balram is a vanished man, a fugitive, someone whose whereabouts are unknown to the police, right? Ha! The police know exactly where to find me. They will find me dutifully voting on election day at the voting booth...I am India’s most faithful voter, and I still have not seen the inside of a voting booth” (Adiga 86). Balram mocks the rich for their extravagance and corruption, but also mocks his fellow members of the servant class for their own cruelty. When Balram goes home to visit his family, they chastise him for not sending enough money home. Balram says sarcastically, “For the first time I can remember, I got more attention than the water buffalo” (Adiga 72). Humor shows the many immoral choices the rich and the poor make due to their situation. After all, it is bad things that are funny, not good things.

The humor in the novel also emphasizes how much Balram relies on humor as a coping mechanism, both to cope with the effects of the immoral choices of the rich on him and with having to make immoral choices himself. Balram procures his job as chauffeur to Mr. Ashok by revealing that Mr. Ashok’s former driver, Ram Persad, is actually Muslim. When Balram tells Mr. Ashok about Ram Persad’s true identity, Ram Persad is immediately fired and Balram gets Ram Persad’s job. Though Balram admits he has felt bad, he has been so desperate for a job, finding no other way out.

The poor of India are often referred to as roosters in a rooster coop. The poor are kept in poverty despite their desperation to have a higher standard of living because to break out of the rooster coop would involve acting very immorally. Balram says, “Can a man a man break out of the coop? What if one day, for instance, a driver took his employer’s money and ran...Only a man who is prepared to see his family destroyed—hunted, beaten...can break out of the coop” (Adiga 150). The metaphor of the Rooster Coop emphasizes how immorality is encouraged through the large gap between the rich and the poor. The only way to break from this rooster coop is being a white tiger as Balram is. He needs to know that his family will suffer when revolting the normal way of living and desiring more than being a slave for richer people.

The end of *The White Tiger* emphasizes the immorality that results from vast disparity in wealth but also hints that things will improve. Balram murders, steals, and sacrifices his family to break out of the servant class. He also bribes the police to help him set up his new chauffeuring business for call center workers in Bangalore. In many ways Balram acts just like his former master Mr. Ashok as symbolized by Balram taking the name “Ashok” when he moves to Bangalore. However, Balram changes when he moves to Bangalore and becomes a member of the upper class himself. When one of Balram’s drivers, Mohammad Asif, accidentally kills a poor young boy while driving, Balram calls the police. The police then clear Mohammad Asif of any charges because of Balram’s bribes, but Balram himself assumes responsibility for the accident and goes to the family of the boy. He offers them money and a job for their older son at his company. Though Balram participates in corruption and certainly sets up his company immorally, he tries to compensate the family of the boy and assumes responsibility for the accident. Balram also says, “Once I was a driver to a master, but now I am a master of drivers. I don’t treat them like servants—I don’t slap, or bully, or mock anyone. I don’t insult any of them by calling them my ‘family,’ either. They’re my employees, I’m their boss, that’s all” (Adiga 259). Though the ending is not a perfectly happy ending, it seems hopeful. Balram makes it out of poverty, but he does not become desensitized and distanced from where he came from, and this allows him to act morally more often. He says, “Now, despite my amazing success story, I don’t want to lose contact with the places where I got my real education in life” (Adiga 259).

The difference between the rich and the poor, Balram explains, is that the poor have no choice but to be immoral while the rich do have a choice. “Allow me to illustrate the differences between Bangalore and Laxmangarh. Understand...it is not as if you come to Bangalore and find that everyone is moral and upright here. This city has its share of thugs and politicians. It’s just that here, if a man wants to be good, he can be good. In Laxmangarh, he doesn’t even have this choice” (Adiga 262). In the future, Balram says Bangalore “might turn out to be a decent city where humans can live like humans and animals can live like animals” (Adiga 273). The last lines of the novel accentuate again the justification of immorality through desperation. Balram says “I’ll never say I made a mistake that night in Delhi when I slit my master’s throat...It was worthwhile to know, just for a day, just for an hour, just for a minute, what it means not to be a servant” (Adiga 276).

Adiga's novel is a darkly humorous social commentary on modern India. In his novel, Adiga shows how a large disparity in wealth can move people to make immoral choices whether they are wealthy or poor. However, the novel ends on an optimistic note, with Balram both making it out of poverty and being able to make more moral choices. As Balram would say, ha! Balram was born into the extreme poverty of a rural Indian village where there are "glistening lines of sewage" in the streets (Adiga 36). Through his job as a chauffeur to a rich man living in New Delhi, Balram is exposed both to extreme poverty and to fantastic wealth. Balram's unique perspective uncovers immorality in the servant class as well as the master class. He believes that immorality is justified at least somewhat by desperation as a result of poverty, and because the novel is written first person, the novel promotes Balram's position.

The compartment in Bangalore, where Balram flees after murdering Ashok, is aligned to standard western country society. He sees murdering his master as an "entrepreneurial" act. Old moral standards don't count anymore and money seems to reign the city. This gets evident while Balram speaks of corruption in city life. The aspect of light and darkness gets reflected in the education as well. People living in the light get well educated, and well educated people can easily keep living in light whereas poor persons have no chance of good education. Because of this lack of schooling most of the poor people stay poor and have no big chance for well-paid jobs.

