

(Basavaraj Naikar

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The Nativist Vision of Life in the Works of Basavaraj Naikar

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Study the past if you would define the future
– Confucius

Edited by
P.V. Laxmiprasad



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A Bond beyond Bondage: Guru-Shishya in Basavaraj Naikar's *Light in the House*

Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha

The Guru-Shishya tradition, or Parampara, denotes a chain of teachers and disciples in traditional Indian culture. It means an uninterrupted series or succession or the passing down of knowledge. It is the tradition of spiritual relationship and mentoring, where knowledge is imparted through the developing relationship between the Guru and the Disciple. This relationship is based on the authenticity of the Guru, and obligation, devotion and submission on the part of the student.

Basavaraj Naikar's fictionalised narrative, *Light in the House*, is a tribute to the 19th century saint poet, Sharif Saheb of Shishunala, popularly known as the 'Kabir of Karnataka' who kindled the light of spirituality in every human being. Though born as a Muslim, he was instructed by a Virasaiva preacher Siddharamayya, and a Brahmin preacher Govindbatta, Sharif or Mohammad Sharif Nawar, was born in 1819 to Imam Saheb and Hajjuma. For twelve long years after their marriage, the couple remains childless, and later they are blessed with a son, who is prophesied to grow up to be a saint. Even as a child, Sharif begins to pose many innocent but fundamental questions to his parents. Though they are pleased with his queries, at times they are embarrassed because they do not know the answers to his questions.

When the child reaches the school-going age, he encounters his first Guru Siddharamayya, the teacher in the village school. This is

Critical Spectrum

The Short Stories of P. Raja

"Details make stories human, and the more human a story
can be, the better."

– Ernest Hemingway

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Transgression or Transcendence? Female Carnal Desire in "Ahalya" and "Nightmare" by P. Raja

Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha

We hail from a cultural background that has given us Khajuraho and the Kamasutra but we are relatively prudish when it comes to sexuality; women more so than men. We refuse to acknowledge that we are living, breathing, sexual creatures. But the truth that every woman knows, whether she acknowledges it or not, is that female sexual desire exists and is a strong, powerful force, equal to and perhaps even surpassing male desire, if not reined in constantly.

The ideal woman is shy and submissive, content to let the man take the lead in matters sexual. When men talk of desire, it is with the self-consciousness of speaking about something connected to a construct of masculine image and not a biological urge. When women speak of female sexual desire, it is with embarrassment, guilt and often anguish that they are transgressing social boundaries. In addition to this, the all-pervading veneration or denigration of women in two absolute extremes – the 'Devi' or the 'whore', leads to a fear of expressing one's sexual needs. For this reason she is disinclined to express her needs, as she may be perceived as either a nymphomaniac, or immoral, both derogatory indictments in our cultural context.

Two stories by P. Raja from his collection of short stories titled "The Black Bitch and Other Stories" celebrate the element of

female sexual desire and provide justification for their deed; interestingly 'Ahalya's Curse' is from a female perspective and 'Nightmare' is from a male perspective.

Myth plays a significant role in shaping the cultural heritage of a nation, thus functioning as a major tool for patriarchy for imposing its ideology on women. The task is accomplished by endowing women with a series of role models who are glorified, revered and rewarded precisely because they advocate ethics of patriarchy. Myths also provide contrasting images of evil women who transgress from the roles assigned to them and are punished for their deviant behaviour. Sita in *Ramayana*, the 'good' woman is passive, submissive, docile, self-sacrificing and devoted to her husband, while 'Surpanakha', the 'evil' woman is assertive and sexually aggressive. Patriarchy is therefore very clear in its stipulation of the qualities that a woman should and should not possess. The sexual woman is a threat to the masculine fabric of our society.

'Ahalya's Curse' is in first person narrative, a monologue addressed to her husband Sage Gautama. She points out to him the roles he had played in her life as a father, mother, and guru, and accuses him of being greedy in playing the role of the husband.

