

ISSN: 2990-7993(P)

Dhaulagiri Journal of Contemporary Issues

Vol 3, Issues 1

June, 2025

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3126/djci.v3i1.79651>

Published by: Research Management Committee,
Dhaulagiri Multiple Campus, Baglung
Home Page: <https://dmcjournal.edu.np/index.php/DWJCI>

Migrating Vulnerability Marks *Homo Sacer* Harvest in Bala's *The Boat People*

Pradip Sharma, PhD
Associate Professor of English
Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, TU
Email: rrcampus72@gmail.com
ORCID iD: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0875-3248>

Abstract

Based on Sri-Lankan civil war and its numerous deaths, Sharon Bala's novel, *Boat People* offers this study to examine the vulnerability of the immigrants and anti-refugee politics in Canada. Bala's narrative of state induced misery that leaves no options to Tamil populations in Sri Lanka to seek refuge abroad offering space to investigate the state racism and human right hypocrisy in the global North. To assay the forcible dislocation of the refugees as a problematic, the study juxtaposes the war-ravaged Sri Lanka and the deceptive West's deportation, letting this study peruse the state of homelessness of the politically ripped off Tamils *homo sacer*: the individual stripped of political and legal protections surviving a mere biological life; *zoé* in a state of exclusion from both law and society. Thus, the article interrogates the statelessness of the Tamils and their narrow escape, aligning with Giorgio Agamben's *homo sacer* concept that spotlights the socio-politically abject life akin to Sri Lankan Tamils. While figuring out the existential struggle for dignified human position; *biós*. Protagonist, Mahindan and others make a herculean attempt for a refuge abroad, making a clarion call for the humanitarian responsibility. Critiquing the westerner's double-standard of human rights, the study shows their reduction to persona-non-grata, which scores high in humanities studies.

Keywords: Agamben, homo sacer, human right, civil war, statelessness, deportation

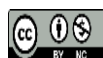
Article Information

Received: 25 February, 2025 **Reviewed:** 26 February, 2025 - 25 March, 2025 **Revised:** 26 March, 2025- 4 May, 2025

Accepted: 8 May, 2025

Published: 2 June, 2025

Corresponding Author: Pradip Sharma



© by author: This article is licensed under the terms and conditions of Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial (CC BY NC) License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Introduction

Hooked to Sri Lankan civil war, Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* (2018) chronicles the war-ravaged ethnic communities and the flow of civilians for abroad asylum from 1980s to 2009. Delving into the dire effects of war induced refugees in a retrofitted boat, Canadian incarceration, and deportation, the study assays the protagonist, Mahindan and other refugees' statelessness attributing them to an outlawed *homo sacer*. Mahindan, a garage worker with other five hundred Tamil people survives a perilous voyage in a rusty boat *en route* to Canada. Upon landing there, they face custodial stay and the vulnerability of deportation when Canadian media stigmatize them as the separatist terrorist/suicide bombers who killed Indian Prime Minister (Rajiv Gandhi). They could pose a serious security threat to Canadian "sovereignty" (Bala, 2018, 83 & 105). The narrow escape amid war in Sri Lanka, awe-inducing voyage, terrorist indictment, and custodial interrogation at Canadian custom suggest to brood over the value of life. Admittedly, the Tamil refugees suffer from state racism—tribal and race-oriented hierarchy and discrimination that even sabotage the minority with impunity which the *homo sacer* undergoes—at home as well as abroad. The extrajudicial killing of Tamil with impunity to immunize the Sinhalese tribe from the Tamils in Sri Lanka informs the state of exception which Lankan regime inclines to do in order to stigmatize the Tamils as the "separatist terrorists" who is not socio-politically recognized as if their position is similar to an animal. Moreover, the repeal of basic human rights of the Tamils calls forth their *homo sacer* status whom anybody can insult and kill with impunity.

