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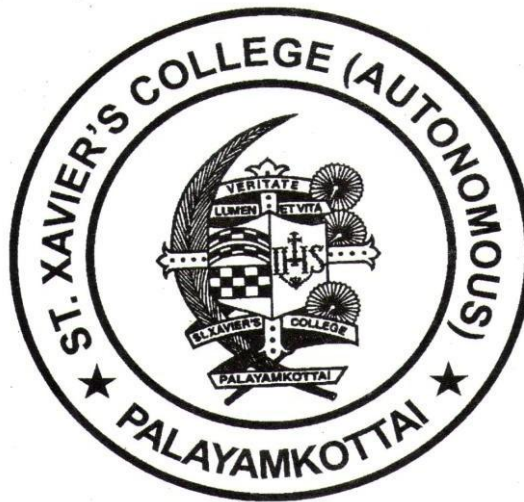
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Veritate Lumen et Vita

(Light and Life through Truth)



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THE POLITICS OF DEATH: A NECROPOLITICAL READING OF SHARON BALA'S *THE BOAT PEOPLE*

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Abstract: This paper explores a necropolitical reading of Sharon Bala's *The Boat People* (2018) and argues how modern nation-states exercise their power, by governing not life but death. Drawing on Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics, the paper analyses how the Canadian government exerts control over the Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers by exposing them to various forms of slow and symbolic death, which include racial discrimination, spatial confinement, and prolonged legal delays.

Keywords: Refugee Narrative, Asylum Seekers, Necropolitics, Racism and Violence.

Literature has always been a space, where the power structures are questioned, the tables are turned, and the marginalized reclaim their voice. This often results in the transformation of margin to the centre. In the aftermath of World War II, the emergence of modern nation-states redefined the concepts such as nationhood, citizenship, and identity. This is reflected in literature, where refugee writings become the source of not just socio-political realities but also aesthetic tools to reaffirm human dignity and justice as Bakara affirms in his *Introduction: Refugee Literatures* as, "the ideas and affects found in writing by and about refugees have become sources of intellectual and aesthetic resistance to both xenophobic nationalism and neoliberal globalization." (291).

The 1951 Refugee Convention defines 'refugee' as a person who is unable or unwilling to return to one's country of origin, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion (UNHCR). Unlike migrants, refugees are forcibly displaced and they flee to safeguard themselves from the imminent death threats posited in the home country.

In recent times, mass displacement of people has become an unresolved global issue and the unprecedented rise in the number of people crossing border is referred to as "refugee crisis" by scholars and policymakers. However, the crisis cannot be overlooked as a mere outcome of sudden mass displacement, but it is a reflection of how nation-states respond to the precarious conditions of displaced population. Due to humanistic interventions and nation-state regimes, the arrival of refugees to the shores of host countries is often perceived to be a threat to national security, identity, and social, and cultural construction of citizenship. As a result, refugees become a politicized category and are pushed to be in the states of social, political, legal, and existential exclusion.

UN Convention advocates for "non-discrimination, non-penalization, and non-refoulment" practices towards refugees. But, in the name of national security, modern nation-state regimes enforce heightened border surveillance,

discriminatory asylum policies, and endless detentions to dominate and restrict certain groups of the population. The transformation of this sovereign power from governing life to governing death and thereby upholding power to dictate ‘who must live and who must die’ is referred to as “necropolitics” by the Cameroonian philosopher, Achille Mbembe in his book *Necropolitics* (2019).

The Canadian writer Sharon Bala’s debut novel *The Boat People* (2018) dramatizes the real-life incident which happened in 2010, in which nearly five hundred Tamils from Sri Lanka arrive on the shores of British Columbia, fleeing the aftermath of brutal Sri Lankan Civil War. Instead of offering unconditional hospitality, the Canadian authorities suspect the so called “the boat people” to have affiliations with Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) group and thus deprive them of basic human rights and dignity. The novel humanizes the plight of these asylum seekers, especially it centres on the father-son relationship, between Mahindan and his son Sellian and explores how the Canadian state exercises its sovereign power to frame asylum seekers as potential terrorists, thereby denies them humanitarian protection and support.

The research paper primarily focuses on exploring the relationship between asylum seekers and the modern nation-state and thereby argues how modern states exercises its power not merely by governing life forms (biopolitics), but by exposing certain groups of the population to systemic structures of death, which Mbembe conceptualizes as necropolitics. In this context, Bala’s *The Boat People* depicts the necropolitical authority of the Canadian state over Tamil asylum seekers by exposing them to various forms of slow and symbolic death which include racial discrimination, social exclusion via refugee camps, and prolonged legal limbo. Through its portrayal of the systemic violence against the refugees, the novel offers a more nuanced and humanized refugee voice that are often marginalised by the mainstream narratives.

The novel begins by exposing the hypocrisy of multicultural Canada, a nation that prides itself on providing unconditional hospitality to people in distress, notably, when Mahindan, a young widower, along with other 500 Sri Lankan Tamils arrives in Canada, with expectation of humanitarian aid and asylum. These refugees encounter the harsh reality when they are detained and interrogated by the Canadian Government, due to racial suspicion. The racial and ethnic identity of the boat people, their Tamilness, are equated with terrorism, and the flight from brutal war is misunderstood as an action to escape accountability for wartime crimes. The absolute detainment of the boat people is the first step towards the exercise of necropolitical control by the Canadian sovereignty. As Mbembe believes that necropolitics operates on “the distribution of human species into groups, ...the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others” (Mbembe 17). The physical detainment of refugees is not only to control their movement, but also to fabricate them as “the other.” The novel highlights the conditional nature of hospitality and how it is offered selectively to those people who belong to selected racial or ethnic identities.

The hostile attitude towards refugees is further amplified by media

sensationalism and political propaganda that frames the Tamil refugees as an imminent danger, where one of the Canadian officials, Fred Blair, Minister of Public Safety warns the general public that the humanitarian aid to the boat people will be a potential threat to the national sovereignty. As he affirms: “Canada is a sovereign nation... We will protect our borders from thugs and foreign criminals and those who seek to abuse our generosity” (Bala 46). This racialized rhetoric not only creates fear among the public, but also allows the state to justify inhumane practices that strategically deprive the Sri Lankan Tamils of human dignity and render them as disposable, in the name of nation security. As Mbembe believes:

Racism is the driver of the necropolitical principle insofar as it stands for organized destruction, for a sacrificial economy...the permanent simulation of the state of exception justifies “the war against terror” – a war of eradication, indefinite, absolute, the claims the right to cruelty, torture, and indefinite detention (Mbembe 38).

Instead of protecting the Sri Lankan Tamils as war victims, the Canadian government transforms them into the “sacrificial economy” where the human rights and dignity of refugees are sacrificed and suspended in order to protect its dominant population.

Amid the chaos of racial suspicion, the Canadian government reinforces its necropolitical control over the Sri Lankan Tamils through the confinement in refugee camps. At first, Mahindan and his fellow 500 Sri Lankan Tamils find the refugee camps as a far safer place as they rejoice on seeing the giant building. “Can this really be a jail?,” Ranga asked (Bala 20). Also in the camp, Mahindan and others begin to learn English in order to make a new beginning for themselves. However, as the days pass without their release, their optimism and hope diminish as the narrator says, “They had slept in open fields, longing for shelter, a reprieve from the sun. And now we might never see the sun again” (Bala 143). This highlights how refugee camps once perceived to be a sanctuary, slowly changes into a place of claustrophobic containment and despair. It is important to mention that refugee camps are a modern way of controlling disposed population where Mbembe argues,

In a context in which decapitation is viewed as less demeaning than hanging, innovations in the technologies of murder aim not only at “civilising” the ways of killing... [but] a new cultural sensibility emerges... [where] more intimate, lurid, and leisurely forms of cruelty appear (19).

Thus, refugee camps are not just a physical containment of refugees, rather it is a space of prolonged uncertainty. As Mbembe points out with more advancement of technologies, death is no longer a spectacular event rather it takes a modern form of slow bureaucratic violence, where the refugees are devoid of identity, agency, and hope.

Moreover, the systemic control exercised by the Canadian government through spatial confinement of refugees further extends through time. The exhaustive and the slow-paced bureaucratic decisions become another form of

slow death. As the narrator notes, “Detention reviews, the admissibility hearing, then the Refugee Board hearing: a long series of judgement, each an opportunity of failure and deportation” (Bala 49). The legal delays result in what Mbembe refers to as “the slave condition” where the plight of refugees can be compared to that of a human slave as “the slave condition results from a triple loss: loss of a “home, loss of rights over his or her body, and loss of political action” (Mbembe 21). In the novel, Bala depicts how these Sri Lankan Tamil refugees endure the “triple loss” of slave condition as well. As Mahindan and the other 500 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees, who are described as “...these were the survivors. Arrival of fittest” (Bala 17), have been forcibly displaced from their roots and have arrived in Canada for seeking safety, in stead of safeguarding, these boat people are racially discriminated, pushed to physical containment, and rendered stateless. The loss of home is not just loss of identity but also the loss of personhood. Also, for some refugees, the delayed bureaucratic procedures result in a fatal decision. For instance, Ranga, one of the boat people, who is accused of past affiliation with the LTTE group is ordered for his deportation, despite proven guilty. The fear of returning to his country, where his life remains in potential danger, makes Ranga take his life. His suicide is not due to being guilty rather it is the failure of systemic bureaucracy. The death of Ranga highlights how the necropolitical power of the modern nation-state which does not directly kill its enemy, rather it creates a condition where the enemy cannot survive and sees death as the only escape.

In conclusion, Bala’s *The Boat People* delineates the harsh reality of refugees, who have fled the threat of physical death in their home country only to face prolonged and uncertain future in the host country. The novel exposes how the hypocritical nature of hospitality is rooted in racial discrimination and thereby leads to the formation of “the Other”. The novel is an important critique of modern nation-state, like Canada, which exerts control over certain groups of the population by exposing them to various forms of slow and systemic death. Thus, the novel highlights how modern nation-state exerts its necropolitical control over the marginalized individuals, under the guise of nation security.

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**EMBODIED NARRATIVES AND MEDICAL RESISTANCE: A
MEDICAL HUMANITIES STUDY OF *THE TRUTH ABOUT ME: A
HIJRA LIFE STORY* BY A. REVATHI AND *I AM VIDYA: A
TRANSGENDER'S JOURNEY* BY LIVING SMILE VIDYA**

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Abstract: This paper explores embodied narratives and medical resistance through a Medical Humanities lens, focusing on *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life story* by A. Revathi and *I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* by Living Smile Vidya. These autobiographies foreground lived experiences of gender non-conformity, bodily autonomy and marginalization within medical and social institutions. The study highlights how these texts challenge biomedical discourses and reclaim agency through storytelling. By situating transgender voices within the framework of Medical Humanities, the paper emphasizes the importance of inclusivity, empathy and narrative healing in healthcare and literary representations.

Keywords: Transgender Narratives, Medical Humanities, Bioethics, Queer Health and Narrative Healing.

Introduction

In recent decades, the interdisciplinary field of Medical Humanities has gained prominence as a critical lens to understand the intersections of medicine, narrative, culture, and ethics by integrating insights from literature, history, philosophy, and the arts. Medical Humanities challenges the reductive logic of biomedical sciences, which often views the body as a machine and illness as mere malfunction. It foregrounds the lived experience of illness and healing, emphasizing on empathy, narrative competence, and socio-cultural context. As Rita Charon notes, "Stories are the way we come to understand the plight of the other" (Narrative Medicine 3), underscoring the necessity of listening to the patient's narrative in clinical practice. This field becomes especially vital when engaging with the lives of marginalized individuals whose bodies and experiences have been pathologized or erased by institutional medicine. Within the Indian context, transgender individuals have long been subjected to medical scrutiny, legal exclusion and social stigma, often without access to affirming care or narrative recognition. In this light, the autobiographical works of A. Revathi (*The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story*) and Living Smile Vidya (*I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey*) emerge as vital contributions to the field. These texts not only document the embodied struggle of gender variance but also resist the medicalization of trans lives by asserting self-narrated agency, cultural specificity, and testimonial power. This article explores how these works, through the lens of Medical Humanities, challenge the clinical gaze, redefine care, and enact medical resistance through embodied storytelling.

A. Revathi's *The Truth About Me*, first published in Tamil as *Unarvum Uruvum* and later translated into English by V. Geeta (2010), is widely recognized as one of the first transgender autobiographies to emerge from the southern parts of India. Revathi narrates her journey from being born as

Doraisamy in a small Tamil village, experiencing gender dysphagia in childhood, enduring familial rejection, and to finding refuge within the hijra community. Her account moves through various geographies- rural Tamil Nadu, bustling Bangalore, and the cloistered spaces of hijra gharanas, each stage marked by bodily and social transformation. She reveals the exploitation within hijra networks, the brutality of serial violence, and the stigma of seeking medical and legal help.

Living Smile Vidya's *I am Vidya: A Transgender's Journey* also translated by V. Geetha (2013), provides another deeply introspective and politically charged autobiographical account. Born into a middle-class Tamil Brahmin family, Vidya's Journey is shaped by internalized fear, psychiatric evaluations, and suicidal ideation before she can fully articulate her transgender identity. The autobiography details the alienation Vidya faced in her formative years, her failed attempts to conform to masculine expectations, and the complex negotiations she undertakes with her family and the medical establishment. Unlike Revathi, Vidya does not become part of hijra gharana system, instead navigates her transition through hospitals, doctors, and eventually, stage performances. Her narrative is filled with emotional and philosophical reflection on the nature of gender, selfhood, and medicalization.

Both narratives offer rich insights into the embodied experiences of transgender women in India. While Revathi's account is shaped by her Dalit identity and community-based resilience within hijra culture, Vidya's is mediated through caste privilege and individual negotiation with modern institutions. Together, these works serve not just as life stories but as a crucial epistemological resource within the framework of Medical Humanities. They challenge biomedicine's neutrality and assert the primacy of lived experience in understanding the human body, identity and care.

Theoretical Framework: Medical Humanities, Embodiment, and the Politics of Care

Medical Humanities as defined by Rita Charon, seeks to "honour the stories of illness and re-center patient agency" (Charon 8). This field draws from narrative theory, ethics, and cultural studies to interrogate biomedicine's reductive gaze. Arthur Frank's *The Wounded Storyteller* posits that ill person is not merely a passive resisting erasure (Frank 6). This concept is pivotal in reading trans autobiographies as resistance narratives.

Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity helps destabilize essentialist views. "Gender is an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 191). For trans individuals, whose lived bodies resist binary logic, this performativity is not theatrical but existential.

Michel Foucault's analysis in *The Birth of the Clinic* exposes how medical power objectified bodies, turning them into "cases rather than subjects" (Foucault 34). In the Indian context, transgender people particularly hijras and thirunangais have historically been pathologized or fetishized. Revathi and Vidya's autobiographies reclaim medicalized bodies as sites of dignity, resistance, and agency.

Embodiment and Violence: The Medicalization of Trans Bodies

Transgender individuals often face violence not only in public but within clinical spaces. Medical Systems, ostensibly spaces of care, become sites of epistemic and corporeal violation. Revathi's account is harrowing: "Doctors called in interns to 'study' me. They laughed and made jokes, as if I couldn't understand them. I was a body to be examined, not a person to be healed" (Revathi 110). This kind of institutional voyeurism aligns with Foucault's "clinical gaze, where bodies are dissected and classified without consent" (Foucault 15). Similarly, Vidya recounts: "I was told that I had to pass psychiatric evaluation. I had to prove that I hated my body enough. But I didn't hate it – I just knew it was not whole yet" (Vidya 89). The forced performance of distress to gain medical access reveals the coercive structure of care.

The language of pathology terms like 'Gender Identity Disorder' dehumanizes. In resisting these terms, both authors create their own vocabularies of embodiment. Vidya asserts, "I am not diseased. I am not a man who wants to be a woman. I am a woman who was misrecognized" (Vidya 132). This statement is radical in its simplicity: it displaces diagnosis with self-recognition.

Autobiography as Resistance

Autobiography has long served as a tool for marginalized communities to reclaim agency. Leigh Gilmore asserts that "testimony in life writing functions not only as personal catharsis but as political intervention" (Gilmore 29). Revathi's narrative functions exactly thus: "I had no rights. Not even the right to my own body. But I had my story. And I would tell it" (Revathi 180).