"You should have stopped there, O Sage! You should have stopped there. It is out of greed you played the fourth role... Not knowing one's limitations is a sin... an unpardonable one at that. You married me." (17)

Talking about her marriage she says,

"I became your wife. Rather I was made your wife even before I could ask myself whether I liked it or not. Such a thing happens to ninety per cent of women in our country. It is destined so, perhaps. Or is it a curse on our motherland?" (18)

The usage of passive voice is deliberate as she is made to follow the customs of an archaic institution of a phallo-centric society where she is deprived of freedom, will and reason. There is no voice, no mourning and no objection. She becomes a mere tool

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Living through Mahesh Dattani's Plays

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LIVING THROUGH

Mahesh
Dattani's
PLAYS

"I regard the theatre as the greatest of all art forms, the most immediate way in which a human being can share with another the sense of what it is to be a human being"

— Oscar Wilde

Editor

DR. P.V.LAXMIPRASAD



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Fragmented Lives and Fractured Identities: Reading Dattani's *Bravely Fought the Queen*

C. A. Assif

It has often been said that modern Indian English drama has come of age with Mahesh Dattani. As a Playwright based in Bangalore, Dattani has dared to open up the hitherto untouched areas of literary thoughts. As an avant-garde writer, his activism has been highly acknowledged by aficionados of theatrical experiment. Deliberately moving away from the safe zones of theatrical experience he rather dwells on areas which have hitherto been uncharted. As the much celebrated modernist writer, T.S. Eliot has remarked every age requires its own language Dattani's plays have focused on the modern urban Indian experiences in its real sense of the term. A world which has been characterised by the fragmented lives is the prime locale of most of his plays. At the locus of most of his plays is the society where no one seems to have an ideal kind of existence since each appears to possess a kind of fractured identity.

Though not trying to make theatre a vehicle of social propaganda he doesn't want to identify himself with the dramatists who considered art as something which is totally detached from life. Conscious of the larger responsibility of the

Mahesh Dattani creates the disagreement among the characters in the play through the strong passion of individual women on traditional dance. Dattani portrays the play with the gender discrimination that exists behind a woman's passion on the dance leads destruction in the life of man.

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Gendered Identities in Mahesh Dattani's *Dance Like a Man*

K. Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha

Indian classical dance forms incorporate both *Tandava* (vigorous /masculine) and *Lasya* (soft/feminine) offering a balance of cosmic energies, male and female, in their exposition. The *Tandava* aspect is branded by sharp and strong movements that aim to capture the essence of the underlying bhava or sentiment. The *Lasya* elements are embodied by movements that soft and fluid, and seem to merge into one another in a graceful blur with no sharp edges. But the beauty and strength of Indian classical dance forms is that they transcend mere physical perfection. Movement does not exist for or by itself, to be practised as meaningless demonstration. The feet, hands, neck, eyes, face, all work in tandem with the body to breathe life into movement and tell a story, taking the energy involved to a whole new dimension. This draws the mind into the process releasing a pensive effect. But how do we explain the power and beauty of a male dancer in a woman's attire transforming into a female even as we enjoy male dancers performing Tandava and Lasya in equal balance? When the dancer performs with zeal and fervour, in that magical moment, the difference between the male and the female bodies disappear and the dancer becomes inseparable from the dance.

The Poetry of T.V. Reddy:

A Critical Study of Humanistic Concerns

Edited by
Dr. P.V. Laxmiprasad

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Michigan - USA

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Angst and Despair: Existential Concepts in the Poems of T.V. Reddy

Anantha Lakshmi Hemalatha

Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote, "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does". Existentialism is a term applied to the work of a number of philosophers since the nineteenth century who generally focused on the condition of human existence, and an individual's emotions, actions, responsibilities, thoughts and the meaning or purpose of life. It is a philosophy that makes an authentically human life possible in a meaningless and absurd world. Existential philosophers often focused more on what is subjective as opposed to analyzing objective knowledge.

