

ECOLOGIES OF THE

**NEW:**

MATTER, MIND & BODY

Volume 1

---

MES Mampad College (Autonomous)



**Ecologies of the New: Matter, Mind & Body**  
Volume 1.

Anthology of Research Papers

**Editors**

**Chief Editor :**

Dr. P.K Babu  
Principal, MES Mampad College

**Associate Editors :**

Dr. Sajid A. Latheef  
Dept. of English, MES Mampad College

Abdul Wahid. K.  
Dept. of Islamic History, MES Mampad College

Dr. Mehar Al Minnath  
Dept. of Chemistry, MES Mampad College

Dr. K. M. Remia  
Dept. of Zoology, MES Mampad College

First Edition: January 2018

©Publication Division  
DGM MES Mampad College  
Mampad 676542

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying or recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

ISBN: 978-93-528188-8-4

Typesetting by Data World, Tirur

1. Athira R.  
Courtship  
The Poet
2. Dr. Sajid A.  
Untying the  
and *Bram*
3. Sajitha M.  
A Comparison  
Tribal and  
in Malappu
4. Mufeeda T.  
From Page  
Hamlet's Po
5. Dr. Pinky I.  
Envisioning  
Howard Br
6. Aneesa Ali  
Embodied
7. Greeshma  
Gender and  
Ecofeminis
8. K.T. Sidhe  
Studies on  
in Two Tre
9. Mohamed  
Human De  
An Inter-co
10. Aditya K N  
Impact of H  
and Develo
11. Brilla Varg  
An Analytic  
In The Dev  
with Specia
12. Vimal. P  
Rethinking
13. Twinkle W  
Ageing and



## Contents

1. <b>Athira Radhakrishnan</b> Countering Power: The Politics of Realignment in <i>The Hangwoman</i> -	7 - 12
2. <b>Dr. Sajid A.Latheef</b> Untying the Tetxs: Intertexts in Bram Stoker's <i>Dracula</i> and <i>Bram Stoker's Dracula</i>	13 - 18
3. <b>Sajitha Mohan. M.</b> A Comparative Assessment of Nutritional Status between Tribal and Non Tribal Children under five in Malappuram District, Kerala	19 - 22
4. <b>Mufeeda T</b> From Page to Screen: Appropriation of Hamlet's Procrastination on the Screen	23 - 27
5. <b>Dr. Pinky Isha</b> Envisioning Myriad Theatrical Styles: A Study of Howard Brenton's Plays for the Poor Theatre.	28 - 36
6. <b>Aneesa Akbar K.V.</b> Embodied Cognition: Towards a Phenomenological Critique	37 - 45
7. <b>Greeshma Gopinath</b> Gender and Ecology Relationship: An Overview on Ecofeminism And Feminist Environmentalism	46 - 54
8. <b>K.T. Sidheek &amp; K.U.M.A. Rafeeq</b> Studies on the Abundance and Diversity of Aquatic Entomofauna in Two fresh water streams of Malappuram District, Kerala, India	55 - 60
9. <b>Mohamed Ashiq PM and Rahmathulla K</b> Human Development in SAARC Region: An Inter-country Comparative Evaluation-	61 - 67
10. <b>Aditya K Narayanan</b> Impact of IFRS Adoption; In both Developed and Developing Countries	68 - 75
11. <b>Brilla Varghese, Maya.K, &amp; Gangasree.T</b> An Analytical Study on the Impact of Farm Tourism In The Development of Agricultural & Tourism Sectors with Special Reference to Wayanad District.	76 - 81
12. <b>Vimal. P</b> Rethinking the Status of Artefacts after Heidegger	82 - 89
13. <b>Twinkle Wilson C &amp; Dr.Zabeena Hameed .P</b> Ageing and Morbidity: With Special Reference to Kerala	90 - 97