Balram admits that he has been a "half-baked" servant for much of his life, a man with little education forced to make his way in any manner he can. Balram decides to put his ideas to work and become an entrepreneur, which is a growing opportunity for people in new India. But his past comes back to haunt him; Balram reveals that he is wanted for questioning in the murder of Mr. Ashok, his former employer, whom he did murder. When the authorities release Balram's information, they are looking for Munna, the blackish son of Vickram Halwai, a rickshaw puller. Balram claims that his family named him Munna (Hindi for "boy") because they had no time to care about the naming of a child. His teacher, Mr. Krishna, gives him the name Balram (the name of Lord Krishna's sidekick). With his new identity, Balram begins to see India with new eyes.

We see that postcolonial thoughts continue to perpetuate hierarchies in contemporary India. Modernity, in turn, has a strong relation to colonialism and capitalism. But this modernity is accessed or understood differently by different sections of Indian society, torn by caste and creed. Balram keeps his eyes and ears open and learns the inner mechanisms of this upper-class society. He harbours in his heart a deep desire to scale higher up the social ladder. But in following his dream, he disrupts the structure of traditional Indian values, familial morality and social ethics. Complications arose during post-independence period of transformation and upheaval amidst hot debate on tradition and modernity in India. At the end of the novel, we also find that in the long run modernity and tradition can't go in a parallel way but they are destined to collide. What ultimately we are left with is a tumultuous social condition, rife with the struggle of potent forces of modernization and the much-obsessed Indian traditional values.

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The Space of Subaltern India Women: A Study on Mahasweta Devi's Three Stories

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Mahasweta Devi has been a prominent figure in Bangla Literature. Often considered to be a spokesperson of tribal and dalit communities, she is also concerned with the peripheral existence of women of Bengal within social, political and economic nexus. Woman has always been dominated by man, be it in matters of socio-economic autonomy or cultural rights. She is victim of a wicked sexual politics driving her to the verge of subsistence. Simon de Beauvoir wrote in the introduction to her famous book *The Second Sex*, “She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other.” Woman is the “Other”, that is, she does not have primacy in society, politics, culture, and not even on her own self. The value of woman is judged in accordance with men – woman only makes sense when placed against man. Woman is traditionally considered to be inferior to man; she is emotional, unintelligent, vulnerable and in need of man. Woman is customarily taught to find her fulfillment in relation with man where she is but slave to his desires.

However, it is a mistake to judge Indian women wholly with the parameters of Western feminism, because India is socially, politically and culturally quite different from the West. India had been under the British rule for a long time which left a deep impact on the socio-political fabric of the country. The struggle for India's Independence is held to be essentially elite achievement. The tribals, dalits, peasants are absent in pre- and post-Independence Indian historiography although these groups had considerable roles in resisting the British rule. What is most ironic is that almost no attempt was perceived from the part of the national rulers of Independent India to improve the socioeconomic condition of the tribals and dalits. Drawing on the arguments put forward by thinkers such as Ranajit Guha and Kanchallaiah, Ania Loomba

maintains that the new elite of India acquired and continued the legacy of the colonizers in subduing the subaltern classes who remain forever excluded from “mainstream” India. The tribal people who are believed to be the real natives of this country are now among the most deprived classes. Poor, uneducated, neglected and exploited, the tribals live in the periphery of Indian society whose story Mahasweta Devi tells with her authentic craftsmanship. Jennifer Wenzel writes, “while both her fiction and her journalism document the desperation of landlessness and bonded labor, Mahasweta is also sensitive to the long-standing cultural and social conflicts in Indian society, exacerbated rather than resolved after Independence, that are among the causes of current desperation; Mahasweta has long been critical of “mainstream” India’s benign neglect of its adivasis, or indigenous peoples”(128). The tribals are not only deprived of the minimal requirements of life but silenced in the discourse of Indian sociopolitical mainstream. The condition of tribal and dalit women is more pathetic because they are marginalized on several grounds – due to their proletariat class-status, or “lower” caste, socioeconomic dispossession, lack of education, and above all, their gender. The three stories of Mahasweta Devi – “Draupadi”, “Shikār” (Hunt) and “Bayān” – reflect the wretched condition of subaltern women who are pushed to the margin of society.

Mahasweta Devi’s stories deal with the lower stratum of life in Bengal the most prominent being tribal and dalitwomen. Her stories bear the mark of her acute sensibility to history because she feels that a historical sense is essential for Literature. Literature, according to her, should not be judged on the basis of its linguistic and formal qualities but by contextualizing it within the ambit of history which gives it solidarity. Her famous story “Draupadi” manifests the oppression on the tribal Santali community through the persona of Dopdi Mejhen, who resembles the Draupadi of *Mahabharata* bearing the brunt of oppression of men around her. The deprivation of the tribals of their rights and uprooting of them from their native habitants build an important theme in Mahasweta Devi’s writing. “Tribal history”, she says in an interview, “is not seen as a continuity in Indian historiography. [...] Yet it is still continuing, the tribals are still being evicted from their land” (xi).

