*Cover image: S j Fotografy*

# HWÆTHWUGU

2013

A Literary Journal of the Department of English

Jai Hind College, Mumbai

# CLASS OF 2013-14

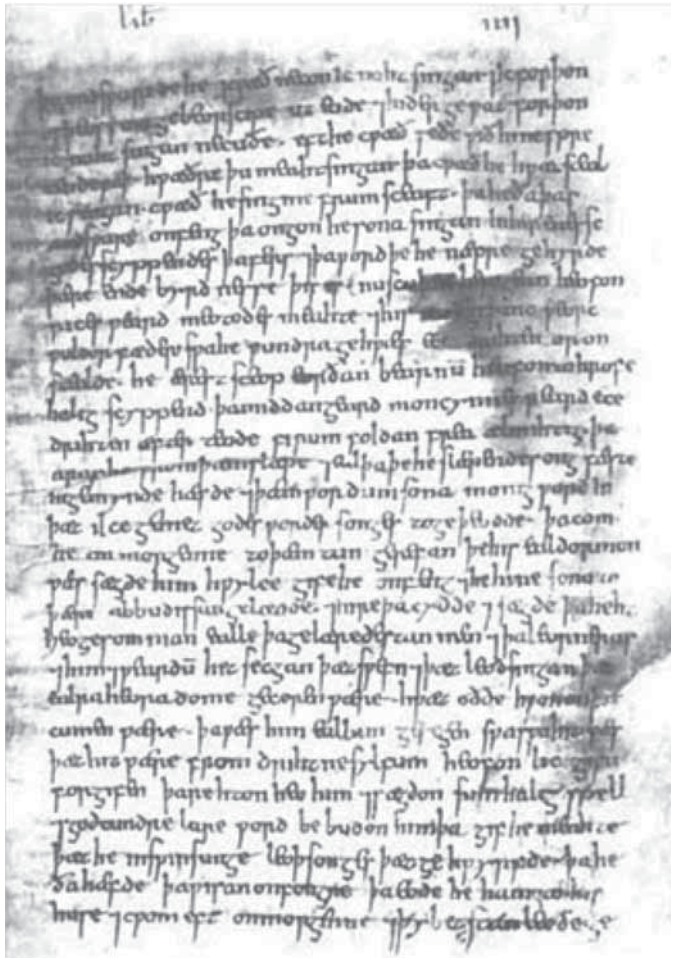
# HWÆTHWUGU

Cædmon, the shy cowherd, left the banquet when he couldn't take his turn singing like everyone else. In his dream, an angel came to him, coaxing him to sing, "Sing me *hwæthwugu!*" said the angel, meaning, in Old English, "Sing me Something!" and coaxed him further. It was the angel's encouragement that resulted in the creation of the first poem in English, Cædmon's Hymn of Creation.

*Hwæthwugu*, or 'something', then, is that indescribable element which can make literature come alive, it is that which can make shy cowherds sing and fill their song with a touch of some mysterious reality, not of this world.

*Hwæthwugu* is that secret element added by every writer, every creator to their work, as they pour a part of themselves into what they write. One sees the writers come alive through their writing, because writing is more than simply words, it is something beyond words ...

*Hwæthwugu*...
it is in the smell of old parchment,
in the yellowing of the pages,
it is the secret of the scent
of books forgotten for many ages...



**Manuscript of Bede's *History of the English Church and People*, showing Cædmon's Hymn, written out in prose as he sang the angel something, and so sang the hymn of *frumsceaft* — Creation)**

# EDITORS

## Editor

Dr. Prachi Khandeparkar

## Creative Editors

Pankti Shah
Shraddha Indulkar

## Assistant Editors

Ms. Divya Bhatnagar
Varun Gwalani
Disha Sanghvi

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# MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

I was told to write a message for the English Association's literary journal *Hwæthwugu*. I was debating with myself about what I should write. Last year, I was interviewed by the students and that gave me freedom to express myself on a given topic. I was told that this year there is no theme for the journal. So I thought of writing about our Jai Hind College, the subject close to my heart. Here are some random thoughts that I have penned down.

In 1981, when I joined Jai Hind College, my subject Microbiology was introduced that year and a few years before that the Commerce branch was started. Over the years they have become integral parts of Jai Hind College. Last few years have seen the introduction of various unaided courses. Many students are attracted towards these courses. The College too has seen many changes. Teachers have moved from blackboards and chalk to whiteboards and markers. Overhead projector was a luxury at one time. Today LCD projector has become a basic necessity, for teachers as well as students and all presentations are only in the form of PPTs. Today Jai Hind has a lot of a/c classrooms.

But these are only superficial changes. Real change will come only when colleges are empowered to decide courses, their combinations and curriculum; when teachers adapt and adopt innovative methods of teaching; when students have the choice to select various subject combinations. This is today's need if our nation has to progress. I hope the day is not far and our students get the benefit of this change. It is said that the only thing which is constant in this world is change. I am looking forward to such positive change and I am sure you too will be wishing for the same.

I must say that the one thing that has not changed in our Jai Hind College is the equation between our teachers and students. For this rapport between them and the congenial relationship, I give equal credit to both of them.

My best wishes for the English Association.

Dr. Ashok Wadia

# MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

W. H Auden once remarked , *"We would rather be ruined, than changed. We would rather die in our dread, than climb the cross of the moment, and let our illusions die."*
Man, from time immemorial, has had a pathological distaste for change, and excessive fondness for the status quo. With the dawn of the techno-savvy 21st century, we are buffeted with change at a frenetic pace. With the onset of ICT, Information and Communication technology, the past six decades or so , have ushered in an era of far reaching changes, which have affected every aspect of our lives. The swiftness of this change, is both daunting and exhilarating; so fast paced, that life seems a blur, and we run the risk of being mere spectators to all that is happening around us.

In the midst of this, if one were to pause for a moment, and ponder, then Mahatma Gandhi, Albert Einstein, Potus Barrack Obama, and the ubiquitous Apple, are never too far from our subconscious perspective.

Albert Einstein said, *"the world as we have created it, is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed, without changing our thinking."* While the high priest of change, Barrack Obama opines, *"change will not come if we wait for some other person, or if we wait for some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for, we are the change we seek…."*

Since it has been my good fortune to spend most of my waking hours with young, vibrant, thinking individuals, I believe Information and Communication technology, is the single most significant aspect, that has brought upon us, changes of a massive scale. It has changed our perspective and how we view lives.

However, especially today, where education is under pressure to accommodate a whole range of new skills, next to the existing ones, we need to see where these new skills fit in, to complement what we already have, rather than throwing out *en masse* the old, time tested practices. Caution and discretion are the need of the hour.
For the Dept of English, its been a year packed with activities, both Academic and Co-curricular.
Our TYBA results were good as usual, with more than 50% of our English Major students, securing first classes.
The English Association has been particularly active, under our dynamic Secretaries Sanaea Bubber and Deeksha Bhushan, and we have a full fledged report inside.

In keeping with my theme of Change, we have a new Editorial Team, headed by Dr. Prachi Khandeparkar, and *Hwæthwugu* has a new look – Way to go!

Dr. Kamal Jadhav

# EDITORIAL

*Subject to Change*—that is how the discipline of English literature was described fifteen years ago, in 1998, by Susie Tharu, the editor of a book by that title. The book anthologized essays by a number of Indian scholars who were busy dismantling the built-in colonialism of the subject of English Literature in the 1980s and 90s and were opening it out to make it a vibrant interdisciplinary field of cultural study. As students of literature today, we are breathing in the same fresh air of change. Writings from German, Russian, Turkish, Swahili, Kannad, Urdu, Tamil—they all find a home on our bookshelves today and we see ourselves more as students of World Literature.

Lest we are swept off our feet by an all-too-dreamy World citizenship, we have scholarship today that spurs us on to rethink, re-negotiate the boundaries of our subject with some real political rigour. On my bookshelf is perched a fresh copy of the recently released 17th volume of the People's Linguistic Survey of India [PLSI] Series, on the languages of Maharashtra. The series is being published under the chief editorship of G.N.Devy and this is but one volume of the fifty formidable volumes covering other regions of India. The contents page of this 700 page volume of PSLI shows me a Maharashtra that I was blind to, in spite of being a Maharashtrian living in Maharashtra for 40 years. The linguistic map that it unfolds to us shows that there are thirteen varieties of Marathi spoken in different parts of the state. Apart from Urdu and Sindhi which, along with Marathi, are languages of the state that are recognized by the 8th Schedule of the Indian Constitution, there are twenty-three tribal languages and nineteen languages of the nomadic communities and two other languages called Dakkhani and Naw Ling that are spoken here! Nearly fifty languages comprise the linguistic map of Maharashtra.

The book also gives us a few linguistic and literary samples of each of these languages with the help of translations. One tribal language spoken by the Katkari tribe is called Katkari. The Katkaris make a living by producing 'kath' (an ingredient used with beetle nut leaf) from the Khair trees in the forest and live in the forests. Katkaris live in Karnatak and Gujrat as well and will tell you that the words from their language that you recognize as Hindi, Gujarati, Sanskrit, Marathi or Kannad words were in fact borrowed originally by all your languages from the Katkari language, which is a much older language. In one of their customs, before disposing of a dead-body, the Katkaris sing a folk song warning their dead fellow tribesman that he should not make the mistake of taking rebirth as anyone except a Katkari:

If you take rebirth as a Brahmin, you will die following useless rituals,
if you take rebirth as a salt-maker, you will die of hard labour,
if you take birth as a shop-keeper, you will die of endless calculations,
if you take birth as an educated man, you will have to write and write till you die;
but if you are reborn as a Katkari, you will live as the King of the forests.

(my translation, from Marathi, of the original Katkari)

I think the implications of such a volume for the postcolonial study of languages and literatures are huge. It is a horizon well beyond our reach yet. To my mind, embracing the kind of creative as well as academic pluralism indirectly advocated in literary studies as a supreme ideal today, is not a naïve universalist exercise. It inevitably nudges us to rethink our entire politics of power and privilege, especially our notions of development. Is our politics a politics of shining, a politics of development at any cost or is it a politics of self-reflexivity and restraint, of receptivity and respect? Is my country going to rise above a cheap nascent nationalism and development-mania and awake 'into that heaven of freedom' that Rabindranath Tagore so lovingly described? These are the big questions we continue to stare at, as modern students of literature, even as Nelson Mandela takes our leave to join Gandhi—two very ingenious practitioners of non-violent defiance of power.

If with great power comes great responsibility, with great abdication of power will come great relaxation, I guess? My all-time favourite quote from a Bertolt Brecht play goes: "Bravery! In a good country such virtues will not be required. We all can be cowards and relax."

Well, at any rate, it certainly looks like it is time for me to relax as I place *Hwæthwugu* in the hands of the readers….

Putting together this issue on behalf of the department has been an immensely enjoyable experience. Teachers of the department too have contributed, and contributed richly, to the publication this time; some of our alumni are listening in and joining us here; and above all, our present students with incredibly bright and sensitive minds have showcased their activities, interests, concerns and have shared with us ideas closest to their hearts. Rohan Kamble, Disha Sanghvi, Naureen Kanthawala, Varun Gwalani, Richa Gupta, Manavi Ranghar, Tarannum Samtani and Jasleen Sachdev deserve special acknowledgement for the quality of mind they bring to the academic community of the college. May their tribe grow! Pankti Shah and Shraddha Indulkar, both were born in a teacher's utopia. I can't cease to wonder at their quiet organized ways, aesthetic sense and ability to tune in effortlessly into my high-frequency wavelength. Divya Bhatnagar, my colleague in the department has been a great help in keeping the magazine work on track. I would especially like to place on record our appreciation of the support and encouragement we received from the Principal of the college Dr. Ashok Wadia and the Head of the Department of English Dr. Kamal Jadhav.

We are very grateful to Mr Arun Keswani the "big" printer, who indulged us by graciously accepting our ridiculously small print order without so much as a laugh. We could hardly believe our luck. How did this happen? Well, we knew how, when he smiled and said those ever-so-musical words: "I was a student of Jai Hind."

Finally, thank you, readers!

Dr. Prachi Khandeparkar

Dr. Prachi Khandeparkar is a former Fellow of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla and her book *Bringing Modernity Home: Marathi Litereary Theory in the Nineteenth Century* is being published by the IIAS.

# ANNUAL REPORT OF THE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

Sanaea Bubber
Deeksha Bhushan

The English Association of Jai Hind College has always tried to do something special every year, something that defines its spirit. This year's calendar too has been chock-a-bloc with activities that helped us explore our creative abilities to the fullest.

We kick-started our year with the Annual Bake & Book Sale of 2013. Gourmands and Book Lovers 2013 was, we are delighted to say, a success! Of course what left us absolutely astounded and overjoyed (as English students) was that a larger part of our crowd drifted toward the books!


The theme for the English Department's Annual Students' Seminar, our second event for the year, is always selected with the goal of balancing what catches our interest, and what is worthy of in-depth analyses. This year, we chose "Heroes & Villains – Over Texts & Time". Following a chronological sequence, the first text studied was the epic 'Ramayana', followed by a paper on a selection of Shakespeare's plays, and John Milton's 'Paradise Lost'. The two final papers of the program were W.M. Thackeray's 'Vanity Fair', and Ian Fleming's 'James Bond'.

The year 2013 also brought with it the English Association's newest event – "Window to Shakespeare". William Shakespeare forms such an important part of literature, but a lot of us find ourselves unfamiliar with his great works. To familiarize the students of Jai Hind College with the legend, we hosted this show that put soliloquies and dialogues from five of Shakespeare's most popular plays on the Jai Hind Stage. The plays represented in this program were Romeo & Juliet, Othello, Merchant of Venice, Taming of the Shrew, and Macbeth. To train the actors, and for the benefit of the students that were inclined toward the performing arts, Mr. Alyque Padamsee hosted a workshop on "How to Fall in Love with Shakespeare" – an experience that left the entire audience of not just drama enthusiasts and Literature majors wanting more, but even

the students who joined us out of mere curiosity.

The crowning jewel of the English Association's agenda of events for the year is the Annual Play that we host in the month of December. This year's play, The Importance of Being Earnest, is our little nod of respect in the direction of the well-loved comedy writer, Oscar Wilde. With a "Comedy of Errors" feel to it, The Importance of Being Earnest is Oscar Wilde's sarcastic view of society and its hypocrisies. A hilarious piece of literature, we hope you enjoy watching it as much as we enjoyed putting it up for you.

As co-secretaries, our journey in putting this year's events together has been one of pushes and pulls and new lessons every day. We learned to work together, bring together teams of people, and wade through the different protocols and procedures that must be followed to ensure that the events go smoothly, and finally, to create the perfect balance between our academics and our co-curricular activities. In conclusion, we would like to thank The

English Department, headed by Dr. Kamal Jadhav and including Dr. Prachi Khandeparkar, Dr. Seema Sharma, Ms. June Dias, and Ms. Divya Bhatnagar, for giving us the opportunity to lead the English Association, and the opportunity to learn many-a-lesson along the way. We are also incredibly grateful for the presence of our wonderful, enthusiastic volunteers, who have had our back, without fail, throughout the year. This year has been an adventure, but making our way through it, we have had more fun than ever before!

**Sanaea Bubber**

Sanaea Bubber, a multifaceted and multi-talented student of the prestigious Jai Hind College is currently in the second year of pursuing her Bachelor of Arts in English.

The animal-lover has been appreciated for her talents in Singing, Drama, Photography, & Organizational Skills and is the Co-Secretary of the English Association at Jai Hind College.

It is her dream to be able to serve children with special needs.

**All EA photographs in this journal are by Sanaea Bubber.**

**Deeksha Bhushan**

Deeksha Bhushan is a Second Year Bachelor of Arts student who hopes to major in English at Jai Hind College. An avid follower of film, literature and history, Deeksha is also the co-secretary of the college's English Association. She loves to write and travel, and has experience as a blog and content writer along with other editorial experience.

# POEMS

# TARANNUM SAMTANI

## A Dramatic Monologue for the Twenty-first Century

What are you looking at? Look at me. Here.
Let me admire your doe-like eyes.
This distance does not help. Come near.
Your sister is waiting? I can't take lies.
I remember you had said, on the eighth
Nina has work downtown. —Come closer. Now.

I know, it's getting dark. I won't let go.
I want the moon to see you, envy me.
You sleep like a baby —of course I know!
I bought the house facing your balcony
That toppled flower pot last night?
That was me.
How dare you get angry? It was just me.

O your skin! Soft and smooth like silk
Your hand fits right in mine! It hurts? Does it?
Is this the bracelet which he had given?
Throw it away! Do what is told. — Throw it!
I can't take my eyes off your face.
Your wrist looks prettier when it is bare.
Smile. Smile.

Don't try to pull away from me, my love.
Why are you crying? I like your weakness.
Stop. Stop. Better. You have no choice. Not now.
I have trampled your flowers. On other nights,
It won't happen again...
I can't see you drenched in blood.
Wait. I'll bring another dress.

# MANVI RANGHAR

## Untitled

Inkdrops stain parched palms
of rusted wrinkled wisdom,
And watery gaze lapped frayed bits of paper
as if t'were sand upon eon's coasted infinity.

Scribbling. Scratching. Stabbing.
Ferociously at the fray.

Almost there.
Never quite.

The distant dog barks.
The man resurfaces.

Remorsed resurrection.
Restraining reality.

## A Haiku

Whistling in the wind
that whistled back
I walked the road that led nowhere.

# Untitled 1

Gyrating to the flurry
Her heart, it cracks, a cut
Penetrating flesh and nerve, spirit and soul

They're all feasting on her
They're all roused; mesmerized,
They're all trapped in her body's trance

And she grinds to the rhythm of a beat
broken
beat.
The edges of her eyeballs steel cages
to the tears of years.
Her breasts sore
her spirit splattered
across a lifetime wasted...

A life dilapidated.
A mind destroyed.

# SANSKRUTI PATIL

## A Song For the Road

I take my keys,
And walk out the door,
My car is ready for me,
So I won't wait anymore.

I start the engine,
And accelerate my dreams,
My life is ready to begin,
I can see my future gleam.

Some cars drive along,
And some pass me by,
The cars in my rear-view mirror,
Tell me, sometimes it's necessary to say goodbye.

My radio plays the background music,
The windshield is not misty anymore,
Even if it's dark or grey,
I will drive along the moonlit shore.

When my journey is over,
I am sure I will be satisfied,
I will call to see where you have reached,
If you managed to hitch-hike a ride.

# DATING A (GIRL) TEACHER

Jasleen Sachdev

*Disclaimer*
READ the article before jumping to furious conclusions and wanting to hunt down the writer to speak about serious consequences of an apparent untraditional and non Indian act of behaviour.

Teachers belong to a completely different class (yes pun intended) of people. They laugh, cry, and work harder than they probably ever thought they could. The only profession, where one steals their home supplies (stationary) to take to work instead of the other way round! A job where they have to do more work if they decide to take a sick leave instead of just suffering through it (lesson plans anyone?). A job, where some days they work to change the world, their eyes sparkling with hope and determination; while the other times, they are simply trying to get through the day.

So, if anyone ever has the advantage of dating a girl who decides to pursue teaching post college, this article is for you – the perfect manual for the road to happiness. Or not.

The teacher has developed certain habits due to hours of teaching kids that will find a way into your social life with her. Don't be surprised if she corrects your grammar or judges your fluency. So, don't flaunt your knowledge of the classics if you haven't read them.

The much dreaded "teacher's voice" may sometimes creep into the conversation, especially during an argument. Don't take it personally. Be prepared to listen to her; and listen to her intently when she speaks excitedly about a child being able to correctly spell "choreography" after a month's efforts or when she feels upset over the poor performance of her students.

Laugh and be her personal cheerleader when she finds the perfect way to turn boring Maths formulae into an interesting rap. Or when using Science jokes at a dinner date is her idea of funny – "I heard that Oxygen and Magnesium were going out and I was like O Mg!"

Offer to carry her bag over loaded with never ending corrections and make her a cup of tea as she scratches her head, trying to decipher the handwriting of her students.

Be patient as she gets lost in the middle of a conversation with you, because a brilliant class activity just made its appearance in her head and she cannot be calm till she doesn't write it down.

Because teaching is not a job to her, which gets over when she comes home; it's a way of life for her. Because as a teacher, she may come to the frightening conclusion that she has the tremendous responsibility to make a child seek further learning or dismiss it. She has the power to affect the long lasting sense of self and faith a child will have in his or her abilities. The nerve wracking understanding that she can influence the dreams, hopes and values of the children she teaches. Furthermore, the belief, that she has the ability to humanize or dehumanize a child.

Date a teacher and you will date someone is who is shaping the future generation.

Yes, your date is super influential and the definition of quirkiness.

# ON BEING A GRANDMOTHER..

Dr. Kamal Jadhav

*Blessed are those who*
*Spoil and snuggle,*
*Hug and hope,*
*Pray and pamper,*
*Boast and brag*
*For they shall be called*
*Grandmothers*

I am being utterly honest when I say, that one of life's greatest joys, is to be called 'grandma!' – not 'sexy,' 'smart' or 'sassy!' When little Aryan, now all of 5, and Rayhan, 2, began to actally articulate that magical word, I was transported to another level of happiness!

For me, this has been a journey, in more ways than one. I plot, plan, scheme, and orchestrate my bi annual trip to the Big Apple, to spend time with my three grand children – little Zara joined the brood, 5 months ago! University exam Moderation, and before that College exam evaluation, submission of marks, all have to be skilfully managed, before that magical date, the first day of the vacation, be it Summer or Diwali! And then its the 16 hour non stop Air India flight that takes me to my little bundles of joy in Manhattan!

Small, seemingly routine everyday happenings, are of much significance and considerable relevance. As I am about to step out to go to the gym, promptly two little escorts emerge out of nowhere, and I am dutifully taken to the door and let out; once the door is shut behind me, the good-byes continue to ring, till I traverse the corridor and enter the elevator. My return is greeted with much passion and enthusiasm; they drop whatever they are doing and rush into my arms, accompanied by "graaandmaa" of different octaves, as they simultaneously check my gym bag for their 'surprise?' The day is set for a bright, sunny start, irrespective of the actual weather outside!

My stay is generously sprinkled with impromptu little tableaux of Super Heroes. Rayhan is partial to Spiderman and it is difficult to separate him from his web spraying glove. The glove does need a wash every now and again, and those moments are challenging, because without the glove, Spiderman is like a toothless tiger, the protagonist being reduced to a state of helplessness! He is distraught, unhappy and deeply concerned, about the fate of Brooklyn bridge and Staten Island ferry crossings, at the hands of the bad guys. To remedy this situation, an emergency call is placed to the NYPD, explaining that Spiderman is currently unable to respond to emergencies, due to mitigating circumstances.

A quick trip to the basement, negotiating through the washing machine and the drier, and the all important glove is well and truly back on Spiderman, who is now ready for business. Mind you, should Spiderman

need an extra boost of energy from 'dunkin' donuts' or 'angry birds' from Gristedes, the grocery shop round the corner, the glove continues to remain firmly in place, while the merchandise is exchanged at the register. The only time the glove leaves little Rayhan's hand, is when it is surreptiously removed when he is fast asleep.

Needless to say , I am well informed on Spiderman heroics. When we are passing the Empire State Building, the older and 'wiser' Aryan, unfailingly, brings to my notice, "Grandma, that is the Empire State Building, and this is where Spiderman carried out that death-defying rescue of that damsel in distress." His animated expression, high pitched voice and furious gesticulation are rivetting! I must confess, that on occasion, I am forced to play the 'damsel' who has been imprisoned by 'the bad guy' (generally Rayhan), while 'the good guy' (Aryan ofcourse) 'rescues' me!

Aryan has now graduated to spending the summer at the Shelby Camp located at Long Island. The camp has been transformational in many ways. He has learnt a whole host of new skills. From participation in games like soccer, Baseball, basketball, swimming amongst other things. New friendships are forged and associations with new sets of parents are formed. After the first weekend of the camp, the lads come home to recoup. The debrief of the goings on of the past week, are riotously hilarious. Whilst the story of the camp is being told to an attentive domestic audience comprising grand mother, parents and the other two siblings, suddenly I am the 'chosen one' on whom to demonstrate a new taekwondo move! Naturally I am nervous and apprehensive. My discomfiture is writ large on my face, and Aryan encourages, "Come on grandma, you can do it." As a lamb to the slaughter, I offer myself for dummy practice, and the jabs come, cautiously and slowly – "It doesn't hurt does it, Grandma?" says the ever solicitous Aryan. As the shadows lengthen, with shower and dinner out of the way, its time for Bedtime stories, which range from Aesop's Fables, to Spiderman, Batman, and Bible stories (on my insistence!)

