

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 1

Month: December

Year: 2023

P-ISSN: 2320-2645

E-ISSN: 2582-3531

Received: 20.10.2023

Accepted: 05.12.2023

Published: 14.12.2023

Citation:

Saleem, Jadeeda.  
“Tishani Doshi’s  
‘Listening to Abida  
Parveen on Loop, I  
Understand Why I  
Miss Home and Why  
It Must Be So’: A  
Pastiche and Epitome  
of Hypernationalism.”  
*Shanlax International  
Journal of English*,  
vol. 12, no. S1, 2023,  
pp. 43–45.

DOI:

[https://doi.org/10.34293/  
rtdh.v12iS1-Dec.88](https://doi.org/10.34293/rtdh.v12iS1-Dec.88)

# Tishani Doshi’s “Listening to Abida Parveen on Loop, I Understand Why I Miss Home and Why It Must Be So”: A Pastiche and Epitome of Hypernationalism

**Dr. Jadeeda Saleem**

*Assistant Professor & Head, PG & Research Department of English  
MSS Wakf Board College, Madurai, India*

## Abstract

*Tishani Doshi, an Indian poet, journalist, dancer and a progeny of cross-cultural parents delineates herself as a hyper nationalist in her book “A God at the Door” which is an exquisite collection of many verses and it reaches its climax in the poem “Listening to Abida Parveen on Loop I Understand Why I Miss Home and Why it Must Be So.” Hypernationalism is extreme nationalism and believing in preserving the culture and national identity of a nation. A pastiche is a work of art, piece of writing that is created by deliberately copying the traits related to subject matter, extracted from different works and loosely mixed. Its intention is serious. Thus it is also a pastiche of Epic of Gilgamesh, an epic poem from ancient Mesopotamia regarded as the earliest surviving Literature. The poem also epitomizes the quest of an immigrant in an alien land.*

**Keywords:** Hypernationalism, Pastiche, Hieroglyphs, Immigrant, Nostalgia, Cross-Cultural.

Tishani Doshi, an Indian poet, journalist, dancer and a progeny of cross-cultural parents delineates herself as a hypernationalist in her book *A God at the Door*, which is an exquisite collection of many verses and it reaches its climax in the poem “Listening to Abida Parveen on Loop I Understand Why I Miss Home and Why it Must Be So.” It also epitomizes the quest of an immigrant in an alien land. Doshi begins the poem with a metaphor, that living as an immigrant, is identical to living on a frugal diet and it “is getting to” her.

The speaker though frustrated in life, is at times enticed to be optimistic by the sea song that is blown through her “shell-shaped ears” by the desert wind. Again she analogizes life as strategic game and argues that

“If the endgame is to renounce home

Mother, father, husband, sibling, succulent child” and

“To go in search of better hummus and woollen blankets

To choose one dog and run for the border”

She was rather dubious that this contest of life was not meant for her. Doshi compellingly portrays the hardships and struggles any immigrant would confront in a foreign country through these lines.

Doshi alludes to her own life as an immigrant in the United States because India is an integral part of Tishani Doshi's identity and she has "embroiled herself in the culture, language and religion of her home country" (The Gaurdian). Doshi's penchant for the imagery of the dog, as she herself admits in a conversation with Karthika Nair and which she incorporates in almost all her works, is very well explicit in the next few lines which reads:

"What if the dog ignores me  
What if he refuses water from the tin cup  
I lay out for him What if we become estranged  
Like Enkidu ancient wanderer and his herd  
What if my dog finds himself a family  
Of wolves and abandon me"

Doshi alludes to *The Epic of Gilgamesh* when she compares the estrangement of the dog with that of the estrangement of Enkidu from his herd in the desert. She is nostalgic when she expresses her hope to live engaging herself in other activities like writing "on multiple tablets" practising "hieroglyphs the symbol for voyage" only if it meant that she could go back to her home country and everything would be as she had left. She is nostalgic of "the bread on table, bowl of salt, apple tree, river in its stepping stones".

She is intensely exposing her diasporic feeling of "home sweet home" as she expresses her wish that it "was better to live with radiation than with war". Even "if home was Chernobyl" which is a site of nuclear power station accident and even if "the well is poisoned the bird's song made up for it". She consoles herself that she will live like birds forced to live in "air to mate and sleep on the way" and "have screaming parties" and "never meant to settle". Exhausted she eventually admits "we are homesick everywhere even when we are home." Doshi is hinting at the patriarchal setup of our country where every married woman is homesick though they are in their native country. She confesses "we are always lost in love never found" and earnestly asks to "please come and find" her.