Arthur Frank classifies illness narratives into restitution, chaos, and quest narratives (Frank 76). Both Revathi and Vidya articulate quest narratives- where suffering leads to transformation, not just of the self but of collective understanding. The chaos they describe is not just internal but social and institutional. In telling their stories, these authors reject imposed medical scripts. Vidya writes, "They gave me a language that never fit. So, I made my own. That's what this book is" (Vidya 7). Such acts echo Gayatri Spivak's call to recognize the Subaltern voice, not by speaking for them but by hearing them in their own terms. She asserts, "translation is never a neutral act- it can be both a form of empowerment and of epistemic violence, especially when local narratives are rendered in hegemonic discourses" (Spivak 182).

Performing the Body: Gender, Surgery, and Spiritual Embodiment

One of the most powerful threads in both texts is the negotiation between body and self – not as a one-time event but as an ongoing process. Revathi writes, "I never saw surgery as the end. It was one step towards living truthfully." (Revathi 134). Here, gender-affirming surgery is not a medical cure but a spiritual rite of passage. Vidya describes her post- surgical self not in clinical but spiritual terms: "I had been reborn. Not because of the knife, but because I had willed it" (Vidya 120). Such expressions echo older Hindu notions of *atma* (soul) and *janma* (birth), reclaiming medical transformation within Indigenous cosmologies.

Cultural and Historical Context: The Hijra Tradition and its Silencing

The narratives of Revathi and Vidya must be read within the larger history of hijra and thirunangai communities in South Asia. While often romanticized or demonized in popular culture, these communities have long histories of spiritual significance and political exclusion. Revathi notes, “We were once revered, now we are feared or ignored.” (Revathi 63). Susan Stryker argues that “trans bodies are texts upon which gender norms are inscribed and contested” (Stryker 250). This is vividly apparent in both autobiographies, where each surgical scar or social slight becomes a letter in a larger counter-script. The Colonial medical apparatus in India classified hijras as a criminal tribe (Reddy 105), a stigma that continues in subtle ways today.

In April 2014, the Indian Supreme Court’s landmark verdict in National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) versus Union of India legally recognized transgender people as a “third gender.” This judgement, while progressive on paper, did little to reform the medical gatekeepers mechanism that continued to police trans bodies.

Revathi’s autobiography predates the NALSA ruling, yet it foreshadows the Legal ambiguity that trans persons continue to face. She narrates: “There were no guidelines, only suspicion. We were made to feel criminal for wanting to live in our bodies” (Revathi 104)

Vidya, post-2000 echoes this: “Doctors would say, ‘You’ll regret this, or, ‘why do you want to ruin your life?’ They held moral authority, not medical knowledge” (Vidya 118). Such resistance by the medical establishment points to a larger institutional erasure. Even after NALSA, the lack of uniform protocols for hormone therapy, mental health support, or post-operative care leaves many trans individuals in precarity. This bureaucratic vacuum reflects what Foucault would call ‘biopolitical control’ – where the state’s ambivalence regulates life through omission and neglect rather than overt coercion.

Narrative Medicine and the Ethics of Listening

Rita Charon’s *Narrative Medicine* offers a framework for ethical listening in clinical settings. “The narrative is not ancillary to care- it is care” (Charon 8). Revathi and Vidya’s autobiographies serve not just as testimonies but as guides for rehumanizing medicine. Revathi recounts of her hospital stay “I was bleeding and in pain, but the nurses looked through me. As if I was not human. As if my pain was not real” (Revathi 111). This invisibilization is a form of moral injury. Narrative, then, becomes a form of justice. Vidya insists, “We don’t want sympathy. We want rights, recognition, and respect” (Vidya 117). The role of the Medical Humanities is not to aestheticize suffering but to politicize it – locating the root causes of pain in the structures, not souls.

Intersectionality: Caste, Class and Region in Trans Embodiment

Both authors foreground how their gender identities intersect with caste, class, and region. Revathi’s narrative is deeply rooted in her Dalit identity: “Even among Hijras, caste mattered. I was less than them” (Revathi 96). This intra- community marginalization is rarely discussed in western Trans theory, underscoring the need for localized analysis. Vidya reflects on the burden of

respectability: “I had to Speak English, dress well, and hide my past to be accepted by NGO circles. But who did that help?” (Vidya 149). Her narrative challenges the elitism often embedded in Queer activism, revealing how rural, Tamil-speaking, lower-caste trans women are excluded from the national discourse.

Kimberley Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality emphasizes how overlapping systems of oppression create unique modes of vulnerability (Crenshaw 1242). In this context, Trans Embodiment cannot be understood apart from caste and linguistic politics. While these autobiographies work through the written word, it is important to locate them within the larger cultural landscape of trans representation in India. The 2019 Tamil biopic *Naanu Avanalla...Avalu*, loosely based on Vidya's life, received critical acclaim. Yet, it cast a Cisgender male actor in the lead role- replicating the very erasure Vidya critiques. Vidya responded in interviews: “They made a film about me without me. My body, my story, but not my voice” (Interview, *The Hindu*, 2015). This speaks about the exploitative nature of representation in mainstream media, which appropriates trans suffering without including trans voices in the creative process. Revathi too mentions being approached for film rights, but was cautious about how her story would be handled. These incidents underline the necessity of self- representation. Autobiographies like *The Truth About Me* and *I am Vidya* reclaim narrative authority, resisting sensationalism depictions and asserting lived complexity.

Care Ethics and Healing Beyond the Clinic

Carol Gilligan's “ethics of care” emphasizes relational, contextualized moral reasoning over abstract principles (Gilligan 73). Applied to trans healthcare, it suggests that healing must go beyond prescriptions to include empathy, community, and dignity. Vidya articulates this beautifully: “My healing came not from pills or surgery, but from people who accepted me- my mother, my friends, my theatre family” (Vidya 146)

Revathi similarly notes: “The gharana system of hijras, for all its flaws, gave me kinship. It was not perfect, but it was home” (Revathi 112). These moments emphasize that care is a social practice. Trans individuals often reply on chosen families, activist networks, and art for survival and wellness. This challenges the biomedical assumption that healing must be clinical and individualistic. As Medical Humanities teaches, the body is not isolated- it is relational, storied, and situated in Community.

Conclusion

The autobiographies of A. Revathi and Living Smile Vidya are not merely life stories; they are critical interventions into medical epistemology, social exclusion, and structural violence. Within the Indian context- where medicine often colludes with patriarchy, casteism, and colonial legacies- these narratives offer an alternate archive of knowledge. By detailing their interactions with hospitals, doctors, legal authorities, family members, and community gatekeepers, Revathi and Vidya resist the reduction of trans lives to clinical case studies. Instead, they articulate gender as embodied and situated, shaped by culture, class, and caste. Their stories challenge the bio- clinical

imagination, reconfiguring how gender, illness, and care are conceptualized. The implications of Revathi's and Vidya's autobiographies go beyond the literary. They serve as pedagogical tools for medical education, narrative therapy, gender studies and policy reform. A Medical Humanities Curriculum rooted in such texts would foster empathy and narrative competence among doctors and social workers. It will encourage culturally rooted trans health frameworks and also promote anti-caste, feminist, and queer- inclusive public health policies. More than just subjects of care trans individuals like Revathi and Vidya emerge theorists, teachers, and caregivers in their own right. Their work offers templates for intersubjective healing, radical solidarity, and narrative resistance. Revathi writes: "They told me I was a mistake. That God did not intend for me to exist. But I am here. I write. I speak. I live (Revathi 156). Vidya echoes: "I had to write this book because no one else would believe me otherwise. My truth had to be mine" (Vidya 155). In the end, these autobiographies resist pathologization not by denying suffering, but by redefining what counts as knowledge, healing and care. In doing so, they transform the genre of illness narrative itself. They are narratives of courageous reclamation, radical authorship, and collective hope.

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A STUDY OF MEANING AND FUNCTION OF MYTH AND RITUAL ON SARPPAKALAM AT MANNARASALA

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Abstract: Folk performances are dynamic. People interpret these performances with meanings of their own, and these meanings that give folk life significance. In Kerala, Sarppakalam is a commonly performed cultural event linked to the worship of snakes. This study focuses on the meaning and rituals connected to Sarppakalam. Rituals and customs still exist in the modern world, although they take on new forms. Therefore, it is important to determine how different aspects of these rituals and customs impact people's mindsets and what purposes they serve to meet the psychological requirements of the community. The objective of this paper is to examine the roles and cultural significance of Sarppakalam at Mannarasala. It also examines the interpretations given to the rites and performances connected to the Sarppakalam myth.

Keywords: Myth, Ritual, Naga Myth, and Folk Culture.

The worship of serpents, is deeply ingrained in Kerala mythology and is a major aspect of Kerala culture and belief systems. The serpent was revered in Indian mythology, and architectural historian James Fergusson notes in his book *Tree and Serpent Worship* that this belief "not only prevailed, but considerably influenced forms of faith"(1).

The story of Kerala's founding is linked to the practice of serpent worship there. A tradition states that when Lord Parasuram flung his axe into the sea, Kerala emerged as the sea moved away from the area where the axe landed. But the land was inhospitable and barren due to its salinity. When Parasuram pleaded to Lord Shiva for a remedy, he was advised to consult Nagaraja, the king of serpents (2). So, in order to appease Nagaraja, he travelled to Kerala's southwest coast and began performing penance. Inspired by Parasuram's devotion, Nagaraja Anantha materialized before him, promising to make the area productive by spitting the poison of his serpents on the soil to desalinate it.

Mannarasala Sree Nagaraja temple is located at Harippad, in the southeast of Alappuzha, Kerala. Surrounding it are grassy sarppakavus, which are home to a variety of unusual species of reptiles and medicinal plants. A large number of idols of serpents may be seen in both the temple and the kavus. Legend has claimed that the site of Parasuram's penance to appease Nagaraja is now the Mannarasala temple. There were mandara (ethyrina) trees all around the location. The Nagaraja promised to live there and provide the land with his everlasting blessing when he came before Parasuram. As a result, the place where Nagaraja lived among the mandara trees became known as mandarasala, or "abode among the mandara trees," and subsequently changed its name to Mannarasala. The people of Mannarasala Illam have guarded the shrine for centuries.

The Mannarasala temple has a centuries-old, distinctive method of worship in which the oldest female person in the Mannarasala Illam becomes

the primary priestess; the priestess is replaced by the second-oldest female member of the family. This is in contrast to the majority of the Kerala temples, which place a high value on male priests. When a woman is chosen to be the next high priestess, she makes a vow of chastity and lives an extreme existence away from the materialistic world for the remainder of her life. Her position is known as amma, or mother. This Mannarasala worship system has a legend attached to it. The serpents within the kavus were hurt and burned during a massive fire that occurred centuries ago and surrounded the temple. With the utmost care and devotion, Vasudevan and Sreedevi, the residents of Mannarasala Illam at the time, nurtured the serpents back to health. The couple's deed pleased Nagaraja, who bestowed upon them the blessing of two children. He declared that one of their boys would be his own earthly incarnation. As a result, Sreedevi gave birth to a human son and a naga son. After the two youngsters reached adulthood, Nagaraja counselled his brother to get married in order to maintain the illam family bloodline.

Then, Nagaraja entered the nilavara, a tiny cellar inside the home, and began to meditate. However, Sreedevi was very upset about being apart from her son, so Nagaraja let her enter the nilavara once a year to perform pujas for him. Since then, the ammas of Mannarasala Illam have been leading the principal pujas and rites for Nagaraja. Even now, there is a persistent notion that Nagaraja meditates inside Mannarasala Illam's nilavara. He is referred to respectfully as appoppan, or grandfather (7). The temple is well-known for the uruli kamazhthal ceremony, which childless couples perform to ask Nagaraja for blessings. When a devotee offers an uruli—a traditional Kerala vessel—to the temple, the amma chants mantras while turning the uruli upside down. It is thought that the serpent bestows blessings on the childless couple while it meditates beneath the spilled vessel. Every year, on the day of ayilyam in the Malayalam month of Thulam (which falls between October and November in the Gregorian calendar), the Mannarasala temple celebrates its annual festival, Mannarasala Ayilyam. The celebration involves a ceremonial procession in which all of the serpent idols are carried from the temple to illam, while the idol of Nagaraja is carried by amma.

The ritual's first preliminary step, known as Kalamezhuthu, involves creating vibrant images of serpents (sarppakalam) using powders of different colors derived from readily accessible natural materials. During the ceremony, one of the Pulluva serves as the chief priest and is aided by a group of people known as the panialukal. The girls or women known as panialukal are the intended ritual performers; their numbers are always odd in the grove's ownership or management family. The ceremony is performed on the 41st day of the fast, during which all of these individuals refrain from all worldly pleasures in order to purify themselves. The designs Ashtanagakkalam, Nagayakshikkalam, Sarpayakshikkalam Nagarajakkalam, Nagakanyakkalam, and Ananthasayanam are commonly used for sarpakkalam, a festival dedicated to the snake god. The eight serpents are Ashtanaga are Ananthan, Vasuki, Gulikan, Sankupaalan, Thakshakan, Mahapadman, Padman, and Karkkodakan. These serpents are thought to be divine that guard our planet. It is said that the

representation of serpents from every caste in a single Sarppakalam symbolizes the society's cultural cohesion. Additionally, the intricate pattern of these eight serpents suggests that none of them could exist without the others because they are all intertwined while still playing distinct roles.

Either the grove or a nearby temporary building with a thatched roof is where the kalam is drawn. The celebration site is prepared by cleaning it, adding decorations made of young, unopened areca palm inflorescence, young, unopened leaves of coconut palm or toddy palm, mango, and betel leaves. Mud is used to wax the floor, and designs created of natural materials called panchavarna podi—pancha meaning five, varnam meaning color, and podi meaning powder—are applied to it. The five natural components that make up this universe are represented by the colors yellow, white, red, green, and black. The ritual begins when the nilavilakku, or traditional oil-lighted brass lights, are lit, signaling the completion of the kalam. The five natural components that make up this universe are represented by the colors yellow, white, red, green, and black. This marks the beginning of pooja, which is the act of calling the snake gods in to the kalam. Invocation is carried out using water, flowers, and silent prayers. Only specific flowers and leaves—thechi blossoms and thulasi leaves—are used for this. Thamara flowers, and koovalam leaves are utilized. The offering of food (Noorum Palum) to the gods mentioned in the design comes next, and is followed by the offering of raw rice, milk, fruits, and tender and mature coconuts.

After being appeased by the offerings, the snake gods summoned in the Sarppakalam are said to be supplicated with devotional songs in order to receive their benefits. The melodies, Pulluvan pattu are sung by Puluva's, who also play the veena, kudam, and ila thalam, among other instruments. The assistants will now stand with the delicate areca palm inflorescences in their hands, focusing on the kalam and singing. These helpers are put into a hypnotized state by the music and the customary drumming in the dim light of the nilivilakku. With this, they dance like a snake and slowly swing their bodies before rubbing off the kalam at the end. This dance performed under hypnosis is known as the thullal or pambu thullal.

Mannarasala Ayilyam is the temple's main ceremony. All the snake idols in the temple and groove are brought in procession to the illam on the day of the Ayilyam asterism in the months of Kanni and Thulam, where the offerings of Noorum Palum, Kuruthi, are made. The family's oldest female member holds the idol of Nagaraja, and a magnificent spectacle and ritual accompany the procession. A pot full of money for wealth and prosperity, skill grains and divine ornaments for education, prosperity, and fame, salt for regaining health, turmeric for poison protection, and other items are the principal offerings at the temple.

Anthropological studies reveal that religion has its roots in the devotional practices of the ancient people. Different concepts and ideas about the supernatural forces have been emerged from the devotional practices of the ancient man, and they still continue to influence the social psyche. It is clear from various anthropological studies that ancient people used to worship things,

living and non-living, which they depend upon for their substantial and material existence. Consequently, different forms of worship emerged, and they came to be associated with certain customs and ritualistic practices. Sarpakalamezhuthupattu is more than a mere ritualistic performance. It has its own functions to fulfil when it is performed. The song, is a kind of treatment for individual and the society as a whole. It creates a sort of mental balancing, and thereby fulfils a therapeutics function. Various performances related to this ritual reinforce the tradition by means of restructuring the values, thereby they providing the ideological ground for the existing social order. In Mannarassala, the same performance pattern continues, and the believers still consider Sarpamthullal as a cure for skin disease and for the problem related to infertility.

Deities are images which are invested with supernatural powers. Kalamezhuthu is a performance practice which aims to make the abstract concept of deities visible. The whole process of Kalamezhuthupattu consist in giving life to deity image. In Kalamezhuthu the deity is snake. Snake being an object of fear from olden periods still continues to haunt the human psyche, and so these rituals are performed to eliminate the destruction caused by the snake. In Mannarassala, there are various forms of kalamezhuthu practice. It is practiced in Nagaraja Temple as a therapy, an exorcism, and a way to please one's deity, with the goal of achieving the fulfilment of desires. The best illustration of the tradition of worshiping both good and bad deities is this particular kalamezhuthu.