To evade shoot at sight; precarity of life in Sri Lanka, Mahindan and his six years son Sellian along with other five hundred asylum seekers, take a risk to come to Canada where they even face more hostile custom interrogation and media trial; "faceless labeled "terrorists" or "refugees"" (Bala, 2018, p. 354). Further, the Canadian Border officials Singh and Fred indict the asylum seekers as terrorists LTTE militants:

The government had received intelligence, he said. Half the people on board had ties to the LTTE, the separatist group better known as the Tamil Tigers, who had been waging war against the Sri Lankan government for more than twenty years. Terrorists. Losers in an overseas war who had fled to Canada to lick their wounds and regroup (Bala, 2018, p. 47).

It infers that the asylum claimants in Canadian vantage point of view, are the "terrorists" militants who obviously belong to a stateless *homo sacer* group. Therefore, they are ever and everywhere liable to be shunned and kept in the margin, *oikos* in Agamben term. Raising the contemporary refugee issue facing by Global North, Bala's tome obliges to rethink human dignity and fundamental need of security in life. The stigmatization, hierarchization, and marginalization especially of refugee, women, minors, and poor among others *per se* subscribe Agamben's *homo sacer* that offers a noble exegesis of biopolitics at the wake of identity politics in postcolonial world. Garnering the appalling narratives associated with asylum seekers in Canada and their traumatic experience in their hometown, in both of the places they hold statelessness status which conforms their *homo sacer* life unsafeguarded by law and society. Thus, a *homo sacer* always faces violence, however, he survives for extracting his labour and procreation which Foucault terms as *homo æconomicus*: an economic man used for re/productivity.

Based on the appalling narrative of the casualty and destruction of lives in war-ridden Sri Lanka and the exodus of Tamils to abroad enduring the perilous voyage, the study aims to probe human dignity and examine the vested interest of every regime to strip down citizen right (*biós*) and ask their people to live a mere life (*zoé*) which is *zoéification*, making citizen as docile as animal. Therefore, it aims to figure out the following issue: does the novel address the concept of home and the existential struggle of Tamil refugees in finding human dignity (*biós*) in the world? In what way, does the context of claiming asylum in Canada bring fore the connectivity between knowledge and power? Why do Sinhalese and Canadian sovereigns like to outlaw the Tamil populations? Overall, in pursuing the human dignity by the Tamils against the *homo sacer* harvesting political cultures, they are bound to be in custodial or alienated situation.

Literature Reviews

Raising the contemporary issue of refugee influx in Global North, Bala braids a poignant story alluding to Sri Lankan civil war, causing myriads of Tamils homeless. While many critics acclaim Bala's work for its in-depth dealing with state racism that ignores human values, some contend that it may oversimplify complex issues surrounding immigration, potentially leading to a one-dimensional understanding of the refugee experience. This perspective invites further discussion on the balance between narrative engagement and socio-political critique.

Among many Bala's critics, Aritha van Herk (2020) alludes to Sri Lankan sectarian war causing refugee influx at Canada. She writes; "*Boat People* is a novel inspired by the historical actuality of 550 Tamil refugees who 'arrived on the coast of British Columbia' in October 2009 and August 2010, fleeing sectarian violence in Sri Lanka" (p. 2). Here, Herk shows the vulnerable life of the homeless refugees whose human dignity has been repealed through Canadian custodial trial. She also probes how Bala's work captures the vulnerabilities of migrants, showcasing their strength in the face of adversity. Likewise, another critic, Sara Casco-Solis (2023) comments on the resilient life of the migrants who endanger their life in a perilous voyage *en route* to Canada. She examines how the idyllic dream of Sri Lankan asylum seekers comes to an end when Canadian authority pays high attention on their "national security" (p.67).