In his first collection of poems *When Grief Rains*, T. Vasudeva Reddy shares the belief along with the Existentialists that philosophical thinking begins with the human subject – not merely the thinking subject, but the acting, feeling, living human individual. A retired Professor of Literature, T. V. Reddy is a renowned poet, novelist, and critic of literature. He is the author of ten collections of poetry, with his most recent collection *Thousand Haiku Pearls* released in 2016. Commenting on his first collection of poems, Rosemary C. Wilkinson says, "...Truly *When Grief Rains* (author's first collection of poems) is an insight into a rare soul longing for the ethereal."

"Life is a Desert" captures the sense of being alone and isolated in the desert of life. He finds himself a 'marooned man' in the midst of his 'kith and kin'. People around him are cautious and careful so as not to entertain or encourage him to befriend them. His poverty-stricken condition worsens and weakens him physically and mentally. The worn out soul questions:

How long shall I resist the jealousy?
Envy and ennui of the society? (WGR, 14)

Despair in existentialism is generally defined as a loss of hope. As Kierkegaard defines it in 'Either/Or', "let each one learn what he can; both of us can learn that a person's unhappiness never lies in his lack of control over external conditions, since this would only make him completely unhappy". Here, in the poem, it is the external conditions that act upon him and make him feel that life is unbearably agonizing. The sense of reality shatters him and makes him understand the ways of the world resulting in despair.

I am a lone man in the barren land.
Dissembling mirage tantalizes me,
A thirsty man with a parched tongue.
Life is an elusive endless desert,
Full of sands and storms, no oases (WGR, 14)

The notion of the Absurd has been prominent in literature throughout history. It contains the idea that there is no meaning in the world beyond what meaning we give it. Many of the literary works of

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**Mutiny and Negotiation: The Muslim Women World
Represented By Salma in 'the Hour Past Midnight'.**

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Abstract

Salma a Tamil poet and novelist made her mark in the Tamil literary world through her original work 'Irاندam Jamankalin Kathai' translated into English by Lakshmi Holmstrom. 'The Hour Past Midnight' articulates her torment and suffering with regard to the treatment of girls belonging to Muslim community. The restrictions enforced upon them stimulated her into the writing of the book. It traces the lives of a few Muslim women, though they belong to the well-to-do, the educated, the poor and the deprived there are more than a few common factors that unite them: the major factor being lives are not theirs to live. Secondly, they are continually pushed and pulled around by the men in their families, extended families, friends and neighbors. The present paper discusses the lives of a few Muslim women as narrated by Salma. It represents their typical struggles and worries, of relationships, of love and hatred, and of death. It presents the conventional lifestyle of Rabia. It also



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**BATTLING FOR MERE SURVIVAL: MARITAL VIOLENCE IN MEENA
KANDASAMY'S "WHEN I HIT YOU OR, A PORTRAIT OF THE WRITER AS A
YOUNG WIFE".**

"I will write in the same way in which I lived through all of this: carrying myself with enormous, infinite grace" – MeenaKandasamy.

The imposing response given by MeenaKandasamy when asked in an interview about the choice of marital violence as the theme of her novel is, "I did not choose that theme, it visited me, imprinted itself upon me, changed my life irrevocably – and I had to write about it". When I hit you is one of the few works of significance dedicated to the subject of marital violence. It is an incredible personal account, written from the first-person point of view wherein the unnamed narrator claims the privilege to tell her story that uncovers layers and layers of trauma and pain she had experienced in the name of marriage and from the repository of memories she recalls how she had to battle her way towards liberation from her tormentor.

Influenced by the Leftists, she falls for a college lecturer who is supposedly an underground revolutionary. Her choice of marrying this Maoist proves wrong as her marriage becomes a 're-education camp' to instil virtues of communism in his bride in a violent and brutal manner. It is attention-grabbing to note what the writer has to say about the nature of domestic and intimate violence which is gradual and vicious. The husband displays masochistic traits to wrest control from her in the form of her email and social media like Facebook. He burns his elbows and legs to threaten her to quit Facebook because she was endangering the life of a revolutionary husband. But the actual reason seems to be his suspicious nature which makes him compel her to share her password for email. The author calls our attention to the post-reunion episode of Ramayana where the husband tells his wife to walk through fire to prove her virtue, making it a public spectacle. But what happens to the narrator is a private spectacle, a preventive measure

for not losing her chastity. This kind of violence is aimed at disarming her. It is a kind of 'career suicide' as he is aware of the fact that Facebook helps her promote her work as a freelance writer. When she gets an opportunity to write an article on sex surveys in the 'Outlook', he takes her away to his village and cuts her off from the outer world of media. She describes how she smuggled the USB dangle from her husband's pocket to mail the article.