From the beginning to end, the performance procedure of Kalamezhuthu functions to stabilize and strengthen the mind of an individual who is troubled by some emotional imbalance. It aims to help the individual come back to his normal life. As an art form Kalamezhuthu is a powerful manifestation of aesthetic knowledge, yet it is tied up with the belief in the supernatural power. At Mannarassala, the wisdom implied in Sarpakalamezhuthu is that no disease can be completely cured out, without touching the cause. It is believed that supernatural elements cause the symptoms of disease. In Sarppakalamezhuthu, the focus of the treatment is to stop the serpent grudge. Sarpakalamezhuthu focuses on the physical and mental health of a person. It is linked to the knowledge of folk medicine. Turmeric powder, seed powder of *Acacia Adoratissima*, burnt husk of paddy, leaf powder of *Adanetra Pavonia* are used in *Kalamezhuthu* which were used in folk medicines.

Magical atmosphere of smell, light, color, sound provide cure for the person suffering from various problems. Even in the medical science, beliefs have a positive role to play in treatment. In Sarppakalam one experiences through five senses- form and color of kalam with eyes, Sarpappattu and music with ear; nose inhaling the smell of holy atmosphere and the fingers touching the remnants of offerings. In each of its elements, the art form reflects the will of the people, and the spirit of harmony. Aristotle's concept of 'Catharsis' is worth mentioning as he claims purgation of feeling after watching a tragedy. Similarly, the purgation of spiritual feeling can be regarded as the final

psychological result of Sarppakkalam.

Even though the myth and rituals of these folk art seem illogical, they have the power to influence the psyche of human beings. Even though they are ritualistic performances, they have their own function to do when performed. The exorcistic Kalamezhuthu takes place in the whole atmosphere. The ritual performing in succession and the evolution of all processes turn into a kind of medication for an individual, family or a whole society. Like all other folk arts Sarpappattu is also proclaiming the message of folk tradition. In each element the art reflects.

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NO COUNTRY, NO VOICE? EXAMINING THE ROLE OF BACKGROUND SOUND AND SILENCE IN REFUGEE FILMS

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Abstract: This paper explores the use of ambient noise and silence in refugee films as they express identity, trauma and displacement. It looks at how filmmakers deploy sound and silence to illustrate depths of emotion, cultural ruin, and struggles for voice in films such as *Flee*, *The Swimmers*, *Limbo*, *Mediterranea*, *The Kite Runner*, and *Kannathil Muthamittal*. The project argues that soundscapes are crucial for establishing empathy and advocating for the voiceless by reference to work in refugee studies and film theory. The aural components transmute the refugee experience into emotional and political stories.

Keyword: Sound Design, Identity, Exile, Trauma, Voicelessness, Silence and Refugee Cinema.

Introduction

In refugee films, the themes of loss, exile, and resilience are primarily explored through visual images and dialogue. However, sound and silence are equally important because of the way film soundscapes embody and shape the emotional engagement of the spectator. In films such as *Flee*, *The Swimmers*, *Limbo*, *Mediterranea*, *The Kite Runner*, and *Kannathil Muthamittal*, background sound and silence are used to emphasize trauma, cultural displacement, and identity fragmentation. This article argues that ambient sound and silence in these films constitute not only a stylistic choice but also a significant narrative device. By using sound in this way, films may express a voice for the voiceless, and silence may be transposed into a space of significance.

The Importance of Background Sound

Background sound in refugee films not only functions as a narrative and emotional element, providing much more than merely an environmental reality, but also serves as a psychological layer to promote viewer displacement in the world of refugees. Sounds in the background—footsteps in popped-up shelters, gunfire in the distance, and the continual loud roar of ocean waves swamping migrant boats—all communicate a sense of global urgency, fear, and the emotional discomfort these films seek to convey. Abyssal sounds that are not dialogue but that work on levels that are more subtle and subconscious and engage viewers, and viewers' emotional and imaginative engagement are consciously felt in ways that affect how the scene is interpreted and emotionally received.

Background sound plays a creative role in memory and trauma in *Flee*, directed by Jonas Poher Rasmussen because the film is animated and structured mainly through narration. The ambient sound is an important foil that anchors the otherwise plastic impression of the images to an emotional reality. For instance, in recalling the experienced journey through Russia, the muted sounds of coat rustling, train announcements, and fluorescent lighting create a sonic interface between memory and the present reflection (Chion 45). The sound

design collapses different times, indicating how trauma still resonates for the refugee, even after years.

Likewise, *Limbo* (2020), directed by Ben Sharrock, exploits "one of the sparse soundscapes positioned as an impoverished milieu to accentuate isolation." Set on a sparsely inhabited Scottish isle where asylum seekers make peace with an uncertain future while awaiting a decision about their status, the film melds wind, the muted sound of waves crashing on distant shores, and silence interrupted only by non-native bird calls to evoke the feeling of psychological displacement. As a rule, the scenes have no musical cues, even when the scenes provide opportunities for music cues, and when music does occur in the film, it represents non-verbal ambient sounds, further underscoring the drudgery and disburdened alienation of the refugee experience ('Strangers in a Strange Land'). The naturalistic use of sound is designed to focus on the silence of the characters and their emotional containment.

Jonas Carpignano's *Mediterranea* (2015) has sound design that swallows the viewer in chaos and complexity. The protest scenes have overlapping police sirens, angry chants, and intense shouting that flop upon each other in an attempt to demonstrate the confusion and vulnerability of marginalized bodies in public spaces. The combination of sounds is not simply an artistic choice to elaborate the scene; the sounds create a sense of fear and demonstrate the threat of constant surveillance and removal that the characters endure. The sounds in the background function as an audio representation of social struggle and unrest, as they capture the refugee's journey of dignity and recognition.

In *The Swimmers* (2022), Sally El Hosaini deploys a different strategy, using nonverbal sonic modulation to signal shifts in emotional transition. In the perilous moment of the sisters' crossing at sea, the background music is completely removed. The sound disappears and is replaced with only waves and breath through inhalation and exhalation. The removal of music signals an increased intensity of peril by weighting the importance of silence and accentuating the noise of the waves. The sisters are isolated in the open sea, and their life-or-death plight is palpable in the film. Later in the film, the sisters are in refugee camps or sports training locations; the sound of life has returned, but it is still chaotic and unsettling, which juxtaposes their current new order with their new feeling of disunity. The use of sonic elements creates a rhythm that oscillates between hope and despair.

Tamil cinema also has many rich examples. *Kannathil Muthamittal* (2002), directed by Mani Ratnam, features Tamil folk songs, civil war sound effects, and the ambient sound of temple bells to reflect the protagonist's emotional struggle between an adopted identity and biological heritage. In these examples, sound becomes a cultural memory—a means of reconnecting to home or acknowledging inherited trauma. For Tamil refugee audiences, these sounds mediate a diasporic identity that survives through sound, just as it does through image (Gopal 140).

In the end, the background sound in refugee films is never neutral. It is a narrative force that conjures a sense of tension, grief, and dislocation, with

occasional moments of peace. Filmmakers mediate background sound to make sense of a world mediated by movement, instability, and longing, immersing audiences into the spaces constructed by these attributes. When audiences listen closely to the background sound of refugee films, they enter the external world of a refugee, not just the experiences of a refugee's interior life simultaneous to the external world. In this sense, background sound acts as a bridge between viewership and voicelessness by enacting empathy beyond language barriers.

Silence as Voice

In refugee cinema, silence is often a powerful form of expression because it conveys feelings and experiences that words cannot. Silence serves as a metaphor for the many forms of voicelessness found in refugee conditions. While background sound may externalize an environment, silence may internalize that same environment's trauma, creating a dimension whichever absence can be meaningful. Silence offers a cloak of protection against trauma while firmly exposing its weight.

In the film *Kannathil Muthamittal*, the emotional gulf between the adopted daughter and her biological mother is articulated through silence rather than conversation. The absence of exchange amplifies the reunion's emotional weight by revealing the unspeakable experience of war and the unthinkable realities of a missing family member. The intention of the filmmaker in using this technique is to force the audience, to some extent, into the emotional experience of the characters, revealing the pain and alienation of the characters that will not allow the viewer to dismiss their inner landscape.

Similarly, silence plays the same role in *The Kite Runner*, dramatizing the protagonist's feelings of guilt and unresolved trauma as he returns to Afghanistan after a war. The silent scenes performed during significant moments of the narrative when Amir stands against Assef or at the moment he is betrayed allow silence to feel like a moral reckoning. The spaces filled with silence throughout the narrated moments ground scenes in reality by interrupting the momentum of violence in history and threats toward individuals (Devadas and Prentice 490). Beyond performative qualities, silence can represent censorship and the collective erasure of refugee voices. It is possible to imagine silence as functionally representing the dangers of voicing experience in documentary style or even when the film takes place in authoritarian contexts to signify futility in using words: "The impetuosity of speech is no longer, and will not be, a remedy" (Kohn 200). One might imagine how silence is also performed in documentary form in films such as *Flee*, where breaks in narration, returns to silence, and spaces of silence dramatize psychological erasure or the impossibility of fullness in the narration of the experience. In addition, it is important to recognize how silence and stillness can be spaces for viewers to reflect on and emotionally process refugees' experiences. Silence provides a unique potential to open interpretive space, which differs if dialogue or musical accompaniment is used. Silence invites viewers to hinge on listening to their breath, stillness, and absence toward all parts of the experience they find uncomfortable so they can route their own discomfort, or also their complicity, towards a political space that humanizes

refugees when they do not speak but show up.

Ultimately, silence in refugee cinema has a cinematic voice. Silence transcends language and cultural constraints and finds meaning in silence that embodies loss, dignity, resistance, and solidarity, and reinforces the notion that there is still a story to be told, even in silence.

Sound, Identity, and Resistance

Sound and silence are vital mechanisms of identity construction and resistance in refugee cinema. For many displaced people, established forms of self-expression have been denied through trauma, censorship, or exclusion. Instead of recognition, soundscapes, including ambient noise, environmental soundscapes, and intentional silence, replace their voices. For example, *Mediterranea* uses sounds of chaos in the city, including sirens for evacuating, protests, and commands from police, as a mechanism to present a hostile environment that encompasses refugees, which situates them constantly as outsiders. Sounds and noise are included with the identity of the characters through complex narratives of struggle and resilience. Silence as a tool of resistance is equally powerful as speech. In scenes of heightened emotion within *The Swimmers*, music is entirely absent, along with dialogue. It elevates the characters' agency to determine their own destinies while exposing them as vulnerable. Silence accepts no distractions and engages in a stark confrontation with the audience regarding the displacement experience. As a result, silence resists easy categorization and forces the acknowledgement and acceptance of the refugee reality. Ultimately, both sound and silence are not simply ambient distractions in the cinematic experience. They are political acts of resistance to categorical sovereignty. By using these devices, filmmakers operate in a resistant capacity to protect refugee voices from erasure and demonstrate the existence of refugees in cinematic space and global consciousness.

Conclusion

This study explores refugee films and their utilization of background sound and silence in enacting the emotional and political realities of displacement. The ambiance created by sound and silence is much more than visual narratives. The films are affective experiences that mark the initial absence of refugee voices by amplifying affect in their absence. The audience beyond the gallery is able to engage with the films, not merely view them. They watch and hear and feel the struggles and displacements caused by conditions of fear, exile, and conflict.

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**EMOTIONAL STABILITY AMID AMBIVALENT WATERSCAPE IN
JOE D' CRUZ'S
*OCEAN RIMMED WORLD***

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Abstract: Joe D' Cruz's *Ocean Rimmed World* sheds light on the fishermen's community and their emotional relationship with the ocean. The vast, mysterious, unpredictable ocean evokes ambiguous emotions among fishermen. The unpredictable waterscapes express their goodness by remaining serene. On the other hand, it shows its maniacal characteristics through cyclones and storms. The binary attributes of the ocean vacillate through human emotions, forming contrasting emotions such as calm, fear, awe, anxiety, excitement, thrill, reverence, and many more. The paradoxical nature of the waterscape creates emotional ambivalence among the people living nearby, especially the fishermen community. Under the scope of Blue Humanities, this paper aims to analyse the ambivalent emotions of the fishermen.

Keywords: Blue Humanities, Ambivalence, Emotional Regulation and Fisherman Community.

Emotions are conscious mental reactions (such as anger or fear) subjectively experienced as strong feelings usually directed toward a specific object and typically accompanied by physiological and behavioural changes in the body ("Emotion") Emotions such as anger, fear, happiness, sadness, and terror are experienced strongly by humans in their daily lives. The emotions of humans work according to the behaviour of the environment in which they are situated and how they perceive the situations. So, the emotions of humans are directly proportional to the place they are in, the thoughts they think and the memories they remember.

The emotions of humans are complex, they change rapidly from one state to another sequentially, on the other hand they occur simultaneously. These sequential and simultaneous change is called emotional complexity. A sequential or successive emotionally complex state is the rapid change or movement between two or more different emotional states such that one emotion appears first and is then replaced by a second emotion (Filipowicz et al. 541; Sinaceur et al. 498). It is the fluctuation of emotions from one state to another in sequence. For example, in the story of Othello (Shakespeare, *Othello*) initially, he loves and trusts Desdemona. After Iago's seeds of doubt are planted inside Othello, his love and trust towards Desdemona change into hate, jealousy and distrust. A simultaneous emotionally complex state involves experiencing two or more opposing emotions concurrently in response to a stimulus (Larsen et al., 684). Humans possess two kinds of feelings together towards the same things. For example, in the story of Macbeth (Shakespeare,

Macbeth), he is very ambitious for the kingship and plans to kill the king, at the same time he feels guilty of killing him and morally hesitates to kill him. Thus, the simultaneous emotional complexity produces ambivalent beings.

Attitudes are made up of positive and negative associations. Such coexistence of positive and negative associations within one attitude is what called ambivalence (van Harreveld et al. 285). Ambivalence produces conflicting emotions about a person, place or object. For instance, a person feels good and bad things about another person at the same time. The conflicting emotions occur to them simultaneously. The source of its occurrence is deeply rooted in the appearance and behaviour of factors such as people, environment, objects, situations, beliefs, culture and many more.

Several definitions of ambivalence have been proposed in various studies. Gardner, for example, defined ambivalence as “a psychological state in which a person holds mixed feelings (positive and negative) towards some psychological object” (241). Eagly emphasized the cognitive inconsistency in ambivalence and defined it as “the extent of beliefs’ evaluative dissimilarity (or inconsistency)” (123). Wegener and Downing defined ambivalence as “the extent to which one’s reactions to an attitude object are evaluatively mixed in that both positive (favourable) and negative (unfavourable) elements are included” (460). All the above-mentioned definitions have been stated from psychological perspectives; however, they have philosophical definitions as well.

Ambivalence can be described as a unitary tension-fraught attitude toward something or someone. It can also be described in terms of a person’s having two opposing attitudes to the same thing...when people are “ambivalent,” then they, in fact, want one aspect of a thing and do not want another aspect of it, or they love one aspect of a person and hate another. Yet in many cases the person is not at all concerned in her conflicting attitudes with different aspects of the object, and when different aspects play a role in putting the person in conflict, the person is not merely concerned with these aspects but rather has opposed attitudes toward the person, state of affairs, or action themselves. (Razinsky 5)

According to Weisbrode, “Between wanting and doing—desire and action—lies ambivalence.” He further states that in all the places and situations ambivalence plays a part, even in the world of fantasies, myths and beliefs. For instance, in the story of Eve and the forbidden fruit, (*New International Version Holy Bible*, Genesis 3) she ate the fruit because of Satan’s temptation. God said not to eat the fruit, Satan tempted Eve to eat the fruit. The situation created an ambivalent state inside her. The situation evokes conflicting emotions inside her and it turns the world upside down. Another example of ambivalence is Hamlet’s greatest soliloquy “To be or not to be...” (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 107). His character showcases two aspects of ambivalence; firstly, Hamlet’s character is insane or is he acting insane? Secondly, his ambivalent thoughts: he wants to kill Claudius at the same time he doesn’t want to kill him.

All the examples and definitions depict that ambivalence is a complex mix of emotions, and they are influenced by ambiguous situations. The concept, on one hand, talks about how humans have mixed emotions about certain things. On the other hand, it deals with how certain things influence their mixed emotions and how they deal with it. Under the scope of psychology, ambivalence is a problem, and the psychological field tries to resolve conflicting emotions for well-being. Philosophically, ambivalence is a part of human existence, and it advocates embracing ambivalence naturally.

