

# **Tales Unraveled**

Sufferings and Pangs of the Downtrodden in the  
Short Stories of K. V. Dominic



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*Edited by*  
**Dr. S. Barathi**



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## Preface

*Tales Unraveled: Sufferings and Pangs of the Downtrodden in the Short Stories of K. V. Dominic* is an anthology that delves into the profound narratives woven by one of India's distinguished literary voices, K. V. Dominic. Through a rich collection of critical essays, this book explores the myriad themes, narratives, and literary techniques that Dominic employs to shed light on the struggles, ethics, and choices faced by the marginalized and oppressed.

The tales spun by K. V. Dominic are not mere works of fiction; they are mirrors reflecting the harsh realities of society, drawing attention to the plight of the downtrodden. With insight, empathy, and a commitment to social justice, Dominic's stories invite readers to engage in contemplation and reflection. His narratives provoke thought and evoke a spectrum of emotions, making his work an invaluable contribution to the world of Indian literature.

As the editor of this volume, I am humbled by the opportunity to compile a diverse range of perspectives on K. V. Dominic's work. Scholars and writers from various corners of the globe have offered their insights, bringing out the nuances of Dominic's storytelling. From the examination of Dominic's response to the unique challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to his treatment of nature, human values, and socio-economic aspects, this collection of essays aims to provide a comprehensive exploration of Dominic's literary contributions. These critical essays also explore the ethical dimensions of Dominic's stories, highlighting his commitment to justice and compassion. The examination of his characters, who serve as the embodiment of the downtrodden class, offers profound insights into the human condition, prompting readers to consider the universal human values at the heart of his narratives. Moreover, the book features forewords and reviews by distinguished scholars and critics, underlining the significance of K. V. Dominic's literary works in the wider literary landscape. This anthology is a testament to the enduring impact of Dominic's storytelling and the scholarly attention it rightfully garners.

In particular, Dr. Ramesh K. Srivastava's foreword for "*Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*" offers readers a glimpse into the realm of modern Indian short fiction. Patricia Prime, Chandramoni Narayanaswamy, Dr. Radhamani Sarma, and Dr. Sulakshna Sharma provide comprehensive reviews of this collection. Meanwhile, Dr. Christopher Rollason delves into K. V. Dominic's

contribution to Indian Writing in English (IWE) within the short story canon. Prof. Elisabetta Marino's article elaborates on the insightful conception of poetry and K. V. Dominic's role in contextualizing the analysis of his collection. Daya Dissanayake compares Dominic's vision to Buddha Dhamma, while Dr. Manas Bakshi explores the treatment of nature in Dominic's stories. Dr. K. Balachandran thematically explores K. V. Dominic's third collection of short stories, those written during Covid-19. Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman discusses various aspects of Dominic's short stories, and Dr. Barathi's scholarly exploration employs Johan Galtung's 'Diagnosis Prognosis Therapy' approach to dissect and analyze the conflicts within Dominic's narratives. Prof. (Dr.) Sagar Mal Gupta's paper delves into the social issues addressed in Dominic's stories, while Dr. Suresh Chandra Pande's article draws comparisons between Dominic's stories and moral fables, equating them to moral stories in Panchatantra. Additionally, K. Ramya Kalaivani and Dr. Raichel M. Sylus apply Tolkien's Theory of Fantasy to explore the technique of creating ecological awareness through an imaginary world. Sreedharan Parokode critically examines K. V. Dominic's short stories and highlights the theme of ever-present goodness in the human mind portrayed in his works. Dr. Laxmi Rawat Chauhan's paper offers a comprehensive examination of how Dominic's short stories depict various forms of suffering. Biswanath Kundu's analysis focuses on the motifs of the Indian thought system in Dominic's short stories, while Dr. Kavita Gopalakrishnan's paper explores Levinas's idea of 'responsibility for the other' within the selected collection of short stories. Lastly, Hemanta Pramanik's paper evaluates Dominic's portrayal of characters from lower strata and their struggles in various contexts, and Elizabeth Valsan's article highlights the deep understanding of Indian socio-cultural dynamics in Dominic's narratives, emphasizing hope and resilience that transcends geographical boundaries. Towards the end, there is also a recent interview with Dr. K. V. Dominic which will enlighten the readers about the poet's writings. On the whole, in *Tales Unraveled*, readers will find a treasure trove of insights, analyses, and reflections that provide a deeper understanding of K. V. Dominic's short stories. This book is an invitation to explore the sufferings and pangs of the downtrodden, to appreciate the ethical choices presented in his narratives, and to celebrate a literary voice that continues to inspire and enlighten.

Let me wind up this preface expressing my deep gratitude to the esteemed contributors as well as to Shri Sudarshan Kcherry ji of Authorspress, New Delhi, for bringing out the book in such a magnificent style and appearance.

**Dr. S. Barathi**

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# 1

## **Foreword to the book *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India***

**PROF. DR. RAMESH K. SRIVASTAVA**

*(Copied from the text pages iii-iv)*

A creative writer is a sensitive being whose imagination gets stirred even by minor vibrations from within or without but is jolted into action when the well-being of a large section of society is at stake. Prof. K. V. Dominic's poems and short stories are the concretization of these creative impulses. Whereas his annoyance over minor social problems finds spontaneous articulation in his poems, major universal issues such as corruption and bribery, superstitions, political and religious exploitation, unemployment and underemployment, exploitation of nature and animals, among other things, find elaborate expression in his short stories.

Kerala has the highest literacy rate in the country and its biggest problem is the unemployment and underemployment of the educated youth. The problem has been highlighted in three short stories: "Who is Responsible?" "The Best Government Servant" and "Twisted Course of Destiny." Anwar, in the first story, has to work in Oman, leaving behind his ailing parents and newly-married wife at home. As a result of his absence from home, his wife elopes with her driver whereas robbers kill his parents to loot cash and ornaments. Krishnan, in the second story, though underemployed, refuses to accept widely-prevalent practice of taking bribe and is transferred to a remote place. He seeks justice by going to High Court which punishes all the corrupt employees while rewarding the honest Krishnan. In "Twisted Course of Destiny," Rajiv with M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees gets a peon's job and has to work under his much less qualified senior employees.

Religious and political exploitation along with evils of superstition find good representation in some of his stories. "Fire Your Horoscopes" is a powerful story against gullible and credulous persons who remain close-minded against logic and wake up only when Praveen and Parvati

celebrate their 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary while according to their horoscopes, they should have died within a year of their marriage. In “Joseph’s Maiden Vote to Parliament,” the protagonist refuses to vote when he finds all the candidates undesirable and corrupt. “Matthews, the Real Christian” depicts the tragic death of a person who was Christian in words and deeds.

The writer’s concern for nature and animals find expression in three stories which are reminiscent of Vishnu Sarma’s *Panchatantra* and Rudyard Kipling’s *Jungle Book*. They are really close cousins of fables and tales in which various animals and objects of nature communicate with one another as would human beings. In the same tradition, Krishnan and Stephen in “Sanchita Karma” have respectively been painted all white and all black. While the former is a lover of birds, animals and plants, the latter hates them and as such kills seven cats. Due to his past accumulated deeds, he has to be reborn as mouse in the next life. Two kittens in “The Twins” are contrasted with human beings. They remain clean and give pleasure to all the members of the family. In “World Environment Day,” Katturaja is a modified and transformed version of the notorious gangster Veerappan who roamed all over the forest, killing tuskers and cutting sandalwood trees. Under the influence of nature, Katturaja is so much transformed that he becomes a great preserver of nature.

A very thin line divides pure literature and literature-with-a-purpose, and that line has become nearly invisible in these stories due largely to the writer’s intensely-felt anguish over social ills as also due to his overwhelming concern to rectify these social distortions by giving them overtly-visible representation. K. V. Dominic’s “*Sanchita Karma*” and *Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India* is undoubtedly a laudable effort in making these stories a powerful instrument for eradication of prevalent evils in the country.

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**Dr Ramesh K. Srivastava** is novelist, short story writer, critic and essayist. Author of 24 books in English including two novels—*Neema* and *Coils of the Serpent* as also an



autobiography *My Father’s Bad Boy*, he is the recipient of Fulbright and Senior Fulbright Fellowships for advanced studies in the U.S.A. He was also awarded the UGC Emeritus Fellowship to work in Bundelkhand University, Jhansi (U.P.). With a Ph.D. from the University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah (U.S.A.), he retired as Professor and Head, English Department, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar (Punjab). Email:

rameshusha729@gmail.com

## 2

### **Review of *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India***

PATRICIA PRIME

*(Copied from the text pages 113-115)*

Prof. K. V. Dominic is a poet, critic, short story writer and editor. *“Sanchita Karma” and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India* is his second collection of short stories. In his Preface to the book, Dominic says: “The themes include loneliness and problems of age, thirst for love, sexual desires, robbery and murder, terrorism, humanism...”

The book contains twenty stories. The opening title story, “Who is Responsible?” focuses on an elderly couple, Rehman and his wife Ramla. Sitting in his armchair watching the world go by, Rehman’s mind drifts to his past. That’s the beginning of the action but not the beginning of the narrative. Dominic continues his theme with Rehman’s son going overseas to work, leaving his wife behind and her relationship with another man. This leads to a violent murder.

Another of my favourites is “A Good Samaritan” Now, to be fair, I’m predisposed to like it because I recall the bible story I read years ago at school. Many people may have passed a road accident, but not many will have stopped to help. This is a sprightly an elegant story that takes a stock character and makes him and his story interesting through story and character construction. The Good Samaritan turns out to be the injured man who has aided many people in the past. I thought I knew exactly how the story would end – and then it didn’t end the way I predicted. It finished on an unexpected grace-note.

The family saga of Joseph and Thomas in “Joseph’s Maiden Vote to the Parliament” is like having the company of friends who are trying to help each other with the tangle of politics. Thomas is a leading Advocate in the High Court, while his son Joseph is a B.Tech. student in the Govt. Engineering College at Kochi. Thomas’ wife, Mercy is a professor in a government college and their daughter, Jane, is studying in

a higher secondary school. The family tries to help Joseph make decisions about his politics but he has a mind of his own and the story ends with this firm decision:

‘I don’t want to cast my vote to any of these candidates. Where is the button for it?’ Joseph exploded. ‘There is no button for it,’ getting from his seat the presiding officer replied angrily.

‘I don’t want to vote for traitors,’ Joseph roared. ‘Political mafia Murdabad! Anna Hazare Zindabad! (Down with political mafia! Long live Anna Hazare) Political mafia Murdabad! Anna Hazare Zindabad!’ raising his right fist up Joseph thundered and ran out of the station. His slogan echoed from the neighbouring hills.

Crackling with imaginative flair, the author nails dialogue and our obsession with politics and politicians, while offering genuine insights into the character’s thoughts and feelings.

In “Our Dear Bhai”, the protagonist seems to hear the watchman of his college, Bhai, calling him. He says of him:

Though he is illiterate, he can be sent as errand to any nook and corner of the country. During feasts and celebrations in the college, he is at the forefront serving food and compelling us to eat more and more. He always has the adage that our happiness is his happiness.

An elegant ability with language and a strand of melancholia binds the short story, as the storyteller reveals that after Bhai passed, his wife did not receive his pension. He says:

Why I heard Bhai calling me was only a hallucination, I understood. I returned to my house sad and forlorn.

The story, “The Twins”, concerns a man who is always working on his computer whereas his wife feels very lonely, and so he adopts a stray cat. But, he says, “The very touch and cry of the cat removed my wife’s solitude.” Later, the cat, Sundari, gives birth to twin kittens but, when one kitten goes missing, a colleague gives them identical twin kittens, whom they name Manikutty and Amminikutty. After an accident with the twin kittens and the storyteller’s mother, he decides to get rid of them. However, fate intervenes and he returns the kittens to his mother who has ‘experienced too much of solitude in my house that these kittens proved real companions’ to her.

“World Environment Day” is the story of a thief, Kaatturaja, who is a “Six footed sturdy youth of thirty. He is ebony black with a twisted moustache on his ferocious face.” This is a moral tale, with a twist to its end.

As pledged and promised Kaatturaja made an action force with his friends. The team of energetic twenty youth started afforestation wherever barren lands were found. The forest guards had no duty at all

since Kaatturaja's team never allowed any trespassers to steal the forest. After two years the forest became a model to the world and the country nominated Kaatturaji and his team for the United nations Forest for People Award.

This is collection of stories evocative of the country with characters simply sketched in a few sentences while still feeling rounded and real. From the tentative beginnings of friendship, to family problems, running from life to finding fulfilment, pointed character studies and quiet meditations – Dominic's people are often bereft, put upon, always searching for something. Through them he speaks volumes in a short space about cause and effect in relationships.

### 3

## **Review of *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India***

CHANDRAMONI NARAYANASWAMY

*(Copied from the text pages 116-124)*

I have long been an avid reader of the poems of Dr. K. V. Dominic but had no occasion to read any of his short stories though some have been published in journals as stated by him in the preface. This bunch of twenty stories is his second venture in fiction and to put it briefly, is another testimonial to his literary genius. Though small in number, these deal with a wide spectrum of themes – the helplessness and loneliness of the aged, their thirst for love, crime and terrorism, religious intolerance and superstition, corruption and unemployment, the ever increasing divide between the haves and the have-nots, the exploitation of the poor by the rich, cruelty to animals, destruction of forests and environment, Christian spirit vis-à-vis Christian practice, cruel destiny and helplessness of man, need for multicultural harmony, impact of mother tongue education, gender discrimination and empowerment of women etc. Like sips of cold water after a dusty walk in the hot sun, the vivid portrayal of these stark realities is relieved by instances of love, humanism, honesty, duty consciousness, compassion, repentance and reformation. Dr. Dominic is both an idealist and a realist, one who sees things as they are, whose outlook is neither pessimistic nor optimistic but practical with the conviction that all is not lost. He is a Gandhian with firm adherence to ahimsa, a patriot and a secularist. Hence though a true Christian by birth and practice he discards the theory generally believed in by majority of Christians that man is the supreme creation of God and He has given him the right to consume all other creatures; accepts what is rational in other religions and rejects what is irrational in his own. Hence he is a firm believer in the theory of karma and rebirth and is convinced that the reward of virtue and vice is to be reaped not in heaven and hell but on this earth through a series of births and rebirths. His love and compassion for animals and deep anguish at their suffering and the

cruelty meted out to them, his honest indignation at the vices and evil practices we see around us have found expression in his poems and his attempt to give vent to them through fiction is equally effective.

The story “Who is responsible?” is thought-provoking, philosophical, and brain storming. Responsible for what? For a particular calamity or tragedy affecting an individual or a family or for catastrophes causing all round havoc? For the degradation in values and the chaotic state of society in which God and conscience have no place? The story describes the pathetic life of a retired school teacher, a man of high character and integrity. His only son who could not come up to his expectations finds a job as an electrician in Oman, earns a lot of money, gets married at the instance of his parents to a rich and beautiful girl and goes back to his job leaving her with them. But instead of nursing the ailing mother-in-law she moves around with her chauffeur enjoying life and finally elopes with him. Simultaneously a letter comes informing the shocked father that his son had been arrested and dismissed from the job for his involvement in terrorist activities. The following day the old couple is found murdered and their house looted. The crime is clueless. The author poses the question. Who is to be blamed for the tragedy of Rahman and his family? But more questions loom large before the readers. Did the daughter-in-law and her paramour have a hand in the crime? Did her infidelity provoke her husband to take to terrorism in his frustration? Was Rehman himself responsible for bringing about the tragedy by forcing his son to marry? The title poses a number of questions for which there is no answer.

In the story “Ammu’s Birthday” in which a professor, having narrated the story of the misfortunes and tragedy of a family to his students, delivers a short lecture by way of replying to their comments and questions that mysterious are the ways of God, such miseries are part of the flow of the system and “as participatory beings we should flow with the system”.

The “Good Samaritan” in the next story having lost his only son in a road accident, had made it his life’s mission to save other accident victims lying unattended on the road. He meets with the same fate and is saved by another good Samaritan. But his future is uncertain with the possibility of living through paralysis and loss of memory. This information is temporarily withheld from his doting wife, old parents and daughters but how long? Will Xavier miraculously regain normalcy? If not, what will the fate of his family? The reader is left to digest these questions.

“Best Government Servant” is also a story about good people who are ultimately rewarded and relieved of all their miseries in the end. As a story with a happy ending it is refreshingly different from most stories we get to read these days which end on a note of despair though some may feel it is too good to be true.

In sharp contrast to the old couple in the first story broke hearted by the neglect and the humiliation meted out to them by their son and his wife, is the old woman in “An E-mail from Senthil Kumar”, tenderly taken care of by her over anxious son and daughter-in-law. She is a heart patient and they follow the doctor’s advice that she should be spared all tension and sorrow to the letter by withholding all information about the calamities which befall her siblings, even to the extent of keeping her in the dark about the death of her youngest brother to whom she was deeply attached. She leads a happy life in blissful ignorance till like a bolt from the blue, the cat is let out of the bag by the son of the dead man who had come to invite them for his father’s first death anniversary when she is alone in the house. Unable to bear the shock she suffers a severe stroke which she survives, only to lie in bed paralyzed and yearning for death. Objects of neglect and over protection all these the aged meet with tragedy.

Like spring following winter the next story “Fire your Horoscope!” is a happy one. A young man and woman hailing from orthodox Brahmin families remain single even after they are past their prime, though eligible in every respect because the horoscopes of both predict death for the spouse within one year of marriage. They finally bring out matrimonial advertisements boldly revealing the dark prediction in their respective horoscopes. By a coincidence both the ads appear in the same paper on the same day and are read by both. Educated and rational in thinking, they decide to get married and giving the lie to astrology and horoscopes, live long enough to celebrate their silver wedding. At the party thrown by their children to mark the occasion, the husband makes a speech in which he condemns astrology and exhorts his guests to throw their horoscopes in the fire.

“Joseph’s Maiden Vote to Parliament” is a political satire. It vividly depicts the chaotic political situation in which avarice, hypocrisy and corruption reign supreme and the confusion and dilemma of the young Joseph, who is to cast his vote for the first time in a parliament election racks his brain to decide to which party and which candidate he should give his vote but is unable to make his choice. He regards Anna Hazare as the messiah to usher in the new millennium. At the polling booth scanning the ballot paper with the names of the candidates and their



symbols printed on it, his confusion reaches the climax and he nearly turns mad and rushes out of the booth shouting. “Political mafia murdabad! Anna Hazare Zindabad!” This would now evoke a smile from the reader who had seen how the euphoria generated by Anna Hazare ebbed out.

“Mathews, the Real Christian” and the “Twisted Course of Destiny” are sad commentaries on the state of unemployment and education in Kerala where the percentage of literacy is the highest in India. In the second mentioned story Rajiv and his sweet heart Sangeeta both postgraduates, languish for years as teachers in private coaching centers getting meagre salaries. Sangeeta has better luck because she belongs to a backward class and getting the benefit of reservation secures appointment as a Lower Division Clerk in a government office and later as a Deputy Collector. Under parental pressure and persuaded by Rajiv she is compelled to marry another. Later Rajiv gets appointed as a peon in a Collectorate. Undaunted he continues his research activities while working as a peon and is awarded PhD. Destiny deals a cruel blow to him when Sangeeta is posted to the same office and being a peon he has to carry files to her and take orders from her. She feels for him and prays for his luck. At last years of patient toil and perseverance are rewarded and Rajiv secures appointment as Assistant Professor in a govt. post graduate college. But the other story vividly highlights another stark and deplorable reality in addition to unemployment, namely the role of religion in politics and elections, making a mockery of democracy. Here Mathews as highly educated as Rajiv having unsuccessfully knocked at the door of employment for any job, finally takes to self employment for his livelihood and takes up agriculture on a small plot of two acres of land which he had inherited. By dint of hard work he becomes a successful agriculturist by combining cultivation with animal husbandry. He is an idealist, a socialist by conviction, loved and held in high esteem by all in the village. His popularity is sought to be exploited by politicians and much against his wishes, he is persuaded to contest the panchayat election as an independent candidate with the support of the left wing. He wins with a thumping majority and is elected as Panchayat President. As president he is efficient, amiable and diplomatic and gets more funds for development of the panchayat, earning the respect and admiration of all including the opposition camp. At the same time he lost no opportunity to spread his own high principles and the message of secularism by exhorting religious leaders not to mix religion with politics. Then comes the Assembly election and once again Mathews is persuaded to contest as an Independent with left wing support. His opponent, the candidate of the right wing, is also a catholic like him and

he has the full support of leaders of the three major religions – Islam, Hindu and Christianity who are alarmed at the prospect of victory of the secularist Mathews. Pastoral messages are published in papers and read in churches and seminaries pleading for votes to the right wing. There is high turnout in all booths and Mathew's victory is a foregone conclusion. But a few days before the declaration of the results, Mathews is killed in a hit and run road accident. His death is mourned by all but his family is not allowed to enter the church to bury the body in the cemetery though they have a family tomb there for which they had paid money to the church. Even though he was a true Christian who followed the teachings of Christ to the letter, the priest tells his brother that he was not a Christian as he never went to church and attended Mass. Finally bowing to public opinion, the gate of the cemetery is opened and the body is buried in the family tomb but without any prayers by the priest. No prayers were needed for the true Christian. This story makes one look back and take a peep into history when in the late fifties the first Communist govt. in Kerala was democratically elected in a fair and free election an event which made the capitalist western block led by America feel glittery and threatened and an efficient corruption-free govt. was dismissed by the central govt. on the ground of irretrievable break down of law and order which was brought about by the direct involvement of the church, the provocation being the move to nationalize education by taking over all private schools and colleges, the majority of which were under the church. Other religious organizations like the NSS and the Muslim League too had joined the agitation. The rot which had set in Kerala politics then had now grown into a mafia and spread to many other States in the country.

There is an air of mystery and supernatural in “Our dear Bhai” and “Sanchita Karma”. In the first story the Gorkha watchman of a college who had grown gray in the service of the institution, devoting himself to the care of its staff and students made it all his world and wanted to continue there in some capacity even after retirement, dies of sudden cardiac arrest while still in service. He is greatly missed and he seems to speak to a teacher who loved him through the rustling of the leaves of a mango tree which he had planted and nurtured to perpetuate his memory in the college. In “Sanchita Karma” seven cats pampered and brought up with loving care by their owners in their previous births had been poisoned to death by their affluent and snobbish neighbours, an advocate and his wife; take revenge on their murderers who have been reborn as two mice by chasing them for a long time when questioned why they are so cruel to them, they narrate the story of their previous births. They were three generations of cats who used to trespass into the

property of the advocate and though they never ventured into the house or stole any food, they would defecate in the compound which could not be tolerated by the wealthy couple who were ostensibly pious Christians who go to church every day and regularly attend Mass. In this story the matriarch of the cat family becomes the mouth piece of the author. Like Bernard Shaw he gives vent through her views on cruelty to animals, his total rejection of the philosophy that man is supreme among God's creations and all other forms of life are meant for his enjoyment and benefit and his firm belief in karma and rebirth. The story is also autobiographical. The merciless elimination of the cats by neighbours is an episode from his own life and the death of the cats is the subject of one of his tear jerking poems "Ammini's Laments" included in his second anthology *Write Son, Write*. Ammini is the name of one of the seven cats in this story.

"The Twins" is also a story about cats with an autobiographical touch. Two cats named Manikkutty and Amminikkutty (names of two of the seven cats in "Sanchita Karma") are the darling pets of a college teacher and a school teacher like the author and his wife. The cats lead a blissful life till their master's mother comes to stay with them. She is a year old heart patient and the master is worried about the disturbance and tension that would be caused to her by the kittens who have the free run of the house. His fears are proved right when the old lady is alone in the house after he and his wife had left for college and school and he comes at lunch time to find his mother lying helpless on the bed gasping for breath, the kittens having knocked down her food and medicines kept on the table. Having revived her with emergency medicines, the master of the kittens takes a hard decision to abandon them for his mother's sake. With a heavy heart he takes the kittens in a carton, drives to a lonely place and leaves them there. But when he is about to return from that place, he gets a phone call from his mother about the missing kittens and insisting on their being brought back. The kittens are taken back and a home nurse is engaged to look after the old lady and all are happy.

"School Entrance Festival" depicts a tragic-comic situation where education in govt. and govt. aided schools goes a begging. A school which was once a model for other schools and used to have a strength of 1500 students and more than sixty teachers is reduced to a state of imminent extinction with only fifty students in ten standards and fifteen teachers. Before reopening the manager calls a meeting and informs the teachers that there was not a single child for admission in the first standard for which they could somehow get one student in the previous year. If they fail to get at least one pupil that year standard-I will be

abolished paving the way for closure of the school shortly. So the teachers go in search of a pupil and finally manage to secure a five-year old girl Vidya, daughter of a daily wager in a slum by wooing her widowed mother with incentives like monthly payment of Rs. 10,000/- for the family to meet their expenses, three sets of uniform, school bag and umbrella for the child. Having conceded all the demands of the family living in poverty (who had been approached earlier by teachers of govt. L P Schools with offers of uniforms bag and umbrella), they make advance payment of Rs.10,000 and give a packet of sweets to the child to ensure her being brought to the school on the reopening day. On that day the school is decorated as for a festival and the child is received like a VVIP with bouquets and toys while flower petals are showered on her. The child looks for friends but there is none on that day or afterwards. For the whole year Vidya studies in Standard-I with the teacher as her only companion. This is the situation prevailing in other classes too. Such a situation has been brought about by the mad rush for admission in English medium CBSE schools to which the teachers in govt. and govt aided L P Schools also send their children in preference to their own schools. The story was like a fairy tale to me who had studied in Malayalam medium in the Govt. Girls High School at Alleppey in Kerala in the early fifties (English medium had been abolished from schools after independence and there were no English medium schools then).

“Selvan’s House” vividly presents the merciless exploitation of labour by the rich. A wealthy engineer is constructing a palatial house and he is so miserly that he does not provide even a cup of tea in the afternoon to the construction workers toiling in the hot sun who are often given food and tea by kinder neighbours. Selvan, who supervises the construction is simple and hard working, so devoted to his work as if he is constructing his own house and has almost started regarding it as his own as it nears completion. But once the work is over, he is discarded like a soiled glove and dismissed curtly by the engineer and his wife who move into the house immediately after the house warming party. It is difficult to believe that such exploitation of labour is possible in Kerala which is regarded as the birth place of communism in India.

There is an element of mysticism in the concluding story “World Environment Day” in which trees and animals, as symbols of long exploited nature interact with man to bring about a miraculous change in the wanton destruction of forests. Katturaja, meaning king of the forest, is the illegitimate son of a tribal woman conceived after she was raped by forest guards. Despised by all, he grows up thirsting for revenge and after

getting some education he learns how the tribals are cheated and exploited by govt. officials and forest mafia. To take revenge and alleviate the distress of tribals he takes to crime himself and becomes a sort of Robinhood by felling trees like sandal, teak and mahogany, selling the valuable timber to the agents of timber merchants and distributing the money among the poor. He is the most wanted forest thief. On World Environment Day when he is about to fell a teak tree, the tree cries for help which is heard by a herd of tuskers who rush to its rescue. Terrified at their approach Katturaja scrambles up the tree and is trapped on a high branch unable to come down as the tuskers have surrounded the tree, ready to attack him if he comes down. In that helpless situation he is able to hear of the voice of the tree which tries to reason with him. He has a change of heart, seeks the forgiveness of the tree and promises to be the friend and protector of the forest to atone for his past life as the destroyer. The elephants in turn understand his language and retreat. Katturaja comes down, a reformed man, surrenders before the Magistrate and voluntarily courts arrest. He faces trial for his past crimes and is sentenced to imprisonment and released on the next World Environment Day. On his return he is welcomed by all inhabitants of the forest birds, animals, trees and planets. He forms a voluntary action force of youths to protect the forest and in two years it becomes a model forest with Katturaja and his team being nominated for the United Nation's "Forest For People" award. The story also conveys a message that the observance of World Environment Day should not be limited to making speeches from the platform but should be observed by doing something tangible to preserve and protect forests and environment and the flora and fauna.

The stories in this collection not only storm the brain but also delight the heart and would be treasured by all lovers of contemporary Indo-English fiction. It is hoped that more such stories would flow from the pen of Dr. Dominic in quick succession.

## 4

### **Review of the Book *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India***

**DR. RADHAMANI SARMA**

*(Copied from the text pages 125-127)*

I am delighted to review the book of short stories by Prof. K. V. Dominic. An academician of diligence and skill, poet and ebullient critic, he needs no introduction. He is a prolific writer who touches almost all aspects of Indian life. There can be no better and fitting assessment than his own avowed approach to his writing corpus. Themes such as old age, loneliness, corruption, pitfalls of human foibles etc., are inherent in his imagination taking shape to reach the public in good earnest. The very first title story "Who is Responsible?" focuses on multiple themes such as separation between couple, especially newlyweds, that might result in elopement, political pitfalls, murder for gain etc. In almost all his short stories, the locale is his favourite Kerala. Diction dipped in practical observation of forthrightness, the story is about the protagonist's son, and daughter-in-law Aisha, who deviates from ethics in the absence of her husband when he takes a job abroad. The story teller observes in his own candid way, "She was young, healthy and full of passion. It was true, she was a bride, but her body knew no ethics. Who would satiate her carnal needs?" 'Misfortunes never strike single' is proved, when towards the end of the story, Rehman and his wife were murdered for gain, the writer wailing that poetic justice is missing. Innocents are done with. Verily true.

In the story "A Good Samaritan" the writer himself begins stating that it is three fourth real and rest based on fantasy. Kerala pops out of his imagining stamping its rightful place. The persona narrating the story of Xavier, a good Samaritan who saved so many accident victims, is the accident victim now, facing loss of memory. Xavier and his wife lost their only son in accident. God's ways are mysterious, we do not know. Those who were saved by him now are saddened by the fact, that he is in

trauma. We all go by the time honoured dictum that, the *puny am, or charity will stand by us*.

“The Best Government Servant” is one, like Krishnan, who has principles not to accept bribes. In a corruption rampant society bribery is canker, either you are rewarded or punished for being honest. In a native immediacy of tone and feeling, the story is carried on. “Ammu’s Birthday” is another depict wherein God’s ways sometimes appear cruel. In the close of Ammu’s birthday celebrations, (fatherless child) she has a tragic end much to the plight of her mother, a widow; what to call this? A philosophy often prevails in our lives, God’s ways are mysterious and we all need to believe and go with the flow of life, be it filled with setbacks and twists and turns. Yet another story reveals that a weak heart cannot take bad or sad news. Mother, memories and medicines which sustain her all through – a weak heart—“An Email Message from Senthilkumar” means a lot. Candid redecoration of human dilemma, bonds and bondage in our lives – all can be visualized. Nowadays horoscopes play a vital role in our matrimonial market and at the same time prove to be futile before human foresight. “Fire Your Horoscope”, humorously coiled by wisdom on either side of bride and bridegroom fructifies marriage and prosperity.

The prolific writer’s potential is testified by simple yet realistic depiction of various characters drawn from all walks of life. The poet-short story writer portrays characters in such a way that the words emphatically flow from their mouths – stay in our minds – as if they are time bound and dictum for all ages. For instance, in “Mathews, the Real Christian,” Mathews observes thus: “ I request your religious leaders not to mix religion with politics. Let religion go its way and politics its way. Hasn’t Christ taught us, “Give unto Ceaser, Caesar’s and unto God God’s?” You should not request lay men to Vote for this party or that man.... It is high time we stop discrimination to women. Being the children of God there is no discrimination between man and woman. Then why should they be denied entry in God’s abode?” Not only society is of concern for Dominic, even tenets of philosophy, Hindu philosophy, take roots in the writer’s short stories. KARMA theory is unfolded, in the story “Sanchita Karma” emphasizing related aspects such as rebirth and God’s will in recreation. The story via conversation between cats and male mouse and female mouse, is Karma theory and rebirth enumerated. Our lives veer round our affinity between people with whom we live, interact and spend. Bhai in the story “Our Dear Bhai” is a Gurkha, a watchman in the college, a lovely character whose day to day involvement is worth mentioning. “World Environment Day”

is conclusive story in which preservation of forest is very vital in our lives and Katturaja the forest thief, after reformation and before his interaction with elephants and trees reveals much. The book is alive in pages – interesting episodes, witty and lively dialogue.



## 5

### **Review of *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India***

**DR. SULAKSHNA SHARMA**

*(Copied from the text pages 128-130)*

K. V. Dominic's book, "*Sanchita Karma*" and *Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India* is his second collection of twenty short stories. Many of these stories, according to the author, "have been published periodically through... [his] own edited journals as well as through other international refereed journals, both print and online" (Preface). Dominic has "used several themes and focused on many issues which are universal and at the same time frequently occurring in... [his] own State, Kerala" (Preface). The themes are mainly socio-political and socioeconomic. The tone is satirical and, at times, didactic.

The author has enlisted a number of themes in the preface to his book on which his stories are based. Succinctly, the various themes can be put under the following main headings: unemployment, Diaspora and its repercussions, devaluation and the frustration of highly educated youth in the highly literate State like Kerala; superstitions, immorality and modernity, discrimination on the basis of caste and social status, the follies in the Indian marriage system, communism versus democracy, corruption and political exploitation of the weak and the downtrodden, plight of the poor, wild life and its conservation, the Hindu religious philosophy of karma et cetera.

The characters and their social milieu are plausible and interesting. Every story brings into light a bunch of fresh problems and themes are explored and realized by its characters to the fullest. Every story leaves a stinging question that forces its reader to rethink his/her role and contribution towards the society. For example, at the end of his short story, "Ammu's Birthday" an English Professor, Dr. Sankar asks his class about the story he had just read for them. The students, referring to the story as an ordinary one, insisted that they wanted "to hear something merry and pleasant" as "tragic incidents" are rife in newspapers. Perturbed by such responses, Dr. Sankar tries to explain the need of such a "tragic" story, thus:

My dear students, I honour your reactions. What Joseph said is true. This is just an ordinary story. I am not revealing the author's name. And what relevance has an author in a work as per New Criticism? The author has mentioned as a footnote that the story is based on a tragedy at a village in North Kerala. As Meera has complained we are reading such tragic lives every day. Dear students, don't forget the fact that our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts, as Shelley has written. The more we read such things the more compassionate and humane we should become. Such literature purges our mind and we get *karunyam* (compassion) *rasa*. We should not turn our faces to miseries and tragedies of others. Such tragedies are part of the flow of the system and as participatory beings we should flow with the system. Mysterious are the ways of the Creator and our little intelligence can't find justifications for the multitudinous activities of the Almighty. Hope you are satisfied with my answers," Dr. Sankar ended his lecture.

Clearly, the aim of the author as a "social critic" has always been the betterment of his society, State and nation.

Most of the stories have a somber tone. They exhibit various socio-political-economic vignettes and are brimming with moral implications: 'Who is Responsible?', 'A Good Samaritan', 'Best Government Servant', 'Ammu's Birthday', 'An Email from Senthil Kumar', 'Joseph's Maiden Vote to the Parliament', 'Matthews, the Real Christian', 'Our Dear Bhai', 'Sanchita Karma', 'Selvan's House', 'Twisted Course of Destiny' and 'Is Human Life Precious than Animal's?' In comparison to the above mentioned short stories, the following stories put forward the message of the significance of rational thinking, morality, compassion and humanity in a more jovial and a light-hearted manner: 'Fire Your Horoscope!', 'School Entrance Festival', 'The Twins', 'World Environment Day' and 'Puppets in the Hands of God.'

In conclusion, the book is a true mirror of the society that writhes under the burden of economic insecurities and lack of good governance. Most of the stories in the book can be adapted for small plays, skits, and even TV serials—aiming to spread social awareness on the burning issues and rampant evils in the Indian society and the Indian political system. Moreover, the stories can be easily incorporated in English textbooks of any school or college. Its copies in the school and college libraries will contribute towards nurturing the young minds of India and making them more humane, considerate and socially aware citizens. I congratulate K. V. Dominic for the success of his noble pursuit.

## 6

### K. V. Dominic's Tales of Kerala Today

DR CHRISTOPHER ROLLASON

#### ABSTRACT

This chapter analyses the contribution to the Indian Writing in English (IWE) short story canon of the stories of Professor K. V. Dominic, examining a selection of representative texts, most of them published in the three short story collections which have appeared to date under his name. It is shown how the author's writing reflects the particular characteristics of his native state of Kerala, as a multi-religious and multicultural environment and as India's most literate state. Close examination of the selected stories also points up how they variously highlight issues that are at one and the same time both local and universal, including ethical dilemmas in urgent situations, generosity and gratitude, and humanity's relationship to animals and to nature. It is further shown how in line with the varying subject-matter the author activates both classical realist and magic-realist or fabular modes of narration.

**Keywords:** Short stories, Indian Writing in English, Kerala, multiculturalism, magic realism

The aim of this essay will be to examine a number of short stories written by the Kerala-based author and academic Professor K. V. Dominic, viewing them as part of an ongoing contribution to the canon of Indian Writing in English (IWE). Criticism of IWE works has tended to concentrate on the novel, but the genre – related but different – of the short story has also been widely cultivated by IWE practitioners. In the first place, behind the work of all modern Indian writers there lies the figure of Rabindranath Tagore (still the one and only subcontinental literary Nobel), whose production in multiple genres includes a considerable number of short stories, originally written in Bengali but nonetheless significantly influential in English translation: stories like “The Postmaster” or “Kabuliwallah” are recognized as classic Tagore. As regards the English-language story proper, we find it practised early on by such key IWE founding fathers as Raja Rao (*On the Ganga Ghat*) and R. K. Narayan (multiple volumes), as well as more recently by the likes of Salman Rushdie (*East, West*), Vikram Chandra (*Love and Longing in Bombay*) and Rohinton Mistry (*Tales from Firozsha Baag*), and by women

writers including Anita Desai (*Diamond Dust*) and Jhumpa Lahiri (*Interpreter of Maladies*). A given author's short stories may be of an avowedly regional nature, and here, in a sense anticipating K. V. Dominic's Kerala-centred stories, we may note a collection which deserves to be better known, namely *Old Cypress*, Nisha da Cunha's volume of stories set in Goa.

