Monthly Multidisciplinary Research Journal

Review Of Research Journal

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RNI MAHMUL/2011/38595

ISSN No.2249-894X

Review Of Research Journal is a multidisciplinary research journal, published monthly in English, Hindi & Marathi Language. All research papers submitted to the journal will be double - blind peer reviewed referred by members of the editorial Board readers will include investigator in universities, research institutes government and industry with research interest in the general subjects.

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International Recognized Double-Blind Peer Reviewed Multidisciplinary Research Journal Review Of Research

ISSN 2249-894X

Volume - 4 | Issue - 9 | June - 2015

Impact Factor :3.1402(UIF) Available online at www.ror.isrj.org

SELF-OBSESSION AND RECONCILIATION OF TARA IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S *"DESIRABLE DAUGHTERS"*

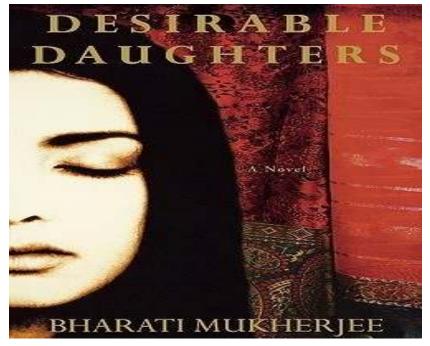




Nirmala Kumari V Research Scholar, Dept of English , KL University, Vaddeswarram, Guntur.

Short Profile

Nirmala Kumari V is a Research Scholar at Department of English in KL University, Vaddeswarram, Guntur.



ABSTRACT:

Bharati Mukherjee reside a peculiar place among first - generation North American writers of Indian Mukherjee's novels are origin. essential to the question of wistfulness for lost home, disappointment of expulsion, mutilation of the self, eagerness of migration, consumption. She has received a number of grants. Bharati Mukherjee's sixth novel, Desirable Daughter (2002) blemish a new tendency in her writings. Her chase of quest for identity leads to several revelations.Tara, the protagonist of the novel challenges some of the social and ideological

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markers that determine her identity by separating herself from her family and community. However, the novel demonstrates that, identity instigation cannot be shack as easily as a snake's skin. In this novel, we can see what happens to a gendered identity who is insist in search of self identity and satisfaction. In the novel *Desirable Daughters*, explores how Tara reunites with her home family community and tradition in the way of quest of Self contrast society, Self demolition and Self finding.

KEYWORDS

Self – centred, traditionalism, modernized, reconciliation, Identity, alienation, Diaspora, migration, transnational.

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INTRODUCTION

Desirable Daughters, is a tale of Tara, the Tree Wife. Her adolescent husband death occurs on her wedding night. In her very early age. Tara Lata is afforded the vilification of life. Unknowingly she becomes the cause of misfortune to her family. In the words of Mukherjee, "not quite a widow, which for Bengali Hindu women, would be the most cursed state, but a woman who brings her family misfortune and death" (DD 12, 2002). But her father decides her marriage with tree. Tara Lata, the Tree –Bride, lives in her father's house, emerging only when she is truck of by the colonial police for her support to the freedom fighters in India. The life of Tara Lata becomes a benchmark to the protagonist of the novel, who afterwards also called as Tara. Tara, the protagonist of the novel, left Calcutta and the great – grand daughters of Jaikrishna Gangooly, belong to a traditional Bengali Brahmin family. She grew up among the Bengali nonpareil in an atmosphere that quiver between Hindu conventionalism and non-religious technocracy. She has born in traditional Hindu family in a healthy atmosphere. Three daughters up very carefully by their parents. In the words of Mukherjee, "Our father could not let either of my sisters out on the street, our ear was equipped with window shades (...) the world did not know it yet" (DD 29, 2002). Tara married to an Indian computer designer. Tara became modernized enough to divorce her husband in few years. She moves with her to San Francisco. In the novel protagonist Tara's story begins with, in the words of Mukherjee, "that most American of impulses or compulsions, a 'roots search'" (DD 17, 2002).

