

International Multidisciplinary  
Research Journal

*Indian Streams  
Research Journal*

Executive Editor  
Ashok Yakkaldevi

Editor-in-Chief  
H.N.Jagtap

---

Indian Streams 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.

**Regional Editor**

Manichander Thammishetty  
Ph.d Research Scholar, Faculty of Education IASE, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

Mr. Dikonda Govardhan Krushanahari  
Professor and Researcher ,  
Rayat shikshan sanstha's, Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu College, Kolhapur.

**International Advisory Board**

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| Kamani Perera<br>Regional Center For Strategic Studies, Sri Lanka | Mohammad Hailat<br>Dept. of Mathematical Sciences, University of South Carolina Aiken                     | Hasan Baktir<br>English Language and Literature Department, Kayseri                      |
| Janaki Sinnasamy<br>Librarian, University of Malaya               | Abdullah Sabbagh<br>Engineering Studies, Sydney   | Ghayoor Abbas Chotana<br>Dept of Chemistry, Lahore University of Management Sciences[PK] |
| Romona Mihaila<br>Spiru Haret University, Romania                 | Ecaterina Patrascu<br>Spiru Haret University, Bucharest   | Anna Maria Constantinovici<br>AL. I. Cuza University, Romania                            |
| Delia Serbescu<br>Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, Romania      | Loredana Bosca<br>Spiru Haret University, Romania   | Ilie Pinteau,<br>Spiru Haret University, Romania   |
| Anurag Misra<br>DBS College, Kanpur                               | Fabricio Moraes de Almeida<br>Federal University of Rondonia, Brazil                                      | Xiaohua Yang<br>PhD, USA   |
| Titus PopPhD, Partium Christian University, Oradea,Romania        | George - Calin SERITAN<br>Faculty of Philosophy and Socio-Political Sciences Al. I. Cuza University, Iasi | .....More  |

**Editorial Board**

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| Pratap Vyamktrao Naikwade<br>ASP College Devrukh,Ratnagiri,MS India                     | Iresh Swami<br>Ex - VC. Solapur University, Solapur           | Rajendra Shendge<br>Director, B.C.U.D. Solapur University, Solapur  |
| R. R. Patil<br>Head Geology Department Solapur University,Solapur                       | N.S. Dhaygude<br>Ex. Prin. Dayanand College, Solapur          | R. R. Yalikal<br>Director Managment Institute, Solapur              |
| Rama Bhosale<br>Prin. and Jt. Director Higher Education, Panvel                         | Narendra Kadu<br>Jt. Director Higher Education, Pune          | Umesh Rajderkar<br>Head Humanities & Social Science YCMOU,Nashik    |
| Salve R. N.<br>Department of Sociology, Shivaji University,Kolhapur                     | K. M. Bhandarkar<br>Praful Patel College of Education, Gondia | S. R. Pandya<br>Head Education Dept. Mumbai University, Mumbai      |
| Govind P. Shinde<br>Bharati Vidyapeeth School of Distance Education Center, Navi Mumbai | Sonal Singh<br>Vikram University, Ujjain                      | Alka Darshan Shrivastava<br>Shaskiya Snatkottar Mahavidyalaya, Dhar |
| Govind P. Shinde<br>Bharati Vidyapeeth School of Distance Education Center, Navi Mumbai | G. P. Patankar<br>S. D. M. Degree College, Honavar, Karnataka | Rahul Shriram Sudke<br>Devi Ahilya Vishwavidyalaya, Indore          |
| Chakane Sanjay Dnyaneshwar<br>Arts, Science & Commerce College, Indapur, Pune           | Maj. S. Bakhtiar Choudhary<br>Director,Hyderabad AP India.    | S.KANNAN<br>Annamalai University,TN                                 |
| Awadhesh Kumar Shirotriya<br>Secretary,Play India Play,Meerut(U.P.)                     | S.Parvathi Devi<br>Ph.D.-University of Allahabad              | Satish Kumar Kalhotra<br>Maulana Azad National Urdu University      |
|   | Sonal Singh,<br>Vikram University, Ujjain                     |   |



### DAVID DABYDEEN'S *A HARLOT'S PROGRESS* : A DIASPORIC TRAVAIL FROM SUFFERING TO DEGRADATION

Prof. Bhistannavar Vasant Appanna

Associate Professor and Head, Department of English,  
Smt. C.B.Shah Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Sangli (Maharashtra)