Professor Dominic has published three volumes of stories to date: *Who is Responsible? A Collection of Short Stories* (2016). *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India* (2018), and *Short Stories during Covid-19* (2022). There is overlap between *Who is Responsible?* and *Sanchita Karma*: the latter includes republications of a number of stories from the former, the texts being identical. The present study will examine selected stories drawn from all three volumes, plus a couple that are uncollected or forthcoming: the provenance of the individual stories discussed will be indicated parenthetically (with footnotes if appropriate), while full publication details will be given in an appendix. Dominic's writing evinces a highly developed sense of place, implying a particularly strong regional dimension. Other parts of India as well as Keralans' third-country employment destinations such as Oman, Kuwait or the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are evoked in a number of stories, but typically somewhat as noises off. All in all, the stories' focus on the local serves to enhance the reader's perception of Kerala – a state which has merited its distinguished literary representations (in Rushdie's *The Moor's Last Sigh* or Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*), but whose realities will certainly benefit from greater literary exposure on the Indian market.

The starting-point for K. V. Dominic's exercise of his narratorial skills is his self-definition (in his preface to *Who is Responsible?*) as a social critic. A whole series of social and ethical issues are raised from a vantage point which is both specific to Kerala and, simultaneously, pan-Indian and universal. The narrator's gaze is overwhelmingly that of an educated person, reflecting not only the author's own high level of qualification but also Kerala's special position in India as the state with the highest literacy rate. There is an emphasis throughout on ethical principles and the life-choices made by individuals (indeed, as we have seen, the second volume of stories is subtitled as offering "tales of ethics and choice").

We will now commence our consideration of a representative number of K. V. Dominic's stories and the issues they raise. For ease of reference, each story will (unless uncollected) be sourced to the volume in which it first appeared, using the following codes: RESP (*Who is*

*Responsible?*), KARMA (*Sanchita Karma*) and COVID (*Stories during COVID-19*). Where parenthetical page numbers appear they will be deemed to refer to the collection from which the story concerned is sourced.

The themes of religion and multiculturalism, while scarcely unique to India, take on particular significance in a country where representative communities are present from a multiplicity of religions. In particular, in the Keralan context harmony and mutual understanding between Hindu, Christian and Muslim communities is a *sine qua non* for the proper functioning of society, and this principle is evident when K. V. Dominic deals with these issues.

The story entitled “Multicultural Harmony” (KARMA) begins with the words “Amar, Akbar and Anthony are good neighbours” (90), linking its three head of household villagers, each hailing from one of the three principal communities, through the letter “a” that commences each of their names. The narrator believes in intercultural harmony as the norm, while stating that “Hindus and Christians are the major communities and Muslims are a minority there” (90). He affirms that whether major or minor, the communities “all have been living in perfect harmony and synthesis” (90). However, this state of equilibrium is perturbed when Amar’s son Anand and Anthony’s daughter Celine fall in love across the religious divide. Neighbourliness gives way to animosity between their families. The third head of household, Akbar, tries to mediate but in vain: the multicultural harmony of the story’s title ceases to apply. It takes Anand’s donation of a kidney to an ailing Celine to reconcile the warring families. The marriage finally takes place, and the narrator declares it a golden day for “the largest multicultural country in the world” (96). Yet the resistance put up earlier by both sides serves as a reminder of the often fraught nature of inter-communal difference, notably under the pressure of religion.

Other stories foreground difficult choices which, in line with the author’s declared purpose, come over as quintessentially ethical. In “Best Government Servant” (RESP)<sup>1</sup>, Krishnan, a newly recruited civil servant in a small town in Kerala, finds himself exposed to a workplace culture steeped in bribery. He faces a stark choice: either to live a quiet life tolerating ingrained abuses, or else to “swim against the flow” (32) and denounce endemic irregularities. He chooses the second response and enters an official complaint. Following this he is transferred to an

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<sup>1</sup> Story reprinted in KARMA, without textual changes. Page numbers are to RESP.

obscure village, “a remote place in the high ranges” (33). The episode nonetheless ends on an optimistic note: the matter reaches the courts and the judge rules in Krishnan’s favour. He is transferred back to his hometown and awarded the distinction of Best Government Servant by the Governor of Kerala. This story with its almost Utopian denouement serves to keep alive the flame of hope for a fairer society.

Ethical dilemmas of a more nuanced character are raised in two stories, “An Email from Senthil Kumar” and “A Good Samaritan” (both RESP)<sup>2</sup>. In the first-named story, the author of the fictive message, an office worker named Kumar, explains that his eighty-year-old mother is bedridden with heart disease. Her close relatives believe, in line with the doctor’s opinion, that bad news of any kind could put her life at risk and provoke a heart attack: in the doctor’s words, “we should see that she was always happy” (41). They therefore come to an agreement to shield her from all and any such news. Thus when her best-loved brother dies her remaining next of kin tell her they are attending not a funeral but a wedding. When finally the facts about the brother are inadvertently revealed by a distant family member who was unaware of the close relatives’ agreement, Kumar’s mother has a stroke that leaves her paralysed. The fictive email ends there: the story raises, without definitively resolving, the thorny issue of whether it is ethical to deceive someone with invented stories in order to preserve their life.

“A Good Samaritan” takes its title from the celebrated New Testament episode (Luke 10: 29-37), which may be summarised as follows: a man beaten up and stripped of his clothes by highway thieves is taken up, treated for his wounds and given lodging, all by a concerned and generous passer-by who is, as it happens, a Samaritan (a member of a community hailing from Samaria in Palestine, typically ill-accepted by the Jews). The biblical allusion could suggest that the story has been placed under the sign of Christianity, but in view of the presence of members of more than one community, it would be wrong to read its message as exclusively Christian: the figure of the Good Samaritan is best seen as a universal archetype of human kindness. The story is told by a first-person narrator named Professor Mohan (to be presumed Hindu), who when driving on the highway finds a man bleeding by the roadside, knocked down by a careless driver. He takes him straight to the hospital, where the doctor says the man has a severe head injury and must be operated immediately. Mohan contacts the victim’s wife

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<sup>2</sup> Both stories reprinted in KARMA, without textual changes. Page numbers for both are to RESP.

Mariam, who rushes to the hospital. She and her husband Xavier are Christians and, we are told, Mariam “cried aloud to Jesus to save her husband” (20). The operation takes place but the doctor warns Mohan that Xavier may be permanently brain-damaged. The professor decides it is judicious *not* to inform Mariam or anyone else present of the real state of affairs: “Hence I pleaded the doctor to tell them a lie and thus hide the seriousness of the case. Accordingly the doctor appeared before them and announced that Xavier had had only a minor head injury” (21). The ambiguity of the situation leaps to the eye when Mariam declares to Mohan, “You are an angel whom Jesus sent” (22). The story leaves unresolved the ethical dilemma around Mohan’s decision to be economical with the truth. It transpires that Xavier was a health service volunteer who had frequently brought people injured on the roads to the hospital, and indeed Mohan says to Mariam; “He is indeed that Good Samaritan of your Bible” (24). It is for the reader to ask who should be called the Good Samaritan – Mohan, Xavier or both?

Generosity is also featured in the twin stories “Compassion Rewards” and “Coffin Maker” (both uncollected)<sup>3</sup>. The first is the story of Madhavan Nair, a retired schoolteacher who is diagnosed with liver disease but cannot afford the operation. An unexpected actor steps into make the payment: it is Rahim, a former pupil of Madhavan’s from fifteen years ago and now a software engineer in UAE, whom the teacher had saved from arrest over a minor breach of the peace. Rahim, recalling how his former teacher had helped preserve his reputation, meets the medical bill in an exemplary gesture that shows how gratitude can beget generosity. The second tale revolves around Peter, who works as a coffin maker but dislikes a trade which has a depressive influence on him: “Horrid images of death are dancing around me whenever I work here” (“Coffin Maker”). Out of the blue, he is offered a golden opportunity – employment in Kuwait – by Afsal, a onetime classmate. Afsal makes the offer – which Peter accepts – in the conviction that good deeds will be rewarded: “The happiness I get by saving you and your family is eternal” (“Coffin Maker”).

A contemporary note is struck when K. V. Dominic touches on the coronavirus pandemic. In “Clement’s Return from UAE” (COVID), the protagonist, a former maths teacher employed as an accountant in Dubai, suddenly finds himself out of work thanks to COVID and therefore plans his return home. However, he is warned on the phone by his wife that their house is in the COVID containment zone. His return

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix.

is thus impaired by the unprecedented restrictions on movement. Clement is willing to compromise and accept fourteen days' quarantine at home, but when he reaches Kerala he finds that he cannot even enter his home and seems to have no option but to quarantine in a hotel. The human cost of the pandemic is graphically conveyed in Clement's predicament: "He is denied entry into his own house, which he built with his own money" (12). He is, though, saved from the anonymity of hotel quarantine by Krishnan, a former student who – here too deploying the virtue of generosity – invites Clement to quarantine on a more humane basis, namely with him and family, for the duration. Dominic's story thus communicates both the emotional cost of COVID and the persistence of human values in adversity.

A number of stories centre on human beings' relations with animals and with nature. The author's focus on animals has merited comparison, by the scholarly authority Dr Ramesh K. Srivastava in his foreword to the volume *Sanchita Karma*, to Rudyard Kipling's *Jungle Books*, as well as a classical text like the *Panchatantra*. "The Twins" (RESP)<sup>4</sup> deals with the narrator's relationship with a pair of twin kittens who he and his wife (both education professionals) lovingly bring up as their cherished pets. The cats have the run of the house but do not always respect tidiness in the domestic space. An ethical conundrum arises when the narrator's invalid mother comes to stay and the kittens overturn her medicines and food supplies. The head of household feels he has to choose between human and non-human, and elects to drive the two cats to a location on the highway and abandon them there. Yet when it comes down to it his mother herself, phoning him at the crucial moment, insists that he bring them back: "My dear son, I can't live without these angels" (111). The story finally becomes a plea for respect for non-human animals, as having the same rights as human beings.

Cats also feature, but in a very different way, in the story "Sanchita Karma" (RESP)<sup>5</sup>. This story goes beyond the limits a different direction combining magic realism with the time-honoured fabular tradition. of the realism generally practised by the author, featuring talking animals and thus pointing in The animal tale takes the form of a dialogue between a group of seven cats and four terrified mice. The leading cat explains that the mice were humans in their previous lives, but were a cruel family who quite deliberately poisoned their neighbours' cats, whom they saw as trespassers on their property. The seven cats now

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<sup>4</sup> Story reprinted in KARMA, without textual changes. Page numbers are to RESP..

<sup>5</sup> Story reprinted in KARMA, without textual changes. Page numbers are to RESP..



facing the mice are the souls of the cats they killed. The punishment in the next life comes in two stages. First the onetime humans are reincarnated as mice, following which and once they have heard the leading cat's karmic explanation, they are killed and eaten by the cats. This story, militating against cruelty to animals, thus conveys a message similar to that of "The Twins" even if using very different literary resources.

Issues of respect for animals and nature come to the fore in "Nature Teaches" (COVID), another story that breaks the bounds of realist discourse. This tale, set in a Kerala town, opens with the decision of the municipal council to authorise construction of a shopping mall. This would involve felling a cherished tree – a fig tree which also plays the role of a bus shelter. A dissident councillor declares that the tree is a precious asset not only for humans but also for a numerous animal population: "Not only birds, squirrels, flies, honeybees, wasps, chameleons, spiders, ants and several other creatures survive only because of that tree. Haven't other beings, plants and trees and all that reside on earth equal rights to live here as we human beings?" (19). Magic realism raises its head, here too deploying animals that talk, as the author depicts a crow who listens in at the meeting and flies off to warn his fellow birds of the threat to the tree. The birds and other animals maintain a permanent vigilance and, in parallel, a group of human protesters is formed to oppose the felling. Officials arrive with the police, and just when the protesters are about to be arrested, the tree's entire crow population fly down and start pecking at the humans. Next come a colony of wasps, and the officers flee for their lives. Finally the councillors annul the proposed development. The story thus, using the resources of magic realism, constructs a human/animal nexus of solidarity which results in a happy – perhaps Utopian – ending.

K. V. Dominic's short stories, of which this essay has examined a representative sample, may be considered highly meritorious insofar as they deploy a rich panoply of literary resources in order to convey, be it through realist or non-realist discourse, what we may call the feel of life in Kerala. The social and ethical issues evoked are simultaneously local and universal. The distinctiveness of Kerala state is highlighted by the focus on multi-religious coexistence, while the strong presence of professional educators across the stories testifies to Kerala's status as India's most literate state. All in all, these are narrative texts which constitute a valuable and stimulating addition to the rich canon of Indian short-story writing in English.

### Appendix: Published collections of short stories by Professor K. V. Dominic

*Who is Responsible? A Collection of Short Stories*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. With author's preface.

*Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*. Ann Arbor, USA: Modern Victory Press, 2018. With foreword by Dr Ramesh K. Srivastava and author's preface.

*Short Stories during Covid-19*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2022. With author's preface.

### Uncollected stories

"Compassion Rewards", *International Journal on Multicultural Literature*, vol. 13, no. 2, July 2023.

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Dr Christopher Rollason is a UK national and independent scholar living in Luxembourg. He graduated in English from Trinity College, Cambridge, and obtained his PhD at York University with a thesis on Edgar Allan Poe, and until 1997 was a lecturer at Coimbra University, Portugal. He was Visiting Professor at JNU Delhi in 2006, and has published widely on Indian Writing in English and other subjects, with multiple articles and reviews, two co-edited volumes and, in 2021, the book *Read Books, Repeat Quotations: The Literary Bob Dylan*. Email: rollason54@gmail.com



## 7

### **Prof. K V Dominic's *Short Stories during Covid-19*: Chronicles of Compassion for a Global Reform**

ELISABETTA MARINO

Unquestionably, the Corona-virus pandemic has functioned as a potent social equalizer, affecting both affluent and underprivileged individuals across the globe, who have fallen victim to its relentless fury. Nonetheless, it has also starkly exposed social inequalities and disparities in access to healthcare and safe living conditions. Indeed, since the beginning of the emergency, the lower strata of society and, in general terms, the developing countries of the Global South, have faced severe challenges in securing vaccines and adequate medical treatments; moreover, limited hygienic measures, precarious accommodations, and the scarcity of food and water supplies have further widened existing gaps between the wealthy and the poor, whose chances of survival whereby no means certain. Though strongly recommended to prevent the spread of the Covid-19 disease, social distancing (which should have been more properly called *physical* distancing) has contributed to eroding bonds of friendship, weakening our sense of community, and isolating those who were already marginalized and excluded. Now that the pandemic has been deemed to be over (even though new cases are, once again, escalating worldwide), we may begin to draw the first conclusions on its effects on society: have we become more humane and civilized, increasingly prone to assist our fellow creatures (both human and non-human animals)? Conversely, has our predator instinct prevailed? Is the Latin proverb *homo homini lupus* (a man is wolf to another man) most true, nowadays? Are we continuing to exploit the natural world and our neighbours, regardless of the consequences? This essay sets out to explore the answers provided by K. V. Dominic by focusing on his recent volume entitled *Short Stories during Covid-19*, finally released in 2022, after a two-year gestation. A brief investigation into Dominic's insightful conception of poetry and the role of the poet will constitute the framework to contextualize the analysis of his collection.

According to Kavitha Gopalakrishnan, “Dr. Dominic’s poetic oeuvre is driven by a holistic belief [...] the parts of something are intimately interconnected and explicable only by reference to the whole” (201). Corollaries to this assertion are the author’s profound faith in multiculturalism – or “unity in diversity” (1), to quote P. C. K. Prem, “... his heartfelt humanism which translates into an “innate concern [...] about the entire universe” (Sahay 68), and his utter rejection of any form of human-fabricated hierarchy, be it based on gender, social status, caste, ethnicity, or religion. Dominic may be regarded as a champion of the oppressed; besides, despite his Christian upbringing, as he revealed to Goutam Karmakar, he believes all religions are fundamentally equal: “my religion is universal religion which preaches to love all creatures of the world and show discrimination to none” (6). In his view, “nationalism must pave the way to internationalism” (Mukhopadhyaya 16); in the global family he dreams of, “Mother India becomes an affable, sweet, and darling daughter to Mother World” (Marino 211). Accordingly, in our spiritually deprived planet, where senseless greed and self-destructive exploitation are the dominant philosophy, the poet is entrusted with an enormous responsibility, since s/he, alone, “can change and save the world” (Phutela 135). As Dominic has elucidated in his interview with Goutam Karmakar, in fact, “the primary duty of a poet or a writer is to point out the drawbacks as well as evil practices of his fellowmen. His writing should act as a corrective force to the society” (6). Dominic’s terse prose and finely chiselled lines, therefore, are stripped of any trace of self-congratulation; following in the steps of John Keats’s chameleon poet, his ego disappears into the powerful, invigorating message he wishes to convey to his readership.

*Short Stories during Covid 19* may be regarded as a literary remedy, a source of solace and insight, a refined balm aimed at healing (at least, emotionally) our diseased society, at a time of extreme vulnerability. Indeed, even in the worst scenarios envisioned in the narratives, the happy ending is guaranteed and hope is unfailingly restored. The seven stories that form the collection (seven, like the days of Creation) address crucial issues – “universal and at the same time occurring in [Dominic’s] own State, Kerala” (Dominic 5) – which, during the pandemic, have become even more critical. These issues encompass the struggles of the precariat (a term combining precarity<sup>6</sup> with proletariat), the subjection of

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<sup>6</sup> In *Frames of War* (2009), Judith Butler distinguishes between the ontological condition of fragility expressed through the word *precariousness*, and the term *precarity*, which indicates “that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death” (25).

women and the various difficulties they are compelled to confront, the enduring caste system in India, and the imbalanced relationship between humans and nature.

In the first two stories, “Clement’s Return from UAE” and “Fate of Migrant Labourers”, the writer focuses on the ordeals suffered by those who were working abroad at the time when the pandemic broke out. Given the tragic circumstances, they found themselves jobless and incapable of providing for their faraway, often ailing relatives, thereby experiencing extreme frustration that added a new layer of pain to their homesickness. In the first narrative, due to the fear of possible contagion, Clement “is denied entry into his own house [in India], which he built with his own money” (Dominic 12); he had moved to Dubai years before, seeking better prospects to ensure regular and substantial remittances for his parents, enabling them to enjoy a more comfortable living. His disappointment at his mother’s ungratefulness and medical ignorance—she had asked perfectly healthy Clement to spend what little he had left on a rented room – is compensated for by the generosity of a former pupil of his. The young man not only opens his own house to the protagonist, but he also expresses his deep appreciation for the education he received from Clement, which eased his progress in life. Even when your own kin desert you, Dominic seems to suggest, there is always a reason not to despair. In the second story, the harrowing lot of migrant workers during the pandemic is uncovered. As one of the characters observes, in fact, “millions have lost their jobs; thousands died of road accidents when they made exodus to their States; many have committed suicide when they failed to support their families” (16). Nonetheless, in the specific case of Aminul (whose wife is terribly sick), unexpected assistance is provided by his employer, Arjun, who treats him like a brother. The sentence that concludes the narrative perfectly summarizes Dominic’s opinion, as well as empowering the reader: “In an inhumane society where employers show least love and kindness to employees and labourers, Arjun shines like a star – a polestar showing an exemplary model to all” (18).

The third narrative, “Nature Teaches”, is centred on the different perceptions of the natural world by a group of councillors, who are debating on whether or not to cut down an ancient fig tree, in order to build a shopping complex (the spectre of consumerism looms large over the text). The tree is home to countless birds, squirrels, and other living creatures; yet, as the writer underlines, “out of the thirty councillors twenty-five voted for the construction of the shopping complex” (20). The story takes an unexpected turn when the animals “decide to teach

man a lesson that non human beings are never inferior to him” (21). Hence, they seem to join forces with a group of peaceful protesters who, reminiscent of the Chipko movement, decide to lie down in defence of the fig tree. Even though bees and wasps use their stings, and birds their beaks to peek at the offenders, the way animals express their scorn and contempt through their sounds and calls seems “like a great celestial symphony” (23): beauty and harmony prevail. Eventually, the cooperation between nonviolent men and animals proves fruitful: not only is the fig tree spared, but new trees are planted alongside the roads.

Three narratives, delving into highly controversial topics and contentious issues that affect modern-day India, feature women as main characters. In “Seetha’s Resolve”, a young victim of male violence (a woman who was horribly disfigured in an acid attack, carried out by a rejected suitor) succeeds in overcoming the traumatic experience she had to go through thanks to the warmth and compassion of her colleagues and pupils. When she receives the award for “Best Teacher,” she delivers a moving and inspiring speech that deserves to be quoted extensively:

I dedicate this award and honour to the thousands of acid victims in the world. I could come back to my life and rise to this stature only because of the love and compassion shown to me by the people around me. Hence I request all my countrymen to shower love and concern to the victims who are destined to live hellish miserable life in their houses and rehabilitation centres. It is for no reason of theirs that they became victims of such inhuman atrocities. Given proper love and compassion these victims can come back to normal happy life like me. (30)

In “Aren’t They Our Sisters?”, Dominic offers his readers a glimpse into the miserable life of sex workers, young women who are treated with universal contempt even if, most of the times, they are the victims of male deception or other unfortunate circumstances. The title of the narrative is an invitation to delve beneath the surface, thus revealing bonds of affection and sympathy with other fellow-creatures.

Another disadvantaged and defenceless woman is the protagonist of “Bhagyalakshmi’s Fate.” Although her name, Bhagyalakshmi, stems from the union of Bhagya (good fortune) and Lakshmi (the goddess of prosperity), she is so destitute that she has to sell lottery tickets to earn a meager living, exposed to the weather and to possible sources of contagion (indeed, she contracts Covid-19 from one of her customers). Moreover, as a woman in that business, every day, she has to “face lusty looks and obscene words from indecent, perverted men” (49). The narrative chronicles the hardships she has to endure, until a charitable passerby stops to listen to the story of her life and buys all her tickets,

leaving them with her. This simple act of compassion changes the woman's fate, as one of the tickets turns out to be the winning one.

Lastly, "What's Wrong with Us?" is a narrative that deals with the caste problem in India. Two little boys, a Dalit child and a converted Christian child, wonder why they are discriminated against as a result, they inquire about the origin of the caste system. They approach their teacher (who also comes from a lower caste) for an explanation. His reply motivates them to further their education so that, when they grow up, they may contribute to restructuring society, with the ultimate goal of abolishing that man-fabricated scheme. What follows are the teacher's thought-provoking words:

Dear children, from what I have read you can feel and understand that the caste system and the discrimination based on it are all man made. It is all misuse of the power and wealth of a few people in the society. God the Father or the Creator can never show any discrimination to his children. The law of Nature also give sequel right to all inhabitants, be it humans or non humans. Hence, caste discrimination is a canker of our society and we should all pledge to fight against it. No one is superior or inferior to others in a society.

To conclude, Dominic's *Stories during Covid-19* deserves to be read in any global context, offering a powerful corrective to the numerous social and economic injustices that continue to plague our society, and have become even more pronounced during and after the pandemic. In the spirit of the Shelleyan *unacknowledged legislator of the world*, Dominic accompanies his readers on an ideal journey, aimed at addressing these pressing challenges while fostering a most needed reform.

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Prof. Elisabetta Marino is Associate Professor of English literature at the University of Rome Tor Vergata and head of "Asia and the West" research centre. She is the author of



four monographs: a volume on the figure of Tamerlane in British and American literature (2000); an introduction to British Bangladeshi literature (2005); a study on the relationship between Mary Shelley and Italy (2011); an analysis of the Romantic dramas on mythological subjects (2016). In 2022, she translated *Parkwater*, a Victorian novel by Ellen Wood, for the first time into Italian. She has published extensively on the English Romantic writers (especially Mary Shelley and P. B. Shelley), Indian diasporic literature, travel literature, and Italian American literature. Email: [marino@lettere.uniroma2.it](mailto:marino@lettere.uniroma2.it)



## 8

### Emancipation through Dominic's Stories

DAYA DISSANAYAKE

I came to know Dr. K. V. Dominic, long before I met him, through his stories and poems. When I first met him, he fitted the image I already had in mind. I have read most of his stories and poems. Through this writing we learn not only about Dominic's writings and about the man himself, but also see the world through his mind's eye. When we read him, we meet Dominic the rebel, the visionary, the recluse, and always the truly humane human being.

In the world today, where most of us suffer from Empathy Deficit Disorder, where we have become so insensitive, where we are blind to the plight of all life around us, Dominic feels the pain and suffering, not only among his fellow human beings, but even among all the fauna and flora. He feels the pain of the kittens, the birds, and the cows and the elephants, but also the *vanaspathi* and the small plants and flowers. For Dominic all life on earth is sacred, they are all children of Mother Earth, and sees their well-being to be the primary purpose of our actions as human beings, because we believe we are the most intelligent, highest evolved and most powerful creatures on earth.

Reading Dominic, I believe that he is attempting to reawaken our inherent *Metta*, loving kindness, towards all life, to bring true emancipation to all suppressed and oppressed life on earth. He tells us that we, all of us, have to achieve Humanism, by becoming humane, once again. We have to get back our empathy. There are many things we have to do, we have to give up, and we have to accept. The path is tough, with many obstacles, temptations, mirages to divert us, and to prevent us from reaching our goal. It is the path shown to us by all great religious leaders.

Emancipation is the nearest word we can get in the English language for *Moksha*, *Vimukthi*, *Nirvana* or *Svarga*. It is not beyond our reach, but even if it wasn't, we can still strive for it. Dominic's vision is close to Buddha Dhamma. Buddha did not promise to give salvation. He

said He was *Marga Data* (Way Finder) and not *Moksha Data* (Giver of Salvation).

Once Dominic had written, “Basically I am a follower of *Advaita* philosophy. Though I am a Christian by birth I believe in *Advaita*.” Perhaps he was influenced from birth by Adi Sankara, who consolidated *Advaita Vedanta*, as Dominic shares the same birthplace with Adi Sankara. Dominic explains his thinking, “My commonsense doesn’t allow me to see God as a separate entity. I believe that there is a divinity in all bodies, both living and non living. To me this universe is a big concert or symphony, a harmony of diverse notes.

A writer’s role in society becomes more and more important as one of the best and simplest mediums to take the message to the people. Dominic makes us pause and think after reading every story, as he says, “I have only one motive behind my compositions – imparting some messages and values to the young minds which are groping in darkness and ignorance. Today’s youth are disillusioned and they lead a futile life. They have no role models or messiahs to lead them in the right track.” Let the youth find role models in writers like Dominic, whose message could reach into their hearts and minds.

Since the stories in several volumes cover so many areas, about so many different characters, so many lines of thought, this paper is an attempt to consider his stories in general, and appeal to the readers to try to read all his stories, which try to seek emancipation for all.

Dominic tells us that we can still reverse our present role as the most invasive and destructive species on earth, and seek a path with the least disturbance and least destruction, we need not and should not cut down a huge *vanaspathy* to erect a building, because the tree has an equal right to the space, and the people on the road needs the shade and the birds need the tree for their shelter and for its fruits.

The Multicultural harmony on earth among all living beings and nature was disrupted by man, in his insatiable greed. If we, the governments, mass media and writers, can do away with all labels, then only we could have true harmony and emancipation. It is all the man made labels that are keeping us apart, making our brother, our next door neighbour, to become strangers, sometimes rivals, enemies. Labels make us chauvinists, believing our nation, race, language or religion is superior, we are clinging on to childish behaviour. Labels prevent us from seeing the fellow beings as members of our own species.

We talk of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, without accepting the black and white, the tall and short, the big and small, the rich and poor, the high and low. We must all dwell in the same house, together, sharing the same food, same water, same air. Then only it will become one *kutumba*.

Most of us talk about *Karma*, some believe in it, but do not think of the real Karmic effects, or the concept of cause and effect. Dominic explains *Satvik Karma* in poetic terms in “What is Karma?” We all of us need to become, at least to the best of our ability, *Satvik* persons. It is then only that our actions will help in the well-being of all life on Mother Earth, and not cause any harm or grief to others. Dominic also talks of *Sanchita Karma*. “*Sanchita Karma* is one of the three *Karmas* or actions of human beings mentioned in Hinduism. The other two are: *Kriyamana Karma* and *Prarabda Karma*. *Sanchita Karma* is the accumulated result of all your actions from all your past lifetimes. This is your total cosmic debt. Every moment of every day either you are adding to it or you are reducing this cosmic debt. Such actions done by you are not ripe to give fruits immediately or on the spot but take some time to get ripened. Such *Karmas* are kept in abeyance pending in the balance waiting for the opportune time to become ripe, to give fruits in future. Till then they remain in balance and are accumulated. Until their fructification, these *Sanchita Karmas* would not be neutralized.”

In “Ammu’s Birthday”, Prof. Sankar tells his students, “And what relevance has an author in a work as per New Criticism? The author has mentioned as a footnote that the story is based on a tragedy at a village in North Kerala. We are reading such tragic lives every day. Dear students, don’t forget the fact that our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts, as Shelley has written. The more we read such things the more compassionate and humane we should become. Such literature purges our mind and we get *karunyam* (compassion) *rasa*. We should not turn our faces to miseries and tragedies of others. Such tragedies are part of the flow.”

We need to read the story, “Joseph’s Maiden Vote to the Parliament’ because the story is still valid for all of us, not only in India but all South Asia. In “Mathews, the Real Christian”, the character Mathew “is one among the thousands of highly qualified candidates shut out from employment opportunities. Unemployment is the worst curse of Kerala where literacy is ninety five percent and nearly twenty percent of the population is graduates”. Mathew explains why he does not attend church as a Christian, “Father, I am an Indian and like a true Indian I believe that God is in me. *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am God). Why should I seek him elsewhere?”

“School Entrance Festival” describes how “Education has become the most profitable business”. It is a big business in most parts of the world, exploiting the parents, students and teachers, without discrimination.

The poet in Dominic comes out in “Selvan's House”, when he says, “Whenever I eat a grain of rice I can't but taste the tear of the farmer”. The tragedy today in our world is caused by obscene over-consumption by some, leading to starvation among many. When we over-consume, or throw away food, we do not think of the farmers who toil day and night to earn a few rupees to feed his family, or the urban poor who slave for others for a few rupees, to save his children from starvation.

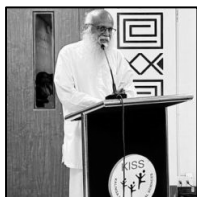
For me “World Environment Day” is the best story, so far written by Dominic, proving how he could empathize with all life on earth. “Kaatturaja was all alone in the forest and was trying to axe a teak. Being their own day, the forest and its inhabitants were celebrating. Gentle breeze kissed and stroked all trees, birds and animals. One could sense the mirth of the Nature from the chirping of birds, laughing of leaves, mating calls and other happy cries of animals. The teak sensed the advent of its death and cried for help. Insensible to human beings the cry reached the ears of elephants grazing on a mound nearby.”

We need to listen, not only to the voices and cries of other human beings, but also the cries of those other animals around us. Then Mother Earth would not have to curse us, but will only bless us. Let me quote from a Sri Lankan novel, where a woman asks her sister's consent to cut down a jak tree in their garden for its timber, and the sister replies she has to seek permission from Mother Earth. Nothing belongs to us. We are only temporary guests of Mother Earth, and we have to safeguard all her resources for future guests.

Let us read Prof. K. V. Dominic, not just for relaxation, or as a literary work, but as a guide to become humane once again.

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Daya Dissanayake is a bilingual writer and poet from Sri Lanka, winner of the SAARC Literary Award and the Sri Lanka State Literary Award three times for the Best English Novel. He is the author of the first Asian E-novel. Email: [daya@saadhu.com](mailto:daya@saadhu.com)



# 9

## Archetypal Patterns in the Selected Short Stories of K V Dominic

DURGA R. & DR. S. BARATHI

### ABSTRACT

In many of the Indian Stories we can find similar patterns that can be called as archetypes. In Dominic's stories there are characters that demonstrate similar archetypal patterns. The present research is to study about these archetypal characters and patterns found in the selected short stories. The study involves the theory of archetypes by Frazer. The study of archetypes in literature is a journey into the realm of universal symbols and patterns that have been deeply ingrained in the collective human consciousness. These archetypes serve as the foundation for storytelling, enabling authors to tap into the fundamental experiences, emotions, and behaviours that resonate with readers across time and cultures. In this research, we seek to illuminate the archetypal threads that run through these stories and unravel the intricate ways in which these characters and themes shape the narratives. By delving into the archetypal underpinnings of Dominic's work, we aim to shed light on the enduring appeal and cultural significance of these universal symbols in literature. Through this exploration, we hope to provide valuable insights for scholars, readers, and enthusiasts of literature, as we unravel the archetypal mysteries embedded in these captivating narratives.

**Keywords:** Archetypal patterns, Frazer, Carl Jung, symbols, character development, plot dynamics, thematic exploration, The Great Mother, The Trickster, The Wise Old Man or Woman, The Shadow archetype

### Introduction

Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung's concept of archetypes, rooted in the collective unconscious, provides a valuable framework for understanding the enduring appeal of these symbols and patterns. Archetypes encompass a range of characters and themes that span the human experience, from the hero's journey to the nurturing qualities of the great mother, the mischievous trickster, the wisdom of the old sage, and the shadows that lurk in the human psyche. In this exploration of archetypes, the attention is turned over to the captivating short stories of K. V. Dominic, where one encounters a rich tapestry of characters and

themes that exemplify the archetypal patterns found in literature. Dominic's narratives offer a profound opportunity to dissect and understand the role of these archetypal characters in shaping the narratives and the broader themes. The hero archetype, a central figure in many of Dominic's stories, embarks on transformative journeys and faces trials and tribulations. Through the hero, we witness the power of resilience, transformation, and the triumph of the human spirit.

The old wise man and great mother archetypes are the guiding forces, offering support, wisdom, and compassion to the protagonists. Their influence is instrumental in facilitating personal growth and societal change.

The trickster archetype introduces disruption and challenges the established norms, serving as a catalyst for change and innovation. These characters inject unpredictability and intrigue into the stories. The shadow archetype lurks in the background, representing repressed desires and fears. Its presence adds complexity to the characters, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the human psyche. As one delves into the selected short stories, one could closely look at the interplay of these archetypes and their impact on the narratives. Through the lens of archetypal analysis, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the human condition and the enduring power of storytelling.

### **Background Study**

The stories selected for analysis, such as "A Good Samaritan," "The Twins", "Nature Teaches," "Seetha's Resolve," and "Compassion Rewards," offer a diverse range of themes and characters that exemplify the archetypal patterns in literature. Each story unfolds a unique tapestry of human experiences, challenges, and transformations, showcasing the timeless relevance of archetypes.

K. V. Dominic's short stories provide a rich canvas for archetypal analysis. His narratives span a diverse range of themes and characters, making them a compelling source for exploring the interplay of archetypal elements in literature. The selected short stories offer a unique opportunity to examine how archetypal characters shape the narratives and influence character development, plot dynamics, and thematic exploration.

### **Research Objectives**

This research aims to unearth the archetypal threads that run through K.V. Dominic's selected short stories and shed light on the enduring appeal and cultural significance of these universal symbols in literature. By delving into the archetypal underpinnings of Dominic's work, we

aspire to provide valuable insights for scholars, readers, and literature enthusiasts. Through this exploration, we hope to unravel the archetypal mysteries embedded in these captivating narratives and contribute to the broader understanding of literature's archetypal dimensions.

### Theoretical Framework

Archetypes are universal symbols or patterns that are deeply rooted in the collective unconscious, as proposed by Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung. These archetypes represent fundamental human experiences, emotions, and patterns of behavior that transcend time and culture. Here are some prominent theories of archetypes.

- a. **Jungian Archetypes:** Carl Jung proposed several archetypes that he believed were present in the collective unconscious. These include the persona (social mask), shadow (repressed aspects of oneself), anima/animus (contrasexual archetype), self (wholeness and integration), and various archetypal figures like the hero, the wise old man, the trickster, and the mother.
- b. **Hero's Journey:** Joseph Campbell, an American mythologist, identified the Hero's Journey as a universal narrative pattern found in myths, stories, and legends across cultures. The hero archetype embarks on a transformative journey, facing trials, overcoming obstacles, and ultimately returning with newfound wisdom or a boon to benefit society.
- c. **The Great Mother:** This archetype represents the nurturing and life-giving aspects of the feminine. It is associated with fertility, creation, and protection. The Great Mother archetype appears in various mythologies and religious traditions, often symbolizing the cyclical nature of life and the interconnectedness of all things.
- d. **The Trickster:** Found in many cultures, the Trickster archetype embodies chaos, disruption, and playfulness. It challenges social norms and conventions, often serving as a catalyst for change and transformation. The Trickster can be seen as a mischievous figure who breaks the rules but also brings creativity and innovation.
- e. **The Wise Old Man/Woman:** This archetype represents wisdom, guidance, and spiritual insight. The Wise Old Man or Woman archetype often appears as a mentor or advisor, offering knowledge and support to the protagonist.

on their journey of self-discovery and growth. Examples include Merlin from Arthurian legends and the Oracle of Delphi.

- f. **The Shadow:** The Shadow archetype encompasses the darker and unconscious aspects of the human psyche. It represents repressed desires, fears, and instincts that are typically considered socially unacceptable. Integrating the Shadow involves acknowledging and accepting these aspects to achieve psychological wholeness.
- g. **The Anima/Animus:** Jung proposed that each person possesses elements of the opposite gender within their psyche. The anima (in males) and animus (in females) represent the feminine and masculine aspects, respectively. These archetypes influence our relationships and can guide us towards self-discovery and inner balance.