She marries a man whom she never meet before that show she has no interest in her arranged marriage, blindly she obey her father 'choice. In the words of Mukherjee, "I married a man I had never met, whose picture and biography and bloodlines I approved of, because my father told me it was time to get married and this was the best husband on the market" (DD 26, 2002). She does not want to become scapegoat for the sake of family happiness. In the words of Mukherjee, "surrender them both of whims of fate and the manipulation of the marital marketplace (...) what do they know of the needs of modern woman?" (DD 2, 2002). Here the writer suggests females, not to surrender themselves to the imposed marriages for the sake of their families. Because there may be bad consequences occur in arranged or love marriage without love. Tara had never meet Bish before marriage; her marital bliss soon ends with her search for identity and fulfilment in life. She thinks she sacrificed her life to her husband and son and she concludes that she has no any identity in western society. Whoever she meets she tires explain about her native land. She is "sick of feeling an alien" (DD 87, 2002). She says "I don't belong here... I don't want to belong" (DD 79, 2002). Tara, 'elucidation of her life in India appears as representative Indian wife, although affluent by class. In the words of Mukherjee, "I was just a teenager trained to be adoring" (DD 81, 2002). She marries to whom her father chooses for her. Tara's girlhood is narrated taut and prudent - an impassable blister, exiting and entering everything can monitored. In the words of Mukherjee, "there was no rebellion, no seeking after individual identity" (DD 44, 2002).

After marrying Bish, Tara life represents as Indian Wife. She is unveiling images of ideal wife in the Hindu tradition, after her palsified husband. She is expected to conserve traditionalism expose the images of Indian even in America, and is not permitted to studies or to engage in other activities, being first as mother and good wife. Tara becomes shadow of once in America, individual identity proliferates to protest indulgent authority. When Tara recognize that America therefore, to begin with emerges as the dreamland of Identity. In the words of Mukherjee, "it was because the promise of life as an

American wife was not being fulfilled" (DD 82, 2002). After lived in America for sometime Tara decides to give divorce to her husband. She does not want to mingle in the American society, always she prud to her husband. Vandana Singh rightly points out: "Though the female protagonist is comfortable with her American identity still she identifies with her Indian roots" (DD 189, 2002). Migration enables the women personalities to cross the traditional limitations of female identity. The identity of the protagonist is highly permeable, can adopt and contain Indian traditional life and westernized American life Tara appear to implicit that identity is necessary, explained by one's home, clique, and culture. She screams attention to this reliance nothing that. In the word of Mukherjee, "Bengali culture trains one to claim the father's birthplace, sight unseen, as his or her desh, her home.... When I speak of this to my American friends - the ironclad identifiers of region, language, caste, and sub-caste -they call me 'over determined' and of course they are right. When I tell them they should be thankful for their identity crises and feelings of alienation, I of course am right." (DD 33, 2002). The opening story of the Tree Wife reaffirms the importance of region, language, and caste, specifically for a gendered identity. As a child, the modern Tara also feels bound by a world which she belongs to. In the words Mukherjee, "when everyone knows your business and every name declares your identity" (DD 33-34, 2002).

But in later Tara, however, appears to have escaped from the restriction of a pre-set identity, which is limited and controlled by community and culture. In her restraint American home, contained invisible life. In the words of Mukhrjee, "The rhetoric of modern San Francisco makes me invisible" (DD 78, 2002). Tara feels not just invisible but heroically invisible. In the words of Mukherjee, "I feel not just invisible but heroically invisible, a border – crashing claimant of all people's legacies" (DD 79, 2002). Her determined identity apparently can be abandoned in the modern eloquence of her new home... She wants to move away from compel identity and hesitate between two lives: In the words of Mukherjee "may be I really was between two lies" (DD 251, 2002). Bhagabat Nayak in his essay observes Tara's quest for identity in her new land, "Tara after time- travelling finds that she is comprised of multiple selves accepting or rejecting certain aspects of both Indian and American culture" (Nayak 23). She wishes to live a life apart from her husband's identity. In the words of Mukherjee, "looking for respect, for a life apart from your husband's identy?" (DD 200, 2002). In her loneliness she changed beyond traditional rules, but the other character Bish does not change, he adhere to traditional identity, Bish wants her to be a good wife and mother. But she always wants to work somewhere, she feels that she needed something but she has not clarity about that. So she left Bish after a decade she wants to join the community college. In the words of Mukherjee, "left Bish... after a decade of marriage" (DD 82, 2002). She needs the liberating promise or marriage and the wider world. She does not want to be as bug in amber. In the words of Mukherjee, "to be preserved bug trapped in amber" (DD 184, 2002). She observes the way of life of women in America. In the words of Mukherjee, "In America it seemed to us, every woman was expected to created her own scandal, be the centre of her own tangled love nest" (DD 83, 2002).