From the same plane, in her analysis of *Boat People*, Eva Darias-Beautell (2020) draws on Jacques Derrida's hospitality theory to explain Canadian hostile reaction in the novel. While hospitality is "often defined as the act of being friendly and welcoming to guests or strangers", it must be noted that it also "marks the existence of a threshold between oneself and the other, the host and the guest, the national and the foreign" (p.70). The hostile hosting of Canadian regime debunks its amicable generosity to welcoming the guests. Reversely, Canada alienates five hundred boat people and compels them to live dangerously developing the art of resilience. Coupling with Darias-Beautell's Canadian hostile protest against the home seeking boat people, Anjalika Samarasekera (2018) in a book review also spotlights the ordeal faced by the boat people home and abroad. She discussed on the rigorous trial at Canada upon the refugees who risked their lives to avoid Sri Lankan persecution:

The refugees have fled persecution in Sri Lanka following the end of the twenty-six-year civil war and have come to Canada hoping for a warm welcome. These hopes are dashed when the Canadian government detains the refugees on the suspicion that some of them belong to the LTTE, also known as the Tamil Tigers, a listed terrorist organization. Eventually, some refugees are released and deemed 'admissible' to Canada while others are deported back to Sri Lanka. (Contemporary writing from Canada, para 1.)

Additionally, Pradip Sharma (2020) analyzed the plight of the asylum seekers who have been thoroughly reduced to zoological life. He writes "Mahindan and other five hundred Sri Lankan survivors in Canada have stranded between their zoological and biological life" (p.72) which compels the humanitarian agency to rethink on the accountability of the regime. While critiquing the modern praxis of producing homeless and stateless denizens, Agamben (1995) also offers a concept to seek human dignity and qualified life in the society which is possible only when the sovereign cease to launch the state of exception.

Overall, the critics above primarily focused on the ripping of the citizenry rights and critique the outlawry as modern political phenomena. They do not talk of why modern nation/ state harvest *homo sacer* and deploys sovereign ban which this study aims to assay taking recourse to Foucault's state racism and Agamben's critique of producing the *homo sacer*. At the same time, it postulates that the forcible dislocated asylum-seeking Tamils embody *homo sacer* life that helps to critique the double standard of Global north in dealing with refugees' rights.

Methods and Materials

In taking stock of the dignified human position by the Tamils beyond their consigned bare lives in Bala's *The Boat People*, the study makes use of Agamben's biopolitical insights of *homo sacer* to critically analyze the

aforementioned queries where he discusses the state of exception, the repealing of *biós*; socio-politically acknowledged life and the individual ultimately survives like an animal attributing to bare life; *zoé*. Upon observing the holocaust and the rampant violation of human rights by the authority which they normalize through emergency power, Agamben, while developing and critiquing Michel Foucault's notion of biopolitics—power's control over life for its proliferation—especially the underbelly of biopolitics; state racism, brings for the concept of *homo sacer*. The terrorist indictment, prolonged custodial interrogation, deportation, and dehumanization among other can help assay the refugees' dignity and safety at home and abroad. Agamben while arguing on *homo sacer* builds idea on Foucault's notion of state racism. Foucault in *Society must be defended* (2003) argues that state racism as the underbelly of life-caring biopolitics wherein to safeguard privileged community the other is deprived and segregated. Drawing on this biopolitical pitfalls Agamben, in *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (1995) explored how the sovereign constitutes *homo sacer* and consigns bare life. In so doing, he reviews on the power of the sovereign to exert exceptional power and create the discourse to normalize it. The normalized state of exception through discursive power which has been the modern sovereign praxis to rip off citizenry rights. This conceptualization of Agamben offers a critical tool to assess the forcible loss of *biós* of the Tamil refugees who undertake a perilous path to find safe haven. Unfortunately, in British Columbia also they are indicted as terrorists and discriminated before some of them get deported. Their state of *persona-non-grata* and Agamben's *homo sacer* both index the stripping down of the human dignity. Therefore, the content of Bala's tome and Agamben's notion ably tie up to help assess the herculean struggle of the Tamils to find out home, the connectivity of knowledge and power to reduce them to only biological life.