These are just a few examples of archetypes that have been explored in depth. Archetypal theory continues to evolve, and different scholars and psychologists have offered their own interpretations and variations. Archetypes provide a framework for understanding the universal themes and symbols that permeate human culture and psychology.

### **Short Stories Selected for Analysis**

Prof. K. V. Dominic's short stories are really thought provoking and are written on a variety of themes. Most of them are depicting the major social instances and can be considered a reflection of that. His way of responding to the social occurrences are very subtle and they focus more on the voice of the subservient. Out of the collection with 17 stories, five stories are selected for research. The ones selected are: "A Good Samaritan," "The Twins," "Nature Teaches," "Seetha's Resolve," and "Compassion Rewards,"

"A Good Samaritan" is an emotional story that can be considered a standing example for the proverb, "What we sow, so we reap". The story revolves around three main characters Mr. Xavier, his wife and Professor Mohan. It is a great deed that Professor Mohan does by saving the life of Mr. Xavier after he met with a road accident. When his wife and a lot of people gather to pray for him to get well soon, Professor hides the truth that Mr. Xavier is serious. Moreover, he is interested in getting to know the background of Mr. Xavier that he comes to know he has saved hundreds of peoples' life and he rescues a lot of people meeting with road accidents everyday.



“The Twins” is a very interesting story that depicts the relationship of the family with the twin cats. The way, the wife considers a street cat as her solace for isolation and the husband replaces that with the cats of foreign pedigree. The story completely focuses on the influence of the cats in the isolated household. The effect that cats make on the husband, wife and the grandmother serves as the theme of the story.

“Nature Teaches” is a very sensitive story that focuses on the environment and ecological awareness. The story revolves around a fig tree that serves as the abode of many birds and animals. When people plan to cut down the tree for establishing a shopping complex, the animals congregate, plan and save their abode from being cut serving as the pinnacle support for some who were against the tree being cut as it serves as a shelter for so many.

“Seetha’s Resolve” is an inspiring story that focuses on the empowerment of an acid attack survivor. The writer here has intricately portrayed her sufferings and the way she breaks the cocoon and enters the world back with a greater energy. As she comes back, the society celebrates her as an inspiration and she in turn regards the society as the reason for her to bounce back with energy.

“Compassion Rewards” is a story that pictures the benefit of doing good deeds. It features the greatness of Madhavan Nair as a teacher, his compassion and the greatness of his student Rahim, who expressed his gratitude towards his teacher. Madhavan Nair’s peaceful life was disturbed when he came to know that he is suffering from severe Liver Cirrhosis that requires liver transplantation. In spite of his wife’s decision to donate her liver to her husband, they were in lack of funds for the operation. It was then, through an advertisement, his old student Rahim came forward to help that he stated he is in a very good position, just because of Madhavan Nair’s compassion that when he was a teacher, he forgave him and his friends, even after knowing that they were the reason behind his head injury. This story reveals the power of compassion and gratitude.

### **Analysis of Selected Short Stories**

#### ***The Hero archetype***

The hero archetype is found in most of the selected stories as described by Joseph Campbell. The journey of the hero is featured in many of the selected stories. For instance, in the story, “A Good Samaritan”, Mr. Xavier is identified as the hero archetype. Although Professor Mohan seems the hero at first when he rescues Mr. Xavier, after the backstory of Mr. Xavier he is considered the perfect archetype. He is shown to have faced

a lot of obstacles and particularly after losing his son in a road accident, he has undergone a transformative journey and that made him rescue all those who meet with road accidents. His background is exactly revealed in the lines below:

“My husband had earlier been an employee of a private bus. He had seen so many such accidents then where victims had been uncared. Then on 20th February 2000 when I was walking along the road with my only son Williams, an auto rickshaw hit my son from behind. He was taken immediately to the hospital but he left us for ever after eight days. He was only twelve then.” She couldn’t restrain from crying. Mariam continued her sobs for a few minutes and then resumed her narration.

That tragic end of our son inspired my husband to involve in such humanitarian service.”

His service to the society is also mentioned in the story and it is that which makes one feel the hero in him and his service to the society as explained by Mariam to Professor Mohan is mentioned in the lines below:

“My husband has saved five hundred and ten people from the road accidents in the past eight years. We have taken it our mission to save the lives of men who are uncared on road sides. My daughters and I help my husband in nursing the accident victims in the hospital. There were several cases in which the relatives of the victims never turned up and we had to bear the hospital charges. Forty-nine victims have died on the lap of my husband on his way to the hospital. How uneasy was my husband in those days! He couldn’t eat anything and I had to wipe out the tears which ran through his cheeks.”

“Everyday from 10.30 am to 2 pm my husband will be at Guruvayoor ready to rescue such accident victims. From 2.30 pm to 6 pm he will be available at Kunnamkulam. Very often my husband had to spend the money in his pocket for such hospital service and we had to starve those days.”

We can exactly spot the transformation of Mr. Xavier that he exactly fits in the hero archetype.

In the story, “Seetha’s Resolve”, the protagonist Seetha is identified as the hero archetype. She is described as a very curious, passionate and an enthusiastic teacher towards the beginning, the greatest obstacle that she faced in her life was the acid attack. Venu her neighbour threw acid on her face immediately after Seetha refused to marry him. After the attack, initially she thought that she has lost her life completely and locked herself inside a room. Only when the principal and the students met her again she understood that the society is ready to embrace her again. When Seetha came back to work, people around her supported

and encouraged her to such an extent that she underwent an ultimate transformation, thereby coming out of depression. Seetha became even more powerful and started working for the society that when she was awarded the best teacher, she lauded the society as well as voiced out for the rights of the acid attack survivors which reveals the hero archetype in her. This is evident in the lines below:

“I dedicate this award and honour to the thousands of acid victims in the world. I could come back to my life and rise to this stature only because of the love and compassion shown to me by the people around me. Hence I request all my countrymen to shower love and concern to the victims who are destined to live hellish miserable life in their houses and rehabilitation centres.”

In the story, “Compassion Rewards”, the character Rahim is identified as the hero archetype as it is evident from the story that he has undergone a journey of transformation. It is revealed when the writer refers to his backstory that it is said that when Rahim came forward to help his teacher Madhavan Nair, he recollects his college days when he smoked tobacco with some of his friends and has pushed him off when he tried to stop them but in spite of getting hurt, Madhavan Nair didn’t reveal his name to the police, he proudly says that, it was just because of Madhavan Nair’s compassion, that he is an engineer in UAE now. He also says that after that incident he and his friends stopped smoking. He becomes a stronger hero archetype as he comes forward to help his teacher as an expression of gratitude as mentioned in the lines below:

“It is my duty to help you when you are in such a dire necessity. You have pulled me up from the hell of drugs and converted me to a hardworking student which enabled me to reach this position. Hence this is my humble gift for the compassion you showed to me. This is my card. You can call me whenever you need my help.”

### **The Old Wise Man Archetype**

The old wise man archetype is found in four out of the five selected stories. These characters are more like embodiment of wisdom and source of guidance to the protagonist. They are more related to the hero archetype that at times they serve as the reason for their transformation.

In the story, “The Twins”, the husband character can be considered as the old wise man because of many reasons. At first as he is very empathetic that he is able to rightly understand his wife’s sense of isolation that he thoughtfully gifted her twin cats of foreign pedigree. The author throughout the story portrays his thought process as a very matured one. He is very philosophical and casually comes up with adages. He seems to be very practical and at the same time looks at life

in a different perspective. He sometimes thinks very much detached that the writer while mentioning his thoughts writes like:

“Why didn’t God give speech power to non-human beings? In a way it’s better they don’t have. The sound pollution which man makes is deadlier than the atomic radiation! The nasty, ugly words which dart from his mouth can annihilate millions! In fact it boomerangs to the Creator Himself!”

“After all life is a sum of innumerable meetings and partings! God has given His creation the strength to bear such pangs!”

In the story, “Nature Teaches”, the crow is identified as the old wise man archetype that even towards the beginning of the story when people discuss regarding the upcoming shopping mall and the fig tree being cut off, the writer doesn’t consider the crow just as a crow but a wise observer that it avoided the usual snack after the discussion. The way, the crow powerfully expressed its concerns to all the other animals and birds for whom the fig tree is the abode and the way it made them all act together and stopped people from cutting down the fig tree proves the old wise man’s archetype in the crow. These crew of crows and other animals proved to be a great support for people who protested against the tree being cut. The crow’s decision was very perfect and had a very wise instinct that it said:

“So we have all decided to fight against man if he comes to cut this tree. Our messenger crow will collect the news of the council’s agenda everyday and thus caution us for action when necessary. We should teach man a lesson that non human beings are never inferior to him, but superior.”

In the story, “Seetha’s Resolve”, the Principal Dr. Mukundan is identified as the old wise man. But for him, it is almost impossible for Seetha to have bounced back with energy. The principal here is so kind-hearted, empathetic and is not very conservative. It was he who rightly understood the value of Seetha as a teacher, and at the same time understood her difficulties as an acid attack survivor and came forward to offer her a car for her convenient transport everyday. Other than this he was the one who encouraged the students and other faculties to treat Seetha with respect and ensured that she is not humiliated at any cost. He proves that he is wise by his encouraging words:

“Seetha teacher, we are all extremely sad at your tragedy. We can be happy only when we find happiness in you. You have been so indispensable to our college and your students love you so much that they don’t want any substitute for you to teach them. Kindly oblige to their request. You know how loving your colleagues are. They are all waiting for your return. As to avoid the gaze of the public we would arrange a taxi car for journey.”

In the story, “Compassion Rewards”, the teacher Madhavan Nair is considered as the old wise man as he is the sole reason behind the transformation of the hero archetype Mr. Rahim. The titular quality compassion refers to him, he as an old wise man seem to have been more wise even in his youth that she extended compassion to a group of his students even after being pushed by them. It is his compassion that has brought them out of smoking and other kind of drug addictions. His act of compassion is revealed when Rahim reveals his back story to thank God for instilling such compassion in his teacher:

“When I found you students smoking in the public place, as a teacher I thought it is my duty to advise you. That is why I approached you. And I knew that you are my old pupil. Having fallen on the ground I fainted. It might be due to the loss of blood. Fortunately, the head injury was not serious. Those who took me to the hospital complained to the police the very moment and two policemen came to my bed in the causality. They asked me what had happened. I told them in detail. They then asked if I could identify anyone of the assaulters. Though I know your name and all details about you I didn’t disclose it to the police thinking about the consequences that would befall to you and your companions.”

### **The Great Mother Archetype**

The mother is always considered as an embodiment of fertility, creation and protection. The mother figure in all media is featured with the same aura and she acts as the prime factor holding the family together like a spine.

In the story, “A Good Samaritan”, Mariam, the wife of Mr. Xavier is identified as the great mother archetype, she is the one who reveals the backstory of Mr. Xavier. Although she glorifies him throughout she also refers to the way she and her daughters support him. She says that they help him in treating the ones rescued from road accidents and it is she who pacifies him when he feels very bad for not being able to save a life. In spite of losing her own son in a road accident, the way she has come forward to assist her husband in the rescue operations strengthen her as a mother archetype. Her role in the story is described in the lines below:

“My daughters and I help my husband in nursing the accident victims in the hospital. There were several cases in which the relatives of the victims never turned up and we had to bear the hospital charges. Forty nine victims have died on the lap of my husband on his way to the hospital. How uneasy was my husband in those days! He couldn’t eat anything and I had to wipe out the tears which ran through his cheeks.”

In the story, “The Twins”, the mother of the husband who comes newly to the house is considered the Great Mother Archetype. Initially, the couple is worried a lot about bring the mother home, as they were

thinking how she will accept the cats but then in spite of suffering hard because of the cats, she was the first one to call and stop her son from forsaking the twins on the road. Despite falling sick, she expressed her motherly affection towards both her son and the twin cats. She enunciates her motherly feelings when it is said:

“Are you mad? What wrong have they done? Do they have reasoning power as we do have? Bring them back,” she cried. “But ma...,” I whispered. “No but. If you can’t, then you may discard me also,”

It is because of these words the cats came back home and one can understand and celebrate the love of the mother.

In the story, “Compassion Rewards”, Suseela, the wife of Madhavan Nair is identified as the Great Mother archetype. This is done at first for her selflessness that she immediately came forward to donate her liver for the sake of her husband. Moreover, she was ready to take all the necessary steps to save her husband and more than all this, the way she blessed Rahim, when he came forward to help them proves the mother in her that she said: “God will shower all blessings on you, dear son. We will always pray for you and your family.” The way she took care of the family, her husband and was ready to do anything for the sake of her family shows a very strong mother in her.

### **Trickster Archetype**

Trickster is generally a character that is very unconventional and disobeys all the established rules. They are the main reason for the transformation of a story as they always bring in twists, turns and challenges for the story. These people are the ones who bring in challenges to the heroes that the heroes become even more powerful. They involve in a lot of fraudulent and illegal activities.

In the story, “Nature Teaches”, the character, the chairman of the municipal council is identified as the trickster as he is the one who plans the tree to be cut for the sake of establishing a shopping complex. He is very stern in his decision that in spite of some people protesting for the tree, he never paid attention to them. Although all the councillors agreed to the decision of the tree being cut, it was the chairman who put forth the decision at first and he was the one who was completely ready to face the consequences that he said:

“One of the agendas of our meeting today is to discuss and take a decision regarding the construction of a shopping complex at the municipal plot near to the Gandhi Square. That plot has been lying there barren for several years. If we build a shopping complex there, it would be an additional income for our municipality”

“We will seek the help of police when the tree is cut”

In the story, “Seetha’s Resolve”, the character Venu is considered as a trickster, it is because he was totally not ready to accept the disappointment that he threw acid on Seetha’s face. Venu never expressed his disappointment on the first day when Seetha rejected her proposal but on the next day when it was completely unexpected, Venu threw acid on Seetha’s face. It is this act that changed the life of Seetha that the act is described in the story like:

“When she moved to the road there came Venu with his auto rickshaw. Reaching very close to Seetha he threw some liquid on her face and sped away. It was acid and Seetha ran back to her house crying loudly “Save me.”

He was arrested for the crime and he himself accepted his crime and stated the reason for doing so that he said:

“Venu cooperated with the inquest and accepted that he did the crime. He told the police that he committed the crime as to avoid Seetha being owned by someone else through marriage because he loved her so much.”

### **Shadow Archetype**

Shadow archetype refers to the character that represses fears, desires and emotions. It goes well with the name shadow that refers to somebody who hides their originality. In the story, “The Twins”, the wife character is identified as the shadow archetype because we find her repressing her emotions. Towards the beginning of the story she states her isolation as the reason behind letting Sundari, the cat into the kitchen. Even towards the end when she gets to know that her husband decided to forsake the cat she was shocked to the core which clearly shows that it is the cats that served as the solace for her isolation that she says:

“You are busy with your computer upstairs, and who is there with me to save me from my loneliness? So I have invited Sundari into the kitchen,”

This is how she reacted when she came to know that her husband decided to forsake the cats on the road for the sake of his mother that she said:

“When my wife returned in the evening I told her what had happened. She was horrified to hear of my cruelty to the twins.”

### **Conclusion**

All the five selected stories are extremely interesting and thought-provoking. These have some archetypal characters like the hero, who is the one who comes across all the obstacles and takes up a transformative journey. The old wise man archetype is the one who is very

philosophical, wise and assists in the transformation of the hero. The great mother archetype is the embodiment of fertility and protection who also paves way to the transformation and strength of the hero as well as the family and the society. The trickster is the one who poses threats and challenges to the society and the hero archetype. The shadow archetype is the one who has a lot of repressed emotions and fears. A story can be made more interesting and with a perfect structure only with these archetypes and one can easily spot these archetypes in any common story especially the ones with social and philosophical insights.

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Ms. R. Durga is a full time research scholar at SRC, SASTRA Deemed to be University, Kumbakonam, Tamilnadu, India. Her area of research is mythology and culture. She is interested in exploring the myths in Indian Writing in English. Besides being a researcher, she is a trainer in ACCESS Microscholarship Program sponsored by the U.S. Govt. And she also interested in writing poems and also published her maiden anthology *An Endearing Endeavour* in 2023. She also has actively participated in poetry reading sessions organised by Chennai Poet's Circle. Email: [durgar@src.sastra.ac.in](mailto:durgar@src.sastra.ac.in)



Dr Barathi Srinivasan is an Assistant Professor of English at Srinivasa Ramanujan Centre, SASTRA Deemed to be University, Kumbakonam, India. Her poems are widely anthologized in books and international journals. She has translated one novel, two short story collections, and five poetry anthologies into Tamil language. Besides she has published an anthology of poems titled *Heart to Heart* (2023) and a book of interviews titled *A Conversation with Contemporary Indian English Poets* (2023). She has received quite a number of awards such as Best translator Award (2021) Capecomorin Trust Best Faculty Award (2021 & 2022) KIWI Miles, New Zealand, Capecomorin Trust Best Female Faculty Award (2023) Bestow Edutex, and she is also awarded a Honorary D Lit by McStem Eduvarsity, U.S.A. Email: [barathi0723@gmail.com](mailto:barathi0723@gmail.com)





## Treatment of Nature, Human Values and Politico-Economical Aspects in the Short Stories of K. V. Dominic

DR. MANAS BAKSHI

Prof. K. V. Dominic, a Christian by birth but equally respectful to all other religious faith and, more remarkably, a believer in humanism in practice is known to the domain of contemporary Indo-English literature not only for his creative genre as a poet or a short story writer but also as the editor of two scholarly journals – WEC and IJML. A close friend of mine for nearly three decades, I have had the chance to go through most of his literary works, and have got acquainted with the way he deals with the juxtaposition of pleasure and pain, gain and loss, deeds and misdeeds concerning human life in today's perspective. Here, within limited space and scope, I would like to delineate on some of the aspects which rule the roost of his creative potential.

In view of the three collections of short stories, namely (1) *Who is Responsible* (2) *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India* and the latest (3) *Short Stories during Covid-19*, it will be pertinent to dwell on the thematic aspects being divided into three broad spectrums: Nature, Humanism and the present politico-economical syndrome. There is no denying the fact that story-telling is an art – not every writer is adept in its exposition. Some use the canvas just to entertain the readers with gossip materials, some resort to make-believe ideas and thoughts while some others catch up with the modern trends pervading our society with a tint of moral preaching. Dominic is a story teller whose approach is a realistic one in many a short story.

Nature being a dominant factor in some of Dominic's writings, it will not be justified if we miss the fragrance of 'Nature Teaches' (*Short Stories during Covid-19*, pp. 19-23) in our discussion. The story is about some small creatures like birds, squirrels, honeybees, chameleons, flies, wasps, spiders, ants and the like who could nose the conspiracy of human beings to mow down a big fig tree near the Gandhi Square when several other roadside big trees were already felled. The tree is not only

their shelter but also provides a shade to numerous people while there is scorching heat of the sun. On the other hand, the Municipality authority decided to build up a shopping complex there to open up some shops for earning rent and it would be a part of their development project in the near future.

While Councillors Joseph and Ashraf supported the chairman Yusef, and twenty five out of thirty Councillors voted for the construction of a complex, Jairam objected to it pleading on behalf of the Nature Lovers but it failed. A crow sitting on a window pane listened to all this, cried aloud to assemble all others dwelling in that tree and said. “Dear friends, this is our only shelter in this town. Human beings have destroyed all our houses least bothering about our existence. If we lose this house where will we sleep? This fig tree is not only our house but our feeder also. We survive eating its fruits which are found in abundance on its branches. Cutting this tree is equal to killing us all. We shall never allow them to do so.”

Works proceeded with woodcutters defying the vehement protest of some Nature lovers who were dragged into the police jeep. And then, there was a twist – the leader crow gave a call – “Now is our turn”. Instantly, the crows, mynahs and other birds started pecking on the hand of the Sub-Inspector, constables, chairman and the woodcutters so actually that order was given to shoot the birds. It did the worse to have hit a wasp nest making the wasps take revenge. And all fled away – having been taught the lesson that the earth also belongs to the non humans.

The next story World Environment Day (5th June 2011) (*Sanchita Karma*, pp. 7-10) centres round Katturaja, a tribal who has had enough bitter experience of the deprivation and sufferings a tribal society confronts even today. Grown up as a victim of exploitation by the system and also the ruling authority, he became a forest thief adept in felling costly teak, sandalwood, rosewood and mahogany as also selling those to the timber merchants in the absence of proper patrolling. He was deemed a Raja of the poor villagers who were helped a lot by him for survival.

On the World Environment Day, he decided to chop off a teak tree and moved accordingly. The cry of the mute tree reached the ears of a herd of elephants grazing nearby. Finding the elephants to gather around the trunk, Katturaya scrambled up quickly on the tree to save his life. He realised his mistake leading to deforestation as also the importance of forest in human life; while he was taken to court, he prayed for the work of preserving the forest in future as punishment. Imprisoned for a year, he was, a different man who guarded the forest affectionately and was awarded for the same.

Is Human Life More Precious than Animals (*Sanchita Karma*, pp. 11-16) is a story that focuses on cruelty to animals flouting all rules of law. It is diabolic that in many a State when the cows grow old or non-productive, their owners sell out the animals to be slaughtered. Pity is while transporting from one State to the destination, these helpless animals undergo unspeakable torture from the time of loading to unloading the truck.

Dominic cites the instance of a cow jumping out of the vehicle in a bid to free itself but, chased by the cattle trader, Anthappan, it could not escape death. The accident could be avoided had its owner not been that much ruthless. Incidentally, a video clip in the Asianet T.V. channel covering the shocking news moved Prof. Antony Francis, an animal lover and a professor in the zoology department in a government college to file a suit in Kerala High Court demanding such punishment for murdering the cow as should have been meted out in case of a human being. Considering the merit of the case, the Magistrate punished Anthappan. The story sets an example how an animal lover like Prof. Francis can get justice in case of murder of a mute animal so that others – not bothering about a punishable offence like cruelty to animals – should be aware of its consequence.

In several short stories penned down by Dominic, human values are an indispensable part of his delineation. The next three stories bear out the imprint of his human-centric approach to all who want to live in harmony with peace. And the story Multicultural Harmony (*Sanchita Karma*, pp. 90-96) is one such. It also reminds one of the once famous Hindi Film having the characters named Amar, Akbar and Anthony. Here also Amar, Akbar and Anthony are intimate friends since their school days and their friendship continued uninterrupted till the moment some sort of a disagreement cropped up between Amar and Anthony over the issue of marriage between Amar's son – Anand and Anthony's daughter – Celine who were in deep love with each other for a long time.

The three different belief systems responding to pressure from the respective communities could pose a bulwark to the two getting wedded but power of love reigned supreme here. It may seem a super-imposition of imagination but, as the story unwinds, Celine is struck down by kidney failure. It was Anand who came up to save her life by donating one of his kidneys. And their common friend Akbar took the initiative as a mediator to unite Anand and Celine while the Pujari, the Parish priest and the Imam lauded the plan of the Almighty in the victory of love of the two souls – not two different religions.

Aren't they our sisters? (*Short Stories During Covid-19*, pp. 39-46) is a paradigm of humanism in practice. No doubt, prostitution is a

profession that dates back to time immemorial but the sex racket nowadays is wide-spread and, as a matter of fact, credulous teenagers are lured and ensnared by the touts to be exploited miserably and live a deplorable life in smutty and filthy conditions. There is no escape unless something miraculous happens. But here it does that in the story.

Rajesh, a sex worker's son lands at the Mumbai Airport with a view to visiting a brothel at Kamathipura where, he has come to know, some young girls from Kerala were in that profession. Rajesh's mission was somehow to rescue them but it was not easy. He tried his best to convince Stella along with some nineteen girls of her ilk and succeeded in persuading them to come to the mainstream by joining Govind Mills at Kochi owned by Rajesh. This idea of rehabilitation was a noble effort; a retired chief justice conveyed, at the time of celebration, to all present there that our society "should never treat sex workers with contempt. Having abused and exploited for carnal pleasures, treating them like curry leaves is cruelty of highest degree and unpardonable. After all aren't they your own sisters?"

Let us now discuss about another story which is a bit different from the foregoing two but points at how compassion shown at a point of time is duly rewarded if God so wishes. In the story, Clement's Return from UAE (*Short Stories during Covid-19*, pp. 9-13), Clement who was working in a shopping mall as an accountant was coming back from UAE to Kochi at the time Covid 19 had gripped several countries when his own house, his wife Merlin conveyed, was in the containment zone. Clement lost his job at the time of lockdown in Dubai but his employer charged no rent for staying during pandemic though his wallet was almost empty after paying for the flight. At Kochi he was advised by his mother-in-law to spend the Quarantine period in some hotels and not at home for the safety of his father who had breathing troubles. Clement agreed but found no way out to arrange fund for fourteen days' stay. Meanwhile he met his student Krishnan who was obliged to him for his tuition long back. Krishnan provided accommodation in his big house with amenities in reward for Clement's selfless service in the past. And needless to say, Krishnan did what his family members did not.

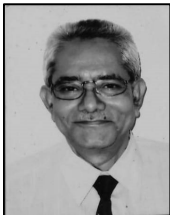
Thematic aspects of varied nature pouring into the thought waves of Dominic are shaped into short story in a lucid way. He is concerned as much over the plight of the sex workers as the hardships of the migrant labourers; while burning issues like caste system blurring the prospect of all Indians as dignified people are emphasized, how far its eradication is essential for the well-being of the society is highlighted in What's wrong with us? (*Short Stories during Covid-19*, pp. 31-38) Interestingly, A Good Samaritan (*Who is Responsible?* 19-24) speaks of compassion in true sense of the term. His feeling for the mute animals

like cats in the story *The Twins* (*Who is Responsible?* 104-111) reveals the real feasts for our eyes and mind. On the one hand, *Coffin Maker* (*Writers Editors Critics*, vol. 13, no. 2, September 2023, pp. 94-98) deals with the other side of life, pointing at the unemployment problem, *Best Government Servant* (*Who is Responsible?* 25-34) shows how unutilised human resource casts its effect on our politico-economical system, on the other. Again, there is nothing circuitous or ambiguous in Dominic's story though, in *Who is Responsible?* (*Who is Responsible?* 11-18) it may be presumed that it is either fate or the system but in reality, neither of the two, nor any person can be blamed. It is left to the readers.

Poetry and fiction seems to be the two abiding passions in the life of Dominic but he is more moved by reality than imagination which is why there is an alchemy between the two in his story. And it goes without saying that forced emotion or bold portrayal, human values are mostly dominant in Dominic's story.

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Dr. Manas Bakshi who was in banking service is an Indo-English poet, short story writer, critic and columnist appearing frequently in leading Indian papers and journals. Some fourteen books of his English poems, apart his PhD thesis and post-doctoral thesis, published by Rupa & Co., Firma KLP Private Ltd, Cambridge India, Script and Sparrow Publication, Authorspress and Poetry Society of India have drawn acclaim in India and abroad. Included in more than sixty anthologies published from India and abroad, his poems have appeared in various noted publications in India, U. S. A, Canada, Australia, Japan, New Zealand etc. Besides poetry, his short stories too have earned due encomium. Dr. Bakshi is on the Editorial Advisory Board of a number of journals of repute and has received several laurels and accolades in recognition of his creative talent from many a literary/academic organisation. Dr. Bakshi won the first prize in both English short story and poem writing in the All India Competition organised by United Bank of India, for its staff members, in 2003. He has been honoured with the "Best Poet of 2003" Award by the Poets International, Bangalore, Bridge-in-Making Diamond Jubilee Award, Kolkata, 2011, Rachana Sahitya Samman, Chhattisgarh, 2016 and Best Award for his poem on Peace by the Poetry Society of India, Gurugram, Haryana, 2017. Email: dr.manasbakshi@gmail.com

# 11

## **Prof. K. V. Dominic's *Short Stories During Covid-19***

**DR. K. BALACHANDRAN**

*Short Stories During Covid-19* is Prof. K. V. Dominic's third collection of his short stories in English. *Who is Responsible* (2016, Authors Press, New Delhi) is his first; *Sanchita Karma and other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India* (2018, Modern History Press, U.S.A.) is his second collection. It is really interesting to note that he selected themes from various walks of life. They are both local (from Kerala) and universal. The themes embedded in his stories are loneliness, problems of old age, compassion, cruel destiny, duty consciousness, humanism, honesty, exploitation in the name of religion, fight against superstition, corruption and bribery in Government offices, fair judgment murder, robbery, sexual desire, thirst for love, politics and political exploitation etc.

K. V. D's third collection comprising 7 short stories word-paint the issues that existed during the cruelest period in the History of the world, the Covid-19 (from 2020 to 2022) – detailing the difficulties due to corona, acid victims' struggle for existence, lottery sellers' problems, problems of sex workers, man's cruelty, Nature restoring man and caste discrimination etc.

The first story, "Clement's Return from UAE" happens both in the Indian and foreign soil. Clement who hailed from a poor family had the duty of looking after his father, (an asthma patient now) an auto-rickshaw driver and his mother a housewife; his young sister waiting for marriage. After passing M. Sc (Moths) he couldn't get any government job. Somehow managed by coaching Maths in a tuition centre; the salary was not enough.

One of his college classmates, Aravind who was working as an accountant in a shopping mall invited him to come to UAE. Clement by the help of his friend, Aravind got an accountant post in UAE. For three years, he led his life somewhat satisfactorily. Every month he sent Rs.30000/- to his father's account. Three years he could send 10 lakhs

and eighty thousand. With this amount his father bought a small house in a five cent plot. His saving helped his sister to get married off. Clement too married a girl Merlin from a poor family. He was a good man and so didn't demand any dowry. Fortunately his wife Merlin was good looking, loving, gentle and meek. God blessed them with two issues, Meena (8) studying 3<sup>rd</sup> standard and son Jaison studying 1<sup>st</sup>. So for his family car was running smoothly.

Covid-19 gripped the whole world including India and UAE. Lockdown started on April 5<sup>th</sup>. Because of the lockdown, many were thrown out of employment, Clement also. It was spreading fire-like. Covid victims flooded all the hospitals. UAE's population is 10 million; Keralites are one million among them. Almost large number of the immigrants tried to return to their motherland but flights were less in number. Patients in UAE increased to fifty thousand and 300 people died due to corona.

Clement after losing his job, due to the clemency of UAE shopping mall owner, could stay without paying rent. Lockdown drowned the economy of every country; Kerala and every individual too. Somehow he could return to Kerala. The story begins with the mobile talk between the husband and wife, Clement and Merlin. On a Saturday he landed Kochi air port. As long as it (phone) was in the hand of Merlin, no shock to him. When it was snatched from her by his mother he could hear shockingly. "Dear son Clement, our papa is serious now. Breathing is very difficult for him even though he is taking the inhaler and tablets. You spend the quarantine period in some hotel so that there is no risk for papa?" (*Short Stories*, p.11) The story gets its climax when he appeals to her that he has no problem and negative certificate and so can stay in one of the rooms in their house. She negates his suggestions insisting that he should stay in a hotel for 14 days. After hearing this tears flowed on his cheeks. "He is denied entry into his own house, which he built with his own money." (*S.S*, p.12) For the past 20 years he was looking after the family. Near the airport exit he sat with tears.

God never forsakes his devotees, it seems, "Clement sir, do you know me? Why are you crying sir? Sir. I am Krishnan, your student, because of your tuition class for Mathematics I passed my exam in the second chance... Now I am an Assistant Professor of English in a Government college at Sharjah. Don't worry sir, kindly come with me. I have got a large house which can easily accommodate you. My wife will only be happy to have you in our house for two weeks." (p.12) What Clement wanted God (Krishna) has given him in the form of man (Krishnan).

The story has a good nucleus and focus. There used to be a maxim, “Whoever believes in God will never be let down.” This story, “Clement’s Return from UAE” proves that. There is one more truth embedded in this story. Good people will never see for community or religion when it is a question or situation of help. Clement is a Christian and Krishnan is a Hindu. There is no religious discrimination in them. They (the two characters) are the good example of Religious Harmony. Here is a third observation. True students will never forget their teacher. Krishnan has not forgotten his (Maths) Guru, Clement. There is a fourth point to be noted, Teacher-student relationship should be cordial and loving. Here the story proves this aspect.

The second story, “Fate of Migrant Labourers” is a truthful picture of North Indians (mostly from West Bengal, Assam, Odisha and U.P.) working in construction field in Kerala and their return to their home states during corona. Four labourers, Aminul Shakib, Emran and Tarique preferred to stay in their work place and with the owner, Arjun, an architect-cum-builder. The story moves very pathetically because of Aminul’s wife bedridden in Kolkata. Shakib’s mother, Tarique’s father became corona victims.

The story centers around Arjun who is broad minded even during the crucial corona period, by paying Rs.500 per day to them. Whatever profit he earned he spent for his workers. When Aminul approaches him for help to save his ailing wife in Kolkata, he offers him one lakh rupees for his wife’s treatment, air travel and other expenditures, Arjun consoles, “I will bear the expense of your travel. You are like a brother to me. You have been serving me for the past five years. It is nothing but my duty to serve you back in your urgent need though I am going through a financial crisis.” (p.17) Aminul fulfills his domestic duty – saves his wife and returns to Kerala (with his wife and two children) to work again in Arjun’s concern. “You are my God, dear Saab I will never forget this love and kindness shown to me. I will be at your service till I die.” These words should be borne in mind by the workers.

Again a very touching story by KVD setting as an example to the employers and employees! The society mostly and mainly is an inhumane society. It is bereft of loving kindness and helping nature. The story ends very befittingly; “In an inhumane society where employers show least love and kindness to employees and labourers, Arjun shines like a star a polestar showing an exemplary model to all.” (p. 18)

The third story, “Nature Teaches” is also an admirable one, for, it tells, “Man has to be considerate to plants and animals.” The Municipal



council and power mongers decide to fell a century old fig tree near Gandhi Square and build a three storeyed shopping complex, for, additional income to the municipality. The moves taken by the council and people in power are in one side. Nature – lovers, the birds, insects residing in that tree are in the other side. The battle goes on! The end? Who is successful, how, why – for all these go through the pages of this story. A well organized theme well delineated by the human and nonhuman characters, the role of wasps are dexterously brought out by KVD and the change of mind in the power-mongers results in, “We should be considerate to non-humans because this earth belongs to them also.” (p. 23)

The fourth story, “Seetha’s Resolve” is about an acid victim. Seetha working in a private college wasn’t mentally prepared for her marriage. Her father, Raveendran and mother, Laxmi coerced her for it. The son, Anand of her father’s friend, came to see her and all the family members decided to conduct her marriage after a month. Fortunately or unfortunately the bride’s side didn’t have faith in astrology and horoscope; bridegroom’s side also.

Seetha’s neighbour, Venu happened to be her schoolmate and also in the college. Since he didn’t fare in the exams, he preferred to be an auto rickshaw driver. Seetha had to reach the town which took 20 minutes to her college. He came to her rescue. Not only that he began to love her – it was one sided love. She didn’t reciprocate his proposal. When he came to know that he can’t marry her, as usual he came to her house not to leave her in the college where she has been working, but to throw acid on her face. He succeeded in his attempt; her right face and neck go burnt. Immediately water was thrown on her and she was taken to the hospital. After a month’s stay and treatment in the hospital, she returned home.

Her original beauty, activeness, and vigour were not in her. Her marriage proposal with Anand was also burnt by the villain, Venu. Life became very meaningless and difficult for Seetha. Though she was house ridden, the whole village visited her house. She used to hide her head with saree to hide the frightening scars. The principal of her college, Dr. Mukundan and other staff members, students invaded her house. What happened then? Go to the story... Many turning points! She was awarded the ‘Best Teacher’ Award. Her college also got recognition to become an aided college resulting in teachers getting higher salary.

The story is well presented by KVD the anguish of Seetha’s parents. Seetha’s dream, her dream burnt to ashes, her lonlied life and a

change after. Her speech during the 'Best Teacher Award' Ceremony, "I dedicate this award and honour to the thousands of acid victims... I could come back to my life and rise to this stature only because of the love and compassion shown to me by the people around me." (p.30) This seems to be the message of the author – inhuman atrocities are happening. If the acid victims are given proper love and compassion, they can come back to normal happy life like Seetha. The writer has done a greater yeoman service to the acid victims by penning this heart touching story.

If the bride's parents had faith in astrology and horoscope, Seetha's fate would have been different. She would not have become a victim for the villain. Astrology is pure science and great astronomers people know. Horoscope also tells about one's past, present and future if it is properly explicated. Ok. The writer may have or may not have faith in them. But he has taken a character (Seetha) who doesn't have faith in them and her sufferance (fate) may be due to it. What happened to her beauty? Nobody could conquer or taste it. Is it not a loss to her?

The fifth story, "What's wrong with us" deals with the converted Christians' problem – they are not supported by the Church; they lose the S. C. reservations offered by the Govt. for education, employment, medical treatment etc. Vijayan's decision (to pursue LLB to plead for the lower caste people in the court) is applauded. Mother India too smiles.

The sixth story, "Aren't they our Sisters?" is about sex workers and their rehabilitation. Rajesh, GM of Govind Mills of Kochi is going to Kamathipura in Mumbai not for sex but for relieving 20 sex workers from their hellish life. He narrates his story to brothels – his father deserted his mother; she became a sex worker in Kamathipura. He had his higher education and employment abroad, earned a lot. Now he wants to fulfill his mother's wish – to relieve sex workers. Now his mother Radhadevi is the MD of the factory. Did he succeed in his attempt is the remaining story? A very fine sex subject, treated asexually by KVD is highly appreciable. Who'll turn a new leaf in the sex workers' life? Very rare to have character like Rajesh! It may be even the author (imaginatively). Anyhow, well done, congrats!

The last story, "Bhagyalakshmi's fate" is about a poor woman, a seller of lottery tickets. She didn't have either bhagya (good fate) or Lakshmi (wealth). How Prof. Krishnaraj brings both in her life is the story. Well conceived, well written with a happy and surprising end! Once again 'Sabash' to KVD! Prof. Krishnaraj may be even KVD? Will all professors be like Krishnaraj? Rare. The protagonist's fate has been

topsy-turveyed (by God?) through the English Professor. “Income from lottery and liquor sale is the main revenue of the literate State Kerala.” (p.47) Is this not a sorry state of affairs? The writer moans “It is a tragedy that both lottery and liquor have become addictions to thousands of men in the State.”