289 - 297

298 - 312

313 - 324

325 - 338

339 - 354

355 - 362

363 - 365

366 - 371

372 - 376

377 - 383

384 - 400

401 - 406

## Countering Power: The Politics of Realignment in *The Hangwoman*

### Abstract

The social construction of power leaves a number of blind spots in society, which produces multiple sources of resistance across its expansion. Elizabeth Grosz notes that the body is "a political object par excellence; its forms, capacities, behaviour, gestures, movements, potential are primary objects of political contestation." The nexus between body and power serves enough space for a dialectic procedure. The vacuum created out of this 'aporias' gives enough possibility for a realignment and reconstruction. When directed by Foucauldian motto "Power is everywhere," anybody and any 'body' can hold it and be the subjects or objects at their own discretion and glance of the structure. This paper is an attempt to analyse K R Meera's *Hangwoman* as a discourse on power and how realignment is possible through the reversion of power structures. The novel is all about the transformation of Chetna from a typical girl in to woman even capable of killings, one of the worst jobs ever. Taking the novel as a discourse on power, the layers which it unravels are seen to be taken as pillars on which the patriarchal and all chauvinistic structures of power are believed to be erected. The intention of the paper is to analyse the different parameters of the discourse in connection with the protagonist, Chetna Grddha Mullick. In the contemporary social circumstances, where the intimidation of female body and related resources are on the vogue and so becoming a culture, finding alternate narratives as a counter strategy has its relevance. As Julia Kristeva points out, this study becomes pertinent as this is an attempt to consider the female marginality as a position for transcending the same and activate their dialogic participation in life.

"I have built the story like a rope, with many strands or parallel story lines woven together. The rope ends in a noose that chokes the reader." (K R Meera)

K R Meera's *Hangwoman* literally chokes the reader through the olfactory senses of smells, sounds and whispers. The noose and fairy tales on death penetrates into the metaphorical dynamics of hanging. The looming metaphor of knot reveals the be all and end all of the novel. The novel is all about the transformation of Chetna from a typical girl in to woman even capable of killings, one of the worst jobs ever. Taking the novel as a discourse on power, the layers which it unravels are seen to be taken as pillars on which the patriarchal and all chauvinistic structures of power are believed to be erected. The intention of the paper is to analyse the different parameters of the discourse in connection with the protagonist, Chetna Grddha Mullick.

Chetna, the youngest member of much hyped Grddha Mullick family, finds a room for herself in the male dominated profession of hanging. Much hues and cries are there to indicate that this is certainly a road not taken by women and the path is yet to be travelled by them. Surpassing all the gossips and finding an answer to all the allegations, she powerfully



emerges to the nether world with her knots. "When we spoke we obsessively made and unmade nooses with the ends of our garments, be it a sari or a dupatta. That must have been a psychological necessity." (13) She often convinces herself about the act of hanging and a girl like her can handle it as a child's game. The episode of Maruti Prasad Yadav and the one with Mano da reveals that the 'professional hanging' is actually their domestic affair. When she asks Mano da 'right hei na,' the laxity with which she finds the act of hanging is visible.

When the issue of hanging occurs, there begins the search of a hangman and not a woman for the job. "Qualification: applicant should be an adult, over five feet four inches tall. Only males need apply." (57) As the notion of patriarchy often slumbers on male forces and tentacles of power, the infiltration of Chetna's name marks the controversy of the scene. When it becomes a way of existence for Mullick's, with Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, this is actually a food for hot story for heir channel. Often and even she is been flaunted a "the symbol of strength and self respect" (157), a phrase where one can see the down play of male culture. The same moment she became hailed as icon of self respect, herself respect crumbles into a mere portion of breast inside Mitra's hands. The pain she experiences at this physical molestation is like that of an ordinary girl who just screwed out of a brutal rape. So this epithet out of which Mitra boasted on and off at the television shows has attained the status of a mockery in which Chetna becomes a mere piece of dice to be played between the two male representatives of patriarchy – her father and her lover.

Whenever Chetna was asked to comment on herself and her profession, she never baffles like a girl of her age would probably do. She has clear vision on the ways she carries out the things. Her body is a strong tool for her to project herself and her predicaments. She never considers her body and her status as a hangman's daughter as a hindrance to the expression of self. The way she comments of her fall into the vault, where the hanged men collapse after the hanging reveals the way she perceives her profession. "With a terrified scream, without a noose around my neck, I descended into the nether world, into which many thousands of human lives had fallen." (76) She identifies it as 'nether' world and not as the 'other' world.

