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Literary Druid is an online Peer-reviewed International Journal of English Language and Literature which is committed to academic research, welcomes scholars and students all over the world who to advance their status of academic career and society by their ideas. The journal welcomes publications of quality papers on research and other mentioned forms in English Language and Literature

Research ought to be active to create a major boundary in the academic world. It must enrich the neo-theoretical frame that facilitates re-evaluation and enhancement of existing practices and thoughts. Eventually, this will effect in a primary discovery and lean-to the knowledge acquired. Research is to establish, confirm facts, reiterate previous works ant to solve issues. An active endeavor to endow rational approach to these types for educational reformations through academic research has become the focal intention of the journal. Now, we feel very proud to bring the April, Volume 6, Issue 2, 2024 Issue contributed by the academicians and research Scholars of the literary field.

Dr. M. Vinoth Kumar & S. Kulandhaivel
Editors'-in-Chief

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Analysis of Myth-Making in the Initial Stage of Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*

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Abstract

Joseph Campbell stated that myths are collective aspirations, while dreams are individual aspirations. The novel "Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief" by Rick Riordan explores the heroic adventure of Percy Jackson through the lens of Joseph Campbell's concept of the Monomyth. The Monomyth consists of three main sections: Departure, Initiation, and Return. Rick Riordan's "Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief" are ancient myths woven into modern graphic novels. The art of myth-making is skillfully employed by the writer and introduces the readers to a world where ancient Greek mythology and mythical characters intersect with contemporary life. Percy Jackson is seen as an innocent teenager who learns the truth that he is the son of Poseidon, which sets the stage for a blend of mythological elements in modern settings. The introduction of Camp Half-Blood in the novel is a training ground for demigods and the protagonist encounters figures like the Minotaur and Chiron. The story is very close to the classical myths and maintains a fresh and engaging approach to delivering archetypal instincts. The seamless integration of ancient tales into a present-day adventure captivates every reader and lays a clear foundation for the series. It may also be helpful to the modern dilemma where many youngsters struggle and there will be a way to find here from this archetypal character. The researcher employs a descriptive qualitative approach to evaluate the hero's quest in the novel. Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief. The conclusion posits that this particular voyage is a symbolic representation of individuals' life journeys in everyday existence.

Keywords: Rick Riordan, *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, Myths, Monomyth, Hero's Journey.

Introduction

Mythology refers to the oral narrative of a community. According to Joseph Campbell, mythology serves as the fundamental basis for the development of all civilizations. "The myth is the public dream and the dream is the private myth" (Campbell 48) *The Hero with Thousand Faces* asserts that mythology elucidates, empowers, stabilizes, and elevates an individual's existence from mere existence to a life imbued with everlasting significance. Homer, Sophocles, Herodotus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, and Archimedes are widely recognized as mythology's most renowned pioneer writers. Mythology has greatly influenced literature.

Problem Statement

The researcher formulated the research question based on the study's background and research topic. According to Joseph Campbell's idea of Monomyth, the Adventure of Percy Jackson in Rick Riordan's novel can be analyzed. The researcher intends to analyze the following questions:



- Does this text pertain to the creation of myths?
- Does the novel align with the theory of Monomyth or the hero's journey?
- Does the main character ultimately realize his true identity?

Objectives

To use Joseph Campbell's Monomyth theory to examine the adventures of Percy Jackson by Rick Riordan.

Significance

According to Joseph Campbell's theory of Monomyth, the researchers thought that this research would be helpful and help readers who want to learn more about Percy Jackson's big adventure and Departure of the Hero's Journey in Rick Riordan's novel.

Review of Literature

Numerous prior findings have been documented in this investigation. The preceding findings are derived from the study that shares similar issues with the present study, namely the Monomyth. The outcomes above are as follows:

The article titled "A Modern Musical Exploration of Monomyth" by Brace (2009) introduces and examines the author's initial jazz composition, A Hero's Journey, which draws inspiration from Joseph Campbell's renowned and often employed narrative structure referred to as the Monomyth. The suite for a ten-piece jazz orchestra was composed by the author, drawing upon significant elements from the Monomyth. The suite comprises six scenes, which are further separated into two acts. Although originating from jazz, the composition incorporates elements from classical music, African music, Indian music, and contemporary rock and hip-hop, resulting in a dynamic and daring musical encounter. The present study commences by providing a comprehensive overview of the entire suite, followed by an analysis of its prominent melodic themes. Subsequently, an examination is conducted on the harmonic development approaches utilized within this composition.

The study "Mad Hero in a Box: Christianity, Secular Humanism, and the Monomyth in Doctor Who (2015)" looks at how Christian precepts in helping the Doctor on his heroic journey, Secular Humanist ideologies draw him away from that path, and the resulting contradictions create an anti-hero who no longer represents the heroic ideal he is supposed to uphold.

Kealy (2011) examines the application and analysis of Joseph Hobbs as Superman's ancestor in the works of *Beowulf*, *Odysseus*, and *Roy Hobbs*. Kealy and Campbell proposed the Monomyth Theory. This thesis aims to assess the application of Campbell's Monomyth theory to renowned literary works, including *Beowulf*, Homer's *The Odyssey*, and Malamud's *The Natural*. These diverse pieces will serve as a means to evaluate Campbell's thesis and determine the durability of the Hero's Journey across both temporal and spatial dimensions.

The author identifies distinctions and parallels among them, drawing upon prior research. In previous investigations, the researchers have employed Campbell's Monomyth or the Hero's Journey but with distinct objects. For instance, Brace utilizes a song or musical as an artefact, Hardy employs a film, and Kealy uses poetry. Consequently, this study will analyze Rick Riordan's literary work, specifically the novel *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* from a monomyth perspective. The researcher will employ the Monomyth hypothesis proposed by Joseph Campbell to evaluate the work.

Research Methodology

The research employed for the study is a descriptive qualitative method. This approach aims to analyze the protagonist's journey in the novel *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, authored by Rick Riordan. According to Endraswara (2011: 5), descriptive



qualitative research is a strategy employed to provide a verbal or visual description without using numerical data. The writer employs note-taking as the primary tool for conducting the research. According to Endraswara (2011: 163), note-taking can be understood as a method of gathering data. During the note-taking process, extraneous aspects of the topic are excluded. At the same time, pertinent concepts, such as underlining or bolding, are emphasized to facilitate the writer's examination of the issues at hand. The researcher carefully observes and records any crucial details in the novel. The methodology employed for the literary study consistently revolves around examining the theory, concept, and methodology. The author utilizes Joseph Campbell's Monomyth theory to explore the extraordinary journey of the protagonist in the novel *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*.

Discussion and Findings

The Monomyth or Hero's Journey stages proposed by Joseph Campbell encompass three fundamental divisions: Departure, Initiation, and Return. There are six stages in Departure, five stages in Initiation, and seven stages in Return. The researcher has chosen the First stage 'Departure' for analysis. Myth refers to the oral narratives of individuals. Joseph Campbell posits that mythology is the fundamental basis upon which all civilizations are built. In his work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* asserts that myth empowers, stabilizes, and elevates an individual's existence. Great writers like Homer, Sophocles, Herodotus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Plato, Euclid, and Archimedes used mythology as the core of their works. Hence, the influence of mythology on writing has been multifaceted.

1. Departure

a. The Call to Adventure

The initial phase of the legendary journey, known as the "Call to Adventure," signifies the hero's summons from destiny, causing a shift in their spiritual focal point from the confines of their civilization to an unfamiliar realm.

I have moments like that a lot when my brain falls asleep, and the next thing I know, I've missed something as if a puzzle piece fell out of the universe and left me staring at the blank space behind it. The school counselor told me this was a part of the ADHD, my brain misinterpreting things. (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 11)

Percy Jackson is suddenly forced into an adventure that he may not like and is against initially. He is loaded with responsibilities that he cannot be refused. Something must have anchored the Gods, and the hero must take it upon himself to solve it. In the novel *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* (2005), Percy is the typical teenage boy forced to find the stolen Zeus' Lightning Bolt. If it is not returned, it will result in a war between the Gods, Zeus, Poseidon, and Hades. Percy tries to handle the fact that he is the son of the Greek God Poseidon, his disabled friend Grover is a satyr who is protecting him all along, and that his pre-algebra teacher Mrs. Dodds one of the furries.

b. Refusal of the Call

The next step is "Refusal of the Call." Sometimes, the hero is given the option of going on a mission. He may or may not search; the choice is entirely up to him.