The right of the tribals on land and forest has always been strongly argued by Mahasweta Devi. In an article on Mahasweta Devi, MaliniBhattacharjee wrote: “There are few writers of her stature today in whose career creative writing and activism have been so closely intertwined”

(1003). Mahasweta Devi has been actively engaged with a number of tribal and peasant rights movements. Her stay in Palamau during the 1960s, her participation in Tebhāgā Āndolan, her strong argument for the relative autonomy of the tribal people of various parts in West Bengal (especially Medinipur and Purulia) and the undivided Bihar can be read alongside her fiction where the marginal people are the protagonists. Working politically with the tribal people, Mahasweta Devi understands the people's attachment to forest, the pangs of their uprooting from their forest dwellings, and their deprivation of human rights. The context recurs in many of her novels, like *Chotti Munda O Tar Tir* (Chotti Munda and His Arrow) and *Aranyer Adhikār* (The Right of Forest), as well as short stories.

In "Draupadi", the story is set in a realistically delineated forest background somewhere at a sylvan setting (around the forest Jharkhani) in Southern Bengal. Dopdi is a tribal guerilla fighting for the rights of the Santali people in the forest area. Along with her husband Dulna Majhi, Dopdi led an angry tribal mob against the oppression of an exploitative landlord who makes them almost poorly-paid slaves. They are fighting for their rights on land and forest, and not driven by some pointless vendetta. The landlords are, however, always successful in gaining the confidence of State-power in their scheme of exploiting the tribals. Dopdi, along with her husband and other people of their community, killed the oppressive landlord Surjya Sau – who denied to give the poor people even a drop of water during draught – and fell on the wrath of the State's police force which are (in) famous for "knauter", that is, fake encounter.

Dopdi escapes from her dwelling and takes the course of the forest. As she walks, she thinks of her fate if she is caught, the betrayal of two Santalis who were the cause of attack on the rebellious Santalis and the killing of Dopdi's husband. Dopdi is traced within the forest, and she is bought to the nearby police station "apprehended" where almost all the constables gang-rape her throughout the night. Yet Dopdi is not a woman to surrender to the satanic torture but stands to the cause of rebellion of the Santals for their land and minimum human rights. When she is called by the "Senānāyak" (Army Officer) in the morning, Dopdi refuses to wear a sari by howling: "You asked them to make me up, won't you see how they made me?" (39). She shouts at him to "knauter" her because the police are not man enough – they can only torture and kill the tribals in fake encounter. This audacity of Dopdi perplexes the Senānāyak whose sense of pride is challenged by the simple but brave tribal woman. He is frightened out of the unexpected

behavior of Dopdi who shows him the numerous signs of oppression all over her body. The gang-raped, mutilated body of the tribal lady is the mirror in which the Senānāyak sees the reflection of his own filthy nature, and as Dopdi comes close to him, the sight becomes too horrible for him to tolerate. Unlike the disrobing of Draupadi in the *Mahabharata* where Lord Krishna saved her honour, the tribal Dopdi finds no such divine agency to her side. This is the sardonic reality of India whose futile promise of an integrated nation, equality and justice are fully exposed in this story.

“Shikār” (Hunt) is another story which expresses genuine concern of Mahasweta Devi for the tribal people. The central character in this story is Mary Oraon who was born as a consequence of her mother’s seduction by a foppish Australian Sabib. Immediately after impregnating Vikhni (Mary’s mother), the Sahib sold his property at Kuruda and went forever back to Australia. Mary, now a youthful maiden, works at the house of the present owner of the property, Prasadji. Mary is white in complexion, and as such, she is neither a Memsahib, nor acceptable in the Oraon community as truly tribal. Herein lies the identity crisis of Mary. Out of her resentment to her unseen father, Mary built around herself an impenetrable wall. Any man, who shows interest to get close to her, receives the threat of her dagger. Although conscious of her community’s problem, she has opposed its orthodoxy by selecting to marry Jalim, a Muslim guy, who is hard-working and honest like her.

The story reveals the exploitation of the Oraon people when a contractor, Tehsildar Singh, comes to forest-area of Kuruda and offers Prasadji to sell the latter’s shāl trees which the Sahibs planted. Tehsildar employs the Oraons of the village to cut trees at a low wage. The tribal people, who are innocent and very poor, agree to work at the low wage and at the lure of alcohol. It is Mary who makes them aware of their exploitation although the elders do not protest because of their poverty and voicelessness. Mary is concerned of the forests of Kuruda which provide the livelihood of the tribal peoples in many ways. The tribal right of forest, as is argued more prominently in “Draupadi”, has always been a serious issue in Mahasweta Devi’s writing. Jennifer Wenzel notes the genesis of the writer’s interest in forest as a part of the continuum of Indian society and literature since the time of the *Vedas* (“Āranyak” being the most relevant part) which is profoundly indebted to and interested in forest. Mary, in “Shikār,” is such a forest-wandering maiden who loves the forest much. Out of her love of forest, and her sense of

deception, she is intolerant to Tehsildar who has planned to deforest the region for his own business. Tehsildar's lust for Mary is analogous to his lust for the shāl trees which would earn him huge profit. But Mary is a strong and determined lady –the “Sahib-blooded Oraon”– who resists Tehsildar's lust for her by threatening him with dagger everytime he treads her path.