Textual Discussion and Results: 'Deading Life' of Sri Lankan Refugees

Bala's *The Boat People* (2018) outlines Sri Lankan refugees seeking refuge in Canada after their narrow escape from war-torn country. The retrofitted boat that carries "five hundred and three migrants" the narrator adds, "These were the survivors. Arrival of the fittest" (p. 40) who undergo detention in Vancouver suspecting that they are the 'human bombs' prepared by infamous Liberation of Tamil Tiger Ealm (LTTE). The observation of one of a Sri Lankan immigrants—and former Tamil Tiger—asks to his Canadian-born niece: "What do you think happens [sic]when you terrorize a people, force them to flee, take away their options then put them in a cage all together?" (p. 230), draws on a crux of the novel staging the *homo sacer* state through constituting hostile socio-political environment that compelled them to opt for forcible migration. Though Bala's novel is a fictional narrative, Darshani Lakmali Jayasinghe (2024) also amplifies it as a trauma narrative bearing witness to the ravages of Sri Lanka's civil war, as well as a powerful portrayal of the racialized interpellation of refugee-immigrants from the Global South (p.1). Jayasinghe's exploration too infers to the constitutionally constituted Tamils' bare lives that is unguarded by law. She further highlights the process of making them *homo sacer*:

Bala presents a humane and humanizing counter narrative that challenges the arbitrary naming, shaming, and dehumanizing discourse that labels asylum seekers as 'terrorists,' 'illegals,' 'thugs,' and 'foreign criminals,' all labels used by Canadian anti-immigrant factions to brand the Sri Lanka asylum seekers. (p.1)

Jayasinghe further spotlights the discursive power of the Global South that holds authority to shaming and bad naming the asylum-seeking Tamils. Negative tagging and defaming the Tamils as an impunity of the sovereigns recalls Agamben's socially relegated *homo sacer* whom anybody can harm and against it he cannot complain because he has already been dismissed from political sphere (*polis*), losing his legal life (*biós*) or agency. Darias-Beautell discussion of loss of legal status of the Tamils and Canadian hostile protest marks the discursive global praxis of relegating the human to animal state (*zoé*).

Encapsulating the plight of the refugees, Ru Freeman, *NewYork Times* columnist (2018) observed:

[S]ubjecting foreign asylum seekers to the processes established by rule of law is the same as the forced removal and incarceration of law-abiding citizens. It's a false equivalence that blights a novel already struggling under

the weight of political opinion: Bala vilifies the Canadian Border Services Agency and the draconian immigration laws (*New York Times*, para 7)

Freeman scans the forcible removal of Tamils and their custody life in Canada to show their Hercules attempt to find peace and order in life. Quite reverse to their optimism, their incarceration and subjugated position helps review the unhumanitarian custom law of Canada and the atrocity of Sri Lankan government. In both of the cases the displaced Tamils undergo the precarious experience of outlawry and statelessness which resembles with Agamben's protagonist *homo sacer*. Following the lines of Ru Freeman, Findor, A. et al. (2021) also talk of the secondary position of the migrants/ refugees which complies with *homo sacer*'s relegated situation to non-human.

Obviously, the refugee crisis is a huge issue in Global North. Hopefully the depth of the characters' stories, and their resilience, make society more aware of the horrors people are fleeing, and how badly refugees are wanting to survive (Christofi, 2018)). Christofi rethinks the trauma faced by the refugees at the host countries where humanity survives under hypocrisy. The Canadian practice of incarcerating and deporting the four hundred Sri Lankan refugees substantiate Christofi's stance regarding the hypocrisy of western world.

Adding to it, "they (the asylum appellants) undergo through prolonged and unending Canadian trial" (Sharma, 2020, p. 65) during their appeal for the refugee status which is for avoiding the prosecutions of waging parties of Sri Lanka. The long awaiting of the custom trial indicates the justice denial to the asylum seekers which Agamben's *homo sacer* also passes through. Apart from it, the "administration of bodies" (Foucault, 1998, p. 140) of the refugees under trial undeniably draws on Foucauldian biopolitics which targets at managing and controlling the population. Not only this, in biopolitical statecraft "diverse techniques for the control of populations" (ibid) are exercised to achieve hegemony over them but also these factors influence on "segregation and hierarchization" (Foucault, 2003, p.241) of populations that alludes to discriminatory state racism.