Collaborating psychological and philosophical views of ambivalence, the opening scene of the novel *Ocean Rimmed World* by Joe D 'Cruz is analysed. The novel was originally written in Tamil and later translated into English by G. Geetha. The novel sheds light on the fishermen community (commonly known as Parathavars) of Ammanthurai, a coastal village, located in the Tuticorin district, southern part of Tamil Nadu. It is also strongly associated with blue humanistic ideology, "The blue humanities name a current of scholarly and artistic discourses that foregrounds human relationship with water" (Mentz). Hence, this study sheds light on the ambivalent relations between fishermen and the sea.

In the opening scene of the novel, three fishermen, Gothra Pillai (old man), Soosaiyar (middle age), and Siluvai (young man) from different age groups were fishing in the middle of the ocean. They use kattumaram (Catamaran) as their vehicle for fishing. In the beginning, the sea remained calm, but in due course it became violent. The strength of the water current was directly proportional to the wind. Amidst this ambiguous seascape, the three fishermen had engaging conversations about their village happenings. Simultaneously, they were consciously keeping an eye on the sea. It was almost past midnight, and it started raining, rough waves crashing through the Kattumaram, they sensed the high intensity of the wave and decided to pull ashore. Amidst this chaotic situation, the fishermen furiously steered the kattumaram, competed with the turbulent seascape and managed to reach the shore. Soosaiyar and Siluve left Gothra on the maram and went to fetch anchor from the shore to secure the maram. Unfortunately, a terrible wave crashed the kattumaram dragging Gothra along with it out to sea. However, it has receded in the good distance at sea. Soosaiyar and Siluve swum speedily towards the kattumaram and got hold of it. The torrential weather hit but the water current was not strong initially. Suddenly a monstrous wave crashed the maram again and broke the maram into pieces. They struggle a lot in the darkness. After some time, sea became calm. Gothra Pillai injured his head and became unconscious. Siluve and Soosaiyar held on to the logs from the broken kattumaram. Three fishermen floated for a very long time with doubts and hope for survival.

This paper, from the psychological perspective, identifies the ambivalent state of the characters and their relationship with the ambivalent seascape. Instead of providing remedies for the emotional ambivalence psychologically, the study analyses philosophical ideas such as acceptance and understanding. Furthermore, it proves that these ideas as emotional regulation

strategies are used by characters of the novel to tackle the conflicting emotions in ambivalent situations.

Literature Review

The novel *Ocean Rimmed World* has been analysed from ecocritical perspectives. The study focuses on the culture, the lifestyle of the fishermen's community and the evil actions of humans that affect the ocean and its living organisms. "... as the novel is the author's anguish over humans' insatiable greed to conquer and control the ocean by displacing the Indigenous way of life and redefining the native landscape/ seascape by promoting global capitalism to meet their commercial interests which have become the norm across the world" (C Amutha Charu Sheela & T Murugavel 169). In addition, the study explores the human-ocean relationship from three major concepts of an anthropologist named Gisli Pálsson such as orientalism, paternalism and communalism.

Since it is a Tamil novel, in Tamil literature, this novel has been analysed from the perspectives of bioregionalism concepts of Tamil Literature, that is Neithal Thinai (sea and place close to the seascape). Furthermore, the paper titled "Joe D. Cruz's Aazhi Soozh Ulagu, Korkai Novels Emphasis on Seafarer's Life" by A. Rajan studies culture, lifestyle, identity, ethnicity and rituals of the fisherman community mentioned in the novel.

Research Gap

In the previous studies, the novel has been analysed from ecocritical and bioregionalism perspectives. The present study implies psychological and philosophical views of emotional ambivalence and emotional regulation in the opening scene of the novel.

Limitation

The study only focuses on the opening scene of the novel *Ocean Rimmed World*; other parts of the novel can also be analysed in the future. In addition, the study is limited to only one novel.

Analyses

Ambivalent Seascape and Fishermen

Water

Wherever you looked

In any direction, you turned, the water

Great expanse of water (D'Cruz 1)

Seas and oceans are the greatest form of water bodies. This marvellous creation gives humans different kinds of emotions such as happiness, awe, fear, and terror. For instance, some people enjoy going to the beach, at the same time they are afraid of tsunamis. People who are in close contact with the sea and ocean possess conflicting emotions towards it. At the beginning of the opening scene of the novel *Ocean Rimmed World*, the sea is calm and gentle. Luminescent plankton and other sea creations swam to the surface; the sea glowed in the darkness. Gothra, Soosaiyar and Siluve fishing carefully and calmly. "...the sea stretched languorously....as a gentle vadai kondal - the seasonal wind bound south-west-blew, a catamaran carrying three men pitched and swayed in the rolling waters." (D'Cruz 1)

In general, fishermen have strong predictions about wind and its effect

on water and other environmental conditions they can expect at sea. In the novel, Gothra Pillai, the oldest one among the three, has been a fisherman since he was ten. While they fish the restful water current becomes strong. Gothra analyses the situation and insists on heading to shore. "... 'Soose, the needvadu will also change any time now. For all you know, it might even rain. Let's head ashore in time,' urged Gothra Pillai." (D'Cruz 2)

Even the slightest behavioural change in the sea affects the actions of the fishermen. The kattumaram drifts far into the sea because of the wind, the fishermen steer the maram as per their need of safety and according to the movement of water current and wind. Though they are fishing calmly, a slight change in the speed of the water evokes slight fear in them. Later the sea turns back to tranquility. "As the wind and the sea stayed calm, the sail swelled out and the kattumaram glided along at a steady pace." (D'Cruz 3)

Once the seascape becomes steady, they spend some more time at sea. They predict the time according to the stars they see. They guess it is past one o'clock and decide to leave but they have entertaining conversations about their village happenings and spend some more time at sea. Though they have entertaining conversations, concurrently they focus on the sea. Hence, the three fishermen possess two emotions simultaneously. They are happily conversing with each other, learning about village happenings at the same time, they are worried about the ambivalent sea. "Siluve, go on, you were saying something. But keep an eye on the sea while you tell us,' said the old man." (D'Cruz 5)

Suddenly, the sea and weather changed. It started raining, and the source of light that glowed far away on the shore went out. The entertaining conversations turn serious. They paddle hard to pull the maram to shore. The tension arises as the sea becomes violent.

They rode in silence for a while. 'Periyalu, a huge wave is about to fold in on us. Look sharp! Don't drive the maram right into it, cried Soosaiyar. Ele, looks like the waves are flattening out now. Paddle hard,' shouted Gothra Pillai. 'Ele, did you secure the gruel pot with the *odakku* rope? He asked anxiously.... Look at that! Periyalu, a giant wave, a huge one has risen. Steer the maram straight. Siluve, paddle hard,' shouted Soosaiyar, even as he paddled furiously. (D'Cruz 7)

The waves turn the seascape violent, correspondingly the fisherman steers the kattumaram furiously. As the waves roll the kattumaram, Siluve paddles so hard to survive in the turmoil. The kattumaram responds well to the harsh paddle and moves in the strong swirling water current. The actions of fishermen are according to the behaviour of the seascape. Amidst this ambivalent setting, the kattumaram that gets stuck symbolises the state of ambivalence between two different emotions. It behaves according to the movements of the sea at the same time it also moves according to the steering of the fisherman. "The maram picked up speed and surged ahead in the swirling water current. It rode through the swell, leaving foam and spray in its wake and, before long, skimmed past a cluster of rocks under the sea close to the Aamanthurai shore" (D'Cruz 7)

When they reach the shore, the sea becomes calm again. Siluve and Soosaiyar leave Gothra and go to get the anchor. Siluve and Soosaiyar, after they reach the shore, they go to get the anchor. They are happy and feel a sense of relief. But Gothra who is still on sea is not completely relieved. Though they come near the shore, the maram is not secure. Gothra knows that he is not safe and keeps on grumbling and shouting at Soosaiyar and Siluve to come fast. Before they reach the shore, a monstrous wave attacks the kattumaram and pulls it far out to the sea. "Waves massed themselves and fell one after the other. To make matters worse...All of a sudden, a giant wave towered over them and flung the kattumaram further out to sea. For a while, they heard nothing except the roar and rush of the deep" (D'Cruz 8).

Siluve and Soosaiyar become tensed, run towards the sea, jump, and swim towards the kattumaram to save Gothra Pillai and manage to reach him. As an experienced fisherman, Gothra senses the situation and asks them to be careful. Even though Gothra is nervous he advises his fellow mates to be careful. "Soose...! Siluve... careful! It's the araneevadu-I can feel the current swirling away from the shore and running seaward. The maram is now drifting on the deep sea, I think. Don't be in a hurry to climb onto it, the old man cried out, even as he flailed about frantically" (D'Cruz 8). The water current becomes strong, and they can not manoeuvre the maram. They feel helpless and swim along with it. "They went under the swirling folds of a wave and before they could emerge from it, another rolled over them, and then another, and another, leaving them gasping for air" (D'Cruz 9). Tremendous waves hit them repeatedly and break the kattumaram into pieces. Later it becomes calm. All three fishermen are scattered. Siluve searches for his uncle Soosaiyar and later finds him alive, and Gothra remains unconscious. Siluve and Soosaiyar are frightened and tensed in the position of being unable to do anything. Despite these negative emotions, they are happy that each one is alive and shed happy tears. Gothra lays unconscious, Siluve and Soosaiyar stop swimming and cling onto broken pieces of kattumaram and drifted along with it. "They kept floating for a very long time. The log was drifting in the direction of the neevadu" (D'Cruz 9).

Till they have kattumaram, they try their level best to tackle difficult currents but once they lose their vehicle, they become powerless. With the kattumaram, though they are frightened, they tackle the monstrous waves bravely. After the great turmoil, they stop battling with it and with doubts, fear, hope and a bit of happiness about their vitality they float in the middle of the ocean.

Regulating Emotions

Before the great turmoil, while Siluve, Gothra and Soosaiyar were fishing they encountered constant changes in the seascape: from calmness to harsh and harsh to calm. They managed the fluctuation well though, they were a little afraid of it. Though they grasped the essence of the situation and thought of leaving the shore, they did not leave immediately, they kept on talking about Ammanthurai (their village) and its happenings. These conversations, despite their fear, give them a resilient mindset. On one hand, they are experienced

fishermen, so they know how to handle the tempest or any violent behaviour of the sea, on the other hand, though they know how to handle the situation, the rate of surviving in it is less. Despite this, they accept the situation and instead of grumbling and fearing about it much, they have entertaining conversations.

Firstly, they talk about how their village got its name 'Ammanthurai', and how in the olden days the coast managed without electricity.

'Ele, things are not all that bad these days. Back then, did we have electric lights, eh? We used to melt turtle fat, fill turtle shells with it light them up with thick cloth wicks, and line the beach with them so that the shoreline was visible in the dark. We'd look out for them as we approached the coast and on sighting them, we'd know it was our village and paddle ashore. But, if it was windy or if it rained, these torches were snuffed out too. All said and done, things are so much better these days!' said Gothra Pillai. (D'Cruz 4)

They also share about the actions of the church priest who helped their village to develop in many good ways. Despite the actions of ambivalent sea, all these conversations make them happy. For fishermen, the sea is not a picnic spot, so most of the time they don't carry food instead they chew betel leaf during fishing.

After the great turmoil in the sea, Siluve and Soosaiyar do not hesitate to go back to the sea to rescue Gothra, though they know about the uncertain actions of water, they rushed to help. Initially, the strong current pulls the marram and recedes to a good distance into the sea, so Siluve and Soosaiyar think that they could pull the marram. But the continuous crash of waves drags the marram to the deep part of the ocean and breaks the kattumaram into pieces. Amidst this difficult situation, they possess ambivalent emotions such as fear, doubt, and confusion, and they cling to hope and beliefs.

They are dying of hunger; everything seems challenging for them. Despite these, they think of positive things. Firstly, they realise that there are not many sharks in the place where they get stuck. Though they are not clear about the location, they are confident about the shark count. According to them, the place where they are stuck has plenty of ongals, and fishermen believe that ongals are helpful creatures. They believe that dolphins will rescue them. Since they do not eat ongals and love them, in the dire situations they hope that they will help them. Their hope on sea creatures is positive at the same time they know that it is only their belief, and they don't know whether it will happen or not, but they embrace their belief.

Gothra Pillai who is lying unconscious slowly gains consciousness. He is not in good condition; he got his head injured and gasping for breath. In the critical state, though he is in pain he helps his fellow mates with survival techniques. On the other hand, he thinks about his wife who is alone and asks his fellow mates to take care of her if something bad happens to him,

No need for all that. Siluve, if you feel thirsty, you must simply shut your eyes tight and drink up the seawater, you hear me?"
Strands of seaweed were floating some distance away from

them. The old man quickly reached out with one of his hands, grabbed a fistful, and gave it to Soosai and Siluvai, urging them to eat. (D'Cruz 102)

Gothra, an experienced old fisherman is ready to sacrifice his life. He accepts the situation and tries to help others. "Whatever happens, we're not responsible for it... it's all the Power above us, Gothra Pillai gasps for breath. "The blows fell heavily on my chest. I can hardly breathe." (D'Cruz, 102) Though he fears little about dying, he is content with his life and hands over his responsibilities to Siluve and Soosaiyar. Since Gothra is old, he desperately wants Siluve and Soosaiyar to live. On the contrary, one of the reasons Siluve and Soosaiyar hang on in hope is because of Gothra. "You two will certainly survive. I'll save you, even if it means giving up my life. Don't be frightened. I have grown old, you see. For how many more days can this frail body hold out?" If at all we are still floating, it's only in the hope that you are beside us" (D'Cruz 103).

Gothra has lots of experience in facing tempest and turbulence at sea. Siluve and Soosaiyar look at him as a God figure. They have hope that he will try to help them with the rescue. Gothra tries to save them, but he is also uncertain about rescue. Siluve and Soosaiyar also know about this, but they believe and hope for rescue.

Therefore, all three fishermen know about the situation and embrace the ambivalent state. They may or may not survive but they tackle the conflicting emotions with hope, the trust they have in each other and their beliefs on sea creatures. They have a mindset of acceptance and resilience, though being ambivalent beings influenced by ambiguous water body. They focus on adaptability and moving forward despite obstacles. From the view of philosophy, they accept the ambivalent state instead of blaming it and embrace the situation with resilience and acceptance.

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**BODY, DISABILITY AND PAIN: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN
DISABILITY STUDIES AND MEDICAL HUMANITIES IN CHRISTINA
CROSBY'S *A BODY, UNDONE***

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Abstract: The emergence of disability studies and medical humanities as part of cultural studies has ushered in various discussions on the different aspects of the human body and mind. Both approaches pose challenges to the predominance of pathological or medical models, and emphasize on the social and cultural narratives about differing conditions of disability or illness. Theorists like Tobin Siebers and Thomas Couser have underlined the notion of 'pain' experienced by a disabled body as one major area of concern demanding voice in disability memoirs. Within this context, the present study chooses to analyse the disability memoir of Christina Crosby, *A Body, Undone: Living on After Great Pain*, in order to address the concept of pain in conjunction with vulnerability and precariousness of human body. The study also delves into the theoretical convergences among disability, illness and medical humanities and associated discourses.

Keywords: Disability Studies, Medical Humanities, Body, Pain, Illness and Vulnerability.

Over the past several decades, the genre of autobiography has predominantly been considered the most appropriate medium of expression for those people who are being forced into the periphery of a society. Since human body becomes a site of discourses, disability and illness also emerge as additions to these marginalised identities, which desperately seek self-representations via autobiographies or memoirs. The voice of a marginalised self serves as counterdiscourse against the silence, shame and stigma imposed by a normalised majority. Thus, disability memoirs and autobiographies could gain wider attention and massive acceptance, culminating in 'memoir boom', especially in the American literary scenario, during the twentieth century. The growth of disability studies, as a disciplinary approach, can be traced back to its activist roots and the civil rights movements in the US and UK during 1980s and 90s. In its initial phase, disability activists often concentrated on the physical disabilities which are visible on the human body, and thus their major concern centred on the social model as an anti-thesis to the medical model. The medical or pathological model, on the other hand, perceived the impaired human body as requiring cure or rehabilitation, which neglected the empathetic, socio-cultural or political dimensions of a disability identity. As a twin approach of disability studies, medical humanities also gained relevance during the latter half of twentieth century, in spite of its emergence in the 1960s and 70s. It aimed at studying the interconnection between medicine and culture, which may encompass humanities and arts to emphasize the importance of healthcare of the patients.