Unlike common Oraon woman, Mary is not submissive, naïve and easily exploitable. She resembles Dopdi Mejhenin resisting the oppression and exploitation of her people by wealthy landlords and mahajans. At the night of the women's hunting ceremony, Mary plans a “big hunt” by laying a trap for the voluptuous Tehsildar. She invites him to meet her at the heart of the forest at the dead of night. Tehsildar goes there following his sensuous instinct only to meet his end at the blows of Mary's dagger. After killing the “beast”, Mary takes a bath in the nearby streamlet like she is reincarnated as a new woman free from the clutches of Tehsildar, the personification of economic and sexual exploiter of the miserable Oraons. As she walks away from the forest at dawn to meet her beloved Jamal, she thinks of going away from Kuruda together by train. This walk is a symbolic journey of Mary from the threat of economic and gendered enslavement to her newly-acquired emancipation.

Mahasweta Devi places the dalits in equal footing with the tribals as both are exploited and repressed by the upper-class and higher-caste people. “Bāyen” is a deeply humanitarian story in which a dalit woman is considered to be possessed by evil spirits so that she became a “bāyen” (roughly translated as “witch”). She is a Dome, an outcaste within the “Varna Hindu” community, whose work is to bury dead children. In the story the protagonist Chandi was happily married to Malindar until the villagers identified her to be a bāyen. The traditional profession of the Dome community is to take care of the “smasān” (cremation ground). They call themselves “Gangaputras” who are believed to be the successors of the mythical king Harishchandra. Their forefathers pride themselves of having the right on every smasān in the world. After the death of her father, Chandi took up the ancestral job of burying dead children. But her motherhood (after she gave birth to a son, Bhagirath) made her avert from continuing the unhappy job. But when she said, “You find out some other person, I don't like this job” (87), the villagers hardly paid any heed to her appeal. Chandi belongs to the dalit class who are bound to continue their filthy jobs no matter whether they like it or not. Malindar gets a job in the

Government morgue where he earns some extra money by making skeletons of unidentified dead bodies.

Mahasweta Devi condemns the higher-caste Hindu villagers who are at once superstitious and tyrannical. They declared Chandi a *bāyen* and condemned her to live away from the village in a solitary hut beside the rail-line. Chandi is marginalized within the marginalized community because of her gender. Mahasweta Devi exposes the irony that it is none but the poor villagers who exploit Chandi in their turn by making her a scapegoat. Yet it is the same *bāyen* who is full of concern for her son from whom she was forcibly separated. She forbids Bhagirath to go near her or look into her eyes lest her evil impact brings doom on him. But Bhagirath goes to school, and as he comes in contact with education, he begins to question the reality of her mother who is now considered to be a *bāyen*. The superstitious beliefs destroyed Chandi's life, or perhaps it is not the villagers who are to be condemned, but the poor socio-economic condition of the villagers who are denied proper education. The villagers are not aware of the Constitution of India which, as Bhagirath comes to know in his school, condemns and abolishes untouchability: "He came to know that there is something called the Constitution of India, where a fundamental right is distinctly written at the very beginning: we are all EQUAL" (84). But the discriminatory behaviour of the villagers, and even the school-teachers, is never eliminated who consciously maintain a distance with the Domes.

"*Bāyen*" also shows the sexual politics prevalent in rural India by highlighting the oppression on a woman belonging to the lower rank of society. A man never becomes a *bāyen*, but it is always a woman. When Malindar is asked by the villagers to see how Chandi adores a dead child in its grave he goes to see her and confirms her as a *bāyen*. This fact showcases the gender-bias of dalit community which too is not free from the age-old patriarchal mindset. People do not care about how Chandi would live alone without proper food and security. Chandi is an "other" within the "other" community which does not give her the scope of self-justification. And yet, ironically, it is the same *bāyen* who comes out to be a protector of people by saving a whole train from accident. Some villagers conspired to rob the parcel-train by placing bunches of bamboo tree on the track. Chandi discovers this plot and sacrifices her life in saving the train and its passengers. Chandi proves with her life that she was not *bāyen*, but the villagers were devils. Chandi's sacrifice earns her a posthumous Government award. Amid the gathering of the

villagers, Bhagirath, who was separated from his mother, embraces the dead bāyen as his mother. This act perhaps brings enlightenment to the oppressive villagers who could not value the dalit woman during her lifetime. Now they accept Chandi as one of them: “The people of the society looked at each other; some itched their neck, looked down at the soil, and said, ‘Yes, she was our relative’” (93).

