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## Human trafficking and surveillance: a close examination of Manjula Padmanabhan's Drama *Harvest*

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### ABSTRACT

*Human trafficking – defined as organ and sex trafficking, and slavery materialized through numerous stratagems – is a growing problem worldwide. There has been a rising interest in the topic of human trafficking, and its mounting complexity and challenge. However, research has scarcely included literary representations of human trafficking achieved via e-surveillance processes: in this respect, Asian plays have received no sufficient critical attention. This article aims to redress this dearth by investigating the processes of human trafficking as depicted in the Indian playwright Manjula Padmanabhan's Harvest, which premiered in 1999 in Greece. The play, a literary testimony to the complexity and subtlety of human trafficking processes, features storylines about human trafficking exercised through the forms of coercion, abduction, sexual seduction, fraud, deception, and abuse of power. Therefore, Harvest is closely read through Fanon's, Foucault's, and Bauman and Lyon's perspectives of surveillance in this article. Reading the play provides a point of discussion of the third world's vulnerability and its resistance to the first world's human trafficking. It sheds much light on diverse human harvesting means such as organ harvesting and repopulation, and miscegenation, utilized through e-surveillance. The article offers complex insights into human trafficking victims of surveillance – both their vulnerability and the attempts of their agency.*

**KEYWORDS:** *E-surveillance, Panopticon, Postcolonial drama, Third/First World, Indian playwright*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

“The more stringent and rigorous the panoptic regime, the more it generates active resistance, whereas the more soft and subtle the panoptic strategies, the more it produces the desired docile bodies” (Lyon 2006, p. 4).

Human trafficking, including the removal of organs, is defined as “[t]he recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation” (Joint Council of Europe/United Nations Study 2009, p. 13). While adopting the definition, this paper explores human trafficking – a real and rapidly growing issue all over the world since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – as represented in Indian playwright Manjula Padmanabhan’s Anglophone play *Harvest*.

*Harvest* is highly significant as it represents, *inter alia*, diverse human trafficking means exercised through e-surveillance. The play features complex storylines about human trafficking exercised through the forms of coercion, abduction, sexual seduction, fraud, deception, and abuse of power. Nevertheless, *Harvest* is read through feminist, neocolonial, psychological, and science-related perspectives. For instance, the play is identified as a representation of the extreme outcome of the international trade in human organs as a metaphor for neocolonialism (Bedre and Giram, 2013; Ramachandran 2005). Mathur (2004) highlights the politics of science concerning third-world women in the play. Rafseena (2017) reads the play’s eerie aspects of uncanniness through Freudian perspectives. Gilbert (2006) argues that power in *Harvest* is manifested through biomedical and digital technology.

Human trafficking representation in *Harvest* has rarely received any sustained critical attention: research has barely investigated the subtle e-surveillance processes in it through surveillance concepts. This is where this article departs from the hardly existing scholarship. This paper aims to redress this vacuum by offering a critical, close examination of representations of the human tracking processes, materialized through e-surveillance, and exercised in a modified panopticon. The focus of this paper is on the processes of exploitation in the trafficking of human beings.

## 2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/ MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 *Harvest*

Written in 1997 and premiered in Greece in 1999, *Harvest* presents a futuristic plot, set in Bombay, India. Om Prakash – the 22-year-old unemployed husband of Jaya – is employed as an organ Donor by InterPlanta Services, a multinational company, in return for a significant improvement in Om’s family’s living status. Om has introduced himself to the InterPlanta Company as Jaya’s brother-in-law, not as Jaya’s husband, as unmarried men are believed to be preferred by the First World organ Receiver. Om’s family from India represents the Third World while the receiver is an “American Receiver” from the “First World” who owns the rights to Om’s undetermined body parts (the First World generally means the nations marked by economic and political steadiness, while the Third World, in general, is used to refer to developing or economically poor nations). However, the agreement is indefinite as to which organ and when the donation is required (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1597). As such, not only Om’s body but also Om’s family members – Jaya, Ma (Om’s mother), Jeetu (Om’s brother and Jaya’s secret lover) – are kept under e-surveillance through a “globe” shaped contact

module, fixed by the employees of the Receiver, in the ceiling of their one-room apartment (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1605), where all four members live. Om and his family members are subjected to the gaze of the intended Receiver, who is visible in the form of a blonde “all-American young female,” self-introduced as Ginni (Gilbert 2001, p. 247). Appearing through the contact module as per the Receiver’s whims and fancies, Ginni regulates Om’s family, specifying their food, and social and hygienic habits. The Receiver’s interaction with Om’s family members is almost non-reciprocal. Although it is Om who agrees to the organ donation bond, the Receiver’s ultimate target is Jaya for the First World’s reproduction, not Om, as revealed only at the end of the play: the Receiver is an ‘ailing’ man, who requires a fertile young woman who can carry his child. While attempting to reach the target, the Receiver engages in diverse modes of human trafficking attempts – abduction, deception, seduction, and coercion – to which family members sans Jaya become victims.