Desirable Daughters is a nice mixed-breed, the suspense with the tenor and consistency of a family story. It a tale emigrants and the viewpoint of three sisters and their ways of debate the multiple disruption in different aspect. They part ways taking their own course of voyage towards their destiny. Padma an immigrant of ethnic origin New Jersey, and Parvathi married of her own choice and settled in the posh locality of Bombay with an retinue of servants to serve her. Tara, the protagonist of the novel, the facility of her identity testifies her character. Her image of her family values forms a wall of security

around her that disguise the breakable endangered self. They are a blend of traditional and modern outlook. In the words of Mukherjee, "Tuberculosis is everywhere. The air, the water, the sold are septic. Thirty – five years is a long life (...) in such darkness perspective disappears. It is a two-dimensional world impossible to penetrate" (DD 3, 2002). Clifford says "Diaspora women are caught between patriarchies ambiguous pasts and futures. They connect and disconnect, forget and remember, in complex, strategic ways" (Clifford 5).likewise, Tara in the novel finds herself seize between forbearing antiquity of her patriarchal home and saga created by her husband in the obtain home. She cuts the relationship with her husband by walking out and, in turn, gets immobile in a relationship of overhaul with a man who leaves her alone in her time of need. Bhabha asserts that "she is booth, being simultaneously and Indian and an American, helps her gaining the same 'third space of enunciation" (Bhabha 54). In the words of Mukherjee, "the rhetoric of modern San Francisco makes me invisible. I am not "Asian, " (...) I am all (...) yet I am still too timid to feed my Ballygunge Park Road identity(...)I am not the only Indian on block(...) I don' belong here, despite my political leaning: worse, I don't want to belong" (DD 78-79, 2002).

Tara in Desirable Daughters rupture all constraints of tradition and depart of the wedlock with her son Rabi to be with her lover Andy, Buddhist retrofitter, and doing volunteer work in a pre - school in San Francisco, to fulfil herself satisfaction and identity. She does not tell anything about her divorce to her parents. The worldly awareness has great collision in her daily affairs. She can neither negotiates her traditionalism nor scrap her foreignness. In California's High Street she has already a refined rearing. Her sister, Padma's affair with Ronald Dey, a Christian boy, rejected by her parents. As they counsel her, in the words of Mukherjee, "if you sow the wrong kind of soil, you are bound to end up with an unhealthy sapling. That means no inter-caste alliance" (DD 44, 2002). She neither able to accept Bish as his husband nor completely be a house wife, as she think routine life. In search of self satisfaction she find a an another home in her foreign land with her lover. In India a wife's identity is constituent of her husband's identity. In the words of Mukherjee, "In India, we did 'not have outside influences (...) we did not know family breakdown. Our families inside an impenetrable bubble. Anyone entering or existing was carefully monitored. We honoured the proprieties. There was no rebellion, no seeking after individual identity (...) we three sisters were treated with absolute equality, as we responded in total unanimity" (DD 43-44). But in San Francisco she finds self identity which she wants. She imbibes the culture there. In the words of Mukherjee, "Maintaining a healthy home life and respect for culture and tradition" (DD 175, 2002). Tara thinks herself as a typical migrant and locates irresistible in a strange delusion of anxiety between her feelings and response deep in her way and muffle Indian self with an American garb.