Although Mahasweta Devi never calls herself a “feminist”, her interest in women’s causes, especially those who live at the periphery of society, is evident in the three stories discussed above. Her project is to bring into light the excluded “subject” in postcolonial nation – the subaltern Indian woman – who is repressed not only by the hegemonic colonial and elitist postcolonial discourses but also by the project of patriarchy. The dual working of racism and sexism attempts to make her voice completely silenced. Gayatri Spivak “challenges a simple division between colonisers and colonised by inserting the ‘brown woman’ as a category oppressed by both. Elite native men may have found a way to ‘speak’, but, she suggests, for those further down the hierarchy, self-representation was not a possibility” (Loomba 195). But Mahasweta Devi seems to challenge the position of her most devoted reader and translator (Spivak) in providing the voice of resistance to her female protagonists. There is oppositional enterprise in the stories of Mahasweta Devi, but however brutal be its course, there is a thin ray of hope even if sought at the risk of destruction of those who oppose the dominant. This optimism alludes to the writer’s Leftist belief in political activity that change is possible and that justice is not absolutely unattainable. Mary Oraon kills the exploiter and sets her journey for a new life; Chandi dies, but her death illuminates the villagers; Dopdi uses the weapon of her mutilated body to terrify the Senānāyak. It is on this activist terrain that Mahasweta Devi’s status as a writer struggling for the rights of the downtrodden people finds its fulfillment.

N.B. – The quotations from Mahasweta Devi’s texts have been translated by the author of this article.

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Culture & Ethics - A Perspective on Indian Business Values

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“Without ethics, man has no future. This is to say, mankind without them cannot be itself. Ethics determine choices and actions and suggest difficult priorities.”

Introduction:-

Indians are generally accommodating and will make great efforts to adapt to the cultural preferences of expatriates. This is not to say that expatriates will not need to adapt their work and communication styles in order to succeed. Expatriates doing business in India have often remarked on the following cultural influences.

1. Value of personal relationships :-

In Indian society and business, trust is established more through personal relationships and connections than through legal contracts or a company's reputation. As a result it is very difficult to establish a strong business relationship without first forming a personal relationship. Sharing information about your family, engaging in discussions about personal hobbies and interests, and spending time with your Indian partner out of the office will build the necessary relational capital and trust to sustain the relationship when business demands and negotiations heat up.

2. Indirect communication style:-

A hallmark of Indian communication is the desire to maintain harmony in relationships. Although many have adapted to the direct style of their western business partners, most Indians prefer to communicate bad news in an indirect manner. This is especially true when communicating with a superior or with a client. Expatriates unused to indirect communication will often misunderstand their Indian counterparts by failing to read between the lines. For example, Indians will rarely express a negative response by directly saying “no”. Responses such as, “yes, but it will be a bit difficult,” or, “that may be possible – what do you think?” are more common and should be considered the same as a “no”. Asking open-ended questions, inquiring into the potential problems of a proposal, and actively listening for subtle clues are a few tactics which go a long way in avoiding miscommunication.

3. Hierarchy:-

Most Indian organizations are run from the top down. Indians are very astute in negotiating power in business relationships and maintain a fairly rigid hierarchy. This is demonstrated in the Hindi language, which has four forms of addressing someone based on their relative status to you. Status is highly valued in Indian society and those in positions of power are often given greater leeway than the average Indian citizen. Expatriates are encouraged to partner with the highest possible level of an organization and to anticipate delays from both internal and external politics. Expatriates who are able to demonstrate patience when facing bureaucracy and who respect Indian values which differ from their own will discover that almost nothing is impossible in India.

Ethics and culture are two sides of the same coin called moral. Much of our modern financial literature is silent about the moral aspects of doing business. We believe that a financial model that adheres to the feasibility tests is sound and will enrich a society irrespective of its mala-fide side-effects. We force moral acceptance into such models and in retrospect try to prove their authenticity in good times. Our models appeal people at large who are indeed trained to look for an accurate rather than an acceptable result. Ethics is not about finding accuracy or reporting it in the context of an established framework. Nor is it a justification of your integrity to an outsider.

It is a reflection of our morals which we hold for ourselves. If there is one prominent reason why the East stood this test of time during days of financial turbulence that reason lies in its ability to reflect and introspect. It is this unique culture of self-evaluation that makes people in east and India in particular less prone to actions that expose common public to severe risks.

The moral resilience of a country comes from its deep rooted ideology towards personal and social welfare. Culture that embeds values for reciprocities is self-sustaining. Wealth that is aimed at expansion of limited number of individuals or groups success diverts money towards narrow goals. These eventually become counterproductive to growth. You may look into the history of corporate developments and find that organizations which did not divert their resources from larger goal of success for many towards that of few, have actually survived the odds. Ones that were narrowly shaped to squeeze benefits for select few have vanished. Ethics does not always means sustenance because what is moral today may soon turn out to be an unethical act of tomorrow. Sum of parts is greater than the whole when we sit back to measure long term impacts of our actions.