#### ABSTRACT

**T**he paper aims at observing the sufferings of black diaspora as reflected in a slave narrative written by David Dabydeen (b.1955) a British-Caribbean poet, novelist and an authority on 18th century slave past. The experiences of slaves are narrated by Dabydeen in his fourth novel *A Harlot's*



*Progress* (1999). It is an imagined autobiography of a slave boy named Mungo, taken from William Hogarth's famous prints of 1732, in which he had painted a Jew, a whore named Moll, a slaveboy, a magistrate and a fake doctor, all bound together by sexual and financial greed. The novel depicts Mungo's homeland Africa, his dispersal to England

on a slave ship, and his sufferings and humiliations in hostland, England. It witnesses one of the most evil and inhuman social practice, the slave trade in 18th century Europe and England. It documents an ironic progress of a slave boy from sad childhood to torturing experiences one after another, which represents graphically the pains and sorrows of black diaspora in general.

**KEYWORDS** :Diasporic Travail , David Dabydeen's , humiliations.

#### CONNOTATION

David Dabydeen's *A Harlot's Progress* (1999) is a slave narrative. Based on William Hogarth's famous prints of 1732, the novel gives life to the slave boy of the prints. It reflects the sexual greed and financial greed of the English of those days. It refers to the inhuman slave trade in England of that time. Hogarth had painted a whore (a slave boy) a Jewish merchant, a magistrate and a quack doctor, bound together by sexual and financial motives. David Dabydeen has chosen this slave boy as the central character of his above mentioned novel. The boy who is named as Mungo narrates his story of life in

autobiographical manner. He is the London's oldest black inhabitant. He tells his story to the Abolitionists. The novel presents scenes of cruelty and vice inflicted upon the slaves under the deck during the passage to England.

In the manner of an autobiography, Mungo begins with his birth place, a village in Africa, giving a picture of the social and family life in the village which is surrounded by the fearful ambience of katran bush. Mungo's and his slave brethren's passage to England is narrated, which is a travail of unimaginable sufferings of slaves. Most of the slaves undergo pains of hunger and physical tortures of different kinds, in the course of which they die, only few could reach England. Mungo survives the travails of this passage by offering himself as a whore to Captain Thistlewood. The rest of the narration is about Mungo's life in England as a diaspora. It throws light on the slave trade in England, and the sexual and financial greed of the English people.

*A Harlot's Progress* of David Dabydeen is a fictional treatment of the most inhuman evil, the slavery, practiced in Europe and Africa in 18th century. Based on Dabydeen's doctoral research on the same issues, the novel speaks about the hell of life of the African slaves of those days, through the voice of an imaginary character Mungo. Slavery is a curse to humanity. Human beings were handled as cargo and treated like animals. All kinds of domestic chores were allotted to them and they were even carried to social parties as pets of ladies. They were sold and bought and gifted. Their names were changed as their owners changed. Their birth places, family traditions and parents were left behind. They were moved to faraway places, like sold out animals. They had lost their own identities. They had been named as either Mrs. Montague's black or Mrs. Smith's black, for example. Slaves were used as hard labour, they were exploited sexually. They were tied like beasts to posts, beaten and tortured, and every unimaginable, shameful, humiliating things were done to them as the expression of abnormal whims of masters. Slavery is a shame to humanity.

In European countries or in England slavery was a very profitable business. English people made much money. As Mungo informs, slaves were brought from Africa in ships, seasoned and polished by maids in England before they were made ready for sale, and sold in auctions. During their passage, many slaves met with death due to hunger and tortures, and many were thrown overboard in the sea for claiming insurance money. So sad was the fate of slaves.

*A Harlot's Progress*, hereafter referred as *Harlot's* is in nine parts, each part is divided into several episodes. Mungo narrates his tale to Mr. Pringle an Abolitionist, thinking that his sad tale would open the eyes of the Abolitionists so that they could work for the redemption of slaves. The narrative consists of myths, half-truths and fantasies, recreating Africa and eighteenth century England. The novel presents Mungo as a celebrity of slum and mansion alike, both beggars and nobility were his friends; he visited the whorehouse as well as the High Church; he was a popular figure. Part I and II of the novel describe life in Mungo's homeland Africa, Part III and IV, narrate passage to England. Part V is about Mungo's beginning of life in England. Part VI describes Mungo's sale and his life in his master Montague's household. Part VII and VIII relate Lady Montague's illness and her madness. And Part IX, the last part deals with Mungo's transfer to Moll Hackabout, a harlot.