But Tara always feels guilty of sumptuous spending and discernible luxury; she feels her husband also must have that feeling. In the words of Mukherjee "I'm feeling just a little alien and uncomfortable, a tinge of not belonging, in the midst of such welcoming comfort and I think it must be the way Bish feels" (DD 75, 2002). As a married woman and house wife she has a contented life what she needed. In the words of Mkherjee, "a gated community, endlessly on display at dinners and openings" (DD 27, 2002). But she divorces Bish, left her happy home, and goes with Rabi to San Francisco. Though she loves her family and her Indian tradition, she left her family and gets rid away. In the words of Mukherjee, "I loved my family and culture but had walked away from the struggle to preserve them" (DD 181, 2002). However Tara enjoys the life with lover Andy by crossing the forbidden rules. Tara thinks that the promise of American wife does not satisfy her desires. She wants to be

independent and wanted to do some job which her husband does not accept. In the words of Mukherjee, "In America, it seemed to us, every woman was expected to create her own scandal, be the centre of her own tangled love nest" (DD 83, 2002). Tara deviates from Indian traditionalism and follow American modernism by having physical attachment with her lover Andy. Her disarticulations from cultural codes speck her again. Tara elucidate her relationship with her lover Andy as: In the words of Mukherjee, "We were exotics to each other, no familiar moves or rituals to fall back on(...) a bear- man" (DD 77, 2002). After having her San Francisco house retrofitted by Andy, she feels very comfortable and enjoys the life. "Totally at home" (DD 25, 2002).

Tara can neither adopt new culture of America nor leave her culture of home land. But at last she follows the of hybrid culture. She chooses a lover and leads a happy life in her views. Bill Ashcroft quotes, "Post – colonial culture is inevitably a hybrid phenomenon involving a dialectical relationship between the grafted European culture systems and an indigenous ontology with its impulse to create or recreate an independent local identity. Such construction or reconstruction occurs as a dynamic interaction between European hegemonic and 'peripheral' subversion of them" (Bill 195). Tara sees difference between her husband and lover in their aspect of love. She thinks love is more pleasure in the love of her lover. Love, to Bish, is the residue of providing for parents and family, contributing to good causes and community charities, earning professional respect, and being recognized for hard work and honesty. Love is indistinguishable from status and honours. In the words of Mukherjee, "I can't image my carpenter, Andy; bringing anything more complicated to it them, say, 'fun'. Love is having fun with someone, more fun with that person than anyone else, over a longer haul" (DD 27, 2002). Though the sense of home plays a significant role in Tara's erection of her life.

In *Desirable Daughter* we can have a glance of stability in the middle of the past and the present through a deft blending of historical convention and contemporaneity in the character of Tara, who has outwardly split open her links with traditionality but still remains tied to her birthplace. She is attracted by antiquated culture and tradition, but is also very much into the attractive world and mutation of the intercontinental America. She is warm hearted aware of her empirical plight. Tara's indefinite steps towards seeking her true self needs to carefully steer between dictatorial Indian traditions and foreign conception of individuality and freedom. Tara is thus and alienated self, deteriorating in the anxiety and scruple of the experience of expatriation. To quote Susheila Nasta "not only an unrequited desire for a lost home land but also a homing desire to reinvent and rewrite home as much as desire to come to terms with an exile from it" (Nasta 2). Her character takes the in the way of her tradition Indian life. Tara Lata's emblematic world, through her critical rehabilitation of the Tree-Bride's history, unimaginable for female expected beyond man, it was vital that Tara, Tara-Lata's scion must neglect her own path to approach indiscreet.

However she does not totally concern to India, America, San Francisco, but she is comfortable to three cultures. She is suppliant of all inheritance she breaks out of the accomplished notions of individuality, tradition, native place and. In the novel we can see many illustrations in which she intentionally parades her Brahmin patrimony. In the words of Mukherjee, "we are Bengali Brahmins from Calcutta and nothing can touch us" (DD 107, 2002). Those are Tara's words but these slants of her personality do not impede her approach of survival in the American land. After six years, she refuses to obey the sacred marriage of Indian tradition and decided to live with Andy. Her reunion of the shattered family also exemplify o the reunion of tradition. In the novel we can observe the endurance

approach to keep possession her identity in a multi racialist society by not engulfing but y conceiving her own ways to express her immigrant conditions