## 2.2 Surveillance Praxis

The conceptual approach for surveillance to reading *Harvest* can be traced through Fanon’s, Foucault’s, and Bauman and Lyon’s concepts of gaze, which are succinctly reviewed here as they support the reading of the play. Fanon’s (2008) self-observation of a black person’s body, with reference to the relationship between colonizers, and the colonized, as presented in *Black Skin, White Masks*, offers insights into self-surveillance. Referring to an encounter with a white person, the book depicts a black person’s consciousness of being ‘different’ from white people.

On that day, completely dislocated, unable to be abroad with the other, the white man, ... I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object. What else could it be for me but an amputation, an

excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood? (Fanon, 2008, p. 85)

This consciousness of one’s body, in comparison to the colonizer, is “a negating activity”, which results in an “amputation” – a figurative self-removal of one’s own identity (Fanon 2008, p. 83). The colonized’s self-amputation is a form of collusion with the colonizers, caused by self-surveillance, through which the colonized people have attempted to appropriate with the colonizer.

Moreover, whilst tracing the development of the medical purposes in the institution of the clinic, Foucault (2003), in *The Birth of the Clinic*, theorizes, that people are subject to “medical-gaze” or “clinical gaze”, which is the constant gaze upon the patient: “this age-old, yet ever renewed attention that enabled medicine not to disappear entirely with each new speculation, but to preserve itself” (Foucault 2003, p. 65). The medical gaze penetrates the surface observation and helps to unearth the hidden truth of a patient’s body. As it is not “an intellectual eye,” it travels from body to body in the space of “sensible manifestation” (Foucault 2003, p.148). This gaze suggests an exaggeration of the practical knowledge of the body; hence, Foucault posits that a doctor’s involvement is an act of biopolitical violence if it is “not subjected strictly to the ideal ordering of nosology” (2003, p. 8). The medical gaze renders the body an object on which medical knowledge of it is generated whilst the patient’s identity as a person is erased. Accordingly, the separation of a patient’s body from his or her identity is dehumanizing, and so is the medical gaze.

Besides, how surveillance is used for order, punishment, and discipline in any institution in society is conceptualized in Foucault’s theory of Panopticism as presented in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault, 1995). From the observation tower of a panopticon, it is possible to observe each cell located on its

periphery where the occupants – ranging from school children to prisoners – are incarcerated. This panoptic structure induces a sense of permanent observation and ensures the functioning of power; hence, discipline is enforced. When the incarcerated are isolated in their own cells, there is no danger of any “collective escape”, “plot” or violence (Foucault, 1995, p. 200-201). By individualizing the subjects and placing them in a state of constant visibility, the efficiency of the institution is maximized in any society as Panopticon is effective in increasing “both the docility and the utility” of all elements in society (Foucault, 1995, p. 218).

Moving beyond the purposes of docility and the utility of Foucault’s theory of Panopticism, Bauman, and Lyon theorize in *Liquid Surveillance* that the panopticon is “alive” and “armed” with “cyborgized muscles,” and has stopped being “universal” (2013, p. 51). Hence, people are subject to individual surveillance: “just as snails carry their homes, so the employees of the brave new liquid world must grow and carry their personal panopticons on their bodies” repairing them and assuring their uninterrupted operation (Bauman and Lyon, 2013, 54). *In aliis verbis*, there are new ways that surveillance is seeping into the “bloodstream” of human life (Bauman and Lyon, 2013, p.128). The notion of liquid modernity frames surveillance in new ways and offers both “striking insights into why surveillance develops the way it does and some productive ideas on how its worst effects might be confronted and countered” (Bauman and Lyon 2013, p. 9).

In this regard, “liquid surveillance” is an approach to situate modern surveillance developments in the “fluid and unsettling modernity of today” (Bauman and Lyon 2013, p. 29). The word “liquid” metaphorically refers to the “lightness” of the present nature of society, and the mobility and inconstancy of the modern world (Bauman 2000, p. 2). Panopticon

is just one form of surveillance and today’s world is “post-Panoptical” (Bauman, 2000, p.11): the inspectors can leave the Panopticon, to inaccessible realms, and power exists globally and beyond one’s own territory.