Despite the thin layer of difference in discursive practices, disability studies and medical humanities can be identified as disciplinary realms deeply concerned with human body and mind. In the twenty-first century, the interconnectedness of body studies with variant aspects of both approaches could gain scholarly attention to a considerable extent. The overlapping areas of discussion may include body, pain, illness, trauma, corporeal vulnerability, precariousness of life, interdependency, medical discourses, ableism, and so on. To quote Martha Holmes, “Body studies - the cultural study of the body and the production of its meanings - spans the humanities and social sciences, including a wide range of disciplines such as history, visual art, sociology, literature, communications, gender studies, anthropology, and philosophy and often working across disciplines or in the spaces in between them” (*Hastings Center Report* 11). Along with locating the impressions of Foucauldian epistemologies in the foundations, Holmes discusses the interlinking exchanges between medical humanities and disability studies:

Both emphasize embodiment (the physical body and the human experience of life in the body, which includes “mind”, “intelligence”, “emotion”, “memory”, and other functions not discretely physical or concrete) and concern themselves with the ways in which that body and its condition and social power are not inherent, but *constructed*, through narrative and other verbal, visual, and material representations (13).

While examining the increasing relevance of ‘first-person’ narratives in both fields, the blurring of the boundaries become much clearer, that several writings remain indistinguishable to be read under disability studies or medical humanities. Lucy Grealy’s *Autobiography of a Face* (1994), Simi Linton’s *My Body Politic* (2006), Mary Felstiner’s *Out of Joint* (2005), Jackie Stacy’s *Tetralogies* (2013), Stephen Kuusisto’s *The Planet of the Blind* (1998), Lochlann Jain’s *Malignant: How Cancer Becomes Us* (2013) are certain significant writings in this regard. Thomas G. Couser’s major works such as *Recovering Bodies: Illness, Disability, and Life Writing* (1997) and *Signifying Bodies: Disability in Contemporary Life Writing* (2009) serve as foundational texts on illness, disability and life writing. Prominently identified as disability scholars, Tobin Siebers and Diane Price Herndl have also authored various essays on illness as well.

As evidenced by the literary and cultural developments in disability approaches, scholars have conducted various enquiries into earlier works of literature as part of the first wave concerned with the project of recuperation, which encompassed revisiting authors with disabilities and works portraying stereotypes of disability. Consequently, later strands of scholarship focused on problematizing different portrayals of disability in order to challenge the deep-rooted ableist notions in culture and socio-political realms and to empower various disability identities in wider social scenario. Lennard Davis’s publication of the first edition of *The Disability Studies Reader* in 1997 announced the birth of this discipline. Recently, scholars such as Mark Osteen and Tom Shakespeare have been paying attention to certain fissures confronted

by the field in the new wave. As Alice Hall observes, among the numerous dichotomies such as ‘disability’ and ‘impairment’, ‘social model’ and ‘medical model’, or neo-Cartesian duality,

“...the intense focus on sociocultural constructions of identity in disability studies has eclipsed important discussions about the physical realities faced by people with physical disabilities... Scholars are responding to new challenges: calling for alternative theories of the body, pain and suffering that take account of impairment and forms of embodied knowledge (26-27).

The overarching ‘social model’ of disability discourses has seriously neglected the concept of human body and the pain it undergoes in various conditions of disability or illness. Elaine Scarry, David Morris, Arthur Frank, and Susanna B. Mintz are considered to be the recent scholars, who have explored the concepts based on body theories, chronic pain and illness in medical as well as disability narratives. As an addition to this scholarship, the present study intends to analyse the points of convergence between medical humanities and disability studies, within the discursive realm of body, and the arbitrariness of pain. The paper attempts to read the disability memoir by the American writer, Christina Crosby, and intends to analyse the echoes of intersectionality between disability and illness in the narrative, thus problematizing the notions of pain, materiality, vulnerability and precariousness of a body undergoing severe physical disability.

A Body Undone: Living On After Great Pain, a disability memoir by Christina Crosby published in 2016, recounts her experiences of severe spinal cord injury leading to quadriplegia, disability and chronic pain caused by a cycling accident, which occurred in 2003, at the age of fifty. Crosby explicitly states the purpose of writing the memoir:

Chronic pain and grief over loss nonetheless remain as unavoidable facts of lives shaped by catastrophic accident, chronic and progressive illness, or genetic predisposition. Despite their strategic elision in disability studies or transcendence in happy stories in the popular press about trauma overcome, bodily pain and grief persist, to be accounted for as best one can. This book is my contribution to that record (7).

Moreover, the memoir undertakes to explore the materiality of human body, the dysfunction which would possibly demand care and dependence, the transformation of an able-bodied self to a disability identity, and the inevitable vulnerability and precariousness of life. Crosby devotes her attention to and pays tribute to those people who lend her help, care, and support, and reminds the predominantly ableist society about the need of interdependence in conditions of disability and illness, resonating the disability concept of ‘temporarily able-bodied’ (TAB) identity. Being a professor as well as a writer in the field of English literature and theory, Crosby delineates her experiences through the lens of Butlerian concept of the body, phenomenology,

psychoanalytical concepts like the uncanny and trauma, and the fear of pain and living generating a Gothic horror. *A Body, Undone* can be regarded as a disability memoir as well as a narrative medicine, since Crosby intricately interweaves myriad variety of perceptions to convey her state of being ‘undone’, instead of presenting a story of triumph and recovery.

Crosby starts confronting pain only after she reaches the rehab hospital from Hartford Hospital, since her prolonged state of unconsciousness in the ICU. The fear of the unfamiliar produces an uncanny effect, which she felt while struck with the intensity of the accident and the reality of chronic pain:

What a horror, to finally and viscerally understand how profoundly I was hurt! I “knew”, of course, from bedside conversations with my physicians and with Janet all that was known about the injury I had sustained. My mind was intact, but how could I understand a body so fundamentally transformed? I had no real idea until then of the scope of my injury, how far up on my body it came. And what a horror that the drugs I was being given didn’t make it stop (27).

Under the influence of medicinal drugs, Crosby remembers those days without pain before and after regaining consciousness. Various stages of surgeries were performed on her body as part of medical care, which enabled her to survive the accident, although the process was never devoid of fear and discomfort. Crosby chooses to describe the days unemotionally, often using medical vocabulary, which is indicative of the rational approach and the courage to accept the stark reality of being ‘undone’, rather than evading into the language of triumph. The reader may find the medical environment and the healthcare being provided equal significance in the vivid descriptions of her days in Hartford’s ICU as well as in the rehab hospital, especially in the chapter titled “Falling into Hell.” As the title indicates, Crosby narrates the excruciating neurological pain which gradually crept inside to turn her days and nights more miserable: “If only pain could be vanquished. It is inescapable, unless you resort to illegal drugs, and even then pain waits on the other side” (30). Among several drugs given in the rehab hospital to ease pain, the artificial opiate heroin-like drug named OxyContin was included, which brought a great deal of relief, by soothing the veins. According to Crosby, pain and loneliness are intimate companions deprived of language:

I feel an unassuageable loneliness, because I will never be able to adequately describe the pain I suffer, nor can anyone accompany me into the realm of pain. I’ve learned that the recourse to analogy is not solely mine, since pain is singular that it evades direct description, so isolating because in your body alone. Crying, and screaming, and raging against pain are the sign of language undone...My electrified neoprene skin holds me tight in its embrace. The current races close to the surface, yet somehow also deeply penetrates the tissue. My fingers fumble. My toes curl upward (31).

Here, Crosby seems to be echoing Siebers’s words about the subjectivity of

pain in his 2001 essay “Disability in Theory: From Social Constructionism to the New Realism of the Body” that, “It is therefore tempting to see it as a site for describing individuality... Individuality derived from the incommunicability of pain easily enforces a myth of hyperindividuality, a sense that each individual is locked in solitary confinement where suffering is the only object of contemplation” (*American Literary History* 743). Similarly, Elaine Scarry in her renowned theoretical prose, *The Body in Pain* (1985), defines pain as a destructive force over language: “Physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries of a human being makes before a language is learned” (4). Thus, linguistic crisis can be identified as the traumatic result of physical pain followed by conflict of identity and inexplicability:

Her crude verbalisations of pain were thus only a provisional outlet for resolving the subjective and social crisis by breaking the boundary between private suffering and the public world. Yet, since this type of expressions was assessed as inappropriate by Crosby herself, for her expletives could offend others’ sensibilities, she practised a voluntary self-censorship... The relationship between pain and language can only be mediated by time, as the temporal distance from traumatic events is necessary to allow sufferers to reflect on how they were transformed by injury and pain (Abdel-Rahman Tellez 235).

In the opening chapter titled “Your Puny, Vulnerable Self”, to the surprise of a reader expecting stereotypical narrative of victory and triumph over a catastrophic accident, Crosby thwarts the disempowering assumptions of vulnerability acquired by a disabled body, “I know for sure that we are much more profoundly interdependent creatures than we often care to think, and I know imperatively that we need a calculus that can value caring labor far differently than we do today. Life is precarious, a fact that has been borne in on me by my injury, recovery, and continuing dependence on others for survival and well-being” (3-4). Even in the midst of devastated condition, Crosby pays heed to the medical care and assistance system and the people involved, especially the CNA Donna, and her lover Janet’s efforts to learn the care routine to look after Crosby at home. In her descriptions on care, which she receives as a patient in hospital, Crosby emphasizes on the necessity of creating humanitarian aura in the broader medical scenario. Alluding to Dickinson’s poetic lines about pain, Crosby finds solace in tropes and figurative language while writing her memoir, saying: “I begin in that leaden place where pain seems on the other side of language, and work toward living on” (12), often resonating with the idea of ‘narrative medicine.’ “What does it take to make a life liveable?”, Crosby raises the question in order to acknowledge the privileges of her position as an academician in society, which helped restart her profession. By enthusiastically engaging in classrooms and office, talking, reading and writing, she temporarily distracts herself from chronic pain and

incapacity. And thus, Crosby intends to point out that, "...I still have enough money to be insulated from the indignities of an unjust world in which so many disabled people suffer because their welfare depends on poorly paid personal aides sent out from agencies, public transportation that is often unreliable, and housing that is only barely or not at all accessible" (6). A personal memoir is turned out to be a platform to address the socio-economic disparities meted out to disability communities, while remembering the role and significance of activist movements for the emancipation of disability communities, which promoted the landmark legislative change named Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1990. Crosby's transformation of identity is evidenced by her empathetic contemplations on disability communities.

In the third chapter titled "Bewilderment," Crosby throws light on her feeling of alienation from one's self after a "catastrophic injury" (18), in spite of the fact that her face "acted as a crumple zone and protected my brain from injury" (18). Perceiving in a phenomenological dimension, she asserts that "Your body emerges through the perception of others as different from yourself.... What you want, who you are, how you feel are all brought into being over time and in relation to others, and those thoughts and feelings are repeatedly inscribed, creating powerful circuits that organize a sense of embodied self" (18-19). Her being and existence in the uncanny and surreal terrain of injured body is in search of expression via the genre of memoir, in order to challenge deliberately the normative narrative structure of disability discourses. In fact, a body undergoing catastrophic injuries confronts the realities of pain, living and fortitude on the part of the subject, as well as of the inevitability of dependency on others. She leaves with the reader the question of how a person whose body is undone by a spinal cord injury can portray his or her "intricacies of body mind interactions" which "defy certainties and confound representation" (21). Crosby continues with phenomenological discourses being applied to her current state of body, and finds its correspondence and reciprocations with medical terms:

Phenomenologists talk about a "felt sense" of the body, a schema that emerges... from the projections and introjections that create a sense of self. Years and years of experiencing my hands as strong and capable laid down certain tracks in my mind and body... This is one of a multitude of embodied realities that are simultaneously fantasies dwelling in my unconscious life. Proprioception, the sense of your body in space that you unconsciously experience all day long, is the medical term for a felt sense of the body that emerges over years of embodied life (50-51).

As mentioned previously in the discussion, her affinity towards literary allusions reflects in the way Crosby perceives and records the trajectory of experiencing physical disability. One finest example would be the metaphor of Gothic horror for describing the unfamiliarity of catastrophe and devastation of body, which reappears in a chapter titled "The Horror, The Horror!". The choice of borrowing the final words uttered by Mr. Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's

Heart of Darkness, and her wish to be read to her, George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, may be justified with Crosby's own argument that, the representation of world in realist literature is "comprehensible, and rationally ordered [...unlike] the neurological storm of spinal cord injury" (187). Most of the disability memoirs resort to the realist narrative structure for reclaiming narrative coherence in their confrontation with disability. Yet, on the contrary, Crosby decides to present her reality as a horror story, "a literary genre governed not by rational exposition but rather by affective intensification and bewilderment" (189), which would be a conscious and deliberate act of enduring a traumatic journey.

Crosby's memoir acts as a counternarrative by exposing, problematizing and subverting the dominant discourses of disability and illness. *A Body, Undone* profoundly transforms into a powerful self-representation and narrative medicine posing challenges to the overarching narrative structure of success, achievement and the story of healing and overcoming on the face of severe physical disability.

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**NAVIGATING IDENTITY THROUGH FAITH: BIBLICAL
METANARRATIVE IN GENE LUEN YANG'S
*AMERICAN BORN CHINESE***

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Abstract: This paper examines how Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* engages with the Biblical metanarrative of creation, fall, redemption and restoration within the context of Chinese American identity struggles. It explores how experiences of rejection lead immigrants to abandon their God-given identity in order to gain acceptance, resulting in an identity crisis. The central research question is: How do Chinese Americans embrace their hybrid identity through faith amidst racial discrimination? Employing a combination of literary and theological analysis, this study investigates how faith serves as a means of restoring and affirming a hybrid identity, shaped by cultural conflict and spiritual reconciliation.

Keywords: Biblical Metanarrative, Hybrid Identity, Racial Discrimination, Identity Crisis, Chinese Americans and Spiritual Reconciliation.

In this globalised world, where innovations and connections are constantly reshaping lives for greater ease and comfort, they also add layers of complexity to the question of identity. Discovering the answer to 'Who am I?' has become a never-ending and often exhausting journey as individuals constantly try to identify themselves through the eyes of others, an illusion that ultimately distorts their true self-image. Eventually, identity becomes a battleground between self-perception and societal projection, resulting in an identity crisis. The primary factor behind this conflict is the human desire for acceptance.

This desire is especially pronounced among immigrants, who feel pressured to adapt to prevailing cultural norms to secure a sense of belonging. Their earnestness to be accepted by others dominates their lives, as they view acceptance as the key to their happy survival in the host land. This pressure is particularly intense for second-generation immigrants, who are born in the host country yet continue to be treated as outsiders. In their attempts to assimilate, they readily reshape themselves according to the cultural ideals of the host society. Their efforts to conform become so intense that they lose sight of their real selves. Oscar Wilde's reflection in *De Profundis* that people become "... other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinion, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation" (59), perfectly capture the emotional toll of the immigrants, who begin to embody the dominant culture's projections rather than expressing and establishing their own sense of identity.

Despite all their efforts to blend in, their physical appearance, however, discloses their origins, becoming a major barrier to social acceptance. Unable to completely assimilate into the host culture or return to their ancestral roots,

they find themselves caught between two worlds, leading to a fragmented sense of self. As a result, the formation of a hybrid identity is both necessary and fraught with tension. Yet, embracing this identity proves to be a deeply conflicted process, shaped by internalised shame, external pressure, and a persistent yearning for wholeness.

Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* vividly captures this inner conflict in second-generation immigrants, revealing how aversion towards one's roots can lead to profound psychological distress. The novel intertwines three narrative threads: the story of the Monkey King, a well-known figure from Chinese mythology; Jin Wang, a second-generation Chinese American teenager; and Danny, Jin's Americanised alter ego. Through these characters, Yang reveals how the pressure to conform to the dominant ideologies can lead immigrants to forget their true identity and sense of purpose. Jin Wang's journey reflects the harsh realities of American society, where racialised expectations and stereotypes push young immigrants to reject their Chinese ethnicity in pursuit of acceptance.