Let's look at case in point from the apex bank of India. The RBI is conventionally know as an institution which has been following conservative banking for the nation which itself is on a growth track. This belief became more prominent when the RBI declined to relax credit policies in the wake of global exuberance in financial markets. So also it was criticized by private players in the banking industry to have shied away from opening up of the credit derivatives market. This was seen by many as underutilization of India's Strengths as a savings driven economy which would have empowered the investors with Complex products in their hands. To the surprise of critics this denial worked exactly in the favor of the nation. The vision of conservative architects who were at the helm of affairs proved to be benign. There were compliments for this approach and there was a steady march towards recovery from indirect effects of global financial turbulence. We all have seen how India is poised for a double digit growth keeping this sound foundation of its fundamental values towards equity and welfare. No wonder the collapses in the west have triggered interest and evoked respect for these values.

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The Measurement of Time as in SreemadBhagabatam

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Abstract

Long ago, more than three thousand years before Christ, the famous ShreemadBhagabatam reports on a classification and unit of time that surprisingly matches with our present day usage to a very large extent. Not only that, times much smaller than our unit 'second' of today was in use. This article attempts a comparative study between the two.

The Text & Discussion

Our discussions begin with a quotation from the famous sage Maitreya[1]:

CharamahsadwisheShanaamanekahasangjutahsada |

ParamaNuhsavijneyahnriNaamOikyavramahjatah | |

Meaning that [2]

The ultimate building block, which is indivisible and the fundamental constituent of matter, is called the "ParamaaNu" or 'atom'. It always exists as an invisible identity, even after the dissolution of all forms. The material body is a combination of such atoms, but it is misunderstood by the common man. Matter consists of the most fundamental particle called 'ParamaaNu'. This is something that modern day science also says. From Dalton's Atomic Theory we get the same picture.

But today we know that atoms are not indivisible. They have an underlying structure. Nevertheless, for our usual everyday world the basic fundamental nature remains the same as stated in the 'SIOka'.

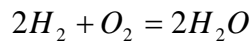
ShreemadBhagabatam moves on to describe the fundamental nature of 'ParamaaNu' as a particle. It is said that there are times when they do not combine, but it is these 'ParamaaNu's which combine or add up to form the variety of existing matter [3]:

Sataebapadaarthasyaswarupabasthitasyajat |

Kaibalyangparamamahaanabishe Shahnirantarahl |

This is exactly what modern science echoes. We know that atoms combine to form molecules. For the elements similar atoms combine to form molecules of that element like $H + H = H_2$

Again different atoms combine to form molecules of compounds like



This is what ShreemadBhagabatam says.

Time is defined in ShreemadBhagabatam following the movement of the atomic combination of bodies [4]. In the remaining part of the SIOka, the potency of the Omnipresent Almighty is stated.

Ebong Kalahapianumitahsouxhsmyesthauye cha sattama |

Sangsthaanabhuktyaabhagabaanabyaktahbyaktabhugbibhuh |

The time taken by the sun to cross an atomic dimension is taken to be the atomic time scale [5]. The concept of something called the 'great time' is also stated which is not of interest to us presently.

Sa kalahparamaaNuhbOijahbhungteparamaaNutaam |

SatahabisheShbhugjastusa kala paramahaan |

At this point Shreemad Bhagabatam tries to define [6] the smallest visible dimension. Normally atoms are invisible. But at times we can 'see' a conglomeration of them. If we see light entering through an open window we sometimes see numerous tiny particles streaming upwards. These are actually hex atoms, formed by three double-atoms (molecules) which in turn is made up by two joining atoms. We call these hex atoms as TrasareNu.

ANurdvouparamaaNUsyattrasarenuhtrayahsmrritah |

Jaalarkarashmyabagatahkhamebaanupatannagat ||

These hex atoms or 'trasareNus' tend to combine with one another. The time required to join three 'TrasareNus' is called a 'Truti'. The time equalling hundred 'Trutis' make up a Bedhah and three 'Bedhah' add up to make a 'Laba'. The 'SiOka' says [7]

TrasarenNutrikangvungktejahkaalhsatrutihsrritah |

ShatavaagastubedhahsyaattOihtrivihtulabahsmrritah ||

As far as modern day clocks go, a 'truti' equals $8/13500$ seconds = 5.926×10^{-4} seconds or 0.5926 milliseconds, a 'Bedha' equals $8/135$ seconds = 0.059 seconds and a lava equals $8/45$ seconds = 0.178 seconds [8].

Continuing along the time scale, three Labas add up to make a NimeSha, three NimeShas make a 'KShana', five 'KShanas' give a 'KaaShTha' and fifteen 'KaaShTha' form a 'Laghu' [9].

NimesHahtribalahjneyahaamnaatastetrayahkShaNah |

kShaNaanpanchabiduhkaShThanglaghu ta dashapancha cha ||

Mathematically a 'NimeSha' equals $8/15$ seconds = 0.533 seconds, a 'KShana' equals $8/5$ seconds = 1.6 seconds and a 'KaaShTha' equals 8 seconds and a 'Laghu' is equal to 8 minutes.

Moving on, fifteen 'Loghus' add up to a 'NaDika' or 'DaNda', two 'NaDikas' give a 'Muhurtam', six or seven 'MuhUrrtas' make up a 'Prahar' or one fourth of a day or night [10].