What mattered in Panopticon was that the people in charge were assumed always to ‘be there’, nearby, in the controlling tower. What matters in post-Panoptical power relations is that the people operating the levers of power on which the fate of the less volatile partners in the relationship depends can at any moment escape beyond reach – into sheer inaccessibility. (Bauman 2000, p.11)

Although the observers escape from visibility and accessibility, the coercion is never withdrawn, but made invisible through e-surveillance, making it more powerful. Bauman’s notion of liquid modernity forms surveillance in new ways and offers both striking understandings of why surveillance intensifies the way it does and some productive suggestions on how its adverse effects might be challenged and disputed. Hence, the coercion that operates through e-surveillance for the process of human trafficking is disembodied and invisible, moving beyond the concepts of Foucault’s Panopticism toward a modern Panopticon.

### 3 RESULTS & DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Om’s Decision: “Neurosis Status *with [his] Consent*”?

Writing a preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Jean-Paul Sartre contends that the status of “native” is a “neurosis” introduced and maintained by the colonizer in the colonized’s mentality *with their consent*” due to inferiority (2004, p.14). Despite the absence of direct colonialism, its legacies haunt the economically downtrodden groups of post-colonial people in

the global world, making them subjected to gaze. The argument here is that Om's subjugation to the InterPlanta company is partly due to his own consent, and partly because of the global coercion actualized through the gaze.

Referring to the recruitment process at the InterPlanta Company, Om says that "six thousand" people were waiting like "goats at the slaughterhouse," inside a building like a big machine: they were waiting there for the job, to become "insanely rich" by selling their body organs (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1600). Despite the chaos experienced there, Om's later comparison of this "slaughterhouse" with "heaven" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1601) suggests his *desire* to be butchered. Moreover, the removal of Om's clothes in the tunnel in the building, in response to the invisible orders by the Receiver during the recruitment process, symbolizes the self-amputation of Om's identity. Six thousand people's willingness to be consumed and self-objectified can also be read as their own neurosis that is materialized through the First World Receiver. Evident is such people's susceptible nature to the seduction of global coercion, a subtle form of human trafficking.

In addition, the strange experiences Om has gained while being "naked" (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1627) during the recruitment process of organ donation (in between the instructions about removing and resuming clothes) allude to Foucault's account of the medical gaze. Om's unclothed body is under the medical scrutiny of the e-surveillance of the American Receiver. Yet, he is neither a patient nor an individual under any medical examination: despite Om's exposure to this body data, the knowledge is not for nosology. As Lion underscores, body data is increasing in society, and surveillance is "turning decisively to the body as a document for identification, and as a source of data for prediction" (2001, p.72). Accordingly, the removal of Om's clothes symbolizes the unearthing of the hidden truth of the body,

which is required for the Receiver to reach their ultimate target.

Contrary to Pravinchandra's statement that the Third World populations are willing to be preyed upon because organ trafficking requires no labor to obtain a price (2010), Om is unaware of the requirements and conditions of the job required from the Donor, until he is recruited. Besides, Om, being the breadwinner of the family, is compelled to give his consent to the InterPlanta service due to his unemployment: "There are no new jobs now ... The factories are all closing!... nothing [is] left for people like us! ... there's the street gangs – and the rich" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1617). This statement explains Om's family tragedy and vulnerable economic situation, and the economic diversity in their society. Om's economic vulnerability is used by the Receiver to reach their targets, under the guise of support. Thus, Om's decision to give his consent to the organ trade is, in Fanon's (2008) words, a self-amputation with [his] consent, caused by the socio-economic complexities he has encountered, and happened through deception.

### **3.2 A Modified Panopticon**

As Gilbert (2006) states, the contact module in *Harvest* operates both as a mode of communication between donors and receivers and as a panopticon. The tower of Foucault's panopticon is replaced in the play with the contact module while the incarcerated bodies are immobilized in their apartment. It is through this panopticon that Ginni maintains her e-surveillance. Ginni is situated at the center (both of their humble dwellings and the metropolitan West) whilst Om's family inhabits are positioned on the margin. Therefore, the contact module which is introduced in the play as the "white faceted globe" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1603) can be read as the metaphorical representation of the e-surveillance of globalization.