When we meet Chetna for the first time, she is like every other ordinary child who finds solace in the little pranks and the household chores which her mother gives. The innocence of the character is perceived when her Kaku sends her to buy grocery from the nearby shop for Sanjeev kumar Mitra. The transformation from such a being to the one who performs the hanging(s) is a miraculous conversion. The inner might of Chetna meets with a new radiance through the curves and bents of life with people surrounding her like Grdda Mullick, Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, Ram da, Mano Da and the numerous historical figures of her family she often come across.

The interesting fact with Chetna is that whenever she loses her inner courage and the moments she feels like losing in touch with herself, she relapses to the history of her family. She submerges into her favourites on times of insecurities and agonies. The way she depends on the myths of Pingalakeshini and Kadambari coincide often with her 'aching left breast.' While the discussions are getting hot on and off screen about hanging going to perform by a woman, Chetna remains super cool with the thought of Pingalakeshini as she is regarded as the first hangwoman of her family. The discourses of power are being treated with reference to history and its manifestations here. Kadamabari was sentenced to death for killing her husband while he is having sex with another woman. The charges posed against her are two

vely made and  
ist have been a  
aging and a girl  
nd the one with  
fair. When she  
visible.

gman and not a  
et four inches  
on male forces  
sy of the scene.  
is actually  
the symbol of  
of male culture.  
crumbles into a  
at this physical  
al rape. So this  
ed the status of  
en the two male

sion, she never  
ays she carries  
dicaments. She  
indrance to the  
he hanged men  
With a terrified  
nto which many  
d and not as the

inary child who  
ther gives. The  
rocery from the  
to the one who  
na meets with a  
her like Grdda  
al figures of her

courage and the  
y of her family.  
ay she depends  
ing left breast.'  
to perform by a  
e is regarded as  
l with reference  
for killing her  
inst her are two

in number. First, she has killed her husband; second, she has interrupted the sexual act. It is believed that "sexual act, which made a man's life as man meaningful." (211) The power to act against the established discourses has for its vigor her interest in the history of the Mullick family.

The novel arranges the inspired counter discourses through the play of binaries. What strikes here the most is the way Meera arranges her binaries. One of the strange combinations is the manner in which she connects love and death. When she says, "From my life thus far, I can say this much on earth, only love is more uncertain than death." (11) The uncertainty of death, which dominates the novel, has obviously narrated in connection with love. Love often culminates in death in multifarious ways like the way Chetna converts her love to reside happily in the death of Sanjeev Kumar Mitra. The novel in binaries is often a discourse on life, on death, on marginality, on lust, on desire, on retribution and the like. The verbal and written formats of the discourse can umpteen layers of communication within these 432 pages. As Foucault comments in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* that discourses are not free, the connection the text establishes with the listener opens up multifarious meanings of exploration. The structure thus evolved gains its co-existence with power through its relation to inadvertently opposing images. Thus, the possibilities of meanings are not just a production of language but through the intricacies of binaries.

The way *Hangwoman* unravels itself in 52 chapters is on the edifice of power structures – the history of Mullicks, the vast landscapes of Kolkatta, high emotional rendering on love, life and death. Chetna's attempt to realign power loops on the way she places her relationship with her father and her lover/ex-lover. Her play on the epithet 'symbol of Indian womanhood and respect' is a kind of discourse interrogating the excess of power. Throughout her life she is trapped inside a number of masculine identities right from the start. "I had the wrong idea that the rope, which lay bent, waiting for a chance to strengthen its spine, was a woman like me." (401) The way she reacts to the molestation of Maruti Prasad through the loop of her rope becomes an occasion for her to rely the power of her body. She simply realizes that gender is not a constraint for her profession comes to her as matter of joy and encouragement. The act of hanging him symbolically suggests the power with which she tries to hang the masculine power which she experiences throughout her life.