Along with Canadian racialized hospitality Sanja Ignjatović and Bogdan Stanković (2021) deal with the incompetency of Tamils to prove that they are not ideologically supporting the separatist war in Sri Lanka. They state:

Sharon Bala's novel *The Boat People*, essentially a series of narratives converging in the present moment Canada, is a novel whose fragmented formal structure and spatio-temporal shifts render it somewhat historiographic. The storyline follows a group of migrants – emigrants, immigrants or terrorists, depending on the perspective, and the members of the legal team aiding in their hearings, but also those deciding on their cases' outcomes, trapped in a bureaucratic loop upon their arrival in Canada. Their cases are presented in courts and their fates are decided on the basis of their ability to reconstruct their own narratives against the political climate of Canada, and reinvent themselves in hopeless, homeless and desperate situations, hindered by unlucky circumstance, linguistic and cultural barriers. (p.180)

Mainly exploring the ignorance of Tamils and incapacity to claim their human position in home town and Canada, Sanja Ignjatović and Bogdan Stanković hint on the deceptive skill of Canadian bureaucrats to keep them in limbo and custody. Their life in limbo refers to the legally unacknowledged situation which Agamben claims that *homo sacer* has.

Further the ensuing discussion sheds light the total Canadian Outlawry and sovereign ban over the displaced Tamils. The delay in custom trial at Canada from one hearing to another to the refuge claimants whom Singh, Canadian Custom official, accuses of "being foreign national from a country known terrorist who have spent the past three decades waging a civil war" (Bala, 2018, p. 60). Postulating them, the militant escapees, another official, Nakamura insists on retaining them in custody and we will review the case again in a week" (ibid). And "*Sinhala Only Act*" (*The Boat People*, p.12) in Sri Lanka excludes the Tamils from public sphere (*bios*) that calls forth Agamben's thesis on *homo sacer*, a figure who is discarded and reduced to animal state whom anybody may hurt with impunity. Moreover, this figure is ripped from social and legal measures. Indeed, it is the "bestialization of man achieved through the most sophisticated political technique" (Agamben, 1995, p. 3) because when man is striped of legal right, he turns out to be

similar to the beast that lives, eats, labours and reproduces under hegemony, a depended life, cornered by the political praxis. Further, he is postulated as socially dead. The Tamils in both of the spaces have not been allowed legal rights; the deprivation of legal position imposed by Sinhalese regime and the Canadian detention camp substantiate their bestial life envisioned by Agamben in *homo sacer* figure.

Therefore, the analogy of statelessness of the Tamils draws on Agamben's concept of 'bare life.' He contends that modern regimes intentionally impose 'bare life' on underdogs. Bare life refers; a life that is neither human nor animal, but rather an inhuman kind of life that exists at the limits of ethical and political categories; the werewolf who is precisely *neither man nor beast*, and who dwells paradoxically within both while belonging to neither (Agamben, 1995, p. 107). The estrangement of refugees in Canada epitomizes the condition of nowhere. Further, the terror laden Tamils exile from home, in a way, is an exclusion from polis and further, their unacknowledged position in Canadian jail, verifies the fact that law has been withdrawn from them. It's a wonder that the Tamils in Canada belongs to nowhere, as the identity of the *homo sacer* is in-between human and animals, so is their case. The unending hearings, from the same fashion, upon the appeal for shelter, leave them vulnerable to unsanctified political and legal violence. Thus, they are on the brink of inside /outside dichotomy of the law like the paradoxical werewolf figure of Agamben.