That's the property line, my mom said. Get over that, hi, and you'll see a big farmhouse down in the valley. Run and don't look back. Yell for help. Don't stop until you reach the door. "Run Percy, she told me. I can't go any further; run! But I stood there frozen in fear as the monster charged her. She tried to sidestep, as she'd told me to do, but the monster had learned his lesson. His hand shot out and grabbed her by the neck as she tried to get away. He lifted her as she



struggled, kicking and pummelling the air. (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 49)

In certain situations, the hero is given no options and is compelled to quest, such as Percy, whose mother is kidnapped and promises to return her when he returns The Lightning bolt to Zeus. Percy resists attending Camp Half-Blood and almost refuses to undertake the task.

c. Meeting the Mentor

Meeting the Mentor is the next step in the Monomyth. During this stage, the hero becomes engaged in the mission or quest, either inadvertently or consciously, and is directed by a mentor.

Then things got even stranger. Mr. Brunner, who'd been out in front of the museum a minute before, wheeled his chair into the gallery doorway, holding a pen in his hand. "What ho, Percy!" he shouted and tossed the pen. Mrs. Dodds lunged at me. With a yelp, I dodged and felt talons slash the air beside my ear. I snatched the ballpoint pen out of the air, but when it hit my hand, it wasn't a pen. It was a sword—Mr—Brunner's bronze sword, which he always used on tournament day. Mrs. Dodds spun toward me with a murderous look in her eyes. My knees were jelly. My hands were shaking so bad I almost dropped the sword. (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 12)

It does not have to be a guide; the hero is often given magical weapons to assist him defend himself. In this book, Percy Jackson is often advised by his Latin instructor, Mr. Brunner in the mortal world, eventually revealed as Chiron, a centaur in command of Camp HalfBlood.

d. Supernatural aid

Supernatural aid is one of the important incidents that happens in the formation of a hero and the success of the hero's task.

I was too tired to argue. I stepped back into the creek, the whole camp gathering around me. Instantly, I feel better. I could feel the cuts on my chest closing up. Some of the campers gasped. 'Look. I -I don't know why,' I said, trying to apologize, 'I'm sorry.' But they weren't watching my wounds heal. They were staring at something above my head. (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 12)

Throughout the story, Percy is emotionally and physically supported by Chiron and spiritually by his father, Poseidon, the God of the Sea. Before embarking on a quest, Chiron bestows upon him a celestial bronze sword to aid him in his voyage and his natural ability to control water as Poseidon's son.

e. Crossing the Threshold

Nestis represents the 'Crossing the Threshold,' a stage in which the hero must choose between leaving his previous world and embarking on the adventures that await him. The initial step in crossing the narrowing barrier between the mortal and eternal worlds is 'crossing the threshold'. The hero is oblivious to the unknown world and looming peril as he embarks on the trip to strengthen his abilities.

Most of the campers were older than me. Their satyr friends were bigger than Grover, all of them trotting around in orange CAMP HALF-BLOOD T-shirts, with nothing else to cover their bare shaggy hindquarters. I wasn't normally shy, but the way they stared at me made me uncomfortable. I felt like they were expecting me to do a flip or something. (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 75)

Percy embarks on a journey from the familiar to the unknown in this tale. He attends the Half-Blood Camp, abandoning his mortal life and developing himself there to reinforce his



foundation. He prepares himself physically and mentally to deal with the difficult and perpetual environment in which no one knows what will happen because the norms and limitations are undefined and unpredictable.

f. Belly of the Whale

The fifth stage of the Hero's Journey is the 'Belly of the Whale.' The term usually refers to the hero's rebirth, particularly in Greek mythology. The hero is absorbed into an entirely new universe, where he may suffer, giving the reader the impression that he is doomed forever. The 'Whale' depicts the hero's initial 'first evil.' The author Joseph Campbell takes the phrase 'Belly of the Whale' from the biblical account of Jonah entering the whale. The hero understands he is too deep into the dilemma to turn back.

Grover was leaning against the porch railing, looking like he hadn't slept in a week. Under one arm, he cradled a shoe box. He was wearing blue jeans, Converse hi-tops and a bright orange T-shirt that said CAMP HALF-BLOOD. Just plain old Grover. Not the goat boy. Grover was a satyr. I was ready to bet that if I shaved his curly brown hair, I'd find tiny horns on his head. But I was too miserable to care that satyrs existed, or even minotaurs. (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 58)

The man facing me was small but porky. He had a red nose, big watery eyes, and curly hair so black it was almost purple. He looked like those paintings of baby angels—what do you call them, hubbubs? No, cherubs. That's it. He looked like a cherub who'd turned middle-aged in a trailer park. He wore a tiger-pattern Hawaiian shirt, and he would've fit right in at one of Gabe's poker parties, except I got the feeling this guy could've out-gambled even my stepfather. "That's Mr. D," Grover murmured to me. "He's the camp director. Be polite. The girl, that's Annabeth Chase. She's just a camper, but she's been here longer than just about anybody. And you already know Chiron... (*Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief* 62)

Greek mythology contains numerous devouring motifs. Zeus, the King of the Gods, is destroyed by his father, the Titan Kronos. To defeat the monster sent by Poseidon, Hercules, the heroic hero, must descend into its belly. When Percy Jackson's mother is transported to the Underworld, he fights the Minotaur first. This is the point at which Percy understands he can't turn back.

Conclusion

The hero is not someone who wakes up one day and chooses to confront evil. He is someone who improves himself with the support of others. He is not a hero because he commits heroic acts. He is a hero because he is moral and does not easily succumb to evil, which constantly influences him. A hero is frequently portrayed as having abilities. A person is a hero because he stands out from the crowd, even when the entire world is against him. Every hero goes through a remarkable or innovative change, known as Percy's journey. Percy Jackson, as described on the first page, is not the same person as on the last page. Like any other teenager, he is bullied in mortal and immortal worlds, making the reader feel connected to the characters. Percy Jackson experiences practically every feeling and emotion that a typical teenager goes through, from bullying to problematic parenthood, prompting every reader to reflect on their own lives. Like other heroes, Percy Jackson undergoes significant transformations that make him appealing to readers. A hero has dedicated their life to something greater than themselves. A hero must complete his physical and psychological



journey despite insurmountable hurdles. The hero does not always have to be larger than life. Analyzing the hero's journey effectively examines story structure, myths, tales, films, novels, and comic books. The hero's journey also provides insight into the hero's personality. The most famous literary works constantly draw on the ageless story framework known as the hero's journey, which has been around for a thousand years. The researcher responds to the problem statement based on the findings from the analysis and discussion. According to Joseph Campbell's idea, Percy Jackson's quest in Rick Riordan comprises three stages: departure, initiation, and return. In this novel, the Monomyth theory applies to the six phases of the first stage. In mythological accounts, the intervention could come from God. In *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*, the hero returns safely out of jeopardy without God's aid. He identifies himself and returns to the Camp of Half-Blood without assistance. Percy's quest will continue in the following stages of initiation and return.

Suggestions

Following an analysis, the recommendations are:

- For previous research, Rick Riordan's Percy Jackson and the Olympians sequel series can also be analyzed using the Monomyth hypothesis.
- The researcher recommends more works incorporating the Monomyth idea, particularly for Literature students, such as *Harry Potter*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Trial of Apollo*, *The Heroes of Olympus*, *Kane Chronicles*, etc.
- The researcher recommends that readers read this novel since it is one of the best novels and tells the tale of someone's life that is comparable to the lives of others.

Future Recommendation

- Another prospective field of inquiry in this story is a psychoanalytical study of the characters' minds, titled "Survival of the Fittest and a Good Leader".
- A social investigation into good and evil as choices.
- Examining the Mythological Figures accepted into the Modern World.
- The researcher can conduct the research in the following two stages: Initiation and Return of *Percy Jackson and The Lightning Thief*.