Once when Aryan was still full of the camp, I was asked to erect a tent. This request had me completely flummoxed, but after a brief pause, I gathered my wits about me, to tackle this seemingly impossible problem. I took refuge in getting hold of the golf umbrella, hastily throwing a sheet over it, with a dog flap to serve as a door, a few rugs and pillows thrown in, with lights switched off outside, and a tiny torch switched on inside, to illuminate the space, and lo and behold, the tent was erected! To my utter relief, this effort met the exacting standards of the campers (Aryan and Rayhan), I had passed the acid test and rose pretty high in their estimation of me. I was over the moon and what followed was three hours of mayhem, the house ringing with sounds of the wild. We were rudely shaken into reality with a stern call from the parents – "Aren't we past bedtime? The two of you, off to bed, Now."

The trip to the Bronx zoo was great fun, though my monumental ignorance of flora and fauna was all too obvious. I had no answers as to why sea-lions do their acts at the behest of their keepers or about the changing colours of the chameleon, amphibian qualities of the polar bears, or for that matter how dolphins understand human talk.

The visit to the apple orchard, with pumpkin picking, and the plucking of luscious apples, straight off the trees from the orchard, was unique, with a tractor ride thrown in, round the unending acreage of the farm. The farm fresh meal on the rustic furniture, was an education, in the rich traditions of American agriculture, and the benefits of organic food.

The picnics on the lawns of Central Park, are perhaps our most enjoyable outings, sometimes with classmates and teachers, or just with family. The hide and seek, chasing the squirrels, or watching the boats zig-zag under the benevolent gaze of Lewis Carrol's *Alice in Wonderland* characters which overlook the artificial lake – all these are engrossing activities, till it is time to stroll back home. On the way, the kids grab Popsicles shaped in contours of the Spiderman mask, complete with red and blue colour scheme. We

troop back, exhausted from the exertion, but the lines of joy remain etched on our faces.

The time to return back to reality, and *amchi* Mumbai is heart wrenching. I pull myself away, and begin the countdown for my next trip to the Big Apple, when Zara will be older, naughtier, and all set to join the fun and mayhem with her older brothers, and I'll have more experiences, and more stories to share!

Till the next vacation.....so long.....

# ELMIRA / AUGUST 2013

## Dr. Seema Sharma

The Seventh International Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies was held at the Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies, Elmira, New York. The conference witnessed the convergence of Twain scholars from all parts of the world to commemorate the sesquicentennial of the pen-name Mark Twain, by which Samuel Langhorne Clemens became famous. The Conference, which was first hosted by Elmira Center in 1989, is a quadrennial affair. It has become a Mecca for Twain scholars and first-timers like me find themselves in a minority.

Elmira has come to be recognized as one of the significant places in the life of Mark Twain. One instantly falls in love with this tranquil upstate New York city situated on both sides of the Chemung River, surrounded by small hills. It had a great importance in Twain's personal life as well as his accomplishments as a writer. It was here that he first met Olivia Langdon in 1868 and married her two years later. Mark Twain spent many summers with his family at Quarry Farm in Elmira, and this constituted the most fruitful period of his writing. In the octagonal study on the farm, gifted to him by his sister-in-law Susan Theodore Crane, he wrote his famous works like The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Prince and the Pauper, A Connecticut Yankee, and many others. The study has now been shifted to the picturesque Elmira College campus. No visitor leaves the city without a photograph of this famous study, which Twain once described as:


It is…a cosy nest, and just room in it for a sofa, table and three or four chairs, and when the storm sweeps down the remote valley, and the lightning flashes behind the hills beyond, and the rain beats on the roof over my head, imagine the luxury of it. It was in at the Woodlawn Cemetery in Elmira that Twain was put to rest in 1910 alongside other members of his family.

Ever after more than a century after his death, Mark Twain occupies an eminent place in American culture and popular imagination. His long-awaited autobiography, published 2010,

topped U.S. bestseller lists. His relevance to 21st century U.S. concerns is suggested by the Time magazine 2008 annual issue, which featured Twain on the cover with a caption "What His Writings can Teach America Today". Though Twain has been hailed as a distinctly "American" author, he enjoys immense popularity outside the U.S. where his works have been widely taught, translated and adapted for stage, films and animations. The transnational popularity of Twain's works was evident at this conference which had participants from all corners of the world. The presentations ranged from aspects of Twain's life, the pedagogical challenges of teaching racially sensitive literature in the classroom, the lesser-known works of Twain like his travelogue Following the Equator (which includes an account of his extensive travels in India in 1896), and how Twain is received and taught outside America.

The conference had a separate panel titled Transnational Readings and Receptions. Scholars from Japan, Hong Kong, India and China observed that Twain's huge transnational success can be attributed to his writings' ability to create a dialogue with a diverse readership on issues of race, social justice, and identity. My paper titled "Mapping the popular Reception of Twain in India" examined the diverse response to Twain's writings in the academic and popular spheres in India. Scholars of Twain in India have claimed that it is Twain's stand on racism and imperialism that finds a resonance with Indian readership. However, in the popular sphere in India Twain is seen primarily as a humorist and children's writer. The various adaptations and translations of his works for juvenile readers have mostly ignored the social satire in his writings reducing his books to tales of boyhood adventures. The paper further argued that sensitive translations of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in Indian languages can socialize young readers into a culture of tolerance through awareness of the deep-seated prejudices against Dalits and African Americans as part of the two nation's history.

The conference keynote was delivered by Peter Kaminsky, an award-winning journalist and former managing editor of National Lampoon. The organizers invited the famous actor Hal Holbrook who has portrayed Twain on stage for six decades. The audiences were also treated to a preview of HOLBROOK/TWAIN, a documentary film on Holbrook's acting career in which he and well-known personalities from different walks of life shared their views on the depth of Twain's writings.

The conference not only provided ample food for thought, it was also a gastronomical delight. The creativity which went into menu planning and layout was unparalleled. With a dinner around the theme "Mark Twain in the West," to Champagne Dessert Reception in elegant tents under open skies, the conference was a foodie's dream. It ended with a memorable barbeque picnic at the Quarry farm with Twain's favorite boyhood dessert- gingerbread and ice cream! After the drinks and dinner, I was surprised that all the participants started climbing up a slope instead of proceeding to the bus waiting to take them back to the campus. As this was my first visit, I was not aware of the ritual that marks the end of the picnic. Everybody marched up to the original site of Twain's study, smoked a cigar in his famous style and sang to the strumming of guitars, as the lights of the city of Elmira twinkled at a distance. For those who were still on a high after the event-filled day, there was a bedtime reading of a story Twain told his daughters. The invite read: Venue - Stephans Lounge Fireplace. Pajamas suggested but not required. Cocoa and cookies provided.

What more could a Twain fan ask for? The next conference will be held at Elmira in 2017.

Do I see a falling star?...

# DON'T SHOOT! WE'RE AMERICAN.

Ms. June Dias

Ma'am, aren't you worried about going out with us? I was asked as I headed out of college with twenty-two students in tow, eagerly looking forward to a movie screening at the American Research Centre. Having been invited by their staff to get my students to the library, I was less apprehensive about taking them out than about the small number that finally accepted the invitation, considering my first estimate of 80 students. Little did I know what lay ahead!

We arrived at Bandra after a short train ride spent getting to know each other better. A convoy of rickshaws ensured that the ride to BKC was quick and painless. And then, it all began.

Even as I got off the last but one rickshaw in front of the American Centre fortress, a guard approached two of the girls, reproaching them for taking a snap of the building from across the road. They duly apologised, having admitted to have read the board prohibiting photography after they reached the gate. The matter, we thought, ended there and we proceeded to get our visitors' passes, joking about their tourist moment as we were slowly but surely allowed to pass the hallowed security check. But, no! The guard was relentless in his pursuit of the 'guilty' girls. He called them aside and made them fill forms stating the offence. All records having been checked, he said they would then have to be taken by the police to the BKC police station to have the police check on the photograph and whether it was a terror threat. Protests that she had not sent the snap to anyone fell on deaf ears. Evidence that it was not whatsapped or e-mailed was made to seem inconsequential. The librarian's pleas that the group was invited and had come from a college of repute paled in comparison with his determination to follow protocol. The man was on a mission.
I was castigated for not warning my students in advance that photography was a big no-no. I had told them that security was tight and they would have to switch off their phones on the premises. Little did I know that Americans owned the Indian soil across the road as well. (Do they?)

So, all three of us were captured (on camera) and taken to a police chowki in their parking lot. The eagerness with which the security personnel was taking the matter up made me wonder what the three of us were in for. Random suspicions of foul-play filled my head and in the wake of the recent cases of gross abuse of authority, news about rapes, murders and molestation, I feared for my students and myself.

From that chowki, we were bundled into a police van and carted off to the BKC police station, the reluctant captors assuring us all the while that a simple 'Sorry' was all that was required to get us off the hook. But mugshots of murderers and rapists lining the inner walls of the van did nothing to make my first trip in a police vehicle a fun ride. At the station, we repeated the same personal details, raising dubious eyebrows at the strange names we admitted to having. (June? Dias?) I was too uneasy about the criminals roaming freely around us to take offence.

They threatened to fine us (12, 500!) and made me wonder how much that photograph would be snapped up for on eBay.

Ultimately, the Superintendent of Police saw the lighter side of the situation and let us go after paying 50 bucks each. The 'receipts', strangely enough, were coupons from National Association for the Blind.

Out on the road again, freedom felt strange. Now, we were faced with the dilemma of rejoining the group back at the American Research Centre or going straight home. For the young 'culprits', it was a no-brainer. Not going back there.... ever! I, on the other hand, had books to return and more students back there who were getting increasingly frantic about us even as the movie was being screened for them in our absence.

So, with disgust and disdain for all things American, I headed back to a place that was beginning to resemble Azkaban.

I got through security effortlessly this time (They only ran my bag through the X-ray machine twice and sniffed suspiciously at my house keys. Now, why would anyone carry metallic things like that?)

My students were agog when they saw me safe and sound. The movie was a side dish now. They were more interested in the main course: "what happened, ma'am?"

So, the next half hour was an incredulous see-sawing between our personal tale of horror and the discussion about the disturbing life story of Tina Turner.

And then, it happened again! Sirens went off and we were ducking for cover. "What's going on?" was written on every one of our faces. It was a drill for an attack. "Here we go again", I thought, as we were unceremoniously locked in the auditorium and asked to crouch in nooks and corners away from the windows.

Tea and biscuits were passed to us as we huddled uncomfortably on the cold floor in small groups. It was the closest I got to my impression of life in times of war.

After that, during the visit to the library, we kept looking over our shoulders, wondering what was on the agenda to spice up this part of our day.

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Nothing. The books were very well-behaved and the librarians were helpful and gracious as ever. We bid the adieu and walked away happy.

I'm sorry I don't have a single photograph of our most memorable co-curricular activity. But, I do have a hangover!

# A MIDSUMMER TERM'S DREAM

Richa Gupta

*'…Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,*
*While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam…*
*…I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed*
*Delighted through the motley spectacle…'*

- from 'Residence at Cambridge', William Wordsworth

When I arrived at Cambridge for a month-long Literature Summer School, I had expected to be awed by the prestigious university town. I hadn't counted on being charmed. As far as learning curves go, I had expected mine to include little more than a better understanding and appreciation of literature. I did learn quite a bit of that, but I'm not certain I'll ever have another opportunity to learn to dance a Scottish ceilidh (pronounced kay-lee) with mad merriness. Such was the experience Cambridge accorded me.

The town invites you to get lost in its cobbled streets and meandering by-lanes. Almost all the colleges that comprise the University of Cambridge are a little way away from the rest of the city; a fact for which I was very thankful. It was as if we were in a little time capsule punctuated only with the occasional Tesco and Marks and Spencer's.

Most of the architecture is several decades old, and in some cases, centuries. Acres of lawns stretch out beyond each college, and are the perfect place for having a picnic while watching open-air renditions of Shakespeare's plays. I must confess I have never enjoyed a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream or A Winter's Tale more.

Even apart from open-air plays, we indulged in all the tourist-y activities one could indulge in at Cambridge and then some. I am proud to say I managed to not capsize a boat when a group of us went punting down the Cam, although we may have agitated a family of ducks with our manic steering. We paid homage to Byron by biking down to Grantchester, and later by visiting the famous Wren Library at Trinity College.

The city was dotted with several archetypal English pubs, and some of which are famous for having 'aided' renowned scientists in thinking up groundbreaking ideas. A pompous barmaid informed us that the concept of DNA had in fact been discovered over a pint of warm beer at the very table we had been leaning against. I suppose one can expect little else from one of the oldest and most famous university towns in the world. Two weeks in, we fancied ourselves as seasoned Cantabrigians, casting supercilious glances at the hordes of tourists that would descend upon town for the weekend.

I was put up at St. Catherine's College, a delightful campus in a prime location. Such was the view, that one could be content perched on the windowsill or at a roadside café watching brisk activity all along the main street. Life there never seemed frenetic, just lively. Music was everywhere: a would-be Jeff Buckley and a variety of street artistes would serenade us at all hours of the day. One particular gentleman had a talent for singing out of a litter box and was quite the crowd-pleaser.

Summer Schools are an extremely popular avenue of pursuing fields of interest since they offer short, meaningful course programs on some very creative modules. A student may find it a resourceful way to spend part of their vacation, while an investment banker may take the opportunity to indulge his fondness for history with a crash course in learning to read Ancient Egyptian pictographs. The University of Cambridge conducts annual summer programs in Literature, History, Science, Shakespeare and Ancient and Medieval Empires.

The four-week Literature program I had enrolled for was very fascinating. Each week we studied two new modules, and several of them were different takes or close observations of famous texts. Nabokov's Lolita is an infamously scandalous text, and therefore sessions spent analyzing its complexities were very interesting, as was learning to appreciate the irony and humor in Pope's Rape of the Lock. The most interesting aspect of the classes wasn't the module, but the variety of perspectives it brought out. People of all ages from all walks of life and all areas of the world could be found in every class. This made for some entertaining discussions, and my classmates' arguments (and accents) often belied their origins.

My first day there, I was extremely conscious of being among the youngest students present. (My class on the works of Elizabeth Gaskell actually had 6 students over 55 years of age). However, the condescension I was bracing myself for never came. It was very encouraging to have all manner of opinions valued and considered.

Valid rebuttals were as welcome as nods of agreement; if anything, the professors allowed students a surprising level of creative freedom. Students who veered off on different tangents of thought were never rebuffed, but encouraged to delve deeper and develop further proof for their arguments. As a result, the environment in a classroom was always very intellectually stimulating.

We had also a series of guest lectures by lecturers who conducted daily plenary sessions on topics connected to the theme of the program. The theme this year was 'Crossing Frontiers', therefore there was much talk of blurring boundaries between different styles of literature and the relevance of classic texts in modern times. My most memorable lecture was on reading the Canterbury Tales aloud in Middle English. I only hope we didn't cause Chaucer's departed soul too much torment.

For someone brought up on a rigid diet of the Indian education system, the flexible and creative system at Cambridge was a virtual banquet. The concept of having to memorize pages of meaningless text didn't exist, and every single class emphasized and encouraged higher-order thinking. Professors and scholars from the university taught us and we benefitted much from their immense knowledge and years of experience. Both teachers and students had the luxury of a relaxed environment in the summer program. More often than not the class was allowed to determine the tempo and theme of that particular lecture, with an occasional guiding nudge or insight by the professor to point us in a direction and ask the right questions.

My experience at Cambridge was entertaining enough to make up for the less-than-perfect food in college; the

British aren't exactly known for their gastronomical expertise. Over a course of thirty days, we were fed every conceivable dish involving potatoes and boiled vegetables, and the fancy names didn't quite stop them from being mashed lumps on our plates. I strongly suspect that July and August are the months when food trucks and restaurants near colleges prosper the most.

The most memorable part of my experience would have to be meeting and befriending literature enthusiasts from around the world. We did come from different parts of the globe, but we were joined in appreciating the academic grandeur of our surroundings. For all our differences, we were very similar people.
My friends from Russia, Spain, Mexico, Austria, Italy, Taiwan, Syria and the USA taught me much about where they were from, and in turn were extremely eager to have their curiosities about India satisfied. If we weren't laughing over each other's accents and cultural idiosyncrasies, we were comparing our country's educational systems. Sometimes we'd talk about native music and film (Shah Rukh Khan, I noted wryly, seemed entirely too popular abroad), and other times we would alternately gush over Benedict Cumberbatch or scoff at One Direction.

After having bonded so well over such a short period of time, we were loath to return to our lives, but several of us cherish hopes to return someday. A few months later, today, my parents listen patiently and my friends' eyes glaze over when I talk about Cambridge; they have only heard me gush about it a few thousand times. But whenever I chance upon a map of the world, I am filled with a sense of joy at being able to place friends from all of its corners.

A splendid summer, I'd say. Absolutely spiffing on all accounts.

# THE JOY AND ANGUISH OF BEING WILLIAM DALRYMPLE

Puja Roy

He has dodged sniper bullets in the heart of Taliban territory, befriended a former mujahideen and recently dined with Barack Obama at the White House! What's it like to be William Dalrymple? To live a life encountering characters as varied as Tantric skull-feeders, possessed temple dancers, Egyptian Orthodox Christian monks, Nobel laureates, Presidents and Prime Ministers? Born in Scotland, this multiple award-winning writer and historian has made India his home for the past 30 years. The self-confessed 'goatherd' (who lives in a farmhouse in Mehrauli in New Delhi) says, "*The greatest moments of my life have been in this country. It's provided an endless source of interest, peace, fascination, beauty. The most intense moments of my life have been here.*"

Dalrymple arrived in India at age 18 when a friend convinced him to make the journey after his plans to head to Iraq as an archaeologist got cancelled. He said it took him six weeks to fall in love with India, *"and thirty years on I'm still here now!"*

On September 14, the 48-year-old was in Goa for the opening of his artist-wife Olivia Fraser's exhibition at Sunaparanta, Goa Centre for the Arts. He graciously granted *Goa Streets* an interview. Read on to find out some lesser-known facts about William Dalrymple, including that he has Bengali blood and that he counts Virginia Woolf among his ancestors.

**PR: You have been someone looking at India and its people from the perspective of an outsider. How challenging has that been for you?**
**WD:** So many writers who have put India on the map in the West writing in English for a Western audience have done this journey from here to London or New York – Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Salman Rushdie. Of the premier division in the West, only Arundhati Roy really has remained here. Everyone else has gone away at some point. I've done the opposite journey. For whatever reason, it's moving against the crowd. And I think I'm probably the only Western writer who started in the West, lives here and is a major bestseller in India. So I'm slightly on my own. And sometimes there are these Twitter trolls turning up and saying 'what are you doing here', 'who are you?', 'go home *Gora*'. It is mainly on Twitter.

Occasionally some other character rises up from the depths. Ultimately it's the same thing. You're an immigrant, you're in a different culture and the kind of abuse that Rushdie or Ghosh or Vikram Seth might get on a tube – 'brown guy go home' – you get from Twitter trolls here. It's a universal thing. Immigrants will have friction wherever they are in the world, in whatever culture they arrive in. It's something you live with. And the good side of that is that you have the interest and excitement of living in a different culture.

**PR: Most people aren't aware, but you're related to Virginia Woolf?**
**WD:** We share a mutual Bengali ancestor. Virginia Woolf was one-eighth Bengali. Bengalis haven't woken up to this! There were these girls, five sisters called the Pattle sisters. One (Sophia Pattle) was my great-great-grandmother and another was Virginia Woolf's aunt. She was my first cousin twice removed or two generations back.

**PR: Through the course of writing your many books on India, you have encountered a wide variety of characters – from *devadasis to Baul* & Sufi mystics and the ghosts of Mughal princesses and their British lovers. What I find intriguing is your ability to portray each personality with familiarity, like you recognise their individual essences. How do you do that?**
**WD:** Most of the examples you've used are from *Nine Lives.* In *Nine Lives,* the key was just long interviews. What you do for that, the technique is you spend time with people, you sit there listening to them. The art is, in a sense, to drill away, keep on drilling, normal conversations with strangers and after 10-15 minutes you try and keep it up for three, four, five hours. The ones in *Nine Lives* were months. I went to Dharamsala to try and find a Buddhist monk with a vague idea of what I was after and I went to Sravanabelagola to find a Jain nun. But I didn't know what story I was after and I didn't quite know how it would fit in. *Nine Lives* was difficult only in the sense that I didn't know what I was looking for. And in truth, what I was looking for was a good story. *Nine Lives* was so amorphous in its concept that until you found someone that had an extraordinary story, there was no way of engineering that.

**PR: You wrote a touching essay in Edge of Faith, photographer Prabuddha Dasgupta's pictorial chronicle of Goa's Catholic community. What struck you most about Goa and its people in the course of your research?**
**WD:** In *Edge of Faith*, I was coming in on the coattails of Prabuddha who had already taken photographs before I arrived. That was a luxury project for me. He came to me, I negotiated a deal whereby, rather than having a fee, he got me a house in Goa for six months. What I hadn't realised was how many Goan Catholics knew about their Hindu roots – what caste they came from, which temple they went to, all the shared festivals between the Hindus and Catholics in Goa. That was pretty new to me.

**PR: Which has been the most special book you have written?**
**WD:** I tend to love the most recent one. At the moment it is *Return of a King.* The one everyone likes here is *The Last Mughal and City of Djinns*. I wrote *Djinns* when I was really young (24 years old). You always find these kids who arrive at St Stephen's or Hindu College from Bengal or Goa and they don't want to be in Delhi. But they read that book and they go exploring and they find the old mosques. Every few weeks, even now 20 years later, I get an email from some kids saying how they visited Delhi and found the old underground passages. In the West, the one they really like is *From the Holy Mountain.* The one I was most obsessed by, although I think it's the most imperfect book because it's too long and heavy and needed to be edited, was *White Mughals.* (Dalrymple spent five years 'madly' researching for the book.)

**PR: Your latest literary offering, Return of a King, has made it to the 2013 Samuel Johnson Prize longlist. How hopeful are you, considering all your books have received recognition?**
**WD:** This is the one prize that has always eluded me. This is the fourth time I've been on the longlist. All three previous times, I never made it to the shortlist. It's a strange form of torture. Let's see how it goes. (On September 30, 2013, the shortlist for the Samuel Johnson Prize was announced; *Return of a King* made it to the list. On November 4, 2013, the prize was awarded to *The Pike*, a biography on Italian poet turned Fascist politician Gabriele D'Annunzio, by Lucy Hughes-Hallett.)

**PR: You don many hats – author, historian, lecturer, curator, critic, war correspondent, traveller. Which role is most fulfilling?**
**WD:** Not that many hats! It's really one hat with lots of different corners. Fulfilling, there is no question, is writing books, but it's also the one that's hardest work. And it's nice to vary with the other stuff. Writing that big a history book is a project spanning five years and it's enormously hard work, it's real grind and gruel and miserable at various points. But at the end of it, if the book does well and receives good reviews and everyone buys it, it's the most fulfilling. Journalism is the opposite from that. It's not difficult to do. It's fun and whacky and you can have a good time doing it. I still am a journalist. The ideal thing is to spend the three-four-five year grind doing a big book and then spend a year whizzing around, travelling around. Journalism doesn't exhaust you, grind you down. And telly is the same – it is fun to do but

forgotten tomorrow. What's nice about books is that they weirdly have this sort of time-death charge thing whereby you can write a book like *City of Djinns* and you can get an email 20 years later. So in terms of fulfilment, no question – books.

**PR: The Jaipur Literary Festival will be celebrating its tenth anniversary next January. How do you feel about it growing from 14 attendees in 2004 to about a quarter of a million in 2013?**
**WD:** I'm very proud of it. There were years when we couldn't keep up with the crowds. By last year, we'd sorted out the problem with overcrowding. Last year was a big success, we had enough seats for everyone. I'm really proud of it. India's given so much to me. This is what I have given back.

**PR: You have travelled to and written about some of the most beautiful and most 'contested lands' on earth – the Kashmir Valley, the Palestinian territories, and more recently Afghanistan. Have these travels enriched your understanding of peoples and cultures, of love and loss?**
**WD:** Any travel increases your understanding of humanity. Contested stuff helps you understand the news better. You can read about Israel for years but not understand what it's like until you go see Palestinians being killed or some Kashmiris being shot at by the CRPF or see a roadside bomb in the aftermath in Kandahar. It's good to see the extremes of things. Life is a rich and varied platter and it's fun to get to see an art exhibit tonight and it's equally good to see a warzone tomorrow. I certainly enjoy that aspect of things whereby you live life to its fullest and wildest. My hero is a travel writer called Patrick Leigh Fermor and he wrote a lovely phrase somewhere from his youthful travels: "There is much to recommend moving straight from straw to a four-poster and then back again." The sensation of roughing it and then living it up – it's all good. I think if you can amplify the bandwidths of your life, it's all positive.