His concern for the poor, downtrodden and laborers is well brought out in all the stories. Like a social reformer his interest in bringing out to light their sufferings has to be appreciated. He is a writer with social consciousness. Pen is mightier their sword! KVD has proved his dictum is suitable for him. Everything – theme, language, style, presentation is very understandable and undisputable, unerring and unflinching, unfurling the ‘Covid-19’ ungrudgingly and unimpeachably. KVD, you are unique as a story teller and short story writer. There is universality in them unraveling the unpleasant and the unseemly! You are an untiring umpire of setting right social maladies (Covid-19). We expect more stories to unveil social malaise from your facile pen.

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Prof. Dr. K. Balachandran, Former Prof., Dept. of English, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar – 608 002 (Tamil Nadu), is a bilingual writer who has published 24 books (20 in English and 4 in Tamil) and a number of poems, research articles and reviews in India and abroad. A Gold Medalist from Annamalai University, he has won several awards. He has been serving as UPSC Examiner for the past 20 years. After retirement he has served as Dean and Principal in two colleges. Email: [prof\\_k\\_balachandran@yahoo.co.in](mailto:prof_k_balachandran@yahoo.co.in)



# 12

## **New Literary Horizon in K V Dominic's Selected Short Stories**

**DR. BHASKAR ROY BARMAN**

Professor K V Dominic, a poet of international repute, presents his readers accustomed to reading his poetry with a bunch of short stories in his *Selected Short Stories*, under the discussion. They will, I believe, relish enjoying them.

I begin the discussion with the first story entitled 'Who is Responsible?' in the collection *Who is Responsible? A Collection of Short Stories*, published by Authorspress, New Delhi in 2016.

This short story with which the collection begins is a good story, based on a conundrum. This short story is good in that it deals with a theme individualistic, familial, social, psychological and, above all, philosophical.

Before I set out to analyse the theme of this short story from individualistic, familial, psychological and philosophical points of view I think it is worthwhile to synopsisize the story.

In the beginning we are introduced to Rehman, seventy-three years old, living with his wife, Ramla, sixty-eight years old, 'in a palatial double-storeyed house facing the Vembanad Lake at Kumarakam in Kerala, India.' His wife is weak, almost invalid and cannot give him much company. A retired headmaster, he, sitting in an arm-chair and watching through the window 'rafts, canoes, cruisers and houseboats' carry passengers and cargoes, longs for a voyage to a dream-world, while ruminating over his halcyon days as headmaster of a Government high school. At school he endears himself to his pupils and though them to their parents. In his retired life he involves himself in a mission of educating illiterate old people and makes himself a politically important person. He has two daughters married away to two businessmen and a son, Anwar, working away as electrician, employed by a company in Oman. His daughters distance themselves from their parents, except for

occasional visits. In course of time Anwar is married to a beautiful girl, Aisha her name. After marriage Anwar and Aisha honeymoon in Ootty, 'an enticing hill resort in Tamil Nadu.' Anwar's leave period is ending and he has to return to Oman. Before returning to Oman he buys Aisha a car and engages a chauffeur Rahul in driving the car, because Aisha does not know how to drive a car herself. When Anwar has returned to Oman, Aisha makes it a habit to go out on every opportunity in the car with Rahul driving it, without caring for what her parents-in-law think of it. Rehman does not dare inform Anwar of Aisha's frequently going out with Rahul, lest he get upset at such news. Gradually, there develop illicit relations between Aisha and Rahul. The aftermath of the illicit relations is Aisha's elopement with Rahul. Rehman blames it on God.

Rehman's brother brings in a maid servant from a neighbourhood to do household work.

Rehman's wretchedness does not end here. One day the police brought in news of arrest by the Government of Arab of Anwar on charge of terrorism. This news completely shatters him and he abandons himself to a fit of crying out loud. Attracted by his loud cry, his maid servant rushes in and asks him what has happened, and about his agonies.

Next morning the old couple are found murdered and the police fail to resolve the mystery of who murdered them. Why they were murdered is quite apparent, because all ornaments are taken away. Even the chief minister shows interest in the investigation of who murdered the couple.

Certainly there is an answer hidden in the story to the question 'Who is responsible?' and it is not difficult to locate, if considered from individualistic, familial, social, psychological and philosophical points of view. In my view it is certainly Rehman, no other else, who was solely responsible for all the events that took place in the story.

Individualistically, Rehman was proud of his having endeared himself, when headmaster, to the students he taught, of his involvement in the mission of educating illiterate old people and of his intimacy with the chief minister, which revealed itself in the latter's interest in the investigation of the mystery of who murdered Rehman and his wife. His individualistic consciousness predominated over other considerations and turned him blind to what children wanted from their parents. His wife was so weak as not to be able to soothe them; rather she was not capable of catching on to their psychological revolt which expressed itself in their subsequent behaviours. Even Rehman, though educated he

was, could not catch on to it. His callousness led to the occurrence of the unfortunate events that took place beyond his imagination. The moments they had been married away his daughters distanced themselves from him, except for occasional visits. His son was living abroad in Oman, employed by a company. 'He was compelled to seek employment abroad...' Who or what compelled him to seek employment abroad? Certainly Rehman's incompetence as a father did. We are told he had an intimacy with the Chief Minister. He could have utilized his intimacy with the Chief Minister to get his son a government job. He did not do so lest a slur might be put on his reputation. He stooped so low as to sacrifice his son on the altar of his self interest. He even pressurized his son into coming to India and marrying Aisha. The offshoot of the pressurization was that Anwar, after the marriage to Aisha, went back to Oman, leaving Aisha behind with his parents. A good thing about Anwar was that he had bought Aisha a car and engaged chauffeur to compensate for his absence. He had earned huge money abroad. It did not at all behove Rehman to have agreed to keep his daughter-in-law with them, indifferent to his son's need to live a happy conjugal life and to his daughter-in-law's sexual appetite that had been unappeased since Anwar's return to Oman. The results of his indifference were disastrous: his daughter-in-law's elopement with the chauffeur and the arrest of his son on charge of terrorism. It was apparent that quite disgusted with the life, he took to terrorism. When he had got to know of his daughter-in-law's elopement with the chauffeur Rahul, he blamed this occurrence on Allah, but did not think of his own responsibility for this occurrence. It was shameful of him, an educated man, to have confided the arrest of his son and his agonies to the maid servant and this confidence led to the murder of Rehman and his wife. Were the thieves unknown, they would have silenced Rehman and his wife, flourishing knives or pistols. But Rehman and his wife had recognized the thieves and this necessitated the thieves' murdering them. It was Shahana, the maid servant, and an accomplice who had murdered them, though Shahana acted out her innocence by knocking at the door and shouting for her master to open the door.

This short story philosophizes on the responsibility of head of a family and on the tendency of parents to give their daughters in marriage to boys working abroad without considering about whether their daughters would be happy or not in their conjugal life.

The story 'Aren't they our Sisters?', in the collection *Short Stories during Covid 19* (Authorspress, 2022) is a simple short story but conveys a never-fading message. Rajesh, the protagonist, after having landed at the

Mumbai Airport, hires a taxi car to go over to Kamathipura and there he meets up with a middle-aged pimp who escorts him to the harlot quarters. Rajesh chooses one from among the sex-workers who were standing outside, beckoning to him. During a conversation with the harlot, Stella her name, the true purpose of his visiting the brothel is revealed. In the conversation with Stella Rajesh tells her that his mother, deserted by his father, took to harlotry in Kamathipura in order to be able to get him properly educated. He fared well in education and, as a result, was employed abroad. He has amassed huge money, while working abroad. Now he owns a textile factory, Govind Mills, in Kochi, of which his mother is Managing Director. To fulfill the wish his mother has enjoined upon him to rescue as many sex-workers as possible from their horrible life, he has visited the quarters and chosen her. He offers to give jobs to as many as thirty or even forty sex-workers. Quite convinced, Stella confides to him how she, daughter of a rich bank manager, was duped by a face book friend, Rajender of name who had posed as an engineer working in an IT company into being sold out to this brothel.

True to his words, Rajesh rescues twenty sex-workers, including Stella, from the god-forsaken place and places them in different positions in his textile factory. This short story ends on a humanistic note.

This short story conveys to the readers something that collides with our own experience and theirs, too. The something promises an idyllic bliss in society, but suggests utopianism. Utopianism imparts a sense of living a blissful life. The author has portrayed two characters, deviating from, or rather defying, the wonted practice of characterization and the likes of them are, so to say, rare in the society we are living in. They are Rajesh and his mother. With a certain purpose that has dominated the portraiture of these two characters the author strives to divinize them. I say 'divinized', because man has conceived of divinity in his own image. Through the direct and active inspiration and co-operation of his mother Rajesh has rescued from the god-forsaken brothel as many as twenty harlots, including Stella, the female protagonist, and placed them in the textile factory he owns. Stella acts as a foil to fulfilling his noble mission. His mother is portrayed as a noble character. Though the desertion by her husband had flung her into harlotry, her humanitarian spirit was not bogged down. Rather it provided her with an opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge of the wretched condition of the harlots and led to her inspiring her son Rajesh to rescue the twenty harlots.

The short story 'A Good Samaritan', (*Who is Responsible?: A Collection of Short Stories*) also ends on a humanistic note. The author says he has drawn upon a true incident and spiced it with his imagination to

make a short story out of this incident. Professor Mohan, the protagonist, when driving his car along the national highway and, noticing a man lying in a pool of blood on the left-side of the road, picks him up into his car and takes him over to the nearest hospital. The doctor who examines the patient says that he needs immediate operation and it cannot be delayed by a moment. Professor Mohan, sensing the urgency of the operation, himself pays for the operation and informs Mariam on the phone number he has got from the patient's identity card of her husband's accident and the admission to Ambala hospital. The patient's name is Mr Xavier. His wife, his daughters and his parents come, rushing to the hospital. Gradually a good number of people not related to them gather in the hospital to enquire about Mr Xavier's condition. The gathering of so many people not related to Mr Xavier's family quite astonishes Professor Mohan and he starts wondering at his popularity. In the meantime the doctor tells him that though his operation is successful, the patient will lose his memory forever. Mr Xavier's wife, daughters and parents get so heart-broken that Professor Mohan thinks, they won't bear this heart-rending news for long. He requests the doctor to lie to them that the patient will temporarily lose his memory and will regain it in a short while. Mr Xavier's are a God-fearing family and they believe in God. They sincerely believe that God will help Mr Xavier to regain his memory. To satisfy his curiosity about who Mr Xavier is, and what has made so many people gather in the hospital Prof. Mohan drags Mariam, Mr Xavier's wife, into an intimate conversation. From the conversation he gets to know that Mr Xavier was once an employee on a private bus and saw many men and women run over by the bus which fled away. A compassion for the victims gradually welled up in him and he felt like taking them over to hospital. But he could not do anything about it. One day, when an autorickshaw knocked over his son, when he was walking along the High Road with his mother, and his son succumbed to the injury in the hospital he had been admitted to. Since then his desire to lift victims of road accidents and take them to hospital had turned into a passion. Hearing all this, Professor Mohan firmly believes that God will help Mr Xavier to regain his memory very soon.

In this short story the author has created two ideal characters, Professor Mohan and Mr Xavier, who will easily endear themselves to the readers, I am sure. Professor Mohan, when he was driving his car along the High Road, saw a man lying on road-side in a pool of blood. He could have passed by him, like every other car-driving gentleman lest they be entangled in police case, but he did not do that cowardly act. Rather, he got down from the car, picked up the victim, into his car and



drove on a considerable distance of the main road to admit him to the hospital. When the doctor told him that the patient needed urgent operation, he himself paid for the operation, without waiting for the patient's relatives to come pay for it.

Mr Xavier is also an exceptionally generous man, but not so socially dignified as Professor Mohan. He had been employed on a private bus and been witness to his bus running over many passers-by. Gradually a compassion had grown in him for victims of road accident. After retirement he made it his habit to pick up and admit to hospital victims of road accident and even he went to the extent of paying for their treatment, when money was urgently needed

When Prof. Mohan saw that a good number of people had gathered in the hospital, on hearing of the accident and the admission to the hospital of so ordinary a person, he could not hide his surprise and asked them why he was so popular with them. They unanimously said in reply that they were the victims of road accident whom Mr Xavier had picked up and had had them treated in the hospital.

What I sincerely appreciate in this short story is the way the author has concluded it. When the doctor announced that though the operation was successful, the patient would lose his memory for ever, at the request of Professor he added, 'but he would recover his memory very soon', because the patient's parents, wife and daughters won't bear this heart-rending news for long. At this announcement the patient's parents, wife and daughters, the people who had gathered in the hospital and Prof. Mohan himself flung themselves into praying for the patient's speedy recovery.

The readers will also join in the prayer.

I shall conclude this article, I humbly inform my dear readers, by dealing with the next short story entitled 'The Twins' (*Who is Responsible?*) in the fear that dealing with all the short story will jar on the patience of the readers and their interest in reading the short story collection under the discussion will be reduced to nothingness.

The short story, when synopsisized, stands as follows:

The author narrates the story in the first person.

The short story begins with a quarrel of the narrator with his wife over a stray cat allowed into the kitchen by his wife, without caring about her kitchen work. The narrator protests at his wife's excessively fondling the stray cat she calls 'Sundari' and she retorts that, fed up of the

loneliness imposed upon her by his preoccupation with his computer, she has allowed the stray cat in to fondle just to shoo off her loneliness. The narrator who himself teaches feminism at his college – he fears that his teaching may backfire on him – owns up to his guilt by foisting loneliness on her by keeping himself busy on his computer. The narrator admits that, brought up in a patriarchal atmosphere, she does not complain of being kept lonely, nor does she demand anything of him. In course of time Sundari gives birth to two kittens and the narrator's wife has three companions to play with. In a few days one of the kittens is found missing. To compensate for his guilt he brings in twin cats of foreign breed from his friend's house. The beauty of the twin cats of foreign breed captivates both the husband and the wife. The narrator describes of the twin cats of foreign breed: 'They had snowy white fur except dark spots on their head and tails. The tails were thick and bushy, characteristic of the Ooty cats. Pairs of emeralds on their heads looked at us.' They, the narrator, and his wife grow so obsessed by playing with the twin-kittens that they feel as if their childhood were returned to them. The unfortunate native cat and her kitten are ignored, though the narrator's wife regularly feeds them outside the kitchen. The twin cats are given names, Manikutty and Amminikutty. The twin cats take advantage of the couple's overindulgence and keep them all attention to them and their needs by turning upside down everything inside the house, sitting on their laps and sleeping with them in their bed, but they cannot say what they want and this leads the narrator to cogitating on their wretchedness and the cogitation leads him beyond the wretchedness of twin cats to comparing man to animal in terms of brutality, the term apt to be used on man instead of animal, says the narrator, citing an incident of a man killing his wife and his own children. However, petting of the twin cats reaches across to their daughter studying away in New Delhi. She expresses her desire to play with the twin cats, when she comes on holidays. It happens that the narrator's mother, who is living on medicine, is coming [from his parental home] to stay a few days with them. They are worrying about how she will cope with the pranks of the twin cats, when they leave her home with the twin cats, when they go out to their respective places of work. They assure themselves they will somehow manage the situation. His mother comes. But to their pleasant surprise his mother is delighted to see the twin cats. Next day the narrator goes out to his college and his wife to her school, finishing with the regular routine of household work, including the feeding of the twin cats and the stray cat and its kitten. When they return home in the evening they see everything has been turned upside down. The narrator's mother is gasping for breath, lying in

bed. The table was tumbled down and food and medicines scattered over the floor. The naughtiness of the twin cats goes beyond their tolerance. After much deliberation and quite unwillingly for the sake of his mother, the narrator decides to leave the twin cats at a distant place so that they cannot return home. He takes the twin cats sleeping in the kitchen in his car over to a distant place. When he is about to leave the unfortunate twin cats, he receives a phone call from his mother, insisting on him returning the twin cats home immediately.

This short story is good in that it features feminism, effect of loneliness on husband-and-wife relationship and importance of man-and-pet relationship in domestic life and so on.

Another thing is worth a notice. We have fascination for anything foreign and neglect anything native. This happens in the case of the stray cat and the twin cats of foreign breed.

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Dr. Bhaskar Roy Barman is an internationally published novelist, poet, short-story writer, editor, critic and translator and book-reviewer from Agartala, Tripura, India. He is the President of Children's Literature Research Centre, Agartala and Readers Club International and also the Director of Sahitya Adda (Literary Rendezvous). He has as many as ten books to his credit. Email: bhaskarroybarman@gmail.com



# 13

## Resolving Conflicts: Galtung's Approach in K V Dominic's Selected Short Stories

DR. S. BARATHI

### ABSTRACT

Conflicts are an integral part of the human experience, and their resolution is a crucial aspect of literature. This scholarly exploration delves into K V Dominic's selected short stories, employing Johan Galtung's 'Diagnosis Prognosis Therapy' approach to dissect and analyze the conflicts within Dominic's narratives. Dominic's narratives are microcosms of societal conflicts, and Galtung's framework helps reveal their roots, likely trajectories, and strategies for resolution. By merging Dominic's storytelling with Galtung's tools, we offer fresh insights into human relationships and societal dynamics. This exploration enhances our understanding of Dominic's literary artistry and universal conflict resolution challenges. The study aims to deepen comprehension of narrative dynamics, power imbalances, and peace-related themes within the stories, highlighting the potential for resolving conflicts through peaceful means. Join us on a journey that combines literature and conflict resolution to illuminate the path to a more harmonious world.

**Keywords:** Conflict, Galtung, Diagnosis Prognosis Therapy, narrative dynamics, power imbalances, healing and reconciliation

### Introduction

Conflicts are an inherent part of the human experience, manifesting themselves in various forms across cultures and societies. The art of conflict resolution has been an essential facet of literature, reflecting the intricate interplay of human emotions, desires, and the quest for harmony. In this scholarly exploration, we embark on a journey through the selected short stories of K V Dominic, a renowned contemporary writer, to delve deep into the multifaceted realm of conflicts. Specifically, we will employ Johan Galtung's 'Diagnosis Prognosis Therapy' approach to dissect, analyze, and ultimately offer insights into resolving the conflicts portrayed within Dominic's narratives.

K V Dominic, a distinguished poet, short story writer, and scholar, is known for his ability to craft compelling narratives that resonate with

readers from diverse backgrounds. His short stories are replete with complex characters and intricate situations, which serve as microcosms of the broader conflicts that plague society. By applying Galtung's framework, we aim to shed light on the underlying causes of these conflicts (Diagnosis), project potential paths toward resolution and transformation (Prognosis), and, finally, explore the therapeutic elements present in Dominic's storytelling that contribute to healing and reconciliation (Therapy).

### **Objectives of the Study**

By applying Galtung's conflict-peace theory to the analysis of short stories, readers and researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the underlying dynamics, power imbalances, and potential avenues for resolution within the narrative. It can enhance the interpretation of conflicts and contribute to a nuanced exploration of peace-related themes present in the stories. This research provides a starting point for exploring the intersection of short stories and Galtung's peace theory. The research also highlights the possibility of bringing peace through peaceful means to resolve conflicts.

### **Literature Review**

Multiculturalism aims to reduce discrimination against minority cultural populations. The most significant contribution of multiculturalism is the awareness that cultural identities may be a source of marginalization and that state policies can harm minorities. The key claim made by minority nations is for self-government rights.

Previous studies on K. V. Dominic's works focussed on thematic analysis, social issues, and nature. Reitz (2009) assesses multiculturalism as a behavioral theory, exploring its impact on social cohesion. It examines the empirical evidence regarding multiculturalism's effects on societal dynamics. Wilkis (2014) evaluates theories of multicultural toleration, focusing on justice as fairness and political theology. This analysis contributes to the understanding of the ethical foundations of multiculturalism. This literature review presents a diverse selection of works that collectively offer a comprehensive perspective on multiculturalism, identity formation, and ethics. From philosophical treatises to literary explorations, these references provide valuable insights into the complexities of living in a multicultural and ethically diverse world. Bouchard (2011) critically examines the concept of interculturalism as an alternative to multiculturalism. It discusses the challenges and benefits of interculturalism in fostering social cohesion in diverse societies. Johan Galtung's insightful article applies his 'Diagnosis

Prognosis Therapy' approach to analyze and offer solutions for conflicts. This methodology can be a valuable tool in addressing the challenges posed by multiculturalism. Kwame Anthony Appiah's seminal work (2005) delves into the ethical dimensions of identity. He explores how individuals construct and navigate their identities in a globalized world and addresses issues of cultural authenticity and belonging. Most of the research is on the art of Dominic's writing, narratology and characterization. None of the works have applied Galtung's theory to identify the possibilities of peace to resolve issues in the selected works.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### ***Salad Bowl Theory Vs Melting Pot Theory***

Distinct immigrant groups will tend to “melt or melt together” leaving their own cultures behind and eventually fully merging into the dominant civilization and The salad bowl theory is a more liberal multiculturalism theory than the melting pot theory; it portrays a varied society where people coexist but retain at least some of the unique traits are brought out.

#### ***Galtung's conflict resolution model***

Galtung's idea of diagnosis-prognosis-therapy is to achieve peace and harmonious coexistence. Johan Galtung's conflict resolution approach, developed over decades of research and practice, offers a systematic method to understand the roots of conflicts, predict their likely trajectories, and prescribe effective strategies for resolution. By merging Dominic's storytelling prowess with Galtung's analytical tools, we endeavor to provide a fresh perspective on Dominic's short stories, revealing the subtle nuances of human relationships and societal dynamics that lie beneath the surface. This exploration promises not only to enhance our appreciation of K V Dominic's literary artistry but also to offer valuable insights into the universal challenges of conflict resolution that permeate our daily lives. As we traverse the pages of Dominic's selected short stories, we invite readers to join us on a profound journey of discovery, one that combines the wisdom of Galtung's conflict resolution framework with the evocative storytelling of a gifted author. Together, we will explore the power of literature in illuminating the path to resolving conflicts and fostering a more harmonious world.

The stories in the anthology are organized into different sections such as Man Vs Nature, Man Vs Animals, relationship issues, honesty, compassion, dharma and so on.

Moral value can also be defined as information about what is right behaviour, and what is wrong behaviour, as well as what is important in life, this message is sent by the author to the readers through the themes mentioned above.

### ***Diagnosis***

In this story “World Environment Day,” the victimization of tribals, poverty, and alienation from society are the basic issues identified. The story is about the change in the protagonist, Katturaja, a notorious forest thief who was involved in criminal activities like illegal cutting of forest wood, poaching, and hunting. Towards the end of the story, he realizes his mistake and surrenders himself to the court.

### ***Tribals as Victims***

Katturaja is the illegitimate son of Kanni, a tribal girl. She was raped by the forest rangers when she was collecting firewood from the forest. “It was a futile attempt to complain since tribal people’s wails were never heeded by the government” (7). The above incident proves that these innocent tribals were victimized by the government, which in turn has lead to multiple issues.

### ***Alienation***

It is another issue which ultimately leads the protagonist to become a forest thief. Katturaja lacked parental affection and care during his childhood. He “lived with his grandparents, despised by all except his mother” (7). His alienation from his mother eventually made him to move away from the society.

### ***Poverty***

Poverty is another big issue among the tribal people. Though the government allotted millions of rupees for tribal welfare, they did not get the required financial aid. “The tribal people lived in a miserable condition” (7). In the story, it is due to poverty Katturaja retorts to cutting the forest woods and poaching wild animals to generate revenue for his tribe.

### ***Superstitious belief***

The story “I am Unwanted” is a semi fictitious story of a girl who was named by her parents ‘Avaanchhit,’ which means unwanted. This name created a psychological issue in the girl’s mind. She wanted to change her name. But at a certain point in her life, she changed her mind and was determined to prove herself. She got through the civil service

examination and was appointed as a district collector. She empowered women by bringing in various welfare schemes for women and girls. Finally, she proved her worth to society. This story is about the suffering of a girl child. The reason why they wanted a male child is due to the general belief that “son is a boon to the parents in a material sense” (43).

### *Gender discrimination*

Another issue in the story is gender discrimination. Avaanchhit's parents already had three daughters and that made them to try the popular belief of naming their fourth daughter as unwanted.

### *Economic issues and Lack of employment opportunity*

“Who is Responsible?” is around Rehman and Ramla, an old couple in Kerala. Though they lived a contented life, their peace was disturbed by their daughter-in-law, who eloped with their car driver; also adding to their misery was their son Anwar, who turned out to be a terrorist. In the final part of the story, the old couple were found murdered in their house. The culprits and their reason to murder them remains a mystery. This story portrays the unemployment problem as follows: “Since Kerala is a State where the majority are educated and employment opportunities are few, neither Anwar nor his parents could fulfill their wish” (12). Thus, lack of employment is shown as a problem in the society, where many have to go abroad in search of their livelihood.

### *Loneliness*

Another major issue in the story is loneliness of the newly-wed Aisha, who longs for the company of her husband. “Everyday after Anwar's departure, Aisha contacted him through phone” (13). These lines demonstrate that Aisha longs for the company of someone who can care for her. This eventually makes her to leave her husband's home.

### *Inter religious love*

The central theme of “Multicultural harmony” is communal harmony. Three families belonging to different religions live together in a village. The problem arises when one of their children wants to marry one of their neighbors from another religion. This creates friction among the families. Friction in their families began when Amar's son Anand fell in love with Anthony's daughter Catherine. “They knew very well that even if the parents consented to their marriage, the society and the religious leaders would object” (92). Finally, the story ends on a positive note when the parents realize that nothing is more valuable than their children's lives. Thus, harmonious living leads to peace in society



### *Prognosis*

According to Galtung, the diagnosis is the root cause that triggers an effect, i.e., the prognosis. Here, in the selected short stories, the prognosis is psychological issues of the protagonist, destruction of nature, elopement, and threats from family and society.

### *Destruction of nature*

In “World Environment Day” finally when Katturaja understood how his people were exploited by the officials, he decided to become a forest thief. With a group of youngsters, he started to cut costly trees and sell them to timber merchants. He wanted to alleviate the poverty of his people. He used the money from selling valuable timber to help the poor. “Katturaja never felt any guilt for his illegal acts, but took it as a sweet revenge on the government” (8).

### *Psychological issues*

In the story “I am Unwanted” the comment from her friends, “You are unwanted daughter of your parents” (43),” made her feel dejected. Avaanchit, questioned her mother: “... you being a woman like me, how could you think of us as unwanted? (44) She was unable to understand why her parents did not want her. She had to face severe criticism in the society due to her name. So, at one point of time, she even decides to change her name. All these show the mental struggle undergone by the protagonist.

### *The elopement and Anwar's Arrest*

In “Who is Responsible?” the author's question is, “Was Aisha crossing the Lakshmana rekha of a bride or Rahul tempting her like Ravana?” (14). Added to this, Rehman received a letter stating that his son was arrested for “involvement in terrorist activities” (16). These are the effects of loneliness of Aisha and Anwar.

### *Threats from family and society*

In “Multicultural Harmony,” Celine told her parents about her love. They opposed her telling though their families had been friends for decades, they cannot accept Anand, as he belongs to other religion. Further, Celine's father harshly asked Anand's father, “what harm have we done to you and your family? Your son is trying to defame us and outlaw us from our religion” to which Anand's father Amar retorted, “do you think we would encourage our son into such an inter-religious marriage?” (93).

### ***Therapy***

Therapy is a solution to the effects in the stories. Some of the possible solutions suggested by the author in his stories are compassion, embracing multiculturalism, education and repentance. The writer deals with man-animal and man-nature relationship in the stories.

### ***Compassion towards Nature***

Katturaja, the forest thief finally realizes his mistake and surrenders to the court. He admitted to the judge that:

Your honour, it is true that I have committed unpardonable crimes and did a lot of damage to the forest. I now sincerely feel that I should not have been so hostile to the forest and the environment. I should have abided by the laws of the government and supported it in its activities for the welfare of the people and nature (9).

### ***Multiculturalism***

The stories selected for the study deal with unity, harmony, interreligious understanding, cooperation, and coexistence. In “Who Is Responsible?” The Muslim couple had appointed a Hindu driver. Their maid servant, Shahana, is also a Hindu. Both of them were treated well by their masters. They lived in perpetual peace with their neighbours. “World Environment Day” insists on coexistence with nature. The story also reinforces our harmony with nature, which is essential for our existence. The story is about the change in the protagonist, Katturaja, a notorious forest thief who was involved in criminal activities like illegal cutting of forest wood, poaching, and hunting. Towards the end of the story, he realizes his mistake and surrenders himself to the court.

### ***Compassion and accepting Multiculturalism***

Celine thinks that by living in a different city, she can overcome the religious issue raised by her parents. Though many years passed, all these families lived in harmony. But this is broken by the love between Celine and Anand. This is due to the lack of understanding of both parents.

### ***Education***

Katturaja’s primary education was an eye-opener. He understood how his people were exploited by the government, forest officials, and forest mafia.

### ***Repentance***

Katturaja realized his mistake when the tree he was about to cut provided him shelter. He understood the real value of nature. He promised that he would never indulge in deforestation activities. He surrendered to the magistrate, accepting his crimes. "He admitted all charges against him and pointed out the places where he'd felled the trees" (9). He pleaded in court that he wanted to correct his mistakes.

### ***Reforestation***

To overcome his sense of guilt, Katturaja reforested with the help of his friends. "As he had pledged and promised, Katturaja made a task force with his friends" (10).

### ***Empowerment***

Avaanchhit was inspired to prove the worth of women to the world. She "decided to retain it despite the stigma" (44).

### ***Tolerance***

The possible solution here might be to be tolerant towards others. In the case of Ayesha, if she had been tolerant and supported her in-laws, this incident would not have occurred.

### **Conclusion**

The study demonstrates some of the struggles faced by the protagonists in the selected short stories and the possible solutions to overcome them. Alienation, poverty, economic issues, superstition and lack of employment opportunities are the causes that lead to sufferings, mental agony, psychological issues, loneliness, terrorism, threats from the family and society. All these issues could be solved through proper education, tolerance towards other religions, compassion, and embracing universal brotherhood.

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Dr Barathi Srinivasan is an Assistant Professor of English at Srinivasa Ramanujan Centre, SASTRA Deemed to be University, Kumbakonam, India. Her poems are widely anthologized in books and international journals. She has translated one novel, two short story collections, and five poetry anthologies into Tamil language. Besides she has published an anthology of poems titled *Heart to Heart* (2023) and a book of interviews titled *A Conversation with Contemporary Indian English Poets* (2023). She has received quite a number of awards such as Best translator Award (2021) Capecomorin Trust Best Faculty Award (2021 & 2022) KIWI Miles, New Zealand, Capecomorin Trust Best Female Faculty Award (2023) Bestow Edutex, and she is also awarded a Honorary D Lit by McStem Eduvarsity, U.S.A. Email: [barathi0723@gmail.com](mailto:barathi0723@gmail.com)



## Effective Treatment of Social Issues in the Stories of K. V. Dominic

PROF. SAGAR MAL GUPTA

Like other short story writers Indian short story writers have a prestigious place in the history of world story writers. Indian short story writers have covered socioeconomic variety, history and languages in their short stories. Dr. K. V. Dominic is a prolific Indian poet and short story writer known for his humanism, environmentalism, social issues and so on. K. V. Dominic has so far published seven short stories books—three in English as shown below and one each in Malayalam, Bengali, Hindi and French.

- (a) *Who is Responsible: A Collection of Short Stories* (2016)
- (b) *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India.* (2018)
- (c) *Short Stories during Covid-19* (2022)

Apart from these books, he has published many more short stories in IJML and WEC issues of literary journals.

The story 'Old Age Home' (*Writers Editors Critics*, 13.1, March 2023, 106-109) is about an old age home in which two inmates Ravi and Jacob are in conversation with each other. This story has been presented in a dialogue form, which is quite innovative. Ravi has been living in this old age home for the last ten years. The second inmate Jacob joined this old age home only three days ago. Ravi introduces himself first. He is 80-year-old, a retired college professor from Kochi. His wife, who died at the age of 68, of cancer, was also a college professor. They had no offspring. Being alone, he decided to live here and is subsisting on his pension. He is very happy at this old age home.

Jacob is a farmer and he has three children. Though he is a graduate he couldn't do any govt. job because of being the eldest son; his father needed his help to look after the management of five acres of agricultural land. His three brothers and two sisters are all settled in the

US and bequeathed their share of agricultural land to him. He and his wife Mercy were happy doing their agricultural work.

After a pause, Jacob continued his story at the insistence of Ravi. He has three sons who all became doctors and settled in the USA with their wives. They come to India for a month once a year. They insisted on taking their parents to the USA but they refused to go. But their grandchildren longed to stay with them for more days and play in the lap of nature. They enjoyed being in the company of the cows, dogs, cats and fowls, butterflies, birds etc. They also liked their presence but at last their day of departure came and they all left for the US—LEAVING THEM ALONE. THEY FOUND THEIR LIVES VERY PAINFUL WITHOUT THEIR SONS AND GRANDCHILDREN.

Tears glistened in Jacob's eyes when he reported the death of his wife a month ago. Now he is left alone. His offspring came from the USA for the burial but left after fifteen days. They wanted to take him to the USA but he insisted on living here. They left him in this old age home promising to call him every day. But he feels he has been living a hellish life here for the last three days: "Of course, I get whatever food I need here. The room I stay is very comfortable with AC, TV and all such requirements. But I have no enjoyment in anything. Very little food I take. My mind is full of memories of my wife. I long to go back to my house and land, but I am imprisoned here... My children can't read the agonies of their father... the pangs of loneliness..." (p. 109) Ravi and Jacob went to bed at 10.30 p.m. Early next morning, Ravi got the sad news of Jacob's death. He died due to cardiac arrest in his bed.

This story very poignantly describes the loneliness, pain and agony of thousands of parents whose children have migrated to foreign countries leaving them alone. In Jacob's case, his children are very sensitive in that they wanted to take him to the US but he insisted on staying in India. He was attached so much to his house and agricultural land that he did not want to live even in a comfortable old age home.

Stylistically, this short story is slightly different from world stories. It is in the dialogue form; has only two characters; written in pure Indian English; airs Indian sentiments in that Indians are tethered to their own land, traditions and culture. Here Jacob truly represents a true Indian character and his sentiments.

This short story will be read for the social issue of loneliness of those parents whose children have migrated to foreign countries leaving their parents alone in pain and agony. Further, the contrast between Ravi's psyche and that of Jacob's is very significant.

Let us now discuss the story 'Best Government Servant' published in *Writers Editors Critics*, 12:2, Sept 2022, pp 115-121. This is the story about Dr. Krishnan Namboodiri aged 38, who is going to join his govt. job as an LDC. But he refuses to accept bribe like other officials and their boss. Krishnan's father is a retired school teacher and he had to spend his hard-earned savings to marry off his two daughters.

Krishnan's father is a very honest man and follows Gandhian philosophy of truth and ahimsa. Krishnan on his part, a hard-working student and a topper in his classes, a member of Students Federation of India has been able to acquire Ph. D on Gandhian thoughts and philosophy from Mahatma Gandhi University, Kottayam on a scholarship, without adding on financial burden to his father. But like other States, in Kerala too, in spite of highest literary rate, it is not easy to get a government job. Commenting on the prevalent practice of getting a job, the writer avers: "One gets placement not just because of his academic merit and skill but based on political, financial influence one can exert" (p.116).

Krishnan made serious efforts to get a govt job but it takes a lot of time to get selected. To help his retired father to run the family, he took tuition classes for students. Because of his expertise in English, he was able to take classes for both school and college students. He also took a part time job in a college and thus was able to earn Rs. 1500/- a month.

Several years passed but Krishnan was not able to get a job. In the mean time his mother was confined to bed due to arthritis. Hence Krishnan's parents insisted on him to get married but he said he could not marry without getting a job. Krishnan became 33 years old but could not get a government job. His mother's condition worsened and father also showed symptoms of old age. Therefore, Krishnan consented to marry Seetha, a postgraduate in English in a simple wedding ceremony.

Krishnan continued his teaching and Seetha attended to domestic duties including serving as a nurse to her mother-in-law. Krishnan did not lose hope and continued applying for KPSC tests. But in the mean time, Krishnan and Seetha had a female and male child. But unfortunately, Seetha suffered from liver cirrhosis. The treatment was very costly and Krishnan took a loan from a bank pledging their ancestral property. At last by God's grace, he got the job of a lower division clerk at the age of 38.

He reported at the Taluk office to join his duties. The Tehsildar explained his duties to him. Krishnan learnt his section work easily; he found his section head unfriendly.

After some time, Krishnan discovered the gifting of envelopes to the clerks by the peon. One day, he was also offered an envelope, which he refused to accept. Even after the intervention of the Tehsildar, he refused to accept it and called it bribe. The Tehsildar told him that it was a gift given to them by people. They never asked for it. But Krishnan refused to accept it. The writer states: "I don't want to argue with you. There are twenty-two staffs in this office and none finds any wrong in accepting these compliments. You will have to bear the consequences if you swim against the rule of the office." (p. 120)

Notice how the Tehsildar threatens him for not accepting the bribe. Krishnan reported the matter to his parents, who supported him but his wife told him to be practical. As expected, he was transferred after a week to a village office at a remote place. Luckily, Krishnan had the support of his parents and his wife. He served the people with utmost honesty.

He filed a bribery case in the High Court against the Tehsildar and his staff and presented solid evidence. As a result, the verdict was given in his favour. Krishnan became a hero and his fight against corruption was widely reported in the newspapers and on TV channels. He was given a warm reception by the Governor of Kerala and he was awarded the Best Government Servant.