The juxtaposition of Jin Wang's struggle to fit in at the cost of selfhood and the Monkey King's rebellion against his own nature illustrates how societal rejection can lead to a fall from grace. Their stories reveal a common trajectory: a fall from authenticity, shaped by shame and alienation, followed by a movement toward reconciliation. This spiritual arc parallels what Christian theology frames as the Biblical metanarrative, a fourfold structure of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration. As N. T. Wright explains, Christian theology is not merely doctrinal but narrative in nature:

The story is about a creator and creation, about humans made in this creator's image and given tasks to perform, about the rebellion of humans and the dissonance of creation at every level, and particularly about the creator's acting. . . to rescue his creation from its ensuing plight. The story continues with the creator acting by his own spirit within the world to bring it towards the restoration which is his intended goal for it. (132)

This description encapsulates the core structure of the Biblical metanarrative, which situates the human experience within a divinely ordered story of purpose, failure, redemption, and ultimate restoration. Wright further identifies this story as, "the fundamental articulation of worldview," which addresses four prominent questions: "Who are we?" "Where are we?" "What is wrong?" and "What is the solution?" (132–33). The Biblical metanarrative thus becomes an essential lens for exploring how theological narratives offer meaning in the face of rejection, identity fragmentation, and the human longing for wholeness.

Accordingly, this paper adopts Christian theology as its theoretical framework, drawing specifically from the Biblical metanarrative to examine how Yang structures the redemptive journeys of his characters. It approaches *American Born Chinese* through a theological lens, arguing that spiritual faith plays a vital role in the immigrant's journey towards accepting a hybrid identity. By tracing the characters' transformations through the four key phases of the

Biblical metanarrative, this paper aims to demonstrate how spiritual reconciliation can serve as a powerful counter to internalised shame and social alienation.

Yang emphasises the Biblical truth that, “The Lord has made everything for its purpose” (*Good News Bible*, Proverbs 16.4) through the tale of the Monkey King. Just as the first humans were formed from dust, the Monkey King is born from stone—an origin that echoes divine intentionality. Though he is a monkey by form, he is endowed with extraordinary abilities by God that enable him to defeat evil spirits and protect the inhabitants of Flower-Fruit Mountain. His purpose, however, extends beyond mere strength and guardianship. Later in the novel, it is revealed that the Monkey King has been chosen to accompany Wong Lai-Tsao on a journey to the West, a divine mission that aligns him with a greater spiritual calling.

Wong Lai-Tsao himself is not portrayed as a perfect or heroic figure but deeply flawed: unable to meditate, prone to fainting, incoherent in speech, and mocked by others. Despite these shortcomings, he rises early, serves the poor, tends the wounded, and embodies compassion. He symbolises the Disciples of Christ, who were not men of status or perfection, but were chosen despite their flaws. Through these characters, Yang suggests that God does not seek perfection but rather sincerity and the willingness to embrace one’s true self.

However, accepting oneself becomes a profound challenge when society imposes shame on one’s true identity. When the Monkey King is rejected from a heavenly banquet due to his identity as ‘monkey,’ he becomes conscious of his “MONKEY FUR” (20) and begins to consider “WAYS TO GET RID OF IT” (20). This moment marks the beginning of his self-rejection. Yang uses this to illustrate how rejection breeds internalised shame and a fractured sense of self.

A similar trajectory of internalised rejection is depicted in Jin Wang’s story. When Jin is a child in Chinatown, he is surrounded by peers of similar background, which makes him feel secure of his identity. However, when his family moves to a predominantly White neighbourhood in San Francisco, he is suddenly forced to reckon with his difference. Though born in America, he is treated as an outsider. Teachers mispronounce his name and assume him as a recent immigrant, while classmates mock him with racial taunts like “CHINESE PEOPLE EATS DOGS” (31) and “BUCK-TOOTH” (33). These repeated acts of marginalisation slowly instil in him a sense of shame toward his ethnic identity. Over time, he begins to perceive his appearance as a symbol of inferiority. Similar to the Monkey King, Jin Wang internalises the dominant society’s rejection and begins to distance himself from his authentic self.

In his effort to gain acceptance, Jin embarks on a path of physical transformation. He changes his hairstyle to imitate American boys, even though it doesn’t suit him. He avoids speaking Chinese, distances himself from Chinese food or anything that marks him as culturally distinct, and even tries to date an American girl. When none of these efforts gain him acceptance from his peers, he lashes out at his best friend Wei-Chen, whose unapologetic

embrace of his Chinese identity becomes unbearable to Jin. His rejection of Wei-Chen symbolises the rejection of his own ethnicity. This self-rejection initiates his fall, a spiritual and emotional descent into self-denial.

As the Bible warns, “If anyone thinks they are something when they are not, they deceive themselves” (*Good News Bible*, Galatians 6.3). Both the Monkey King and Jin Wang fall into this trap. The Monkey King, after rejection, trains hard and acquires new powers, demanding no longer to be called a monkey but instead, “The Great Sage Equal of Heaven” (60). He believes that by shedding his true identity, he can achieve equality with the divine. Similarly, Jin takes his transformation a step further. In a symbolic act akin to Dr. Faustus selling his soul for worldly gain, Jin renounces his identity entirely and re-emerges as Danny—an American boy with no trace of his Chinese background. This transformation is a spiritual erasure born from a desperate desire to escape racialised marginalisation.

Yang’s narrative thus presents the ‘fall’ as a necessary but painful phase in the journey toward self-discovery. The Monkey King’s fall parallels the Biblical story of Satan in Milton’s *Paradise Lost*—a being who seeks to elevate himself to divine status but is ultimately cast down due to pride. Milton writes that Satan, “could repent and could obtain / By act of grace, [his] former state” (81), yet he chooses not to. In contrast, the Monkey King, after being trapped under a rock for 500 years—a clear symbol of divine judgment and reflection—chooses repentance. He accepts the purpose God has set for him and agrees to accompany Wong Lai-Tsao on his sacred journey. This distinction is crucial: Satan’s fall is permanent due to pride, whereas the Monkey King’s fall becomes redemptive through humility and acceptance. By turning back to his original form and purpose, the Monkey King moves closer to God, showing that restoration is possible when one embraces the self created by God.

As noted in Chute’s article “What Is Redemption? The Important Meaning for Christians from the Bible,” the novel foregrounds the Christian belief that the “fallen world will be redeemed.” According to the Christian doctrine, the sin of Adam and Eve led to the fall of humanity, but God did not abandon His creation. Instead, He sent Jesus Christ to redeem the world—“who gave Himself for our sins so that He might rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father” (*Good News Bible*, Galatians 1.4). In the Old Testament, God’s consistent response to human failure was to send messengers to call people back to righteousness. In *American Born Chinese*, this redemptive role is embodied by Wong Lai-Tsao, who is sent by God to guide the Monkey King towards the acceptance of his true identity and purpose. Although the Monkey King initially resists this divine calling, he eventually submits and embraces the path designated for him.

In Jin Wang’s life, redemption emerges in a more personal form. The Monkey King, now redeemed, appears as Chin-Kee, Jin’s Chinese cousin. Jin perceives Chin-Kee’s arrival as a disruption, remarking that he appears just as Jin is “coming into [his] own” (126). This remark highlights Jin’s false assumption that the socially constructed identity he has adopted as Danny is his

authentic self. In a pivotal moment, the Monkey King reveals himself as Wei-Chen's father and discloses that, because of Jin's betrayal, Wei-Chen has abandoned his divine mission to serve humanity. However, the Monkey King does not condemn Jin; instead, he extends forgiveness and an opportunity for redemption. This moment signifies the emotional fulcrum of Jin's redemptive arc. When the Monkey King declares, ". . . I DID NOT COME TO PUNISH YOU. I CAME TO SERVE AS YOUR CONSCIENCE. AS A SIGNPOST TO YOUR SOUL" (221), Jin is confronted with the truth he has long denied. His solemn gaze upon the grotesquely grinning Chin-Kee mask symbolises his rejection of the racial caricature he once internalised and his progression towards self-acceptance and spiritual reconciliation.

Nevertheless, redemption in Christianity is not confined to the act of forgiveness; rather, it culminates in restoration. As Dan Wells observes, "Restoration is the essence of redemption . . . restoration means that there is more to redemption than the promise of eternal life. The lives of the redeemed are restored to good purpose on earth." In this light, redemption extends beyond the alleviation of guilt or shame, functioning as a call to return to the originally intended divine purpose. True redemption encompasses not only reconciliation with the divine but also the recovery of one's authentic self. This notion is reflected in Lai-Tsao's words to the Monkey King: "To find your true identity... within the will of Tze-Yo-Tzuh... That is the highest of all freedoms" (149). Through repentance and acceptance, the Monkey King is not only redeemed but also restored to his real purpose: to accompany Lai-Tsao and protect him in his sacred journey. The panel depicting the Monkey King recounting the fulfilment of his mission symbolises the inner clarity and peace that emerge from aligning with God's purpose.

In this scene, he openly declares, "I AM THE MONKEY KING, EMISSARY OF TZE-YO-TZUH," while reverently recalling how he has "STOOD IN HIS HOLY PRESENCE" and completed his "TEST OF VIRTUE, [HIS] JOURNEY TO THE WEST" (215). Surrounded by figures representative of both Eastern and Western traditions, and presenting offerings to the Christ child beneath a serene night sky, the Monkey King is depicted in a state of spiritual completion. The visual composition of this moment emphasises the full arc of his transformation from rebellion, to redemption, and ultimately, to restoration.

A parallel trajectory of restoration is evident in the character arc of Jin Wang. His decision to relinquish the fabricated identity of Danny is not a mere expression of remorse but a symbolic step in his journey toward self-acceptance. The Monkey King's concluding remark—"YOU KNOW, JIN, I WOULD HAVE SAVED MYSELF FROM FIVE HUNDRED YEARS' IMPRISONMENT BENEATH A MOUTH OF ROCK HAD I ONLY REALIZED HOW GOOD IT IS TO BE A MONKEY" (223)—encapsulates the moral insight Jin must internalise. Jin ceases to view his Chinese heritage as an obstacle to social integration but recognises it as a meaningful and integral part of his identity. His reconciliation with Wei-Chen signals the restoration of broken relationships and his growing acceptance of his hybrid identity. Jin's

restoration, therefore, does not depend on privileging one cultural identity over the other, but in accepting the complexity of both. Through spiritual reconciliation and healing of interpersonal bonds, Jin enacts the Biblical model of redemption, which not only liberates him from internalised self-rejection but also helps him rediscover the divine purpose and his personal integrity.

Jin's journey closely parallels the Biblical arc of Eden, Fall, and Restoration. As Simon Marsden explains, "Eden represents both the state from which humanity was excluded at the Fall and the potential for eschatological recreation by a final, decisive act of the divine will" (238). In this context, America in *American Born Chinese* acts as a symbolic yet unstable Eden: an imagined land of belonging that ultimately results in exclusion and disillusionment. Similar to Adam and Eve, Jin attempts to alter the identity bestowed upon him by God, believing that such a transformation will secure acceptance. However, Yang's narrative affirms that true restoration is not found in the pursuit of an idealised society, but in the return to one's divinely ordained self. Jin's spiritual reconciliation thus serves as a symbolic act of recreation, an inward Eden cultivated through grace, humility, and self-acceptance.

This paper demonstrates how Gene Luen Yang's *American Born Chinese* can be effectively interpreted through a theological lens, using the Biblical metanarrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration as a structural and symbolic framework. Through close analysis of the spiritual and psychological arcs of characters such as the Monkey King and Jin Wang, the study shows how Yang embeds Christian themes to depict the immigrants' journey from self-rejection to self-acceptance. By tracing these narratives, the paper establishes that faith serves as a transformative force that enables characters to confront social marginalisation, overcome internalised shame and reclaim their hybrid identity.

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BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S 'TREE BRIDE': A TALE OF MEMORY, TRAUMA AND REJUVENATION

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Abstract: The story of the 'Tree Bride' Tara Lata Gangooly has been recounted by Bharati Mukherjee in her novels *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*. These works explore themes of cultural background, social consciousness, familial memory, postcolonial trauma and the quest for one's roots. The connection between the protagonist Tara Chatterjee and her ancestor Tara Lata Gangooly, who was married to a tree in 1879, is central to these narratives. The protagonist realises that she is not only a namesake of Tara Lata Gangooly but also a symbol of legacy in modern society. In the first novel *Desirable Daughters*, Tara grapples with her life in the United States as a divorced and struggling woman. The paper examines the impact of memory on both novels, bringing out the history of a particular Bengali family that is intertwined with the collective memory of a society that underwent patriarchal subjugation, colonialism and freedom struggle. Additionally, it analyses the contrasting imposed memory of the British Colonisers and the authentic memory of the people, as experienced and perceived by them. It is the latter that carries trauma and requires rejuvenation.

Key words: Memory Studies, Trauma Studies, Postcolonialism, Diaspora Literature and History.

A renowned French philosopher and sociologist by the name of Maurice Halbwachs once stated that "one may say that the individual remembers by placing himself in the perspective of the group, but one may also affirm that the memory of the group realises and manifests itself in individual memories" (40). Although Hugo Van Hofmansthal is credited with the coinage of the term 'collective memory', Halbwachs is regarded as the earliest important advocate through the publication of *On Collective Memory* in 1925, wherein the term would be promulgated into a new field called 'Memory Studies'. Although Freud has been a significant influence on the area of memory, Halbwachs's move from personal to social experience helps us understand what collective memory is. Much has been critiqued in parallel; great thinkers such as Hermann Ebbinghaus, Aby Warburg, Frederick Bartlett and Richard Semon have explored 'Memory Studies' in their respective areas of psychology, history and biology. However, in recent times, critics such as Astrid Erll, Jan Assmann, Pierre Nora and Michael Rothberg have started exploiting the concept of memory in cultural and national contexts. Nevertheless, in his essay "Rethinking the Concept of Collective Memory", the prominent American psychologist Barry Schwartz argues that memory has not been given as much importance as the concepts or the cultural aspects that memory embodies in different texts; for he argues that "memory study needs a better conceptualisation of its object" (19). As he proceeds with his argument, he differentiates between history and memory studies.

Schwartz's reasonable concern and a solid proposal of individual and collective memory as an alternative or a parallel concept to history might resonate well with diaspora writers whose works intertwine blurred Western histories with mitigating Indian fictions. An exceptional writer who fits comfortably in this category is Bharati Mukherjee. Like many diaspora writers, Bharati Mukherjee's novels focus on the immigrant memory. However, Mukherjee's speciality is in delivering individual memories in nonlinear ways, often distorted and filled with flashbacks, which include cultural overtones and inhibitions that come in the form of collective memories such as stories, letters, documents and Indian myths. This paper examines Bharati Mukherjee's *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride*, a duology that features Tara Chatterjee as its protagonist, from the perspectives of both individual and collective memory, applying the concept of 'Memory Studies'.

To begin with, the novel *Desirable Daughters* centres on a divorced Bengali woman Tara Chatterjee, who faces numerous issues that she does not comprehend until the very last chapter, where her house gets bombed in an attempt to kill Bishwapriya Chatterjee, her ex-husband and an affluent Indian American businessman. Mukherjee does not present a linear storyline from beginning to end, but guides the readers into the complex memories of Tara Chatterjee, the first of which takes us directly to 'The Tree Bride.' The story of 'The Tree Bride' is a collective memory of Tara's family as the former, a prominent freedom fighter, is the latter's ancestor. The story takes place in the darkest hour of history, or to be very precise, the 'collective memory' of the Gangooly family, who in 1879, sacrifice the life of a five-year-old by marrying her to a tree in the event of her groom's death by snakebite.

The theory of memory studies in the selected diaspora novels can be fully realised with the application of "cultural technologies", where the story of the Tree Bride, though roughly documented, is "concerned with the complex, multi-layered ways in which remembering is socially experienced" (*Research Methods for Memory Studies* 105). The first cultural technology, of course, is the oral tradition that inspires Tara Chatterjee to search for her roots and to identify herself with the Tree Bride: "We are sisters three / as alike as three blossoms on one flowering tree" (16). The fact that the former and the latter share the same name and have two elder sisters alike intensifies the connection, along with the story narrated by Tara's mother. The aforementioned commemorative rhyme is not a kindergarten song to be overlooked; rather, it captures the events from one and a half centuries ago as a collective memory of a Gangooly family, a Brahmin community and a Bengali society. These events are picturesquely presented in the first few pages of *Desirable Daughters*, a title that connects all six sisters from two different timelines. Bharati Mukherjee starts the novel with a magnanimous presentation of a Brahminical wedding on a doomed winter evening of 1879, a time that is going to be marked by a series of unfortunate events that will ultimately prompt social critics to question the traditional and superstitious practices of the people. Jai Krishna Gangooly, a well-educated lateral-thinking barrister at the English court, is set to marry his daughter off to Satindranath Lahiri from a land-owning Lahiri family, another

Brahmin community. However, unfortunately, the sudden death of the groom by a snakebite ignites a dispute between the two families, which ultimately results in the bride marrying a tree.

