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# Rethinking Socio-cultural Values in Literature



Edited By  
Dr Kam Avadh Prajapati & Dr Abhishek Tiwari

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RAMNIRANJAN JHUNJHUNWALA COLLEGE  
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# **Rethinking Socio-cultural Values in Literature**

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2.

**Exploring Cross- Cultural Dimensions in  
Vilas Sarang's "A Revolt of the Gods" and  
Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man  
with Enormous Wings": A Study of Religious  
Hypocrisy**

Mrs Maria Ahmed Shaikh

The chapter gives a glimpse into the fraudulent nature of human beings across all cultures. The above stories lay bare the pretentiousness of people who put up a religious façade in society but they readily give up on their cultural beliefs and they also can easily desert their Gods. The paper establishes that religious fervor forms an important aspect of individual/cultural identity but what lies at the core of the hearts of people across all cultures is their religious hypocrisy. The paper demonstrates how Vilas Sarang, an Indian writer, and Gabriel Garcia Marquez, a



want to get rid of them or they flee from these gods/ angels who they have worshipped all their life.

A critical analysis of Vilas Sarang's "A Revolt of the Gods" and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" brings to light the fact that the response of the fictional characters from two different regions, India and Colombia, towards the godly intrusion in their lives is basically the same. The paper establishes that religious fervor forms an important aspect of individual/cultural identity but what lies at the core of the hearts of people across cultures is their religious hypocrisy.

After a brief exploration into the common perspectives of culture and religious beliefs that form the thread of both the stories, Vilas Sarang's "A Revolt of the Gods" and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings", it is important to present the notable contribution of these great writers to literature. Vilas Sarang was a modernist writer who experimented with new forms of writing to create new worlds which demonstrated his creative genius to the world. He was also a bilingual writer as he wrote his works in Marathi and English. He wrote: "To write first in Marathi, then redo the text in English, is thus a means of reconciling the two halves of my divided psyche". Some of his famous works are: *A Fair Tree of Void* (1990); also translated in Marathi), *The Dinosaur Ship*



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Another common aspect in Vilas Sarang's "A Revolt of the Gods" and Gabriel Garcia Marquez's "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" is the superb use of Magic Realism. In "A Revolt of the Gods", the mundane world is fused with supernatural occurrences. Vilas Sarang depicts how life is disrupted completely when Ganesh idols vanish and they appear again only to strike back at their devotees. Similarly, in "The Old Man with Enormous Wings", Gabriel Garcia Marquez describes how people insult the old angel when he lives in their midst. The stories have similar themes because of the presence of fantastic elements in the real world in which the characters live. Both the writers have combined elements of fantasy and the real aspects of life to satirize the hypocrisy of people in their respective communities.

In "A Revolt of Gods" by Vilas Sarang, the undercurrents of magical and fantastic elements that exist in the real world makes the reader realize that practice of age-old rituals by characters is not real devotion but merely a sort of lip service paid by them to their Gods. In the following words:

Their behaviour is so contradictory... They are worried and pessimist, but individual doubts are hidden underneath the visible national (religious) pride, and private pessimism is hidden by the cultural norm of chauvinism in public situations. (Bardiau- Huys125)



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reveal the reality behind conformist methods of worship in all Indian cultures. He sarcastically describes the chaotic reaction of the crowds when the Ganesh idols started disappearing from wooden platforms, pandals and trucks. He says:

Here and there one glimpsed clay images that had come to life, as it were, and were sprinting away but scarcely anyone possessed the composure to watch this miraculous spectacle. Confused and terrified, everyone rank back towards the city. Even the traffic cops had abandoned their positions and were running with the rest. Knocked about in that disorderly retreat, I lost one of my slippers. For a while I ran with one slipper, but then realized that there was no point in returning that way. I cast it off too and ran barefoot. (Sarang 59)

The story takes a surprising turn when the crowds who had gathered to pray to Lord Ganesha disperse in fear when he appears before them. The narrator of the story also notices that “a huge civic figure (a big idol of Lord Ganesha) jumping down from a truck. I saw a man fall to the ground at a blow from his trunk.” (59). People are terrified because the boundary between the real and the supernatural worlds gets blurred. In the following words:

At first it seemed that they had disappeared, but then fleeting glimpses of them were caught here and there. The elephant-headed god’s trunk would appear around a



Collective identity is built upon those elements of culture valued most highly by moral judgment. Non observation of these cultural ways is felt as unnatural and leads to guilt feelings... non respect of (cultural) elements brings about an unpleasant feeling of incongruence. (Bardiau- Huys120)

The same idea echoes in the story "A Revolt of the Gods". MrKini, the accountant, confesses to the narrator that when his wife and children are not at home, he curses the gods. He assures the narrator that his life is perfect. He hardly has any big problems yet the writer indicates that he can hear loud noises from his house. When he hears about the vanishing idols he is scared because he thinks that everything that is happening is the result of his cursing gods secretly. His action is symbolic of the guilt that makes him imagine that his sin will lead to disaster. The technique of Magic Realism, is thus, used to shake human beings from their complacency.

Further, their busy life comes to a standstill when people hardly go out to work as they are scared of the Ganesh idols. They also stop wandering the streets, especially in the night, as they come to know that the vanished Ganesh idols suddenly appear before people and strike them. People who worship their gods without fail are now frightened of seeing their gods face to face. The writer points out to how people runaway from gods and everything that can make their life meaningful.



lost his spiritual powers. Even some people who come to see the old angel throw stones at him. The writer purposely presents an angelic figure, devoid of divine powers to bring out the cruel side of humankind. He shows how she cannot put up with one angel and it will be a hellish nightmare for her if she has to live in a place full of angels. Thus, Elisenda turns upside down the cultural discourse of angels being considered as desirable beings.

The 'feeling of awe' ascribed to an angel is universal in all cultures. The old man who has descended in the poor couple's courtyard symbolizes the transformation of a spiritual entity into a flesh and blood being. They do not have any kind of reverence towards the angel as it has intruded into human spaces.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, thus, makes use of the technique of Magic Realism to depict the ingratitude of human beings from all cultural backgrounds. The old angel is a magical creature who changes their destiny. The couple has experienced the bitter reality of poverty but even divine intervention cannot change their basic selfish nature. The fusion of the fantastic with the mundane realities of life results in reducing the angel to a creature to be driven from one corner of the house to another with a broom.


Finally, the old angel recovers from his illness. He grows new wings and flies off to disappear in the skies. Elisenda, who watches the old angel flying to his heavenly abode when she is performing the mundane task of cutting the onions, heaves



Marquez, Gabriel Garcia. "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings". <https://www.umsl.edu/~alexanderjm/AVeryOldManwithEnormousWingsbyMarquez.pdf>

Sarang, Vilas. "A Revolt of the Gods." *The Women in Cages*, Penguin, 2006, pp. 56- 68.

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