The story speaks loudly and effectively about the corruption prevalent in government offices. The corruption percolates down from top to bottom. It is very difficult in such a situation to root out corruption. But Krishnan takes it up as a challenge, in spite of difficult domestic circumstances; he files a suit against the Tehsildar and luckily gets the corrupt officials punished. Krishnan's gumption and courage shows that there is still a hope in society.

Another story that deals with a burning social problem is the story about women who been pushed into brothels because of deceitful strategies of some brothel agents. The hero of this story Rajesh, who is the owner of Govind Mills, Kochi, takes upon himself to free some sex workers from a notorious brothel situated at Kamathipura, Mumbai. The story is entitled 'Aren't They Our Sisters?' (*Short Stories during Covid-19*, pp. 39-46) Rajesh to achieve his mission leaves for Mumbai by air. He reaches Mumbai and books a taxi to go to Kamathipura. As he reaches the destination, he is accosted by a middle aged man Kishore, who is an agent of brothels. Rajesh wants to meet a pretty Kerala lady aged between twenty and thirty. Kishore ushers him to the lane where Kerala girls are available. Describing the city graphically, the writer says, "The



entire city looked very dirty, crowded lanes with people of all ages – sex workers, their families and customers, dogs, cows, rickshaws, vegetable and fruit vendors on roads. The buildings on both sides seemed centuries old, without proper maintenance or painting. A person who visits once will never wish to visit again.” (p. 20)

Rajesh feels attracted to a lady standing in front of him on the first floor. The lady asks him to give her Rs 500/- and get ready as per instructions. Rajesh makes his intention of coming there clear in the following words: “Trust me; I have come here to save you from this filthy, hellish life. Kindly tell me your whereabouts, from where you are and how you happened to be here.”

The lady refused to trust him as she had been cheated by another man. Rajesh tells her that all men are not the same. The lady says that one of her friends was promised a marriage and she was made pregnant and then that man disappeared. Rajesh tells her that he is concerned about her because he is the son of a sex worker. He is very rich now. He is son of a father who deceived his wife and her child in Mumbai. Her mother was forced to take up the profession of a sex worker in Kamathipura but sent me to a boarding school. I got a job in a foreign country and became rich. Now we have started a factory at Kochi and I have decided to improve the lot of sex workers. My mother is the Managing Director of the factory. We can provide jobs to twenty sex workers. “You will be given very good salary. There are family quarters near the factory where you can live with your family. Day cares and playschools are there in the campus and you will never have any problem of alienation, isolation or discrimination. Now what do you say?” Hearing this, the sex worker introduces herself. She says that her name is Stella; the daughter of a rich bank manager. Her mother is a school teacher and their house is in Thrissur. She fell in love with a Face book friend named Rajender. Rajender is a Hindu and being a Christian, her parents tried to dissuade her from the marriage. But he eloped me and brought me to Mumbai. They lived in a hotel very comfortably for some time. He went to his office at 9a.m. and returned at 5p.m. One evening, he told me that he had to go to Kolkata on account of office work for a week. He shifted me to a friend’s house for a week. He brought me to a middle aged lady. After Rajender’s departure, the lady told her that she was to work there as a sex worker. There were twenty sex workers and Rajender is one of the agents. The middle aged lady locked the room from outside. She had to start the life of a sex worker; she had been serving as a sex worker for the last 5 years. Rajesh told her to decide within a week’s time and she

could also talk to her friends who would accompany her and would like to be saved.

Stella contacted her other sex worker friends and Rajesh came to Kamathipura with a bus. Twenty sex workers with their baggage were happy to leave that place and they all reached Kochi to be welcomed by the Managing Director. A function was arranged to welcome them. They were given a rousing welcome. Several VIP's gathered there including the Mayor of Kochi, the Retired Chief Justice of Kerala court and Radhadevi in her address said: "The Society should be compassionate to the tortured, abused and exploited people of the world." The Mayor in his presidential address congratulated Rajesh, Radhadevi, and their Govind Mills for doing such a marvelous humane service to the neglected outcast section of the society. He added that the company's unique act should be a model to all big firms and billionaires in the world. The wealth they amass is indirectly the wealth of the society and so part of it should be returned to the society by the way of humanitarian activities".

In his address, the Chief Justice "reminded the society that they should never treat sex workers with contempt. Having abused and exploited for carnal pleasures, treating them like curry leaves is cruelty of the high degree unpardonable. After all, aren't they your own sisters?" (p.46) Stella in her vote of thanks expressed deep gratitude to Rajesh and his mother Radhadevi for saving them from drowning in the ocean of grief. Stella and her friends started a new life of prestige and happiness.

The present story "Aren't They are Our Sisters?" deals with a crucial social issue of sex workers very sensitively. Generally, society treats them with contempt. The present story makes a plea to people to treat them as their sisters and accord them a respectable place. After all, it is not their fault. They are pushed into the sex trade not by choice but by pimps through their strategies. The story brings out the efforts of Rajesh, a social worker who demonstrates the gumption of saving twenty sex workers from their trade by offering them respectable jobs in a factory and by providing school education to their children. The story arouses social consciousness and stories like this serve as a wake-up call to people to accord a respectable space to sex workers.

The story 'What's Wrong with Us' (*Short Stories during Covid-19*, pp. 31-38) is about social discrimination of low caste people by the upper caste people. The story begins with 16 year old Vijayan asking a question from his father Gopalan. 'How come his name does not have surname, such as Namboodiri, Pillai, Nair, Menon etc.?' Vijayan asked. The

answer given by Gopalan was very shocking to Vijayan: “Dear son, they all belong to higher castes and those tails to their names denote the caste they belong to. We are low caste Dalit people and we don’t have such qualification to be proud of” (p.31).

Vijayan’s query was natural. “Why are we born as low caste people and they all as high caste, dad?” (ibid) Gopalan said that he asked the same question from his father and he could not give a satisfactory reply. Vijayan, God has created all equal. The social discrimination that is found in society is not God’s creation but man’s creation.

After his dad’s explanation Vijayan now understands why he is being treated so shabbily by his classmates and teachers. Gopalan advises his son to overcome his insult by teachers and his classmates by working hard and making a mark in his studies like K.R. Narayanan, who rose to the highest post of the President of India by dint of his hard work.

The first part of the story ends with Vijayan’s decision to become a high level government officer through hard work. This decision pleased his father Gopalan. Through flashback technique the writer tells the readers about the profession of Vijayan and gives the details of his family. Gopalan is a daily wage labourer working in the lands of rich agriculturists. Being a low caste, he faces discrimination during his work also. This is highly demeaning on the part of society. Gopalan’s family consists of his wife, son Vijayan, a five year old daughter and old parents. His father is suffering from asthma and mother a patient of diabetes. They get old age pension of Rs 1600/- per month to meet their medical expenses.

Now the third part of the story begins where the writer brings out the discrimination meted out to converted Christians. Joseph a friend of Vijayan and his father Mathai are discriminated against by the rich Christians. Mathai works as a rubber tapper in the rubber plantation of a Christian land owner. Once Joseph saw his father Mathai being addressed as Mathai without a respectable surname as per custom. When his father told Joseph that they being converted Christians are discriminated against and they are double losers: “The irony of the conversion is that the converted Christians were never supported by the church and they lost scheduled caste reservations offered by the government for education, employment, medical treatment etc. So they are never considered a forward community and lost whatever support they have been getting from the government.” (p. 34) Hearing this, Joseph like Vijayan takes a decision to work hard and get an excellent government job.

Notice both Vijayan and Joseph, the young generation are determined to change their lot of low caste through hard work. They are depicted not as revolutionaries but ambitious who would change their social status through hard work. They make beginning by asking their social science teacher Ramesh Krishnan, who being a low caste got this government job through reservation. Vijayan asked him how society was divided in high and low caste.

The social science teacher appreciated the question. He said “it is a relevant question” ... So much of discrimination, cruelty, mob violence, torture, lynching, burning houses, murder and police persecution are going on in our country in the name of caste (p. 35)

Compare this statement of Prahlad Chendwankar’s poem “My Father” Tells his son how he was discriminated by the school teacher:

My Son  
The teacher we had  
Was a bloody bastard  
He'd make us sit  
Outside the school,  
He beat us till we peed (18-24)  
(*Dalit consciousness and Dalit poetry*: p.119)

Compare another poem of Boyi Bheemanna titled ‘The Huts Are Burning’:

The huts are burning  
O yes, they are burning!  
Alas! Whose huts are they?  
For sure they might be the Dalit’s huts!  
Who else own huts, then?  
(*Dalit consciousness and Dalit Poetry*: 157)

The social science teacher quotes the history teacher’s statement on the origin of caste: “... castes seem to have originated more than 2000 years ago. Under this system which is associated with Hinduism, people were categorized by their occupations. The four primary castes are Brahmin, the priests, the Kshatriyas, warriors and nobility, Vaisya, farmers, traders and artisans, and Shudra, tenant farmers and servants. Some people were born outside and below the caste system: they were called “untouchables” or dalits meaning “the crushed ones” (p. 35)

The written evidence of caste system occurs in the Rigveda, Bhagwad Gita and Manusmirti. The Hindu caste system began to solidify sometime between 1000 and 200BCE. Untouchables were considered impure. They were not allowed to draw water from wells of high case people. They were not allowed to enter temples. Generally,

they lived outside the city or town on the border. If they touched food, no Brahmin would eat it because it got polluted. The untouchables were given the task of scavenging animal carcasses leather work or killing rats and other pests. Untouchables were not allowed to eat in the same room in which they ate and even their dead people were not allowed to cremate in the same crematorium. This was the limit of discrimination. The social science teacher further said that God and nature created all men equal but the discrimination was perpetrated by man. So it is a man-made creation; imposed by upper caste people on lower caste people. The teacher further said that caste discrimination is a canker in our society and we should vow to fight against it. The profession of a pujari and that of a scavenger be regarded equal and dignified. The original caste system was based on profession but later on people who, practised the profession of devotion, fighting and courage thought they were superior to those who did the manual work. Later their practice became the norm. Economists and Political scientists never regarded caste a barrier to economic development or political democracy. The teacher furthermore said that we should learn the dignity of labour from the West. Caste has become an inseparable part of Hindu religion. And political parties in India have compounded it further for gaining political power. Sree Narayan Guru, Father of the Renaissance in Kerala has rightly said “one caste. One religion, one God for ‘mankind’”. We should follow his dictum instead of caste system so vociferously advocated by the champions of caste system. The social science teacher ended his speech by giving the example of Daya Bai, a social activist from Kerala working for the welfare of the tribal people in M.P. He exhorted all the students to follow her example. Vijayan and Joseph stood up and promised to fight for the discrimination perpetrated against the Dalit people in the society. All the students stood up and clapped for several seconds. The last sentence of the story is meaningful and ‘Mother India smiled with immense happiness.’

To conclude, we can say that every conscious writer concentrates on the depiction of social problems and issues and suggests remedies. Such writers follow the diction of art for life’s sake and not merely for art’s sake. K. V. Dominic takes up the social issue of discrimination very effectively in his story “What is Wrong with Us?” This story has very little action. It can be called a discussion based story in which the two main characters Vijayan and Joseph vow to fight against social discrimination prevalent in the society.

The other social issues raised in the stories are pushing women in the sex trade (vide ‘Aren’t They Our Sisters’) and the problem of senior

citizens whose (vide 'Old Age Home') sons have migrated to foreign countries leaving them alone. Their loneliness has been effectively dealt with. The author deals with the issue of corruption very effectively in the story 'The Best Government Servant' which shows that there is still a hope in society because of the presence of honest people like Krishnan. I enjoyed reading these stories and I am sure you would too, if you decide to read them.

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Prof. (Dr) Sagar Mal Gupta was educated at Edinburgh University in the UK and at the University of Hawaii in the US from where he earned his PhD in Linguistics. He has fifty-six years experience of teaching English Literature, ELT and Communication at various colleges and universities in India and abroad. Now he has retired from active teaching and lives at Jaipur spending his time in writing poetry in English, Hindi and Urdu. His poems have been published in innumerable journals. His collection of poems entitled *The Crescent Moon* was published in 2018 by Yking Books Jaipur and has received good reviews. His second collection of poems entitled *The Songs of India and the World* was published in July 2019 by Prakash Book Depot Bareilly. His third collection of poems *Songs of Rajasthan and Other Poems* came out in 2020 and was published by Prakash Book Depot Bareilly. His fourth collection of poems *Waves of Imagination* was published by Yking Books, Jaipur in 2023. Email: guptasag69@gmail.com



## **Indian English Short Story: Evolution and the Contribution of K. V. Dominic**

**DR. SURESH CHANDRA PANDE**

The origin of the genre called short story is as old as the beginning of prehistoric creation. Our planet's early phase: the initial evolutionary cycle was fully devoid of life, excitement and pulsating spectacles. In later phases the *terrafirma* evolved gradually giving nativity to various vertebrates and mammals. Side by side, the growth of vegetation, verdure, hills and dales, rivers and lagoons, islands and continents gave to the planet a specific physiognomy. The growth and change of seasons, mysteries and miracles of nature, the sum-total of evolutionary forces enhanced faith in supernatural envisaged by the predecessors of today's mankind. By the time man evolved sufficiently to gain and ascertain communication, co-habitation many indigenous languages came into practice/flourished. In the beginnings, indigenous languages had no orbit to preserve their oeuvres except some visuals and cave-drawings. So with the passage of time the words of mouth passed from one generation to the next – to progenies. Thus short story as a genre passed from generation to generation as an oral art/ tradition and as inseparable part of indigenous cultural matrix. This generation-wise growth of story has a unique tale to tell rather than the method/s of narration.

Practically, the most credible and ancient form of short story is the anecdote. Anecdotes mainly function as kind of parables which have a brief realistic narrative to embody a point. Yes, it is the beginning of point-wise or step by step narrative. Early Greeks contributed immensely to the scope, trope, art and knack of short-fiction. Aesop, who happened to be a Greek slave, his fables alongside Panchatantra's moralistic, and didactic stories are earliest examples of ethically decent short fiction. As short story is a prose narrative dealing with a few characters, aiming to unify the effect, concentrating on the creation of mood rather than plot – it seems deeply rooted in human psyche/civilization. Its propensity and desire is to listen vigorously and attentively in order to elevate/edify the readers or the spectators. In Sruti's short stories are heard in

congregation by the mode of a brief lull as in/of a Katha. Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* [1] is an early instance of telling Harikathas to socio-religious assembly of native families or community gatherings. In India short-stories owe their existence and allegiance to historical legendary tales of epics and the Puranas. Contrastingly, India's middle eastern counterpart Scheherazade's [2] one thousand and one nights and accompanying one thousand stories set limits for the length and breadth of short-fiction. It indeed is an individual narrative that can be told at one sitting. There is no word count limit for a short story or flash fiction [3]. Flash fictions are stories in 1000 words or less; however they are found from maximum 20,000 to minimum 1000 or five to twenty pages. It can be perused within half or an hour. A German Novelist and playwright Gustav Freytag [4] estimates plot as a narrative structure that divides story/stories into five parts like the five acts of the play. These parts are exposition, rising of the action, climax, falling action and denouement. One can read, analyse and evaluate a story within these given parameters.

K. V. Dominic's short fiction like a testament of the enduring aspect of post-modern era's good, enjoyable and sunny narratives is of immense interest. All these without qualms have qualities essential for a successful piece of notable short fiction. The author for achieving full potential narrates/ translates stories as practical human application/implementation of knowledge he has stocked from sources known and unknown. This he simply does by having an authentic introspection into the complexities of human-life inhaling both in India and abroad. In this way his stories are 'the slices of life'[5] to present the sweet, agonizing and bitter experiences or truths pertaining to existence. Moreover, the fusion of intellect and emotion bestow added charm on events occurring off and on in a world of human composition. Besides poetry and translations Dominic so far has written/compiled three collections of short stories. His first collection appeared in 2016 under the title *Who Is Responsible?*. The second collection entitled *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales Of Ethics and Choice From India* was published in 2018 from USA. The third collection which is Prof./Poet's 45<sup>th</sup> book *Short Stories During Covid-19* appeared in 2022 from Authorspress, New Delhi. A collection of 16 short-stories has an up-to-date translation in Hindi by eminent scholar Dr. Sangeeta Maesh.

I am taking for brief appraisal, here the third albeit the latest collection [6] as it has a limited trajectory of universal texture within which beauty and bathos appear to commingle inextricably. In a collection overall of seven short pieces, the first story deals with the



life/struggle of a migrant worker who being protagonist is surviving for supporting partially callous, economically weaker family ties. As the story is written during Covid-19 period the protagonist Clement in UA E is shown in conversation with Merlin-his wife at Kochi, India. The talk centres around formal family accords such as children and old asthma suffering parents. Besides family, human relations such as acquaintances and aides add up to the development of the plot of the story in a language and phraseology imparting rare individuality to the author. Faith in man and God enrich thematic objectives besides fulfilling long drawn aspiration of perceptive readers. What shapes ideals, attitudes and philosophy of characters is author's firm conviction in inherent goodness of man: the humanism. Almost all seven stories concentrate on guiding principles such as the welfare, progress and happiness of mankind. Humanity appears working curiously toward human beings, seeking solutions for major/minor human problems/ailments by *raison d'être* of good sense and gumption rather than gullible religious beliefs. The second story likewise demarcates as the title justifies-the fate of migrant labourers under the canopy swarming with trepidations of Covid-19- "My wife is bedridden with high fever and headache. She just phoned me. I am doubting if She is stricken with Covid. Many of our neighbours are in hospital and a few have already died." (2-14) Aminul, Emran, Shakib and Tarique are room-mates living at the aegis and mercy of Arjun Saab-an architect and builder. Aminul graciously guided, financially and morally supported by Arjun Saab in highly difficult lockdown times emerges as a leading character to fight against corona virus that had infected and inflicted his wife Abidah. In a society wholly inhuman and atrocious Arjun Saab's acts of charity, gratitude, compassion and kindness like a Savior put him at par with God's greatness- "You are my God, dear Saab. I will never forget this love and kindness shown to me. I will be at your service till I die." (2-17). The meaning and the moral of the story eagerly captivates, much more elevates by purifying/purgating the passions, emotions almost of all his enthusiastic readers. The author finds solution of worldly problems in a nutshell of ethical methodology as explained in spiritual principles of world-religions. Accordingly the society profiles the backbone of ethical principles composed of three protagonists – Individual, Institution and Community.

"Nature Teaches", the third story of the third collection is admirable for its milieu is set against vividly exhibiting progressive views of man grappling for material development, economic efficiency and self-sufficiency. Nature needs to be sacrificed in order to attain/implement contemporary machinery/tools for construction of an

advanced Shopping Complex as proposed by the Municipal Council. The Tree forms indispensable part of nature besides being endemic it is part and parcel of life-men, birds, bees and beasts all grow, get free shade, shelter and sustenance under its largesse. The tree is a great hindrance to the construction site of new Complex so it needs to be cut punctually. However, by and large fervent protest of nature-lovers - crows, wasps, mynahs, honeybees, squirrels also on behalf of passengers who evenly wait for buses from under its huge canopy stir up the government. That's why, the Chairman of Municipal Council decides in favor of protesters. Instead of placing orders for cutting of the tree, he votes in favour of afforestation and plans for planting new saplings at road-side where the tree stands and construction of a Shopping Complex is proposed. His proposal is warmly welcomed, well received acknowledged and accepted in toto by Municipal Councillors. The story thus provides innovative, informative and progressive ideas alongside depicting the prerequisite aspects of nature crucial to human survival and endurance. His words and lines are creative, articulate, reflective and captivating. So also they are a storehouse of yummy thoughts.

According to India's National Crime Records Bureau data there were more than 1000 acid attack cases reported in the country between 2017 and 2021. *Chhapaak* translated *Splash* is a 2020, Indian Hindi language biographical film based on the life of acid attack survivor Laxmi Agarwal and his acid attacker Naeem Khan. It stars Deepika Padukone as Malti. The acid attacker is Bashir Khan. The Malayalam film *Uyare* also centres around acid attack and the tragedy faced by Pallavi the protagonist. These and many such tragic incidents seem to have inspired K. V. Dominic for penning the story "Seetha's Resolve"(4). The story of Seetha besides highlighting the crime of chilling inhuman love succinctly focuses on the tradition and institution of marriage: "Seetha, how long are you going to remain alone? So many marriage proposals have come and you don't agree to any. You are already 27..." (4-24). Accordingly, after mutual consent a perfect match was sought and the marriage date was fixed. Alas! unfortunately Seetha's neighbour, school class-mate, son of labourers working in cardamom estate, as auto-rickshaw driver used to drive Seetha to her school due to paucity of regular buses in the locality. His name was Venu. He loved Seetha secretly and had a passion for her although he was ugly looking and had inferiority complex. Naturally, an imperfect match for Seetha due to class and status symbol that Venu once revealed while going with her to the town in his auto rickshaw. She snubbed his proposal then and there sans any qualm of conscience. However, being Seetha's close neighbour and having formal friendly relations with her for past several

years Venu knew all developments in Seetha's house pertaining to her marriage. He aired /sensed the fear of losing her: "He looked very moody not even caring to look at her face" (4-26). Therefore, she willingly/knowingly avoided Venu's approach. The next morning thirty minutes before allotted time Seetha got ready to catch the bus that goes to the town. It was rather early in the morning and when she reached the road there came Venu too close to her in his auto rickshaw and to her utter surprise and contrary to human belief: "he threw some liquid on her face and sped away." (4-27). Seetha wept and cried bitterly. Meanwhile, She was taken by her parents to the Medical College where doctors immediately started treatment for her burns. The case was reported to the Police Station and Venu was arrested within a couple of hours. It took one month's treatment for Seetha's burns. Her face looked horrific, sheer approach to mirror made her cry aloud. Three months had passed, gradually she was recovering to win amazing love, affection and support of the people in and around her locality and the town. She continued her teaching profession. Her college itself arranged for her a taxi-car for journeying to and fro. Her colleagues and students almost everyday assembled at the front yard to give her a warm welcome. Seetha's loneliness and sorrow now was replaced by happiness and cooperation of his college mates. Besides stories of her miraculous come back to life were amply hyped by the media. In college she outshined in academic conduct so was given extra charge for co-curricular activities. Taken as a whole she performed competently and excelled in discharging her duties in all sincerity. The college also got recognition from the government: "The State government decided to promote Seetha's unaided college to a government aided one taking into consideration the best results and the social service activities." (4-30) Very soon, including Seetha all started getting higher salaries for their benefit and pleasure. The State unit of NSS promoted Seetha's activities/contributions and she was given the best teacher award by the president of India. On her behalf Seetha donated this award to rehabilitation centres for the welfare of thousands of acid victims. Actually, this is the solo story to justify Kerala as a beautiful land inhabited by hardworking, talented and intellectual people committed to the glorified principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" in spite of petty jealousies and envies seen in human attitudes and modes of behaviour. This story unfolds author's remarkable prudence and sound sense of social harmony, equitable growth and people-centric progressive values for which he strenuously exerts to instruct and educate.

The next story "What's Wrong With Us?" narrates to highlight woes, wails and that which is amiss in Indian society. The author in

protagonist/s infers right answer for the malady and unfairness of caste-structure that divides man from man. The hierarchy of being high or low, big or small, affluent or indigent, educated and illiterate and many other economic, political, social and religious incongruities create an unequal society wherein crime and immorality thrive. That is why, the author in order to depict contemporary reality/sensibility designs events, invents characters simultaneously presents their struggle, intransigent efforts to acquire equal status by bridging unmasked hiatus. Their efforts to establish an egalitarian society, to approach government machinery by all possible/viable means and to boost up democratic ideals indeed succeed and do well to boom and bloom. No nation, in truth, can thrive on racial hatred, discrimination and exploitation. One has to develop an attitude of tolerance, co-existence, convergence and interdependence. In the progressive society of a nation the unbridled evil of caste-system is so deeply entrenched that it appears almost difficult to root it out presently. The struggle continues and the narrative style in the form of dialogue, debate or catechism argues precisely the origin, development, nomenclature and the foundation of the caste-system. This is the greatest wrong amply argued in the story first by Vijayan and Gopalan, a father-son duo, then by Mathai and Joseph who are Christians by birth and Ramesh, a low caste person who enters into the profession through reservation. All the characters in the story appear abuzz with the zeal and weal, with courage to grab the opportunity in order to excel in whatever profession they enter or may enter. They have high ideals and visions for brighter future prospects. How confidently Gopalan tells to his son: "Haven't you heard of K. R. Narayanan...He was born in our own State Kerala in a low caste poor family like ours...He had to walk 15 kilometres to reach his school everyday. By hard work he could get degrees after degrees from India and abroad and even served as Vice-Chancellor and Indian ambassador before he became the Vice President of India and then President" (5-32). Like the son of a beloved father the story makes greater appeal, a lasting impact on reader's sensibility marked by psychological undertones and logical progression from specific to the universal. His wits often sparkle while carrying out intended hits. There are moods apparent in the story/stories and the narration vary from grief, agony, anxiety, anger, helplessness to high seriousness almost nostalgic but full of fun and joy with a purpose not only to delight but to instruct. As far as literary realism is concerned this story through compassion and social justice transport policies to empower marginalised communities by fostering equal opportunities. It is the discovery of a real Kerala story paving way for brighter future where dreams will thrive and humanity flourish.

Cosmopolitan in outlook and stance the author's 6<sup>th</sup> story is an attempt to narrate successfully the pangs, sufferings, agony and misery of sex-workers struggling for survival in a brothel at Mumbai's Kamathipura and well-timed arrival of Rajesh, the owner and managing director of Govind Mills, the textile factory of Kochi with a proposal to restructure/ameliorate the lot of working inmates. Besides being didactic and instructive the story intends to prevent, amend and improve prevalent evils of brothel systems. Stella, daughter of a rich Bank Manager and a School teacher is ill-fated leading woman character who cooperates/liases with Rajesh in his endeavour of changing/modifying the mired life of her 20 brothel inmates. In a non-dramatic way all leave Kamathipura for Kochi to join Govind Mills and with much fan-fare and jubilation the welcome ceremony is hosted for new employees. It is more than a humanitarian endeavour endorsed by democratically elected government establishments and judicial adjudicators as well and alike. There is no filth and grime now, no cheating in mutual human relations of the neglected and depraved, outcast sections of the society. The unique efforts of the company, the humanitarian activities of the billionaires jointly teach readers a lesson of industriousness, sincerity, admiration and reciprocal respect towards sex-workers who after all are analogous to our sisters. When a new life full of happiness and hope dawns, the sex-workers feel calm, contented and elated as though heaven has opened unto them. The beast in men by and by gets transformed into philanthropic sage and is seen engaged in charitable activities and civilized ventures for the good of one and all: the human race. Moreover, the author as self-reliant person independently creates ideas/ideals and then translates them into effective solvents for the future. This story has ample merit, has something that obstructs and side by side supports excellence. Diverse things co-exist and evenly balanced recognition conclusively leads to clarity. Here and elsewhere Post-Modern representation of reality personify characters probing their roots and identity into a society structured by multiple economic, political, personal, emotional, religious and spiritual disparities, inequalities and differences. This is what forms the film of the plot in miniature. There are varying temper tantrums to boot from grief, agony, anxiety, anger, helplessness to high pitched seriousness almost appropriate/adequate to present day situations, circumstances, contests and challenges. At many places human interactions allow for humorous incongruities in behaviour, cultural conundrums and modes. Yes, the culture—as a driving force is not only limited to art, literature and music but also covers a wide variety almost everything, the entire range of development, mutual respect and understanding of human life and activities those

provide to the author a fulfilling intellectual exercise – an innovative, perspicuous and intuitive debate/dialogue beseeching hermeneutics.[7]

Unlike the first the last story narrates to translate prevailing tribulations those sustain/carry on life using lottery and liquor as means to economize like lakhs of people in naturally beautiful and educationally literate State of Kerala. The protagonist Bhagyalakshmi has neither favourable fate/good luck nor wealth or prosperity to lead materially fulfilled and spiritually enlightened life: “Aged 35, she is a widow with two kids and old parents.”(7-47).The narrator protrudes her character against the horrendous milieu: “... handicapped persons on crutches, persons with no palms at all, blind, deaf and dumb with deformities found in all towns and cities throughout the State”. (7-48). Moreover, the cruelties of nature and the severity /onslaughts of weather adds to the destitution of the people. All is well because God is there always above the canopies they dwell. At the crossing or intersection where Bhagyalakshmi usually sits to sell lottery tickets opportunely arrives Prof. Krishnaraj: “He has no interest in trying luck through lottery and he rarely buys tickets”. (7-47). However, his selfless philanthropic outlook and humanitarian stance at once impresses/delights Bhagyalakshmi and the readers of this titillating tale. He becomes an instrument to ameliorate what is low and miserable in Bhagyalakshmi primarily by alleviating her pangs and paroxysms. He often sees, occasionally meets to have intimate knowledge of her family–life/household-chores besides sale of lottery tickets for which she sits at the same crossing bearing onslaughts of weather. The covid phenomenon as a breaking point, as brief interval in their relations serves as the backdrop. Once or twice Prof. Krishnaraj gives her some money then buys all her lottery tickets to recuperate her economic anxiety/anguish. This is what that also gives support to Prof. Krishnaraj’s philanthropic outlook. The action rises to hug the climax and we see Bhagyalakshmi in telephonical conversation with Prof. Krishnaraj clearing all doubts of emotion straight away telling about the lottery ticket that has won for him sixty lakh rupees. The calm, cool, amiable temperament of Krishnaraj surprises one and all chiefly then when Bhagyalakshmi is taken from the crossing to the nearby branch of SBI where all money earned in lottery is directly deposited in her name and account. The denouement successfully leads to a happy cessation, elates immensely by testifying truth, mystery and reality of Bhagyalakshmi’s name. Additionally, as creative writer, the author offers special insight into human experience sharpened by the perception of social reality. Representation of Bhagyalakshmi as an epitome of moral goodness and economic stability despite regional limits in the twenty

first century India is a gracious mark of benevolence, meekness, docility and delicacy sans hostility. As in life so also in literature such a woman is rare to be found for her challenges put aside injustice, prejudice and marginalization, uphold her self-exalted cultural, religious and social persona despite being part of economically weaker sections of society.

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Dr. Suresh Chandra Pande, born in Nainital, Uttarakhand, India on 2nd October 1955, gained an M.A. in English Literature in 1976 and a PhD in Indo-Anglian Literature in 1983



from Kumaon University, NAINITAL. Dr. Pande's first Biography appeared in 'International Who's Who of Intellectuals -13th Edition from I. B. C. Cambridge: England in 1998-99. He is a poet and critic well-known in contemporary literary and academic scene. He is an erstwhile University Teacher. Email: [drsureshpande@rediffmail.com](mailto:drsureshpande@rediffmail.com)

## **Environmentalism in the Realm of Fantasy: Exploring Ecological Fantasy in K. V. Dominic's "Nature Teaches" and "World Environment Day"**

**K. RAMYA KALAIVANI & DR. RAICHEL M. SYLUS**

### **ABSTRACT**

Ecological awareness is created through various aspects like realistic, feministic, humanistic, and ecocritical approaches in literature. Fantasy is one such aspect. It is not only used as a medium of escape from reality but also exposes reality. In the short stories "Nature Teaches" and "World Environment Day", K. V. Dominic blends fantasy and reality to enlighten the young minds. He instills imagination as well as evokes Eco-consciousness among readers through ecological fantasy. He uses imaginary world to appraise the sufferings of the natural world. This paper titled "Environmentalism in the Realm of Fantasy: Exploring Ecological Fantasy in K. V. Dominic's 'Nature Teaches' and 'World Environment Day'", focuses on the technique of creating ecological awareness through the imaginary world. It also examines the elements of fantasy in "Nature Teaches" and "World Environment Day" through J. R. R. Tolkien's theory of fantasy.

*Keywords:* eco-consciousness, ecological fantasy, environmentalism, fantasy, reality

The Earth is the storehouse of raw materials. Nature gives abundant resources for human beings to have a sustainable living. Unfortunately, deforestation destroys the population of trees and minimises the availability of raw materials such as tree bark, dried leaves, wood, and twigs. The conversion of forest areas or fertile land to plots for sale cuts down the fodder from forest which is an essential source for grazing animals in the hilly areas. In certain areas, deforestation wipes out the medicinal plants and trees, which are the saviours of human health.

The destruction of environment reveals the prevalent crisis in the environment. Hence awareness should be created among children, youngsters and adult, on the preservation of environment. Short stories are among the best medium to create awareness among the younger



generation. K. V. Dominic's short stories "Nature Teaches" and "World Environment Day" effectively create awareness and insist on the effects of deforestation. Dominic uses the technique of fantasy to expose reality and evoke eco-consciousness.

"Nature Teaches" is one of the short stories in the collection *Short Stories during Covid-19*. The setting of this short story is within and outside the Municipal Council. Dominic brings the element of fantasy and eco-consciousness in the urban setting. "World Environment Day" is in the collection *Who is Responsible? A Collection of Short Stories*. Contrary to "Nature Teaches", the setting of "World Environment Day" is a forest.

"Nature Teaches" is a story that revolves around the discussion which takes place in Municipal Council to construct a shopping complex in a plot. Birds in the fig tree near the plot fight for their shelter. "World Environment Day" is about the transformation of Katturaja, one who steals trees and hunts wild animals to the one who becomes the forest protector.

The act of deforestation and the pain of trees being cut down are explicitly represented in both short stories. In "Nature Teaches", Dominic proves as an eco-writer through the words of Councillor Jairam. Upon hearing the agenda by the Chairman, Councillor Jairam says that there is a giant fig tree on the roadside in front of the plot and adds that, "Passengers waiting for the buses take shelter from the scorching heat of the sun under the tree" (19). Through this line, Dominic indirectly conveys the increasing global temperature and the worth of a big tree in sheltering humans. Dominic portrays the reality of cutting down the trees through the words of Councillor Krishnan as he explodes:

... In the name of development we have cut down almost all the trees on the roadsides. Those were the trees planted by the kings who ruled before our Independence.... Not only birds, squirrels, flies, honeybees, wasps, chameleons, spiders, ants, and several other creatures survive only because of that tree. Haven't other beings, plants and trees and all that reside on earth have equal rights to live here as we human beings? (19)

The idea of having equal rights for plants and trees on earth kindles the reader's mind and increases the urge to fight for their rights.

Likewise, on "World Environment Day", Dominic points out the problem of cutting trees. He highlights the irony of trees being cut down on World Environment Day. He says:

5<sup>th</sup> June 2011. World Environment Day. Katturaja was all alone in the forest and was trying to axe a teak. Being their own day, the forest and its inhabitants were celebrating.... The teak senses the advent of its death and cried for help. Insensible to human beings the cry reached the ears of elephants grazing on a mound nearby. (113-4)

Dominic picturises the cry of trees seeking for help. The cry does not reach humans, but it reaches the ears of the elephants.

Dominic insists on eco-consciousness through the aspect of fantasy. J.R.R. Tolkien in "On Fairy-Stories" says that, "... fairy-stories offer also, in a peculiar degree or mode, these things: Fantasy, Recovery, Escape, Consolation" (138). Fantasy is unreal images that are not present in the primary world. Tolkien says, "Fantasy may be, as I think, not less but more sub-creative; but at any rate it is found in practice that 'the inner consistency of reality' is more difficult to produce, the more unlike are the images and the rearrangements of primary material to the actual arrangements of the Primary World" (139-140).

In "Nature Teaches", Dominic brings out the elements of fantasy after the meeting in Municipal Council. Dominic sarcastically says "There was a crow sitting on a window pane listening to the discussion of the councillors.... The decision to cut the tree thrust like an arrow on its heart" (20). The crow conveys this alarming news to its friends. The conversation of the crow with its friends is a fantastical element. The depiction of a crow listening to humans' conversation and conveying the news to its friends makes the reader's mind to visualise it. As stated by J.R.R. Tolkien, "The human mind is capable of forming mental images of things not actually present" (138). After the crow shares the news, all other birds such as crows, mynas, cuckoos, bulbuls, treepies, flower peckers, drongos, woodpeckers, and owls in the fig tree gather for a discussion. The eldest among the crow states that it is their only house and feeder, and they should not allow humans to cut the tree. Myna supports crow and Dominic conveys the outburst of Myna which says:

The eldest myna supported, "What right has man to cut this tree? This earth is not his grandpa's. We never trespass upon his house and shut him out. Then why should he destroy our house and deprive us our food and shelter?" ("Nature Teaches" 21).

Dominic advocates the perspective of birds not trespassing the house of the humans while humans destroying birds' shelter. He takes the side of birds in giving a superior status to them as he portrays it through the words of the crow. He mentions the words of the eldest crow, "We should teach man a lesson that non human beings are never

inferior to him, but superior” (21). Birds do not talk in real life. However, they “talk like real men in fairy-stories” (Tolkien 117).

In “World Environment Day”, Dominic builds up the secondary world by giving voice to the tree like humans. Katturaja climbs up the tree as the elephants rush to him upon hearing the cry of trees. Trees talk to him like real humans. Through this aspect of fantasy, Dominic brings out ecological awareness. He mentions the significance of trees in the voice of the tree:

“Dear friend, what harm have I done to you to instigate you to kill me? See how I became your saviour!... Haven’t you felled thousands of trees and hunted hundreds of animals?... If you continue to destroy this forest, how and where will those elephants and other animals live?” (114)

Dominic presents in such a way that the tree converses with him in a friendly manner even after he tries to cut it down. The tree points out the fact that forests are the only place of shelter for animals. If humans destroy it, then animals will lose their only living place. Dominic conveys the importance of trees through the questions of a tree to Katturaja.

Recovery is one of the elements of a fantasy story. According to Tolkien “recovery is a re-gaining – regaining of a clear view.... seeing things we are (or were) meant to see them” (146). In “Nature Teaches”, the protesters argue with the woodcutters as they approach to fell the tree. The leader of the protester argues, “... It is a shelter to thousands of passengers and abode to hundreds of birds and other creatures. Tell your manager that we won’t allow you” (22). The conversation between protesters and woodcutters is the recovery element in this story. The shift from the conversation among birds in the secondary world to the conversation in the primary world brings the reader’s mind back to the real world.