The Dutch cultural scholar Ann Rigney explains that, according to the Anglo-American critics of ‘Cultural Memory,’ “the study of ‘cultural memory’ stands by and large for the close reading of particular phenomena” (66). In this regard, the becoming of the ‘Tree Bride’ is the phenomenal event that outstrips all the other commemorative events of the fateful day. The modern electric tube lights, at an era when electricity was considered sophistication, that decorate the bride’s caravan; the flamboyant clothes of the bride and her relatives; the Brahminic pride, along with their customs, food habits and typical attire; the majestic position of Jai Krishna Gangooly and his intellectual prowess; the Bengali culture, the gods and goddesses, and the typical cultural practices, along with its superstitions; the Indo-Victorian topography of Bengal Presidency, with its pre-independent assorted society of Hindu-Muslim populations of extreme classes; and the ill-fated death of the groom would not have been recorded and commemorated if Tara Lata had not married the tree. Having argued that the former event is the central figure of the whole memory, one should generously acknowledge that such a phenomenon generates additional cultural technologies, such as the fictional place Mishtigunj, the documents related to the Tree Bride, the freedom fighter and the records left by British officers along with the sociocultural practices of nineteenth-century Victorian Bengal Presidency, second in importance to the British Crown next only to London.

Mukherjee creates an almost ideal community, comprising Hindus and Muslims in equal numbers in a village called Mishtigunj, after its creator, John Mist, a British convict. The creation of the village acts as a catalyst for shaping the future memories of both the Bengalis and the British. The British officers and English sympathisers live alongside the Bengalis during the colonial era, creating unique memories that are documented in *Mist Nama* as well as in the diaries of the Tree Bride. These sets of documents have so much to reveal about the place, which in turn changes the lives of its dwellers, forging memories that affect different characters, such as Tara (Gangooly) Chatterjee, Abbas Sattar Hai (Hai-Chowdry), Victoria (Treadwell) Khanna—the protagonist, the antagonist and the deuteragonist (Tara’s physician during her second pregnancy). There is a profound connection between Tara Chatterjee and Victoria Khanna as found between Mist and Hai. Tara initiates to write on the Tree Bride, while Dr. Khanna hands her a few documents that have travelled some countries and finally the book *Mist Nama* is handed over to Tara, who learns that Mist and Hai share the same fate as the Tree Bride, plainly stated: “Mist and Hai were hanged by the British” (*The Tree Bride* 151).

Mishtigunj may be a fictional place with no significance in reality, but Bharati Mukherjee’s portrayal of the place is not a mere cultural technology; it is a solid package of memories, spanning from the inception of the village to the death of Tara-Ma, the Tree Bride. The place itself has a context and cultures infused by different people, even before Tara Lata entered the scene. And

finally, as it goes with the very many forgotten stories of the Hindu customs, it is also a sordid reminder of the numerous child marriages and freedom struggles that went unnoticed in pre-independent India. As such, the place Mishtigunj records the events that happened to the Tree Bride and acts as the sole collective evidence and a residue of this collective memory. Tara Lata Gangooly is one of the most unfortunate victims of child marriages. Owing to the groom's unfortunate, sudden death, she is forced to marry a tree, which seals her fate forever. She is never going to marry anybody and will remain a virgin, impoverished in a little house in Mishtigunj. The decision is made by her father, who does not want to pay the dowry money to the Lahiris and decides it is better for his conscience that his daughter marry a tree and remain a virgin, a woman with no future, for the rest of her life. In her later years, in the 1940s, Tara Lata became a freedom fighter and remained in custodial prison for the rest of her life, fighting for her freedom in Mishtigunj. The place also holds significant cultural importance for Bengalis, who take pride in their strict adherence to the nineteenth-century Indian caste system, as well as the religious and cultural practices that are most prominent during family festivals, especially weddings.

In *Desirable Daughters*, the last paragraph of the first chapter and the entire chapter twenty are dedicated to documenting the trauma experienced by sixty-eight-year-old Tara Lata, who is affectionately called Tara-Ma by her followers, as well as by other freedom fighters, especially women. In presenting the misrepresentation of black women, Abigail Ward writes the following: "This invisibility of the black woman in History has been compounded by the UK's reluctance to remember its past of slavery" (52). Ward decries the colonial amnesia that still persists in the Western history books, which portray the Western conquest of the African countries as a generous intervention of development and goodwill. However, having argued thus, the very mention of black slavery is concentrated solely on the sufferings of the black men and not their women. In the very same context, the documents of the Tree Bride can be analysed as important evidence of colonial memory and trauma, especially that which particularly affects the colonised women. It was the 1940s, and India remained under British control. Tara Lata documents in detail the atrocities of British officers:

Killed by bullets	9
Wounded by bullets	35
Rape and assault on women	65
Assaulted by lathi-charge	359
Homes looted by police	100
Homes burglarized by miscreants	70
Houses burned by soldiers	20
Arrested	617 (<i>Desirable Daughters</i> 421)

The novels *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride* tell not just a single story but a collection of complex narratives through the collective memories of characters from different religions, including British Australians and Americans who are equally affected by the tale of the Tree Bride, which

continues to live in the minds and hearts of the people in the twenty-first century even after a hundred years. The rejuvenation of the Tree Bride's traumatic memory occurs in various forms. The modern Tree Bride Tara Chatterjee takes it upon herself to give a proper funeral ceremony to Tara Lata through her son Robi. Additionally, she returns to India to discover her roots and spends a significant amount of time with her parents. Tara Chatterjee makes it a point to write the story of her ancestor so that the world may know the struggles of Tara Lata Ganguly, the Tree Bride and a Freedom Fighter. In conclusion, the story of the Tree Bride brings the protagonist back to her own home, giving her a purpose to live for and strive in all that she does.

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**CONFLICT AND TRAUMA IN IFTIKHAR GILANI'S
*MY DAYS IN PRISON***

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Abstract: *My Days in Prison* (2005) by Iftikhar Gilani suggests how the tragedy of being in the restricted space becomes public spectacle of punishment for the reading public who are twice removed from reality. It is an autobiographical narrative suggesting the secrecy of the “essence of prison” (Foucault 1977). Through this book, the author takes his readers through the prison system of India with reference to Tihar Jail. The conflict that the writer undergoes through incarceration is traumatic as his narrative presents real life incidence of tortures and mishappenings during his stay in Tihar Jail and aftermath.

Keywords: Prison Literature, Conflict, Trauma Narrative and Prison System of India.

Prison literature as Paul St John writing in *Eastern New York Correctional Facility* (1994) suggests; “it is a “dead wood”: insider knowledge that nobody outside wants”. Iftikhar Gilani in his seminal text, *My Days in Prison* suggests how tragedy of the being in a restricted space becomes the public spectacle of punishment for reading public who are twice away from reality. The book, published in 2005 by Penguin publisher is an autobiographical narrative suggesting on secrecy of the “essence of prison” (Foucault 1977). Through this book, the author takes his reader through the prison system of India with reference to Tihar Jail. The text gives a step wise process of investigation to the final imprisonment and henceforth the life in the prison as well through the tough process of release from the imprisonment. The conflict that the writer undergoes through incarceration is traumatic as his narrative presents real life incidences of torture and mishappenings during his stay in Tihar Jail and its aftermath.

My Days in Prison is an autobiographical narrative that offers imaginative and singular view of education system in the prison (an initiative led by Kiran Bedi's reformation through education), behavior incurred to inmates, food served to inmates and other disqualified knowledge that does not find space in the urban spatiality of the readership. His life in the Tihar jail is spectacularly captured through the locative, linguistic and the constellation of the discourses divided in the seven chapters, namely, “Freedom Restored”, “They had come for me”, “Smoke and Mirrors”, “Life in Tihar”, “Twists and Turns”, “The Role of Media and the Law and its Misuse.” The text starts with a retrospection of coming out of the seven months imprisonment. The text begins with a date “13 January 2003, 6 p.m.” that significantly etches an eventful way of “writing back” against the stereotypes of the suffering in the jail, as the author says, “after seven months in jail, fear and obedience came instinctively to me” (Gilani 1). Gilani notes his experiences through resistance to the prison

as a “total institution” (Goffman, 1961).

In the first segment of the text, the author discusses how after getting released from the jail, his existence is stigmatized because of alleged involvement in an act that endangered national security. The author often uses the expression as “the secret world of the Tihar jail”, to reflect on his bitter experiences shared inside the jail. The narrative starts with a brief demonstration of the release from the imprisonment and how the fear of the displacement clutched him tightly. He was gripped with the fear of death as well as the fear of getting rearrested. He narrates how during his release he was pushed in an ambulance for medical tests and eventually was followed by a Maruti Van. Through this set-up, the reader learns how exit from imprisonment is not the real exit in the real sense. One lingers through a prolonged trauma and suffering. Therefore, one addresses the changing atmosphere within. The author gradually remembers his wife and his close friends during his suffering. Nevertheless, it is significant to note that the author felt awkward at the public gatherings and celebrations.

The author (he names himself as Gilani in the text) was arrested as a “Pakistani spy” for breaching the security standards of the country under section 292. The litigation and the proceedings of the defense which took a long time created a crater inside his mind. The suffering of being in prison for an offence made in life seems much greater than the actual offence made in the streets. The conflict and trauma he faced was so unpleasant that he mentions it again with the citation of the real incidence, in chapter 2. One finds the minute details of the entire search operation that took place at Gilani’s residence. He carefully mentions the date as Sunday, 9 June 2002 (7). Gilani was a journalist working for *The Friday Times*. Leading a hectic life, one day he observes unwanted guests in the early morning around 4 a.m. with a loud bang on the door. The author later learns that the house was raided by two policemen with arms and guns from the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF). Moreover, there were around 10-12 persons outside the door. The search warrant against Gilani along with the guns of the policemen just made him look surprised. Nevertheless, such a search warrant was a social scare and traumatic at the personal level. While, giving the details about the search warrant, the author describes geo-spatial position of the house. The rooms almost looked like Kashmiri homes.

The process of the interrogation was slightly uncomfortable and agonizing for him. The author’s wife wanted to change her clothes yet was denied privacy. Their phones were seized and eventually their home was also seized. Moreover, during the investigation, the author and his wife were denied refreshments for 18 hours. Later, the author was asked to take the policemen to his father-in-law’s house. However, the author’s father-in-law was a prominent leader of the all parties Hurriyat Conference, which was a conglomerate of twenty-three political groups questioning Jammu and Kashmir’s accession to India. He had been subjected to such actions by the government in the past as well.

The author tries to convey the condition on the streets. Gilani describes that the condition on the streets was worse than the condition inside. The streets were full of the policemen with the battle-ready position with guns pointing towards the author's house. Gilani also takes a very strong position regarding the act of silencing which was a kind of psychological pressure induced on him by random questioning.

The author has always hinted that right from the beginning of the search investigation, he was deprived of food. Being deprived of food appears to the reader as a form of direct violence that describes the social injustice and harsh treatment before one is found to be the culprit. During the search investigation, the team was served breakfast whereas he was deprived of food. Therefore, it appears that food is a means of control unit to punish and reward people by the people in power. After investigating Gilani's father-in-law's place, the investigator did not find much but there were doubts which the author and investigator were not able to solve.

The author tries to analyze specific situations which he had not otherwise noticed. He hadn't received the emails since a couple of days. His email id was blocked. Moreover, from the neighbors, he learnt that a Maruti car was parked with three-four people near his flat. Being interrogated, they answered that they were from the police. Later, as a part of the investigation, IB joined the squad to proceed with the search warrant. He got a few random calls from the journalist of the *Friday Times* about whether his father in law's place was raided or not. Since the scooping of news for TRP is a huge problem in India, the author remains very worried about his wife who was away for the investigation at her father's place. There was also a false broadcast that a vast amount of gold was recovered from the author's home.

His wife Aanisa was helping the investigating team understand the content written in Urdu, however, she was constantly threatened by the cops to cooperate. Meanwhile, Aanisa returned from her father's place with more IB officers. They rummaged through the author's home investigating clothes, jewelry and paper adding some psychological pressure on him and his wife. They also asked some random questions which did not seem appropriate. In this chapter, food was only given to the officials. The search operation was put to the rest for a while only when the officers wanted to have lunch. At the same time, the author and his wife were hungry yet they were locked for several hours. Later, the author came to know that it was an IT raid.

As the situation proceeded, the raiding party looked for other documents such as the news report, books and other documents that were lying in the author's office. Geelani, also worked for the Radio Deutsche Welle (Urdu service). As such, he had too much Urdu literature at hand. The author also mentions about the documents and books of accounts that were recovered from his place during the search investigation as genuine.

Later, when the author and his wife were released from the locked room, they were made to watch television in which variety of news being broadcasted it. A few people reported that the author was absconding yet he was there inside his residence. However, at the same time, a few journalists

protested against Gilani's detention. The manufacturing of the news was of the greatest concern for the author. The sensational news appeared on the television about Gilani's documents yet the news reporters were eyeing the "breaking news" and the "exclusive reports", narrative recorded by Gilani. As Gilani says, "they were reducing me to tamasha damaging my overall reputation". There were cameras, media-persons and the microphones all looking for photographs, images and bytes to lend the credibility to the stories. However, Gilani managed to come out of that situation.

On the other side, there was a heated debate going on at the author's study table. The author was confused and exhausted. Finally, one of the officers came to him asking for the published copy of a file named "forces" otherwise the IB officers would arrest him. However, one of the officers came forward and stated that they had come for his "giraftari".

Chapter 3 is named "Smoke and Mirrors." The author mentions that the atrocities of the search were found inside as well as outside. In this chapter, two policemen stayed backed and asked him if he needed anything. The author suspected that he was going to be arrested. He also mentions about a journalist who called him asking about the defense document found at his place.

Meanwhile, Gilani was asked to change and follow the officials. His wife was left behind and it naturally created a trauma both externally as well as internally. His wife and children were socially outcaste until his innocence was proved in front of the social media. The false and hasty remark made by Majid that "ab raho choudah saal andar" made Gilani tense. However, this statement was countered by one of the officers present there. Gilani was nervous and was crumbling as he faced the special cell of the Delhi police that generally dealt with terrorists.

The document recovered from Gilani's laptop was a part of the three annexures of an article that he had downloaded from the internet. According to the author, the original document was published by the institute of the strategic studies in Islamabad in the form of a booklet that he found on their website. The author also claimed that the document found by IB was doctored at multiple levels. As a result, the author was charged as a criminal under the "official secrets act, 1923." Gilani was charged of being an agent to ISI, Pakistan and informing the agency about the activities of the deployment of the Indian army and its movement. However, as per the narrator, the document was doctored by IB Sleuths after which it looked like the classified document. Gilani was also suspected to be an "insider of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen". The critical part of the case was Gilani working as journalist for *Kashmir Times* and *Daily Times* in Pakistan and has been reporting about the incidents without fear. Moreover, he was married to the daughter of a political leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Gilani distinctly talks about the conflicting life in Tihar as one of the prominent components in his text. The author talks about the food packets in the jail as he thinks that Tihar jail deprived people from the basic amenities of life. It lacked the discipline as other prisoners attacked the food and licked it off from the floor. The author talks about the history of Tihar Jail and its physical

construction on how different units are meant to punish people arrested under different crimes. He also mentions how he was subjected to the violence via the superintendent and he was called “saala gaddar, Pakistani agent”. Moreover, he was subjected to frequent abuses and violence. He was asked to clean the toilet and was asked to remove his blood-soaked shirt and clean toilet with it. The author also demonstrates how his body was checked for recreational drugs and was pushed into “highlight” a high-security ward meant for the hard-core criminals. Later he was transferred to the kaal kothri. The author actively gives reference of the other inmates who were subjected to life imprisonment such as Professor Bhullar. Later, he also states various instances about the jail reforms initiated by Kiran Bedi. The author also comments on the education system/reform initiated by Kiran Bedi. There were no teachers and the inmates randomly shared their own experiences. For Gilani, life in Tihar was traumatic and difficult because his profession involved reading and writing. However, with an application made by the author, he was allowed to access the library but for only 20 minutes. Besides this, books supplied by the author’s wife, were also seized in the name of the censorship, especially the books that included the word freedom. Later, the author was allowed to subscribe the *Indian Express* with just two pages to read. Hindi papers were censored. Later Gilani, explained how he fell ill and also explains how the lack of proper treatment claims the life of the inmates. Smoking was banned in the prison yet people manufactured their own ways of making it.