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Abstract

Mythology consists of myths relating to sacred stories of a particular culture. These stories deal with a wide range of topics such as morality, the origin of humanity, cultural values, traditions, the purpose of life and so on. They also recount the tales of Gods and other supernatural beings. Indian mythology is a vast collection of tales that revolve around celestial and human beings. These are documented in Hindu scriptures like the Vedic literature and the Puranas. Ramayana and Mahabharata are the two ancient and well-known epics of India. These epics are not mere ancient tales of kingship and warfare, but also an effective medium used to emphasize the value of upholding dharma. Indian mythology has become the prime component among many contemporary Indian writers who have used widely mythological characters and incidents in their works. Devdutt Pattanaik is an Indian mythologist, speaker, illustrator, columnist and author of more than fifty books. Some of his important works are My Gita, Jaya, Sita, Shyam, The Book of Ram and Yama and his Book of Accounts. His works deal with the areas of religion, mythology and management. The present study aims at an analysis of "The Book of Ram" of Devdutt Pattanaik to highlight the significance of upholding dharma in one's life. It depicts how Ram has lived his life on a righteous path even in difficult circumstances. Ram is the symbol of morality and dharma and is thus known as "Maryada Purushottama." Throughout his life, he consistently follows dharma in all the roles he has assumed whether it is being a son, a husband, a brother, an enemy, and a King. The author provides a novel perspective about Ramayana by narrating the life of Ram as a person who has lived for others.

Keywords: Devdutt Pattanaik, *The Book of Ram*, Puranas, *Ramayana*, Ram, Dharma.

Introduction

Indian Mythology has emerged as a prominent theme among the several contemporary Indian writers who have extensively incorporated mythological characters and incidents in their works. "From early on the special importance of Indian mythology was perceived in its great antiquity and its extraordinary continuity, so that its ideas and gods can be observed in 'statu nascendi' and its stages of development over millennia can be traced up to the present." (Horsch 423) Devdutt Pattanaik is an Indian mythologist, speaker, illustrator, columnist and author of more than fifty books. Some of his important works are *My Gita*, *Jaya*, *Sita*, *Shyam*, *The Book of Ram* and *Yama and his Book of Accounts*. His works deal with the areas of religion, mythology and management. The present study aims at an analysis of *The Book of Ram* of Devdutt Pattanaik to highlight the significance of upholding dharma in one's life.

The term 'myth' is derived from the Greek word "mythos" which means stories that



are transmitted orally. Mythology is a collection of myths of a particular cultural group. M.H. Abrams and Harpham describe mythology as “a system of hereditary stories of ancient origin which were once believed to be true by a particular cultural group, and which served to explain why the world is as it is and things happen as they do, to provide a rationale for social customs and observances, and to establish the sanctions for the rules by which people conduct their lives” (*A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 230). These narratives explore various themes such as good vs evil, the origin of humanity, cultural values, traditions, the purpose of life and so on. Such tales are often about Gods and other celestial beings. These mythological stories usually deal with the stories of the distant past. Academicians and Historians consider these as subjects of debate and attempt to prove their factual accuracies. However, myths serve as an effective tool to teach moral values to mankind.

Indian mythology is a vast collection of tales that revolve around celestial and human beings. These are predominantly featured in religious texts like the Vedic literature and the Puranas. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are the two ancient and well-known epics of India. These epics are not mere ancient tales of kingship and warfare, but also an effective medium used to emphasize the value of upholding dharma. Mythological stories effectively convey the essential message to people and guide them towards a peaceful and prosperous life. Indians especially Hindus consider that following their religion could provide a sense of meaning and purpose to their lives. Spiritual values are essential for one’s liberation from worldly entanglements and the well-being of the soul, mind and body.

Theoretical Framework

Dharma is a key concept in Indian philosophy and literature. It encompasses the duties, rights, laws, conduct, virtues, and the right way of living of an individual in this mortal life. Its importance is intensely rooted in the cultural traditions of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. In the Hindu concept, dharma is the moral law with spiritual discipline that guides an individual's life. *The Ramayana* is one of the major two epics of ancient India. It is a sacred epic where the concept of dharma is explored in the life of Rama and Sita. Rama is the protagonist of the epic who is an epitome of dharma. His actions demonstrate the principles of righteousness and moral duty in life. Devdutt Pattanaik is a contemporary Indian author very much known for his works on ancient Indian myths and epics. He has reinterpreted the myths and epics as novel narratives to make them accessible to modern audiences to imbibe the ancient didactic values. Pattanaik offers a retelling of the *Ramayana* in his "The Book of Ram" with a focus on the concept of dharma connecting its relevance in the miserable contemporary times. Sneha Tripathi & Dr. Tejal Jani say, “By reinterpreting myths from revered classics and folklores, Devdutt explores the mysterious nature of humans. He clarifies and elucidates the root cause of traditions and taboo practices in India even today. The persona of Gods and Goddess is both feared and worshipped in India when they are seen as mortal men and women.” (265) Hence, this article takes up a study on the significance of dharma in Pattanaik’s *The Book of Ram*.

Literature Review

Koller, J. M. (1972) in the work "Dharma: An Expression of Universal Order" explored dharma as a manifestation of universal order and its role in maintaining cosmic balance. This work provides a philosophical background that can be juxtaposed with Pattanaik’s interpretation.

Hiltebeitel, A. (2001 a) in the article "Rethinking the Mahābhārata: A Reader’s Guide to the Education of the Dharma King" focused on the *Mahabharata* by eliciting an examination of dharma’s complexities and contradictions offers insights applicable to the



Ramayana.

Sharma, A. (2000) in the book "Classical Hindu Thought: An Introduction" provided an overview of classical Hindu thought, including an in-depth analysis of dharma, which can be instrumental in understanding Pattanaik's modern interpretations.

Pattanaik, D. (2010) in his novel "The Book of Ram" gives a focus for dharmic analysis wherein Pattanaik's reinterpretation of Ramayana by highlighting the role of dharma in the context of contemporary issues.

John Brockington (2004) in the article "The Concept of Dharma in The Ramayana" examined how Rama's adherence to dharma and its implications for modern ethical and moral dilemmas have been portrayed in *The Ramayana*.

Dharma in *The Book of Ram*

In *The Book of Ram*, Devdutt Pattanaik portrays how Ram has lived his life on a righteous path even in adverse conditions. Ram is the symbol of morality and dharma and he is known as "Maryada Purushottama." Throughout his life, he consistently upholds dharma in every role he has assumed whether it is being a son, a husband, a brother, an enemy, and a King. The author presents a new perspective on the epic *Ramayana* by deviating from the conventional narrative of Ram and instead focusing on Ram's selfless existence for others. Some of the instances in the epic display the selfless and righteous deeds of Ram.

For instance, the King of Ayodhya, Dashratha has declared his son Ram as the future King. At this moment, one of the wives, Kaikeyi, on the persuasion of her maidservant, Manthara, asks for the older promise that her husband has made. She demands that Ram should go into exile for fourteen years and that her son Bharata should be made the King. Dashratha struggles and hesitantly orders Ram's exile. The author opines, "Ram leaves Ayodhya, not because it is his destiny and not because it is his desire, but because it is his duty" (*The Book of Ram* 33). Without much hesitation, Ram accepts the order because it is his dharma to honour his father's old promise and leaves for the forest. Ram does not worry about leaving the luxurious life in the palace or the struggles of survival in the forest. According to Hinduism, the dharma of a son is to obey and respect his parents by being considerate, polite, and following their orders. This act of Ram shows his unflinching nature of following dharma as a dutiful and devoted son.

Ram, being a hermit, is required to maintain a state of celibacy. In the wilderness, sexual behaviour is driven by instinct, whereas in human society, it is influenced by both emotions and intellect. In the forest, he observes birds and animals involved in mating publicly. However, as a result of the pledge he has undertaken, he is obligated to lead a life of renunciation. Ram maintains dharma by keeping up his promise. Ram's actions exemplify his unwavering commitment to upholding dharma as an individual. Another episode illustrates Ram's quality of modesty. After the war between Ram and Ravana, Ram approaches the injured Ravana on his deathbed to acquire knowledge from him, as he is the son of a Rishi and a highly knowledgeable scholar. Ram requests, "Noble king of the Rakshasas, for the crime you committed against me you have been punished. I have no feelings towards you at this moment. Only great regard for your wisdom. I, seated at your feet as a student, humbly request you to share your knowledge with me" (*The Book of Ram* 120). Ram sits near the feet of Ravana as a student like a disciple sitting beside the Guru's feet. He requests Ravana to impart his wisdom to him. Amused by the humble act of Ram, Ravana teaches him the greater lessons of life. As an enemy, Ram has done the duty of punishing Ravana for the crime he has perpetrated against him. He holds neither hatred nor anger towards Ravana rather he has immense respect for his wisdom. Ram sees Ravana as an individual for what he



stands for and not as his enemy at the end. This episode reveals the humbleness of Ram and his upright act. From the analysis, the readers could understand the importance of upholding virtue in one's life. Ram has acted as a dutiful son, a celibate to the core and a great person of humility and nobility under different circumstances. Devdutt Pattanaik has adeptly presented the significance of upholding dharma in one's life with the illustration of Ram in *Ramayana*.