The phone number is changed and she is instructed not to share it with anyone except her parents. Thus she is isolated in a strange city as she does not know the local language of Mangalore and totally cut off from her family and friends. At one point, he deletes all the emails from her inbox and changes her password so that she cannot restore her mails. He erases everything on her hard disk and everything about her life as a writer is gone. Gradually, he takes away control from her and dehumanises her.

The woman in this novel is a millenary and these are her modes of communication. If the novel had a feudal age setting, then a suspicious husband would have been eavesdropping on her private conversations and interfering with her handwritten correspondence. Again, the husband's hatred of Facebook, emails, mobile phones and Macbook are not because they are capitalist icons, but rather because they enable her a freedom that he cannot sufficiently control and helps her reach out to the world of other men. "I think we must avoid the danger of conflating a tool of communication or a product of technology as something that is intrinsically a feminist device or an emancipatory invention", Meena Kandasamy records in an interview when she speaks about possessive and suspicious husbands tracking their spouse's movements by installing spyware.

He starts criticizing her mode of dressing. He is verbally abusive when he says, "Don't expect that you will one day earn the trust of the working-class women if you strut around with your lipstick and handbag. They will mistake you for a prostitute." (132).

As it develops, it turns the everyday environment into a war-zone and the instruments of abuse are many to catalogue.

"The cord of Mac-Book which left thin, red welts on my arms. The back of the broomstick that pounded on me across the length of my back. The writing pad whose edges found my knuckles. His brown leather belt. Broken ceramic plates after a brief journey as flying saucers. The drain hose of the washing machine." (70)

The man always finds other means of intimidation. In the kitchen, the wooden cutting board is banged against the counter-top, the clattering plates are thrown into the cupboard, and unwashed glasses are thrown down the floor. She simply holds back her tears and counsels herself, “Try harder, husband. Try harder. I am not going to be tamed by these tantrums.”(131)

But she knows better, and launches a fierce fight back, refusing to forget her words, and never her sense of humour. She writes poignant letters to imaginary lovers: “I write to you because I can.” The writing follows a pattern: “Open a file, write a paragraph or a page, erase before lunch.” Even as she leads a suffocating life in her domestic realm in Mangalore, where she is trapped “in the space of three rooms and a veranda”, with a husband who takes out belts and other gadgets to penalize her, she is not lost for words. The liberation through writing, even writing that is erased, is an inspiring revolution. There is a lot of great literature about war in general. On the one hand, millions of people, writers included, are killed in the war. On the other hand, destruction on such a scale turns people inside out – and produces haunting literature. The same is the case here. But the unfortunate truth is that for every woman who manages to come out of violence unscathed and be able to draw, write, act, work – there are hundreds and thousands more who are broken down and have their dreams, ambitions and talents crushed.

Subsequently, MeenaKandasamy differs from other women writers of marital violence. They dig the ruins, scour the past and always put themselves there playing only the victim role. But her narrator even when she is beaten up badly by her husband who forces her to delete something that she had keyed into her laptop, battles with the situation and has faith that someday she will be writing about that moment.

“...I am conscious that I am thinking about this and not about the moment, and I know that I have already escaped the present and that gives me hope, I just have to wait for this to end and I can write again, and I know that because I am going to be writing about this, I know that this is going to end.”(88)

Before she manages to escape, the narrator of Meena’s book chillingly records her ordeal: “...when he hits me, the terror flows from the instinct that this will go further, that it doesn’t end easily...” Her talks with her parents hold up a mirror to the society. They take turns convincing her to stay when she wants to walk out of this marriage. She is instructed not to

raise her voice, not to talk back and to use silence as a shield. Her father advises her to be tolerant and patient for this reason: “If you break of your marriage, everyone in town will mock me...You have no idea what a father goes through. A father of a daughter – that is a special kind of punishment. We pay the price. Please. Think about this once.” (158-159). The mother counsels her that marriage is not magic and finding the perfect man is only a myth.