However, unlike Foucault's original panoptic structure where each prisoner is confined in isolation – “is seen, but he does not see, he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (1995, p. 200) – Om's family members are imprisoned in one small apartment and allowed communication among family members. This ‘freedom’ given for family communication requires further attention in comparison to Foucault's Panopticism. In the original panoptical structure, as the occupants are not allowed to communicate, their opinions are also not revealed to the onlooker: hence, the observers have no idea of the inmates' views or visions. Yet, as Om's family can communicate among themselves, their interactions are spied upon and eavesdropped on by Ginni. This coercion becomes more powerful and highly subtle as Ginni becomes aware of all of Om's family secrets. Foucault suggests that “visibility is a trap” (1995, p. 200). *Harvest* uses not only this trap of visibility but also a trap of audibility: the incarcerated are invisibly observed and silently and secretly eavesdropped on. Hence, unlike the incarcerated in Foucault's Panopticon, this is more related to Bauman's notion that the contemporary world is “post-Panoptical” (2000, p. 11). Om's family is subject to a form of dual surveillance, a modified Panopticon.

Besides, as revealed later in the play, it is through Ginni's extension of her trap of visibility and audibility to Jeetu and Jaya's secret encounters that occur outside the apartment, that Ginni understands family secrets: Jaya is Om's wife, not his sister; Jaya is Jeetu's secret lover and Jeetu is a prostitute (sex-worker); and Jaya likes to have a baby which is not yet fulfilled through Om. Through e-surveillance and the trap of audibility and visibility, Ginni realizes that Jeetu is healthier and has more potential for reproduction than Om. Hence, as later revealed in the play, the Receiver aims at Jeetu instead of Om, to reach Jaya. This reflects the subtle coercion of the

modified panopticon. This process also alludes to Bauman's (2000, p. 2) opinion about the “mobility and inconstancy” of “liquid surveillance” in the world today: the Receiver has moved beyond the apartment, “to inaccessible realms” (2000, p. 11), to exercise coercion on Jeetu and Jaya.

Moreover, Om's family is deprived of social contact. By fixing a mini-gym, an air-conditioner, bed-cum sofa, a computer terminal, and a toilet in the apartment, Om's family is “quarantined” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1610). This is a precaution taken by the Receiver to avoid health hazards to the First World's targets. For instance, Om's family members used to make use of a toilet by sharing it with “forty families” (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1606). Now they have an attached toilet in the apartment fixed by the Receiver's employees called Guards, yet they are not permitted to share it with anyone outside the family. They are overseen by the invisible Panopticon: Ginni appears only when she wants to communicate with the family members. Moreover, their family, which was an extended family before Ginni's invasion, is now named a “unit”, and their food is replaced with “fuel” and food pellets (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1602) by the First World. Paradoxically, while making Om's family “consume” this “fuel” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1602), the Receiver is ready to consume Om's family with the help of the modified Panopticon.

### **3.3 Ma: An Unintended Target?**

Referring to the equipment used for surveillance, Bauman and Lyon argue that, similar to modernity, technologies function as “swords”: however, because of the double-edged feature of swords, “swinging swords are by their nature dangerous tools to use” (2013, p. 84). Such swinging swords, apart from the intended goals selected for their assumed intentions, damage unintended targets (Bauman and Lyon 2013, p. 84). Ma is a strong case in

point for the unintended targets of Ginni's human trafficking process.

Ma, being sixty and representing the older generation, is initially in a conundrum about the organ donation agreement with the InterPlanta Company. It is revealed through her questions about the nature of Om's job which requires no labor, and about how and what makes Jaya into Om's sister: It is also enigmatic for Ma, who used to share a toilet with many families, to understand why permission is needed to answer a call of nature, after Ginni's intrusion to their apartment.

Nevertheless, Ma gradually succumbed to Ginni's seduction. Ma becomes first deceived by the gains such as food pellets received through the Receiver's employees. This leads Ma to neglect her motherly concern towards Jeetu as he is against and critical of Om's job and the First World Receiver. For instance, Ma says that "there's no place for him [Jeetu] now" and "there won't be enough [food] for him" (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1611). This provides evidence of the collapse of familial relationships caused by the invasion of the contact module. Ginni's intrusion through the modified panopticon severs the unity between the mother and her children, especially with Jeetu.