Conclusion

Pattanaik's *The Book of Ram* offers a thoughtful search for dharma. It highlights the enduring significance of guiding human conduct and moral decision-making in mortal life to defeat adharma. By doing a reinterpretation of the *Ramayana*, Pattanaik highlights dharma, which is deeply rooted in the ancient tradition of ancient India. It remains a fundamental and pertinent concept in addressing modern moral challenges of life. His work not only rejuvenates the interest in traditional Indian literature but also provides a coherent framework to understand and apply the age-old wisdom in today's difficult world where dharma is vanishing. *The Book of Ram* positions dharma as a vibrant and pliable framework that will apply to modern life to evade many problems. The novel also reinterprets the trials and tribulations faced by Rama and emphasizes dharma as a principle of ethical living that transcends all time. Pattanaik has demonstrated that dharma is a living tradition and encourages his readers to consider how the moral lessons from the *Ramayana* can transform personal lives from crises and could help to develop societal values.

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A Critical Discourse of Myths and Mythological Characters in Tamil Literature

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Abstract

The paper intends to study the use of Myth in Tamil literature. Myths are bygone narratives about the gods and goddesses or individuals of exemplary characters and deeds. The earliest available literary works of all the three Tamil Sangams are referred to as "Sangam literature". The Sangam age is between 300 BC and 300 AD. Among the literary works of the first and middle sangams, "Tolkappiyam" is the only literary work now available, as the other works were lost in submersion. It is an old Tamil grammar text, in which the names of gods viz. Vishnu, Skanda, Indra, Varuna and goddess Kotravai are mentioned. It serves as a handy reference for the use of mythological stories in Tamil literature. The past Sangam literature mainly consists of the great five epics among other works. The first among the five epics "Silappathikaram" with its central character Kannagi, seems to be based on a historical story. As a deviation from other works, Kannagi, a woman of chastity, is elevated to the status of goddess. After the Sangam and post-Sangam period, "Tirumurai" a compilation of hymns in praise of Lord Shiva by 63 Nayanmars and "Nalayira Divya Prabandam" a compilation of hymns in praise of Lord Vishnu by twelve Alvars also indicate the usage of mythology in Tamil literature.

Keywords: Tamil Literature, Myths, Characters, God, Goddess.

Introduction

Myth or mythological stories in any literature refer to traditional phenomena, which may also be a social one. Mythological stories in Tamil can be found in the earliest available literature known as 'Sangam literature'. This literature has references to the gods and goddesses worshipped by the Tamil race during that period. In the post-Sangam period, five important epics namely *Silappathikaram*, *Manimegalai*, *Sivakasinthamani*, *Valayapathi* and *Kundalakesi* were produced. These epics deviated from the earlier practices of adoring the Gods and Goddesses to adoring the heroes and heroines of the epics. For example, *Silappathikaram* and *Manimegalai* adored the heroines namely Kannagi and Manimegalai respectively. In the later period, they were elevated to the status of goddesses.

Sangam Literature

The word 'Sangam' means 'association of Tamil poets'. The Sangam age is approximately between 300 BC and 300 AD. There are archaeological and literary references about three sangams that functioned in Ancient Madurai, Kapadapuram and Thenmadurai. There is also a mention of a continent known as 'Lemuria'.



Ancient Madurai [first sangam] and Kapadapuram [middle sangam] were situated on that continent. The said continent was submerged in the Indian Ocean, due to natural calamities. It is believed that Agasthiyar, the ancient Tamil Siddhar, chaired the first Tamil Sangam. The literary works of the sangams are classified as 'Pathinen Melkanakku' books composed between 200 BC to 100 BC and 'Pathinen Kilkanakku' books composed between 100 BC to 300 AD. The important works in the latter category include *Thirukkural*, *Palamoli*, *Naladiyar*, etc. *Thirukkural* is a didactic book on ethics written by Thiruvalluvar. The literary works of the first two Tamil Sangams were lost due to the deluge of Kumari. The only work that is still available is 'Tolkappiyam' of the middle Sangam. The works of the final Sangam survived and were classified into 'Ettuthokai' and 'Pathupattu'. 'Ettuthokai' consists of eight works and the important ones are 'Agananooru' and 'Purananooru'. Likewise 'Pathupattu' consists of ten works and the important ones are 'Thirumurugatrupadai' and 'Pattinappalai'.

Tolkappiyam

Tolkappiyam is the only Tamil literary work, produced during the middle sangam, that survived in the submersion of first and middle sangams. It is said to be more than two thousand years old and the first ancient Tamil grammar text. There are mentions of Tamil gods and goddesses like Vishnu, Skanda, Indra, Varuna and Kotravai in the text.

Vishnu

Vishnu also known as Perumal is mentioned in *Tolkappiyam* as the deity of forests. During the period, he was given the status of 'Paramporul' and was glorified as 'supreme deity'. It was believed that his Lotus feet could remove all the sins or evils and grant 'Mukthi' to devotees. 'Alvars', a group of Tamil poets cum saints and followers of the deity, glorified him in the post-Sangam period. There is also a mention of Vishnu in 'Paripadal', another Sangam literature, A few verses of the *Paripadal* describe him as 'the substance and meaning of everything in the world.

Skanda

Skanda also known as Murugan or Karthikeya is a Hindu god. He destroyed evil-natured Asuras such as Taraka and Surapadman. He was hailed as the God of war and victory. He is the son of Goddess Parvati and Lord Shiva. He is also called 'Arumugan' for his six faces. He is worshipped not only in India but also in Sri Lanka, Singapore and Malaysia. His vahana (mount) is a peacock and his flag depicts a rooster. He married the daughter of Indra, namely Devasena and Sundaravalli, a tribal woman. Arunagirinathar, a poet-saint, was inspired by Murugan and he wrote a poetic verse called "Thirupugal" to bring out the fame of the deity.

Indra

In Hinduism, Indra is the king of devas. He is also the god of rain and Storms. He is considered the bravest of the gods and known for his battle against monsters. He is compared with the Norse god Thor and the Greek god Zeus. His ammunition is Vajra, a mace and his vahana is 'Airavata' a white elephant. He is known for bringing rain to hydrate the fields containing fertile crops which belong to devotees. In modern days, Indra has lost his fame and is not largely worshipped by people.

Varuna

Varuna is mentioned as the god of the sky and Oceans in Tamil mythology. He is hailed as the principal deity of the Neithal Sangam landscape (sea and its adjacent areas), He is highlighted as the ruler of the sky realm and upholder of cosmic and moral law. He is Compared with 'Ahura Mazda', a Zoroastrian God. Varuna is considered to be present in the



water pot installed in any puja and worshipped as such. He is also worshipped as the guardian of the West direction.

Kotravai

Kotravai is described as the Goddess of the Palai region [deserts or sandy areas in the early Sangam literature]. Kotrvai is also referred to as the goddess of war and victory as well as the mother goddess, a symbol of fertility. She is depicted as a deity with several arms holding different weapons, dancing atop the beheaded body of a buffalo demon known as Mahishasura. Because of this act, she is mentioned as Mahishasura-mardhini, in the latter Sangam literature. Her vahana is a lion as well as a black buck. There are mentions of this deity in *Nerunalvadai*, *Maduraikanchi* and *Pattinapalai*, which belong to the group of *Pattupattu* produced in the era of the final Tamil Sangam.

Post Sangam Literature

The second century onwards is considered to be the post-Sangam period. The illustrious works in that period include the great five epics namely *Silaparthikaram*, *Manimegalai*, *Sivaka Sinthamani*, *Valayapathi* and *Kundalakesi*, following Bakthi hymns have been produced by Saiva as well as Vaishnava is known as 'Nayanmars' who produced 'Thirumarai' consists of twelve anthologies between eleventh and twelfth centuries. Sekkizhar's *Periyapuram* is considered to be the twelfth one. The main deity worshipped by the Saivates is Lord Shiva. Likewise, Vaishnava saints known as Alvars produced 'Nalayira Divya Prabandan', which consists of four thousand hymns contributed by various Alvars to lord Vishnu. The main deity of the Vishnava sect is Vishnu. *Thirukkural*, a unique work on ethics was authored by Tiruvalluvar during this time.