In “World Environment Day”, the tree speaks to Katturaja, and he realises his mistake. After realising his mistake, Katturaja confesses the truth in the magistrate’s office. He was imprisoned for one year for his illegal act of felling the trees. The transition scene from a tree speaking like a human in the secondary world to Katturaja’s confession at the magistrate’s office in the primary world shows Dominic’s usage of recovery as an element. In both short stories, Dominic aptly uses the element of recovery to make them an exciting fairy story.

Escape is one of the main functions of fairy stories. Tolkien says that, “Though fairy-stories are of course by no means the only medium of Escape, they are today one of the most obvious and (to some) outrageous forms of ‘escapist’ literature” (147). The reader develops

profound ambitions, such as flying or speaking with and comprehending the language of the beasts. In “World Environment Day”, Katturaja understands and responds to the language of trees, whereas in “Nature Teaches”, the councillors understand birds’ minds through birds’ mass attack.

Consolation is the joy of a happy ending seen in all fairy stories. Tolkien calls this element as “eucatastrophe” (156). In “Nature Teaches”, the Chairman of the Municipal Council decides to drop the plan of felling the tree after the mass attack by birds. He mentions that the earth also belongs to non-humans, so humans are not permitted to fall the tree. He states that the municipality will plant many trees to compensate for deforestation. Dominic picturises the happiness of birds that, “One could hear the chirps, tweets, twitters and all such merry sounds of all the birds from the tree, celebrating their victory.... It seemed like a great celestial symphony” (23).

In “World Environment Day”, Dominic conveys the element of consolation through the transformation of Katturaja. He says that, “The forest accepted him as its saviour Raja” (117). Katturaja and his team of twenty youths start afforestation. After few years, the forest establishes as a model for the rest of the world. In this story, consolation is the sudden joyous moment of Katturaja’s realisation and implementation of planting trees for safeguarding the environment.

Emine Ulu Aslan and Bayram Bas in “Ecocritical Approach to Children’s Literature: Example of ‘I am a Hornbeam Branch’” mention that, “Instead of human-centred thinking, it is necessary to create a new environmental ethic and try to explain that even the smallest damage they cause to the environment is actually the damage they cause themselves” (713).

In “Nature Teaches” and “World Environment Day”, Dominic explains that felling a tree damages the environment as well as spoils the life of humans. These two short stories, as an ecological fantasy, convey the problem of deforestation. It is vivid that short stories intertwine with the theme of fantasy and ecology can effectively create ecological awareness.

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Mrs. Ramya Kalaivani K is a PhD Scholar in the Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore – 43. Her area of research is Indian Ecoliterature. Email: 19phenf003@avinuty.ac.in



Dr. Raichel M. Sylus is an Associate Professor, Department of English, Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women, Coimbatore – 43. Her areas of interest include Ecocriticism, American Literature and Children's Literature. She has been in the field of teaching since 2001. Email: raichel\_eng@avinuty.ac.in



## The Impartial Intuitions: A Critical Study of K. V. Dominic's Short Stories

SREEDHARAN PAROKODE

### ABSTRACT

Narration of an incident, whether happened or grew up in mind, is made up by the narrator with or without added colour. If developed in mind, attractive flavour is added for making it tasty, or mixing it up with imaginative eagerness. The present study is focused on the stories of Prof. Dominic, well-known poet, philanthropist and an outstanding observer of environmental issues. A flower can be elaborated from different angles. Suppose, it is seen in front of a gardener, he laments and says something on its beauty if it has life in the garden; if it happened to be with the philosopher he may attribute and connect it with human life or fall before time. Possibility of ups and downs in life cannot be ruled out. A flower vendor may see the possibility of making bouquet or something like that. So variety of thoughts may sprout, different views would be exchanged. The elaborations make the substance strong, in a way. One can connect it with the will and wish of the designer. Critics are trying to reveal the hidden matter in the story. In fact, a real appreciation of an art form is due to mind's attachment with it. It is the very same idea of ever loving goodness to be borne in human mind, Prof. Dominic starts writing. Prof. Dominic not only sees the facts hidden in it, but makes the visions as substances for his creative narration.

**Keywords:** Egalitarian Concept, Covid 19, Human thoughts, Birds and animals, Mind's attachment

Stories are written for explaining the abstract ideas to make them accessible to the person or the group going through. They are sometimes, the facts of life, sometimes the facts interwoven with imaginative calibre. Anyhow, they are the narration of creativity elucidated with a mission with a view to make awareness of the happenings, in and around. There will have thoughtful moments thoroughly caught up by the teller (writer) whose interest goes beyond igniting interest of the reader. With the elements of wit and vivacity he adds flavour behind the curtain of incidents, by the potentiality of the thoughts.

The writer with the sole intention of creating a spark in readers' mind uses the emotions and moves with the readers with his feelings accumulated from the experiences unexplained. In fact, telling a story is an art or noble work as it is directly or indirectly touches the palpitations of thoughts of the community. The writer's soul gets relaxed when the words are appropriately made or his quill takes rest after the process and ready to move in to the society. He doesn't bother which way it travels. Definitely it creates some indelible marks.

Prof. K. V. Dominic, through his 'Selected Short Stories', takes the human pulse to describe the sides of shadows of human thoughts and actions in a special way. As we know, Prof. Dominic is a poet with narrative skill to divulge the contemporary situations along with traditional technique. He is a multifaceted thinker writes about values to be preserved, always makes human affections and aspirations for his 'writing fuel'. Being a prolific writer, widely known in poetry world, the writer has created unforgettable incidents with unimaginable quality of writing.

In the story, 'Aren't they Our Sisters?' the writer gives a clear picture of a situation as:

Rajesh landed at Mumbai airport and went straight to the prepaid taxi booking desk. He booked a taxi car to Kamathipura, paying the charge of Rs.600. Rajesh got in to the car and the journey started. A well begun story really gives inquisitiveness.

Driver, what is your name? Rajesh asked.

I am Arun Sir.

How long it is to Kamathipura? 18 Kilometres, Sir.

How much time needed? Maximum 20 minutes, Sir. Where are you from Sir? Kerala. (*Short Stories during Covid-19*)

The dialogue ended. The abrupt ending of the conversation compels the reader to think that there is something in the story. Really, the ending is becoming the beginning of the story, in a sense. Every piece of writing is for the reader's attention. At first, the scene troubles the writer and creates wave of emotions in him. Subsequently he is pouring it without losing the gravity of it. It compels the readers to be with it. In fact, stories are the proponents of visions.

Here, in 'A Good Samaritan', the writer opens his sympathy of heart saying 'I am going to narrate an incident that is three fourth real and the rest blended with some fantasy to make it a short fiction. In it, he says about the iron-hearted people. At the same time Dr. Dominic depicts the reality faced by Mariam, the wife of Mr. Xavier admitted in

the hospital following a road accident. The picturisation of the characters' mental conditions is beyond words and that too are given with suitable words. Similar situations are faced on the roads when buses and cars are running like 'rockets', as he says. (*Who is Responsible?*)

Prof. Dominic's method of telling story is unique. It seems that words come to obey him. When the doctor of the hospital said Xavier's surgery was successful and survived the crucial condition, the reader is also relieved with his kith and kin waiting outside for the good news. Here, the writer's purpose is clear, for that he joins the suitable words with the situation. Through the portrayal of Xavier's family's circumstance, Prof. Dominic visualises the entire system, including common man's suffocation and sufferings.

Coming to 'Best Government Servant', another notable story, Krishnan Namboodiri, a 38 year old job seeker as the main character, tells of the dusty mind set of some people. Krishnan Namboodiri, a man with principles has to leave due to the unscrupulous attitude of his co-workers. Being the son of a teacher who possessed the virtues of Truth and Non-violence, Krishnan could not tolerate with these. He is well aware of the unemployment period, tiresome, engagements in some tuition centres, the mental agony followed etc are visibly narrated here. Late coming of the staff, attitude of illegal money acceptance of the taluk office staff, all made his job interest less. Exchange of words with Raju, the peon, as Krishnan was totally against this practice, arise the conscience of the common man. The Tahsildar's remark, as 'Krishnan, don't be like Lord Krishna' you will have to bear the consequences if you swim against the flow of the office, is a true picture of some offices run. The victory of truthfulness is highlighted in the story at last. A warm reception was accorded to him by the Governor and Krishnan was awarded the "Best Servant". (*Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*)

'An Email from Senthil Kumar' is not an ordinary mail, but it is a heart's weeping in the form of reply detailing the causes of delay in replying. expressing sorry for the delay. When we go through the description in it, the anger in the reader will dissolve and turn into sympathy. He was the son of a mother with heart ailments and was under treatment for the last few years. A thousand thoughts regarding the disease and the treatment process are left for the reader to see such a situation. Contemporary hospitalisation and the expenditure incurred all come up here for visualisation. But the story ends with an apology of the email sender: 'mother was discharged from the hospital and lies in my house longing for death.'



Senthil adds: “Hope you have understood my position. You can do nothing to soothe me. Kindly pray for my mother.” The above words of Senthil make readers’ eyes wet, no doubt. Here too, we see the writer’s peculiarity of picking words. The reader’s mind would stand still over it. (*Who is Responsible?*)

In ‘Sanchita Karma’ one of the marvelous stories in the book, Krishna was a poet and Nature lover. Krishna had only ten cents of land and on it he had planted papaya trees. The trees are not meant for the fruits for his family. He is in mirth when he sees that the birds feast upon the ripe fruits. These lines are truly the examples for the writer’s ardent desire for protecting them by providing with what one has. In other words, Prof. Dominic sees the other part of the world also, making all the creatures friends and relatives. Krishnan and family loved their cats and other pets as their own children. Sanchita Karma is the accumulated result of all your actions from all the past life time. (*Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*)

The story, ‘The Twins’ belongs to a special category. Some of the waves go like:

“when I teach feminism to my students I pray to God to dissuade the students from asking its practice in my own life. He adds a noble sentence to it, ‘a teacher should be a model to the students.’ A colourful description is given there about Manikutty and Amminikutty well attended by the writer’s family. The innocent childhood is brought back, the story reveals. It can be said beyond doubt that Dr. Dominic has wonderfully crafted it saying with an element of satire as: ‘the way they played football was more thrilling than watching the World Cup, though they made the pillows and bed as their toilets.’ Bitter sweetness indeed! (*Who is Responsible?*)

The story ‘World Environment Day’ tells of the peculiar scenes of the forest and the splendid work of Katturaja. This, too, is involved in the activities of Nature. One could sense the mirth of the Nature from the chirping of birds, laughing of the leaves and different moods of the birds and animals.

‘Clement’s Return from UAE’ is a story with Merlin’s anxiety “Have you booked your ticket dear?” we are all worried about you. Are you alright there?” Merlin’s phone call was not about the climatic condition of the country or taste of the food taken. But, it revolves around with the sharpness of a thousand thoughts!

The panic situation gripped throughout, making everybody standstill and everything motionless. The Pandemic Covid 2019, compelling lock down, flight cancellation, RTPCR, quarantine, has made the unfamiliar words and situations familiar--indescribable

conditions of death toll, checking of routes by the Health Departments and the related personnel etc...

“What shall I do reaching home?” was a spreading puzzle from hearts to hearts across the globe. Clement too was hopeless and helpless. There was no sufficient amount as bank balance and how will the family survive.’ This was the fear embraced throughout.

Unexpected words coming from his mother’s mouth further saddened him ‘will you spend the quarantine period in some hotels?’

He felt that he had denied entry into his house. Clement’s mind can well be read here. He wanted to cry out loudly. A former student of Clement appears on the scene and he renders needful and possible help to Clement. This story also tells virtue will not vanish forever. It also has a nice ending, leaving the eyes of the reader tearful. (*Short Stories during Covid-19*)

The characterisation of the life of the neighbours with their kith and kin in the village called Devalokam is also quite marvelous.

In the story, ‘Multicultural Harmony’ the character Amar is a farmer, Akbar is a businessman and Anthony an Upper Division Clerk in the Education Department. They never had a feeling that they belonged to different religions. Their parents brought them up in such a secular manner and that religion never mattered in their social life. Festivals were celebrated with equal fervour and enthusiastic mind. Such an excellent picture of the unity is given in it. It is not the case of a family or the families, but the writer likes the entire world to be with the notion of harmonious life, without any sort of conquer and conflict.

But the last part of the story tells that the bosom friends Amar and Anthony became foes to each other. Akbar’s attempt to unite them turned out to be futile as both the families were inflamed by the religious sentiments. The sublime decisions of donating one of the kidneys and the decision of conducting marriage ceremony give the reader a happy note. (*Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*)

In ‘Old Age Home’, the pathetic condition of the inmates is narrated with unusual charm. Jacob’s words would definitely hurt us as he says: ‘my mind is full of memories of my wife, I long to go back to my house and land’. Here we can feel the closeness maintained with his partner, who has left him. (*Writers Editors Critics*, vol.13, no. 1 March 2023)

Story telling is not an easy task. What one imagines is splendidly depicted and gives the shape for it, at first, in his mind. He uses suitable language without providing confusions. He uses apt words for the appropriate situations. What he conceives is given with colours and calculations. With the ability of the teller's talents coincided with his thoughtfulness he narrates the entire episode for the readers. It is needless to say that the writer visualises the situations first. Some edition work with deletion and addition also carried out to make it readable.

In the stories of Prof. Dominic, one can easily notice that he dreams of the concept 'Vasudhaiva kutumbakam' or the entire universe as one family. He has his words towards virtues, and at the same time against bad practices. He gives life to the characters. He is Keeping mum on some occasions. But the silence is eloquent. A true human being walks towards truth. It is evident in his stories. His egalitarian concept is vehemently clear in them. He has thousand tongues when he says about environmental issues. Birds and animals have ample space in his heart.

In real sense, Prof. Dominic is not writing for writing's sake, but for humanity as a whole. It is with a visionary's view he takes his pen.

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Sreedharan Parokode is a bi-lingual poet and lyricist from Kerala. He has thirty books of poems to his credit, both in his mother tongue Malayalam and English. He has received awards and other honours including Sahithya Sree, Sahithya Shiromani, Shan-E-Adab etc. Email: [sreeparokode@gmail.com](mailto:sreeparokode@gmail.com)



## **Cataloguing the Incarnation of Agony and Technique Used in the Short Stories of K. V. Dominic**

**DR. LAXMI RAWAT CHAUHAN**

### **ABSTRACT**

The short stories written by Dominic are well-known for their realism in depicting different types of suffering. Dominic, an author who works in the English language, conveys a variety of different kinds of sorrow in his short stories. In this study, Dominic's short stories are investigated, and the author's numerous incarnations of anguish are recorded and classed according to their respective categories. In the article, the topics of social injustice, poverty, discrimination against women, and environmental degradation are discussed in relation to his short stories. In addition to this, it investigates the methods that Dominic utilised, such as the utilisation of vivid imagery and symbolic language, in order to illustrate the plight of his characters. The purpose of this study is to provide a comprehensive examination of how the short stories written by K.V. Dominic depict various forms of suffering.

**Keywords:** Agony, Suffering, Marginalized, Gender discrimination.

### **Introduction**

K. V. Dominic is a well-known Indian poet, short story writer, critic and editor who works in the English language and has published multiple collections of short stories. The torment and anguish that his character experiences occasionally reflect and provide a glimpse of Thomas Hardy's characters who live in the countryside of Wessex. The depth to which Professor Dominic's short stories convey the feelings and calamities that befall humans has earned him a well-deserved reputation for excellence. The author does not shy away from confronting some of life's more unsettling aspects, such as poverty, social inequality, gender bias, and the deterioration of the natural environment, in a number of the pieces that he has written. Within the scope of this investigation, we shall look into how the author conveys a wide variety of different sorts of anguish. It is well known that he is a poet and short story writer from India. His literary works are well renowned for the fact that they usually

explore topics that are related to politics and social issues. His short stories have gained a particular reputation for the way in which they depict the tribulations endured by a wide range of people, in particular those who are persecuted and frequently marginalised in society. His protagonists commonly come from oppressed or underrepresented groups.

The stories that Dominic tells serve as a potent reminder of the significance of identifying and comprehending the struggles and tribulations that individuals go through on a daily basis, and they serve as a great source of inspiration. Dominic hails from the Indian State of Kerala. His writing has garnered praise from a variety of different literary communities. The representation of pain, both physical and mental, as well as the numerous ways in which people attempt to deal with it, is a recurrent issue in his body of work. His body of work also focuses on the various techniques by which individuals attempt to deal with it. In the collection of short stories penned by K. V. Dominic, we will examine how the author portrays pain, with a special emphasis placed on the manner in which the characters cope with and feel pain.

### **Various Kinds of Suffering**

In his short story titled "Is Human Life More Precious than Animal's?" Dominic explores the moral question of whether or not the value of a human life is inherently superior to the value of the lives of other creatures. The writer argues that despite the fact that humans are capable of reason and communication, they should not believe that they are superior to other creatures simply because they possess these capacities. He says this because humans tend to view themselves as superior to other animals simply because they can reason and communicate.

A truck dashed the cow and she fell down with a loud scream, limbs trembling violently. The cow died instantly. The vehicles stopped. The owner was weeping, not because of any sympathy to the animal but because of the monetary loss due to its death. The video reporter too expressed no sympathy to the cow or sadness at her death. He commented that had the cow not been killed or just crossed the road safe, the man would have lost his life dashed by the truck. His tone was that of a relief at the man's life saved. (*Sanchita Karma* 11)

He maintains that all different kinds of life should be regarded and treasured in the same way, and that all different kinds of living organisms have the right to exist as well as the right to do so. In general, the story conveys the idea that we should have compassion and empathy for all living beings, and that we should work to conserve and safeguard the environment for the benefit of all different kinds of animals. In

addition, the essay argues that we should work to protect the environment for the benefit of all living things.

In the story “Who is Responsible?” Rehman, a retired headmaster, and his wife Ramla live a calm existence in Kerala, India. They have two married children and a son named Anwar who works as an electrician in Oman. Ramla has severe arthritis, and their son's absence has left her lonely and in need of help. Anwar unwillingly submits to a planned marriage with the lovely Aisha. Ramla's suffering knows no end. “Things were going like this with gloom and despair haunting in Rehman's house. Ramla's health was declining and she staggered as she walked. Yet she did the cooking in the morning as Aisha always got up late.” (“Who is Responsible?” 11)

However, after Anwar leaves for work, Aisha develops close to Rahul, Anwar's chauffeur. Rumours and suspicions spread across the community, generating stress within the family. Both Aisha and Rahul go missing one day, leaving Rehman concerned and Ramla sad. Ramla's health deteriorates as a result of the stress, and she becomes paralysed. Rehman receives notification that Anwar has been fired and arrested for alleged involvement in terrorist activities.

Rehman, overcome with sadness and despair, considers suicide but is stopped by the female servant, Shahana, who calms him and assures him that his son will be released. Shahana discovers Rehman and Ramla brutally killed in their home the next day. The village is startled by the catastrophe, as the safe containing valuables has been emptied. “Who is to be blamed for the tragedy of Rehman and his family? When thousands of villainous wolves flourish and reign, innocent lambs like Rehman are mercilessly butchered. Where is the poetic justice?” (“Who is Responsible?” 18)

The story concludes with the topic of who is to be blamed for the tragic events that occurred, emphasising the injustice experienced by innocent people like Rehman in a world full with villains.

### **Exploring the Agonies of Life**

One of the recurring themes throughout Prof. Dominic's collection of short stories is the pain and anguish that are inextricably intertwined with the lives of ordinary people as they go about their day-to-day activities. The pains of life are typified by a sense of unhappiness, disillusionment, and despair, which are frequently induced by the pressures and expectations of society as well as one's own shortcomings. This sense of discontent, disappointment, and despair is frequently

developed as a result of personal failings in addition to society constraints and cultural expectations.

One of Dominic's stories, "Old Age Home," stands out as deepest. There is a heartwarming exchange that takes place between two elderly men named Ravi and Jacob, who both live in the same retirement community. Ravi is a retired college professor from Kochi who has been residing in the house for close to ten years. He moved there after retiring. Since he and his wife did not have any children, he is completely alone now that his wife passed away ten years ago and there is no one to take care of him. He has all he needs at home and is pleased and happy there. He also appreciates his pension. Jacob is a farmer who, as the oldest son in his family, was required to assume responsibility for the management of the family's agricultural holdings. "Very glad to hear that you are happy in this home. Though childless a man, you are fortunate in a way when compared to me, a father of three children. I am a farmer by profession..." ("Old Age Home" 107) All three of this man's children went on to become medical professionals and currently reside in the United States. Recently, his wife passed away, and he is having a difficult time coping with the sadness of losing her. Because he was unable to sell his land, his children pleaded with him to move in with them in the United States, but he turned down their offer. The talk is made more difficult by the fact that Jacob is expressing his sorrow about the death of his wife, and Ravi is attempting to console him.

The tragic death of Jacob's wife has compounded the suffering that he has been through. Jacob is utterly heartbroken over the loss of his soul mate after sharing 60 years of togetherness. He is unable to come to terms with the void and the memories that flood his mind, and as a result, he is going through intense pain and suffering. Jacob feels confined and alone at the old age home, despite the fact that his children attempt to provide support for him. However, his children are unable to truly comprehend the extent of his anguish. He has a hard time finding peace and coming to terms with the reality of his predicament, which makes every second he spends apart from his wife intolerable.

The narrative as a whole sheds light on the severe mental anguish that is inflicted upon residents of elderly care facilities by the fact that they are cut off from their families and other loved ones. The anguish comes in the unfulfilled need for friendship, the weight of loneliness, and the challenge of finding meaning and joy in life after experiencing substantial loss. These factors combine to make finding meaning and joy in life extremely challenging.

Yes they all came for the burial and after fifteen days with me they went back leaving me here. They asked me to accompany them. But I said that I can't leave my house and land. I told them that I would stay here alone and the maid would come every day to cook food for me. But they were not willing to leave me alone. Who is there to care if anything happens to me in night? ("Old Age Home" 108)

This worry of Jacob's children actually comes true in the end when Jacob is found dead in the morning by one of the employees of the old age home...but according to the account of his children, he was not alone when he died!

The story "Aren't they our Sisters?" revolves around Rajesh, the main character, and he is the one who goes to Kamathipura, which is a red light district in Mumbai, and meets a sex worker there. Because of her history with other men who have lied to her and taken advantage of her and her friends, the sex worker is sceptical of Rajesh's intentions to rescue her from a life of prostitution and remove her dependence on prostitution. "Trust men? I am here since I trusted a man I loved most. Don't waste your time. You may go. Here is your money." ("Aren't they our Sisters?" 41) However, Rajesh emphasises that he has a tremendous respect for individuals like her because he is the son of a sex worker himself. This shows that Rajesh has great respect for people like her. The sex worker is still cautious to trust him despite the fact that he pledges to give her a route out of her predicament by providing her with a job and a home in Kochi. The narrative sheds light on the seedy underbelly of modern society as well as the fate of sex workers, who are frequently forced to remain in the industry due to their precarious financial situations and limited career opportunities. "He was beckoned by many ladies standing in front of their doors and windows. 'Though beautified by lipstick and powder some appeared young in the twenties while others in the thirties and even forties'" ("Aren't they our Sisters?" 40). In addition to this, it demonstrates the significance of trust, empathy, and compassion in the process of developing connections and assisting those who are in need. "Stella in her vote of thanks expressed deep gratitude to Rajesh and his mother Radhadevi for saving them from downing in the ocean of grief." ("Aren't they our Sisters?" 46).

### **Techniques Employed by Dominic**

In order to convey the mental suffering that his characters go through in an accurate manner, Dominic employs a wide array of techniques in his writing. Through the use of vivid imagery and symbolic language in his writing, he is able to make a major impression on his audience. In these works, he has employed several literary devices in a very competent and effective manner:



The subject of karma, and more especially the concept of sanchita karma, which refers to the cumulative actions of earlier incarnations that influence our present circumstances, are investigated in the short novel "Sanchita Karma". The entirety of this narrative contains a great deal of meaningful symbolism throughout. This is a story about karma and reincarnation, both of which are discussed throughout the narrative. The tale recounts of a bunch of cats who were poisoned to death by their neighbour, a guy named Stephen, and his wife, Stella, because they were unhappy with the presence of the cats in their complex. The cats had been there for some time. In their subsequent lives, the cats are reborn as mice and find themselves the prey of the same seven cats that were once their companions in the previous birth. When the mice inquire as to the reason behind the cats' pursuit, they are informed that the cats are the reincarnated souls of the seven cats that the mice were responsible for killing in their previous existence. The cats say that the reason the mice cannot remember their previous lives is because the mice's religion did not teach them about reincarnation when they were younger. The cats then transport the mice back in time to their previous existence and reveal to them that they were actually Stephen and Stella, who were the ones who had poisoned the cats since they did not like their presence in their colony. "We never wanted to do so, but the Almighty orders us to dispatch you. It's nothing but Sanchita Karma. My children finish them now," Preethi ordered and in few minutes the mice were killed and eaten." ("Sanchita Karma" 75)

The tale focuses an emphasis on the concept that each person is responsible for their own actions and that those actions have ramifications that extend beyond their own lifetimes. This theme is connected to the idea that each person's actions have consequences that extend beyond their own lifetimes. In addition to this, it highlights the relevance of self-reflection and the pursuit of personal development as a method for influencing the course of our future. In general, "Sanchita Karma" is a thought-provoking story that analyses the intricate concept of karma and challenges readers to reflect on their own deeds and the impact those actions have on their present and future circumstances.

Dominic examines the complicated feelings and events that people go through in the course of their everyday lives via the lens of the characters he creates in each of these short stories. His work shines light on the challenges and hurdles that are frequently ignored or missed in mainstream literature, and he accomplishes this by putting light on the struggles and obstacles themselves. His writing brings attention to the difficulties and issues that are typically neglected or overlooked in mainstream literature.

The plot of the story "Nature Teaches" revolves around a meeting of a local council. At the meeting, the councillors discuss the possibility of building a shopping centre on an empty parcel of land. However,

there is a large fig tree on the roadway in front of the property, which functions not only as a place for people to wait for the bus but also as a place for people and animals to take shelter. Even though there are some councillors who are against cutting down the tree, the bulk of them vote in favour of the building. The other birds and animals who make their home in the fig tree are given fair warning by a crow that is present and listening in on the conversation between the councillors. "A squirrel listening to the talks of the birds then said, "I support your views dear friends. We can defeat man's attempt of cutting this tree fighting unitedly." ("Nature Teaches" 21)

They come to the conclusion that they must put up a battle to prevent the man from cutting down the tree and depriving them of their food and shelter. When the construction company arrived to cut down the tree, they were confronted by a group of people who were passionate about nature and questioned the activities that were being taken. The author also emphasises the numerous ways in which animals contribute to the health of the ecosystem, as well as the value of keeping the surroundings in which these species reside. In addition, the author highlights the need of protecting the ecosystems in which these species are found.

It is possible to assert that the collection of short stories that Prof. Dominic has written is a great example of something that has stood the test of time. His stories probe the harsh facts of living while shedding light on many issues. Dominic makes use of a variety of literary methods in his writing, such as vivid imagery, symbolism, and sarcasm, with the hopes of leaving a major impact on the readers of his work. His stories, in general, serve as a reflection of the society in which we live and inspire us to become engaged and make a change in the world. They also operate as a mirror in which we may see ourselves.

Prof. Dominic possesses a more profound awareness of the culture of the country, and through his life experiences, he has produced substantial contributions to the literary canon of India. Because of the exceptional manner in which they portray the challenges of life that are suffered by regular people, his short stories stand out among the many other works he has produced due to the fact that he has written so many of them. K.V. Dominic illustrates the difficulties and challenges that people face in real life by using the points of view of his characters and the issues that he investigates in his short stories.

## Conclusion

The short stories penned by K. V. Dominic offer a profound and nuanced portrayal of pain in all of its guises, from the physiological to the psychological. His stories cover a wide range of methods, including denial, withdrawal, resilience, and defiance, all of which are employed by the author in protagonists in his stories to deal with the pain and anguish they are experiencing. The stories also shed light on the social and economic factors, such as poverty and inequality that contribute to the exacerbation of pain and suffering throughout the world and bring these factors to our attention. In general, Dominic's short stories are interesting and thought-provoking. Dominic offers a powerful and insightful study on the human experience of pain as well as the various ways in which we can find consolation in the face of it.

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Dr. Laxmi R Chauhan holds a Ph.D. in English Literature from Gurukul Kangri University, Haridwar (India). She is M.A. (English), M.A. (Economics) and B. Ed (English and Economics). The pivotal of her doctoral research was study of the novels of Doris Lessing (Nobel Prize winner of 2007). She extensively explored communist disillusionment, psychoanalysis, science-fiction and mysticism in her research work. Email: laxmirawcha@gmail.com



# 19

## **Materials and Motifs of Indian Thought System in the Short Stories of K. V. Dominic**

**BISWANATH KUNDU**

An edited anthology of 17 selected short stories written by K V Dominic, one of the globally known literary luminaries of our time looks like a kaleidoscope to explore the essence and fragrance of short stories that can be read in a single sitting. The stories included in the present anthology are based on various themes like Man & Nature, Value of Compassion, Crime & Karma, and The Fates and so on that affect and effect the flow of life everywhere in the world. Let's read them one by one.

The collection opens with the story, "Who is Responsible" that delineates Crime & Karma in a style characterized by realism and authentic introspection into the complexities of the Indian society. Rehman, a retired headmaster in Kerala and Ramla, a housewife got their only son Anwar who was employed abroad, married to Aisha, a beautiful girl of the locality. Anwar came to India for a short leave. After joyous wedding celebration followed by the sweetest honeymooning at Ooty, Anwar went back to Oman, leaving behind his young and beautiful wife to his parents till his next leave after two years. At the end of the happy spell spent with her beloved, Aisha now got caught severely in grief and loneliness. Life started to take twists and turns for Aisha. Her in-laws apprehended something unethical but dared not ask anything. They started decaying from within. Their psychological traumas as well as the reality of life have been nicely depicted in the following lines:

"It was true that she was a bride, but her body knew no ethics. Who would satiate her carnal desires? How long could she control her desires? How could she resist the enticement? Was it fair for her husband to leave her hungry there for such a long time? Can Anwar be blamed as he was against the marriage itself? Who is to be blamed then?"

Rehman's heaven like house turned quick to a hell of sorrows and dejection followed by twine shocking news, first his daughter-in law's

elopement with a chauffeur and next his son's sacking from service on charges of involvement in terrorist activities. He wished not to live any longer and prayed God to get withdrawn. Finally he and his wife are found stabbed to death in their bedroom. The police came and started to investigate the crime. Here again the following lines raise an eternal question to the humanity all around the world:

“Who is to be blamed for the tragedy of Rehman and his family? When thousands of villainous wolves flourish and reign, innocent lambs like Rehman are mercilessly butchered. Where is the poetic justice?”

“Sanchita Karma” is again a wonderful story on the same theme i.e., on Crime & Karma. It resembles to a frame story or a story within a story. The present story reminds the readers of the narrative tales available in *Panchatantra*. As per accumulated results of actions of previous births Stephan, an advocate and Stella, a housewife in their earlier birth, are now reborn as mice to be chased by the souls of seven cats whom they had killed through poisoning. The herd of the seven cats had been enjoying their life freely and happily in the house of their masters' who were extremely kind hearted, affectionate and lover of nature too. But suddenly there came a tragic end of their happy life due to cruelty and selfishness from the part of Stephen and his wife, Stella. Preethi, the grandma of the victim cat family now breaks down in anger and pains and comments:

‘We, cats have no boundaries as you mice too. The creator has created this earth for all animals and plants. He has not given human beings any special right to fence any land. But the selfish man does so’. Pointing to the trembling mice couple, she hits out: ‘the devil in him and his wife nurtured hate for us and it ended in poisoning us.’

The cycle of death and rebirth has been superbly explicated once again in the story through Preethi, as found from the following line:

“The cruelty you had shown to us and our masters are the karmas which demanded reaction. The gravity of your crimes was such that it could not be atoned by any punishment when you were still alive as human beings. So you are destined to be born as mice to be chased by the souls of the seven cats you dispatched in your last birth.”

Let's now discuss stories dealing with Man & Nature. There are four such stories in these collections. These are: “World Environment Day”, “Nature Teaches”, “The Twins” and “Is Human lives Precious than Animal's”. The essence and fragrance of life on earth is a reality so long honored as the interdependence of Man and Nature. The very survival of human beings is in peril once Nature starts to take revenge for wounds being inflicted on her. The writer who himself is a great humanist cum Nature lover has described this plain truth as

picturesquely as well as deftly in all these four stories. Let's analyze it one by one.

In "Nature Teaches" he shows how a crooked and commercial design of the Municipal Council of felling down a big roadside fig tree that houses birds, squirrels, flies, honeybees, wasps, chameleons, spiders, ants and several other creatures besides being the shelter for passengers waiting for buses in the sun and rain was foiled by Nature itself. The readers start swallowing the vivid portrayal of the development when the protest of a group of Nature lovers failed and emerged instead on the scene the non humans with the onus of safeguarding their habitat and teaching man a lesson that they are never inferior to him but superior as found from the following:

"Now is our turn," The leader of the crow gave signal to all birds. All the crows, mynahs, and other birds flew down and started pecking on the head of the Sub inspector, police constables, Chairman, Managers and woodcutters. The Sub Inspector gave order to shoot the birds with guns. The gun shots went up and one hit the huge wasp nest on one of the branches of the tree. Thousands of wasps flew down angrily and attacked the offenders. The police, the Chairman and the Manager got into their vehicles and sped away for their lives..."

'World Environment Day' is another wonderful story wherein Kaatturaja, the most sought out forest thief in Karnataka gets transformed into a forest savior meted with again a great teaching from Nature. Here is the pen picture of the great change:

"5th June 2011. World Environment Day. Kaatturaja was all alone in the forest and was trying to axe a teak. ....The teak sensed the advent of its death and cried for help. Insensible to human beings the cry reached the ears of elephants grazing on a mound nearby.

...the elephants rushed to him roaring. Frightened he shot up the tree like a rocket. The elephants stood beneath the tree waiting for his descent. The teak thanked the elephants through its rustling applause."

This story provides an excellent message of the need of preservation of forest and protecting its animals for the very survival of human beings.

Fight against cruelty to animals is not only a slogan but a social obligation. Government has earmarked April as the month of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Violation of the law of Indian Animal Welfare Act is a criminal offence. Still poor animals suffer miserably at the hands of cattle traders and are forced to end their lives bearing intolerable pains and groins. On this perspective another masterpiece short story titled "Is Human life Precious than Animal's?" is here a special gift to the readers. Being shocked at the video clip of the 9 pm news in Asianet TV Channel

Prof. Antony Francis, a professor of Zoology in a Government college and a genuine lover of animals lodged a criminal case against Anthappan, the cattle trader and the murderer of the cow, in the High Court of Kerala and pleaded as follows:

“Had it been a human being in place of the murdered cow, what punishment Mr. Anthappan would have deserved, the same punishment shall be awarded to him, I plead your honour. Your honour, is human life precious than animals’ or animals’ life valueless compared to humans’?”

“The Twins” is an equally important addition in this series of stories dealing with Man and Nature. How pet cats have become inseparable members of a family has been nicely described in this story. Manikutty and Amminikutty, the angelic twins would play happily not only in the kitchen but also in the entire room pestering miao, miao, miao with their loving master and mistress. With their presence they both got back their childhood and started playing with them and enjoying their activities as found from the following:

‘The expression of these twins’ love-their kissing each other, hugs, licking one another, sleeping on other’s body, eating and drinking from the same plate, playing together etc, etc, – are real feasts for our eyes and mind.’

When everything was going on smoothly suddenly the scenario changed. Master’s mother who was eighty seven years old, weak and heart patient had come there for staying with them for some months. She needed medicines timely. One day while masters were leaving for their workplaces they fed the twins and kept extra food for them in the kitchen and prayed to God that the twins should not create problems to their mother. During lunch time when he returned home he saw his mother struggling for breath and tablets and food tumbled down. Immediately he attended to her emergency medical needs and thereafter readied to leave the twins for the very life of his dear mother. The writer’s philosophical note on this regard is worth mentioning:

‘After all life is a sum of innumerable meetings and partings!’

His act of deserting the loving twins is ridiculed brilliantly by the great lines uttered by the twins as found from the following:

‘Pappa, are you leaving us? Please don’t leave us. Please don’t leave us. How will we live? Who will feed us? Wasn’t it better that you killed us?’ Ultimately he was relieved of suffocation and aching of his heart by a call from his mother ordering him to bring back the twins to home again as seen from the following line:

“...If you can’t, then you may discard me also.’

Here, we, the readers are reminded of the satire in the story of ‘The Necklace’ by Maupassant, the father of the modern short story.

There are several stories in these collections based on 'The value of Compassion'. All are distinct in unfurling great social messages. Let's discuss them one by one starting with "A Good Samaritan".

Prof. Mohan was driving a car along national highway to attend a seminar at Thrissur. Suddenly he noticed a man lying unconscious and bleeding through his nostrils at the left side of the road. Unlike the general trend of the urban selfish people, he lifted him to his car and took him to the nearest hospital. He signed the papers for the patient as none of his relatives was present there. He himself even advanced an amount of Rs. 10000/- as fees of operation. On recovery of identity card and a phone diary from the wallets of Xavier, the victim, he called to his wife, Mariam, at home. Within half an hour Mariam arrived there accompanied by a dozen people followed by more and more people of different sections of the society. They all started praying for his life. The story based on such an incident that is common in our life looks like a pleasant and happy reading for those who believe in divine justice. The writer has beautifully presented it during the conversation between Prof. Mohan and Mariam as found from the following:

'...My husband has saved five hundred and ten people from the road accidents in the past eight years. We have taken it our mission to save lives of men who are uncared on road sides. My daughters and I help my husband in nursing the accident victims in the hospital. There were several cases in which the relatives of the victims never turned up and we had to bear the hospital charges. Forty nine victims have died on the lap of my husband on his way to the hospital...'