Moreover, Ginni's seduction of Ma is then extended to technology as well. Ma is seen "buried" in the "VideoCouch" pre-set by the Guards, in their apartment to "receive seven hundred and fifty video channels [...] ten modes, seventeen frequencies" with access to "satellite, bio-tenna" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1622). Despite the Guards' guarantee that Ma will survive in the VideoCouch with technology, they give no answer to Jaya's inquiry – "what happens if there's a malfunction" (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1623). Instead, Ma is seen entombed in the VideoCouch with a breathing mask on her face. Hence, the cyborg Ma's existence is speculative, especially because she is illiterate

and does not understand "a word" given in the instructions (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1622). Ma retreats from "biosocial space into the media-saturated oblivion" (Gilbert 2006, p. 129). The VideoCouch, *de facto*, is Ma's electronic coffin installed in Om's apartment. Ma's demise is partly that of her own choice, yet it is Ginni's subtle seduction mechanism that leads Ma to her electronic suicide. This again recapitulates the Joint Council of Europe/United Nations Study's (2009) definition of seduction in human trafficking, Fanon's (2008) concept of self-amputation, and Bauman's (2000) post-panoptical notions.

Ma's catastrophe directs us to revisit Om's trauma. As noted previously, Om's recruitment itself is a form of human trafficking. Additionally, the insidious nature of the process underscores the cruelty of the medical gaze he has been subjected to. It is by means of deception, that Ginni achieves Om's consent and control over him. For instance, the organs to be donated are never specified in the recruitment medical process. Later, Om understands that the First World Receiver's target is not him, but his brother. To recall, it is through Ginni's e-surveillance which includes both a trap of visibility and audibility that she captures even the secret details of Om's family for her own benefit. Hence, Om becomes psychologically and physically weak and feeble as he realizes the true price of the illusion: "Oh – how could I have done this to myself? What sort of fool am I?" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1613). Om's symbolical demise is indicated through his new status of infancy. Although he is a twenty-two-year-old youth, he is seen "lying in a foetal position" and hiding on stage like a "frightened animal" waiting to be slaughtered (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1614). What is implied is that Om is infantilized through the modified Panopticon, which causes his decay.

Moving beyond the discipline expected from Foucault's (1995) Panopticon, Ginni's contact module creates Om's and Ma's metaphorical

demise. Ma experiences a cyborg death, while Om is animalized and meets an embryonic death. Donors can only see the Receiver when the latter is willing to adopt self-exhibition, whereas the Donors' every movement is under the visible or invisible scrutiny of the Receiver. It is through this invisible coercion of liquid surveillance of the modified Panopticon that the First World, as represented in the play, utilizes the Third World.

### 3.4 Jeetu's Metamorphosis

As Ramachandran (2005) states, Jeetu's understanding of the difference between slavery and employment prevents him from being dependent on Ginni. Jeetu initially resists being subjected to the First World Receiver as clarified in his distinction between their jobs – Om as an organ Donor to the First World Receiver and Jeetu as a sex worker in the country: “When I sell my body, I decide which part of me goes into where and whom!” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1608). It is Jeetu's this vision of life that prevents him from being seduced by the conveniences installed in the apartment or monetary gains from the Receiver. Nevertheless, Jeetu is later subjected to transformation because of the Receiver's acts of coercion and seduction. Hence, it is imperative to explore closely Jeetu's metamorphosis caused by the invisible, disembodied gaze on Jeetu, extended by Ginni.

As noted previously, Ginni's extended surveillance allowed her to obtain all family secrets, including Jeetu's hyper-sexuality and Jaya's desire for reproduction: the two seeds that Ginni eventually attempts to take for her human trafficking for their reproduction. InterPlanta employees' forceful abduction of Jeetu as their donor (instead of Om), by administering a “hypo” injection on Jeetu (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1616) is an instance where the medical gaze is cast on Jeetu, shifting it from Om. This abduction is a symbol of Jeetu's metaphorical death because when Jeetu,

later, appears on stage after this capture, he is “blind”, and wearing “enormous goggles” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1618-1619). As Jeetu says, he has lost his sight by then: “sightless sight” and with “poison-vision” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1618-1619). The replacement of Jeetu's eyes with goggles is the metaphorical slaughter of Jeetu's vision and independence. This first transplant carried out off-stage, underpins the invisible coercion of the human trafficking process.

After Jeetu is deprived of his sight and vision to understand the insidious nature of the First World Receiver, Jeetu contentedly and willingly surrenders to the next transplant which also happens off-stage. When Ginni's contact module seductively shows a woman's body, the ‘visionless’ Jeetu becomes sexually subjected to it. As Mathur states, Jeetu is “seduced by the unattainable angelic white sex-goddess” (2004, p.130). It is interesting to note here that, as Gilbert (2006) states, it is only Jeetu's prosthetic eyes that can see Ginni's seductive figure on the contact module. Jeetu hence gladly follows the InterPlanta employees for the next transplant. This signifies a subtle form of sexual seduction for human trafficking.