Kannagi

Kannagi is described as a goddess of chastity, for her noble deeds by *Silaparthikaram*, an epic written by Ilanko Adikal, the younger brother of the Chera King. She is the central character of the epic, which describes the marriage between Kovalan and Kannagi and Kovalan's love for Madhavi, a dancer. It also described his ruin of business and Wealth, in Kaveripoompattinam, a town in Chola kingdom and exile to Madurai, a town in Pandya kingdom While trying to sell his wife's anklet for starting a new business, he was falsely set up in a theft case by a wicked goldsmith, who had stolen the queen's a anklet. He was executed without trial. Kannagi, the widow, came to Madurai and proved her husband's innocence. She then tore off one of her breasts and flung it to the ground. At once, the kingdom of Madurai burst up with tall flames and was destroyed, because of her power as a faithful wife, she then moved to a place called 'Vannathiparai', which is located in the Idukki district of Kerala and situated about 1337 meters above mean sea level. After a few days Kovalan, accompanied by some Devas, arrived at the place in a Pushpaka Vimana and carried Kannagi to heaven. After that incident, Chenguttuvan, a Chera king constructed a temple known as 'Mangaladevi Kannagi temple' and performed regular pujas. At present, it is closed throughout the year except during the Chitra Pournami festival. Kannagi is also worshipped by Sinhalese Buddhists as 'Goddess Pattini'. Tamil Hindus in Sri Lanka worship her as Kannagi Amman. In Kerala, it is believed that she is an incarnation of Goddess Bhadrakali.

Thirumarai

Thirumarai consists of twelve anthologies produced by various 'Nayanmars' in praise of Lord Shiva. Among them. Appar, Sambandar and Sundarar are the most famous ones. They produced a lot of hymns about Lord Shiva during their lifetime. Nambiyandar Nambi, a Shaiva scholar, compiled their works in seven volumes and named them *Devaram*. This happened during the eleventh century. To accommodate the works of other Nayanmars,



Manikkavacakar's *Tiruvagasam* and *Tirukovayar* are appended as eight volumes. *Tiruvisaippa* and *Thiruppallandu* is the ninth volume, which was contributed by various Nayanmars. Thirumular's *Thirumandiram* is added as the tenth volume. The works of Karaikal Ammaiyar, Cheraman Perumal and Nambiyandar Nambi are included in the eleventh volume. Sekkizhar's *Periyapuranam* contains the details of all 63 Nayanmars and has been added as the last and the twelfth volume.

Periyapuranam

It is the twelfth volume of Thirumurai. It describes the life of all the 63 Nayanmars. Their devotion to Lord Shiva and his devotees. A special mention is to be made of the story of Siruthondar Nayanar. The said Nayanmar is ready to serve the needs of the devotees, who visited his house, even at the loss of his only son.

Nalayira Divya Prabandam

Nalayira Divya Prabandam contains 4000 hymns produced by twelve Alvars in praise of Lord Vishnu. The Alvars popularized Vaishnavism predominantly in Tamil areas around the 5th to 8th centuries. Their love and devotion towards lord Vishnu is unconditional. Nathamuni, a Vaishnavite poet-saint compiled the same in its present form during the 9th to 10th centuries. Among those, the important ones are Nammalvar's *Thiruvaymozhi* and female Saint Andal's *Thiruppavai* and *Nachiyar Tirumoli*. The daily service at Vishnu temples such as Srirangam includes chanting of *Divya Prabandam*.

Thiruppavai

It consists of thirty Pasurams, in praise of Vishnu. The author is a female poet-saint Andal. She personified herself as the lover of Lord Vishnu and dreamt about her marriage with him. With context to this, she wrote most of her Pasurams in the style of wedding songs.

Conclusion

There is no dearth of "myth" or mythological stories in Tamil literature. The antiquity of the Tamil language and the culture that prevailed from time to time are implicated in the types of mythological stories used in the literature. The Sangam as well as the post-Sangam literature mentions the worship of gods and goddesses namely Vishnu, Skanda, Indra, Varuna, and Kotravi. *Tolkappiyam* is the proof of the ancient phenomenon. The post-Sangam period is known for the five epics and Bhakti hymns of Nayanmars and Alvars. Most of the epics dealt with historical stories. However, the heroine of the epic *Silapathikaram*, namely Kannagi, was elevated to the status of God for her deeds. In commemoration of this, the Mangaladevi Kannagi temple was built in the Idukki district of Kerala.

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A Study on Authentic Classroom Interaction Patterns

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Abstract

The present-day education sector has been so challenging for the teachers. As communication and technology rise to their heights, teachers are required to upgrade their teaching standards and teaching practices in the classroom. In this respect, teachers need to learn the latest teaching patterns and keep their efforts to create an effective classroom. At this juncture, various changes have taken place in the modern classrooms. As part of this, several patterns for classroom interaction are introduced. Interaction is highly required in classroom activities. It helps the teaching and learning procedure to run smoothly and can raise interest among the learners. Maintaining interaction with the whole class is needed for a teacher to create a learner-centric environment that raises interest among students towards the subject, and active participation during class time. This refers to the conversation between the teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves, in which active participation and learning of the socio-cultural activities is possible. Through this students develop their knowledge and focus on the learning patterns collaboratively. The present paper deals with various patterns and implementation in an interactive classroom concerning my personal experience during the course period of my Bachelor of Education.

Keywords: Interactive Classroom, Learner-centric Environment, Patterns.

Introduction

Interaction in the classroom either at the school level or college level refers to the conversation between the teachers and students, as well as among the students themselves. Active participation and learning from one another become vital always. In our regular personal and social activities several situations take place to interact among various parties. This has been trained and practised in the classrooms.

Two ways to refer to classroom interaction

- (i) **Educational Talk or Exploratory Talk and**
- (ii) **Presentational Talk**

The purpose of educational talk or exploratory talk is to allow students to engage in broken or full of dead-end conversations that will allow them to try new ideas to hear how they sound and to see what others make to arrange their ideas into different discourse patterns. Educational talk or exploratory talk is frequently intentionally designed by teachers.

Presentational talk is a one-way lecture delivered by teachers in the classrooms, which makes minimal effort to inspire and include students in a communicative discussion. When students connect, they create a sort of symmetric dialogic context where everyone may take part, be treated with respect, and make decisions together. Thus, by taking part in interactions, students can develop their linguistic resources and increase their confidence in speaking to others. To analyze the process of interaction with each student and with the



whole class, a few activities are being conducted for the students of 9th standard, in a Govt. High School, at Rajampet, Annamayya District, Andhra Pradesh.

Review of Literature

Edwards, A. D., & Westgate, D. P. (1994) in the book "Investigating Classroom Talk" provide a comprehensive analysis of the possible classroom interactions by focusing on the linguistic and social dynamics that influence educational outcomes among the learners. The authors emphasize the significance of conversation and question the domination of teacher-led conversations in classrooms. They advocate for student-centred interaction to foster deeper understanding and critical thinking in the classroom learning process.

Hall, J. K., & Walsh, M. (2002) in the article "Teacher-student interaction and language learning" explored the relationship between teacher-student interaction and the language learning process. The research findings enquire on how the different interaction patterns such as initiation-response-feedback (IRF) affect the language acquisition level of the learners. The study points to the need to improve the interaction patterns to enhance the language learning process in classroom settings.

Nuthall, G. (2007) in the book "The Hidden Lives of Learners" studied the existing complexities of classroom interactions and their impact on the student learning process in classrooms. Through observational studies, the author argues for more personalized and receptive interaction patterns in the learning process. Only interaction-based methods can cater the easy mode to the students with active engagement.

Mercer, N., & Hodgkinson, S. (2008) in the book "Exploring Talk in School: Inspired by the Work of Douglas Barnes" examined the role of conversational talk in educational settings. It mainly discusses how different interaction patterns such as exploratory talk enhance the learning process among the learners by encouraging the students to articulate their thoughts, test each other and construct knowledge collaboratively in an active classroom environment.

Kumpulainen, K., Hmelo Silver, C. E., & César, M. (2009) in the report entitled "Investigating Classroom Interaction: Methodologies in Action" explores the various methodologies for studying classroom interactions. They highlighted the importance of authentic communication in promoting collaborative learning among the teacher and learner. The book also includes many case studies and theoretical perspectives that clearly demonstrate how interaction patterns in the classroom environment impact student engagement and learning.

Markee, N. (2015) in the edited handbook entitled "The Handbook of Classroom Discourse and Interaction" covers a wide range of topics related to classroom discourse and interaction among teachers and learners. It also provides theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches and practical applications to analyze and improve interaction methods in classroom educational settings. They highlighted the requirement for extra interactive methods and conversational methods teaching practices.