Mungo depicts the business of slaves carried out in England and at the same time he mentions that England is a slave to doctrines of the Church and slave to Priests. It is a slave to money and sex. People from top politicians to ordinary people are addicted to money, and they adhere to corrupt means to get money; and they entertain illicit sex relationships. Like slavery, whoring is a prominent business in England. English people blame the Jews for their profit making mentality, but they are not less profit minded than the Jews. These facts about English people are narrated by Mungo.

Mungo wants to prick the conscience of English people by producing 'a testimony of suffering of

slaves, and to convince the English of the virtues of abolition. Following words of Mungo may be observed:

And I, Mungo, am to prick the nation's conscience by a testimony of suffering, which Mr. Pringle will compose with as much intelligence as a Jewish conspiracy. For I am to become a crucial instrument in Mr. Pringle's scheme to rescue England from its enemies. Mr. Pringle will demonstrate the slavery that lies at the heart of Catholic worship - slavery to doctrine, slavery to Priests - and will contrast the freedoms fostered by Anglicanism. To do so would demand utmost care of thought and preparation of a watertight case, to convince the English merchants too of the virtues of abolition (*Harlot's*, 1999:144).

Mungo hopes to redeem the fate of his slave brethren as well as to redeem the English peoples' psyche from slavery to doctrine and priests. He hopes so though he knows well that a whole library of slave narratives would not succeed to prepare them for abolition. Following words of Mungo about his autobiography are meaningful:

The last thing on Perseus's mind is the emancipation of his brethren. Unlike Mr. Pringle he is not foolish enough to believe that a single book will alter the curse of history. Not even a whole library testifying to the plight of the Negro would deflect the English from their common pursuit. Money, not ideas, is what holds the notion together and as long as it is profitable to trade Negroes, slavery will thrive, and the state of England remain intact (*Harlot's*, 1999:256-57)

Mungo fears, ironically, at the same time that if the English abolish slavery it would certainly free the Africans from slavery but it also would make many English people, connected with slave business, free from their jobs.

Remembering his homeland, Mungo says that he was punished by his tribe for disobedience. He was put into a deep hole which his mother was made to dig. His disobedience had brought sin upon her and the threat of destruction to his village, for his ancestors had departed in anger from the katran bush, leaving them no defence against enemies of fire, drought, malicious stars and tribes with different scars. This banishment from the history of their tribe was not enough to pacify his ancestors. So they had migrated to another place, 'leaving them without memory of past and to a stillborn future' (*Harlot's*, 1999:20)

Mungo's father banished him to katran bush to die among widows. Among the Africans, widows who were sexually exploited by the head and other males of the community, were banished to katran bush if they proved childless. They were made to die as their fates led them. Mungo joined them. Rima, one of the widows gave him the love of a mother. Captain Thistlewood picked up Mungo from this place after he shot Rima. Mungo's diasporic travail began here. To him, his homeland Africa was a place of terror and suffering. His moving away or dispersal from homeland must have filled him with a desire for a better future in hostland England. In this way, it may be observed here that sad circumstances force the persons like Mungo to move away from homeland.

During the passage, however, the condition of migrant slaves becomes more horrible under the cruel authority of Captain Thistlewood. To them, it was a very sad experience of being moved from a frying pan to the fire. Mungo says that he was under the care of Captain Thistlewood, a whiskered, bearded, and rum smelled man. He met Christianity in all its luxuriance on the slaveship. For three years or thirty days, he cannot exactly know, they 'floated towards the distant bank of death..... (his) fellow creatures pleaded and moaned for release, but only (Mungo) was singled out for salvation' (*Harlot's*, 1999:47). With Thistlewood he saw the scene of chained slaves beneath the deck. The Captain counted them for the purpose of insurance. They died of cholera, gangrene, and other diseases. They were tended as sick animals. The sailors maimed and molested them. The Captain flogged Mungo and abused him sexually. So horrible was their passage to hostland, England. All the slaves were bound in

one general pain, says Mungo. They were 'dissolved into one mess of black suffering' (*Harlot's*, 1999:58). Someone said that he had betrayed them, and another said that he had become 'the Whiteman's wife' (*Harlot's*, 1999:59). They said, Mungo had robbed them of their land. Other slaves cursed him while they perished, and Mungo survived by trickery and self-abasement. For diaspora people, survival matters most, and Mungo succeeds in saving his life even though it meant self-humiliation. He offers himself as a whore to Captain Thistlewood or there was no other way round. In case of diaspora, one more thing is observed that their home traditions are rooted up and host traditions take their place. It can be seen in the words of Manu addressed to Mungo. He says:

(Captain Thistlewood) will not kill you with blows but with new words ..... He will plant in your mind pictures of his land, and root up ours (*Harlot's*, 1999:64-65).....The White Captain is a herd of wild pigs that root in our fields. He has run amok in your mind and left only dung. And all the description of his own land are false, he has been at sea for centuries, and England has coarsened in his absence. They have laid waste to their own land, cleared their forests to make ships to carry us, gouged the earth for the ores to make our chains. When the White Captain beats you now, it is out of melancholy, for he is estranged from his own herd, that his speech is antique beyond recognition. So remember us as we are, and the earth that not only suckled us but after the rains, it ran with colours, and gave astonishment and even in a season of drought, dust masked our faces in the richest dyes' (*Harlot's*, 1999: 66)

In the above words of Manu, we see how the memory of homeland troubles both slaves and Captain Thistlewood.

In England Mungo is given to the care of Betty an English maid. She explains to Mungo the business of slavery. She says, Captain Thistlewood comes to her three times in a year with boys like Mungo who were to be cleaned up, polished and fattened and seasoned to the cold, before being taken to the market. The boys were his entitlement, she says, for as Captain he was granted a portion of his cargo. He brought grains, clothes from the ship, saved due to death of blacks and sailors. Captain Thistlewood was worse than the Jew in profit making, she says, he saves the teeth too to be sold to the dentist. Ironically, Betty says:

Money rules, The king has the most, then the politicians, then the merchants, then the Church, then people like me. That's our England. Our God ordered it so, it says in the Bible. Those who preach rebellion are not patriots. They preach in open fields and at street corners, no patriot would rent them a hall, for they claim that niggers and Englishmen are equal. Can you believe it! Give them time and they'll be arguing that men and women, noble folk and vagrants should be equal too, and they would urge people to riot and burn down all that make this country the greatest in the world. But no Christian and true-born Englishman will heed their dangerous talk (*Harlot's*,1999:132).

Mungo narrates that Mr. Pringle's account of Betty is an ordinary tale. Such tales are found everywhere in England. She is a 'heartless thief' (142). She betrays her friend Mary to Magistrate Gonson. Mungo narrates:

Her deeds are characteristic of the times. Deceit and betrayal motivate people at the highest level; by their example the poor are corrupted. Jews and Jacobites and Papists and their spies are everywhere, threatening the stability of England ..... They're all thieves' together, great and small, their joint actions eroding the foundation of the country. True, the Jew's worse, his money-making being part of a conspiracy with Papists and Jacobites to create chaos. He finances their plots to overthrow King and Parliament and the commercial system on which the security of the nation depends (*Harlot's*,1999:143).

**Mungo further says:**

it is blindness to such sin, for the sake of profit, that makes England vulnerable to foreign invasion. It is inevitable that the sin England commits overseas would visit it at home in the form of Jews and Papists and Jacobites. Saving from the degradation of slavery will be to save England's Christian soul from the contamination of the foreign..... (*Harlot's* 1999:143-144).

Lady Montague changes the name of Mungo to Perseus. The slaves get the names given by their masters. They didn't have their own identity. This shifting identity is an attribute of diasporic consciousness.

Betty took Mungo to the market for sale. Men with red faces, says Mungo, came to eat him as those he was a fattened calf or suckling pig. Lord Montague bought him and took him home in his carriage. Compared with his life in his home in Africa, Mungo's present life at Lord Montague's house was better, he says. He was glad that there was enough food and rich ambience around him. After a life time of screeching from Rima sobbing from Betty, and especially the vulgar and chaotic interruption in his inner-ear by his slave brethren, tormenting him with either descriptions of a 'devasted past or else with prospects of return to the innocence which was our village' (*Harlot's*, 1999:176). Mr. Pringle forces him to tell about Lord and Lady Montague but he could not oblige him. He says his duty was to wait upon them and do blindly what they order. He was full of admiration for their noble backgrounds. The Lord was always engaged in diplomatic activities and the Lady assisted the Lord in his activities. She arranged parties for the guests and attended with him other social parties Mungo was presented to her as a gift.