Ultimately, Canadian authority denies refuge to Ranga who finally commits suicide upon the issue of being deported because he would not like to be the victim of Sri Lankan regime or the rebel LTTE again. His suicide delineates the precarious life of the refugees. In question, his deportation decree precisely shows the liminality of human dignity and dramatizes the inclusive exclusion of migrants. Commenting on the reductionist state character, the forceful evacuation and custodial stay of the asylum seekers Ru Freeman (2020) reveals:

[S]ubjecting foreign asylum seekers to the processes established by rule of law is the same as the forced removal and incarceration of law-abiding citizens. It's a false equivalence that blights a novel already struggling under the weight of political opinion: Bala vilifies the Canadian Border Services Agency and the draconian immigration laws. (cited in Sharma, 2020, p. 71)

Freeman's critique on *The boat people* also evidences the subjectivation of refugee claimants to 'bare life' who belongs to nowhere because of their intrusion in Canada. Ironically, as Bala genetically belongs to Sri Lanka then she has belittling sense to Canadian border authority. Freeman's metaphor of draconian law brings home the sense of death prone law used in Greek time to scare people. Allegedly, the lengthy trial upon the Sri Lankan refugees bags Agamben's thesis of state of exception that brews sovereign ban to rip off their legal status.

In another point, it draws attention on Mbembe's (2019) notion of necropolitics and breeding the death-world: how the modern states are exiting from the promises of democracy (p. 166) which Bala's novel resurfaces through forcing Ranga who was once a Tiger fighting for autonomy to the death-world. Ranga once admits that he was a Tiger, waging militant (Bala 2018) that Prasad generalizes upon perusing the Canadian media: "To them we are all Tigers (Bala 2018, p. 265). Espousing with the migrants' exceptional status, Garrido, L.E. et al (2021) delved into the ordeals of the migrant highlighting the powerful and often subversive tactics migrants use to negotiate borders, sovereignty and relations of power in gendered, racialized, material, embodied and imagined manners (p. 241). They further cue the phrase 'migrant states of exception', from Agamben's provocative claim that, in modernity, states of exception become the norm, 'a paradigm of government' to exert absolute sovereign power (p. 242), so that the stateless Tamils can be de/ re-subjectified as terrorist or refugees.

Additionally, while exploring the bare life, life not safeguarded by sovereign, of the Tamils especially, Mahindan and others in Sri Lanka, it cannot be overlooked their statelessness at home which characterizes their *homo sacer* state. Further, five hundred refugees as detention inmates in Canada replicate a holocaust *museleman*, Bazi camp inmate who witnessed the absolute injustice and outlawry and cannot verbally express the trauma he has received. The refugee claimants are shackled and handcuffed (Bala 2018, p.11) which proves their loss of *biós* and reduction to mere

biological body (*zoē*). Notably, they are reduced to an animal to be tamed and made governable. Largely, this physical bondage of the refuge seeking asylum in Canada mirrors the fact of social and legal exclusion after being ripped from human rights.

However, Mahindan assumes that Canadian bestialization of his life is for his safety (Bala 2018, p. 11) brings the ironic sense upon the heterotopia he has assimilated. This is the power of the regime to impose the truth of regime to Mahindan that he would get better life in for himself and for his six years son, Sellian despite shackles and handcuffs in his body. Repealing their human dignity and reducing them to the terrorist marks the highest paragon of *homo sacer* harvesting which Minister Blair states “All these brown people look exactly the same which is to say, like terrorists” (Bala 2018, p.105). Moreover, Blair’s premise affords Foucault’s state racism that immunizes the super race from the fear of “brown” Tamils who are in Canadian custody. It by and large, epitomizes that the regime retains the power to make both body and mind go docile and subject to the given environment.