Vermunt, J.D., Donche, V. A. (2017) in the paper entitled "Learning Patterns Perspective on Student Learning in Higher Education: State of the Art and Moving Forward" aimed to portray the state of research and theory development for the student learning patterns in higher education and the possible methods that support them.

Agustin, Helin & Noviyenty, Leffi & Utami, and Henny (2019) in their article entitled "An Analysis of Classroom Activities Pursuant to Effective Techniques Teaching English in Integrated Vocational Schools" found the techniques that the teachers used to stimulate the classroom activities that suit the elements of effective teaching for the students. They also



pointed out that the chief elements of effective teaching are the use of positive support, feedback, supportive learning activities, classroom atmosphere, questioning-instruction method and indirect teaching to ensure classroom learning activities.

Glaser, G., Kupetz, M., & You, H.-J. (2019) in the article entitled "Embracing social interaction in the L2 classroom: Perspectives for language teacher education" discussed the significance of Social Interaction in Second Language (L2) Classrooms. The paper emphasizes the importance of conducting language teacher education programs to incorporate training and promote authentic classroom interactions in classroom settings.

Thanh Vu Thi and Duyen Dao Thuy (2021) in the study "A Study on Interaction Patterns in Language Learning Online Classes – Adaptation and Efficiency" found that the outcomes differed from class to class for the interaction forms among the teacher group and the student-student groups. The teachers found that their teaching experience with the students and the student's English language competence emphasized the forms of interaction in classrooms.

Such references offer a methodical examination of authentic classroom interaction patterns and provide valuable insights for educators, researchers and learners to enhance educational practices in classrooms. Based on these findings, the study has been planned to estimate the authentic classroom interaction patterns for students of 9th standard, in the Government High School, Rajampet, Annamayya District, Andhra Pradesh.

Observations on the process of planning interaction

Based on the observation from the teachers, they used various techniques in the teaching and learning process. They used individual interaction techniques and conducted class games, whole class interaction, and some stage activities also. As a teacher, I felt interested and found different ways of interacting with the students in the classroom. According to the theory of Anthony, "Technique is the level at which classroom procedures are described. It is the implementation that which takes place in a classroom. It is the particular trick strategy or contrivance used to accomplish an immediate objective." The technique must be consistent with a method, and therefore in harmony with an approach as well. Teaching technique is a step or activity that the teachers use in teaching English. Another definition is that 'Technique is a way of achieving one purpose skillfully a knack' (Anthony, 2004). There are several kinds of techniques in teaching as follows (Keachie, 2006). Talking purposefully or purposelessly is very common among the students in class. Incorporating different types of interactions, achieving the lesson objectives through such interactions, ensuring that students participate in meaningful interactions, and ensuring that all students engage in conversations and learn from the teachers as well as from one another were some of the challenges that came with planning lessons with meaningful interactions.

Challenges of interactive classroom

- Naturally, controlling conversations is more difficult because of the students' disparate levels of language proficiency and the topics that generate dialogues among them and match their levels of proficiency.
- Students in the class come from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and, commonly, each student may come with their own special set of knowledge.
- Differentiating language ability may seem simple to some or unnoticeable to others, but doing so in the classroom will have a significant impact on how students view themselves and others, as well as how they perceive the value of their cultural and linguistic background in advancing their academics.

Ways to overcome the challenges



- Teachers’ continuous monitoring and evaluation: Continuous monitoring helps the students rectify their mistakes and may also help them to Peer evaluation
- Selecting the appropriate group size
- Assigning group roles and group configurations
- Monitoring the student's teaching stage
- Evaluating at the post-teaching stage

Stages of Interactions in the Classroom

i. Interaction of the students with the teacher (whole-class interaction): As part of the whole-class interaction, the teacher became an instructor and frequently asked the students to give their opinions on a particular question about a newly introduced or previously covered subject. To ensure that all students were represented in the interaction process, students were chosen at random for the responses based on their aptitude, seating arrangement, gender, and ethnic groups.

ii. Pair Interaction (Interaction with their peers sitting together or next to them): This engagement frequently occurred before instruction, for example, to activate their conceptual framework for a subject. Students were typically required to collaborate with their partners on a topic that the teacher had provided and present it to the class as part of the assignment of group roles.

iii. Group Interaction (Groups of 4-5 students in each) During the while-teaching phase, this type of interaction frequently occurred. After reading a text, for instance, during a reading class, students could choose a concept to debate. Their conversation may centre on deepening the ideas’ application in real life, identifying a problem and its solution, or posing an original question.

Interaction Patterns for Classroom

The table.1. explains the types of interaction patterns, types of activities, the benefits of activities, the challenges for interaction, and when those activities are suitable to conduct in the classroom.

Table 1. Type of Interaction Pattern

Type of Interaction Pattern	Type of Activity	Benefits	Challenges	Suitability
Group Work	Group Discussion/ Students Debate on any social issue/ Group Guessing & Responding/ Choral Responses Vocabulary Building Games/ Memory Testing Games/ Information	Group work provides more practice opportunities, an increased variety of activities is possible, increased student creativity and the zone of Proximal Development increases.	As with pair work, the groups must be carefully selected to ensure students can work productively; not all students can work to their full potential in this situation; and assessment of student progress can be challenging.	Small groups (5 to 6 members in each group) Giving and getting tasks.



	Transfer			
Individual Work	Textbook pre-reading during the class/ Presenting a topic/ Narrating a story/ Summarizing the topic/ Asking Close-ended questions Describing any person/ object/ situation/ Reading any news item/ Pick and Speak/ Just A Minute (JAM)	Students work at their own pace, feel confident, and they can use their preferred learning styles and strategies	Students cannot get the benefit of learning from and working with their peers unless they are involved or self-motivated	Individual student participation . Giving and getting activities
Pair Work	Situational Dialogues or conversations/ Introducing others/ Asking and exchanging questions/	Students have the chance to work with and learn from their peers; struggling students can learn from more capable peers; it is especially useful for students who prefer interpersonal learning settings.	If students are not matched up well (i.e. low students together, high students together, a higher student with a low student but they do not work together, etc.) pair work won't be useful; the ability of the students to work in this way needs to be taken into consideration.	Two students participate in each activity. Giving and getting tasks.

Findings

After observing and practising the above-mentioned patterns of interactive classrooms, it is identified that these patterns and techniques are more suitable for a language classroom and less useful for other subject teachers. However, by applying other related rubrics for each subject, these interactive teaching patterns will be helpful. I observed a positive impact by using these techniques in the classroom, and that had shown a high impact on improving the skills of psycho-motor learning of students. Students have shown much interest in continuous participation. It is also very important to add listening-related activities equal to the reading, speaking, and writing skills. Along with the use of modern teaching



tools like ICT, and online learning sources, it is required to train the teachers regarding the use of various interactive teaching patterns for better understanding of the concepts and to get rid of the fear of studies among the students. This may be challenging in the initial level of teaching but this improves the participation of students in the classroom. They lose their fear of studies and also they come out of the monotonous learning environment.

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Where is De-human? Reconfiguring ‘human-ness’ in *Animal’s People*

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Abstract

Written in the wake of what Lawrence Buell refers to as ‘toxic discourse’, Indira Sinha’s *Animal’s People* deals with the anxiety of living in a poisoned world. The inhabitants of Khaufpur—the disaster zone in the novel—or the victims of the apocalypse have been irreversibly altered to varying degrees to the point of losing their individual ‘human’ identity. I argue that this loss of humanness operates on two different levels. The first is through the slip into a largely unclassifiable ‘nonhuman-ness’, as seen in individual characters in both novels. The second is seen through the creation of ecological ‘collectives’ that bind humans and non-humans—communities that Sinha refers to as ‘people of the Apokalis’. With this in mind, this paper questions what makes the inhabitants of Khaufpur non-human, and posits that while the slip into the nonhuman is constantly in flux as a result of the apocalypse and its aftermath, the status of the ‘people’ in the zone is a more stable category because of the way it defines itself based on these entanglements, rather than the ‘species’ identity of its constituents.

Keywords: Anthropocene, De-human, Reconfiguration, Human-ness, Indra Sinha, *Animal’s People*.

Introduction

What does it mean to be human in the Anthropocene, when the end of the world has already occurred? Indra Sinha’s *Animal’s People* (2007) is heavily invested in this question. The novel operates under the framework that ideas of “the end” are deeply entangled with the Anthropocene—the epoch where human actions have significantly impacted the earth’s climate (Crutzen 480). However, in the process of controlling nature, human activity destroys the environment, and in turn, the human being itself. Against the larger backdrop of the perils of human influence on the environment, *Animal’s People* explores the vulnerability of human beings in an environment that seeks to strip away both their humanity and their humanness.