In England, Mungo observes the commerce of English people, their piracy at sea and their whoring on land, he says. He observes from the coach window the ordinary English people consisting of lunatics, bankrupts, gamblers, soldiers etc. good as well as bad people. Lady Montague was ignorant of ordinary English life, says Mungo. She was unknown of her husband's many activities, and lord Montague, too, was 'irritated by the secret purposes of his wife' (*Harlot's*, 1999:197).

In Montague house, Mungo is renamed as Peruses. Lizzy and Jane, mother and daughter, prepare him for the service of Lady Montague. While dressing him, they torture him by their mischief. After the death of Medusa, the pet monkey of Lady Montague, Perseus takes its place. He is called as Percy with affection. The monkey's silver collar is tied to him and he is supposed to emulate the monkey. He is tied to the bed post of Lady Montague. All maid servants did sin with him, says Perseus, Even Lord Montague doubted that Lady Montague had done sin with him.

Perseus accompanies Lady Montague to social parties. In a party, he finds Saba serving Lady Cardew. Like him, Saba, too, is working as a slave. Now they have lost their African identities. They are called as Lady Montague's black and Lady Cardew's black. This is how their African identity becomes invisible. They had to keep silent and they should not show their emotions.

Mungo further narrates that Lord Montague felt that he had brought terror to his house in the form of Mungo. He observed a change in Lady Montague's behavior. She was behaving improper to her status. She was inviting baser people to parties. She was having sleepless nights. She was turning mad. Mr. Gideon a fake doctor was attending her. Mungo says that Mr. Pringle does not write the facts about Lady Montague. According to him, a Lady can never be improper. Even if she seems improper, it cannot be recorded in print. It shows how the English hid their mischief out of reports. They wrote only good things about them, and never lost a single chance to report the demerits of blacks or 'others' of Edward Said's description.

At the end of the novel Mungo left Lady Montague with some of her belongings. He would be blamed as a thief. He went searching for Mr. Gideon the Jew because, like him, the Jew was cursed in

England. He took shelter with Moll Hackabout, a whore like himself. Mungo says that Mr. Hogarth painted him and the Jew and Moll with a degrading status. He informs that the Jew tried to emancipate the slaves. He behaved humanly with them. Mr. Hogarth considered the people like the Jew, Moll and Mungo as responsible for the ruin of Christianity. The truth was that the English people were not behaving up to the Christian values. Mungo, hence, is hurt by Mr. Hogarth's degrading of Jews, slaves and whores in his paintings. They were misrepresented by the English. They needed them and used them for enjoyment, and, in return, they cursed them. The novel *A Harlot's Progress* is a commentary on this kind of English hypocrisy. The title, ironically, points to Mungo's progress from suffering and humiliation to degradation. It is a witness to the inhuman slave trade, and it is David Dabydeen's genuine attempt at a graphic description of the suffering and tragedies of black diaspora presented in the form of an autobiography of a slave.

#### REFERENCES

1. Dabydeen, David. *A Harlot's progress*, London: J. Cape, 1999.
2. McLeod, John. *Beginning Postcolonialism*, New Delhi: Viva Books, 2011, 2013 (Indian Reprint).
3. Seldon, Raman. and Peter Brooker Peter Widdowson ed. *A Reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory India*: Pearson 2006, 2011 (Fifth Edition).



# Publish Research Article

## International Level Multidisciplinary Research Journal For All Subjects

Dear Sir/Mam,

We invite unpublished Research Paper, Summary of Research Project, Theses, Books and Book Review for publication, you will be pleased to know that our journals are

### Associated and Indexed, India

- \* International Scientific Journal Consortium
- \* OPEN J-GATE

### Associated and Indexed, USA

- Google Scholar
- EBSCO
- DOAJ
- Index Copernicus
- Publication Index
- Academic Journal Database
- Contemporary Research Index
- Academic Paper Database
- Digital Journals Database
- Current Index to Scholarly Journals
- Elite Scientific Journal Archive
- Directory Of Academic Resources
- Scholar Journal Index
- Recent Science Index
- Scientific Resources Database
- Directory Of Research Journal Indexing

Indian Streams Research Journal  
258/34 Raviwar Peth Solapur-413005, Maharashtra  
Contact-9595359435  
E-Mail-[ayisrj@yahoo.in](mailto:ayisrj@yahoo.in)/[ayisrj2011@gmail.com](mailto:ayisrj2011@gmail.com)  
Website : [www.isrj.org](http://www.isrj.org)