Given that *The Boat People* projects the lengthy trial of the refuge appellants and their perennial detention, “Mahindan would never be allowed to leave the jail” (p.169) imbricates over camp inmates who was traumatized by Gestapo to the state of unsayable biological beings. The refugees spend time under the uncertainty of deportation in the custody as the *Muselmann* would remain in limbo of life and death. The public slogan “*Send the illegal back! Go home terrorist*” (Bala, 2018, p. 16) to outcast the homeless and dislocated refugees further dehumanize them and subject to be statelessness because they are being ripped from human right. This state of uncertainty and trauma born by the refugees in Canada is necropolitical, pushing life to death by making it ‘walking- death,’ or it is deadening the life by reducing the life to inhuman condition after the sovereign ban. To bolster the traumatized life Mahindan recalls a dreadful duress and extortion in Sri Lanka by rebel LTTE and the Sinhalese soldiers, “You heard that they took Chelva and his nephew. The boy is not even eleven. The Tiger had stepped up their recruitment. One fighter per family no longer enough” (p.169). This abduction is what the rebel did to manipulate the commoners. The state is also equally irresponsible to safeguard the innocent Tamils. Mahindan again recalls:

Soldiers with riffles and batons patrolled on foot. Armored vehicles came and went, throwing up dust like clouds of mosquitoes. At night, young people were forced into white vans and never heard from again...six girls who had gone missing were found dead in the river, their bodies facedown and naked. The Sinhalese called this a welfare village. (p.304)

This state induced rampant coercion, rape, extermination, and stripping the Tamils of their citizenry right, cause them go under trauma, dislocation and finally relegation to statelessness which obliges them seek abroad refuge.

The Canadian trial has the explicit interface with Sri Lankan exclusion of the Tamils. The civil war-laden Tamils in Canada are under the trial and detention-laden. In both spaces the sovereigns subjugate them to the ‘world-of- death’ which Mbembe (2019) contends, “The ultimate expression of sovereignty largely resides in its differential power and capacity to dictate who is able to live and who must die. To kill or to let live thus constitutes sovereign’s limits, its principal attributes” (p. 66). Here he decries the nature of regime and clearly elaborates that the sovereign has the authority who to stay safe, or live and who to die. The illegal detention, abduction, killing, and extortion for militia constitute terror which forces people to live in death.

Moreover, the episodes of “Chelva and his eleven years nephew” (Bala 2018, p.169), six girls killing after coercion and rape (p.304), *Go home terrorists* (p.16), and Ranga’s deportation further signal state racial imperative that Foucault (2003) claims, “we all have some elements of fascism in our head” (p. 30) exercised through biopower against socially excluded underdogs, here the refugees. The aforementioned fictional exclusionary episodes subscribe “all those biological-racist discourses of degeneracy, but also all those institutions within the social body which make the discourse of race struggle functions as a principle of exclusion and segregation, and, ultimately as a way of normalizing society” (p. 61). By and large the Canadian discourse based on racial hospitality recalls the authority or organization

to exert power in sorting every individual within the given society (Foucault: 2003, p.317). Overall, the terrorist stereotype of the asylum-seeking Tamils invokes their relegated *homo sacer* state and vulnerable life.

Conclusion

The examination of Tamils' narrow escape from Sri Lankan civil-war and their landing in British Columbia amid the uncertainty of deportation ascertains the fact that seeking human dignity bags high pertinence. The narratives of Sri Lankan refugees neither at home, nor in Canadian custody enjoy the ethical and political life *biós*. They perennially fall victim of state racism, exclusion and get the stigma of terrorist in Canada that substantiates their being of *homo sacer*. Thus, they lead a precarious life after being reduced to the *persona non grata*, people unrecognized by any law so that they get excluded from lawful position. Put differently, the Tamil refugees are mutilated not physically but socially and legally in Canada in a metaphoric sense which exemplifies both of their vulnerability and political praxis of Global North, harvesting the *homo sacer* in which the sovereigns hold authority to deny human dignity (*bios*) of some specific community under different alibi and normalize it through discursive power.