**PR: Ralph Fiennes is expected to star in and direct the cinematic version of White Mughals. Are you going to be closely involved with the movie's production, including writing the screenplay?**
**WD:** No, I'm not. I do not write screenplays. I will be advising. What you do is you choose who you sell it to. It's got an intriguing team – Ralph Fiennes directing and Frank Doelger, the guy who produces Game of Thrones, doing the production. It's the third time I've sold that book and the reason it hasn't been made up to now is that it's one of those projects that's very expensive – it's got battles, elephants and it's going to need a huge amount of money to make it; kind of like Lord of the Rings, it needs that kind of vision. Thanks to the success of Game of Thrones, there's a small chance that actually now Doelger could make the movie if he really throws his reputation behind him.
**PR: Goa is increasingly being recognised as a destination for the arts. How much potential do you think the state has to become one of India's premier Art & Culture centres?**
**WD:** Increasingly, a high proportion of Indian artists, writers seem to be based in Goa. The combination of a large relatively wealthy middle-class, lots of artistic life going have something to do with that. I'm not in a position to judge seriously, but it has serious prospects.

**PR: Would you consider bidding Mehrauli goodbye and moving to Goa?**

**WD:** It's something we think about, we talk about every so often. I just love it there. All my friends are in Delhi and some are in Goa. It's certainly a very attractive prospect, particularly in winter.

**PR: Finishing words from William Dalrymple for Streets' readers, especially those who are keen to take up writing in the future?**
**WD:** Lucky people, you live in a gorgeous place. Stay there and write hard!

***This interview was earlier published for an entertainment weekly called Goa Streets. Reproduced here with the permission of the author.***

# CARTOONS AND CONTEXTS HOW MATURE IS OUR DEMOCRACY?

Rohan Kamble

In a diverse democratic polity like India incidents of sentiments being hurt due to a film, song or a painting are not unheard of. More often than not such events have led to haphazard decisions by the government to ban the hurtful object in question. The Ambedkar cartoon controversy which erupted on the 11th and 14th of May, 2012 and took the Parliament floor by storm is a pertinent and recent example. The cartoon in question was part of a political science textbook formulated by the NCERT. It shows Dr. B. R. Ambedkar sitting on a snail, which represents the Indian Constitution, with a whip in his hand and behind him we see Pandit Nehru holding a whip to make the snail move at a faster speed. The cartoon was drawn by Shankar in 1949 to criticise the slow pace at which the drafting committee was working on the Constitution. India was granted freedom and it urgently needed a constitutional framework under which it would start functioning. In these circumstances it took the drafting committee three long years to create a constitution which suited India's needs. The cartoon in question was a product of these impatient times.

Objections were raised in the Parliament and they were unanimously supported across party line (a very rare moment indeed!) claiming that the cartoon denigrated Ambedkar. The HRD ministry decided to withdraw the textbook which resulted in the resignation of Suhas Palshikar and Yogendra Yadav, the chief advisors for framing the textbooks, leading to an outcry among academicians over the interference of the Parliament in academics. The controversy raises certain questions which, if tackled with due consideration, will only help us strengthen our democratic setup. Whenever such a demand is raised for banning a 'hurtful object' how should the government respond to it?[1] But isn't the banning of an 'opinion' in itself an act of violation of the freedom of speech and expression that the Consitiution confers upon us? Are there certain things which are sacrosanct and above criticism?

To answer the last question we need to understand the context behind the controversy. Why is it that issues pertaining to Ambedkar gain such prominence while Gandhi and Nehru, also criticised in the same textbooks, seldom invoke such passionate protests of this magnitude? For the upper caste Hindus, who have no doubt been the dominant class in every sphere of life, Gandhi and Nehru are political leaders and nothing more. Extra-ordinary as they were, they were never put on a pedestal and worshiped as Ambedkar was by the Dalits. Ambedkar, born in a Hindu Dalit family at a time when untouchability was still widely prevalent, became an iconoclast shaking the orthodox Hindu society to the core and galvanised the Dalit community to revolt against the oppressive caste system, to demand and not beg for their rights. He was instrumental in extending the ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity to the Dalit masses, who otherwise would have been conveniently left out of the Nationalist agenda. In his ultimate act of rebellion Ambedkar embraced Buddhism and millions of Dalits followed his footsteps. He became a beacon of a new era and symbolised Dalit pride. The fact cannot be over-emphasised that for dalit imagination, Ambedkar is not just a social reformer but a 'Messiah' who freed them from their bonds of slavery and taught them to lead a life of dignity.

It is in this context that arguments made by intellectuals seem rather fragile. The insistence of academicians supporting the cartoon smacks of intellectual arrogance and hypocrisy. On the one hand they claim

that the cartoon is open to various interpretations and thus serves the purpose of innovative pedagogy and on the other they seem to insist that the cartoon be viewed in a particular way[2].

The cartoon in itself does not give the reader the complete picture. The impression that is created is that Ambedkar was responsible for the slow paced work of the drafting committee and Nehru was trying his best to accelerate its pace. The cartoon, when viewed in today's context, without any interpretive framework, does not take cognizance of the possibility that the cartoonist too may have internalized the hegemonic ideas and prejudices of his times. Makarand Sathe in his article 'Readrawing Shankar for Today's World' which appeared in The Hindu provides alternatives, which removes the flaws of the present cartoon.

[3]

**Sathe notes** 'The original one depicts Shankar's broad political comment about the sluggish process of drafting of the Constitution… and acts as a pedagogical tool. But from the other point of view, which is equally important, this also holds Ambedkar in bad light, as Nehru stands behind the snail with a whip in hand, and this is the limitation of this cartoon. The other two cartoons can make students become aware of and think about this limitation and also, about whether the cartoonist, by being more sensitive to the hegemony in society, could have said it in any other way... Together these three variants can make students aware of what the cartoonist wanted to say at a particular point in history as well as how his own location creates limitations. They illustrate how the interpretation of history is always contemporary and is a continuous process. It indicates how one should locate an issue in history and also interpret it through contemporary sensibility simultaneously, without chauvinism.'[4]

Despite the above mentioned flaws these textbooks were among the rare examples where Ambedkar was shown to be an equal to Gandhi and Nehru and his contribution to the social and political life of India got the attention it deserved. What the protesters in their enthusiasm to prove their devotion to Ambedkar and the Dalit cause conveniently forgot was that the textbooks were a step ahead of the curriculum designed by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) in 2000 which was explicitly casteist and sexist.[5] What benefit will anyone get from the withdrawal of these textbooks which give maximum emphasis on the ideals and politics of Ambedkar, Phule and Periyar? This is not say that the protests were misplaced. But such arm twisting tactics in a democracy cannot be forgiven. The issue could and should have been resolved through dialogue. The complaint should have been taken seriously and sent to an appropriate body to provide a solution.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the Dalit leadership is to move beyond notions of empty symbolism and concentrate on solving the real existential problems of dalits. In projecting Ambedkar as a symbol of Dalit pride and adding to the fervour of paying eulogies to him what has been forgotten is that his life was an unending struggle against injustices which continue even today. Until and unless efforts are made to remove these injustices, hailing Ambedkar as a saviour of Dalits would be an exercise in futility. The greatest tribute to Dr. Ambedkar would be given the day he comes to be widely acknowledged not as the messiah of dalits but as the greatest champion of democracy that India produced in the 20th century.

*Notes*

1. For elaborate discussion see Peter Ronald deSouza's, "Through the Lens of a Constitutional Republic- The Case of the Controversial Textbook," *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. XLVII, No. 22 (2012).
2. See Manas Ray's 'The Cartoon Controversy: Crafty Politicos, Impatient Pedagogues' accessed on www.india-seminar.com/2012/635_essay.html.
3. The first cartoon from the left is Shankar's controversial drawing. The other two cartoons are adaptations of the original cartoon by Makarand Sathe.
4. Sathe, Makarand, 'Redrawing Shankar for Today's World', *The Hindu,* August 4, 2012.
5. Roy, Kumkum, 'The Constituion, Cartoons and Controversies- Contextualising the Debates', *EPW,* Vol. XLVII, No. 22 (2012)

# MASTER OF THE JUNGLE: KIPLING'S MOWGLI

Richa Gupta

*"Mowgli the Frog have I been," said he to himself; "Mowgli the Wolf have I said that I am. Now Mowgli the Ape must I be before I am Mowgli the Buck. At the end I shall be Mowgli the Man. Ho!'"*

The grimly determined protagonist of *The Jungle Books* is a far cry from the scrawny, fresh-faced, red loincloth-clad boy the world has come to love. In fact, the original Mowgli created by Rudyard Kipling is a far more complex and dark character than we realize. A reading of the text makes it apparent that just about the only similarity between the characters is that the movie keeps their names intact.

Walt Disney's animated feature The Jungle Book has greatly popularized Mowgli as well as Kipling's other characters, but people wrongly assume the Man-cub's story to be the usual children's fiction after having seen only the film. For starters, "The Jungle Books" are not your everyday children's stories. They are immensely popular with adults, and they actually include some profound scenes which may be beyond the intellectual capacity of children. The eight tales follow Mowgli through his adoption into the Seonee Wolf Pack, his childhood in the jungle, his entrance into the "Man-Village" when the wolf pack casts him out, his eventual ejection from the village by the "Man-Pack," his return to the jungle and further adventures there, and his final return to the world of humans. It would not be amiss to compare Mowgli with Burroughs' "Tarzan of the Apes", because Kipling makes his protagonist out to be as deadly and as capable a 'master of the jungle' as the fearsome Tarzan himself. Burroughs described Tarzan as one who is 'able to pass within society as a civilized individual, but prefers to strip off the thin veneer of civilization' when he can. Mowgli eventually returns to the world of man and becomes a householder, but for a majority of the story he is much like Tarzan.

Kipling came up with this character in the story, "In the Rukh." This story featured Gisborne, an English forestry official in India, and how he comes across a mysterious young man called Mowgli, who displays uncanny wilderness skills and seems to have an almost superhuman sense of smell and hearing. He ultimately proves to have been raised by a wolf pack, explaining his attributes. Gisborne then asks the young man to join the services as a forester.

There is something about Kipling's writing style that makes him out to be an apologist for British colonialism, especially in Mowgli's introductory story. The villagers' treatment of him seems in a way to be reflective of the Englishmen's treatment of natives – with a reluctant fascination with the other's primitive lifestyle.
It is a harrowing scene where Mowgli comes to the village bearing Shere Khan's hide, and is pelted with stones and accused of sorcery for handling such a feat by himself, and for being able to command wolves to do his bidding. Only a deranged woman who had previously accorded him shelter tries to shield him,

and it is for her sake that Mowgli stops his wolf-brothers from razing the village to the ground. This scene marks the dual nature of Mowgli's character. He belongs in both, the world of Men and in the Jungle, and yet is shunned by both. He constantly traverses the boundaries between human and animal, and one is never very certain about when he stops being a child and becomes a hardened adult instead.

What surprised me upon reading Kipling's work was the extent to which the so-called rough edges have been smoothened over to appeal to a larger audience. The movie may show Mowgli gamboling about with his wolf-brothers, watched over lovingly by Rama and Raksha; what it fails to mention is that even they, his wolf-family could not look him between the eyes. The realization that he was Man, and therefore capable of being their overlord and master, was one that hit them even as Mowgli was a child.

Baloo and Bagheera stay on as Mowgli's teachers and dearest friends, but here again the movie has mellowed their characters down considerably. Baloo is not the bumbling simpleton who goes about the jungle singing "Bare Necessities"; he is in fact the dignified, grave, wise old bear who is a teacher of Jungle Law. With Jungle Law, Kipling had created a concept which runs through all stories. Jungle Law is the supreme governing model for all the Jungle-log and the strength of their allegiance to it is startling. While in the movie all the residents of the Jungle happily go about their business, the books actually bring to light the idea of a pecking-order and a complex hierarchical structure in which everybody knows of the unique position they occupy. Back to Baloo and Bagheera- the latter is an assiduous yet shrewd panther who was once part of the zoos of the 'King of Oodeypore', therefore he warns Mowgli of the ways of man.

Kaa is probably the most sinister character in the entire book; he is not under any circumstances the slightly idiotic villain he is made out to be in the movie. The rest of the Jungle (save Mowgli, of course) are wary of him, and even as allies, keep a safe distance from the wise and extremely dangerous python. It is Kaa who devises the strategy for the battle against the Dholes, leading to a death-defying chase led by Mowgli and a bloody skirmish between the Dholes and the Free Wolves. Chief Akela fights to his death, as do several others. It is blood-letting at its vicious best.
Disney couldn't even afford to hint at the possibility of a savage war for supremacy of the jungle in the interest of maintaining their 'safe' reputation, and thereby robbed the story of its most compelling scenes.

Those who laughed at irresponsible Mowgli getting his act together by driving Shere Khan away will be shocked at the jungle lord who carefully orchestrates an ambush to have the tiger (also called Lungri, the Lame One) trampled by a horde of rampaging cattle. The entire scene is a horrific one, especially when Shere Khan is flayed by Mowgli. The significance of this act is completely lost due to its omission from the on-screen version. It is this scene which truly establishes Mowgli as the Master of the Jungle, and all animals defer to him from then on.

Another noticeable difference is Kipling's detail to character in the book. I laughed at the vultures in the movie as they were spoofing the Beatles, but marveled at the detail and graveness of character given to every animal that the author introduced. The noble wolves, law-abiding elephants and anarchical monkeys (among many other characters) have been accorded an undue amount of frivolity in the movie.

Perhaps it is unfair to charge Disney with dumbing down a classic in a movie that was, ultimately, intended for viewing by an audience no older than the young man-cub. This product of pop-culture did turn out to be a delightful offering, and was probably a great starting point forthe purists who wanted to introduce others to the real thing. Suffice it to say that the menacing novel and the overly-sanitized screen representation were probably not intended for the same audience, and hopefully viewers who grew up on one learned, over time, to appreciate the classic.

We smile indulgently when, on screen, Mowgli blushes at seeing a pretty village girl come to fetch water, and go home happy after finishing the film. Mowgli's departure from the jungle in Kipling's original could not have been further from the truth. It is spring-time when Mowgli feels a sense of detachment from the Jungle, but the animals in their ecstasy fail to heed his last call. Only his dearest friends- Baloo, Bagheera, Kaa and the Four Brothers come to bid him goodbye at the Council Rock. A moving exchange follows, where Mowgli cries and feels helpless at being drawn towards the village. Kaa gently tells him, "Man goes to Man at the Last". Baloo declares, "It is no longer the Man-cub that asks leave of his Pack, but the Master of the Jungle that changes his trail. Who shall question Man in his ways?" But what is most poignant is Gray Brother's words which betray a sense of irrevocability as he addresses his fellow wolf brothers, "Where shall we lair to-day? For from now, we follow new trails."

# WEAVING PARADOXES
# A REVIEW OF SHIP OF THESEUS

Shikha Shah

*Ship of Theseus* intrigued me. I have come across people who have either loved the film or hated it. It's certainly not one of those films that the entire audience applauds and goes gaga about it. It's a slow but absorbing film, a brilliant piece of work, deep and thought provoking. *Ship of Theseus* is perhaps one of the best films that the Indian cinema has seen in a long time. A much-required break from the gooey love stories and Hollywood knock offs, it stimulates the brain in a way that you can't stop thinking about it for quite a while.

The movie is so real that one can completely relate to it and understand how the photographer thought she could do her best only if her eyes were shut(yes, that happens), or how a person who idles away his life finds purpose or how the monk is in a moral predicament whether to stand by his beliefs or to give in. The paradoxical nature of life is implicit in the Greek myth from which Anand Gandhi's thoughtful film takes its title. Theseus' ship was repaired, plank-by-plank, to the point where no material from the original remained in the restored craft — a story used by Greek philosopher Plutarch to pose provocative questions about what constitutes authenticity and identity.

Each segment of the film is shot as a self-contained unit. And each leads you to a place where you are left asking questions. The first of these is Aliya (filmmaker Aida El Kashef), who counter-intuitively takes up photography when left blind by a cornea infection. She becomes a celebrated photographer who relies on a mixture of intuition, specialised software and supportive boyfriend (Faraz Khan) to create her images. But Aliya is conflicted about the role that chance necessarily plays in her artmaking — and discovers that accepting a cornea implant doesn't offer easy solutions to her dilemmas. If your eyes have failed you, does that mean you cannot really see? Or is it that physical sight can actually impede the real, insightful vision? The actress who plays this part does it with such openness and candor that you end up watching her world the way she does, filled with shadow and sound. When she does regain her faculty, does she lose her way of seeing?

The middle — and strongest piece — revolves around Jain monk Maitreya (theatre actor Neeraj Kabi), who is fighting a court case against animal testing by pharmaceutical companies. Maitreya's belief in the sacredness of all life is severely challenged when diagnosed with cirrhosis of the liver.

He will die unless he accepts an organ transplant — and all the associated medication — but this goes contrary his principles. His position is challenged by young lawyer Charvaka (Vinay Shukla) who accuses him of forfeiting his life at the altar of "a thought experiment".

His conversations with this a-little-too-chatty acolyte are a delight, raising the kinds of questions so seldom heard in mainstream features. His monk is so full of inner glow that I would willingly sell my non-existent Ferrari for him. This bit touched me the most, for how many times does one give up on one's beliefs and how firm would one be? How far is too far when it comes to standing by your ideas?

Part three looks at stockbroker Navin (Sohum Shah), who prefers swimming in the emotionally undemanding shallows rather than jumping into the deep end of life. An accidental meeting introduces him to Shankar (YashwantWasnik), whose kidney has been stolen during an appendectomy. This meeting

turns out to be the event that will reveal to shape the next of his life. Navin decides to travel to Stockholm in search of the organ recipient — and justice. We see the journey of how he finds a purpose in his life, and is driven by the passion of seeking justice for Shankar no matter how far he has to go. Shah, who has also produced the film, does a great job of excavating the feelings of an individual who starts off as an ignorant man and goes on to learn the truth in a way that he is no longer the same person.

The big reveal at the end draws the characters and the strands together in the most surprising but the most apt way. We see the parts and the whole. Once you finish, you know that there could have been no other ending. There are a few moments, which feel stretched, and sometimes the wordiness distracts from the business of seeing. But these are minor niggles.

The three stories come together through the theme of organ transplant; we are no longer looking at and for binding threads. *Ship of Theseus* takes us so far away from the acceptable prerequisites and definition of 'Good Cinema' that we forget that so far, we have never forgiven cinema that dares to be self-indulgent.

Gandhi weaves his ideas into coiled urgent vignettes that tell us so much about the quality of life without engaging us in unnecessary polemics. This is a film of ideas.

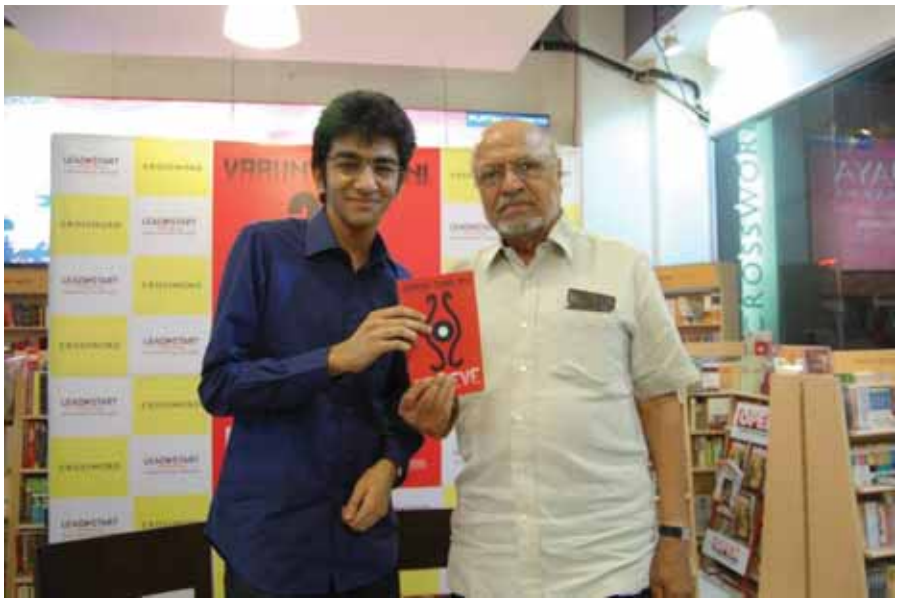
What we come away with is a sense of loss even as the film weaves a hypnotic tale of repair, redemption and renewal.

There is both terror and beauty in these intertwined tales: they are deep without being heavy, captivatingly capturing Mumbai and the other landscapes. Anand Gandhi has suggested, "The three short stories are evolved to fill in the three corners of the classical Indian trinity of satyam-shivam-sundaram (the pursuit of truth, the pursuit of righteousness and the pursuit of beauty)". Indeed, but in the beautifully knit narratives about the psychological journey that each life is, the movie refrains from giving us any reductive answers. It works so well because it simply aims at bringing home to us the eternal enigma :

*If the parts of a ship are replaced bit by bit, is it still the same ship?*

# CAN YOU BELIEVE IT?


Varun Gwalani, an SYBA student of the Department has the distinction of being a young novelist. His debut novel *Believe*, published by Leadstart, was released by the distinguished film-maker Shyam Benegal recently at a function held at Crossword, Kemps Corner.



**Here is what the blurb says:**
Have you ever felt that special kind of happiness that comes when you're doing something that makes you feel like you're truly in touch with your inner self? Imagine yourself in the peaceful, happy state doing that something special that makes you feel fulfilled, feel like you're doing what you were born to do.
Now imagine yourself torn from there, imagine every work you've ever done claimed to be the cause of misery for every person you love and

imagine that the work you were doing might now not be the work you were born to do. Experience that for a minute.Now you know a little of how Conner White felt."
This revelation led Conner White to the small town of Levion, where he sought to find himself. There he met Victoria, a young girl who was fighting her own inner demons.
Soon, however, dark secrets are exposed all around, and Conner has to fight not just to save himself, but Victoria and the town of Levion as well. "Believe" provides you with a story that not only grips you, but provides you with insight into the very nature of our own beliefs.

***Congratulations, Varun!***

# SHE INTERVENES, (DOES SHE?)

Sneha Menon

It was not like Sheila to be spontaneous, but when something told her to go sit in on a Women's Studies class that she had not opted for, she did. Looking back, it wasn't spontaneous really, it clashed with none of her lectures and she had known it would prove helpful for her research project. She had no inkling of how it would truly help her.

It is strange how the ideas her professors left loose on her in those half hours a day strongly clung on to her even today. Sheila remembers how one idea in particular had appealed to her. An economics idea. Her professor had asked Sheila and her class to think about how many hours housework took, how much money their parents earned in this time i.e. how much they earned in the hours they were spared by their domestic help. A lot more than they paid the help, for sure. She and her classmates observed that the maid's wages were nothing close to her opportunity cost. She was paid a "normal profit" of sorts, just enough to stop her from leaving. Sheila had wondered then, how much they'd pay if there was an artificial maid scarcity? And how much pay did the maid really deserve. It was strange, how simple this idea was, yet how it required a third person to make Sheila think of it.

Today Sheila was upset. Again.

Sheila hated it when she got upset. It made her feel like she had no control over her emotions. But she did have control over her emotions. Sheila knew what emotion she would feel as she thought a thought. And so all she had to do was think a different thought. The thought appropriate for the situation was "how many thousands of women had gone (and were going) through worse things and so how she had no right to be this upset" (this was her go-to thought). Sheila remembers her grandmother's childhood stories, a BBC documentary on trafficked women…. and her thoughts turn to a woman she had met the day before.

This woman was an ayah at an Adivasi school where Sheila volunteered occasionally. The lovely old lady had taken Sheila and her friends to her paddy fields, which was a multi-kilometre walk through amazing greenery and amazing deep muck. Amazing deep muck was amazing to her because there was no amazing deep muck back in the city which she longed for. But back to the appropriate thought...

The Adivasi woman had been complaining about how her sons were lazy and how one had thrown her out of his house. After that, she had lived in a small thatched tenement (jhobdi) just outside her son's pakka home. Shiela and her friends loved this cozy jhobdi, where they sat and munched groundnuts and wondered about how much richer she could be if she had direct "market access" for her vegetables. She was 73 according to their calculations. How could her sons leave her to manage this farm alone? How could they make her work as an Ayah? An unpaid ayah on top of everything. She was not paid anything at all because her grandchildren studied in the same school for little to no fees. This must be the same sons' children. Come to think of it, how much would she have been paid anyway? NOTHING close to the opportunity cost, for this woman had no close alternative. It really is true then that unlike in a man's case,

a raise in a woman's income always translates to better social outcomes for her family, because so much of her life revolves around the family.

Women's Studies. You'd think that the never ending spate of social issues in our textbooks and newspapers would sufficiently cover this stuff. But feminism wasn't "stuff", it was a lens, a "sensitized" lens that Sheila loved peering through. But Sheila wondered why the "sensitized" lens was the "exception", and was somewhat undesirable sounding. But she knew that unsenstitized lens meant a "(socially) conditioned" lens, the idea of which gave her the creeps now. Girls and pink, girls and domesticity, girls and long hair, girls and their looks and their looks and their looks. Sheila notices now how she always moves first when a man approaches in the same direction and how textbooks on sex-education only mention male masturbation but not female masturbation.

Sheila wonders if everybody were sensitized, would they all act? Would they feel ethically obligated to act? Is it the fear of this ethical obligation that keeps people from becoming fully aware or empathising with the poor? Or being such comfortable sufferers of poverty fatigue.