'Multicultural Harmony' is another excellent story conveying the message of 'The value of compassion'. Amar, Akbar and Antony were three friends. They lived with their families as members of one joint family in a village in Kerala and celebrated happily the religious festivals like Onam, Vishu, Christmas, Easter, Ramzan, Bakrid etc together. Amar's son Anand and Antony's daughter Celina were in love with each other since school time. They are now both engineering graduate and employed at Bangalore. When Celina's father was planning to get his daughter married the relation between Anand and Celina was no more kept in secret. The thought of inter-religious marriage reared in two souls when expressed two bosom friends were turned into foes overnight. Their common friend Akbar tried as a mediator to unite them but failed as both the families were inflamed by religious sentiments. Although there was great pressure from both the families and relatives to break their love and decision to marry, their love did not end, rather continued, of course secretly. Meanwhile losing peace of mind Celine became seriously ill and needed Kidney transplantation. When Antony was at



his wits' end how to save his dear daughter from the impending death Akbar conveyed to him Anand's willingness to donate one of his kidneys to Celina. This was the turning point that brought two families closer again. Hundreds of the villagers including parish priest, pujari, and imam who were waiting outside the hospital celebrated the successful transplantation in a festive mood coming out of their religious bigotries. The happy ending of this tale of true love is picturesquely delineated as follows:

The Pujari said: we are only happy to be part of this purest union of two souls.

The parish priest then said: Its God Almighty who has united them sharing their organs and religions shall take it in that sense giving full support to God's plans. We will surely be present for the function and will bless the ideal couple.

The Imam said: This is God's plan and man shall not try to make any obstructions. I will be present for the function to bless the noble couple."

This story provides an excellent example of the notion of transmigration of soul. And this will help people living in any corner of the world to get a firsthand experience of authentic Indian culture.

There are three other stories on the same theme i.e., the value of compassion. These are 'An email from Senthil Kumar', 'Clement's return from UAE' and 'Compassion rewards'. In all these stories a great message is conveyed to the society that the compassion shown to anyone in life never goes in vain, rather it comes back amply rewarded in that very life.

In-depth analysis of the minds of the people around us has been reflected in the story 'An email from Senthil Kumar.' The story showcases with instances after instances how an honest lie prolongs the life of an over sentimental aged heart patient and rewards the family by sustaining life of their dearest member again and again. A dutifully beautiful son may not get an equally beautifully dutiful mother in times of need. Selfishness and individualism, the hard realities of life have been nakedly exposed during covid-19 or more particularly at the times of quarantine period.

Author's keen observation on the developments of the society during pandemic period has been vividly portrayed in the story 'Clement's return from UAE'.

The writer's penetration into the psychological aspects of human nature is clearly evident from the composition of the story 'Compassion rewards' wherein he shows how benevolent and compassionate mind works reversibly and helps rescue the distressed in times of need.

The collection includes four stories dealing with the burning social issues and the fates. These are 'Aren't they our sisters?', 'Seetha's resolve', 'Old age home' and 'Fate of migrant labourers'. Let's go through the stories one after another.

The first story of the series i.e., 'Aren't they our sisters?' opens with landing of Rajesh, a son of a sex worker now a very rich man and owner of Govind Mills, Kochi, at Mumbai Airport and proceeding to a brothel at Kamathapura for rescuing Kerala girls who are living there a filthy, hellish life. After much persuasion he succeeds in agreeing Stella, an abused sex worker and other nineteen hapless ladies to the offer of their rehabilitation to normal life with employment at the Mills based on their education and skill. Through a grand welcome celebration attended by nearly 500 people including Mayor of Kochi and a retired chief justice of Kerala High Court they were all brought back to the mainstream of the society with a new life full of happiness and hope.

Like a genuine social reformer, the writer pinpoints the circumstances leading to induction of innocent and credulous young girls into the sex racket and advocates strongly for rehabilitation of the cheated, tortured and abused human resources through messages conveyed by different VIPs present in the welcome celebration as found from the following:

'...company's unique act should be a model to all big firms and billionaires in the world. The wealth they amass is indirectly the wealth of the society and so part of it should be returned to the society by way of humanitarian activities. The retired chief justice in his key note reminded the society that it should never treat sex workers with contempt. Having abused and exploited for carnal pleasures, treating them like curry leaves is cruelty of highest degree and unpardonable. After all aren't they your own sisters?'

Love makes one blind and prompts to go to the extreme caring little about his counterpart lest his beloved goes to the other hands, is the main theme of the story 'Seetha's resolve'. Venu, an auto rickshaw driver loved his classmate Seetha, now a teacher by profession, since the school days. Venu never expressed his love but reared it secretly in his mind. One day when he came to know that Seetha was going to be married off soon elsewhere he proposed her and was rejected outright for not being a good match. He could not digest the rejection and committed a heinous crime of burning her face with acid as to avoid her being owned by

someone else through marriage because he loved her so much. Thus the young beautiful lady got fated as an acid victim. The fate of the victim can be guessed from the following:

‘Usually acid victims are neglected by the society and they take refuge in the rehabilitation centres established by NGOs.’

Disaster, however, tragic and enormous be it, can always be overcome with will power. Perhaps this philosophy of life of the writer finds a pleasant expression in this story. He shows how an ill fated acid victim returns to normal life with support from family members and people around her and even emerges as the Best Teacher of the year in the country. The great message of extending hands of support to the distressed people as conveyed in this story may be found from the following speech she gave on her receiving the national award from the President:

‘... I dedicate this award and honour to the thousands of acid victims in the world. I could come back to my life and rise to this stature only because of the love and compassion shown to me by the people around me. Hence I request all my countrymen to shower love and concern to the victims who are destined to live hellish miserable life in their houses and rehabilitation centres. It is for no reason of theirs that they became victims of such inhuman atrocities. Given proper love and compassion these victims can come back to normal life like me.’

Let’s now read the story ‘Fate of Migrant labourers’. Here we see Aminul, a migrant labourer working in Kerala with the builder Arjun Saab got upset and panicked hopelessly hearing the news of sickness of his wife during covid period. On advice of his other roommates there, he approached his employer who not only readily assured all financial help to the ill-fated labourer but stood by him also as a big brother providing necessary guidance to treat his sick wife. Unlike the trends of selfishness and inhuman activities in the society, the story provides an excellent example of human relation between the employer and the employee.

Movement of people from one state to another in search of job is a common exercise for all those either totally unemployed or seasonally employed. Big companies are always busy ensuring supply of cheap labourers from the economically weaker sections to register greater profitability in their trades. Deprived of job opportunities in home states skilled and unskilled labourers are compelled to leave their dear homes and stay outside only to arrange food for dear families. Thus are born the migrant labourers. During the period of lockdown most of them had lost their jobs and thus they had been passing through the most precarious life. People were seen turning fast into selfish entities having neither time nor intention to serve anyone except themselves. Humanity seemed to

reach at its bottom. Still there was a ray of hope, a rare celebration of true love between two uneven classes, the employer and the employee that has got explored by the optimistic writer in this touching story as found from the following:

“In an inhuman society where employers show least love and kindness to employees and labourers, Arjun shines like a star-a polestar showing an exemplary model to all”

‘Old age home’ is again a touchy story related to pangs of loneliness experienced in the growing old age homes in the city that is fated to be the refuge of hundreds of senior citizens who have been bereaved either of dear soul partners at home or forced to stay singly here being separated from their dear children established and settled abroad.

Juxtaposition of joy and sorrow, pride and tears, reality and fantasy is littered extensively in the entire story. Getting old is an unstoppable process of life and readying to leave behind our dearest and loveliest possession both living and nonliving with time is a reality. The writer’s social awareness as well as pragmatic vision of life can be traced from the conversation of two inmates of the Old age home as follows:

‘Ravi: Calm down, Jacob. This is the fate of all parents whose children are abroad. There are thousands of parents like you in hundreds of old age homes grieving like you. This is the way of the present world. Kindly take life philosophically like me and enjoy life till it leaves our body.’

Let’s now read the story ‘Coffin Maker’ that happens to be the concluding story of these collections. In the story we see how Pater, once the best student in the class in a school in Kerala was inducted in the business of coffin making due to poverty. Finding no other option to feed a big family consisting of widowed mother, wife and two children he was chained in his father’s shop where he had apprenticed after the end of his school education. He was going through severe mental agony with this fearful profession that looked like praying for people’s death. His daughter too requested him to give up the job and try for anything better to maintain the family with happiness. But glaring unemployment problem in Kerala and his poor health stood as an impediment to take risk of availing any new initiative. So despite enduring unbearable pains, while he was continuing in his business of coffin making, one day he happened to meet his old classmate Afsal at his shop. This meeting brought a great turn in his life as he found an escape route from the hellish life. He was offered a job in Kuwait. And like a true friend Afsal made all arrangements including passport, visa. He extended necessary

financial support also and helped him start a new happy chapter in his life.

A friend in need is a friend indeed. This eternal truth finds its practical application in the story 'Coffin Maker'. Pangs of agony coupled with irony of fate unleashed with burning unemployment problem have been nicely captured by the writer as found from the following:

'...I don't like this job. But there is no other option to feed my family. Horrifying images of death are dancing around me whenever I work here. No pleasing thoughts enter my mind.'

We have so far discussed about the sixteen stories. One is still left. Now we will wind up our discussion with the reading of the story "Best government Servant". Here it is:

Dr. Krishnan Namboodiri, the son of an honest retired school teacher got appointment as an LDC in a Taluk Office in Kerala at the age of 38 after enduring a series of tests and tribulations of life. In spite of his all through brilliant academic records, a pauper student like him could not get deserving placement anywhere so long mostly due to staggering unemployment problem and excellent literacy rate and somehow due to lack of financial and political connection to bargain a job for him. Born in an ideal Brahmin family he inherited great values like honesty, sincerity, truthfulness, patriotism and so on from his parents. Just after a week of his joining in the office, he got shocked seeing his colleagues taking bribes for their service. He not only refused to take his share but also protested vehemently against the ongoing practice of corruption in the government office. As a punishment of his non cooperation with the existing practice of receiving compliments from the generous customers for the service, soon he was transferred to a village office at a remote place by the Tahsildar. In the new office he continued to serve the poor people of the locality honestly with certificates and other documents as expeditiously as possible and lodged a bribery case in the high court against the Tahsildar and the entire staff of the Taluk Office. With support of his parents and wife he fought a legal war singly and boldly against all the corrupt staff. He won it ultimately and was reinstated to the Taluk Office with additional increment emerging as the Best Government Servant by Governor of Kerala.

The story unveils the pains and traumas of the unutilized human resources. It is again a pensive account of the corruption amongst a section of people in government jobs. It gives a distressing note of degradation of values, morality and ethics in the society. But it is not all about nihilism. He is optimistic too and banks on some positive aspects of life. Great virtues like honesty, sincerity, dedication to duty and extending helping hands to the needy and the distressed transpire automatically from inheritance. This conviction has been established in this story. The fight for a noble cause may be challenging but it ends with a rewarding win provided the courage and stamina is not lost. Different

shades of life are scattered plentifully throughout the story which is reflective of the psyche of the writer as well as a direct hit on the great mockery of the present day system as found from the following:

“...you have to do your duties very promptly as others are. There is a harmony in our work and therein lies our success.”

All these seventeen short stories discussed so far are powerful enough to spread awareness and educate the people. Readers find in almost all the stories a fine blend of reality and fantasy. Like a master craftsman he portrays a picturesque view of the tales catering to the needs of analyzing short stories from an anthropological point of view. The shadow of the great style of writing of both James Joyce and Ernest Hemingway is greatly noticed in most of the stories of these collections as reflected from the application of his profound minds as well as simplicity of language and modern themes. He speaks volume in a short space about cause and effect in relationship with words flowing from the mouths of the characters but staying in our minds. Almost all the stories included in these collections belong to the Indian soil in general and in Keralitic perspective in particular. Like the stories of R. K. Narayan's here also readers find a lot of portrayals relating to south Indian life, their culture, custom, faith and his views of the world and those who live in it. These short stories, all being rich gifts in world literature, it is believed, will enjoy the media adaptations and find its deserving inclusion in curricular activities.

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A science graduate and a retired Accounts Official in Indian Railways, Biswanath Kundu (b.1963) is an author of thirteen books, seven of them being books of poems. Besides he has co-authored two books of criticism with Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. His poems and articles have been published in different prestigious anthologies and internationally famous journals. Email: bp\_kundu@yahoo.com



## Responding Responsibly: A Levinasian Ethical Reading of *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*

DR. KAVITHA GOPALAKRISHNAN

### ABSTRACT

This paper aims to extend the ethics of Levinas to understanding the characters portrayed in Dominican short stories. His stories exude Levinasian spirit. As conceived by Levinas, the subject is not the egocentric subject in traditional philosophy but rather an ethical subject based on—the other. The paper also delves into Levinas’—responsibility for the other as portrayed in the select short story collection. Levinas asserts that the nonintegrable alterity, infinity, and transcendence of the other give us an inescapable and infinite responsibility for the other. The responsibility for the other will appear when we encounter face to face with the other.

**Keywords:** Emmanuel Levinas, ethical subject, responsibility for the other, the face

Dear friend, what harm have I done to you that you should kill me? See how I became your saviour just now! What harm have this forest and its animals done to you? Haven’t you felled thousands of trees and hunted hundreds of animals? You and your people survive only because of our presence. (“World Environment Day”, 8)

This conversation between the tree and Kaatturaja changes the latter’s self and conscience forever. This face-to-face encounter made Kaaturaja promise the tree that he would “devote (his) life to the preservation of this forest” (8). According to Levinas, the concept of the “face” can be identified, though it is not confined solely to facial features, as a significant realm for engaging with others. Be it humans, the planet, animals, or plants, all existence embodies this notion of the face, encapsulating a fragility and susceptibility that compellingly emphasizes the sheer distinct nature of the non-human realm. The paper tries to elaborate how through the stories in *Sanchita Karma*, Dr. K. V. Dominic elucidates Levinas’ concept of the pre-cognitive, face-to-face interaction with the profound otherness of another individual, as an

ethical encounter that necessitates a conscientious reaction to their distinctiveness.

Levinas' thought was introduced to us in 1951 with the publication of his essay, "Is Ontology Fundamental?", in which he critiques Heidegger and ultimately rejects the traditional Western appeal to ontology as the first philosophy. Levinas' contention hinges mainly on the assertion that Western ontology as a whole, and specifically Heidegger's ontology, fundamentally possesses an egoistic nature in its portrayal of the individual as a being primarily preoccupied with its own existence. In response, Levinas presents an alternative standpoint by advocating for ethics as the foundational philosophy. This stance entails a corresponding reimagining of subjectivity as a "pre-ontological" intersubjectivity—a standpoint that underpins the entirety of his subsequent body of work. Ethics reshapes the concept of subjectivity, moving away from the notion of independent autonomy (where self-preservation is upheld through the freedom, equality, and reciprocal interactions of individuals) and instead emphasizing a duty towards the other (where I take the place of the other). According to Levinas, the ego within consciousness, as it self-reflects, manages to "escape its own critical eye," leading to inherent limitations (*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence* 92). Responsibility to the other constitutes a true subject as—"It is as responsible that one is incarnated". (*Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, xiii). Subjectivity constitutes a commitment to the well-being of the other, rather than being a characteristic or quality inherent to subjectivity itself. Levinas outlines a depiction of the environment where the significance of ethics is forged, a setting distinctly characterized not solely by the existence of the other, but also by the experience of being addressed and summoned.

According to Levinas, being an individual or a subject, entails being placed under the ethical summons of the other, being tasked with the responsibility to answer in our distinctive uniqueness to the distinctive uniqueness of the other. In this viewpoint, subjectivity embodies this responsive and responsible engagement. An explication of this can be seen in *Sanchitha Karma*, when Kaatturaja asks for forgiveness, "His voice echoed in the forest and his conversion was welcomed by the entire forest with cheers. The trees swayed and danced. Birds twittered. Animals cried in joy. The elephants standing below went away, swinging their trunks in happiness" ("World Environment Day" 8). Here, we see the identity of the other, as well as the significance of their expression, lies far beyond any conceivable portrayal or understanding that the self can construct. When engaged in direct conversation, the other inherently



surpasses his ego-driven assumptions, defying assimilation into his accustomed manner of existence and thought (Adams, 33).

The conversation between the tree and the Kaatturaja highlights Levinasian perspective of responsibility and ethics:

I speak of responsibility as the essential, primary, and fundamental structure of subjectivity. For I describe subjectivity in ethical terms. Ethics, here, does not supplement a preceding existential base; the very node of the subjective is knotted in ethics understood as responsibility. (*Ethics and Infinity* 95)

Ethics, we do understand, is not a matter of knowledge as no amount of knowledge of the other will help one to become ethical in relation to the other. In Levinasian terms, by expressing the radical alterity the other confronts one with meaning beyond one's autonomous capacity to construct it, calls one to become open in conversation with a mystery beyond oneself, and thereby offers a (potential) teaching (Adams, 33). In the words of Levinas,

The relation with the other, or Conversation, is a non-allergic relation, an ethical relation; but in as much as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching....Teaching is not reducible to maieutics [drawing out something I already know, as Plato would have it]; it comes from the exterior and brings me more than I contain. (*Totality and Infinity* 51)

In short, the encounter with austerity, "the face", is outside ontology, it is the opposite of all forms of totalization and it is non-representational. Levinas believes that this "face-to-face" encounter with "the Other" is the basis of ethics. Levinas's concept of the phenomenology of the face pertains to any entities that are susceptible to suffering and have the ability to communicate that suffering to me. If an animal possesses, in the way Levinas defines it, a kind of face that enables it to convey its distress, there exists no valid ethical rationale for withholding moral regard from it. In the story "Twins", we see the unnamed narrator musing when he has a "face-to-face" encounter with the cats:

"Miau, miau, miau, miau," the twins were stillpestering me. "What do you want?

What are you crying for?" I asked. "Maa, maa, maa, maa," the tone was different.

"Oh! They are calling for their mother," I could read their language. Probably they were asking me where their mother was. An arrow pierced through my heart. I'd never thought of their attachment to their mother. I could read also their mother's moans. Was it not cruel of me to snatch away these little ones from their mother? The thought pricked me and my heart started to bleed. Shall I return the twins to their mother? No, I

shouldn't be so sentimental. After all, life is a sum of innumerable meetings and partings! God has given His creations the strength to bear such pangs! I sought refuge in such philosophies. There are many things we human beings can learn from these 'subhuman' beings. (3)

In "Is Human Life More Precious than an Animal's?", the writer calls out the anthropocentric nature of humans. In the story, Dr. Dominic momentarily moves towards an articulation of human-animal relationality that is grounded in the animal's capacity to be for the Other by movingly narrating a progressive affirmation of his own humanity through the eyes of an animal. In the story, one can see how everyone but the narrator is relieved that the man is safe and only the cow is dead:

Prof. Antony's wife Teresa was also viewing the TV, and she shared the same view of the video reporter. "God saved the cattle dealer. Only the cow was killed. Even otherwise it would be butchered within a couple of days".... "Teresa, you have no grief for the cow, it seems. My heart is aching at her tragic death. I don't feel any sympathy for the owner. He is responsible for the death of the cow. He is a murderer."

"Why should we feel so much sympathy for an animal? God has created animals for man's use and comfort. Similarly, all other creations in the universe. Isn't man the centre of all creation? Aren't we the children of God, who created us in His image?" (11)

The story makes us think about we who are so full of ourselves and fail to think beyond our comforts. In the story "Sanchitha Karma", we see the situation in reverse and how we would have to pay for our actions sooner or later. In the story, Preethy the grandmother of cats, is seen chasing a mouse couple for a long-time but not catching. When the mouse asks the cat as to why he is meting out such torture towards them, the cat says,

You believed that after your death your soul would go either to heaven or hell. You believed in the shallow philosophy that man is the centre of universe and all other creatures are created for you. You believed that you are created in the image of God and you are His favourite. You can't remember your past since divinity has got lost in you by your unholy, criminal deeds. (73)

The majority of the brief narratives in the compilation *Sanchita Karma* are thus aligned with the viewpoint influenced by Levinas, proposing that the foundation of ethics is intertwined with philosophy. Within this framework, philosophy encompasses not solely the affection for wisdom, but also the sagacity of love. Levinas deliberates on the concept of God, conceiving it not in theological terms, but rather as an ontological occurrence transcending temporal and spatial confines. This phenomenon unites us in the realm of human experience. We can see

this philosophy entwined in the stories like “Matthews, the Real Christian”, or in “A Good Samaritan” and others.

This paper attempts to delve into Dr. Dominic’s examination of ethical conduct within ordinary and extraordinary circumstances. This examination is approached through the lens of Levinas’s philosophical framework, which itself explores ethics in the context of extreme situations and the unparalleled challenges they pose to one’s moral comportment. Levinas delves into the realm of ethics through an exploration of the concept of the Other. This concept encompasses both the Other as God—a transcendent entity or an all-encompassing facet of existence that surpasses human comprehension—and the Other as a fellow human being. Levinas asserts that the notion of the Other is intricately tied to the notions of responsibility and ethical conduct towards them and this is echoed in almost all the stories of K. V. Dominic.

The paper has contended that *Sanchita Karma* exemplifies that the crucial factor in establishing a respectful connection with the other is acquiring a deeper understanding of them. It emphasizes the need not to reduce the other to a mere object for exploitation. The proposed epistemological approach to understanding otherness outlined in this paper strives to eradicate the potential for unjust treatment based on knowledge imbalances and incorrect assertions. The objective is to attain an authentic comprehension of the other and to foster a genuine appreciation for their uniqueness. The epistemology of alterity represents a meaningful progression toward enhancing our understanding of the other, understanding the common thread that binds the stories in this collection, and comprehending the ethos of the writer.

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Dr. Kavitha Gopalakrishnan is an Assistant Professor of the Department of English, Baselius College, Kottayam, Kerala, India. She has to her credit innumerable publications in national and international journals and edited books. She has been the review editor of the international refereed journals WEC and IJML. Email: kavitha.sanju2012@gmail.com



## Some Representative Characters of K. V. Dominic: The True incarnation of the Downtrodden Class

HEMANTA PRAMANIK

### ABSTRACT

'Downtrodden' literally means 'treated badly and unfairly.' This term is verily subjected to the classes of the poor, oppressed, exploited, distressed, hated, discriminated and marginalized in the society. The vivid description of the sufferings and pangs in the lives of the downtrodden in different socioeconomic conditions has been a major part of Indian literature, tradition and culture. The eminent novelists like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K. Narayan of the colonial period and Aravind Adiga of the post-modern times have adroitly depicted the troubles and torments of the impoverished sections in their writings with insightful approach and analytical outlook. Along the lines, there has been shortlisted a new name K.V. Dominic to carry out the handed-down legacy of exploring the sufferings and pangs of the downtrodden in his notable short stories. His sensible heart has undertaken a deep probe into the misfortunes faced by the poor, have-nots, low earners, migrant labourer and sex workers. This paper aims to make an esteemed evaluation on the writer's vivid portrayal of different characters from the lower strata and their miseries, tortures, sorrows and struggles in varied socioeconomic, religious and cultural contexts.

*Keywords:* downtrodden, poor, sufferings, pangs, impoverished, socioeconomic, exploitation

K. V. Dominic, a contemporary major poet, critic, editor and short story writer of the present Indian literary scenario has well-written three short story collections, namely i. *Who is Responsible?* A collection of short stories. New Delhi, Authorspress, 2016 ii. *Sanchita Karma and other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*. Ann Arbor, USA, Modern Victory Press, 2018 iii. *Short Stories during Covid-19*. New Delhi, Authorspress, 2022 along with other 7 poetry collections and various articles. Followings are the detailed analysis of his selected short stories out of his three story collections.

The first story 'Who is Responsible?' narrates a heart-rending tale of Rehman, a septuagenarian retired headmaster and Ramla, a

hexagenarian housewife shattering their hopes and dreams for peace and happiness. It pathetically shows how negative issues of the family can deteriorate the healthy ambience of living destructing the resilient powers of the noble parents. At the very onset of the story, Rehman got nostalgic about childhood watching the rafts, cruisers and houseboats carrying passengers and tourists in the lake. Instantly he was remembered of his childhood as he longed to be a voyager with hunting dreams. Viewing life philosophically enabled him to accept the realities of life. Rehman, a dedicated teacher with love and compassion for the students, rightly deserved love and respect from the villagers. Ramla, his housewife of late sixties performed all house chores despite having severe arthritis. So they decided to have their son married. Through a conspicuous wedding ceremony, their son Anwar got married with a perfect match Aisha. But the problem started to screw up when Anwar journeyed to his working place in Oman leaving his wife alone after a sweet honeymoon trip. Aisha eventually indulged Rahul, a young driver to satisfy her carnal appetite. Ramla at first got skeptical about Aisha's relationship with Rahul. One morning Ramla and Rehman came to know that Rahul had eloped with Aisha. At Aisha's elopement, Ramla deeply shocked and paralysed had to depend upon Sahana, a maid servant for house chores. Rehman also hesitated to inform Anwar about Aisha's fleeing away with her chauffeur. But tolerance took a tough test on Rehman when he was informed about Anwar's arrest for terrorist activities through a letter from the Sultanate of Oman. He got himself hysterically unfit and Ramla was left unaware of it. Next day morning, Sahana became awe-struck seeing the noble couple being stabbed to death by an unknown villain. Later the police investigated the clue that they were murdered for their ornaments and money locked in the safe.

Now the story name 'Who is Responsible' reasonably demands more answers, not merely a single one. The questions are such as Is Anwar responsible for Aisha's illicit relationship with Rahul in his absence? Who is responsible for Ramla's suffering from paralysis? Who will shoulder the responsibility for Anwar's involvement in terrorist activities? Who is the culprit behind the tragic death of Rehman and his spouse? Would any poetic justice provide relief to the souls of Rehman and Ramla in so-called heaven?

In 'Aren't they our sisters?' the very tale tells about the myriad problems of livelihood and rehabilitation of the sex workers and the humanitarian attempt to restore them from their dingy hell. Once Rajesh, the owner of Govind Mills, Kochi endeavoured to take away the Kerala girls working in various brothels of Kamathipura of Mumbai for

their proper rehabilitation and care. Reaching the red light zone, he was attracted by the perfect beauty of a Kerala lady. Rajesh giving own identity negotiated with her about his honest intention. But the lady questioned him against his genuine concern for saving her from her nasty work.

‘Who are you so much concerned about me and saving from here?’

To support her suspicion, she duly cited the example of her friend being cheated by her lover during pregnancy. Then Rajesh disclosed that his mother once had been a sex worker in Kamathipura. His father had deserted his mother and him when he was a child. His mother had reared him up to his present status giving higher education. His earnest endeavour of restoring the sex workers from their condemnable profession is just a profound tribute to his mother’s wish for their welfare. Realising the verity of Rajesh’s speech, the Kerala lady introduced her as Stella, the offspring of an aristocrat family and confessed her falling in love with a Facebook friend named Rajender from Mumbai. But Stella’s parents couldn’t accept the love of Rajender, a Hindu for Stella, a Christian. Though, Rajender later identified as pimp’s agent one day sold her to a middle-aged lady who appointed Stella as a sex worker in her brothel in Mumbai. At last, Stella agreed to Rajesh’s rehabilitation project and she along with other nineteen workers were employed as employees in Govinda Mills at the discretion of Radhadevi, the owner of the factory. It seemed as if Radhadevi had created a heaven for the sex workers to play as angels living up to their peace and happiness. Humans should be humane this way!

The story ‘A Good Samaritan’ opens with Professor Mohan’s taking humanitarian initiative for saving a hexagenarian man from a road accident on the national highway. From the identity card, the injured man is identified as Mr. Xavier residing in Chavakad in Kerala. His wife is directed over phone to come to the Amala hospital where her husband has been admitted for treatment. Mariam, the wife of the injured confesses that her husband had been a private bus employee witnessing so many accidents. Their only son Williams was dashed by an auto rickshaw in 2000. He left for his heavenly abode after eight days of accident. The tragic end of his son had inspired him to dedicate his life for the humanity. Since then, in the last few years, he has been saving the victims of road accidents with his sincere attempt for their hospitalization and treatment. In this sense, he is a true good Samaritan. But Jesus has sent another Samaritan Professor Mohan to save the former Samaritan Mr. Xavier in a miraculous way. Venugopal, Akbar

and Joseph irrespective of religion are all accident survivors by the grace of humane Xavier.

In the story 'Best Government Servant', the readers know to their surmise that Dr. Krishnan aged 38, an M.A., Ph. D in Gandhian studies is going to join as LDC in the Taluk office in Kerala having literacy rate 95% and unemployment rate 15%. Depending upon the tuition money added to his father's meagre pension, Krishnan strives for sustenance. Pangs of poverty are so acute on the family that it can't employ a maid-servant to do the household chores. Being worried about parents' worsening health, he agrees to marry a girl named Seetha, a post graduate in English literature without dowry. Gradually, a daughter and a son are born to them and Seetha falls sick at last. After joining as LDC in the Taluk office, Krishnan one day discovers the strong bribe culture in the small envelopes among clerks and other staff. Being offered with one envelope, Krishnan directly says 'no' not caring about the fear of transfer. Under the threat and intimidation by the Tahsilder, he even doesn't bend his spine accepting its possible unfavourable aftermath.

Krishnan files a bribery case in the court against his transfer to a remote place duly conspired by the Tahsilder. To prove his allegation against envelope culture, he produces his recorded phone talks between him and the entire staff. The final verdict has gone to his favour. The govt. is requested for the transfer of the entire staff to a remote area with a cash fine. The judge has also recommended Krishnan's transfer to his home town with a special increment. He is awarded the best govt. servant by the governor of Kerala and he becomes a real hero for his stance against corruption. His father's Gandhian ideals have paved the way for his struggle for truth.

The sixth story 'Sanchita Karma', a fantastic tale, is told upon centering the philosophy of Advaitabad of Hinduism. The Hindus believe in transmigration of soul and the event of rebirth. The cruel and sinful actions always demand reactions. Sanchita karma is the accumulated result of man's actions of all past lives. This karma doesn't tend to give any instant result but it likes to be either added or reduced daily in an individual's life. It takes time to be ripe and provide result in future. The male mouse and his wife i.e. the female mouse who were Stephen and Stella in their last birth have to be born as mice in their present birth in order to atone their cruel deeds. Then they poisoned seven cats to death in three consecutive attempts. Preethi as grandma of the cats reminds them of their ignoble acts of killing seven cats reared by Krishnan, their neighbour. Stephen and Stella were Christians believing in man-centric universe without any belief in rebirth and atonement of



sin. Preethi with her daughters and grandchildren had been peacefully living their comfortable lives under the loving care of Krishnan who reared them up with all requisites and luxuries. Sometimes the seven cats were tempted by their instincts to trespass into Stephen's land and used to defecate there. But despite being a Christian believing in Jesus's words to love neighbours, he placed some poisoned fish before them. Consequently all cats had to die and for this unatoned cruelty, he deserved rebirth as a mouse, not as a human. Any human being with negatively accumulated cosmic debt fails to attain 'moksha', the redemption from the cycle of death and birth. Thus the story imparting a philosophical lesson highlights the Hindu religion to a great elevation.

The 8<sup>th</sup> story 'World Environment Day' reads the story of transformation of a notorious forest thief into a sanctified forest lover. Kaatturaja, the destroyer of a forest was born as a bastard to the society. His mother Kanni being raped by forest guards got no justice but was married to a youth leaving her son to her parents. Kaatturaja became resolved to revenge on the govt. system and establishment for his mother's dishonour. The tribals have been a deprived section always. To slap the govt. for its indifference to the tribals' needs, he started earning money by logging costly trees and killing wild animals to distribute among his neighbours.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2011, World Environment Day, the forest along with its inhabitants was in a celebrating mood. But a teak tree sensing the evil intention of Kaatturaja cried for help. Listening to the teak's cry, a tusker came roaring and frightened Kaatturaja who was by turn grateful to the tree too for giving him shelter. The tree as if motivated Kaatturaja with emotional talks and he promised to the forest that he would be the saviour of trees and animals since that moment. The transformed Kaatturaja repented for his crimes and was imprisoned in the jail instead. After one year on his release from the jail, he started afforestation on the barren lands with the members of his action force and was nominated later for the UN Forest for people award. It might be said that discrimination and deprivation of the tribals were the main cause for Kaatturaja's being a most-wanted forest thief.

The ninth story revolves round the tragic death of a cow being carried from Tamil Nadu to Kerala for slaughter. In transit, the cow jumps down over the fence of the truck moving on the national highway. Being chased by the cattle owner, the cow runs along the divider and is dashed by a truck to a horrible death. The news is telecast on the Asianet News channel. Having seen this, Prof. Anthony feels for the dead cow unlike his wife and the video reporter. Owing to the Dvaita philosophy,

Prof. Anthony's wife Teresa feels no sadness in her heart. She opines that God has created man in His image and all sub-creatures are under him. But her husband disagrees and emphasizes that God has created all with same importance and all are equal to man.

Analyzing others' views and thoughts over the cow's death, he puts up a question before all that whether human life is more precious than the animal's? Considering others' talks as nonsense, he files a criminal case against Mr. Anthappan, the cattle owner who is accused of committing murder and charged with maximum punishment with a huge amount of fine. Here Prof. Anthony, an animal lover, wins the battle believing that all creations of God are equal and all lives are precious without any comparison. He stands alone against man's ill-treatment and indifference to the animals.

In the story 'Multicultural Harmony' it is to be concluded that religion can't be a hindrance to the union of two souls on question of love and marriage. Though inter-religious love relations mostly suffer from familial objections and social impediments. Amar, Akbar and Anthony are three friends coming from the Hindu, Muslim and Christian families. They read in the same school and didn't face any bar of religion to their free mixing in childhood. But later, their offsprings fall in love with each other. Amar's son Anand likes Celine, daughter of Anthony. When the relation is disclosed, Anthony being a Christian objects to the consummation of marriage between them. The intimacy between Amar and Anthony puts a question to each other's threats and whiffs. Meanwhile, Celine develops serious illness and is diagnosed with high blood pressure in addition to both kidney failures. As Time presents problems before us, it also shows the ways to solution simultaneously. Anand firmly resolves to his father's objection to donate one kidney to save the life of his beloved. Akbar, the Muslim neighbour, always tries to mediate between two families. Forgetting all about religious sentiments, Anthony and Alphonsa agree to Anand's proposal. After three months of kidney transplantation, on an auspicious day, Celine gets united with Anand before all.

India is a country of multiculture and pluralism. Her citizens get habituated to witness and realize the unity in diversity here. The whole world has seen this apparently impossible to turn into a possibility.

The story 'Clement's Return from UAE' opens up with the mobile conversation between Clement and his wife Merlin on the Clement's return journey from Dubai to Kochi during the prolonged lockdown for the worldwide Corona pandemic. Despite having a post graduation in

Maths, Clement can't procure any govt. job. Low salary in a tuition centre urges him to accept the help of his college friend Arvind who has somehow managed for him the job of an accountant in a shopping mall. After meeting his own requisites, he was able to send Rs. 30,000 per month to his father's bank a/c for buying a little house and his sister is married off with the rest money within five years since his employment. But the extended lockdown mercilessly makes him jobless. Many Keralities have enlisted their names in the embassy for their return. Limited flights can't cope up with the heavy rush of the passengers. At last the compassionate mall owner books a ticket for his flight to Kochi. But after his landing at the airport, he feels himself just an orphan when his mother unwelcome him to his own home fearing corona infection for his Papa. She asks: 'Dear son, will you spend the quarantine period in some hotels so that there is no risk for papa?'

Being disheartened to convince his mother, he has to spend 14 days in the home of his student Krishnan who has just landed at the same airport from Sharjah. He extends his humanitarian help to make his Sir comfortable. The teacher-student relationship is so exalted and eternal that it leaves an indelible impression upon the human minds.

The next story 'Fate of Migrant Labourers' speaks of the sad plight of the migrant workers during the Covid lockdown in the country. Four migrants couldn't return to their homes but stayed in Kerala under the humanity of their builder Arjun Saab. That time, Aminul's wife was hospitalized with fever and headache. There's none to look after her. Then Arjun Saab, the humanity incarnate, booked a ticket for Aminul to reach home soon. When millions of migrant labourers had lost their jobs, many died on the ways to home, then Aminul's builder cum employer Arjun Saab extended his liberal hands with a bag of Rs one lac to Aminul for his wife's treatment in a hospital in Kolkata. Being obliged to receive his benevolence, Aminul was indebted through his words...

'You are my God, dear Saab. I will never forget this love and kindness shown to me. I will be at your service till I die.'

People like Arjun Saab are still there to kindle the hope for living among the masses even in the days of inhumanity today.

The story 'Nature Teaches' is really an interesting story having an environmental awareness for all. Today in the days of industrialization and urbanization, it seems as if deforestation is the prime condition for human survival. To exist on this green planet, man should be considerate in logging so many counts of trees. To cut the only big fig tree sheltering different kinds of birds, ants, insects and other creatures is one of the

agenda discussed and decided in the Municipal Meeting for building a shopping complex there. The messenger crow who listens to the discussion of the councillors conveys his alarming message to all birds and other creatures living on the tree. On the first day of the company's move, all birds, animals and wasps along with the protesting Nature lovers create a pandemonium by pecking on the heads of the Chairman, the Police, the construction manager and other allies. Finding no way to materialize their project, all concerned with the construction have to flee from there. Learning a lesson from the Nature agents, the Chairman and other Councillors resolve to plant more trees on the roadside to compensate for the loss of deforestation in the surrounding locality.