In sum, the custody and deportation of Tamil refugees suggests the declaration of the state of exception that helps the authority exert the emergency power in order to repeal citizenry right which means constituting *homo sacer* whose life is socio-politically invalidated, leading to ostracism. Bala's novel informs that Tamils under 'Only Sinhalese Act' get deprived of citizenry rights as a political practice of producing the Tamils as *homo sacer*. By the same token, Canadian Custom law also equally does not acknowledge them because of their tribal lineage with militant LTTE. Thus, their pursuit of security, home, and dignified life in the world certify their migration vulnerability and the *homo sacer* harvest in Bala's narrative.

References

- Agamben, G. (1995). *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life* (D. Heller-Roazen, Trans.). Stanford University Press,
- Anjalika Samarasekera (2018). Contemporary writing from Canada and the world. *Prism International*. <https://prismmagazine.ca>
- Bala, S. (2018). *The boat people*. Doubleday.
- Christofi, P. (2018). Book Review: *The boat people* by Sharon Bala. *Glam Adelaide*, 18 August 2018, www.glamadelaide.com.au/book-review/
- Darias-Beautell, E. (2020). The paradox of hospitality. In Sharon Bala's *The boat people*." In L. L. Ropero, S. P. García-Cañedo, & J. A. S. Fajardo (Eds.), *Thresholds and Ways Forward in English Studies*, 69–77. Publicaciones Universidad de Alicante.
- Deane, T. (2016). Historical and political background to the erosion of the rule of law and human rights during Sri Lanka's civil war and the way forward. *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27(6), 971–995. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.123411>.
- Findor, A. et al. (2021). Re-examining public opinion preferences for migrant categorizations: "Refugees" are evaluated more negatively than "migrants" and "foreigners" related to participants' direct, extended, and mass-mediated intergroup contact experiences. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 80 (2021), 262–273. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2020.12.004>.
- Foucault, M. (1998). *The will to knowledge. History of sexuality* (R. Hurley, Trans.). Penguin Books.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *Society must be defended* (D. Macey, Trans.). Penguin Books.
- Garrido, L.E. et al., (2021) Migrant lives in a state of exception (II): Sovereignty, mobility and agency in a globalised world, *Parallax*, 27(3), 241-249. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2022.2071202>.
- Herk, A. V. (2020). Trembling strength: Migrating vulnerabilities in fiction by Sharon Bala,

- Yasmin Ladha, and Denise Chong. *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 00 (0), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021989420972455>
- Ignjatović, S. and Bogdan Stanković (2021). The Postmodern refugees, migrants, and Canadians in Sharon Bala's *The boat people*. *The Society for the Advancement of Cultural Studies (SACS)*, 176-192. https://doi.org/10.18485/asec_sacs.2021.9.ch12
- Jayasinghe, D.L. (2024). Racialized Hostapitality and Narrative Resistance in Sharon Bala's *The boat people*. *South Asian Review*, 45(1-2), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02759527.2024.2404275>
- Sarkowsky, K. (2021). The other side of citizenship? Narrating flight and refugeeism in Sharon Bala's *The boat people*. *Parallax* 27(2),159-175 <https://doi.org/10.1080/13534645.2021.1995950>
- Sharma, P. (2020). The politics of bare life in Sharon Bala's *The boat people*: A biopolitical perspective. *SCHOLARS: Journal of Arts & Humanities*, 2(1) 65-73. <https://doi.org/10.3126/sjah.v2i0.35014>.

Author Bio-note

Pradip Sharma is a Faculty of English at Ratna Rajyalaxmi Campus, Tribhuvan University (TU). He has got his PhD from TU taking stock of methodological insight from Michel Foucault's concept of biopolitics. His dissertation incorporates power dynamics over the issues like gender, ethnicity, marginalized people, and colonialism among others. He has penned several scholarly articles on different literary genres. They encompass poetry, novels and dramas along with visual arts. He has looked into those texts from eco-critical, feminist, Marxist, subaltern studies, biopolitics, necropolitics, and postmodern perspectives etc. He prefers to pen on contemporary issues like socio-cultural injustice taking recourse to resistance theories as methodological insights.