Not that she herself knows or does enough. Sheila doesn't even know whether she should dedicate her life to this or make money first and then give it away for a social cause. The latter is a popular idea. But Sheila can't reconcile with the idea that giving away lots of money could do more than researching poverty and advocating policy. But she loves being plagued by these ethical dilemmas. She doesn't realize she enjoys indulging in such introspection that leads nowhere.

Today she was wondering whether it was right for them to whisk away the Ayah to Bombay for a cataract operation given how scared and averse she was about and to it respectively. She had been reading "The White man's Burden", a book about how aid can even harm. She wondered if she was carrying a brown (socially aware) girl's burden. Was she wrong to want to "uplift villages"? Do the villagers really want to be up lifted? What does uplifting mean anyway? Hooking them to cloud Technology?! How much of this quest of doing good was about feeling good and proud? Gosh! how Kant would disapprove!

Then there is the absence of equal opportunity, the absence of choice and the elimination of this motivated her. All developmentalists agree on those counts. She was conflicted on many levels but not at that one. She did not know whose rights to fight for, which cause was most urgent, which career path was most outcome-efficient but she did know the overarching cause, the overarching wrong to right. And that made her feel better. Besides, if she made sure she didn't feel TOO good about the good work she'd know she had a higher purpose.

Using the Aya's pitch dark loo for instance was one way to create some aversion. Haha, but she had enjoyed that too. She was even sure to have heard a rat. She wasn't upset anymore. She knew how little she knew and that she thought and felt just like everyone else. And that humbled her…

# PARADISE LOST

## Aldish E.

*As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need.*
*O! lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud!*
*I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!*

- PB Shelley, *Ode to the West Wind*

Miss June taught us this poem. In one of her mesmerizing 7:30 am Romantic Poetry classes in our second year. I was awestruck and this was only the beginning.

I joined Jai Hind right after school. Even so, in hindsight, my college life began and ended with my second year. When you have the likes of Ms. Jasmeet and Mrs. Dias teaching you, things seldom go wrong. So, this piece will focus on my happiest time in Jai Hind, my second year.

The language elective was dropped in the second year. Already, I was a happy child (I had taken French). New elective in its place. Women Studies. Best. Decision. Ever. Taught by the English Department's teachers and having a rigorous curriculum, Women Studies had us learning concepts that weren't even introduced in our lit classes yet. Feminist theory, Marxist theory, constitutional law, feminism in popular culture, its history; it was all there. There were barely seven people in the class. Thankfully. Learning is a whole new experience with just a few people. Once it was just Ms. June and I in a class. We discussed the Undivided Hindu Family property rights and marzipan recipes for Christmas.

Then there were the lit classes themselves. After studying with these teachers so closely in Women Studies, studying in lit classes was much more comfortable. I studied things I didn't even know could be studied formally. The structure of an ode, rhyme, metre, haiku, post modern lit (or po mo, as the cool kids called it. Though, given their fleeting presence in class, this mnemonic may well have been an error in hearing), drama & partition literature! A life full of wonder. Indeed, now that I no longer can spend endless time discussing lit, I realise, life is so much better when good literature is involved.

Partition literature was beautiful. It introduced me to my first literary crush, Saadat Hasan Manto. Sure, there was Keats, but he was more of an eye candy really. Dalit, partition and Indian literature in translation, romantic and modernist poetry and world history were the best classes. The teachers let me talk. A lot. I was in a good world, my world.

History was a love, carefully nurtured since standard 5 and brought to a most splendid fruition in Mrs. Dias' classes and the Heras Institute's research methodology workshop. I am yet to come across a happiness so intense as the one that is felt upon the completion of one's dissertation.

Contextualisation is easy when a set chronology is in place, because only then can you allow the wave of post modernism to wash over it and destroy it fully. This happens in third year lit. Stay safe in your epistemological cocoon until then. Second year History will help.

There were other things. Important benchmarks one reached in the second year. Successfully turning the canteen into a site for the re-enactment of the cold war with Abhay, a most dear friend; hovering outside the staff room, waiting to ambush unsuspecting teachers with the most inane questions (Is Hesse better than Gibran? Did the Rothschilds secretly supply armaments to the Nazis? How high was Keats when he wrote Ode to a Grecian Urn? You get the point); and trying to sweet talk our way into making the librarian bend the only-two-books-per-pupil rule…. Ah, fun times! *wipes a tear*

A veritable smorgasbord of all these things and more, made up my second year in college, but more than anything it readied me for the absolute terror and wonder that was third year lit. A solid centre was created, which has not wavered to this day. Although, given my charming work life, I wonder how long this centre will hold (Yeats. Cool, eh?). One waits for another phase of contentment in life.
Until then, we'll always have that second year.

# THE LOST TRAVELLER

Devika Soni

"Standing on the roof of that house in Venice, listening to the brothers' fight underneath while their mother cooked them a meal; I wondered what was worth my time. Staying in Venice, to admire its beauty, or to keep moving forward looking for a home?" thought the swallow.

This swallow wasn't an ordinary one. Unlike his companions, he always felt lost, being dragged around places; he felt like a burden. No, there was nothing wrong with him. He was a perfect swallow in every way possible but he seemed to be unsatisfied with just flying around collecting food and migrating when it got cold.

"To find something else, something that might fill this hollowness I feel, something that's different from what my brothers want, I have to leave behind what I have. My home, my family. I have to find my own destination." "I must leave early next morning; just keep flying for sometime"

One morning he settled on a roof of a beautiful white mansion, with white picket fence, a red door and a marble fountain that adorned the garden. There was a little veggie patch with fresh vegetables too. "Where am I? This mansion seems a bit strange. What is that big, tall grey something far far away?" "It looks like a pyramid (yes, he'd been to Egypt) a very thin one, except it not made of stone; looks like some sort of a spider web construction." That's when it struck. La Tour Eiffel! "C'est Paris!"

Oh how he wished to see this place, all this time he heard the other birds talk about it. He decided to stay there for a while, wanting to absorb everything French. He sat atop the Notre Dame Cathedral, admiring its magnificence. The French countryside took his breath away. The sunflower fields stretching till it touched the horizon…. "It's liberating." He spent a night on a tree watching a boy and girl staring at the beautiful starry sky.

"Is this what the children just want to do? Sit here and while away their time? Don't they worry about their future, about home, how life will be when they grow up?" the swallow wondered.

"Paris, it is a beautiful place, and I love it here. The culture, the people, the streets, the trees… But I just don't feel right. I don't feel like I have any meaning here. Feels like it's not my destination and I have places to go, things to find; maybe not as charming as Paris but something with its own different beauty and purpose" With that thought in mind the swallow left Paris behind.

He flew over a place that had blue patches of the sea, lush green grass and a few scattered trees. Rest of the place was sandy brown; those were the stone houses and the hills. He flew over Eastern Spain but had no clue of its existence. His next stop was the western kingdom of Morocco. He flew over the desert. "It is certainly hotter than I anticipated." He sat atop a huge, beautifully carved house. He saw children play ball and the men enjoying a bath in a pool inside the house. He hopped to a window and peeped inside "That woman looks like she's cooking my feathered brother! No way I'm ending up like this!"

He flew to a nearby hut which sheltered a couple and their five children. "They barely have anything to eat. Why do they have to suffer so much while the rest lead an easy life? How is it fair? Is there anything

anybody can do to change it? Is that what makes me so unhappy, seeing people suffer and not being able to do anything about it? Why is everything the way it is?" and he just kept brainstorming. But he couldn't stay there where he had no home, he had to leave.

I still feel like a lost soul; flying looking for someplace I can call home where I can feel like I have a purpose, like my soul isn't lost after all. But that is what I think life is all about : that maybe, sometimes the place you're in is not made for you, it's not where you really belong. And sometimes you might never find a place, I know I haven't; and that's just fine because what matters at end of the day is not where you are, it's about learning things. Leaving Paris was hard but had I stuck around I would have missed out on the other places I saw, so I'm glad I chose to leave.

… And that's what I think you should believe in too, that change is good, so is moving on. Find new people, who are different than you because birds of a feather may not always flock together. Get out, find someplace to go, find something to do, keep experimenting. It's not the destination that matters after all, it's your journey. When you're really old and you see a bright light at the end of your tunnel but life still feels empty and meaningless, that's no reason to be sad, think about all those little things you saw, you felt. That's what matters more. All of us are travelers, some just know what they want, for those who don't – you can call yourself a lost traveler, but a traveler nonetheless.

# THOUGHT FOR FOOD

Drishti Mehta

*"There is no love sincerer than the love for food."*
George Bernard Shaw

I have often heard musicians saying that music is like food for the soul. Well in that case, food according to me is most definitely music for the soul and undoubtedly for the senses. It's true; food does bring an immense lot of meaning to my existence.

As I see it, it is that one thread that stitches the world together, the glue that binds people; caste, gender, profession, no bar. Everybody eats it, talks about it and draws sweet joys from it.

I am not just referring to the eating aspect of it. It is so much more than just a means of satisfying the hunger bugs inside your stomach.

I remember a very vivid image from a while ago. I was in Jerusalem for the holidays. We were walking around the breathtaking city and somehow couldn't manage to satisfy our urge to walk 'just another mile,' to soak up all that the city had to offer. It was undoubtedly beautiful, but we couldn't figure out an effective way to build a rapport with the locals and so found it difficult to get our way around things.

We then decided to follow the ideology of the genius Savarin; "Tell me what you eat and I will tell you what you are," we walked up to the main market in the city and started talking to the locals about their food and dietary habits. And my goodness, did that work!

We felt one among them. All of a sudden, it seemed as though the tourist halo that we were parading all around the city had been lifted off our heads. Beautifully crafted stuffed olives, incredibly sweet sesame fudge, shinning aubergines and stacks of flat bread offered to us by the pleasing locals, seemed to come to life and welcome us to their city.

It was back then, that I comprehended the power of food. Its ability to bring people together; its constant ability to please.

The feeling of accomplishment when you overturn a flan out of its mould and it sits there on the plate with all of its elegance intact; the smell of freshly baked cookies wafting throughout the house; the therapeutic aura when one kneads flour; Food for me is an expression. An expression of a whole lot of things put together in this one, short word.

Just the other day, a friend of mine and I were taking a walk. The weather was stunning with a light drizzle and gentle breeze. We walked past a café and through its glass window spotted a heap of glorious muffins, freshly baked, all puffed up and studded with ruby like cranberries. We just had to get one!

We bought those magnificent muffins and sat at the table by the giant window. It was everything you'd wish for in a muffin; warm, light, crumbly and moist.

We also ordered for a steaming cup of cocoa with a whipped cream topping, which was delivered to our table. Accidentally, they did not put a tiny swirl of cream on the cocoa, but gave us an entire big bowl of it on the side.

For a moment there, I felt like I was in some sort of dairy heaven and nobody would judge me if I was found nursing a bowl full of whipped cream.

That delusion was shattered by my friend, when she said, gaping at me eating spoonfuls of that cloud like cream, "You gluttonous girl!"

What exactly is this thing we call gluttony? What is gluttony? Is it really that much of a sin? Often I sense my mind repeating the same thing: "I like that, I want that and yes, I most definitely must have that. I do already have that, but I still want more of that. I could never have too much of that." Can you truly consider the burning desire to want more and more of something to be sinful?

Branding it as a sin or not is an endless debate and if we begin to include the relativity of situations then we could go on about this for donkey's years. But wait a minute. What is this aroma wafting in the air?… Well, sorry folks, I have to go!

# ENGLISH SEMINAR
# *HEROES AND VILLIANS IN LITERATURE THROUGH THE AGES*


Jai Hind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# HEROES AND VILLAINS

## SEMINAR

The Annual English Association Student's Seminar of the academic year 2013-14 was organised around the themes of Heroes and Villains. Traditional narratives have assigned rigid roles to heroes and villains. They act as counter forces to each other. The direction that a narrative follows is also predictable where a calamity makes the hero confront his demons and fight the villain in the ultimate battle where the hero emerges victorious signifying the victory of good over evil. The intention of this seminar was to move beyond this simplistic narrative format and explore the complexities of the hero-villain relationship or of their individual characters and functions in a narrative.

There were five group presentations, guided by the five faculty members of the department and were organised along a chronological axis. The first paper dealt with the ancient Indian epic the *Ramayana* that has had a unique history of being made and remade several hundred times, which continues unimpeded even now. The paper looks at the complexities in the characters of Ram and Ravan in a few counter-cultural renderings of the *Ramayana* which make it an open, fluid and infinitely subversive text. The second paper looks at the conception of heroes and villains in Shakespeare. Iago, one of Shakespeare's iconic villains declares in a chilling manner 'I am not what I am.' This becomes the central theme of Shakespearean plays where the central characters confronted with the vicissitudes of life begin to reveal the unseen side of their personality. The third paper dealt with the vision of good and evil in another epic of the English literary tradition, Milton's Paradise Lost. Satan although traditionally seen as the very personification of evil, is portrayed as an extremely complex and subtle character, a villain who is, ironically, a majestic but ultimately tragic hero. The next paper analysed a nineteenth century text with a female central character, William Thackeray's novel Vanity Fair. Subtitled as 'a novel without a hero', Vanity Fair provides us with no moral paragon or champion who emerges from the glittering-yet-sordid society portrayed in the text. Thackeray's central character and indeed, the 'hero' of the novel, Becky Sharp comes intriguingly close to being a villain. The final paper attempts to locate a twentieth century popular cultural text, Ian Fleming's James Bond, in its multiple avatars in fiction and film, in the context of the shifting power balance in the West in the second half of the twentieth century and also scrutinises the implicit and explicit gender prejudices that are evident in the portrayal of women in the James Bond novels and films.

Needless to say, the seminar was a highly educative experience for students and they especially learnt a great deal through the comprehensive keynote address by Dr. Roshan Shahani and through the evaluative comments by Dr. Govind Shahani at the close of the seminar.

# BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

## Ram and Ravan in the *Ramayana* Narrative Tradition

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Disha Sanghavi
Guided by Dr. Prachi Khandeparkar

**Abstract:** This paper looks at the *Ramayana* as a literary tradition of multiple texts that often have little in common except the names of the characters. *Ramayana* is not only not a single text, it is often reconfigured in wildly divergent ways to give a narrative shape to whichever ideology that seeks to put it to its own uses. Contrary to our assumptions, we find that the story of *Ramayana*— reinvented, turned on its head, mocked at, and parodied endlessly for several thousand years in some few hundred versions— never quite fits into a neat formula of a battle between a hero and a villain.

**Text:** Mythology has always had an eminent place in all cultures. The universal attraction that it holds for the readers is nothing short of an enigma and that is the reason it has also always been a powerful tool of ideological mobilization. Although geographical and cultural characteristics shape all mythological stories, they do share a universal underlying theme. The portrayal of the eternal fight between good and evil has been that theme. Almost always the myth is about a protagonist, the embodiment of righteousness overcoming every impediment in his/her path to vanquish the antagonist, who is evil personified. Almost every mythological story builds its edifice on this foundation. But when we scrutinize such texts and their numerous versions along with various interpolations through the lens of ideology, it reveals some surprisingly interesting facets of myths as cultural texts. This paper concentrates on the Indian epic *Ramayana* and tries to deconstruct it, showing how its characters and action are perceived in different contexts.

The fact that there is no single *Ramayana* text which could be considered as the original or the Ur-text makes the process of tracing the modifications in the story, which inadvertently affects the characterization, an enriching process. Usually it is Valmiki's Sanskrit *Ramayana* which is considered to be the oldest and most well-known text. But *Ramayana* finds a place not only in Indian languages but also in Chinese, Cambodian, Malaysian, Sinhalese, Thai, Tibetan etc. not to forget the dance-dramas and folk traditions. A. K. Ramanujan uses the word 'tellings' to describe the *Ramayanas* in different languages to emphasize the authenticity of each of these texts. The story may be the same in the two telling but the discourse may be vastly different. Even the structure and the sequence may be the same but the style, details, tone and texture -and therefore the import- may be vastly different.[1]

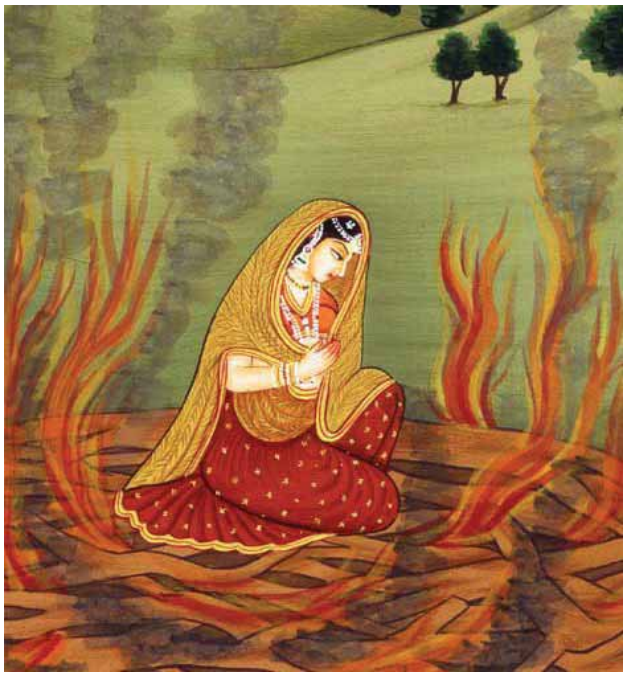
There are certain social, political and etymological factors which shape these texts and influence the way the characters are received. Thus to understand the hero-villain dynamics it is necessary to deduce the context, the complex mechanisms in which it was produced and projected the hero-villain relationship in a different light. Although the skeleton of the epic remains unchanged in all the 'tellings' it is the emphasis on different incidents of the epic which decide what ideology is the text made to subscribe to. Three incidents in the *Ramayana* deserve our attention not just for the significance that they hold in terms of the plot but also because of the moral ambiguity to which the hero i.e. Rama is subjected to which inadvertently changes our perception of the Ravana as well. The three incidents according to the order in which they take place are the mutiliation of Shurpanakha, the slaying of Valin by Rama, and Sita's trial by

fire. These incidents challenge the established notions about Rama's divinity. These incidents have been specifically cited by commentators to assert their cultural views against the dominance of the accepted norms.

Valmiki's *Ramayana* is said to have been written between 3rd century BCE to 2nd century CE. This text portrays Rama as a legendary warrior prince unlike the later texts which consider him as an incarnation of Vishnu who was born among men in order to rid the three worlds of the terror of Ravana. It has been said that Valmiki wrote in the context of the rising tide of Buddhism, which preached moral values and stressed the ideals of celibacy and monkhood. As opposed to this Valmiki presented through his poem the Brahmanical ideal of virtue exalting the householder's stage of life, and he provided a role model for all kinds of relation- ships: father, son, mother, wife, friend, and so on. Weaving together the legendary tales centering around Ayodhya, Kishkindha and Lanka, his epic created a fascinating saga in which the norms of a patriarchal varna-based society are upheld by various characters at the cost of a great deal of personal and dramatic appeal. Henceforth the basic plot of the Rama story becomes fixed but variations were still possible and have been made down to the present century both in literature and folklore.[2]

If Rama attains a mythical status in the later interpolations then a corresponding increase in Ravana's attributes can also be conceived to justify the incarnation of Vishnu to destroy Ravana who is relatively unknown in the Aranya and Kiskindha kandas.[3] This is in contrast with what we see in the Uttarakanda where Ravana defeats Gods in battles and even challenges Siva. This balances the power equation between the two. The reason behind Rama's drastic elevation can be traced to historical factors where the king gained the status of the representative of God.

The mutilation of Shurpanakha is an event of unprecedented importance as it leads to the abduction of Sita and the subsequent battle between Rama and Ravana. The assertion of a woman's sexuality is the central theme and the way in which the different characters react to it in different telling is of significance. It is one of those events in which Rama wavers from his righteous path and makes fun of Shurpanakha as shown in Valmiki *Ramayana*. On hearing her wish of marrying him instead of rejecting her proposal Rama seems to make fun of her by saying, *"You have such a charming body that you appear to be a rakshasi. But for a woman like you the presence of a co-wife would be unbearable."* Here it should be noted that Rama doesn't think that their alliance would be successful only because Shurpanakha might not take Sita's presence kindly. He doesn't seem to be opposed to the idea of their marriage. Her mutilation is carried out on the orders of Rama once she tries to kill Sita. While Tamil poet Kampan in 'Iramavataram' assigns the blame for Shurpanakha's disfigurement to Lakshman. Tulsidas's *Ramcharitamanas* and Radhesyam *Ramayana* are examples of didactic texts with a strong overtone of patriarchal prejudice where Shurpanakha is squarely blamed for being infatuated by Rama. Lakshmana's castigation acts as a moral lesson to all women to keep their sexuality in check. Irrespective of how this event is portrayed, it leads to the abduction Sita by Ravana. He avenges the insult to his sister by abducting Rama's wife.



Rama's morally dubious act of slaying the monkey-king Valin is another point of debate. As one modern interpreter of *Ramayana* admits*: "The perfect man takes a false step, apparently commits a moral slip and we ordinary mortals stand puzzled before the incident. It may be less of an actual error of commission on his part than a lack of understanding on ours; such an event might*

*stand out differently. But until we attain the breadth of view we are like to feel disturbed and question the action."*[4] When Valin questions Rama's action and asks him as to why he did not challenge him in an open conflict, Kampan answers this through Lakshman who replies:

*O you who failed to do right*
*when your younger brother sought refuge with you-*
*the Lord had sworn to slay you.*
*Thinking that in battle, out of love for life,*
*you, too, might take refuge with Him,*
*He hid from you and shot*

This reply is quite shocking as it seems to blatantly justify Rama's cowardly act. Laksmana's explanation is, perhaps, a response to a well-known pattern in Tamil myths-that of the devotee who forces the god's hand. Often the villain of the myth-a demon such as Ravana, for example forces the god to grant his request by resorting to intense, almost suicidal devotion to this deity. "The assumption is that the god must respond to his worshipper's devotion; bhakti always produces results. Sometimes, indeed, problems arise when the deity is faced with contradictory requests from two opposed and equally determined groups of devotees. It appears, according to Laksmana, that Rama has acted to avoid precisely this sort of situation.[5] This seems to emphasise the the Tamil tradition of attending salvation through God by whatever means necessary (which is also demonstrated in the Ahalya episode).

## *Ramayana* as a Tale of Political Subjugation

As India inched towards freedom separatist tendencies became active and began citing regional, religious and cultural differences for the lack of compatibility with the Indian federation. These forces continued to voice their demands even after independence. Every issue, whether regional or religious, was politicized to garner public support. A similar situation arose in Tamil Nadu when on 1 August 1956, E. V. Ramaswami (henceforth E.V.R.) set out with his followers to burn pictures of Lord Rama. The rise of the Dravidian identity in the early 20th century is an example of how a religious text i.e. *Ramayana* was used for the assertion of the cultural identity of the elite non-brahmins of Tamil Nadu and simultaneously, for their rejection of Aryan i.e. North Indian Sanskritic culture. E.V.R. desired a separate Tamil state and identity for South Indians, and linked his articulation of that identity with a critique of the *Ramayana*.[6] A brief study of the situation that led to the culmination of these events enhances our understanding of how *Ramayana* was used to gain political goals which led to changes in the way the text was perceived by the readers.

The act of burning pictures of Lord Rama would be considered an act of blasphemy. But E. V. R. cleverly chose this method as a parallel to an already existing and well known tradition in Northern parts of India of burning effigies of Ravana. The burning of the effigies of Ravana suggests the victory of good over evil. Thus E.V.R., for whom it wasn't Ravana but Rama who was evil personified, gives various justifications for his actions. This is in complete contrast with the usual veneration that Rama is bestowed with. It is not just Rama but also his relations which invite the ire of E.V.R. for wavering from the path of righteousness. He views the text not as a tale which has been used for didactic purposes but as a text of political domination, which through its ideology not only projects Rama's invasion of Lanka and the defeat of the asuras as inevitable but also legitimizes it. Here we can observe a complete reversal of roles for the characters in *Ramayana* when it is used for political discourse. In an attempt to completely eradicate the trace of Aryan civilization E.V.R. wrote a diatribe against the *Ramayana* heroes called 'Characters in the *Ramayana*' where he portrays Rama as barbarian representing the Aryan culture and Ravana as the epitome of Dravidian ideals.

*Ramayana* through the eyes of E.V.R. was seen as a struggle between North and South India. For E.V.R. "northern" means brahmanical, caste-ridden, and Sanskritic, while "southern" means nonbrahmanical,

egalitarian, and Tamil- value judgements that are embedded in his interpretation.[7] The structure in Characters in the *Ramayana* is tripartite. He commences by making clear his intentions behind this work and its importance for the liberation of Tamilians. The middle section critically evaluates the deed performed by the major characters and culminates with a short collection of quotes from authoritative works. It is interesting to see how despite maintaining the basic skeleton of the epic E.V.R. manages to completely change the connotations text by stressing on particular events or character traits and ignoring some.