Jeetu's reappearance on Ginni's contact module, as a transformed male named Virgil, affirms Jeetu's transformation. It also confirms how Jeetu's body is invaded, and his sexuality is seized by the Receiver (after killing his ideology and vision). In other words, the First World Receiver, who first appeared as a white-skinned woman “exuding a youthful innocence and radiant purity” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1605), now appears in the body of Jeetu to seduce Jaya. In Virgil's words, Ginni is a “computer-animated wet dream” used to “bait the hook” (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1625): the bait is the Third World donor, as represented through Om's family. Ginni, who as Jaya says is a “vampire” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1606), is now reborn as Virgil. As Gilbert states, Jeetu is now a “cybernetic organism, a human-



machine hybrid” (2006, p.128). Virgil’s admission that Jeetu now has a “casing”, but “no body” (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1625) further confirms the Receiver’s coercion. The intention of the First World Receiver is only now articulated through Virgil: “We’re interested in women where I live, Zhaya, Child-bearing women” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1625). It is the transformed Jeetu – a mixture of the impotent American male and the sexually strong Indian male – who attempts to impregnate Jaya. In the guise of satisfying Jaya’s unfulfilled sexual and maternal desires, the American First World Receiver attempts to develop a virtual relationship for reproduction.

Jeetu’s sex-labour which he has been offering to the local market in India due to his economic status, is seductively obtained to be used in the international market by the First World. Jeetu has been transformed to be a ‘sex worker’ of/for the First World. This highlights how the modified Panopticon surrenders Jeetu – who in the original form never intends to be a slave to the First World – for its advantages while damaging the Third World.

### **3.5 Womb-exploitation vs “Life Support”?**

*Harvest* represents the organ trade where First World men have lost the art of human reproduction, hence have become interested in the women of Third World populations under the guise of life support. Virgil is interested in young men’s and women’s bodies, more specifically — males’ bodies to “live in” and young women’s bodies “to sow” children (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1625). Vigil says that the Interplanta employees will make the child possible, through the implant [...] which they are ready to deliver. But you can take your time. About two or three days are still within your fertile cycle—” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1626). The Receiver, however, has not disclosed its aim of reproduction until Virgil appears on stage. This explicitly signifies the deceptive nature of human trafficking.

Virgil’s claim—“in exchange for the life support, we offer poorer sections of the world; we gain fresh bodies for ourselves” (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1626) – necessitates further examination. Virgil’s attempts to help Om’s family can be read as “the life support” to the Third World nations. Yet, in the guise of the support, it is obvious that what Virgil certainly sets out is to achieve his aim – to make children for the First World. This shows how poor populations become commodities for rich nations in the First World. Virgil’s attempt to use Jaya for reproduction is a type of womb-exploitation representing human trafficking processes. This also alludes to Bauman and Lyon’s concepts of the “cyborcized muscles” of the post-Panopticon (2013, p. 51). Whether Jaya succumbs to the cyborg survival requires further scrutiny.

### **3.6 Jaya: Emblematic Resistance against Cyborcized-muscles?**

One way of showing resistance to oppression and coercion is through agency which is the ability to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power. Despite family members’ surrender to the First World’s coercion, Jaya’s reactions imply her strength and insights into both understanding of, and resistance against, the human trafficking forces which are ready to suppress her.

Om, Ma, and Jeetu, for different reasons and ways, become subject to Ginni’s forces which represent the coercion of the First World. As Moni states, their “surrender [...] stands out in stark contrast to Jaya’s reactions” (2013, p. 320). It must be noted that Jaya also undergoes an outward metamorphosis. At the outset of the play, she is “barefoot”, wearing “a cotton sari [...] faded with repeated washing”, and “with glass bangles [...] with no make-up aside from the kohl around her eyes and the red bindi on her forehead” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1599). All these imply both her poverty and traditional Indian customs (Kohl and Bindi have cultural and religious significance in India). Yet, her

appearance changes drastically after the intrusion into the family home by Ginni. Jaya is later seen, parallel to the transformation of their room, ‘transfigured’ – “doing her nails [...] overdressed, her face is heavily made-up, jewelry winking from her ears, wrists, ankles and throat” and “in heels” (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1608). Jaya’s outward appearance seems, to use Fanon’s (2008, p. 9) words, to elevate her “status in proportion” to her “adoption” of the First World’s standards.