Shame, pride and a society in which everyone from parents to police expects a woman to put up and shut up force the realisation that only she can save herself. She tries to be silent. But her silence is broken by more violence as the husband takes in hand another weapon – rape. While rape by a stranger is highly traumatic, it is typically a one-time event and is clearly understood as rape. But marital rape is more emotionally and physically damaging than rape by a stranger. In most cases, marital rape occurs as part of an abusive relationship. Trauma from the rape adds to the effect of other abusive acts or demeaning talk. When she begs him to stop, he shouts at her,

“Why do you talk to me now? Why? How did you find all your words all of a sudden? So, this is the miracle cure to your silence, is it? If you wanted to be fucked like a bitch, you could have asked me. See, you have got your speech back. See, you have been cured. Now keep your mouth shut and don’t wake the neighbours. You are a whore. Thevidiya. You should know that. Stop crying, there is nothing to cry about. I should be crying for marrying a whore. You are a whore. This is what whores do. This is why I don’t treat you like a wife. Stay still. You don’t want it this way? How many men took you from behind? How many? Would you even remember? Don’t fight or this is going to hurt you. Fucking cheap whore. Next time you taunt me with your silence I will tear your fucking cunt apart. Now say sorry, bitch. Say sorry. Yes. That’s it. You will remember this. You will never forget this lesson.” (163-164).

The narrator’s reaction to this action is one of desolation. She asks, “How do I explain to anyone this savage rite? Where do I look for metaphors? How do I let another person know how it feels to be raped within a marriage?” (168). The shame of rape is the shame of the unspeakable. She compares herself to a corpse that lies motionless, devoid of sight, smell, sound, touch and taste. When the ceremonial feeding of the corpse is done, when it is fed with uncooked rice into its mouth by close relatives, it lies there, with a feeling of unfeeling. She feels the same way when she is made to part her legs and he begins pushing inside her.

Besides, marital rape is mostly not just a one-time event, but a repeated if not frequent occurrence. Whether it takes place once or it is part of an established pattern of domestic violence, trauma from rape has serious long term consequences for victims. Also, in the case of marital rape the victim has no choice but to continue living with the spouse. The researchers Finkelhor and Yllo remarked in their metropolitan Boston area study that, “When a woman is raped by a stranger, she has to live with a frightening memory. When she is raped by her husband, she has to live with the rapist.”

In her case, rape is a fight she could not win; it is defeat. As rapes become the regular occurrence, she reaches the point of no return. She plays rag-doll and learns to normalize the rape and the violence in his words. But the coarseness of her husband’s insults makes her cringe. She is shaken by the way language allows a man to insult a woman in an infinite number of ways. The aim of this rape and rough sex is that she must not derive any pleasure from sex. “When I’m through, what you have will be torn and tattered. After a child, it will not even be recognizable”, are the words of her man who makes use of rape as a tool of punishment. She is not allowed to even urinate after the act, as the husband sees it as a ‘systematic conspiracy’ to ensure that she never gets pregnant. Every word MeenaKandasamy writes, every sentence that relates the abuse and trauma is imaged in one ethnographic detail or another—the disturbing accounts of sexual abuse and rape; the societal dismissal of survivors of violence; the helplessness of parents who feel silence can be a refuge from violence; the transformation of one’s intimate space where violence is not only possible, but inevitable. It is when he threatens to kill her that realisation dawns on her that she is “more useful alive than dead,” and she does not want to do anything that would endanger her life. In the end, she escapes, no thanks to anyone else but herself.