Parvathi and her husband think that Tara's American life is over with the divorce and they think how Tara and her son become victims to the savage life of America. So she wants Tara should come back to her native place. In the words of Mukherjee, "Rabi must have seemed a savage, a trust-fund American savage" (...) they thought my American adventure was over. I wondered it was just beginning" (DD 66, 2002). Parvathi could not bear the question put by Tara is 'about the collaboration between Padma and Ron Dey'. In the words of Mukherjee, "I cannot fathom what is going on in your life to force you to make such a bizarre request. Do you have any idea how mad you sound? May be you have lost touch with the way things work here, in which case, I think you need a good long Indian vacation away from all those crazy soap operas that keep putting bad ideas into susceptible minds(...) Have you become so American that you don't realize how absurd your request is?" (DD 96-97, 2002). She asserts that even Tara' divorce and family matters also they never discuss with the close relatives. She quests Tara that how can she dare to ask such absurd questions. In the process of cleaving, migration and cultural disruption Tara lose her meaning and purpose in life. She become modernize by accepting another man, she thnks same going on in others life. With her sister's words she felt some guilty. In the words of Mukherjee, "Didi, I can't deal with modern India, it's changed too much and too fast, and I don't want to live in a half - India kept on life-support (...) you thought my work ended when I left Bish? I never told you about Andy or Promod (...)." (DD 184, 2002).

Tara cannot escape from her community by her movability and contemporaneity. Homi Bhabha asserts that, "cultural construction or notionness (exists) as a form social and textual affiliation" (Bhabha 292). In spite of her wish to abscond the curtailments of her community, Tara residue compels within it by the gender relations of wife and mother. For instance, the detective agency which she consults declares that, Chris deys threat her because she is wife of Bish Chattarjee. Tara will always be linked to Bish. In the words of Mukherjee, "I know that (...) but in the eyes of Indians you'll always be linked" (DD 143, 2002). "I know who you are, and I even know your address. If you're trying to hide your identity, let me tell you it won't work" (DD 143, 2002). She never escapes her identity as the exwife of a notable and extremely affluent member of the Indian community, and is quarry of criminal world. Though Tara may pursue to insensible within the eloquence or a modern unsettled life in San Francisco, she residue firmly set within the social and cultural identity allocate by her gender-specific, sub-caste, and financial status. Intellectual elements from those which cannot easily be deserted. In the words of Mukherjee, "the iron- clad identifiers of region, language, caste, and sub caste they call me" over determined" and of course" (DD 33, 2002).

Tara known as Bish's wife to the every Indians of New Jersy and New Media. She thinks that she left the past behind her, and was not to her individual identity from her husband. Though she tries to forget the past in her life, but the public reminds her as she was Bish's wife. In the mean while she finds that the past life is energetic and its derivation into the present life can throw into confusion continuously in the continuum. The confusion cause to feel her that the past life is nice. In the words of Mukherjee, "the past is nice, this place is nice. Its' nice to visit the past every now and then. Just don't live there" (DD 76, 2002). Tara however, has been rudely jolted into the understanding that the past is not a detached 'place' that one can visit infrequently and then preterm it – she has discern that the past is a spirited intimation in the present and cannot be refused; reparably, it must be thrash out with to approach an discernment of the 'self', Tara finds herself throw in a insensible leeway where she has no

affirm to voice the uncertainty of her position. Her lop spirit hesitate between her American woman liberation, which seeks to find the candour about the illicit nephew, and the preservative Indianness, which be emphatic on reconcile for a quiet that would help conserve the family's valuable repute. Nonetheless, she floats on easterly expedition in the wake of the truth as well as the firm to express her indecisive position. During these trips, she realizes that she does not want to be a bug in amber. Tara regretfully – more willingly she need accept her barely perceptible, notably, even as the Tara moves eastward, she is not reverting to an original past – she continues her barely perceptible position even in her eastward movement. Tara is not in the wake of lost past; her journey is described as in the words of Mukherjee, "most American of impulses or compulsions, a 'roots search'" (DD17, 2002). And also a serach for an concern to articulate her postcolonial uncertainty; that is, the coalition is American as well as non-American,. This state or being between worlds exaggerate the bustle of culture's cannot translatability.