However, while elevating her living status, she never allows her agency to be surrendered to the First World’s coercion or seduction. At the outset of the play, Jaya, while explaining Om’s job to Ma, who is excited and happy about the material benefits, foresees the consequences and implications of this employment:

He’s sold the rights to his organs! His skin. His eyes. His arse. (*Sobs again*) Sold them! [ . . . ] (*Sobs, To OM*) How can I hold your hand, touch your face, knowing that at any moment it might be snatched away from me and flung across the globe! (*Sobs*) If you were dead, I could shave my head and break my bangles – but this? To be a widow by slow degrees? To mourn you piece by piece? (*Sobs*) Should I shave half my head? Break my bangles one at a time (*Succumbs to her tears*)  
[...]  
(bitterly) Of course! They bathe him in praise while gutting him like a chicken! (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1604).

Jaya’s reference here to the “globe” implies her overall understanding of exploitation exercised through the First World Receiver. Firstly, she is cognizant of Ginni’s intrusion: Om will be disembodied and objectified in the guise of material possessions offered to them. Her diction, “snatch[es] away”, also signifies the peremptory command of the organ receiver, representing the forceful abduction of Jeetu.

Secondly, Jaya’s references to the removal of the body in parts, like gutting a chicken for eating, suggests, as Gilbert (2006, p. 127) states, a primitive praxis of “cannibalism.” Jaya later articulates the nature of Om’s job to Jeetu as “spare parts in someone else’s garage” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1608). Cannibalism refers to primitive practices usually committed for ritualistic or religious purposes. It also refers to modern practices that allude to the removal of parts, assets, or equipment from one product to be used for the other, resembling the practices of a motor-garage. What Om has succumbed to is the second mode of praxis operated through, to use Gilbert’s words, “biomedical technology” (2006, p. 127) through the medical gaze. Thirdly, it is also interesting to note Jaya’s allusion to the traditional cultural praxis of mourning such as *Sati* in India. (When a husband dies, the widow expresses her mourning in different ways: *Sati* is one such practice among Hindus in India, in which the widow immolates herself on the funeral pyre.) She prefers Om’s death to the removal of his organs and prefers the sacrifice of her whole life to a gradual and slow psychological killing. Jaya’s sobbing here represents the third-world nations’ helpless position when they are subjected to such global coercion.

Jaya extends her interrogation to pass her judgment on Virgil’s deception by cross-examining him, and by saying that “you sew a crooked seam and call it straight” (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1625). Jaya’s realization of this “crooked” construction is a challenge to Virgil, as indicated through his silence after Jaya’s criticism – “*there is a silence while he looks at her*” (Padmanabhan, 2003, p. 1625). Jaya voices her defiance. She also challenges Virgil’s “virtual touch” (Padmanabhan, 2003, p. 1627) for reproduction. She states:

And if I let you take it from me, I will be naked as well as poor! Do you think

I haven't understood you by now?  
You'll never let me have what you  
have, you are only willing to share your  
electronic shadows with me, your night  
visions, your "virtual" touch! No, no—  
if the only clothes I can afford are these  
rags of pride then let me have those!  
Unlike Om—unlike Ma—and Jeetu—  
(Padmanabhan, 2003, p. 1627).

Knowing that all her family members have at last surrendered to the powers of the Receiver, Jaya is encouraged to fight with her intelligent verbal argument until the last moment. Mathur claims that Jaya is "enticed by the promise not just of sexual satisfaction, but also of motherhood" (2004, p. 130). Yet, despite her desire to have a child of her own and her love and attraction towards Jeetu, she vehemently rejects the command of power, voiced through the transformed body of Jeetu, Virgil. Jaya demands that if Virgil wants to repopulate the First World using her, he will have to come to her in the flesh, not through, to use Bauman and Lyon's words, "cyborcized muscles" of the post-Panopticon (2013, p. 51). The refusal of Virgil's demand functions as a metaphorical resistance to the coercion of the First World.

Jaya makes a suicidal attempt as a weapon against the forceful miscegenation of the First World's power, explained by Virgil. She tries to win by losing. Jaya says: "I'll take my life. If the guards cause me any discomfort whatsoever—I'll take my life. If you do anything at all other than come here in person—I'll take my life!" (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1627). As Ramachandran states, Jaya challenges the "ghosts of miscegenation and hybridity" (2005, p. 171). Amidst her attempts to "win" by losing her life (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1627), she also continues to demand that Virgil pronounce her name correctly.