MeenaKandasamy has a piercing tentacle for injustice. In 2012, in an emotional piece on her broken marriage with an abusive husband, she wondered if she could overcome the nightmare. Five years later, she has taken responsibility over her own life; she has written her story. As far as she is concerned, “Violence is not something that advertises itself...As long as a woman cannot speak, as long as those to whom she speaks do not listen, the violence is unending”. This is why MeenaKandasamy’s voice, her narration becomes very essential: it ruptures the social contentment and silence around violence, and stresses that women survivors of violence cannot be merely defined by their experiences of the same

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திராவிட மொழிகளில் சிறுகதைகள்

பன்னாட்டுக் கருத்தரங்கம்

Short Stories in Dravidian Languages (International Seminar)

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WOUNDED WOMEN PSYCHE IN SELECT SHORT STORIES OF KAMALA DAS

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Short-story as a powerful form of literary expression today has acquired a distinct Indian dimension and identity in the Indian literature. Though it is not a dominant form like fiction still it is a popular form of writing in literary world. Today, Indian women writers have laid a solid platform for short-story writing. It is evidently seen in their published works both in regional languages and English that they focus on women and their life in all dimensions. Short story in India has always been popular in the regional languages among women writers. Kerala can boast of a long line of short story women writers in Malayalam. Kamala Das is one of those rare writers who is equally at home both in the regional language as well as in English. She is accepted as an Indian English poet and as a Malayalam short story writer. She writes short stories under the pseudonym Madhavikutty. It is surprising to note that when over a hundred and fifty stories have issued from her pen in Malayalam, Kamala Das has used the short story form very sparingly in English. If Das's Poetry has been identified as explorations of the 'self', it will be appropriate to accept her short stories as explorations of the 'other'.

'Punishment' by Madhavikutty, translated into English by A.V. Varguese, talks about the plight of a girl of fifteen on her nuptial night. The girl who is addressed by her grandmother as Ammu is found curled up on the bed where she used to sleep every night along with her grandmother. Though the old woman is filled with compassion for the sleeping child, she is compelled to wake her up and send Ammu to her husband. When Ammu wakes up the granny understands that she has cried herself to sleep. "Ammu opened her eyes wide, startled. They were tear-streaked eyes, strained and

stained with sorrow. Granny's heart ached for her." (P)

When her grandmother urges her to go to her husband, Ammu becomes panicky. "Didn't I stay there half the night? Ammu asked. Shouldn't I get to sleep now? Does marriage mean that one loses one's sleep?" (P) Kamala Das was also married at the age of fifteen to a man who was much older and employed in a city. Therefore, as a writer, we find her consistently delving deeper into her consciousness to create female images that are at once herself and the other. "If I had passed my examination, I wouldn't have been married off, right?" (P), Ammu's question sounds insignificant to her grandma at that time. However, through Ammu the writer makes us feel that education could have been a saving grace. "If I had passed, there would have been no marriage, murmured Ammu. I should have studied better." (P). Ammu who is still a child with a lean and immature body feels unhappy to be in a loveless marriage that makes cruel demands from her body. Towards the end, we find her still ruminating, "Ammu sat on the bed and hid her face in her hands. I could have concentrated more on my studies, she whispered." (P) The voice of the voiceless ends just in a whisper.

The prime concern of Kamala Das's short stories has been the age old relationship between man and woman. Kamala Das questions this blind acceptance of matrimony and its inherent quality of subjugation of women. 'The Goat' (Kettiyitta Koladu) is another short story by Madhavikutty portraying a 43 year old woman whose life is centered on her family. When her elder son mischievously remarks that she looks like a goat, she hides her pain within herself. She is not happy with her skinny cheeks either and her body that has lost its youth and lusciousness. She sleeps alone on a mat on the floor outside the bedroom. Throughout the day she toils very hard for the sake of her family in an uncomplaining manner. She carries buckets of water from the bathroom to the kitchen and back with no help from her grown-up sons or husband. The family exploits her gullibility and that is evident from the following lines:

"...occasionally, they would loudly praise her famed abilities in cleaning and mopping the house, in cooking their food and in washing and ironing their clothes. Whenever she heard their

adulation, she would smile –

exposing her deteriorating teeth." (G).