Something is unsettling about the Anthropocene in the text. While it is supposed to be “the age of humans”, the human-made disaster created by a factory explosion—a reference to the Bhopal Gas Tragedy—creates a zone that destabilises humans through exposure to toxic contaminants in the environment. In other words, the Anthropocene in *Animal’s People* is de-humanising (I deliberately write ‘de-humanisation’ with a hyphen to separate it from the word ‘dehumanisation’. The latter refers to a “deprivation of human characters and attributes” (OED) that is a result of acts of cruelty arising from the view that another person is ‘less than human’, the word de-humanisation looks at how ‘humanness’ can be removed from the human being.); there is simultaneously an expansion of human power over the non-human, and a contraction in who falls under the category of “human”. Here, the ‘humanness’ in question is one’s physical or psychic characteristics that define their identity as a ‘human



being'. Through the de-humanising potential of Khaufpur, *Animal's People* explores how the boundary between the 'human' and the 'non-human' is destabilised in the Anthropocene. The removal of these human attributes through de-humanisation, while painful and often unsettling, isn't necessarily accompanied by a narrative of loss. Instead, the text—rather than taking away the agency of a being—seeks to reconfigure the category of the human being altogether. Here, it moves towards a system wherein the beings within the zone are moulded into a larger 'multispecies' collective—or, borrowing from Donna Haraway's terminology, an assemblage of "odd kin" (Haraway 2).

Toxic Materialities

Animal's People is invested in the idea of de-humanisation arising out of exposure to toxic material. In the aftermath of an explosion that takes place in a factory close to Khaufpur, toxic chemicals leech into the town's soil and waterways, afflicting the town residents with various illnesses. This kind of poisoning that slowly accumulates into the bodies of the Khaufpuris can be best described by what Rob Nixon refers to as "slow violence", which is a kind of suffering that is spread out over time and space with no definitive point of impact (Nixon 30). It is difficult to recognise because the violence is often "out of sight" but its effects are gradually felt (2). The inability to see this kind of environmental damage makes it all the more powerful and dangerous, as experienced in Khaufpur, where the invisible violence makes it nearly impossible for the Khaufpuris to receive justice.

The extended effects of the poison are dehumanising, as seen through the ways Khaufpur residents are denied clean water, air, medical care, or justice for the explosion (referred to in the novel as the 'Night'). Through the ignored plight of the survivors and the injustices faced at every level from the legal to the environmental, one sees the denial of parameters necessary to a life fit for a 'human'. At the same time, the experience of being a victim of Khaufpur's slow violence is also de-humanising, wherein the toxic environment, through the changes it produces within its subjects, is capable of stripping them of their humanness. For some, this change isn't directly physical. For instance, Ma Franci is afflicted with aphasia after the Night, which makes her lose a large portion of her memory and her ability to communicate. Before the explosion, she was able to converse in English, French, Hindi, and Khaufpuri. However, her aphasia makes her lose the ability to speak in any of these languages, and she is left with only a garbled amalgamation of the languages and the life she used to live. She is rendered mentally handicapped, but refuses to allow this change to strip her agency away; she chooses to live alone and still acts as a guide to Animal.

De-Humanized Bodies

While non-physical changes produce de-humanised subjects that still 'appear' human, the stripping of humanness becomes visible when it produces a physical change in the body. Animal is an example of this. After being exposed to the Kampani factory explosion, he begins experiencing debilitating pain in his spine and he is forced to walk on all fours like an animal. After coming in contact with the toxic fumes, he loses his ability to stand upright. This physical change takes away his humanness, in his and the rest of Khaufpur's eyes. Animal's non-human status remains unspecified and vague throughout the novel. While he categorically denies being categorised as a human, he refuses to classify himself as anything other than an 'Animal', which is both his status and his name. He sees himself as a non-human creature unlike any other. Early on, Animal tells the reader his mantra; "My name is Animal. I'm not a human being, I've no desire to be one." (Sinha 23). This mantra is particularly striking, for his name in itself is not his official name, but a nickname that stuck



as a result of cruel insults by children in the orphanage. His real name has been long forgotten, even by the nuns in the orphanage he grew up in. Animal's name contains a paradox. It reveals exactly who he is—an animal, set apart from human beings. At the same time, the name Animal in itself resists any kind of stable categorisation. 'Animal' is an ambiguous word, as well as a taxonomical term that contains nearly nine million species—none of which can classify Animal.

Animal thus attempts to define himself by negating other species categories. He is often confronted with the question of what kind of animal he is, to which he doesn't ever have a definitive answer. While looking through a book of animals of India, he notices that the book, "in all of its hundreds of pages and pictures", has no animal that is just like him (223). Furthermore, he changes the idea of what species he is when it benefits him. When jokingly antagonising his friends, he claims that he is "not a cat, or a dog like Jara, nor camel, goat, leopard, bear etc" (208). When he is spying on Elli, an American doctor who sets up a free clinic in Khaufpur, he calls himself a "bat-eared ape that climbs only in the dark of night" (208). While these moments in the novel are meant to be humorous, they point to an important aspect of Animal's species status, which is that while he is decidedly not a human, he cannot definitively say what he is. The only thing that he knows for certain is that he is 'one of a kind'. Animal retains this idea of wanting to be unique even to the end of the novel when he realises that he no longer wishes to be an "upright" human; "If I'm an upright human, I would be one of millions, not even a healthy one at that. Stay four-foot, I'm the one and only Animal" (366). This sentence marks a shift in Animal's perspective, from straddling the blurred line between the human and the non-human, to using his situatedness as a de-humanised subject to transcend the category of the human altogether. Thus, Animal shifts from being an unclassifiable 'animal', to Animal: a species of his own that resists being categorised as anything else.

The corporeal changes in the people of Khaufpur because of the events of the Night reveal the links between illness, disability, and de-humanization. In her chapter on deviant agents and environmental illnesses, Alaimo writes that "the chemically reactive manifest a corporeality that is always already trans-corporeal, as they help us to envision the invisible movement of xenobiotic substances across human bodies and more-than-human nature" (Alaimo, 125). In *Animal's People*, one can view the idea of "chemically reactive" through Alaimo's idea of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS), which is a condition "in which exposure to "normal" twenty-first-century environments and substances causes a range of reactions, including rashes, tremors, convulsions, breathing difficulties, headaches, dizziness, nausea, joint pain, "brain fog," and extreme fatigue" (114). Although Khaufpur is far from a normal twenty-first-century environment, the ailments of the Khaufpur residents fall under the bracket of MCS, because of the toxins that enter their bodies daily in Khaufpur.

A moment in the text which stresses this kind of relationship is when Animal, while "jamisponding" (i.e spying on other people), comes across a poor breastfeeding woman in a place called Paradise Alley. This woman, who is being treated by doctors, keeps shooting spurts of pale breastmilk into the ground below her. When asked why she responds that she "won't feed [her] kid poison" (Sinha 107). To this, an old woman appears "out of the shadows", and informs the doctors that "We have looked upon the milke and it semeth to muche thinne and watry. Plus it enclyneth to reddenesse, which is unnaturall and euill. Likewyse, it tasteth bitter, ye may well perceyue it is unwholesome" (107). The old woman is likely a relative of the sick breastfeeding mother, who speaks in a faraway, ancient dialect resembling Middle English, warning the doctors about the younger woman's condition. In



this description of her milk, the words "unnatural" and "evil" stand out. The unnaturalness of the milk, along with the image of the woman shooting the milk into the ground reduces the clearly ill woman to something monstrous, abject, and non-human.

Moreover, the mother is aware of why her illness exists. To Elli, she says; "Our wells are full of poison. It's in the soil, water, in our blood, it's in our milk. Everything here is poisoned. If you stay here long enough, you will be too" (108). Here the woman's body is poisoned by the ground below her and the water she drinks, which de-humanizes her. She then feeds the same milk to her baby, and sends it back into the earth, effectively poisoning her future too. This moment reveals a strange kind of transcorporeality, wherein the body, the environment, and toxicity, are violently entangled together (Alaimo 3).