JAYA : [...] I'll take my life. If you do anything at all other than come here in person—  
I'll take my life!

VIRGIL: Zhaya—

JAYA : And in the meantime, I want you to practise saying my name correctly: It's Jaya—"j" as in "justice", "j" as in "jam" —

VIRGIL: Zhaya—

JAYA : I won't talk to you unless you say it right!

VIRGIL: (*Pause*) Zh...Jaya.Jaya. Jaya—listen—to me—

JAYA : NO! You listen to me! [...] For the first time in my life and maybe the last time of my life, I'm going to enjoy myself, all my myself! (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1627-1628).

The dialogue at the end of the play portrays Jaya's challenge against Virgil. Virgil has succumbed to Jaya's command because he, in the end, calls out her name correctly – a symbolic loss of Virgil's agency.

The imperial gaze represented through Ginni's gaze is turned upside down here, as the American Receiver becomes the target of the 'observers' when Virgil loses his agency. Jaya, as well as the audience, looks at the computer image of Virgil when he surrenders to her interrogation and pronounces her name correctly. Mathur argues that it is "through this manipulation of desire, this illusory reversal of the (first-world) seeing 'I' becoming the object of the (third-world) gaze, that science engenders the native" (2004, p. 129).

The two words Jaya uses to refer to her name – justice and jam – connote, respectively, (i) the righteousness of her position, not to be subject to the virtual touch of Virgil for the First World's harvesting, and (ii) of the tight position into which Jaya is wedged by Ginni. Jaya's suicidal attempt by consuming poisonous drugs is blocked by pellets given by Ginni replacing food, because, as Virgil reveals, they contain "anti-suicidal drugs" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1627). Hence, Jaya is "physically incapable" (Padmanabhan 2003, p. 1627) of killing herself. Yet, her metaphorical resistance against the e-

empire is shown through her awareness of Virgil's failure. Jaya says:

-but I'll die knowing that you, who live only to win, will have lost to a poor, weak and helpless woman. And I'll get more pleasure out of that first moment of death than I've had in my entire life so far! (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1627).

Moreover, the stage set with which the play ends suggests that she "looks happy, and relaxed. She points the remote and turns the sound up loud. Rich, joyous music fills the room" (Padmanabhan 2003, p.1628), despite her weeping image at the beginning of the play. This last image epitomizes the Third World's resistance against the First World's human trafficking coercion operated through the modified Panopticon. The Receiver's coercion and seduction employed distantly through the gaze cause the downfall of the personal, social, and family unity of Om's family. Yet, as represented through Jaya, the resistance to them is also powerful.

#### 4. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

*Harvest* moves beyond the post-Panopticon because it combines the medical gaze and e-surveillance for human trafficking under the pretext of support, hence is a synecdoche of a modified panopticon. The play sheds much light on human harvesting in three main ways, as symbolized through its title. First, the word harvest ironically refers to traditional cultivation, which is echoed through Virgil's intention: he acknowledges that he needs to sow on Jaya's field/body. Second, Jeetu's eyes are forcefully initially transplanted making him visionless, and then, the young Jeetu's body is transplanted into an 'impotent' person from the First World. This process symbolizes organ harvesting – an actual surgical procedure that removes organs for reuse, according to immunology. Third, the play also resonates

with repopulation, harvesting humans through e-miscegenation and womb-exploitation: as Virgil says that he wants Jaya to produce children for the First World. All three references are testimonies to human trafficking processes employed through surveillance.

Moving beyond its cultural knowledge, *Harvest* represents a microcosm of the exploitative nature and processes of human trafficking, specifically the trade of human organs and sex-trafficking between Third World populations and First World populations. It echoes the high-technology human tracking systems that are common in the twenty-first century. The play alludes to how surveillance systems obtain data and categorizes populations "to determine who should be targeted for special treatment, suspicion, eligibility, inclusion, access, and so on" (Lyon 2003, p. 20). It shows how surveillance, which is justified by Foucault for national security and social uplift, is employed today to subjugate the Third World populations through modified panopticons in which liquid surveillance is embedded with the medical gaze. The analysis offers complex insights into the modes and processes of, to use Lyon's words (2006, p. 4), "stringent and rigorous" panopticons, human trafficking victims of surveillance, their vulnerability, and the possible attempts of resistance to human trafficking.

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