Rama's crowning as the king is seen as his scheme to usurp the throne conveniently ignoring the fact that it was Dasaratha's decision crown Rama as the king. Rama's killing of Valin, a monarch of a southern kingdom also is vehemently criticized. E.V.R. castigates Rama's conduct for having killed Valin treacherously which questions Rama's supposedly God-like virtues. The fact that Brahmins extol the virtues of such a man is seen as an attempt to foist an unheroic Rama upon South India as an exemplar of proper behavior. According to R. K. Narayan, *Rama was an ideal man, all his faculties in control in any circumstances, one possessed of an unwavering sense of justice and fair play. Yet he once acted, as it seemed, out of partiality half knowledge, and haste, and shot and destroyed, from hiding, a creature who had done him no harm, not even seen him. This is one of the most controversial chapters in Ramayana.*[8]
Rama's treatment of Sita is another incident which invites criticism from E.V.R. and is seen by him as emblematic of Rama's oppression of those less powerful than himself.[9] As E.V.R. comments, "Even though Valmiki proclaimed the chastity of Sita, Rama did not believe it so she had to die. E.V.R. links this hostile attitude towards women as typical of North Indian culture.
However it is Rama's treatment of Shudras that gained the attention of masses who were devout Hindus and convinced them to take the drastic step of burning pictures of Rama. Rama kills a Shudra called Shambuka because he was performing asceticism which is prohibited by the Vedas for the lower castes. Rama murdered Shambuka in order to revive a Brahmin boy who had died as a result of Shambuka's 'blasphemous' actions. E.V.R. thus highlights the plight that the Shudras were under the rule of Rama to incite the majority of Hindus[10] to repudiate the idea that 'Rama Rajya' was a utopian society.

If for E.V.R. Rama is the symbol of Aryan invasion and barbarism then Ravana exemplifies South Indian culture. For him Ravana is the paragon of virtues (for which he cites Valmiki). E.V.R. uses the premise set by earlier critics of *Ramayana* to justify Ravana's heroic stature. "The ten-faced and twenty-armed Ravana was apparently a very intelligent and valiant hero, a cultured and highly civilized ruler, knew the Vedas and was an expert musician. He took away Sita acco1rding to the Tamilian mode of warfare, had her in the Asoka woods companioned by his own niece, and would not touch her unless she consented."[11] There is a corresponding re-evaluation of Vibhisana who is portrayed as treacherous and is the cause of Ravana's downfall. The assistance that he offers to Rama is not seen as a proof of his virtuous nature but motivated by his desire to posses Lanka. Sita's abduction is justified on the ground that it was an act of retaliation against Rama's insult and Lakshmana's disfigurement of Ravana's sister, Shurpanakha. The very fact that

Sita was left alone in the forest made the abduction inevitable. In other words, by abducting Sita, Ravana is simply performing an action which he is destined to perform- an interpretation which assumes an inexorability about the events in the *Ramayana*.

Thus to render justice to Ravana modern Tamil poet Kulantai Pulavar wrote the magnum opus Iravanam Kaviyam. Thus Ravana becomes a literary tool to reject Aryan notions of superiority. It doesn't take the middle course of portraying Ravana with shades of grey, something that Tamil interpreters of Kampan's Iramavataram tried to do. C. and H. Jerudasans comment in the History of Tamil Literature 1961 is noteworthy: *"There was never a grander personality in the role of a villain in the world's dramatic literature… His language to Sita is the language of a cavalier… Never once does he indulge in repulsive coarseness of indecent language. But Pulavar refused to be apologetic and depicted Aryan's as animal-slaughteres, meat eaters, drunkards and fornicators while Ravana was shown to be abstinent and a vegetarian."* [12]

There was a constant attempt by Tamil interpreters to not characterize Ravana as the black villain but as a complex, tragic, heroic personality, a slave to his passions, generous and cruel, gentle and vicious at the same time.

## Jain *Ramayana* – A Different Take on the Hero and the Villain

Most popular tales, epics and legends, as has become a custom, are tales of good versus evil. They tend to be glorified stories of the hero battling the villain, whether it is the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers, The Lord of the Rings or the *Ramayana* and Mahabharata.

The *Ramayana*, for one, has been handed down for centuries through traditional methods, oral or written. The epic itself has gained popularity in various countries across Asia, across religions and cultures. It has become a tale of such popularity that not a single child grows up without hearing of how the great, good God Rama defeated the evil, ten headed Ravana. But what is it truly that defines the perimeters of good and evil in such tales?

The Jain *Ramayana, Paumacariya* of Vimalasuri, written in the thirteenth century AD, gives an altogether new perspective on this beloved tale of the ages, looking at good and evil in its grey areas and impressing upon the reader the difficulty in defining these terms. What is it that truly constitutes a hero? What creates a villain? Such are the questions one finds oneself asking on reading the Jain take on one of the most definitive epics of the Indian culture. The following paper will aim to expose and understand what constitutes a 'hero' and a 'villain' in the Paumacariya, in an attempt to bring to light how culture, and religion may be reflected in the story as a whole and give it an entirely different take.

Although Valmiki's *Ramayana* has gained the status of being the *Ramayana,* as stated above, the epic has multiple versions. The Jain *Ramayana* is an example of how a different religion embeds within the tale its own ideals. In order to understand it, one must first understand the culture and ideals of the Jains. Jainism, as a religion places a great deal of emphasis on reason – even in the context of the spiritual. It is, today, the biggest atheistic religion in existence, and this marks the first difference in the Jain telling. The Paumacariya is not a tale of the Gods, and the reincarnation of God in order to vanquish evil as narrated by Valmiki.

It questions the stories of monkeys defeating Ravana, and Ravana himself being evil. It questions how Indra, the most powerful God could be dragged hand-cuffed to Lanka, and it also questions how Kumbhkarna could have slept soundly through six months of the year even though boiling oil was poured into his ears, elephants trampled over him and war trumpets and conches blared all around him. "All this looks a bit fantastic and extreme. They are lies and contrary to reason." (Richman, 1991, 34, references to *Many Ramayanas* cited within the text henceforth)

The Jain telling takes on a more 'human' perspective. Being an atheistic religion, it takes its guidance from the teachings of 24 tirthankars. It is said that Ravana is a learned, religious man, a tirthankar of the next generation. Naturally then, unlike the Hindu *Ramayana* (or Valmiki's Ramayana), which displays Ravana as inherently, evil, the Paumacariya tells a different story and even claims to 'correct the mistakes' of the earlier text by Valmiki.

Ravana, here, is seen as a noble and great ruler of Lanka, a religious man who was destined to a cruel fate. He is seen as misunderstood rather than evil throughout the epic. The story focuses more on Ravana than it does on Rama. It opens with the genealogy and greatness of Ravana rather than that of Rama and projects him in a favourable light, a man who earned all his powers through great tapas. He is seen as a devotee of the Jain Tirthankars. It is said that to please one of them he even took a vow to never touch an unwilling woman. It is through these tellings that one sees Ravana as one who is undone by 'the passions that he has vowed against, yet cannot resist' (Richman 1991, 34) as is seen in his love and lust for Sita. He tries through various ways to convince her and win her affection, but in vain. Yet, even in his attempts, he is certain to not bring harm upon her. Here, one pities him, knowing that there is more to him than simply the evil that Hinduism confers upon him. Although his actions can be construed as wrong, his emotions are those that one can easily relate to. The epic exemplifies his 'goodness' and upright nature instead, making him more of a grey character rather than simply an embodiment of evil.

Due to the Jain tendency to reason and understand, one sees in these tellings a complete lack of miraculous births, monkeys and monsters (rakshasas). As a result, Ram and Lakshaman are born in the normal way rather than through any miraculous conception; Hanuman is not seen as the son of Air and a monkey, but rather the son of a King known as Pavan (air) and thereby was completely human ; Ravan is known as the dasamukha[13] not because he was born with ten heads but because, at his birth, his mother was given a necklace with nine gems. She placed them around his neck and saw his face reflected in the gems, leading her to call him 'dasamukha' (Richman 1991, 35).

The people of Lanka were not Rakshasas (monsters), either, but were known thus because Lanka was known as Rakshash Dweep during that time.The vanaras are not monkeys, but rather distant relatives of Ravan himself. They are known as Vanaras because their emblem is a monkey (vanar) and hence the name (Richman 1991, 35). In another version, they are known thus because they belong to a kingdom called 'Vanar'. In yet another interpretation, they are vague ariel, shape-changing beings who wear a monkey emblem on their crown and fight with nooses in the shape of tails. All of these interpretations are seen as the 'true' story that the Paumacariya finally brings to light, stating that it has been distorted through the years and thereby misrepresented in Valmiki's *Ramayana.*

The concept of hero and villain is quite lost in these tellings, for it is not the tale of good versus evil or that of a hero vanquishing a villain, but rather about the ill fate of a noble king. The unlucky nature of his destiny is emphasised even more in some versions of the text where it is stated that Sita, unbeknownst to Ravana, is his daughter, leading to an Oedipal situation.

Rama himself is seen as an evolved Jain soul throughout the epic. Unlike the Hindu *Ramayana* which lays great emphasis upon his fidelity to Sita, the Jain tellings state that he had four wives. Also, as a result of his being an evolved Jain soul, or a Balabhadra, he cannot commit violence and is seen at the periphery of most of the action as opposed to the role played by Lakshamana. Since he is in his last incarnation, he has nearly given up on all his worldly-ties, settling himself more into a spiritual existence. This lack of fidelity, immense self-restraint and spirituality along with his unwillingness to immerse himself completely in the action all combine to make Ram an unbecoming 'hero' of the tale, instead adorning him with a more sage-like image.

Here, the common definition of 'hero' is more fitting for characters such as Lakshamana or Hanuman. On the other hand, Ravan, clearly does not exude the characteristics of a 'villain'. But even in this case, the more anthropocentric view the text takes ensures that even the 'hero' remains in a more grey area. Hanuman, who has, in all the tellings been viewed as a maharishi, a monkey-god who remains celibate

takes on an entirely new avatar by becoming the man who seduces and is seduced by multiple women throughout the course of the tale. Here, self-control is seen as only for Jain saviours or the Tirthankars.

It is important to note another difference in the Jain tellings, for according to a popular belief, it is said that in every half-time cycle there are nine Vasudevas, Prati-Vasudevas and Balabhadras . To understand this, one must understand the concept of the wheel of time. Jainism believes that the wheel of time movies in two half rotations, one is the ascending half time cycle where everything is alright and there is prosperity all around, and the other the descending half time cycle where everything descends into chaos. It is in the current descending half time cycle of which Ram, Laxman and Ravan were the 8th incarnation of the Balabhadra, Vasudeva and Prati-Vasudeva respectively (Richman, 1991, 35). These emphasise the evolution of the soul. Balabhadra is the man in his final incarnation before he attains salvation. The Vasudeva is he who is destined to destroy evil in the world whereas the Prati-Vasudeva is he that spreads evil. The quest of the Vasudeva is to kill the Prati-Vasudeva with the help of the Balabhadra.

It is perhaps a result of such beliefs that gives rise to one of the most significant differences between the Jain telling and Valmiki's version. For here it is Lakshaman who ultimately slays Ravana and they both go to hell for it while Rama attains salvation.

Yet it is predicted that in their future incarnations they would both attain liberation and Ravana, as stated earlier, would gain a place amongst the great Jain saints. As per these tellings, Ravana, being the noble and learned king that he was, became aware of himself as being the Prati-Vasudeva and tried in vain to reach a peaceful settlement to the battle. When such talks failed he went, knowing fully his fate, to the battle where his own weapons worked against him as they recognised Lakshaman as the Vasudeva, leading to the tragic demise of Ravan with his own weapon.[14] Thus, in this version the concept of the villain is non-existent. Both Rama, an evolved soul as he may be, and Ravana perform actions that could be condemned as well as actions that could be applauded. Both are seen as being more human than as divine beings, and the tale of the God is altered into a tale of humans and their fate, their mistakes and the spiritual journey of their lives.

The *Paumacariya* is a version of the *Ramayana* so different from the more popular text of *Ramayana,* that it must be considered an entity in itself. It may narrate the same story and depict the same picture, yet it provides an entirely altered version of the characters and their 'realities' and therefore comparing it to another telling is a futile attempt at bringing together two completely distinct texts.

The *Ramayana,* thus, is a tradition of multiple texts. It is a common pool of characters and events on which multiple cultures have drawn freely and innovatively. The true glory of the epic is that the good morphs into the evil and the evil into good so often and so effortlessly in this tradition that unlike the religious scriptures the *Ramayana* in fact brings home to us the feeble nature of our notions of good and evil.

*Notes*

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2. Jaiswal, Suvira. "Historical evolution of the Ram legend." *Social Scientist*, p.92. Accessed on 16/08/2013at http://www.jstor.org/stable/3517633 .
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5. Shulman, David. "Divine Order and Divine Evil in the Tamil tale of Ramayana", *Social Scientist*, p. 666, accessed on 17/08/2013 at http://www.jstor.org/stable/2053906.

6. Richman, Paula (ed.), *Many Ramayanas*, p. 179.
7. Richman, Paula (ed.), *Many Ramayanas*, p. 181.
8. Narayan, R. K. *The Ramayana: A shortened Modern Prose version*, London: Chatto and Windus , 1973.
9. *Many Ramayanas*, p 184.
10. 60 percent of South Indians are regarded as Sudras. Richman, *Many Ramayanas*, p. 185.
11. Pillai, M. S. Purnalingam, *Ravana the Great: King of Lanka*, Munnirpallam, 1928, p. 133.
12. Zvelebil, K. V. "Ravana the Great in Modern Tamil Fiction." *Social Scientist*, accessed 17/08/2013 at http://www.jstor.org/stable/25212249
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# FAIR IS FOUL; AND FOUL IS FAIR

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**Abstract:**This paper journeys through four of Shakespeare's plays (The Merchant of Venice, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth), while examining their heroes and villains, with reference to the times and also comparing them to those of the past. Through the paper we realise, that The Bard, has in fact captured true human nature in a prism, creating an array of grey characters that allow for a variety of interpretations, therefore revealing to us realistic characters which cannot be easily categorised as heroes or villains because of their depth.

**Text:** *"The remarkable thing about Shakespeare is that he is really very good – in spite of all the people who say he is very good."* [1] –Robert Graves

William Shakespeare, although not definitively having studied beyond high school, was a man of keen observation and insight. He fearlessly expressed himself, be it to mock the society or write love sonnets. He had certain influences that made him the posthumous literary giant that he is. Through this essay we will explain what separated Shakespeare from others of his time and discuss four of his works; The Merchant of Venice (1596), Othello (1601-4), King Lear (1605-6) and Macbeth (1606).

The early theatre, the one he saw growing up, and one that definitely influenced him consisted of Morality plays .[2] These plays had a basic pattern of the protagonist's moral process: "divine, fallen, and redemption". They also named characters as different actions, the most popular example being, Everyman. Shakespeare saw how clearly the hero and villain, good and bad were defined in those plays. The villain or devil was often the Vice, a jest and cause of laughter, who ultimately met his end. We see this adapted in Touchstone, although here there is only jest, no evil. There is a blurring of character.

This blurring is the main key to his greatness. Shakespeare, throughout time, has been known for his characterisation. His characters were not all good or all bad. He didn't believe in black and white. There is a motive behind a character performing a certain action; no one is there just to move the play forward. He amplified in the basest and crudest way the basic emotions and thoughts we experience even today; everyone can relate to his characters, they are his strong point. He had the ability to humanise them to absolutely realistic levels. *"But Shakespeare's magic could not copied be; / within that circle none durst walk but he"* -John Dryden.

Another influence for Shakespeare was the class system of his time. The classes consisted of the Nobility, Gentry, Yeomanry and the Poor.[3] All writers were exposed to this, but none adapted and commented upon it the way Shakespeare does. We see each of his character fitting into one of these classes, but acting against

its accepted regulations. Othello is exceptional and very trustworthy, but black. Macbeth is a murderer. King Lear is overcome by his own daughters. These are not acceptable traits for the social classes these characters fit into; it can't have been easy for the higher classes to accept this.

He didn't stop here though; there was a lot more he changed. The correct, standard way of writing in his time, the one accepted by all people and followed by his contemporaries, was to emphasize on the plot. The plot determined the course of action a character would take. But with Shakespeare, the characters were the priority. Their individual self was shaped by their beliefs; the characters moved the plot forward, not the other way around.

[4]Normally, a hero is referred to as someone who is good and a villain as bad. But with Shakespeare, heroes and villains are much more complex than their good and bad motives. All have their peculiarities, their positives and their negatives, just like any human being.

On one hand, we have Iago, termed as a villain because he likes creating havoc; his reason to hate Othello keeps changing and we are left only with his evil intentions. But another character, termed as a 'villain', is Shylock, and although he is rash, he is behaving that way because he's a Jew; he is ill-treated by society in general and people are clouded by prejudice, which is why he acts the way he does, with his best interests in mind. *"Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me, I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction".* –The Merchant of Venice. Can this sort of self-preservation really be called villainous?

Shakespeare's heroes are not very perfect either. Macbeth is the protagonist and also the murderer, although influenced by ambition and largely by lady Macbeth. Hamlet, in a fury, kills Polonius as a misunderstanding.

*"O, from this time forth,*[5]

*My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!"*
-Hamlet

Shakespeare went beyond the convention of having a perfect hero who is all good and a villain who is all bad. Words, actions, intentions, nothing can be definitive proof of whether a person is a hero or a villain. If we look closely, we see that all the heroes in Shakespeare's tragedies have some fatal flaw. This, in theory, is what separates Shakespeare from other writers. The liberty to define characters in a few words is not available with Shakespeare's works. They are complex and often an end within themselves. He created them with precision and intricate detail. One of the greatest hopes of society is thinking, revolutionary men, and individualistic characteristics. Shakespeare was such.

This essay progresses to deal with the four plays, discussing the heroes and villains, the characterisation and structure of each play. A mix of a comedy and tragedies, it throws light on the protagonists and the different ideals driving them forward.

Many critics'[6] account of their experience watching the Merchant of Venice almost force one to include it, into one of Shakespeare's tragedies. Although the frame of the work is a composition of laughing masks and sunny faces and satire forms, one cannot help but think about this man "no less sinned against-than sinning" by the end of the play.

There is no doubt however, as to Shylock's villainy. He is revengeful, but he is not a monster, nor is it his startling deeds, which hold our attention. It is perfectly clear that Shylock is not one of those villain who simply step to the front as dramatic heroes because the diabolical cleverness of their villainy overshadows

everything else. On the contrary, if Shylock is the hero, it is because we sympathize with him so much for suffering.

The difficulty of deciding upon Shylock's position is closely interwoven with the problem of whether the play is to be treated as a tragedy or a comedy.[7] If it is the later, Shylock cannot possibly be the hero; if it is the former, his position is not so easily determined.

The difficulties that confront us, in interpreting the play, probably had no existence for the Elizabethan minds. Hatred for the Jews was so pronounced in Shakespeare's day, that the audience of the time had no shred of sympathy for Shylock. They feel that the wrongs which he suffered, account for his conduct.

But, all our sympathy cannot change a play technically constructed as a comedy into a tragedy. The trial scene is tragic and the character of Shylock is tragic, but this does not transform the whole play. If, however, we were ton consider the main action of the play, ignoring the sub-plots, would Shylock not be the hero? The surest way to answer these questions is to outline the play from the stand point of the Jew as the protagonist: A Jew, who hates a Christian plots to get rid of his foe, without endangering his own life. He therefore loans him money upon a bond which provides for in case of a forfeiture, a pound of the Christian's flesh, if the money is unpaid by a certain date. The Jew is about to vent his hatred by enforcing the bond, when he discovers that the enforcement will result, by legal process, his own death. He therefore cancels the bond and retreats, deprived of his wealth.

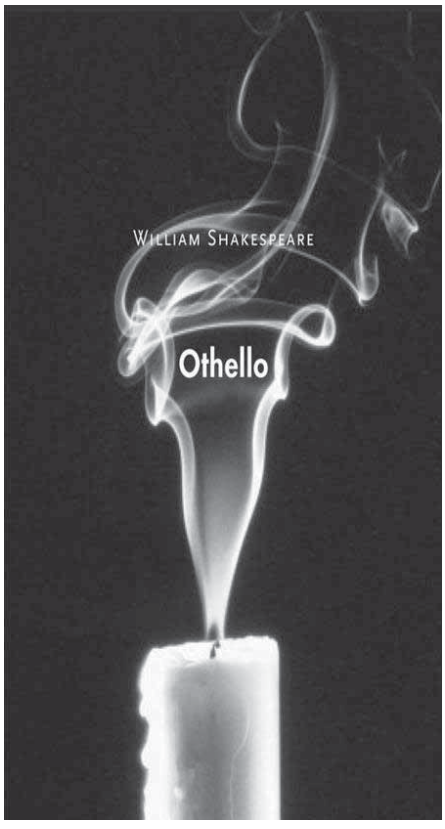
Such is not the main action of The Merchant of Venice. It presents the story in an entirely different light. Shylock, suffer a tragic fate. If Shakespeare had elaborated the character of Antonio as carefully as he has that of Shylock, there would be no doubt as to who was intended as protagonist. As it is, Antonio is rather neglected for the sake of the love story. He is good and is well loved by his friends, but he not characterized that we love him, as much as his friends do. Our interests in his welfare is that we have for a man who we know is deserving; it is not with the interest of personal attachment.

With the Jew, however, Shakespeare has adopted methods just reverse. All the 'decent' people in the play hate him. But in spite of the fact that he is actually a usurer, the poet makes us sympathize with him, by revealing his proud and spirited nature, and by displaying the oppression which he has brought about the hardening of his character. However, when we take the structure of the play into account we realise Shakespeare has simply made us sympathize with his villain; he has not made him the hero.

On the other hand, Antonio fits into the main action as hero very well. It is the merchant whose life is put into jeopardy by a noble action. It is he for whom we are concerned. It is he, who is about to suffer, unmerited misfortune and his danger that stimulates pity and fear for the time being. Our pity for Shylock begins long before the fourth act. We can sympathize deeply with a Shylock for the pain he has suffered while recognising that its effects on his personality have been disastrous. We are, most of us, like Portia, perfectly capable of defending the principle of mercy but are not always capable of exercising it.

The Merchant of Venice defies any simple schematic interpretation and refuses to come to heel at the command of any producer or literary critic. What we say, however, is the ambiguities of the play are of the kind we encounter in real life, for human motive is never simple in reality as it often appears in fiction.

It is over 2,300 years ago, that Aristotle wrote his famous manual for contemporary authors. This guide, entitled Poetics[8], covered what aspects a tragedy should contain. Of these aspects, one of the most important points in Poetics made by Aristotle is what characteristics a tragic hero, the protagonist of the tragedy should have. The tragic hero should be a successful, noble person who displays an error in judgment and contributes to his own destruction by some moral weaknesses, known as the fatal flaw. Aristotle further explains that the protagonist must be dominated by a 'hamartia' or tragic flaw which leads to his downfall. These guidelines for creating a tragic hero as well as his guidelines for writing a tragedy were used by many authors who wrote after Aristotle died. One example of a playwright who used Aristotle's Poetics for creating a tragic hero is William Shakespeare and this can be seen in his famous drama, "Othello". Shakespeare's tragic hero, Othello is portrayed as a noble, virtuous and highly




respected man. It is emphasized that he is a man who is in control of his passions and wouldn't lose his head in a crisis. He is known for his adventures far and wide. Before his frightful transformation, he is the ideal hero who is of a free and open nature. His love for Desdemona so true, that the differences in their colour don't matter to him. It is this magnificent human being who is turned by Iago into a beast. Someone who wouldn't lose his head in the force of his passions succumbs to jealousy.

The source of Othello is Giraldi's Hecatommithi.[9] The original story does not seem like a suitable tragedy. The colourless heroine, the melodramatic villain, the clumsy nemesis which overtakes villain and hero, and the leisurely tempo of the story are all obstacles to dramatic treatment. But Shakespeare transformed this story into a renowned tragedy. Shakespeare brought about many variations in this story. For example, the moor in Giraldi's story lacks most of the dimensions of a tragic hero: a man who arranges to have his wife battered to death with a sandbag is not likely to retain the sympathy of an audience and later he even tries to hide the crime. In the latter story, Othello himself murders his wife and upon knowing the truth commits suicide and we wonder how such a noble character came to commit a murder. Shakespeare has written the tragedy in a way that even though Othello commits a murder, we sympathise with him and his situation.

Albert Gerard[10] examines Othello's personality, discovering cracks in the "facade" of the generous, confident self-disciplined husband and general. The critic argues that Othello believes that his marriage to Desdemona will transform his life from one of primitive "chaos" to one of civilization and contentment. This naive dream shatters, however, with his increasing jealousy and his growing awareness that his new-found happiness is an illusion. Gerard thus regards Othello's development as a change from innocence to self-awareness and recognition that he has been looking outside—to Desdemona and Venetian society—rather than inside himself for his sense of identity.