De-Humanized Dead

Animal's People also looks at how de-humanization isn't just a problem of the living, through the character of Kha-in-the-Jar, a fetus that Animal sees and befriends in a doctor's office. Kha is a fascinating toxic de-humanized subject. While he is described as a "monster" by Animal, he's also referred to as "kha", which is the Khaufpuri term for brother (57). Kha is kept in a jar, and pointed out to Animal by a doctor who says that he is one of the many babies who was aborted after the Night, because of the strange modifications that the toxic chemicals produced. Although Kha technically never 'lived', he too has been de-humanized by the poison. This idea of the 'non-living' 'being de-humanized can be read in Mel Chen's writing on toxicity. She writes that 'toxicity straddles boundaries of "life" and "nonlife", as well as the literal bounds of bodies, in ways that introduce a certain complexity to the presumption of integrity of either lifely or deathly subjects' (Chen, 279). The toxicity that produced Kha is the same factor that prevented his birth, and his subsequent humanity. As a result of the toxic fumes in Khaufpur, Kha developed 'monstrosities' 'in vitro, and is presumed to be a non-human before his birth. In other words, his suspected monstrosities are what lead to his 'non life'. However, he is given a dignified 'non-life', where he occupies a position on the "Board of Poisoned Children", which consists of many other children who never lived as a result of the Night, referred to as the "children of poison" (59). Kha, along with the rest of the board, often advises Animal, and Kha (and his jar) are one of the very few things that survive the fire that is set to the building that he's in, towards the end of the book. Thus, despite his de-humanization, Kha still occupies a very real space in the zone of Khaufpur.

Unborn fetuses such as Kha and the Board of Poisoned Children, along with Animal, Pandit Somraj, Ma Franci, and the rest of Khaufpur are all a part of a multispecies ecological collective that the novel refers to as 'People of the Apokalis'. It needs to be noted that when the word 'people' is used, it doesn't necessarily just mean human beings. The phrase first makes an appearance in a vision of half human half animal 'people' that Animal hallucinates upon poisoning himself. However, the term could apply to anyone who was affected by the tragedy in Khaufpur. This kind of community is similar to what Michael Edelstein proposes in *Contaminated Communities*, where he defines the term as any residential area located within or proximate to the identified boundaries for a known exposure to pollution (Edelstein, 22), and the {discovery of a toxic threat [that] provides a basis for a new and shared identity that effectively defines a community" (22). Even if they don't share the same 'environment', whether that is geographical, social, or political, the very process of being entangled in toxicity is what holds the community together. Individually, the residents of Khaufpur are a heterogeneous group all at different stages of de-humanization, but together this distinction



doesn't matter as the 'People of the Apokalis' don't privilege the human over any other species.

Conclusion, or Overcoming De-Humanization

The residents of Khaufpur are all a part of a multispecies ecological collective that the novel refers to as 'People of the Apokalis'. This is similar to what Michael Edelstein proposes in *Contaminated Communities*, where he defines the term as any residential area located within or proximate to the identified boundaries for a known exposure to pollution (Edelstein, 22), and the "discovery of a toxic threat [that] provides a basis for a new and shared identity that effectively defines a community" (22). Even if they don't share the same geographical, social or political 'environment', they are held together by being entangled in Khaufpur's toxic landscape. In other words, while the residents of Khaufpur are a heterogeneous group all at different stages of de-humanisation, together they form the 'people of the Apokalis', which doesn't privilege humans over any other species.

In Charles Darwin's famous last paragraph from *On the Origin of Species*, he describes a "tangled bank", where life forms "so different from each other, depend on each other in so complex a manner" (Darwin 452). An eerily similar image is found in *Animal's People*. Towards the end of the novel, Animal swallows capsules of poison and has strange, realistic dreams. In this haze, he imagines an afterlife for himself that he refers to as "paradise" (Sinha 351). In this vision, he sees "animals of every kind", as well as small figures who "are neither men nor animals, or else they are both" (352). In this dream, Animal feels as though he's found his 'home'. He describes this paradise as a place in "the deep time when there was no difference between anything when separation did not exist when all things were together, one and whole before humans set themselves apart" (352). Here, he is drawn to this entangled space, where nothing sets apart the human from any other species, and where the idea of 'species' itself is put in flux. Animal in the real world stands out because of his inability to categorise himself, however, in this vision of Paradise, these categories no longer matter.

Bruno Latour in *Love Your Monsters* writes about the "process of becoming ever-more attached to and intimate with a range of non-human natures" (Latour 20). The only way to survive in the 'bank', sacrifice zone or not, is to become entangled in it—i.e. make 'kin' across species boundaries. This idea of kin-making invokes Donna Haraway's conception of the *Chthulucene*, which is an era that occurs in the wake of the disasters created by the Anthropocene, where the remaining few 'earthlings' stick together in "mixed assemblages" (Haraway 103). According to her, the Chthulucene "entangles myriad temporalities and spatialities and myriad intra-active entities—in assemblages—including the more-than-human, other-than-human, inhuman, and human-as humus" (116). The entanglement of entities into mixed assemblages rings true in *Animal's People*. In a 2007 article published by The Guardian titled "Bhopal: A Novel Quest for Justice", Indra Sinha writes about how the depiction of Khaufpur goes beyond the Bhopal Gas Tragedy. He writes; "Khaufpur is every place in which people have been poisoned and then abandoned. It could be Seveso, Halabja, Minamata, Caracas or Sao Paulo" (Sinha). The ambiguity in Khaufpur's location is reminiscent of the novel's very last lines; "We are the people of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us" (Sinha 403). Here, the emphasis on the collective pronoun conceives a kind of community created in 'mixed assemblages' as well as a grim reminder of the effects of the Anthropocene.

The question of what it means to be a human being after the end of the world is both difficult to answer and central to the Anthropocene. *Animal's People* attempts to answer this



question by reconfiguring humanness altogether and shifting the power that a human occupies in a dynamic space. It conceives of spaces such as Khaufpuras zones that produce a collective ecological identity—an assemblage of odds—rather than focus on the individual, to deal with the trouble that comes from de-humanisation. It asks, at the very least, to acknowledge ways of being in the world outside of the human.

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In the Memory of Hind Rajab

Poem

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Introduction by the Author

The ongoing genocide in Gaza by the apartheid state of Israel has been continuing for more than six months now. It has taken countless innocent Palestinian lives including a large number of children and women. This poem is based on the state sanctioned murder of a six year old girl called Hind Rajab who was shot to death by the Israeli armed forces while she was trapped inside a car. It dramatises on the incident and retells it from the perspective of someone close to Hind.

In the Memory of Hind Rajab

- Aishi Saha

Hind, my dearest, no more does the bougainvillea bend
All canopy is dead. Your puppies trembled and shivered and then ran away,
Until they realized that every precarious alley was leading them back to this wasteland.
Mama's cereal rocket ships cannot feed those in the south,
But can surely kill them. When the sunlight falls ever so brightly,
The world says that God still loves Gaza. My faith is unshakeable.
It is not God I doubt, but the eulogizing poets of the imperialist world
Who want to make another Auschwitz-Birkenau out of our homeland.
My people do not want grandiose memorials of their tragedy,
Or a month dedicated to their history inaugurated by the murderous state(s) that erased it.
It is happening already – my daughter the topic of intellectual discourse
Learned white men condemning the murder over a coffee at Starbucks
They will stick Hind's name in bold characters on museum walls
'Never again,' they will say while they do it again to someone else.
For every stone we threw, they dropped bombs on starving children;
For every slogan we raised, they planted bullets in our lungs.
Hind, my dearest, I hope death carries you to the realm of our collective dream,
Where land beside the Jordan River meets the Mediterranean Sea,
Where you can hear the song of birds and not the blast of airstrikes,
Where children hold each other's hands and not each other's cold bodies,
Where every individual lives with grace without the fear of forced displacement.
There – Hind, wait for me. Wait for Palestine.

Glossary

Hind - Hind Rajab, a six year old girl shot to death by the Israeli armed forces.

Gaza - Gaza City is a Palestinian city in the Gaza Strip

Faith - Strong belief in somebody or something (Here refers Upon the Merciful ALLAH)



Auschwitz, Birkenau - A series of concentration camps operated by the Nazi state of Germany during World War II in occupied Poland.

Homeland - Native land (Here refers to Gaza)

Tragedy - A very sad event or situation, especially one that involves death.

Murderous State(s) - The countries that do genocide. For example- Sri Lankan genocide of the Tamils, Rwandan genocide of the Tutsis, Biafran Genocide of the Igbos, Jewish Genocide of the German Nazis (At present Israeli acts of war crimes in Gaza)

Starving children - Hungry children

Forced displacement - Coerced movement of someone away from their home land

Wait for Palestine - For the Liberty of Palestine

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