Even a small act of kindness brings tears to her eyes, she cries in the kitchen when her younger son buys her a gooseberry. With the passage of time, she becomes a disgrace even to him as she is neither educated nor sophisticated.

"When she said that she would accompany him for the school drama, he said:

'No need, Amma. I will be embarrassed.'

But why? I will wear my silk sari – my wedding sari...'

No need for you to come." (G).

The writer expresses the never-ending business of a homemaker – "Two thin legs moved around in that small house constantly, never resting. Finally that machine also became faulty." (G) When she falls sick due to endless labour, the doctor informs the family that she has developed acute jaundice and has to be shifted to the hospital immediately. "When a helper hoisted her onto a gurney in the hospital, she opened her eyes wide and cried: 'Ayyo! I think the pulses are burning on the stove.'" (K). Her family, that has praised only her abilities of cleaning, mopping, ironing, cooking and washing is shocked to hear that she has jaundice. The story concludes with the husband shedding tears as an effect of his inability to understand the value of such a wife. Thus the selfless, self-effacing, noble qualities of this woman, is set apart from the husband and the sons who form the selfish majority.

Madhavikutty's 'The Tattered Blanket' exposes the sour facts of life in a stunningly simple manner. This is one of the brilliant stories penned by her in Malayalam. Gopi is a big officer in Delhi living with his wife Vasantha and four children. His mother lives in Kerala with his eldest sister Kamalam who is a widow. Gopi visits his mother after five years when he makes an official trip to Thiruvananthapuram. Mother fails to recognize her son but she has

a picture of her son in her mind. She says, "My son is in Delhi... a Government Officer. He has Kesariyogam... He draws a salary of two thousand five hundred rupees." (TB). She expresses her requirement for a new blanket, a red one, as the old one given to her by her son is tattered. Gopi had bought for her the red blanket when he was studying in Madras: it is just a ball of knotted yarn now. Kamalam knows that Gopi has come only for money, to sell his share of land, and not to see his mother. Kamalam says, "Amma is eighty three now. I don't think she will pull on much longer. It took you so long to visit her after the last time". But Gopi has his excuses for not visiting Amma. He says, "But amma can't remember who I am." The story ends with Kamalam's question to Gopi, "But do you remember your Amma?" The mother does not recognize her son because of memory loss. In fact forgetfulness is a blessing as there is nothing left of her son's love for her. Kamala Das's focus has always been on the tormented female self craving for love. Here the blanket represents the warmth of her son's love.

'Sweet Milk'(Neipayasam) is yet another short story that lays emphasis on the role played by a woman in her family. The story begins with the man (Achchan) returning after cremating his wife. The three children are too young to understand that their mother is dead. The day had begun like any other day but has ended unexpectedly with the death of the mother due to heart failure. They had married against the wishes of their parents and gradually became dejected due to lack of money and the children's spells of illness. Nevertheless they were a loving family. Now that she is gone, he is worried about the future. When he feels a twinge of pain in the knee, he becomes anxious, "...the beginning of arthritis? Who will look after the children if I am bedridden? Suddenly his tears welled up." (SM). He is swept by jumbled emotions described by the writer thus: "He was angry with her for no reason. How could she go, without any warning, burdening me with all the responsibilities! Now who would bathe the children? Who would cook for them? Who would look after them when they fell ill?" (SM). He rehearses a leave application in his mind, "My wife died," he whispered to himself, "my wife died suddenly today of a heart attack. I need two

days of leave... Leave not because the wife is ill. Leave, because the wife is dead." The boss may not understand his sorrow because "...he didn't know her. He didn't know her hair curled at the ends, her tired smile, her slow step. All these are his losses." (SM).

Traditionally, the work of Indian women writers has been undervalued due to patriarchal assumptions about the superior worth of male experience. Contributing to this prejudice is the fact that most of these women write about the enclosed domestic space, and women's perceptions of their experience within it. Madhavikutty's stories are a re-affirmation of women, woman reclaimed of body and spirit. The stories taken here for analysis portray the poignant voice of wounded woman psyche against the value systems of a patriarchal society which in its self-absorption fails to even notice the needs of women.

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