Iago is one of the most notorious and mysterious villains of all time. He spends all of his time plotting against Othello and Desdemona, eventually convincing Othello that his wife has been cheating, despite the fact that Desdemona has been completely faithful

Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge calls Iago "a being next to the devil, only not quite the devil"[11] and goes on to call Iago's behaviour "motiveless malignity." If we agree that Iago has no real motives for hurting Othello, we could also argue that Iago's character is kind of "Vice" figure. A "Vice" figure is stock character from medieval Morality plays like "Everyman." Vice figures are typically personifications of immoral behaviour.

A. C. Bradley[12] closely investigates Iago's character by examining his soliloquies. Finding that the motives of hatred and ambition inadequately account for Iago's actions, Bradley stresses the importance of the character's sense of superiority and his self-interest in determining his behaviour. Iago's ego, wounded by the denial of promotion, demands satisfaction, and his schemes and manipulations allow him to re-establish his sense of power and dominance over others. Bradley also finds that Iago is motivated by a love of excitement and by his perception of himself as an artist. He derives great pleasure from the successful execution of his complex and dangerous intrigues. The critic concludes that Iago's evil is comprehensible and therefore human rather than demonic.

Although Othello commits a heinous act, he is not reviled. This is because like all Shakespearean heroes, he is still human. Audiences can relate to that human aspect of Othello. All of us, even the best of us can and have been led astray. Therefore, we view him not as the insecure husband, but *"As one that lov'd not wisely, but too well".*[13]

The tragedy of King Lear is considered to be Shakespeare's most powerful tragedy and with good reason. Not only does it depict the descent into madness of one of the most powerful kings in the land of that time; but it also shows the primary reason: his own daughters. That is perhaps one of the most heartrending parts of King Lear: he distributes his life's work, his kingdom, to his own flesh and blood, believing that they will take care of him but they cast him out, treating him worse than the lowliest beggar.

As with all Shakespearean characters, these characters are essentially grey. Kent, while honesty and truly loyal, is quick-tempered and not tactful. Gloucester, although loyal, is still taken in easily by his bastard and expels his trueborn. The Duke of Albany is seen as week and poor at decision-making, yet at the end of the play he metes out justice. The titular character of Lear himself, makes poor and rash judgements when angry, and succumbs to flattery in the beginning of the play. However, can he truly be blamed for being an old man who wants to indulge in the love of his daughters?

Although Edmund is treated better than bastards were in his time, he conspires against his father and brother. He turns a blind eye to his father being blinded and callously plots for more power through marriage to one of Lear's daughters. On the other hand, there are several points in the play where he claims he is just doing what is necessary to claim his birthright to the title, since he is the eldest but he knows he will never get what he deserves simply because he is a bastard. He seems to show remorse at the end of the play and admits to having ordered Cordelia's death.

The other evil characters of the play can be considered truly vile. Cornwall is domineering and cruel sadist who takes pleasure in gouging out Gloucester's eyes and gladly participates in Regan's schemes. Goneril and Regan are ruthless in their quest for power, first conspiring against their own old father who literally handed them the crown and only asked for lodging in return; then conspiring against each other for the hand of Edmund, showing there is no real honour among villains and that evil really does turn on itself.

Who are we? That is one of the main struggles in King Lear: Identity loss. Everything we perceive to be true, our beliefs that we hold, the way we see other people struggle, the way we deal with life, all of it is a result of where we've been and where we are now. Many of the characters in the play ask that same question: Who am I? What makes me this way?

Then the play goes and takes it one step further by actually providing a way for the characters to have those questions answered: By having their identities stripped. In this manner, the characters lose the preconceptions they've held all their life and instead come face-to-face with reality and discovering harsh truths about themselves and the world in the process, and this particular aspect isn't too bad.

As the play progresses, we see Lear undergo an incredible transformation. In the beginning, we see him as slightly vain and ill-tempered. He seems to believe that love that is flashy, love that can only be expressed in flattering terms and honeyed words is important. He does not realize the necessity or even importance of real emotion or loyalty beneath those words. Therefore he prefers Regan and Goneril's false words to Cordelia's true love or Kent's loyalty. He puts great importance in the size of his retinue and he is so used to his position as king that even when he is at his daughters' homes, he expects to be served with that same respect that he has always commanded, which they are not willing to offer anymore.

By the end, however, he has lost his relationship with his daughters, his kingdom and eventually his mind; he discovers the importance of several things. He values the love of Cordelia, who was the only daughter who loved him truly; and the loyalty of Kent, who stood by him in disguise even when he was banished. For the first time, he also sympathises with the plight of the homeless that wander his kingdom, because he has now become one of them. This perspective would not have been possible if he had not embarked on this strange journey of his.

When Lear looks at poor Tom the beggar, he remarks that this is true humanity, untarnished by the false glamour and prestige we attribute to the perfumes and fancy clothes of high society. He claims that our core, we are no better than animals.

This is a play with an emphasis on the theme of justice. The characters themselves wonder whether justice is apt in a world where events are unfolding before them so terribly and brutally. Gloucester says that men are merely puppets, to be knocked down for amusement in a world where Nature has its own set

of rules. Edgar, on the other hand, believes that individuals get what they deserve and that "the gods are just". However, while the evildoers are defeated in the end; it also contains a horrific twist which leaves you questions the very concept of justice.

King Lear's most controversial aspect throughout the ages has been its ending. Every other retelling of the story of King Lear has a happy ending, with King Lear and Cordelia both surviving, and Cordelia ruling the kingdom. However Shakespeare chose not to go with that ending, preferring instead to end the play with Cordelia dying in Lear's arms. Cordelia's reconciliation with Lear is particularly important, because it shows how far Lear has been able to come since the beginning of the play, now being able to treasure his daughter's true love for him.

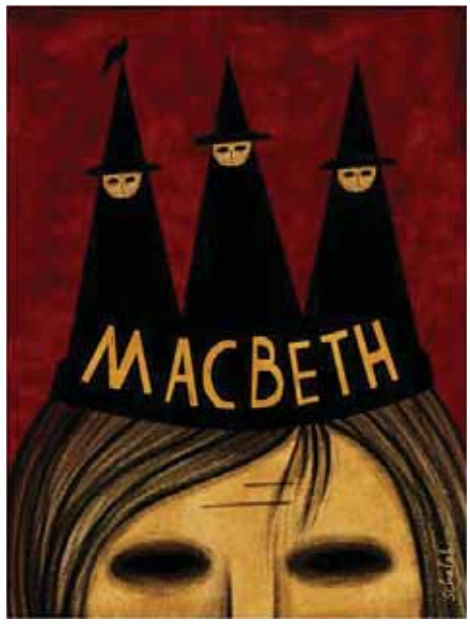
In the end, when Lear is cradling Cordelia's body, he laments asking why a dog or a rat or a horse have life while she has none at all. The tragedy of this line is that he has already provided an answer to this question earlier, when he says that humans are no better than animals, thus implying now that Cordelia had really no special reason to live.

King Lear's world is horrifying and tragic, and Shakespeare could be trying to convey one or all of several things. He could be trying to tell us that Cordelia, who was made out to be the paragon of purity, could not live in a world that was so cruel; that the justice and the just could not truly survive in a world that is made up of the unjust. He could also be trying to convey that in the battle against evil, not even the truly good are spared and that sacrifices have to be made if the war is to be won, no matter how grave those sacrifices are.

Four of Shakespeare's plays, King Lear, Othello, Hamlet and Macbeth have been critically hailed as superior to all his other tragedies.[14] They have been called "Tragedies of Destiny" or "Tragedies of Character".[15] All the titular characters have strong personalities but possess one major flaw or weakness which results in their downfall. King Lear is too indulgent, Hamlet is incapable of action, Othello is jealous and insecure and Macbeth is over-ambitious.

The plot of Macbeth is loosely derived from several old facts of Scottish history, derived from Holinshed's Chronicle, which is a large comprehensive description of British history and is in fact also a source for several of his other plays such as King Lear, Cymbeline and Henry V.

Macbeth begins with the witches making a prophecy about Macbeth and Banquo, who are generals in the Scottish Army at the time. The witches make a series of predictions, the last of which is that Macbeth will be the King of Scotland. One by one these predictions start coming true and Macbeth's ambition for power rises.




The essence of this play is meant to represent a battle between the concept of fate and free will. However it is clear that if the catalyst of the witches had not been present, then Lady Macbeth would never have been able to lead Macbeth down the dark path he eventually took. So the very concept of Fate, in a way influenced free will.

He writes about the meeting with the witches to his wife, Lady Macbeth, who on meeting encourages him take action. Macbeth after immense persuasion agrees and kills Duncan. According to Macbeth the only thing standing between him and the throne was the King himself, so once the King was out of the way everything would be fine. In his quest for power and his fear of losing the throne Macbeth ruthlessly killed anybody who came in his way. He turned into a monster of sorts, and thought himself to be invincible.

The moment Macbeth realizes that he needs to kill Duncan to become King; he shuns the idea almost immediately. He even justifies saying he can't kill him because he is a great man and has been so wonderful to him. However the tables turn when Lady Macbeth inferring from his letter has already started plotting. Macbeth's refusals can't stand up against her threatening him with the loss of her love, so he finally relents. The fact that he stops plotting temporarily because the thought of murder upsets him has its place in estimating his character, in showing that he is not totally conscience-less.

She is the one who finally makes up his mind. In a time where women didn't have much power, Lady Macbeth seems to have a lot of it and Macbeth is content to go along with her planning. One would think that even though he is against the murder in his soliloquy he hasn't shunned the idea completely because he isn't very hard to convince. By instigating her husband to murder Duncan, Lady Macbeth becomes an accomplice and we have two criminals where before we had one.

The tragedy is that it shows the disintegration of the character through the course of the play.

Macbeth is a play that closes in on its characters , through the course of the play he's entrapped by his own crimes as opposed to a play like King Lear which opens. Lear's character loses his bad qualities, while Macbeth through the play gradually develops them. In Othello, Iago is evil from the very beginning but Macbeth grows into it.

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are both extremely ambitious characters, though it is seen at different times during the course of the play. Although it is she who gave birth to his evil but her own dark side consumes her with guilt and remorse that leads to her killing herself. Macbeth however feels no remorse at all, not even when Lady Macbeth dies.

We can somewhere sympathize with this ambition because we have it in ourselves and we watch it grow in Macbeth with tremendous force. So our moral sense compels us to think and reach the conclusion that an ambition strong as this should result in death.

The Witches are the representatives of the mysterious and unknown world of evil. They add to the gloomy atmosphere and the supernatural with their incantations and prophecies but more importantly they form the link between the evil in Macbeth and the evil forces of nature of which they themselves are a part.

Still we look at Macbeth, as a tragic hero because unlike Iago in Othello who is evil from the very beginning, Macbeth isn't. He didn't believe the witches till the first prophecy came true and with that new belief came his new ambition.


This play fulfils all the requisites of a great tragedy. It is a story of human action producing exceptional calamity and ending in the death of a powerful man. Macbeth was a good soul and his existence depicts the subjectivity and possibilities of human nature. His struggle for power is so intense that his end is inevitable.

Shakespeare, overall, created some of the most famous characters of today's fiction. Be it star-crossed lovers, indignant evil, pure innocence; everyone thinks of different characters to these archetypes. There is scope for endless arguments and debates and papers. All his characters are viewed differently by everyone and each who acquaints himself with Shakespeare relates to his magic, in a different way. That's the beauty of his writing. With him we learn that there is no right answer. A character may be a villain for one reader and a victim for another. A character may seem like a hero while reading a play and appear to be a villain while watching a visual adaptation of the play. The possibilities are endless and Shakespeare's genius is unlimited, personified by the perception of the audience. He is known by all. Positive or negative, everyone still has something to say about his characters. In a capsule of words, that is the effect of Shakespeare on the world.

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2. Morality plays: Stephen Greenblatt's Shakespeare biography, *'Will in The World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare'*. Greenblatt is probably the most famous living American Shakespeare scholar.
3. The idea of the Social class was brought out in *Archive for the Social Cultural and Economic Significance* Thursday, December 3rd 2009 and cited in www.sites.duke.edu
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6. Hein Henreich, *Shakespeare's Madchen und Frauden* (1839); translated C.G Leland 1891
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# THE CHARACTER OF SATAN THROUGH THE AGES

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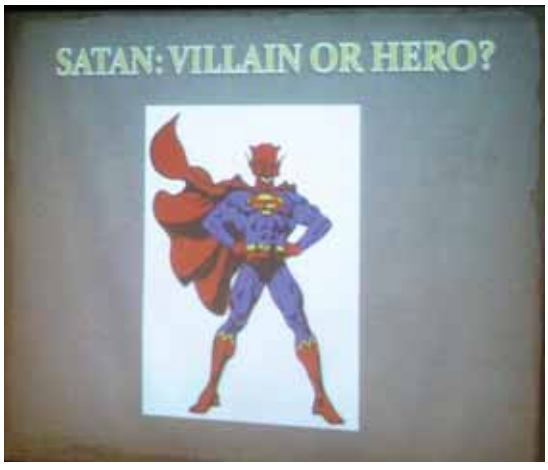
**Abstract:** The capacity of Satan to express mercilessly his hatred and anger and the horror of his situations is what makes him a hero. Satan is also an egoist. We do not pity his misery because we assent. We do not know whether Milton had these Elizabethan heroes in his mind and was inspired by them when he drew his Satan, but he has certainly given this character a glorious and magnificent role like that of a hero. While comparing Satan with the Aristotelian and the Elizabethan hero, we can come up with the conclusion that Satan can be identified better with the Elizabethan hero because he is a character we do not feel compassion for and his actions do not come out of ignorance or misunderstandings like that of an Aristotelian hero. He is very much aware of what he is doing and for what reasons he is doing it.

**Text:** '*Awake, arise or be forever fall'n.*'

These are the stentorian words that Satan uses to wake his hurt and decimated legions shortly after their pernicious fall. It is evident from the very beginning that the forceful and charismatic character of Satan in Milton's Paradise Lost is an exceptional one. What evokes the highest degree of fascination perhaps is that while Satan is unabashedly portrayed as the villain, the archfiend, Milton's gruesome descriptions of Satan only reiterate his magnificence and his exploits aimed at bringing doom to mankind and dethroning the almighty, elicit admiration. John Milton's portrayal of the character of Satan in his epic Paradise Lost is unusual in the manner in which it is brought about as it goes against the classical framework for character types. The moral, or rather, immoral qualities of Satan's persona would traditionally propel a reader to think of him as the antagonist. However, Milton begins Paradise Lost with Satan as the pivotal character in the story, giving him the faulty significance of that of a protagonist. And adding to this unconventional characterization is Satan's successful corruption of mankind, thus depicting his victory. As the epic progresses, one sees Satan, not in his simplistic role of an evildoer, but as a complex character with serious intrinsic flaws. His truculent behaviour forms the basis of his character, along with his merciless greed for power and revenge. Satan, thus, serves as a substantial benchmark for a villain, bearing in mind Milton's projection of his vitriolic nature in a rather glamourized fashion. Both Paradise Lost and the figure of Satan have become iconic in the literary world; having had an impact on diverse works from a range of writers like William Blake as well as Salman Rushdie. Satan's villainous traits can be compared to that of most sinister stereotypes belonging to various time periods, races and cultures.

Aristotle once said *"A man doesn't become a hero until he can see the root of his own downfall."*

The Aristotelian Hero, most commonly known as the 'tragic hero' is someone who is not normally perceived as a 'hero' in the most conventional sense. A tragic hero is a literary character who makes a judgment error that inevitably leads to his/her own destruction. He is perceived as 'normal' or someone who does not possess any heroic qualities. He is someone whose situation is pitied by the audience. Initially, he should not be someone who is either worse or better than normal people, because that gives the audience a chance of identifying with him. Only then, the emotion of pity is introduced amongst the audience. This is required because if the hero is an extraordinary being, then the audience would be outraged with their fate and also not care because he is ideologically superior. And if the hero were imperfect or evil, the audience would feel that his ill fate has been justified because of his behavior. This is why there is a need to strike a balance between these two extreme characteristics. An Aristotelian tragic hero must possess specific characteristics which are, Hamartia, a flaw or error of judgment, Peripeteia, a reversal of fortune brought about because of the hero's error in judgment, Anagnorisis, the discovery or recognition that the reversal was brought about by the hero's own actions, Hubris, excessive pride and the character's fate must be greater than deserved. There are other characteristics that also shape a tragic hero. The hero must suffer more than he deserves. The hero must be doomed from the start, but bears no responsibility for possessing his flaw. He must be noble in nature, but imperfect so that the audience can see themselves in him. He must have a weakness (this is usually pride). He has to be faced with a very serious decision that he has to make. He must have discovered his fate by his own actions, not by things happening to him. He must understand his doom, as well as the fact that his fate was discovered by his own actions. His story should arouse fear and empathy. He must be physically or spiritually wounded by his experiences, often resulting in his death. The hero must be intelligent so he may learn from his mistakes.




*'Alas, how terrible is wisdom when it brings no profit to the man that is wise! This I knew well, but had forgotten it, else I would not have come here'*
-Oedipus Rex

In reading Antigone, Medea and Hamlet, the role of justice and/or revenge influences each of the character's choices, resulting in actions caused due to a "judgment error."

Another example of a tragic hero includes Oedipus Rex. Oedipus is a concerned, caring king whose people love and trust him, but he has a quick, impulsive temper and fails to think in some critical situations. As a result, he commits some terrible crimes, destroys his personal world, and drags some innocent people down with him.

Medea is a tragic hero because she is beset by tragedy throughout the whole story. She betrayed her own family and nation to be with Jason. The family therefore disowned her. But later Jason leaves her to put himself and his sons in a lofty position, leaves her nothing but empty promises. She's a woman driven to madness; her losses are multiple, and in her madness and grief she even kills her own children, so that their father may suffer more and so that no one else may exact revenge upon them for her killing of the princess. While Satan's fatal flaw is pride, Medea's is her anger and is responsible for the destruction of her world.

*'For dreadful is her wrath, nor will the object of her aversion gain an easy triumph'.*

Satan without a doubt is an interesting character. The first two books completely sketch this. Satan emerges and fits the definition of the tragic hero. His pride is his tragic flaw, which also contributes to his downfall. He was the angel who was loved by God before he fell towards Hell. His journey is from Hell to Earth, passing through Chaos and Night. Even though the reader knows that Satan is going to have a horrific downfall because he is going against God, the reader still admires his courage: making attempts to tempt God's new creation, man. This is indubitably a dangerous task that the other devils are not ready to undertake. This is why Satan is said to have a 'transcended glory' for taking such a risky attempt. The reader is captured by the words Satan uses to convince his fellow devil, and finds it difficult to disagree with his reasoning.

*'Go, therefore, mighty Powers,*
*Terror of Heaven, though fallen; intend at home,*
*While here shall be our home, what best may ease*
*The present misery, and render Hell*
*More tolerable; if there be cure or charm*
*To respite, or deceive, or slack the pain*
*Of this ill mansion: intermit no watch*
*Against a wakeful foe, while I abroad*
*Through all the coasts of dark destruction seek*
*Deliverance for us all. This enterprise*
*None shall partake with me.'*

***Paradise Lost Book II***

These lines give us an example of why Satan inspired such great faith amongst his followers. He was willing to traverse the unknown depths of the dark abyss for the collective good of his fallen people. While indubitably proving that Satan possessed a great amount of audacity, it also proves that he was a brilliant strategist.

While Satan undoubtedly fulfills the notions of the Aristotelian tragic hero, he possesses many elements making him similar to heroes of the Elizabethan era as well. Milton begins Paradise Lost by describing Satan's heroic magnitude and heroic energy but as one re-reads the poem, one realizes that the imaginative impact of the first books is much more powerful than the last. This is where we can see similarities between Milton's Satan and the Elizabethan hero. We can parallel Satan's career to the progression of any Elizabethan hero from being a brave and strong character to a deceiver, to a destroyer, to someone who is not capable of feeling anything. Elizabethan heroes like Hamlet, Macbeth and Dr. Faustus have gone through similar stages.

Macbeth begins his journey as bold and faithful general, transitions into a deceitful murderer, a hirer of assassins, an employer of spies, a butcher, a coward, to a monster. Dr. Faustus progresses from an intellectual, to a master of all human knowledge, to a swindler, to a slave of phantoms, to an unfortunate and contemptible person. This theme of deforming a creature to its lowest state, by its own actions and not as a consequence of accidents or misconceptions is handled with great power by Shakespeare and Marlowe respectively. In the same way Milton describes Satan as a character who defies the nature of things and rebels against God and his authority. Satan is in search of personal independence and possesses one of the characteristics that are common among all Elizabethan heroes, that is, pride.

The distinction between men and evil in popular theology is the irreversibility of the fall of the angels.

While man is given a chance to repent his sins, the devil's will is considered so perverted that he is incapable of repentance. Satan's actions are hence justified to himself because he questions God's decision to give mankind a chance at redemption but not the fallen angels. The Elizabethan heroes Macbeth and Faustus are also incapable to change to a better state. Readers do not expect them to look back and regret or apologize for any of their actions. Satan and these tragic heroes act against nature and these actions are not performed by mistake or error of judgment but out of their own will. These actions are aimed at a desired good and these heroes accept all conditions for it's supposed satisfaction. They are fighting against the accepted setting of things.

*'I have no spur to prick the sides of my intent, but only vaulting ambition, which o'verleaps itself and falls on the other'.*

Another feature that Elizabethan dramatists used to elevate and glorify their heroes was by soliloquy. Milton gives to Satan no less than five long soliloquies. It is in them that Satan strikingly resembles the tragic hero.

*'…Which way I fly is Hell; myself am Hell;*
*And, in the lowest deep, a lower deep*
*Still threatening to devour me opens wide,*
*To which the Hell I suffer seems a Heaven.*
*O, then, at last relent: Is there no place*
*Left for repentance, none for pardon left?*
*None left but by submission; and that word*
*Disdain forbids me, and my dread of shame*
*Among the Spirits beneath, whom I seduced*
*With other promises and other vaunts*
*That to submit, boasting I could subdue*
*The Omnipotent. Ay me! They little know*
*How dearly I abide that boast so vain,*
*Under what torments inwardly I groan,*
*While they adore me on the throne of Hell.'*

***Paradise Lost Book IV***

The capacity of Satan to express mercilessly his hatred and anger and the horror of his situations is what makes him a hero. Satan is also an egoist. We do not pity his misery because we assent. We do not know whether Milton had these Elizabethan heroes in his mind and was inspired by them when he drew his Satan, but he has certainly given this character a glorious and magnificent role like that of a hero. While comparing Satan with the Aristotelian and the Elizabethan hero, we can come up with the conclusion that Satan can be identified better with the Elizabethan hero because he is a character we do not feel compassion for and his actions do not come out of ignorance or misunderstandings like that of an Aristotelian hero. He is very much aware of what he is doing and for what reasons he is doing it.

Paradoxically, Satan also fits the bill for the 'anti-hero' as seen in later, contemporary times. There is a vast contrast in perception between the two. Whereas previously, the appreciation given to Satan was reluctant, Milton's glorification of the negative, the 'anti-hero' was now accepted with enthusiasm. This can be seen through the depiction of similar characters in contemporary fictional comics. The heroic cum evil protagonists of the restoration along with contemporary fictional comics, their rancorous yet gallant characters have led to a massive destructive impression in the literary world. John Milton's character has been successfully accepted as a synonym to evil (Satanic) in the literary world of sin. The character

embodied by Satan and his anti-heroic image is prevalent in the modern times, best represented by Todd McFarlane's comic Spawn. These anti-heroic characters created by the classic writers John Milton and Todd McFarlane have broken the frames of a 'real hero'; the characters break the notion of 'a flawless protagonist', and introduce to us the imperfect reality of human behavior.

The overarching similarity of the two protagonists cannot overshadow the peculiar differences they present. The central theme of good v/s evil is maintained but the central characters perform a dilemma of the zone they play. The fictional grey character Satan was an angel of heaven but for his spiteful pride of equality was sent to hell whereas Spawn (Al Simon) a human character was a highly trained assassin. Al Simon was killed in a blazing inferno and his soul was sent to Hell because he had knowingly killed innocents in his C.I.A. days. Therefore, it is evident that both Spawn and Satan are juggling between the dilemmas that they are facing because of the change in the circumstance that have arisen.

A major similarity between Spawn and Satan is that, both of them developed feelings of vengeance at some point in their life. This can be seen in the way Satan felt when God sent him to hell. Similarly Spawn underwent a feeling of revenge when he saw his wife married to his best friend Terry Fitzgerald. Both Satan and Spawn were similar in qualities of leadership while on one hand Satan was in a way ruling hell on the other hand Spawn too became the king of the 'rat city'.