The famous tattle 'home is where the heart lies' guide the suitable importance to Tara's wish. The alienation between them and Tara lonely life constrain her to spawn that she is now out guarded cocoon of Calcutta life. In the words of Mukherjee, "the narrow world of the house and city felt a secure to me as it must have to Tara in Mishtigung" (DD 23, 2002). Mentally, Tara feels the very absence of spirit in this estrange country. In San Francisco, Tara aspires to guide her life in full enjoyment as American wife. But Tara is not happy as either with her husband Bish or with her lover Andy. In this unspecified city she is from familiar bonds. In the words of Mukherjee, "I am free to make a mess of my own life" (DD 48, 2002). The re-creation of new home seems rather a conceited attempt in the estrange environment. The journey of her soul is revealed in the America. Her physicality pursue only for the independent life that is go against with spirit which neglect apart the past days in Calcutta, the city of San Francisco transpire as the place of home without any psychological attachment which differ from her native place in India: In the words of Mukherjee, "I'm feeling just a little alien and uncomfortable, a tinge of no belonging, in the midst of such welcoming comfort.." (DD 75, 2002). She recollect the days of her teenage in Ballygunge who she learn many thing in the kitchen from her lover. In the words of Mukherjee "how we were never even allowed in the kitchen back in Ballygunge" (DD 236, 2002). These utterances shows us that Tara's present American life is well stocked with the memories of the golden past, past events here proceed as vessel to serve the required elements to her present American life. Estrangement is one of the notable elements that indicate a migrant's immigration expulsion, deracinating and sense of loneliness in a new country.

In *Desirable Daughters* Tara's being with her husband and lover Andy in American never comfort her, which she get in her native land. She cannot digest the culture of America though she allows some changes in her outfits. Her husband's attitude as traditionalist compels her full freedom makes life boredom in America. Therefore, segregation and objectivity in the American society flood her life. She expresses her pain and discomfort continually in the foreign country. In the words of Mukherjee, "Ioneliness had made me a little wanton; wantonness had made me every lonely" (DD 262, 2002). Tara regrets about her son emotional detachment towards his cousins, Bhupesh and Dinesh in Bombay, as Rabi is acquaint live In American environment. Despite e extended stay behind in the original root. Tara states heart – wrenchingly when she is working in kinder garten preschool. In the words of Mukherjee, "I'm not the only blue-jeaned woman with a Pashmina shawl around my (....) I don't belong here" (DD 79, 2002). Moreover, as the Bengali immigrant, Tara disband traditionalism of the sacred marriage, she revealed the tradition of her family regarding marriage. In the words of

Mukherjee, "Divorce was not in our family vocabulary in the sixties" (DD 101, 2002). Tara native culture does not allow the sight of a girl lightening up cigarette, in the words of Mukherjee, "in Calcutta a man brushing up against a woman in a rush- hour bus or tram might cause a riot" (DD 80, 2002). Though Tara aim to avoid the Bengali culture converts an American woman so far she does not shack it thoroughly.

Chris Dey's character helps the forwarding of the plot of the novel. A series of incidents in the story creates by the character of Chris dey. The news of the real Chris Dey's death comes as headlines in the newspaper. Tara returns to India after the destruction her house by bombing. By uniting her parents, we can analyze that she accept the tradition, home, culture and community. Her father moves to Rishikesh after selling their house in Calcutta. Rabi observes some words by Bengali saint in his grandfather's books. In the words of Mukherjee, "Have thou no home, what home can hold thee, friend? The sky thy roof, the grass thy bed" (DD 297, 2002). Tara's mother promptly says a comparing belief asserts that, in the words of Mukherjee, "Home is where you belong, Rabindra" (DD 297, 2002). Yet this idea of be held by Rabi, who born in America lesbian speak in English, is as complex as it ambitious for the illicit Chris Dey. When home is explicate as a "private spheroid of paternal pecking order" and distinguish by it's barring, some human beings will always be outside. Her reunite with the family, Tara's relationship with Bish, we get a notion of workly identity and strengthen her words. Tara cannot abscond her lot of exterior of individuality, Martin Mohanty guotes" the complicated working out of relations between home, identity, and community" (Mohanty, Biddy 195). Though Tara continuously feels that her life as a wonder with many twists. In the words of Mukherjee, "once-firm identity has been" smashed by hammer blows, melted down and re emerging as something wondrous, or grotesques" (DD 196, 2002). The renovated identity remains firmly compel within the intellectual purpose of home and clique.

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Review Of Research Journal 258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005,Maharashtra Contact-9595359435 E-Mail-ayisrj@yahoo.in/ayisrj2011@gmail.com Website : www.ror.isrj.org