A burning social problem is picturesquely narrated in the story 'Seetha's Resolve' centering round the acute sufferings and rehabilitation hazards of Seetha, an acid victim. Her neighbour cum classmate Venu who had a secret passion for Seetha since his school days threw acid on her face just out of his frustration. He felt one-sided love for her who was totally unaware of it. The secrecy was disclosed when Seetha's marriage was fixed with Anand, her father's friend's son. Due to his despair of losing her forever, Venu, an auto rickshaw owner, executed the ignoble action on Seetha who would have to live with her disfigured face up to the last day of life. He was sentenced to ten years of imprisonment with one lac rupees of fine.

Now Seetha lived a caged life of her own. But Dr. Mukundan, the college principal, with some students had come to Seetha's house with a prayer to resume her college teaching. Being implored, she agreed to join her profession. She also arranged many social activities under NSS unit of her college beside taking extra classes for the students. Receiving the 'Best Teacher Award' nationally, she earnestly requested the countrymen to guess the physical pain and mental trauma of the acid victims and shower their love and sympathy for their normal come back to the main stream living.

The heart-wrenching story of 'Old Age Home' shows the trend of the world that aged parents having sent their wards abroad for education or employment or having no ward at all must seek shelter in old age home lastly. Here the story is carried through the dialogues between two inmates Ravi, a retired college professor and Jacob, a new comer. Both have lost their wives forever. Sharing their bio details in a nutshell, they try to grow intimate with each other in the homely ambience expressing their pain and pleasure. Ravi has taken life philosophically but Jacob can't set himself to this post-modern trend. His memory of agriculture and farming can't be uprooted from his mind. As per his words: 'I long

to go back to my house and land, but I am imprisoned here. My children can't read the agonies of their father.'

Next day morning, Jacob is discovered dead on his bed due to possible cardiac attack.

A good turn always deserves another. This maxim proves true in the story 'Compassion Rewards'. Madhavan Nair as a teacher once deterred a student Rahim from taking drugs openly in the company of his fellow beings and helped him to pursue his studies to be a software engineer. Later, on the contrary, Rahim showed his obedience and gratitude to his teacher's compassionate heart by giving Rs.20 lakhs direly needed for Sir's urgent liver transplantation. Rahim recalled that his friends couldn't do justice to his teacher that day by pushing him violently to the ground. Instead, his teacher despite knowing him didn't disclose his identity to the police only to save him from legal harassment. Having read the report on Sir's serious ailment and prayer for financial help in the Malayalam daily 'Mathrubhoomi', Rahim couldn't stay still but came forward to save his saviour. This is the immortal relationship between a student and a teacher that can teach the whole world the lessons of dedication, dutifulness, love, compassion and gratitude.

The last story 'Coffin Maker' is also an impressive one. In the society, people seek help from others of different professions during their urgency. The process of carrying a corpse to the graveyard or crematorium ground requires a coffin to encapsulate the body. And the man who prepares this for the very purpose serves humankind relentlessly. Such a man is Peter who had been apprenticed in his father's shop for long days. Due to his father's death, he has to run the shop now. But his daughter Elsy urges him to take up another profession thereby leaving this selfish work. She opines that making coffins means longing for others' deaths. Peter though convinces her that finding no work suitable, he has to stick to that inhuman work. One day an opportunity knocks his door when his once school mate Afsal offers him the chance of working in Kuwait. Peter is overwhelmed at his selfless proposal and expresses his gratefulness.....

'You are an angel sent to me by God to save us from the ocean of grief. Inexpressible is my gratitude to you, dear Afsal. Our family will be indebted to you forever.'

Mentionable here is his genuine craftsmanship that K. V. Dominic, a prolific Indian author internationally acclaimed shows in portraying all the representative characters of the downtrodden section of the society realistically. Anwar, Stella, LDC Krishnan, the tribal woman Kanni,

Clement, Aminul, the acid victim Seetha, Afsal, Peter and a few others fall in this class. With his hearty concerns for humanism, social maladies, environmental issues, sympathy for the migrant workers, his bold stand against corruption in govt. offices, his radical thinking for the sex workers' rehabilitation, problems of old age and religious taboos, he has lettered his immortal name in the world of Indian English literature. He stands alone bravely to safeguard the neglected and deprived people from their perpetual exploitation and oppression by upper classes, governments and other authorities. He is the spokesman pleading for the dignity and rights of the poor people. His three story collections are a must-read literary deed for all literature lovers.

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Hemanta Pramanik (b.1971) a bilingual poet, short story writer, children's author and editor writes from WB, India. He is widely published in many international print journals and anthologies. Songs of Immortality is his debut poetry book. His writings duly claim wide acclaim for him. Email: hkp.lit@gmail.com



## **K V Dominic's Short Stories: Panorama of Ethical Values**

ELIZABETH VALSAN

I've had the honour to peruse the works of Prof. Dr. K. V. Dominic, a writer and a poet who skilfully weaves tales of humanity, hope, and justice delivered. Each story, from "Aren't they our Sisters?" and "A Good Samaritan" to "Best Government Servant," embodies a masterful depiction of society's core values and challenges, written with scholarly precision and discernment.

### **Narrative Technique and Setting**

Prof. Dr. Dominic's tapestry of narratives is embroidered with acute observations and vivid imagery. Whether it's the bustling cityscape of Mumbai or the serene backdrops of Kerala, Dominic's meticulous descriptions transport readers, grounding each story in a tangible reality. The stories, though diverse in content, are unified by the author's commitment to detail, ensuring that each setting plays a pivotal role in enhancing the narrative's overall impact.

### **Characterization and Theme**

Across his stories, Dominic has sculpted characters that resonate with life's complexities. Rajesh in "Aren't they our Sisters?" embodies hope, Xavier from "A Good Samaritan" epitomizes selfless service, while Dr. Krishnan Namboodiri in "Best Government Servant" stands as a paragon of integrity. Each character, with their distinct challenges, propels forward the overarching themes of humane treatment, relentless hope, and the unwavering pursuit of justice.

### **Language and Tone**

Exhibiting a blend of lucid prose with intricate layers, Dominic's choice of language is both accessible and profoundly intellectual. As someone deeply entrenched in the world of English Literature, I find Dominic's diction and syntax commendable, striking a harmonious balance

between sophistication and clarity. The tone remains consistently professional, echoing the gravity of the societal issues being addressed.

### **Cultural and Societal Context**

Dominic's stories reflect a deep understanding of Indian sociocultural dynamics. From tackling issues like casteism and dowry to shedding light on the significance attached to government jobs, each narrative is anchored in the unique cultural milieu of India. Yet, their universal themes ensure they resonate beyond geographical boundaries.

### **Conclusion**

Prof. Dr. K. V. Dominic, through his array of stories, invites readers to a world that is both hauntingly familiar and profoundly transformative. By interweaving societal critique with tales of hope and resilience, Prof. Dominic not only highlights the societal malaise but also underscores the potential for individual redemption and societal transformation. For scholars, students, and readers who value narratives rich in theme, characterization, and sociocultural critique, Prof. Dominic's works stand as indispensable additions to contemporary literature.

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Mrs. Elizabeth Valsan, MA English, was the former principal of Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Goa, a CBSE school. She represented National Testing Agency (NTA) for the State of Goa.



She is the Secretary of All Goa Government Recognised Aided Schools Association. She is also the Treasurer for People for Animals, Goa. Email: Elizabeth.valsan@gmail.com



## Universal Human Values in the Selected Short Stories of K. V. Dominic

DR. S. BARATHI

### ABSTRACT

The world at present is chaotic due to a variety of reasons. Though ethical perspectives of people differ from one culture to the other, moral values remain universal. Moral values are related to human behaviour in terms of good and bad. Moral is a universally accepted code by the society concerned with the actions, attitudes, etc. Literary works promote the ideals of moral principles and ethical values. Hence, it is essential to look at these texts as valuable materials to instill values among the younger generation. The present paper is based on the above ideals and it is brought out through the short stories of K. V. Dominic, an Indian English Writer, and the study further elaborates on how these values could be promoted through Fiction genre.

Keywords: Compassion, Dharma, Self respect, Humbleness, Respect

### Introduction

Universal human Values are necessary to coexist in harmony in the society. This could be achieved through writings that center around moral and ethical values. Such works are necessary to impart good qualities among the younger generation. The present study is an analysis of K. V. Dominic's Short Story Anthology, *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*. As the title suggests, all the short stories in the collection aim at teaching the readers ethical and moral values.

### Background Study

Many of our ancient texts such as *Ramayana*, and *Mahabharata*, teaches universal human values of right thought and right action. In this regard, it is worthwhile to note the four basic values pointed by Kinnier (2000) such as: compassion, justice, truth, and forgiveness. The underlying basic concepts are (a) respect for oneself, (b) respect for others, (c) civic responsibility, (d) and respect for natural environment. Moral values are related to human behaviour, in terms of considered good and evil. Moral

refers to a good or bad doctrine accepted by society related to actions, attitudes, obligations, morals, manners, and decency. Understanding these actions, either good or bad is essential for any human being. This means that something which is considered good for someone or a nation not necessarily is the same for other people or other nations. Someone's opinion about morals and values is usually influenced by the view of life. Furthermore, moral values are the values which are associated with customs, manners, and behaviour. On the whole, the moral teachings are norms and understandings determining the things which are considered good and bad. Consideration of good or bad behaviour is something that would generate moral, as a generic concept which refers to the fact that the authors express a moral message to the readers through literary works, either directly or indirectly. Moral in literature usually reflects the views of the author's life, the views on the values of truth, and what the author wants to deliver to the readers. Based on the description above, it could be concluded that morality is the measurement used to determine what is right or wrong of human being's attitudes and actions in terms of the good and bad.

With regard to the core elements of moral values, there are many experts (Maciver, 1952; Gert, 1970; Harrelson, 1980; Hick, 1992; Bennet, 1993; Bell, 1994; Kane, 1994; Kidder, 1994, Christians & Traber, 1997;) Qtd. in Kinnier et.al. (2000: 8) who have briefed on the basis of morals and its implications as follows: 1. Showing respect and compassion towards others 2. Truthfulness 3. Justice 4. Personal responsibility 5. Self-discipline 6. Courage and faith in oneself and others. From the explanation above, it could be concluded that moral values are connected with human's behaviour.

Moral is a practical lesson that a story, an event, or an experience teaches. Therefore, Hurlock Elizabeth (1997) states that moral is controlled by the moral itself. S Alwi (2008) and Zuriah N (2007) have elaborated on the rules of moral to which the members of a culture have become accustomed to and which determine the expected behaviour pattern of all the members of a group. Every society has values to arrange their life that contain some principles, ideals and standards. In addition, there are several kinds of moral values. They include universal concepts such as bravery, humbleness, honesty, justice, steadfastness, respectability, responsibility, sympathy, cooperativeness, thankfulness, trustworthiness, sincerity, and others. The present paper tries to bring out all the aspects mentioned above in Dominic's short stories.

### Analysis of the selected Short Stories

Based on the theme, the stories in the anthology are organized into different sections such as Man Vs Nature, Man Vs Animals, relationship issues, honesty, compassion, dharma and so on. Moral value can also be defined as information about what is right behaviour, and what is wrong behaviour, as well as what is important in life, this message is sent by the author to the readers through the themes mentioned above.

### Compassion

In the story titled “Twins”, the writer deals with man-animal relationship, where the protagonist decides to abandon the twin kittens, as they were found to trouble his aged mother. So, the protagonist tries to leave the kittens which is morally not good. But later, when his mother enquires about the kittens, he realizes his mistake and brings the kittens back home. This story is constructed on the moral value of Compassion, i.e., showing compassion towards all living beings.

Chandramoni Narayanaswamy, (2019) observes: “... the stories in *Sanchita Karma* deal with a wide spectrum of themes, including the helplessness and loneliness of the aged, the thirst for love, crime and terrorism, religious intolerance and superstition and corruption and unemployment” (“Store”). From this, it is evident that all the stories in the collection deal with compassion at various levels, such as compassion towards animals as in the case of “The Twins.” The following lines clearly picture the mindset of the protagonist thus:

“When my wife returned in the evening, I told her what had happened. She was horrified to hear of my cruelty to the twins. She too agreed to appoint a home nurse. Until we get one, I decided to take several short leaves of absence. Thus, our house became heaven again!” (6) The title story “Sanchita Karma”, depicts karma of cruel neighbours, who in their past life had tortured innocent animals.

### Compassion towards nature

In yet another story, “World Environment Day”, Katturaja, the forest thief finally realizes his mistake and surrenders to the court. He admitted the crimes to the judge:

Your honour, it is true that I have committed unpardonable crimes and did a lot of damage to the forest. I now sincerely feel that I should not have been so hostile to the forest and the environment. I should have abided by the laws of the government and supported it in its activities for the welfare of the people and nature (9).

These lines prove the change of mind of Katturaja, and now he has turned compassionate towards nature. The three stories discussed are spun around the quality of mercy and compassion.

### **Compassion towards animals**

“Is human life more precious than animals?” questions human’s attitude towards animals and it discusses animal justice and animal ethics. According to the protagonist, Prof. Francis Antony, all lives are created with equal opportunities in nature and humans have no right to torture the animals. He feels frustrated when his wife did not understand the above-mentioned value. He bursts: “Teresa, you have no grief for the cow, it seems. My heart is aching at her tragic death. I don’t feel any sympathy for the owner. He is responsible for the death of the cow. He is a murderer” (12). Through these lines, the author points out that everyone should be compassionate towards other creatures.

### **Respect for others**

The term of “universal values” has been explained by several experts with their theories and arguments. One of them is Linton (Qtd in Kinnier et.al., 2000) who states that universal values include a theory of “modesty” that tells how to behave in life including how to respect others or an appreciation of other’s human right existence. The story “Best Government Servant” is an example for this. In this story, Dr. Krishnan Namboodhiri, though poor, tries to be honest and sincere at work. He undergoes a series of hardships and finally, his honesty is rewarded towards the end. This story is also a best example for the four major and specific categories of moral values proposed by Kinnier et.al. (2000) i.e., commitment to something greater than oneself, that is to recognize the meaning and purpose of one’s existence, to seek truth and to seek justice. Here, Krishnan refused to take the bribe and despite his poverty, he lived a straightforward life.

### **Self-respect, with humbleness**

There are many stories in the collection that center on self-discipline, and acceptance of personal responsibility, i.e., to respect and care for oneself. “Joseph’s Maiden Vote for the Parliament” is the best example for this. This story expounds on a youngster’s dilemma on which political party he has to support. “I am Unwanted” is the tale of a young girl who had to undergo humiliation due to her name. The writer develops the character in a positive way, and finally the protagonist, who was sick with her strange name, understands that name is just nothing and resolves to serve the downtrodden women. From her humble beginning

“Awanchith” the unwanted girl, becomes a wanted woman by everyone. She decides to be a whistle blower to gender discrimination, when she expresses: “I vowed to reveal to the world how wanted women are on earth. I dropped my plan to change my name through gazette notification, and I decided to retain it despite the stigma” (44). This shows the transformation in the young woman. Through this, the writer wants to reinforce the fact that one should maintain one’s dignity and self-respect. Another value one could find is not to exalt one-self, avoid greediness, self-centered attitude, and to act with conscience.

### **Respect and Care**

“Our dear Bhai” narrates the sad tale of the lives of Nepali men who come to India in search of livelihood. In this story, the Nepali watchman, fondly called as brother by the college professors, dies in a heart attack. His relatives are unable to attend his death rites and he was cremated in the alien land. The protagonist looks at “the young mango tree which Bhai had planted three years back. There were bunches of flowers on it. Bhai’s eldest son came with Bhai’s second wife to our college today to complete formalities of the pension. Some eighteen months have passed since Bhai left us. Yet his pension has not been released to his wife” (49).

The above lines are instances of understanding and connectedness between the people. All the stories in the collection drive home the point that one has to serve and to be helpful to humankind and individuals and to be caring, respectful, compassionate, tolerant, and forgiving to others.

### **Conclusion**

In “Twisted Course of Destiny”, the protagonist Rajiv, though well-educated could not get a suitable government job. He was very patient and finally he got a government job of a peon. But still fate followed him, and though he lived a contented life, the moment he saw his ex-colleague as a higher official, he could not contain himself. Still, he was patient and one fine day his sister announced: “Happy news, brother! You have got an advice memo from the PSC requesting you to join as Assistant Professor of Mathematics in Maharajas Government College, Kochi. ‘Oh my God, what a surprise, thrilling news! I am coming home tomorrow.’ Thus, God granted Rajiv’s prayers at last. May be Sangeeta’s as well” (58). The above story highlights the value of patience. In addition, moral values are also about values that express the belief of someone or faith such as people believing in God. Next, courage is an element that also has a value that needs to be assessed in life since it is related to how someone can live in this world with power and good

resolution. We have to take it seriously that it is vital to keep in mind how we should behave towards above mentioned important elements as well as making those kinds of relationship that are in balance, so that what seems as abstract in terms of moral values content becomes concrete or real when people have an effort on applying them.

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Dr Barathi Srinivasan is an Assistant Professor of English at Srinivasa Ramanujan Centre, SASTRA Deemed to be University, Kumbakonam, India. Her poems are widely anthologized in books and international journals. She has translated one novel, two short story collections, and five poetry anthologies into Tamil language. Besides she has published an anthology of poems titled *Heart to Heart* (2023) and a book of interviews titled *A Conversation with Contemporary Indian English Poets* (2023). She has received quite a number of awards such as Best translator Award (2021) Capecomorin Trust Best Faculty Award (2021 & 2022) KIWI Miles, New Zealand, Capecomorin Trust Best Female Faculty Award (2023) Bestow Edutex, and she is also awarded a Honorary D Lit by McStem Eduvarsity, U.S.A. Email: [barathi0723@gmail.com](mailto:barathi0723@gmail.com)



## Conversation with Dr. K. V. Dominic

DR. S. BARATHI

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**Barathi:** Greetings to you sir! First of all let me congratulate you on your fifth collection of poems. Sir, I have a few questions to ask you about your recent works. First, the Anthology *Cataracts of Compassion* has won a wide acclaim from the young and the old equally. Could you please share your experiences while writing the collection?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Greetings and thanks dear Dr. Barathi! What you have stated is true. *Cataracts of Compassion* has been appreciated by many readers and critics. I have been very particular in avoiding repetition of subjects and topics in my poetry. As a social critic, some burning issues and themes had to be dealt with again and again in each anthology. *Cataracts of Compassion* has thirty four poems and the very first poem “Enlighten Us Lord Buddha” in ten sections has blessed the collection, I hope. Spirituality, Nature, environmental issues, poverty, problems of women, relation between humans and non humans, influence of scientific growth on society, role models in society, freedom of expression, terrorism, equality, etc. are the themes touched in this collection. Through these poems I have been trying to portray the contemporary issues as well as eternal values. As a poet I am growing and that might be another reason why this latest collection becomes more appealing.

**Barathi:** Personally, I appreciate more your Haiku in the anthology. They cover various aspects of life right from eco-consciousness to socialism. They leave a deep impact on the mind of the readers. It is also interesting to find that these poems have evoked a wide range of emotion especially among the young readers and they feel highly

motivated to strive for the betterment of the society. What do you feel about this sir?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** In fact those triplets you have mentioned are not haiku in the strict sense. Instead of the haiku syllabic pattern of 5-7-5 I have used syllables of varied length. Haiku, a Japanese originated poetic form has Nature as its theme. I have used not only themes of nature but also social, environmental and philosophical issues. I have given the title to this group of poems as “Triplets of Wisdom”. Wonderful ideas and messages and values could be imparted through these triplets. That is the beauty of these micro verses.

**Barathi:** Sir, as I had been associated with you since 2010, I understand that you are a great humanist. How has it been possible for you?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Being a human I ought to be a humanist. That’s what the Creator expects from human beings. The rationality naturally tends man to act as a humanist. This element of humanism is inherent in all human beings. To be a humanist doesn’t need any belief in religion or superstitions. A theist as well as an atheist can very well feel that this planet earth is mother to all its inhabitants. So it is quite natural that one will have a fellow feeling to other human beings and non human beings. One will be forced to consider others and feel sad and agitated when the necessities and comforts one enjoy is denied to others.

**Barathi:** Your compassion is quite oblivious to the readers through many of your poems like “Cow on the Lane”, “Crow the Black beauty”, etc. But what is particularly interesting is your poems on cats like “Ammini’s Lament”, “Poppy”, etc. which demonstrate a very strong emotion. It appears as if you have a great fancy for your pet cats as they appear in many of your anthologies. But there is a pestering question I would like to ask you. Why didn’t you have written any poems on Dogs so far? Is it that you are prejudiced?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** To be frank, when I composed poems on cats they were in our house just like our family members. Unfortunately I did not have a pet dog at that time. Now I have one, named Rockey, a Pomeranian white. Unlike dogs which are chained or locked in kennel, cats can’t be jailed in our house or compound. Naturally they will go to neighbour’s compound. Most of my cat poems are tragic because of the brutality of my neighbours. As Shelley says, our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thoughts, the tragic ends to my pet cats had to be composed into poems as revenge to my cruel neighbours who could not be punished legally or socially. I have



composed poems on dogs, not on my own pets, but on the plight of stray dogs as well as another on the love of dog to its dead master.

**Barathi:** Your books are internationally acclaimed and many of the books published provide the readers an entirely difference in thought. Especially the one in collaboration with Dr Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. How does it occur to you?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** I follow a style of my own. Simplicity and clarity in expression, telling things in a direct manner, use of free verse and more narrative poetry, innumerable varieties of topics and themes, every poem bears a message or value—these are my characteristic styles which attract the readers. I don't want the readers to be quibbled or confused with mind-blowing expressions or unnecessary imagery. Another striking point of my poetry is that I have touched some issues and topics which very few poets have done. Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya is the best critic and interpreter of my poetry. His critical approach is entirely different from other critics. He being a great philosopher is able to go deep into the philosophical aspects of my poetry and interpret them in comparison with Western and Eastern philosophies as well as classics in world literature.

**Barathi:** Coming to the other aspects of your poems, it has been found that you write more of free verse. Is there any specific reason for selecting free verse? And your poems unlike some of your contemporaries lack imagery. Another aspect is at times the poems sound too prosaic. Is there any purpose behind this, sir?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** To me poetry is not just an expression of emotion but a medium to impart great values and messages to the society. So the aspect of reason is more in my poetry than imagination. When reason is expressed with very little imagination the style becomes prosaic. I have used only free verse and tried to express things in a direct manner. If a message or value can be imparted directly without any imagery why should one harass the readers who have little time to read in this busy, materialistic world? It is a fact that reading habit is diminishing due to the influence of visual media and internet, and if at all people have time to read anything, they will choose fiction, as is the trend of the world. This being the reality, nobody wants to read a poem, particularly if it is long, boring, time killing and obscure. This awareness is behind my writing in simple, direct style.

**Barathi:** Apart from your poetry collections, you have also published a collection of short stories based on contemporary issues and incidents. It also stresses the importance of humanism and

compassion. What I strongly feel is that such stories should be incorporated in the lessons for young adult learners. What is your opinion about this, sir?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** My maiden collection of short stories was published by Authorspress, New Delhi in 2016. My second collection of stories is under print in USA, by Modern History Press. As in my poetry, I have used contemporary issues and topics in my short stories also. They deal with the culture and way of life our country. The burning issues of the nation as well as of the universe are portrayed in these stories. It is purely because of the prejudice of curriculum committee and board of studies in our universities that they do not include poems and short stories of the contemporary living writers in our country. They prescribe still the foreign writers or those dead Indian writers of the last century.

**Barathi:** Your poetry collections have been translated to Gujarati, Hindi, and a couple of poems into Tamil too. Can you share your views about translating to other languages?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** True, my poetry collections have been translated into Hindi and Gujarati and the books have been published by reputed publishing houses in New Delhi and Ahmadabad. The French translation of poems by the French translator and artist Dominique Demiscault is under print in Paris. Bengali, Tamil and Malayalam translations are going on and the books will come out by next year. The translators have been supplied with my five poetry books in English and they will choose poems for a translated book. It is not verbatim translation they do, but trans-creation. I would like to have translations of my poetry into as many languages as possible. I have a mission in my writing and it is to impart great values and messages to as many minds as I can.

**Barathi:** Though Malayalam is your mother tongue, you never seem to write in your language. Is there any specific reason for this?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** To be frank, I have diffidence in writing poems in my mother tongue Malayalam. My vocabulary and usage in Malayalam is not sufficient to create good poems or short stories. Besides, there are innumerable good writers in Malayalam and if I try, I fear, I will lose the good will and reputation I have as an English writer.

**Barathi:** Recently you went to Nepal for an International Conference and you have been regularly participating in SAARC literature

festivals for many years. Could you elaborate on your experiences in such events?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** I have been fortunate to be invited for the International Conference on Mountain Literature at Pokhara in Nepal. Again I have been invited regularly for the South Asian (SAARC) Literature and Sufi festival in India. Many a times I have been representing the South India as I have been the lone participant from the South. My paper presentations and poems dealing with the culture of the South have been warmly received and appreciated by the other participants.

**Barathi:** You seem to be a socialist but when reading some poems it shows Marxist-communist leanings. What is your stand on this, sir?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** I am a socialist, not a Communist Marxist, and I am not against private property. I like Marx and his philosophy which is ideal, but practically thinking, a society now without any private property is unimaginable. My State Kerala is one which has deep roots of communism and left ideologies. As a political party Communist (Marxist) party has more followers than any other political party in the State. At present Left Democratic parties are in power. In my poems one can find my leaning towards left ideologies. I am always with the poor, the downtrodden, the labour class, and the marginalized.

**Barathi:** You have published a short story collection and at regular intervals you have been publishing short stories in journals, which has an equal impact on the readers. But you are identified as a poet than as a writer of fiction. Do you have any idea to concentrate on fiction in future?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Since I have composed innumerable poems on almost all topics and themes, new poems are born now only occasionally. I would like to concentrate more on fiction, as you have suggested. The problem is that I can't write anything which doesn't impart any value or message.

**Barathi:** Recently, there has been a tremendous increase in violence and harassment against women and girl children and there are sad news about molestation of girl children. What is your stand about this? As a writer what is your reaction to such cruel acts?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** My reaction to such diabolic acts in our country has been recently expressed with a short poem entitled "Had I been Born

as a Dove” published through Face Book. I am greatly shocked and pained by these unimaginable atrocities. I have ended the poem thus:

How can I feel proud of my country?  
How can humans become so mean?  
Had I been born as a dove  
I shouldn't have felt so much of pangs

We don't hear of such shocking offences and tragedies in other countries. In my opinion such molesters and murderers should be trailed soon and subjected to capital punishment. Then only such tendencies can be controlled. Our democratic liberty has degenerated to uncontrolled license.

**Barathi:** Now, we live in a technocratic world, where writers have started publishing online, especially on social media. Would you support this or the traditional way of publishing?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Change is inevitable and as science progresses writing and publication style is compelled to change. Instead of writing on a paper, many writers are typing their compositions now directly on the computer. Since print media is much costlier than web media many writers prefer to publish their works through free social media and online journals. Publication through social media has another attraction. Since the work (short pieces of poem, short story, article etc.) reaches the readers instantly, the writer will get the feedback within a few days. The print media has no such attractions. But the case of a full book in print and e-version is different. The beauty of a print book remaining ever visible and immortal in the book shelves of houses and libraries can't be dreamed of by an e-book. That is the very reason why people prefer to publish books in print version even though it is very costly.

**Barathi:** How do you feel about the present generation writers?

And what is your suggestion for the budding poets/writers?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** With regard to the use of English language, the present generation is not very careful. Grammar mistakes can't tolerated under any poetic license. I find many such mistakes in novels, short stories and poems of the youngsters. With regard to themes and topics they should concentrate more on the burning issues of the country as well as that of the universe. At the same time they should be very cautious not to wound or hurt others' feelings.

**Barathi:** Many of your poems sound philosophical, for instance, “Tyagi”, “Brahman's Leela”, “What is Karma?” etc. Besides, one

could find a fine blend of Christian theology and Hindu philosophy. Though a Christian, in particular, you seem to be attracted towards the Advaita philosophy. What is the reaction of the readers to this, sir?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Though I am born as a Christian, I believe in no established religion. My religion and philosophy is Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. Advaita philosophy seems to me more reasonable than Dvaita. In fact Jesus Christ spoke of both Dvaita and Advaita philosophies. When he spoke of God the Father in Heaven, it is Dvaita and when he said that God is within you and your neighbours, it is Advaita. Being an Indian, naturally I will have a fascination and love for my motherland and its philosophies. So it is not surprising that I love Hinduism and Buddhism. Moreover I find science and spirituality as twin sides of these philosophies. My stand has been appreciated by my readers, both Eastern and Western. How it appeals to the Western readers is reflected by the great reception and appreciation of my books published in USA.

**Barathi:** A final question to you sir, in some poems what readers observe is the negativity, anti-socialism, religious fanaticism in the country as portrayed by you. Though it is sad, don't you think that writing on this subject will bring a kind of bad impression about us?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** The primary duty of a poet or writer is to correct his society. A poet or a writer is a person above the ordinary man, in the sense that he is more sensitive to things around him. I have composed my poems and short stories primarily for my own countrymen to read. It is my belief that poets are the best educators to impart great values and messages to the society since religious and political readers have their own partisan interests. Ours is a democratic country and we have innumerable problems and issues to be solved here. I can't take a stand "my country, right or wrong" in civil matters to be solved in the country itself. Hence as a poet I will be forced to fight against and write on the evil tendencies of the people, superstitions and religious fanaticism, communalism and casteism, corruption done by the government etc. When negative aspects are much more than the positive aspects, how can I glorify the positive things and pretend to ignore the dark face of the country?

**Barathi:** Many research articles and critical books have been published on your works and the young researchers are interested on conducting research in your works. Can you suggest some possible areas where your works to be researched on?

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Since I have written several poems on various themes and topics, researchers can find so many areas in them. They can do research on topics like social awareness, social criticism, philosophy, patriotism, nature, environment, eco-criticism, regional elements, ethics, multiculturalism, love for animals, war and terrorism, issues of women and children, Indian aesthetics, trilateral relation of God, man and nature, old age problems, initiative, leadership, loneliness and alienation etc.

**Barathi:** It is an immense pleasure to converse with you. Thank you for sharing your thoughts and valuable time.

**Dr. K. V. Dominic:** Thanks a lot dear Dr. Barathi for your sensible questions. God bless you!

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## **II. Prof. K. V. Dominic’s Published Books**

1. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Postcolonial Readings in Indo-Anglian Literature*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2009. (Edited Book)
2. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Selected Short Stories in Contemporary Indo-Anglian Literature*. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2009. (Edited Book)



3. Dominic, K. V. *Pathos in the Short Stories of Rabindranath Tagore*. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2009. (Research Book)
4. Dominic, K. V. *Winged Reason*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2010. (Poems)
5. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Stephen Gill's Poetry: Panorama World Peace*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2010. (Edited Book)
6. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Discourses on Contemporary Indian English Poets*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2010. (Edited Book)
7. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Studies in Contemporary Canadian Literature*. New Delhi: Sarup Book Publishers, 2010. (Edited Book)
8. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Critical Studies on Contemporary Indian English Women Writers*. Sarup Book Publishers, 2010. (Edited Book)
9. Dominic, K. V. *Write Son, Write*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2011. (Poems)
10. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Critical Perspectives on the Poetry of R. K. Singh, D. C. Chambial and I. K. Sharma*. New Delhi: Access, 2011. (Edited Book)
11. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Discourses on Five Indian Poets in English: Keki N. Daruwalla, Shiv. K. Kumar, Pronab Kumar Majumder, Syed Ameeruddin and Aju Mukhopadhyay*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2011. (Edited Book)
12. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Concepts and Contexts of Diasporic Literature of India*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2011. (Edited Book)
13. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Changing Face of Women in Literature: The Flaming Spirit*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2012. (Edited Book)
14. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Studies on Six Indian Poets in English: Jayanta Mahapatra, Hazara Singh, P C K Prem, Gopikrishnan Kottoor, Manas Bakshi, Chandramoni Narayanaswamy*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2012. (Edited Book)
15. Dominic, K. V. *Multicultural Consciousness in the Novels of R. K. Narayan*. New Delhi. Authorspress, 2012. (Research Book)
16. Dominic, K. V., ed. *African and Afro-American Literature: Insights and Interpretations*. New Delhi. Authorspress, 2012. (Edited Book)
17. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Indian Poetry in English*. New Delhi. Access, 2012. (Edited Book)
18. Dominic, K. V. *Multicultural Symphony (A Collection of Poems)*. New Delhi: Gnosis, 2014. (Poems)
19. Dominic, K. V., ed. Jayanti M. Dalal: Select Stories. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013. (Edited Stories)
20. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Sarojini Sahoo's Feminine Reflections*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014. (Edited Book)
21. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Indian Literatures in English: New Directions, Newer Possibilities*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2014. (Edited Book)

22. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Multicultural Literature of India: A Critical Evaluation of Contemporary Regional Literatures*. Jaipur: Vking Publishers, 2015. (Edited Book)
23. Dominic, K. V., ed. *World English Fiction: Bridging Oneness*. Jaipur: Vking Publishers, 2015. (Edited Book)
24. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Multicultural Studies on Three Nobel Laureates—Rabindranath Tagore, Toni Morrison and Alice Munro*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. (Edited Book)
25. Dominic, K. V. *Who is Responsible?* (Collection of Short Stories). New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. (Short Stories)
26. Dominic, K. V. *Abheepsa* (Hindi translated poems) Trans. Dr. Santosh Alex. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. (Hindi Poems)
27. Dominic, K. V. *Contemporary Concerns and Beyond* (Collection of Poems). New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. (Poems)
28. Dominic, K. V. and Pamela J., eds. *Environmental Literature: Research Papers and Poems*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2016. (Edited Book)
29. Dominic, K. V. *Aapni Abhipsa*. (Gujarati Translated Poems). Trans. Fr. Varghese Paul, SJ and Yoseph Macwan. Ahmedabad: Rennade Prakashan, 2016. (Gujarati Poems)
30. Dominic, K. V. *K. V. Dominic Essential Readings and Study Guide*. Ed. Victor R. Volkman. Ann Arbor, USA, 2016. (Poems and Criticism)
31. Dominic, K. V. *The Poetic Art of T. V. Reddy*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2017 (Edited Book)
32. Dominic K. V. *Cataracts of Compassion (Collection of Poems)*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2017 (Poems)
33. Dominic, K. V. and Rachel M Sylus. *Multicultural Matrix: Shifting Paradigms*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2017 (Edited Book)
34. Dominic, K. V. and S. Barathi. *Diasporas and Dilemmas – The Voice of an Exile*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2017 (Edited Book).
35. Dominic, K. V. *Sanchita Karma and Other Tales of Ethics and Choice from India*. Ann Arbor, MI, USA: Modern History Press, 2018. (Short Stories).
36. Dominic, K. V., ed. *A Journey from Within to Beyond: A Bunch of Short Stories Culled from Different Cultures*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2018 (Edited Short Stories)
37. Dominic, K. V. *Poèmes Philosophiques de K V Dominic: Poèmes sur la justice sociale, les droits des femmes et de l'environnement* (French Edition) (2019) Trans. Dominique Demiscault. Kindle Edition.
38. Dominic, K. V. *Winged Reason* (ஞானச் சிறகுகள்)—A Bilingual Translated Anthology of Poems. Trans. Barathi Srinivasan. Authorspress, 2019. (Poems English and Tamil)

39. Dominic, K. V. *Write My Son, Write*. Bengali Translation by Dr. Sabita Chakraborty. Underground Literature, Kolkata, 2019. (Poems in Bengali)
40. Dominic, K. V., ed. *Muse of Now Paradigm: An Entry into Poepr*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2020. (Edited poetry anthology)
41. Dominic, K. V. *Musings on Covid Pandemic and Beyond (Collection of Poems)*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2021 (Poems)
42. Dominic, K. V. *Ezhuthoo Makane, Ezhuthoo* (എഴുത്തു മകനേ, എഴുത്തു മകനേ). Trans. Madhu S. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2021 (Malayalam Poems)
43. Dominic, K. V. *Aaraanu Utharavaadi?* (ആരാണ് ഉത്തരവാദി?). New Delhi: Authorspress, 2022 (Malayalam Short Stories)
44. Dominic, K. V. *Nirbachito Chotogalpo* (Selected Short Stories in Bengali). Trans. Sabita Chakrabarti and Biswanath Kundu. Kolkata: Rohini Nandan, 2022 (Short Stories in Bengali)
45. Dominic, K. V. *Selection de petites nouvelles* (Selected short stories in English and French). Adaptation française: Dominique de Miscault (Translated by Dominique de Miscault. Amazon kindle version. September 2022. (Short Stories in English and French)
46. Dominic, K. V. *Short Stories during Covid-19*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2022 (Short Stories)
47. Dominic, K. V. ed. *Selected Short Stories of GIEWEC Poets*. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2022 (Edited Short Stories)
48. Dominic, K. V. प्रोफेसर के. वी. डोमिनिक की चुनी हुई कहनियां. Translated by Dr. Sangeeta Mahesh. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2023 (Short Stories in Hindi)

#### Critical Books on K. V. Dominic's Poetry

1. *Philosophical Musings for a Meaningful Life: An Analysis of K. V. Dominic's Poems*. Ed. S. Kumaran. Ann Arbor, USA: Modern History Press, 2016.
2. *K. V. Dominic: Essential Readings and Study Guide*. Ed. Victor R. Volkman. Ann Arbor, USA: Modern History Press, 2016.
3. *Write My Son, Write—Text and Interpretation: An Exercise in Reading*. By Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. Ann Arbor, USA: Modern History Press, 2016.
4. *K. V. Dominic Criticism and Commentary: An Essential Readings Companion*. By Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. Ann Arbor, USA: Modern History Press, 2017.
5. *Poetical Sensibility of K V Dominic's Creative Muse*. By Dr. Ramesh Chandra Mukhopadhyaya. New Delhi: Authorspress, 2019.