LaghUnibaisamaamnaataadaShapancha cha naaDika |

TedvemuhUrrtahpraharahShaRyamhsaptabanrriNaam | |

In modern language a 'naDika' or 'DaNda' equals half an hour or 30 minutes, a 'Prahara' is equal to 3 hours. The remaining part gives units just as we use today, hence we do not repeat it.

Four 'Prahara's' make up a day, so do a night. Fifteen day-nights give a 'PakSha' or fortnight. Two such fortnights give a month [11].

YaamaahchatvaarahchatvaarahmarrtyanaamahanIubhe |

PakShahpanchadaShaahaaniShuklahkrriShNah cha maanada | |

This goes on to add [12]

TayOhsamucchayOhmasahpitriNangtadaharrniSham |

DvoutabrrituhShaRayanangdakShiNangchOttarangdibi | |

Meaning that two 'PakShas' add up to give a month and that equals a day and a night in 'PitrrilOka'. Two months make up a season and six months for the duration of solar travel in one direction.

Finally it is said that two solar travels in opposite directions form a day and a night for the Gods. This equals a year for humans. The humans live for a hundred years [13].

AyanechaahanIpraahuhbatsarahdvaadashasmrritah |

SangbatsarashatangrriNaangparamaayuhnirUpitam | |

Conclusion

As we saw in the article the ancient text speaks of time with remarkable accuracy. The deep insight into the matters is mind boggling. We as Indians can indeed take pride in our old and rich ocean of knowledge.

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Body, Masculinity, Identity and Advertisement

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Abstract

Television commercials have more to convey than any other media of communication in the present day scenario. As a marketing tool it informs and attracts its viewers. It also functions to build and rebuild our conception about different things and as such discursively contributes to the making and consolidation of ideology. The concept of the male body as used in diverse advertisements is crucial to our understanding of the discourse of masculinity. The question of 'being' and 'becoming' a man is intricately connected with the performance of the body and the pursuit of the muscle. This paper reviews the function of some television advertisements, particularly for men's skin products in defining the masculinist ideal.

Keywords: ADVERTISEMENT, BODY, MASCULINITY, GENDER, IDENTITY

Advertisement, as a form of communication, is now a universal phenomenon and an inseparable part of our daily lives. Newspapers, television channels are now loaded with advertisements or commercials. It has embedded our routine life and thoughts. Since its inception during the flourishing of Industrialism in the 17th and 18th centuries, advertising has been a powerful tool for the proliferation of capitalist goods. Different companies use many different methods to affect our choice and decisions in purchasing specific products. Therefore, as a discursive tool for the capitalist market advertising effectively contributes to the making and consolidation of ideology by transmitting messages to the public. Like anything else, how maleness or masculinity is shown in media texts of advertisements can have the power to build popular conception of masculinity.

By projecting and portraying certain groups of individuals in certain roles, advertisements, like any other literary and non-literary texts, promotes stereotypes. Traditional advertising has, for decades, sexually objectified women and their bodies. While the health drink advertises of Horlicks,

Bournvita and the likes still continue to stereotype women in traditional roles of home-making and child-rearing, there is now an abundance of advertisements that are objectifying men in a similar fashion. The male body is now subjected to various patterns of consumption. It is now in the centre of focus in diverse advertisements ranging from denims to deodorants. In fact, the body has been of great importance in establishing the masculinist ideal right from the days of Greek statuary. In analysing gender in advertising, Susan Bordo argues that men are usually portrayed as virile, muscular and powerful. Their powerful bodies dominate the space in the adverts. In a particular Clinic All Clear Shampoo advert run a few years back, the camera has its focus as much on the body as on the dandruff free hair. In the recent motor bike ad of Mahindra Centuro the masculine body lines of the bike get objectified in the biker's bare bodied image. There are many such ads where the male body dominates the space. This trend of exposing the body is termed as 'Adonis Complex' in current theoretical terminology. The renewed focus on well-built muscled bodies is the result of the same anxiety that women have felt for decades. It relates to a crisis of the masculinist ideal. As women have entered every domain of the so called masculinist orientation from work-force to politics and policy-making, men can no longer enjoy the authoritative (read: patriarchal) roles of the past. Threatened of emasculation in this new environment men strive to prove their manhood by using whatever symbolic props are available like deodorants and fairness creams. Douglas Holt and Craig Thomson refer to this symbolic reaffirmation of manhood as the compensatory consumption thesis in their article "Man-of-Action Heroes: The Pursuit of Heroic Masculinity in Everyday Consumption".

Such socio-economic changes have also given way to 'multiple masculinities' as variants of the culturally superior 'hegemonic masculinity'. This is apparent in the equally flamboyant representation of the metrosexual and the jock. The metrosexual is characterized by smooth features, concern for appearance, show of emotion while the jock is the 'old type' masculine who avoids being soft and is aggressive. By demonstrating his power and strength the jock wins approval of other men and adoration of women. These are connected with different behavioural patterns of the body which in turn relate to the performative aspect of gender. The very constructed nature of gender becomes apparent in the ad for Wild Stone Talc whose tagline goes like a plea: "Wild Stone Talc: Use It in the Interest of Mankind". The ad begins with images of effeminate men and a masculine voice over which derides such gestures as 'wrong'. There is a

man with long hair, a metrosexual man in a parlour and one who cries and expresses joy in an effeminate way. The male body is nevertheless offered as an object of desire. The man, so far using women's talcum powder, makes seductive feminine gestures. However, his muscular body does not quite match with these 'imposed' effeminate movements, thereby underlining the gap between masculinity associated with a well-built body and effeminacy which is 'other' to the masculine body. It aims to essentialize the connection between male body and masculinity.