Another such character is that of Elektra whose circumstances turned her into an anti-heroic personality. Elektra was born on a Greek island near the Aegean Sea to Hugo Kostas Natchios and his wife Christina Natchios. She had an older brother named Orestez Natchios. It is assumed that Elektra was born prematurely. At the age of nine Elektra was assaulted by kidnappers, this was the time when her brother suggested to her father that she should be given training in Martial Arts. In her later years, terrorists kidnapped Elektra and her father. A rescue attempt by Matt went wrong, and Hugo Natchios was gunned down. Elektra lost faith and hope. She quit Columbia and returned to China to study martial arts. Stick, a member of the benevolent organization called the Chaste, recognized the darkness in her soul and attempted to train her himself, but she ultimately sided with the Hand, a sect of mystical ninja, who trained her as an assassin.

There is a striking resemblance between Elektra and Satan which happens to be their ability to mesmerize others, and as such make them see illusions or other phenomena Elektra also has the ability to "throw" her mind into those of others. For instance, she was able to track down her enemy, Ken Wind, by temporarily "borrowing" people's minds and acting through them while she hunted around for her prey. This temporal mind control enables her to metaphorically sniff out the psyche, or intent, of her targets.

A similar characteristic was found in the way Satan somehow tried to convince the fallen angels for the reason why they had to been sent to hell. But all these fallen angels had at some point or the other been proven to be having similar satanic elements. This is clearly visible in some of the speeches given by a few of the angels, which made a strong impact on the other fallen angels. One such angel, who spoke first was Moloch, who was of the opinion that they should have open war with God and batter God's throne. Mammon was of the opinion that they should not have war and instead with their power and hard work should try to build the best situations for themselves in hell, many of the angels approved this because they were not in favour of going to war with God. On the other hand, Beelzebub was not in favour of agreeing with Mammon as he felt that God would eventually exert his dominion over it too. There will be no peace, but they don't necessarily have to assault Heaven. He opinioned that there was a rumour that God is building a new world, which was that of mankind, and they could try and destroy this world or seduce them to their own party. This proves that each of these angels had evil thoughts deep within and were eager to put their own selfish interest above everything else. So, in a way, the fallen angels were quite satanic and very similar to the character of Elektra. Satan managed to convince the army that God had wronged them in some way or the other.

And the fallen angels believed that they have the ability to stand up to the powers of God. They decided that they could utilize their experience of being associated with God for some time by planning to take

revenge for what God had made them go through. Satan made them believe that instead of pitying themselves over the treatment given to them by God, they should enjoy it.

*'It is better to reign in hell, than to serve in heaven'.*

A character, which is most similar to that of Spawn and Satan, is that of Lobo, another famous anti-heroic character who is portrayed as a ruthless bounty hunter. He only has one rule: once he takes a contract, he finishes it no matter what, even if it means risking his own life. Lobo was declared immortal: after he died and went to hell, he proved too much for the demons, and when he was sent to heaven, he wreaked so much havoc that he was permanently banished from the afterlife. Just as Satan had to undergo the journey from heaven to hell, similarly Lobo because of his unruly behaviour in both heaven and hell was banished from the afterlife.

To add to the list of these anti-heroic character, there was Carl Draper who also had tremendous abilities and was able to produce things of unimaginable powers but unfortunately somehow or the other the credit for his work was always given to others as a result Carl, just like Satan, went into a revengeful mode, created the identity of Master Jailor and kidnapped his love Lana Lang.

We can find the satanic elements in all the anti-heroes who are able to have control over the vulnerable as well as strong-minded people. It is very clearly visible from what we have learnt about all the above characters is that whatever circumstances they have been through in the initial stages of their lives makes the people sympathize with them and thus taking their actions as fair. But if we give a balanced thought, it is difficult to sympathize with Satan as most of his deeds were evil which portray him in a very negative light.

*'Never can true reconcilement grow where wounds of deadly hate and pierced so deep'*

The similarities that lie within the maligned characteristics of Satan and in those of the villains of Japanese "manga" and "anime" also come to light. Tite Kubo's Bleach is a popular manga series written and illustrated by him. The series is about a "Soul Reaper" named Ichigo Kurosaki, who uses his powers to fight for people and protect them from evil forces that threaten mankind. Soul Reapers are a fictional race of spirits who govern the flow of souls between the human world and the afterlife realm called the Soul Society. Sosuke Aizen, initially a part of the Soul Society, later betrays it and evolves into the story's main antagonist in opposition to Kurosaki. His most prominent proclamation in the series is

*'No one stands on the top of the world. Not you, not me, not even gods. But the unbearable vacancy of the throne in the sky is over. From now on...I will be sitting on it.'*

Aizen fakes his death in order to manipulate the Soul Society and gain power by obtaining the "Hogyoku" which enables one race to exchange powers with another. He uses these powers attained by false means to attack the Soul Society to establish his hold over it. His main aim is to control it and the passage of souls and powers. His character, though, at the beginning seems mild and guiltless, upon scheming and achieving his vicious goals becomes largely malicious and his true manipulative and dangerous character is revealed.

Milton uses the first few books of Paradise Lost to build and establish Satan's spiteful and wicked persona and the infinite cruelty he is capable of displaying for his personal gain. However, in Bleach Aizen's real character is only revealed once his manipulative plan follows through. But the magnitude of his evil intentions is given the same kind of importance. Their motives, as well, are in line with one another, that are to use their powers to manifest their hold over mankind and corrupt the ways in which it functions. The main striking difference that one would see between Paradise Lost's Satan and Bleach's Sosuke Aizen is that Milton concentrates more on Satan's being and his menacing qualities, and Kubo's plot is more traditional, with Ichigo the protagonist fighting against Aizen. Aizen's sinister motives are given the presiding role, rather than his character, because the motives are a representation of it.

In Paradise Lost the traditional roles of hero and villain are ambiguously reversed. If contrasted to other characters in the work itself, Satan comes across as a larger character than any of them. Satan cannot really be compared to God who is depicted as omnipotent, perfect and infallible, therefore not relatable. A better contrast would be that of Satan with God's Son. In many ways Satan can be looked at as a stronger character than the intended hero, Jesus Christ. Satan came up with his own mission and feels an independent need to defeat God. On the other hand Jesus Christ is chosen by God to complete a mission. Therefore Christ is only a loyal servant. He does not come up with a brilliant plan; he only fulfills God's vision. Throughout the poem Satan is engaged in heroic missions, encouraging his followers with powerful and intelligent strategies. These are expounded over a large portion of the work, whereas Christ is depicted much later giving the reader the impression that the real hero has woken quite late in the day.

*'That his great purpose he might so fulfill,*
*To honour his Anointed Son aveng'd*
*Upon his enemies, and to declare*
*All power on him transferr'd: whence to his Son*
*Th' Assessor of his Throne he thus began.*
*Effulgence of my Glorie, Son belov'd,*
*Son in whose face invisible is beheld*
*Visibly, what by Deitie I am,*
*And in whose hand what by Decree I doe,*
*Second Omnipotence'*

***Paradise Lost Book VI***

This gives the reader the impression that God has merely transferred part of his powers to Jesus. One wonders whether he is truly motivated or merely an instrument of God. Satan's toil is therefore more appreciated, despite being for the wrong reasons. Christ is not a warrior; he does not possess superhuman strength or slay hundreds on a battlefield. He is not a classic hero. Neither does he possess any of the characteristics that make a tragic hero or a fatal flaw that is his undoing. His death is a willing choice, an altruistic sacrifice for the human race. When pitted against the humongous and wily Satan, Christ is similar to him in the manner that he too has free will. He does however choose to employ it to the directions of God, not against him. With reference to Christ, all that is lacking in the grey Satan is brought to the forefront. Here is an unconventional hero with no relatable flaws, or extraordinary capabilities but whose compassion renders him identifiable. Satan too, to a degree cared about those that followed. As to who is the true hero of this work depends upon the reader's perception of whether a hero is allowed to be grey. Is Christ's obedience to God's will exemplary or is Satan's defiance of the same courageous?

Satan's persona hence can be seen in a variety of ways, although the glorification or rejection Satan's qualities have varied throughout the years. The outright defense of Satan has come into being only in the recent, more contemporary and modern ages. Where as the Aristotelian and Elizabethan ages focused on his redeeming aspects so that he could be justified in being seen as a hero, the later ages accept him completely for whom he is and think his acts of rebellion and defiance commendable.Indeed the changing perceptions of Satan and varying degrees of his acceptance throughout the ages reflect on the changing ethical mindset of society itself. It is evident that Milton was far ahead of his time in depicting Satan as he did three centuries ago. It is also evident that Satan in some form or the other has always been there whichever the era. To conclude, one may say that Milton's characterization of Satan is unique and cannot be emulated, but it is however, extremely crucial when studying the stereotype of a villain and contributes largely to literary analysis. It can be seen as the template that the characters of other transgressors and evildoers from works over the centuries were possibly based on. None perhaps can compare to the detail, complexity and variety of qualities that Milton depicts in Satan. It projects Milton's brilliant perception and the path set for writers of the next centuries to come.

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# VANITY FAIR:
## The Hero in the Novel without a Hero

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**Abstract:** The paper focuses on the character of Rebecca Sharp who is the central protagonist of William Makepeace Thackeray's satirical novel Vanity Fair, a scathing critique of British society in the nineteenth century. It compares, contrasts, and covers briefly the lives of the two central female characters of the novel viz. Rebecca and Amelia Sedley. It strives to focus on how the writer while insisting that the novel has no hero ends up painting a character like Becky Sharp who does not conform to the traditional definition of a hero but still emerges as the hero in this text. The paper looks to question the traditional understanding of a hero being the central male protagonist. It is an attempt at examining the limitations of being a woman in the nineteenth century and thereby establishing Becky Sharp as the real hero of the novel.

**Text:** A lot has been said about heroes and villains being binary opposites and the aim of the seminar being to question these distinctions. In this paper we intend to not just dismantle the traditional definitions of the hero and the villain, but question the ideal of 'hero' being a gender specific category. Human beings have a tendency to divide the world into basic binaries which help them structure and fathom their world according to what is and what isn't, a differentiating line between actions and deeds that are termed good or evil. The former's representative is the quintessential hero we find in literature and other modes of popular culture. The latter's faithful representative is the villain, the embodiment of all forces dark. However, in W.M. Thackeray's Vanity Fair, he has tried to refrain himself from confining the characters of the novel to such stereotypical and simplistic definitions of hero or anti-hero. The novel undercuts these assumptions about fictional characters. The very subtitle of the novel is "A Novel without a Hero". How exactly Thackeray attempts to dismantle these binaries and present us with an unconventional hero, we shall see through the course of this paper.

First, a brief introduction:

The novel Vanity Fair by William Makepeace Thackeray is a long satirical account that pokes fun at the greed, corruption and of course, vanity of the aristocratic and middle classes in nineteenth century England. It was originally written in the form of a series published in the magazine Punch from 1847-48. To avoid having his work being shunned by the people of his time, or worse, be sued, the novel is set thirty years before it was actually written, during the reign of King George IV and the second invasion

of Napoleon. Thackeray's snarky humour outlines the story of two young women, Becky Sharp and Amelia Sedley, fresh out of finishing school whose lives take them in and out of every segment of English society, each of which can be mocked at and displayed for laughs in turn. He executes his terrible power of detecting man's self-deceptions, shams, and pretenses to expose the unworthy aspirations of everyone in the book, from snobby merchants, greedy social climbers, illiterate aristocrats, to nosy servants and bossy women.

The definition of a hero depends on the social context that the character in the society the character originates from. Usually it was the individuals who warm the top seat of the social ladder and watch over those below, protecting them from evils, confidently assuming that they can't fend for themselves. During medieval times, knights ideally embodied the role of the hero or protector of the lower class possessing qualities such as bravery, loyalty, courage, doers of good and selfless deeds. So basically a hero was a brawny man who fought the bad guys, possessed an impossible array of strait laced, goody two shoes qualities and who falls for a shiny haired woman who he stays faithful to in sickness and in health.

And then there's the traditional villain, the moustache twirling, hand rubbing evil guy who wants to take over the world. A literary villain is usually depicted as a cruel person devoted to a life of wicked and malicious actions in the plot of the literary work. As an antagonist, the villain functions as an obstacle which the hero has to overcome at various stages of the plot. He portrays a complex character steeped in amorality and evil doing for his own gain at any cost.

Thackeray warns us right in the beginning that the plot of Vanity Fair possesses no hero and in the ideal sense of the word as described earlier, the novel really doesn't have a hero. But what he puts forward instead, is a more unconventional hero.

The word hero comes from a Greek word that means 'warrior', more literally a 'protector' or 'defender'. And that's exactly what Becky Sharp is. She isn't a strapping, able bodied man protecting the meek and saving the day all while being faithful to a one true love. More realistically, she's somebody that has been left to her own devices and it is now her job to protect herself from society, the cackling villain that it has always been and to defend her ruthless choices. She's her own hero, not your usual female protagonist looking for solely a husband like Amelia, in fact, love is merely a pawn in a quest for wealth and stature. Thackeray never actually reveals whether she is guilty or innocent of her heinous acts like stealing from her creditors or being the cause of Joseph's death, who is Amelia Sedley's rich brother. The author somehow makes these acts sound like comical shenanigans rather than nefarious evil. The narrator hints at her being an unfaithful wife but doesn't give us an authoritative account of her transgressions. Thackeray's intrusive narrator invites the reader to interpret the ambiguities of Becky's moral character themselves.

In the novel, we begin by confidently rooting for Becky Sharp, the 'poor girl' forced to grow up with no maternal guidance and a father who uses liquor as his life boat as he drowns in debt. Finally orphaned, Rebecca is left to fend for herself in a world that's offered her nothing but hardships. She's a girl that lives by her wits and aims at carving a place for herself in the world, a 'Vanity Fair'. Furthermore, the ruthlessness of her character is brought out through the conflicting personality of Amelia Sedley, the rich and pampered perpetual damsel in distress. Amelia is essentially concerned with the men in her life where as Becky is concerned with making a name for herself, just about any way that she can. In the course of her life, the steps up the social ladder might as well have been the heads of the people that she met along the way as she, all too easily, fibs her way in and out of every situation. Now before you feel the urge to rip off your "Team Becky" t-shirts to reassess her character, don't forget that she's an unconventional hero. Credit must be given that she doesn't just surrender to the forces of Murphy's Law but fights to make a decent life for herself. Her actions may be far from moral but it is amply clear that she aims to emerge victorious against her villain - society. One sympathises with her for life dealt to her from a seemingly unfair deck of cards and all she's doing is playing dirty right back. You fight fire with fire. Herein lie her heroic characteristics of courage and bravery - being a woman in the early nineteenth century battling the obstacles that society puts in her way, trying to make something of herself.

Now let's turn our focus on the kind of society that Thackeray has sketched out for the readers. He

shows us a picture of British society characterised by social hierarchy and class conflict, stratifications and distinctions. Thackeray treats the characters as puppets and actors performing in a fair. Relationships make or break depending on the kind of fortune the other party has during the course of it. The characters see themselves in a superior light and treat people poorer than themselves as objects of mockery and ridicule. Thackeray attempts to hold a mirror to British society and show them their many inconsistencies and flaws. George Levine (2007, 64), while talking about the continuities and discontinuities of the narrative voice in Vanity Fair says, 'There is no novel more self-conscious (and perhaps inconsistent) about the fact of its illusionism, about the difference between the claims of art and the claims of plausibility, about the inadequacies of omniscient representation in the efforts toward authentic representation…'

As has been mentioned before, Thackeray spares no one in his portraiture of Vanity Fair and attacks all classes of society especially the aristocracy, the business class and the army.

Adding to the dilemma of living in a society where people watch your actions hawk-eyed was the restrictive nature of society towards women. They weren't allowed to venture into the many avenues of life like men were. The superiority of man was always stressed upon, both physically and intellectually. In a society where gender construction was so rigid, it was difficult for women to progress and prosper independently. They had very limited options available to lead a 'respectable' or 'dignified' life. A woman could either better her economic condition by marrying a man from a richer class and moving up the social ladder or she could pursue the few options available to her. For instance, a woman could enter the teaching profession but that would require her to be from a privileged background, or, she could become a governess.

It is important to know that being a governess was a tough job. The exact role of a governess was not defined and she was expected to take up almost all the maternal responsibilities. Moreover, her status wasn't one to be envious of as she was placed just a little higher above that of a servant. Even though she was supposed to shape the character of the children of the family she was never regarded or treated as an equal by the employers. George Osborne in fact dissuades Jos Sedley from expressing his wish to marry Becky because he does not want a governess to be his sister in-law. More often than not, the governesses were made to eat with the servants of the house and had very few opportunities for social interaction and lived in isolation. It was the duty of the governess to take care of all things domestic; her life hardly extended outside of the four walls of her home. And most of all, a governesses' salary was a meager one and could in no way ensure her financial security for the rest of her life.

Becky, who belongs to the underprivileged classes, is lucky enough to land herself the job of a governess since she has been educated at Miss Pinkerton's School. Being a poor orphan, the only reason Rebecca is able to stay in Miss Pinkerton's academy in the first place is due to her deceased father's influence as an ex-teacher, and her ability to speak French. Knowledge of a foreign language lets a person acquire an edge, an upper-hand. Rebecca makes full use of her command over the French language by snubbing Miss Pinkerton and bringing her down from the high horse upon which she sits. This provides a peep into 'the historic/fictive metonymic association between Napoleon invading Europe and Becky Sharp invading society … carried over in linguistic terms.' (Marks 1996)

She is recommended for the job of a governess to the Crawley girls. This role of Becky is quite similar to what Charlotte Bronte writes in her novel Jane Eyre. Charlotte Bronte has been quoted as saying about Thackeray that in Vanity Fair he shows 'an intellect profounder and more unique than his contemporaries have yet recognised' (Y! Voices) and that he was 'the first social regenerator of the day'. Bronte saw Thackeray's work as having power enough to bring about some real change in the position of women. Becky does not enjoy her role as the guardian of the Crawley girls. She is quick and intelligent and has very little patience with children and maternal duties. She would rather apply her mind and make intelligent conversation with the men-folk than spend her time within the four walls of the house. Let's try and draw a comparison between the two famous governesses of Victorian literature – Jane Eyre and Becky sharp. Jane is a heroine; Becky Sharp, is a hero.

Jane Eyre is a resilient woman, of higher moral caliber than Becky Sharp, but her happiness, and her psychological 'completion', seems to depend on her securing the love and companionship of another, Mr.

Rochester. All her battles from the orphanage onwards, with whatever doughty and feminist intelligence they are fought, are presented as leading to this one end. Becky can't be a heroine because she is not a 'good' enough person; while Jane Eyre's fine qualities see her through against the world, Becky is too much of that world. Her resourcefulness and skill at dealing with it, however, qualify her first for our interest, then for our backing and finally for something like heroic status.

Jane is of a submissive demeanor which is indicative of a traditional and conventional woman, one who automatically qualifies as a heroine. Jane has her ideals and morals intact and could deal with the demanding duties of being a governess. Becky on the other hand, is neither submissive nor a conventional heroine; she defies these traditional definitions and does more than the job of the governess at Sir Pitt Crawley's place. She has a wide range of influence over the whole house and is even involved with helping out Sir Pitt Crawley with financial and business matters. In the case of Jane Eyre, Jane falls in love with Mr. Rochester but leaves as she does not wish to be a mistress. On the contrary, when Sir Pitt Crawley proposes to Becky, he finds out that she is already married; to his own son – Rawdon Crawley. Clearly, Becky leaves no stone unturned and grabs every opportunity she gets to better her position in society where as Jane Eyre, being an exceptional Victorian governess, sticks to her strong sense of morals and values. All in all, they are both the main characters of their stories and therefore equally heroes. If any distinction can be made, it would be between heroine and anti-heroine since Jane follows the moral path and Becky quite the opposite.

It is also important to make a comparison between the various characters of the novel and see where they stand as far as being the main hero of the novel is concerned. As the title suggests, none of the male characters in the novel possess the strength of character that could establish them as the hero. Rawdon Crawley, the husband of Becky, is shown to be a worldly-wise soul who manipulates people and is in a ton of debt. His character undergoes a transformation in the later part of the novel but nothing too drastic to call him a hero. Joseph Sedley, the brother of Amelia, is an obese, highly nervous and very vain character. George Osborne, the husband of Amelia is a pompous and frivolous young fellow who is all too aware of his own good looks. The only male character that comes closest to being a hero is Dobbin, George's friend. He is noble and unpretentious, but Thackeray doesn't paint a very convincing picture of Dobbin as the hero.

The other female character besides Becky Sharp is Amelia Sedley, whom Thackeray sarcastically refers to as the heroine. She has been portrayed as overly sentimental, gentle and naïve. She is educated at Miss Pinkerton's with the sole purpose of making a good match. Her existence is defined by the men in her life. All in all, she is the archetypal heroine. But Thackeray rejects his sarcastic claim of Amelia as the heroine

with force by establishing her as selfishly indifferent. Her obsession with her dead husband George makes Dobbin realise that Amelia is after all, not worthy of the sacrifices that he has made. Thackeray deems Amelia way too weak and unaware of the ways of the world to be termed as the hero of the novel.

Thackeray seems to be mocking the novelistic conventions of boxing characters into heroes or villains based on their idealistic or villain-like qualities; and he instead sprinkles them with virtues and vices just enough to make them realistically human. H. H. Boyesen (1989, 599) in his essay on the construction of heroes down the ages says,

*'Thackeray's heroes, then, derive their chief value from the fact of their not being heroic. Arthur Pendennis, Clive Newcome, Harry Esmond, Captain Dobbin, Rawdon Crawley, and all the rest of them? How well we know them! How near they are to our hearts! ….They were in the best sense representative and typical. That was the way Englishmen acted, spoke, and felt during the first half of the nineteenth century.'*

In defense of the various questions and doubts about Becky's morality, the narrator befittingly presents an equally strong case of the society's antics. Becky has been shown as having had an unstable and impoverished childhood. From this very phase of her life she desires to better her position in society and resolves to use any means to succeed in this task. Thackeray describes Becky as displaying a psychological maturity since the age of eight. She is made aware of her inferior position at the finishing school of Miss Pinkerton. In all her experiences with people, she is alert to the way power operates in social relations, the dominant ideology of the powerful classes and how it deeply impacts the behavior of people. Ordinary people might submit to social hierarchy and adhere to its norms but Becky is no ordinary woman. Given the time that Thackeray is writing in, and the position of women during that time, it becomes imperative for Becky to make questionable compromises in order to build a comfortable and respectable life.

The readers are introduced to the character of Becky Sharp when she is about to leave Miss Pinkerton's academy. Her act of flinging Johnson's dictionary out of the carriage window establishes her as someone who is independent, assertive and irreverent. Her rejection of the dictionary is symptomatic of her rejection of oppressive class hierarchy. Ironically, Becky rejects social norms only to be able to find a place for herself in the fashionable and respectable circles of society. She understands that as an orphaned governess, her future is bleak and she must do something to improve her siuation. Also, she knows very well that society around her would not let her make a comfortable life for herself. She would have to worm her way through the classes to attain the social status she aspires to. Victorian literature is populated with fictional narratives where poor young men rise to the status of a gentleman through their cunning and hard work, like the character of Pip in Great Expectations by Dickens. It is unfortunate that the only avenue open to an intelligent woman of poor means is marriage - just a vehicle to move up the social ladder. In the society portrayed in Vanity Fair people shift loyalties to wherever the money shifts so it's very hypocritical of society to look at Becky as the villain as she's not the goddess of morality or goodness when they themselves least have the right to blame her for being ambitious. This ambition stems from her acute awareness of the exploitative nature of social hierarchy and Becky has experienced first-hand the condescension and arrogance with which the higher classes look down upon her. Becky's vices seem nothing in comparison to the vile and selfish attitude of society. Even in the novel when Becky tries to better her financial position by manipulating Joseph Sedley or Rawdon Crawley, it's understandable – one, because she does not have a mother to assist her in sealing a marriage deal in the matchmaking business; second, she does so out of her desire to live a comfortable and more than all, a respectable life. But what reasons can the Crawleys sell us when they drool and wait with bated breath for their aunt Miss Crawley to die, so that they can add more money to their large fortune? Or how do we buy the elder Osborne's logic of asking his pretty son George to ditch poor Amelia Sedley because her dad doesn't have money anymore? Becky is trying to worm and wriggle her way into society for a little financial security but the rich are just plain greedy.

H.H. Boyesen (1889, 597) mentions a type of hero that Rousseau calls " the grand and virtuous criminal," the man who wages war single-handed against a corrupt and pusillanimous society, who is forced into the career of a criminal because all roads of honorable utility are closed to him. The character of this hero was a direct outgrowth of the sentimental philosophy of Rousseau, and at different times occupied the

fancy of every poet and novelist who came under his influence. Becky seems to possess similar qualities. And indeed, she doesn't need be a man to be her hero. She is all this, and more. Becky becomes the unconventional hero in our eyes because she has the courage to defy gender norms, to not accept a secondary position in society passively but to actively pursue all her ambitions and keep trying to climb the social ladder unrelentingly. Her personality is a lethal combination of wit, prudence, humour, tact and ambition all rolled into one. And even in Thackeray's narration, we see a sort of sympathetic concern for Becky. We see him attacking Becky's conniving nature too but he seems less caustic and less bitter towards her actions and more unforgiving of the actions of society. At the end of the novel, when Joseph Sedley dies mysteriously, Thackeray never resolves the question of whether Becky has committed the crime. Letting audiences wonder about something as serious as murder is sign enough of where Thackeray's sympathies lie.