The journey of Chetna is actually a journey through the realities that really exist in women's lives. What makes her different in the journey is the way she adopts both the physical and psychological realities of life and how she accepts and modifies the social conditions to portray pictures of subverting discourses. Chetna's self is actually an amalgamation of two sections, one as that of an ordinary woman who yearns to get passionate glance from her lover and the other that of empowered woman who yearns to tie the noose on her lover. "I desired with one corner of my heart and despised with the rest of it" (98) The juxtaposition has often produced rapacious effect on the reader. When she meets Sanjeev Kumar Mitra for the first time, she feels like she skipped a heartbeat out of the feeling of love. She yearns for him before Mitra actually proposes her. Even after the time she senses the bad aching on her left breast, she is willing to surrender before him. It is Mitra who have planned not to utilize the situation. Later when on the occasion of Ramu da's death, the insensitive, practical tactics of Mitra's behaviour choked her literally. The culmination of her features (broken) finds a voice then through Hangwoman Chetna. To be reassured with herself, Chetna embraces a smile, to say one of the enthralling one ever seen, before the



world as a distancing technique. She models Annapurna in her smile. "Annapurna's spiritual journey started when she began to smile to herself in the middle of unending domestic chores." (271) Thereafter Chetna gives smiles to everyone alike. Even in the peak of sorrow (the demise of Ramuda and Kaku) she opts her enchanting smile. Her smile finds a better fulfillment with Mitra in the newsrooms, on the streets and even in his bedroom at Sonagachi. "I threw yet another noose around his neck with a beatific smile. He... unarmed and helpless." (331) Her redefinition of liberation as transformation finds face in the bedroom of Mitra where she makes sexual advances with her smile. Mitra being utterly taken aback with move takes a moment to catch hold of the situation. When he finds that Chetna actually means it, he staggers vociferously. Being engulfed in her smile, he even says, 'You are raving mad.' (331) He never imagines or meets such a woman who is so stern in her stand of sexual advances. His social consciousness never supplies him with the idea of a girl with the 'desire.' "Though she may be unarmed, be wary of the woman who comes into your bedroom of her own will-this is what men learn from the world." (323) He feels numbness instead of being erected. Chetna deliberately pushes out the corner stones of the long past of patriarchal power pillars both in form and structure.

The image of Goddess Durga in the novel seems to be the psychological projection of the inherent 'sakthi' embedded in women. The doctrine '*shrishti, sthithi, samhara*' finds a fresh move with the trio, Durga – Niharika – Chetna. Niharika, the elder sister of Chetna, was in love with a man named Himanshu Pal whose job is to make Durga idols. One day when he comes to Nimtala Ghat to see Niharika, he carries with him the idol of Durga, but the face bears Niharika's with the dimple she has on her left cheek. As Mullick opposed to the affair, she was married to another man where she had to suffer domestic violence. She returned home soon only to find solace in death. Being symbolically associated with Durga, Niharika yearns for a transformation but as she lacks *samhara* quality and hanged herself to death. Chetna, on the other hand, being a cauldrom of burned out desires, assumes the real *samhara* durga. As the goddess wipes out the evil creatures from the world, Chetna emerges out as a harbinger of power, a realm unknown to her gender so far. "The statue of Durga is made out of soil taken from the beshya's doorstep. This is because the ego of the man who crosses it unravels and falls on the ground there." (432)

Chetana even goes one step further and says that the goddess of Calcutta is not Durga but Devi Manasa. While talking to Sanjeev Kumar Mitra at his place Sonagachi, she talks at length about Devi Manasa, who is abandoned by her father God Shiva in the snake pit and there it is the snakes who have given shelter to her. As she was disposed of both by her father and husband, she becomes symbol of vengeance. "The wrathful Manasa sat on a blooming lotus beneath the hoods of seven black cobras, the snakes swirling and sliding on her body. Manasa could never forgive those who did not respect her precisely because she had weathered insult, betrayal and insecurity." (326) The image of snakes thus emerges out as a powerful representation of vengeance here. The association of Manasa with snakes later turns out to expand her feelings of betrayal and its transformation into vengeance. The image of snakes lurks again in the novel when Chetna goes on to visit the jail and the hanging place. When she sees for the first time the coiled rope for hanging, she feels it like that of a cobra preparing to lay eggs. Later in the novel, when her smile feigns vengeance for Mitra, she uses such a coiled rope in the form of cobra for hanging him. When the novel opens, the word 'fuck' is the monopoly of Sanjeev Kumar Mitra, later Chetana use the same word to shed the ego of Mitra. The sexual satisfaction they both thrive for at the different levels of the text find