In another advert for the soap of the same brand a man is tricked by some ladies into getting dirty during a football match with kids. To the expectation of the ladies he goes shirtless. The man in this advertisement is rugged, seductive but not hegemonically masculine. The game is an important trope used here. There is the fascinating strip-tease sort of format: the man gradually gets to expose his body and comes closer to the ladies, playing with water. The background score of "Aise Na mujhe Tum Dekho" adds to the thematic effect of the scene.

Through their participation in the meaning of these adverts men seem to acquire a sense of social control. Through the use of such products people behave in ways that meet expectations of others. Indeed, the stereotypes created by these adverts tend to segregate the non-buyers as 'the other' and put them on the verge of emasculation. Then they are willing to do whatever it takes to be masculine and be accepted by the society. Erikson defines this process as assuming a 'social identity'. He sees identity as a process involving the interaction between the "interior development of the individual personality, understood in terms derived from the Freudian id-ego-superego model, and the growth of a sense of selfhood that comes from participating in society, internalizing its cultural norms, acquiring different statuses and playing different roles".

Advertisements, with so much focus on the gendered function of the body, thus also play on the ideas of 'being' and 'becoming' man. In fact, popular culture is lived through participation. What we buy says more about who we are than any other fact. In the latest television commercials for men's beauty products, a man using a women's beauty cream and other such stuff is prone to emasculation. Only by choosing a proper, men's product he is saved from being feminized. In the advert for the Emami Fair and Handsome Fairness Cream for Men, the man concerned has the muscular body stuff but is not fair enough to be hegemonically masculine and so attract girls. Use of women's fairness cream only makes him feminine in his bodily gestures. Confusion

arises with masculine body in feminine acts. By using the right product for men he consolidates the sex-gender-desire teleology and comes to attract beautiful ladies around him. In using the cream he learns masculinity and in the process becomes a man. Needless to say, this segregation of daily products in two categories of ‘for men’ and ‘for women’ is one of the most common ways that male-female binary is upheld and reinforced in society.

So, the representation of the body in advertisements lends itself easily to discursive analysis. Theorists have spoken at large on the norms and expectations of gender performance. Pierre Bourdieu talks of ‘Habitus’ or the regulation of the body in various cultural fields. Butler speaks of ‘gendered bodies’ that cannot exist outside the cultural conditions of their own materialization. Butler, in fact, draws on Foucault’s theory that as a signifier of maleness, the body speaks to the gender category of Heterosexual men and is located within a political power structure; the body is the surface upon which power operates. So, the various images of masculinity shown on the screen exist to promote not the male body as such but corporate profits. In objectifying the body we also identify with it and rush to the market to impersonate the ideal. This Ideological State Apparatus continues to work on us as it is supposed to do.

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POEMS

Listen to the Rational Beggar

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee

Not a penny.

Even what I have

I do not have many.

They robbed me off

Not my culture,

Nor destiny,

Neither of my testicles.

But myself.

I am missing.

My self is not in myself.

I consist of ours.

They in me, I in them as well.

Do I lost, or unfounded?

I could have served for the nation

I would if I could.

Indeterminacy

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee

Potholes – ultimo

Pitfalls – proximo

Blast furnace – instant.

And the rest,

In the year of our lord.

--glad tidings

Of conflagration.

Will you be good enough to?

I cannot help telling you—

Let me show the penumbra.

We would request you to be so good

As to

Peruse—summon—inquire.

Come on!

Sing your heart out

Violate your pledged words—

Sport with the wordy syringe.

The zenith of a failed system

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee

The zenith of a failed system

Flash across my mind.

The density

Of a civilized wasteland

As yet

On the verge of peril.

A poet's alliteration

Be not a knot.

Even it is no respecter of persons.

What to worry for,

If theism be in a gala mood.

Please don't make it amiss.

Force itself be in a break-neck speed.

-in a fume.

-in its paw.

Set them free.

Make me a go...

The world of the earth

Tanmoy Bhattacharjee

Dwelling on sand and soil.
The earth we name at.
Blowing in and on
Worldly wind we say that.
A world is simply what we create
Depending upon where and whom
We are catering to (the need).
Your room is your world
Provided that is roomy enough.
The globe you come across even
If the wind blows on equal pace.
World of two hearts are complete
If Plato and Shaw reside adjustably.
Let dreams finger at world
If the surgeon can see it and operate.
Dizziness dead on a babyish breath.
Creating a world is actually
Bowling out the spinner-- life.
Hurtle down
Narrow down

Tumble down

--a titanic job indeed.