More than anyone else in the novel, she possesses a very keen insight into the working of the human mind and the social world. She adapts and moulds herself in whatever way she sees fit or profitable for the given situation.

As twenty-first century readers, we can afford to have an open-minded attitude towards Becky's scheming and manipulative nature because we can look at her objectively as a woman who's a victim of her times and who's merely trying to make a place for herself in society. Trying to come to terms with her own subjectivity, being controlled by powers larger than herself in this age of consumerist capitalism; the unprecedented gap between the rich and the poor; international geopolitics, and so on, the modern reader roots for Becky for her wonderful gift of knowing how to game the system. When society is one as described in the novel, we become all the more forgiving of Becky's seemingly dangerous tactics. Thackeray was quite the futurist in a sense because he realized very well that no person is entirely good or bad, that we all possess shades of grey. Hence, in this realist novel which is full of multiple narratives and various digressions, we never for once lose track of our adventurous, exciting and aggressive hero Becky Sharp and continue to cheer for her till the very end.

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# JAMES BOND AND CULTURAL POLITICS

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**Abstract:** The James Bond novels and films are among the few that have made their mark as a phenomenon that people have revered and continue to revere for over half a century now. The following paper studies the political climate of the 50s and the 60s and how that influenced the construction of the hero and the villain in the Bond novels. It also studies the role played by the "Bond Girls", their relationships with the hero and villain, and the misogyny displayed toward them by Ian Fleming, and therefore, Bond.

**Text:** Why have the James Bond novels and films proven so popular?
It has been claimed by his publishers that in James Bond, Ian Fleming created 'a fictional character unrivalled in modern publishing history' or in another formulation, 'the most famous secret agent ever'. Viewed collectively, the Bond novels and films have achieved a degree of international popular appeal over an extended period – they have been significantly popular for nearly a half of a century now. A critic of the novels, Ian Watt has stated that an author's characters may sometimes take on a life of their own, assuming a mythic status as quasi-real beings independently of the texts in which they first appeared. This applies to the popularity of the character of James Bond and the international phenomenon of the Bond novels and films.

With the popularity of the Bond films in the early 1960s, there developed a cult of 'Bondiana'. In advertisements, magazine features, changing styles of fashion, the figure of Bond assumed a quasi-real existence, coordinating a series of overlapping ideological themes in a way that was – and remains – to a degree independent of Bond's textual embodiment in a series of films and novels.

## Scope of Paper and Study:

This paper studies the development of the hero and villain in the Bond novels, specifically in the period of the late 1950s and early 1960s. The reason for studying this period is mainly that it constitutes what might be called 'the moment of Bond', the period in which the novels and the films exerted their maximum, highly concentrated popular appeal and in which the figure of Bond first assumed a wider cultural reference. This is also the period of a lot of political anxiety with the division of the world into two power

blocs around the world, a fact that plays an important role in the shaping of the characters of the hero and villain of this set of novels.

## The Narrative Structure of The Bond Novels:

In an essay called 'The Narrative Structure in Fleming', Umberto Eco offers analyses the plot, story and narrative, and the manner in which studying all three can change the way the reader studies the Bond novels. Eco states that the basic plot line and concept of the novel stays the same, at least for the novels of the '50s and '60s. According to Eco, the Bond formula is merely a variant of the archetypal structure of the traditional fairytale with a hero and a villain and a princess to be rescued. Bond as the archetypal hero needs to step in to save England and the world from the destructive plot of the villain.

However, Eco argues that interwoven with the fairytale structure, there is a further structure consisting of a series of oppositions – between love and death, chance and planning, loyalty and disloyalty – organized around the relationships between the central protagonists, particularly the Bond-Villain dichotomy. These oppositions between contrasting qualities are superimposed on a further set of structural oppositions, such as those between the Free World and the Soviet Union, between the Anglo-Saxon and the non Anglo-Saxon countries, and between associated values – duty versus sacrifice, chance versus planning, and more simply, good versus evil – which these opposing terms bring into play.

Eco's analysis offers pointers as to how the Bond novels can account for their popularity in historical terms. It is surely no accident that the Bond novels first became significantly popular in the late fifties when Cold War tensions were at their highest. The same period also witnessed a profound and developing crisis of national identity – most clearly symbolized by Britain's humiliation in the Suez crisis – as Britain's imperialist status visibly and rapidly waned, suggesting that the novels were successful, at least in part, because they offered an imaginary outlet to a historically blocked jingoism.

## The Influence of the Political Scenario on the Construction of Bond and his Villains:

With the sun setting on Britannia's empire, the creation of a character like Bond brings to the British audience and readers a chance to participate vicariously in Bond's adventures, his sexual exploits and his Vodka Martinis. It also brings to the readers a solution to their weighty and mounting crisis of national identity – James Bond, the perfect British man. Their trump card, their ace in the hole, Bond is the man that can do just about anything. From Russia with Love describes Bond as:

*"First name: James Bond. Height: 183 cm. Weight: 76 kilograms. Slim body; blue eyes; black hair; scar down the back of the right cheek and on the left shoulder; signs of plastic surgery on the back of the right hand; all-round athlete; expert pilot shot; boxer knife thrower; does not use disguises. Languages: French and German. Smokes heavily, drinks but not excess, and women. Not thought to accept bribes."*

If the Bond books are read critically, one of the things that are most striking about them is how similar in personality Bond is to the villain (with a few exceptions). Both these major characters have chosen their

belief system and set of values through force of their personal will, are ruthlessly dedicated to them, and will not in any way compromise with them. The only differing factor here seems to be that the villain has chosen the 'wrong' values. This is where Fleming's own political opinion and proclivity come into play. The villain almost always has a connection to The Soviet Union, under Fleming's fabricated SMERSH. The novels' antagonistic organization, SMERSH, was also Russia's lethal body that also operated abroad. The contraction of the organization is "Smiert Spionam", which means "Death of Spies".

An imperialist code, in which differences between nations and between races are constructed, in a relationship of superiority and inferiority, around the image of Englishness symbolized by M and Bond, is central to the structure of characterizations within the Bond novels. Eco explains this in his comments on the geographical distribution of villainy and the use of racial stereotypes in characterizing the villain in the Bond novels. From Le Chiffre, to Dr. No, Fleming's villains find themselves from the different parts of the world, with different racial and national beginnings.

It is also worth noting that Bond's helpers, where they are not American or French stand in a colonial relationship to Bond, tied to him through the special bonds of loyalty, which bind the colonies to the Mother Country. This is true of Quarrel, the black Cayman Islander who helps Bond in Dr. No. The relationship between England and America, on the other hand, is portrayed in the relationship between Bond and Felix Leiter, the CIA agent assigned to work with Bond in several of the novels, is worthy of special consideration. Kingsley Amis pinpoints Leiter's function precisely:

*"The point of Felix Leiter, such a nonentity as a piece of characterization, is that he, the American, takes orders from Bond, the Britisher, and that Bond is, constantly doing better than he, showing himself, not braver or more devoted, but smarter, wilier, tougher, more resourceful, the incarnation of little old England with her quiet ways and shoe string budget wiping the eye of big global tentacle multi-billion-dollar-appropriating America."*

The effect of Leiter's subordination to Bond is to mythically recentre England internationally during a period when Britain's international role and status were visibly declining. America may have dominated NATO whilst France was a leading power in Europe but, in Fleming's world, Bond gives orders to Leiter and Mathis and Her Majesty's Secret Service leads the CIA and the Deuxieme Bureau in their common struggle against communism. The same effect is achieved in a variety of other ways: by the simple fact that England is usually selected as the principal target of the villain's conspiracy, for example. Most notable in From Russia With Love, the principal object of the conspiracy launched by the villain is to weaken England's belief in her and to discredit her in the eyes of her allies by destroying the myth of Englishness – of the national character, which supposedly founded an Empire – encapsulated, textually, in the person of Bond himself. The SMERSH, the hostile organization of the villain in this novel, wants to send a message to all nations' intelligence agencies that they are the only one with all the real control on the world. They want to disrepute the MI6, and claim in to be incompetent compared to SMERSH. They do this by targeting Bond and attempting to trap him in a sex scandal. There is a lot of internal cutthroat politicking before they choose Bond as the target. If successful, this mission would leave Bond and his agency's reputation in tatters.

Through this all, loyalty intact, Bond manages to represent Britain in conversation with Goldfinger, not as substantially uncontested imperialist ideology but, rather as a withered ideology, vindicating the myth of Englishness in face of the eruptions of history – not 'real history', but history as represented in the novels. The discourse Bond delivers to Goldfinger, conjuring up an image of 'plucky little old England' in the new league of superpowers, underlines the point:

*"You underestimate the English. They may be slow, but they get there. You think you'll be pretty safe in Russia? I wouldn't be too sure. We've got people even out of there before now. I'll give you one last aphorism for your book, Goldfinger: 'Never go a bear of England.'"*

## The Physical Appearance and Sexuality of the Villain:

As stated previously, the construction of Fleming's villain was almost entirely influenced by the Cold War. This included the physical appearance and sexuality of the antagonist. Fleming's very obvious and blatant bias against not just the Communist nations, but also any race or community that was not Anglo-Saxon directly translated into a physical deformity or sexual abnormality in the villain. Casino Royale's Le Chiffre was described as a man with a pale complexion, crew cut hair, odd dark brown eyes with very prominently visible whites in the irises and an expensive set of false teeth. His racial origin was not confirmed, claimed to be a mix of Mediterranean with Polish or Prussian traces.

While the villain in From Russia With Love, Donovan "Red" Grant, did not have any visible physical deformities, Grant is introduced to us at the start of the novel as a rich man lying by a poolside. Later a young girl, a masseuse, claiming to have sexual desires toward Grant comes on to him, but like he has for the past two years, he shows no interest in her. His lack of interest in her, as well as any other woman he may have encountered, seemed to suggest the asexuality in the man.

Dr. Julius No, of the novel Dr. No, was a man of mixed origins. Born to a German father and Chinese mother, No had his fair share of traumatic experiences in the past, which led him to become a self-affirmed megalomaniac. His rather peculiar name is a result of a residual grudge against his father named Julius. The "No" represented his rejection toward his father's name and identity. No's physical appearance can be categorized as grotesque once the reader discovers that after being attacked by a Chinese criminal gang that cut off his arms and shot him, he used metal pincers as prostheses. The only reasons he survived the gunshot to his chest was due to an abnormality called Dextrocardia, which is a condition that causes a human's heart to be tilted toward the right, as opposed to the standard left. In the novel, No is described as six inches taller than Bond, who is six feet tall. No's frame is described as thin, eyes like "the mouths of two revolvers", he also wears the first ever contact lenses.

Auric Goldfinger, at first glance, can be viewed as an almost normal looking man, with no allegiance to a political unit. Upon a more critical reading, one can identify features like a short, physically disproportionate body, blue eyes, a passion for tanning and curious red hair. It was believed that his red hair was almost symbolic of his allegiance to the "Red States" of the Soviet Bloc. Though Goldfinger has been portrayed as a sexually active heterosexual man, he was a heterosexual man with a fascination for prostitutes whom he painted gold before sex. His obsession with having the color gold around him spread not only to the presence of the word Gold in his name, but also to the color of his hair, cat, car and clothes, all in variants of the hue. Even his servants and henchmen were Korean and were called 'yellow-skinned' for all intents and purposes.

While Bond is presented as physically attractive and possessing a hetero-normative sexuality, the villains are grotesque, as well as sexually "deviant".

## The Bond Women:

There is, in addition to the Cold War and imperialist ideology, another ideology central to the narrative structure of the Bond novels; the ideology of sexism. It is fairly easily visible that the girl in the Bond novels usually constitutes the source of an enigma in being somehow 'out-of-place' sexually. This 'out-of-placeness' may take the form of a challenging aggressiveness (Vesper Lynd in Casino Royale), a resisting frigidity (Gala Brandt in Moonraker) or lesbianism (Tilly Masterton and, incredibly enough, Pussy Galore in Goldfinger). In each novel, Bond encounters a girl (never a woman: female characters are always referred to as 'girls' in the Bond novels) who questions the traditional ordering of sexual difference. The 'place' which they are so 'out of', so to speak, is that allotted to them – that which they should occupy – within the structure of sexist ideology: subordinate, sexually and socially to men. The 'out-of-placeness' in these girls is usually accounted for in one of the two ways: the girl was either orphaned from an early age (Domino Vitali in Thunderball) or has suffered a childhood sexual experience that damaged her sexually (Tiffany Case of Diamonds Are Forever and Pussy Galore of Goldfinger, who was raped). In some cases – like that of Honeychile Rider, Bond's girl in Dr. No, for example – the two circumstances are combined.

Either way, the effect is the same: the girl has been either insufficiently or faultily positioned sexually. Lacking a clear anchorage within the ideological ordering of the relationships between men and women, the Bond girl often functions as a 'drifting subject' within the sphere of ideology in general, unsure of her place sexually, she is also politically deviant, as she sides with the villains in the novels.
The task that is assigned to Bond – sometimes explicitly but more usually, by and within the structure of the narrative – is that of repositioning the girl within the traditional ordering of sexual difference. If the girl constitutes a challenge – either because of her overt aggressiveness or because of her cool indifference toward Bond – Bond, in turn, responds to that challenge.
Established during the late fifties and early sixties, The Bond girl was depicted as "the subject of a free and independent sexuality liberated from the constraints of family, marriage and domesticity."
Over the course of the novels, each of the female characters struggle to gain power over the main protagonist, James Bond, and each time Bond confronts this new female character by engaging in sexual intercourse with her in order to strip her of her agency. Throughout the series of novels, Bond successfully manages to bed and defeat each woman by placing her back in a role of submission. To quote from the text:

*"Bond came to the conclusion that Tilly Masterton was one of those girls whose hormones had got mixed up. He knew the type well and thought they and their male counterparts were a direct consequence of giving votes to women and 'sex equality'. As a result of fifty years of emancipation, feminine qualities were dying out or being transferred to the males."*

Fleming's books offer a different reading experience to men and women. It is likely that women readers do not respond to the dominant structure of identification as seen in the novels. The blatant sexism in the writing may cause women to be offended by the Bond books or even adopt an indifferent or hostile attitude.
Bond's work is to 'tame' the rebellious streak in his 'girls' and making them traditional and obedient; the ideal candidate for marriage regardless of whether he actually marries them or not.


Bond functions as an agent of sexist ideology, refurbishing its impaired structure by quelling the disturbance within it. In thus re-placing the girl in a subordinate position in relation to men, Bond simultaneously repositions her within the sphere of ideology in general, detaching her from the service of the villain and recruiting her in support of his own mission. This relationship is clearly discernible in Goldfinger where that threat to the traditional ordering of sexual difference is posed more explicitly than usual by Tilly Masterton and Pussy Galore's evident lesbianism. An example of this can be embodied in Pussy Galore's sexual deviancy being refurbished as Bond repositions her, both sexually and ideologically:

*"""People keep on asking if I'd like an alcohol rub, and I keep on saying that if anyone's going to rub me, it's you, and if I'm going to be rubbed with anything, it's you I'd like to be rubbed with," She ended lamely. "So, here I am."*
*Bond said firmly, "Lock the door, Pussy, take off that sweater, and come into bed. You'll catch a cold."*
*She did as she was told like an obedient child. She lay in the crook of Bond's arm and looked up at him. She*

*said, not in a gangster's voice, or a Lesbian's, but in a girl's voice, "Will you write to me in Sing Sing?"*
*Bond looked down into the deep blue-violet eyes that were no longer hard, imperious. He bent and kissed them lightly. He said, "They told me you only liked women."*
*She said, "I never met a man before." "*

Pussy, at this point – and only at this point, at the very end of the novel – is firmly back in place. Speaking 'not in a gangster's voice or a Lesbian's, but in a girl's voice', safely cradles in the crook of Bond's arm, doing 'as she was told, like an obedient child', she is back in place as a woman, and back on the right side in the contest between good and evil, west and east.

Fleming isn't subtle when he describes his heroines' sexuality. With outrageous names being given to almost all his female characters, Ian Fleming was characterized as a chauvinist with absolutely no respect for the fairer sex. Offending names that were double entendres or puns, such as Pussy Galore, Plenty O'Toole, Xenia Onatopp, or Holly Goodhead, were commonly found in the James Bond novels and were considered "ubiquitous symbols of glamour and sophistication."

**Conclusion:**
The modern conception of the world of the secret intelligence services and assassinations was derived partly from the fictionalized activities of James Bond. The licensed-to-kill operative is the model for the secret service agent of the public's imagination. While this is fantasy, the former Naval Intelligence and one-time MI6 asset Ian Fleming, based the plots and details for his 007 books on incidents in his own life, and information he picked up during his career in the secret world. However fantastic the story, there is always an element of truth in Bond.

While it may seem highly speculative to deal with matters that are arguably "conspiratorial", it should be remembered that the field of espionage is inextricably bound in conspiracy, and this is no different for espionage fiction. As Fleming himself famously stated, *"Everything I write has precedent in truth."*

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# OUR CONTRIBUTORS

**Tarannum Samtani**
Tarannum Samtani is a final year undergraduate student at Jaihind college majoring in History. She was the first student editor-in-chief of the History Association Magazine 2012-2013. She has always ranked in the top 3 of the Scholars list in college and was also awarded the Shakuntala Jagtiani Prize for Outstanding Student in English in 2011-2012. Writing poetry is one of her passions along with painting, cooking, photography, travelling, yoga and cycling.

**Manvi Ranghar**
"They named me Manvi. Deeply lost, deeply curious, controlled by her ego and knows it, loves books, philosophy, pretentiously well read, a rock purist, film enthusiast, paints, just a kid, hates having to write such self synopsis, nature loving trash picking self proclaimed hippie, searching for something, don't know what. Aren't we all."

**Sanskruti S. Patil**
Sanskruti S. Patil is an F.Y.B.A student. In her own words: "My life is nothing less than a fairytale. I am God's favourite child as I have been blessed with world's best parents. I love to shop, sleep and sleep some more. I am crazy for bungee jumping and roller coasters. One sentence that describes me is, I love being me!"

**Jasleen Kaur Sachdev**
A full time student and a part time teacher at Make A Difference, Jasleen dreams of being a global teacher and traveling the world. Having become the Head of the Literary and Debating society of Jai Hind in her second year of college itself, she is an active presence in public speaking events. She regards speaking during Eve Ensler's launch of One Billion Rising movement in Mumbai as the hallmark of her college life. Super apprehensive about life post graduation, she hopes to make it in the "big scary world".

**Dr. Seema Sharma**

Dr. Seema Sharma's areas of interest include American Literature, Postcolonial Studies and Translation Studies. She regularly translates creative and critical works from English to Hindi. She recently published a book titled *Articulating Resistance in African American Slave Narratives.*

**Ms. June Dias**

English teacher par excellence (or so say all of us). Often, interested in other languages (that have no immediately obvious practical purpose). Fond of Psychology and sometimes gets conned into learning Maths.
Otherwise, a daughter, sister, wife and mother-of-two with a figure that belies that last fact.

**Richa Gupta**

Richa Gupta is a second-year Arts student at Jai Hind College with a desire to study literature. She tends to gush about Welham Girls' School, her alma mater, to anyone who cares to listen.
She spends a lot of her time wincing at internet shorthand and obsessing over fictional characters.

**Puja Roy**

Puja Roy is a 28-year-old journalist and writer based in Mumbai since 2004. She graduated from Jai Hind College in 2007 with a Major in English Literature. She has worked in the business news space with CNBC-TV18 and Bloomberg TV India and did a brief stint with Goa-based news and entertainment weekly Goa Streets as Editor. Her main areas of interest are foreign policy and human rights. She counts the Dalai Lama, Noam Chomsky, Naguib Mahfouz and Arundhati Roy as her inspirations. Puja hopes to write a book someday!

**Rohan Kamble**

Rohan Kamble is a TYBA student pursuing English Literature. He participated in the English Seminars organised by the English Association on the topics "Heroes and Villains in Literature through the Ages" and "Adaptations of Shakespeare through Culture and Time" in the academic years 2013-14 and 2012-13 respectively. He has also worked as the Treasurer of the Literary and Debating Society and secured the third place in the Creative Writing competition for the college magazine in the academic year 2012-13.

**Shikha Shah**

Shikha is an eccentric 17 year old child and a determined dreamer. She is walking towards a destination that may not exist or may be her paradise, She doesn't bother herself with these thoughts anymore because her journey is so beautiful that her final destination is definitely happy ever after. She studies Philosophy and English in FYBA, and she thinks she is a descendant of Aristotle and Shakespeare. Also, Shikha loves sleep, and food, and more sleep.

**Sneha Menon**

Sneha Menon is an alumnus of Jai Hind. She is nothing like Sheila in her article though she would like to be. Unlike her, Sneha takes taxis to college, uses lots of hot water and quite insensitively ignores traffic beggars. When she is not deepening her carbon footprint, she takes Economics and Math classes for her final year of grad. She loves dogs and listening to podcasts.

**Aldish Edroos**

Aldish is an Assistant Producer at CNBC-TV18. In addition to working in broadcast journalism, she is an avid reader of literary fiction & historical non-fiction, irregular blogger, erratic sketcher and listener of metal & classical music. She also worships food. Currently, she lives in Mumbai with her family and a pet lizard that sometimes roams around her bathroom. She has named her Lizzie. Aldish is the founding editor of *Hwæthwugu.* We have no idea how Aldish got away with giving our magazine such an impossible name!

**Devika Soni**

"When it comes to people, your family and friends don't struggle to become better, because that is like fighting a battle that isn't yours. Struggle to be there and you'll do just fine."
No these aren't words of some fancy author, they're of Devika, an F.Y.B.A. student of Jai Hind. An offshoot of her eureka moment. She evidently likes to write and her drawing isn't that bad either.

**Drishti Mehta**

Drishti studies in FYBA. She has an odd sense of humour, has an undying love for Pink Floyd and cakes bring her an unbelievable amount of joy. If there comes a day that the human race in caught up in the middle of a chicken apocalypse we would stand no chance, she believes. Also, she thinks lemons are pretty good.

**Dr. Kamal Jadhav**

Dr. Kamal Jadhav has studied at the Universities of Madras, Andhra and Mumbai. Indian English writing andPartitionliterature are her areas of interest. Her most rewarding experience has been the opportunity to interact and brain storm with young minds, and out of the box perspectives and outlooks. This has been both a humbling and a deeply enriching journey spanning 30 years. This exciting journey now continues with her grandkids.

Oscar Wilde's
The Importance of Being Earnest
A Play by The English Association

# EDITORIAL TEAM

**Ms. Divya Bhatnagar**
Ms. Divya Bhatnagar has studied at the University of Delhi and has been teaching for the past seven years. When she is not teaching, or surfing the internet she spends her time reading,watching films, travelling and listening to music.

**Pankti Shah**
Pankti Shah is a TYBA student of the Department of English. She has worked as a professional in designing. She has done her Maximedia course in Graphics and Designing from NIIT and enjoys working with all Adobe softwares and softwares such as Director Mx, Sound Forge and Maya. She loves animating and designing. She is currently doing a course in Animation and aspires to become an Animator.

**Shraddha Indulkar**
Shraddha Indulkar is a TYBA student of the Department of English. Designing is a passion with her. She is a professional in Managing Social Media and she loves experimenting with the latest designing softwares. Her work can be viewed on *wecouldbewallflowerfriends.tumblr.com*

**Disha Sanghvi**
Disha Sanghvi is currently a T.Y.B.A English student. She has always enjoyed reading and writing, but her secret passion seems to lie in travelling the world. So far, she has participated in various intercollege and intracollege creative writing competitions. She has also attended various courses in order to better her understanding of English Literature, all in an attempt to discover that something that gives the literary works their unique beauty.

**Varun Gwalani**
Varun Gwalani is an SYBA student, who has been writing for a long time. *Believe* is his first published novel, and his first foray into a new world, with his book being about the fictional town of Levion.

Cædmon, the shy cowherd, left the banquet when he couldn't take his turn singing like everyone else. In his dream, an angel came to him, coaxing him to sing, "Sing me *hwæthwugu*!" said the angel, meaning, in Old English, "Sing me Something!" and coaxed him further. It was the angel's encouragement that resulted in the creation of the first poem in English, Cædmon's Hymn of Creation.

*Hwæthwugu,* or 'something', then, is that indescribable element which can make literature come alive, it is that which can make shy cowherds sing and fill their song with a touch of some mysterious reality, not of this world.

*Hwæthwugu* is that secret element added by every writer, every creator to their work, as they pour a part of themselves into what they write. One sees the writers come alive through their writing, because writing is more than simply words, it is something beyond words ...

*Hwæthwugu...*
it is in the smell of old parchment,
in the yellowing of the pages,
it is the secret of the scent
of books forgotten for many ages...