Chetna's spiritual  
 ding domestic  
 peak of sorrow  
 : finds a better  
 : at Sonagachi.  
 unarmed and  
 he bedroom of  
 ken aback with  
 'Chetna actually  
 You are raving  
 stand of sexual  
 in' 'he 'desire.'  
 bedroom of her  
 nstead of being  
 : of patriarchal

gical projection  
 'samhara' finds a  
 of Chetna, was  
 ne day when he  
 ga, but the face  
 sed to the affair,  
 e. She returned  
 Durga. Niharika  
 herself to death.  
 he real samhara  
 emerges out as a  
 ga is made out of  
 : no crosses it

utta is not Durga  
 achi, she talks at  
 he snake pit and  
 oth by her father  
 it on a blooming  
 ing on her body.  
 ecause she had  
 emerges out as a  
 ith snakes later  
 ance. The image  
 e hanging place.  
 e that of a cobra  
 r Mitra, she uses  
 opens, the word  
 word to shed the  
 ls of the text find

is manifestation in the end through the hangings. The demo hanging happened inside the  
 which caused the death of Mitra is the one which witnessed the fulfillment of the  
 desires of the both. In a successful hanging it is believed that on the moments of struggling for  
 life, men are likely to ejaculate semen along with their urine and faeces. If the explanation is  
 worth, Chetna 'fucked' Mitra and his ego. "I realized that if the noose was in the wrong place  
 because the length of the rope was wrong, men dying in agony passed not just urine and  
 faeces but also semen. No one had told me. But a woman does not need special lessons to  
 know that. That was the turning point in my story. After that, I do not have the heart to let him  
 off." (76)

Meera's major point of attack in the novel is the male ego. Chetna, as such, is a  
 perfect fit in the hands of the author for the execution of her target. The description of  
 Sonagachi in the novel is worthy enough to expand the hypocrisies of the patriarchs. Grddha  
 Mulick is fond of prostitutes right from his youth till the time the readers meet him. She  
 regards them in high spirits even that of his wife. Keeping away his interest in prostitutes,  
 when he finds Chetna's Kakima in such a space, he losing his temper murdered both his  
 brother and wife. When the discussions on their murder later occurs in their home and when  
 Grddha explains his stand, Chetna's mother wittingly says, there is nothing wrong with  
 Kakima as she does for saving her husband's life from an illness. Chetna is actually rebelling  
 against all those hypocrisies through her hangings. When Sushila Didi from Sonagachi asked  
 her about her job, she vehemently says, "I am a hangman!" (342) The irony in her statement  
 evident is quite evident here.

"What if I do not realize ultimate joy in this world and have to leave with an unquiet  
 body to the other world?" (313) Chetna's attempt to deconceptualise the meanings by  
 countering the dominant power ideologies find expression in this statement. Krishna  
 Sarbadhikary in *Gender: Text and Context, Canadian and Indian Writing* says, "Foucault has  
 focused on the relational character of power, which shifted emphasis from repressive  
 function to its productive function but a regulatory force evident in its productive power to  
 produce, demarcate, circulate, differentiate the bodies it controls." Due to the process of  
 reiteration, sex comes to attain the status 'natural', an idealized construct, produced and  
 embedded in culture and society in the course of time. It is in this reiteration and the repeated  
 creation of norms lies paradoxically "the deconstructive possibility of gender." What Chetna  
 finds through her discourses on power is such a realignment and deconstruction of gender. In  
 the contemporary social circumstances, where the intimidation of female body and related  
 resources are on the vogue and so becoming a culture, finding alternate narratives as a  
 counter strategy has its relevance. As Julia Kristeva points out, this study becomes pertinent  
 as this is an attempt to consider the female marginality as a position for transcending the same  
 and activate their dialogic participation in life.



## References

- Bharati, Sivaram. *Women in Indian Literature*. New Delhi: D.P.S Publishing House, 2010. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. London: Routledge, 1990. Print.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972. Print.
- Foucault, Michael. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. France: Editions Gallimard, 1969. Print.
- Gupta, Monika, ed. *Women Writers in the Twentieth Century Literature*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2000. Print.
- Meera, KR. *Hangwoman*. Haryana: Pengu Books, 2014. Print.
- Verma, Varun. "A writer is inherently a feminist, humanist, environmentalist and a socialist." *Telegraph India* 18 Jan. 2015. 1. The Telegraph. Web. 20 Jan. 2017.