Doshi fuses humanity with spirituality when she replaces god with home. As she herself asserts in a conversation she wants everything to be associated with sacredness. Doshi in the final lines of the poem probably refers to Jung's theory of individuation which would escalate her to that state of divinity to identify her self. She frantically exclaims:

"Would you carry me to that divinity"

All the images used in the poem allude to *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and makes it a perfect pastiche of the epic. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* is an epic poem from ancient Mesopotamia, and is regarded as the earliest surviving notable literature is written as different fables in clay tablets Only twelve tablets were recovered. These fables were later used as source material to make a combined epic. The fable begins with Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk, who was two-thirds god and one-third man.. He was extremely handsome, immensely strong, and very wise. Although Gilgamesh was godly, he was an imperious ruler and lorded over his subjects. He tortured his subjects with forced labour, and his enervated and oppressed subjects could only pray to gods. The gods responded to his subjects' prayer by creating a wild man named Enkidu who was as magnificent as Gilgamesh, to restrain him.

Enkidu who lives with the animals, sharing everything with them is discovered by a hunter and is sent to a temple prostitute who tames him to a man. After Enkidu's sexual relationship with the woman, the animals reject him as he becomes the part of the human world.. Enkidu, infuriated on hearing Gilgamesh's atrocities, travels to Uruk and challenges him. There when Gilgamesh is about to force his way into a bride's wedding chamber, Enkidu obstructs him which leads to a long fierce wrestle wherein Gilgamesh finally wins and, they become friends to continue their adventurous journey.

Gilgamesh and Enkidu plan to steal trees from a distant cedar forest forbidden to mortals and is guarded by the demon, Humbaba, the devoted servant of Enlil, the god of earth, wind, and air. The two heroes continue their hazardous journey to the forest, fight with the monster and they kill him aided by Shamash the sun god. Then they fell the trees, fashion the tallest into an enormous gate, make the rest into a raft, and sail back to Uruk. Upon their return, Ishtar, the goddess of love, is overcome with lust for Gilgamesh. As Gilgamesh rejects her, the vexed, the goddess demands her father, Anu, the god of the sky, to send the Bull of Heaven to him. The bull descends from the sky, bringing with him seven years of famine. Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight vehemently with the bull and kill it. The gods constitute a meeting deciding that one of the two friends must be punished for their transgression, and they conclude that Enkidu should die. He falls ill, suffers immensely, and shares his visions of the underworld with Gilgamesh. When he finally dies, Gilgamesh is heartbroken.

Gilgamesh is distressed after the death of Enkidu, and he muses about the prospect of his own death. He relinquishing kingly garments for animal skins as a sign of mourning Enkidu, sets off to find Utnapishtim, the Mesopotamian Noah, whom the gods had granted eternal life to know the secret of immortal life. Gilgamesh finally meets Utnapishtim insists that he be allowed to live forever Utnapishtim gives him a test in which he should stay awake for a week. Gilgamesh fails miserably and so Utnapishtim orders him return to Uruk and continue as the king. Just as Gilgamesh is departing, however, Utnapishtim's wife convinces him to tell Gilgamesh about a miraculous rejuvenating plant that restores youth. Gilgamesh finds the plant and takes it with him, planning to share it with the elders of Uruk but is stolen by a snake. When Gilgamesh returns to Uruk, he finds the plant missing but is reconciled at last to his mortality.

Thus Gilgamesh's quest for a life of immortality and final reconciliation to immortality is similar to Tishani's quest of an immigrant in an alien land and the final reconciliation that "we are homesick everywhere." Life represented as a contest, journey, Enkidu's life with the animals in the desert, the distress of Gilgamesh after the death of Enkidu the screaming party of the birds, the rejuvenation plant, the desert, the underground world, the wall, heart been taken out, Apis, the cosmic bull etc. portrays Doshi being influenced by this epic and dextrously employs the traits in it to make her poem an unexcelled pastiche. She has ingeniously merged myth with reality using these striking imageries. Posing a salvo of rhetorical questions, she voices her fears that are real and imagined, also the hardships and struggles one might be exposed to, in an alien country. The body of the poem serves as an analysis of the rhetorical question "Listening to Abida Parveen on Loop I Understand Why I Miss Home and Why it Must Be So." which is the title of the poem.

As Nikita Biswal rightly quotes in *Times Literary Supplement* "Doshi delves into the conflicts between disaster and renewal, past and present. They are tender enquiries rather than resolutions." Doshi's images encapsulate multiple layers of meanings and we are compelled to excavate it as in an excavation and evince the potency and eloquence of her verse.

## References

1. Biswal, N. A God at the Door TLS. *Times Literary Supplement*, 2021.
2. Doshi, T. *A God at the Door*. Harper Collins, 2021.