In Chapter 5 “Twists and Turns,” Gilani is pictured in a favorable light because of the protests made by the journalist of the *Times of India*. In this segment, Gilani gets released and in the next segment, he explains how he was defended by the journalists, especially his own employer, the *Kashmir Times* and the *Indian Express*. Later, he discussed the law and its misuse. According to the author there were several instances of the misuse of law especially in terms of the fabrication of the law.

Iftikhar Gilani’s *My Days in Prison* is a harrowing autobiographical account of the author’s arrest and incarceration under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) in 2002. A respected journalist and son-in-law of Kashmiri separatist leader, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Gilani was accused of possessing sensitive documents related to Indian military deployment. His narrative exposes the dark reality of the Indian criminal justice system, foregrounding themes of institutional violence, civil liberties, and psychological trauma.

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BETWEEN CARE AND CONFINEMENT: MADAMS, DEPENDENTS, AND THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN BROTHEL NARRATIVES

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Abstract: The paper examines the complex dynamics between brothel madams and the women in their care, focusing on how dependency, control, and the desire for escape shape their lives. Through a comparative analysis of the short stories “A Doll for the Child Prostitute” and “River of Flesh,” and the films *Mandi* and *Begum Jaan*, it explores the tension between nurturance and oppression, arguing that madams act as both caretakers and enforcers.

Keywords: Brothel Narratives, Madams and Dependents, Gendered Spaces, Power and Agency, Resistance and Survival.

Introduction

“‘My golden bird has flown out of her cage’ she wailed while from outside the window a crow cawed rapidly as though it had also heard the shocking news, and was perturbed.”

-Lachmibai

Brothel narratives refer to stories that center on the lives, experiences, and social realities of individuals, primarily women, living and working in brothels. These narratives have a long and complex history in literature and films, reflecting evolving societal attitudes toward sex work and the women involved in it. Typically, the brothel serves as the central setting, often owned and managed by a madam. The madam is usually an older, experienced prostitute who oversees and controls the other women, many of whom remain under her authority due to financial or social constraints. Such narratives not only depict the internal hierarchies and relationships within brothels but also illuminate broader themes of confinement, agency, and struggle for freedom within these spaces.

Literature and films have long depicted the theme of prostitution at the core. However, there is a marked gap in showing the humanistic side between the madam of the brothel and her dependents. The short stories of Kamala Das and Kamleshwar depict the poignant relationships among women living in brothels, where the madam often assumes the role of a mother and the other women become her daughters. Similar dynamics have been shown in Indian films released over the years. While the majority of films have traditionally focused on topics that appeal to mass audiences, there has been a noticeable shift toward engaging with social issues. As Santosh Pathare observes, Indian cinema has frequently been criticized for representing women in clichéd roles and for their objectification, with many arguing that such portrayals contribute to ongoing gender inequality and reinforce outdated social norms (21). Although numerous stories and films explore societal narratives, this chapter

undertakes a comparative, intertextual, and analytical study of brothel narratives through “A Doll for the Child Prostitute,” “River of Flesh,” *Mandi* (1983), and *Begum Jaan* (2017).

The short stories, written by Das, are highly relevant in the Indian context. Through the verbal medium, she depicts how brothels, while offering refuge, often become prisons for the women living there. The elopement of Mira, her ‘favourite’, leaves Lachmibai in a destitute state. Although she raises Mira like a daughter, she also expects her to lure men of substance, which, in return, will bring respect to the house. Even in her concern for Mira, there is a hidden shrewdness, as she worries about her business being marred. Lachmibai’s contradictory personality is evident in the fact that she holds the dependents responsible for maintaining the respectability of the house.

Lachmibai, also known as Ayee, is the madam of the brothel, while Mira is a prostitute who sells her body; both are reflective characters in “A Doll for the Child Prostitute.” Ayee considers the brothel her home, even though all kinds of illicit activities take place there; she remains deeply concerned about its dignity. In an incident she slaps Sita for disappointing the client ““You have ruined the reputation of this house,”” said Ayee (70). Her indifference reflects that, although the brothel has a bad reputation her only concern is the livelihood. Ayee worries about the ‘honour’ of these dependents because if men find out that diseases are spreading there, no one will want to come. So, the meaning of ‘honour’ here is directly tied to the impact on the body business.

Jugnu in “River of Flesh” does not feel any suffocation in her profession because Amma always takes care of Jugnu’s body and appearance, Jugnu sees Amma as a mother. Just as a mother worries about her child, Amma scolds Jugnu for not taking care of herself. Perhaps Jugnu does not realize that Amma’s concern for her is actually more about the body business than about Jugnu herself. The irony is that, despite living in a place like a brothel, Jugnu still does not want to leave.

Among film makers, Shyam Benegal stands out as an iconic director whose films cover a wide range of subjects, but it is his nuanced portrayal of the lives of sex workers in *Mandi* that is truly commendable. Keeping Benegal’s keen observation in mind, Rishabh Sharma writes Shyam Benegal, a renowned figure in Indian cinema, revolutionized filmmaking in India by highlighting the experiences of marginalized communities. His influential films brought the stories of the subaltern to the forefront, frequently placing women and the oppressed at the heart of narratives that questioned conventional storytelling.

Although the madam of a brothel is often perceived as a woman inflicting suffering on other women, complex relationships still develop within brothels. Since these establishments are set apart from mainstream society, they are typically spaces where only men are allowed to enter as clients, while women form the primary community within. In such environments, paternal figures are often absent or only present in name, resulting in a social structure where maternal relationships become central.

Within this context, Rukmini Bai and Zeenat share a cordial relationship, despite Zeenat being the daughter of Rihana Begum and Mr. Agarwal. This highlights that, even in the absence of traditional family structures, bonds of care and mutual respect can form. Unlike the more restrictive environments found in Amma's and Lachmibai's brothels, the dependents in Rukmini Bai's brothel experience a greater sense of freedom and autonomy. P. Pokhariyal et al. remarks "The movie *Mandi* shows an amicable relationship between the inhabitants of the prostitutes' house and how their care-taker is more of a motherly figure to the young girls" (55).

Zeenat is a gifted singer with thousands of admirers, including a constable, yet Rukmani Bai ensures that no one gets close to her. Having raised Zeenat like a daughter, Rukmini Bai is protective of her and instructs her to avoid the company of men altogether. Mr. Agarwal, fearing societal judgment, does not accept Zeenat as his daughter. After Zeenat falls in love with Sushil, Rukmini Bai's concern begins to trouble her. P. Pokhariyal et al. observe "While Zeenat is fluid in her emotions and has shifting loyalties, she is Rukmani's prized possession. She treasures the young Zeenat and allows her to remain a virgin in the brothel, surrounded by men who safeguard the place" (56).

Begum Jaan highlights the humanity and emotions of women living in brothels by portraying their resilience, solidarity, and personal struggles against a backdrop of social upheaval and patriarchal oppression. Gulabo is drawn to Masterji's ideals of revolution and freedom. Unlike the other men who visit the brothel merely to satisfy their own desires, Masterji's reasons for coming are different. He frequently brings gifts, books, and clothes for the dependents in Begum Jaan's brothel. However, behind his apparent generosity is a concealed malevolent intent, motivated by his sexual desire for Begum Jaan.

The stories of Gulabo, Zeenat, and Mira are intertextually linked, not only through their shared brothel setting but also through recurring motifs of love and longing for freedom. Each narrative invokes the archetype of the marginalized woman seeking liberation through romantic attachment, a theme prevalent in both Indian literature and films. By falling in love and aspiring to marry, these characters mirror each other's desires and struggles, while also referencing a wider cultural narrative in which marriage is idealized as a woman's ultimate escape from marginalization. Madhavi Menon in chapter 17 "Sambandham" records the pervasive opinion of Indian society on marriages. It could be said that marriage is the foremost preoccupation for middle-class families in India. Across the subcontinent, weddings have become a booming industry, much like they are in many other parts of the world.

Unlike Gulabo, Mira, and Zeenat, who sought refuge with their lovers, Jugnu has no idea where to go without money. For her, Amma is the only source of comfort, but even she leaves Jugnu's side after the diagnosis of dreaded tuberculosis. However, Amma's behavior stems not from hatred, but rather from motherly affection; she simply wants Jugnu to recover from her deteriorating health condition. Resembling Amma, Begum Jaan cares for Gulabo after her attempted rape, nurses her back to life from a half-dead state.

However, Gulabo measures Begum Jaan's kindness differently. For her, Begum Jaan is the butcher and she is the goat, kept with care in the brothel for years, only to be sent to men every night like a sacrifice. Without much thought, Gulabo takes Masterji's hand and leaves with him. Begum Jaan could have stopped her, relying on her authority and the fear she commanded, but her maternal affection prevents her from doing so. Gulabo is like a daughter to her, which is why she is willing to support Gulabo's relationship with Masterji. Aware of Gulabo's deep feelings for him, Begum Jaan chose not to go with Masterji herself.

The allure of the forbidden reflects common weakness in human nature. Rukmini Bai succeeds in shielding Zeenat from the influence of men, yet she ultimately fails to keep her away from Sushil. For Sushil, Zeenat is like a lifeless golden bird, and Rukmini Bai's brothel is nothing more than a cage. Zeenat accepts that her world is confined to the brothel of Rukmini Bai. When Rukmini Bai objects to her relationship, she refuses to see herself as her daughter and demands to know why she cannot meet Sushil. She feels that Rukmini Bai wants to steal her happiness and suppress her feelings.

Rukmini Bai raised Zeenat like her own daughter, which is why she tries to protect her from making mistakes. She considers Zeenat her responsibility, even though, in truth, that responsibility belongs to Mr. Agarwal, Sushil's father. Rukmini Bai silently endures all of Zeenat's rebellious words, never responding harshly. While she outwardly links Zeenat's death to the brothel's financial loss, it is Rukmini Bai who grieves her absence the most, for the other dependents are preoccupied with their own lives.

Benegal's realistic portrayal of the women in the brothel demonstrates his sharp eye for character and themes. Pathare notes the recurring themes in Benegal's films, which repeatedly foreground marginalized perspectives and raise questions about national identity and social inequalities. Benegal's work spans subjects ranging from the peasant movements of the 1970s and rural development struggles to the overlooked experiences of weavers, low-caste farmers, and women performers (16–17).

The visionary outlook of Benegal merges with Das in "A Doll for the Child Prostitute," where Ayee's remorse closely parallels the thematic complexities embodied by Rukmini Bai. Nineteen years ago, Mira's mother left her at Ayee's doorstep. Ayee gave Mira a mother's love and, despite the presence of other dependents in the brothel, her affection for Mira was unparalleled. She was taken aback when Radha referred to Mira as a prostitute, for Ayee never regarded her in that light. This striking contradiction lies in the fact that, although Ayee saw Mira as a daughter and involved her in the flesh trade, she still refused to accept her as a prostitute. She wished for Mira to marry her long-lost son, but Mira, holding onto dreams of marriage, ran away with Krishna. Though she mourned Mira's departure, Ayee's deeper sorrow emerged from the realization that no other girl in the brothel could match Mira's presence. So, the only difference between Rukmini Bai and Ayee lies in their approach, while Ayee compelled Mira into the trade, Rukmini Bai sought to protect Zeenat from it.

Conclusion

While society often assumes that only a mother is capable of making truly selfless sacrifices for her daughter's happiness, this analysis demonstrates that even a brothel madam can embody maternal qualities. Managing a brothel does not inherently make her a bad woman. By applying a comparative intertextual lens, this chapter has examined the complex roles of madams as both oppressors and protectors, the ongoing struggle of dependents, particularly women, for freedom, and the brothel's dual symbolism as a space of both care and confinement within brothel narratives.

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TRAPPED MELODIES: GENDER INEQUALITY AND MARITAL POWER IN ZOE MORRISON'S *MUSIC AND FREEDOM*

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Abstract: The paper explores the relationship among music, marriage and male dominance. The primary objective of the study is achieved by applying “Interdependence theory” by Paul Van Lange and Caryl Rusbult. The theory focuses on how married people affect each other’s life decisions. *Music and Freedom* by Zoe Morrison is one such novel which narrates the plight of Alice Murray after she marries Edward. It examines her desire of becoming a pianist and recounts her husband’s role in stopping her from pursuing her dream. The paper concludes with the key findings suggesting that *Music and Freedom* is an effective reminder about the importance of independence in marriage, overseeing the conservative ideology of the present society.

Keywords: Music, Feminism, Interdependence, Zoe Morrison and Marital Power.

Gender inequality between spouses is a chronic problem in many nations due to societal norms, power disparities, and traditional conceptions of gender. Even with advancements in equality, differences in men's and women's rights, obligations, as well as possibilities are still evident in many marriages. Regardless of their employment obligations, women often handle a disproportionate amount of childcare and housework. Men are less inclined to handle household chores, and social conventions frequently dissuade men from undertaking it. Husbands in traditional marriages are often given more control over money, family choices, and individual liberties. Wives' independence and influence within the partnership may be restricted by this power disparity. The assumption that males are better or more capable is preserved by deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes, which results in discrimination in the areas of education, work, and legal rights.

Women who experience gender inequality are more likely to experience anxiety, stress, depression, and low self-worth. Lack of liberty and the pressure of uneven obligations can have a detrimental effect on wellbeing. Substantial power disparities and a lack of respect for one another make marriages less secure and fulfilling. In these situations, women are more inclined to file for divorce. Women who are financially dependent are more susceptible to poverty and constraints.

“Patterns of Psychological Aggression, Dominance, and Jealousy within Marriage” (2013) by Heidi Kar and Daniel O’Leary published in *Journal of Family Violence* and “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism Towards a More Progressive Union” (2015) by Heidi Hartmann, published in *Capital and Class* were the prior research conducted on the theme of male dominance. Existing research does not focus on the processes that underlie the relationships as well as the effects of behavioural aggression, authority, and envy. These papers also emphasize how much more research is

needed to fully understand the disparities between men and women. This paper explores the relationship between music, marriage and male dominance. *Music and Freedom* by Zoe Morrison is one such novel which narrates the plight of Alice Murray after she marries Edward.

Zoë Morrison is an Australian writer. She holds an LMusA in piano and an Arts degree from Adelaide University. She studied several facets of social exclusion for her doctorate. She later secured a position at St. Peter's College as a college lecturer. In Oxford, Zoë began her first novel. *Music and Freedom* received a Victorian Premier's Award. The 2016 Readings Prize for New Australian Fiction was awarded to this book.

Music and Freedom is set in rural Australia, where the protagonist, Alice Murray learns to play the piano at the age of three. She is sent to boarding school in England by her mother, and while attending Oxford for the summer, she meets Edward, a professor of economics, who captivates her. Alice quickly discovers that she is stuck. Until catastrophe hits, she holds tight to her playing and her goal of becoming a concert pianist. As the years pass, Alice grows more and more lonesome until she loses the will to continue. Alice must learn to love again in order to live.

The primary objective of the study is achieved by applying "Interdependence theory" by Paul Van Lange and Caryl Rusbult. For more than 50 years, groups of scientists have been inspired by the classic social and behavioural sciences notion of interdependence, which was first proposed by John Thibaut and Harold Kelley in 1959. There are six dimensions of situational structure namely, "Dependence", "Mutuality of dependence", "Basis of dependence", "Covariation of interests", "Temporal structure" and "Information availability" (Lange and Rusbult 253). The theory of interdependence explains the manner in which partners in a relationship affect each other's the desired results.

Dependence allows for emotions and motives that centre on relief versus unease with dependence and independence, and extreme dependence scenarios may awaken an individual's trait-based refusal of depending on other individuals. Differential power results from nonmutual reliance, when the more dependent spouse bears the higher burden of interaction costs while the less dependent partner has more influence over choices and resources. The basis of dependence explains the way partners affect each other's results. The two possible causes of dependence are joint control and partner control. Covariation of interests characterizes whether the results of partners align or diverge, with linked interests facilitating communication and opposing interests producing bad feelings and thoughts. Temporal structure encompasses flexible and continuous processes with prolonged circumstances including a sequence of stages before attaining a goal and situation selection representing mobility from one scenario to another. Information availability refers to whether spouses have solid or hazy knowledge about one another's intentions, activities, and ambitions, some knowledge is crucial in unfamiliar or hazardous situations. Using both direct and indirect methods, partners communicate their objectives, values, and preferences through self-expression and responsibility, and

communication.

In *Music and Freedom* novel the dimension of dependency is depicted in the following instances. Edward first encountered Alice during a concert, where he developed an immediate affection for her. However, following their marriage, he did not support her musical pursuits within their household. Consequently, Alice would practice the piano at a church after completing her domestic responsibilities, so as not to disturb Edward. Nearly a year into their marriage, a vacancy arose for a pianist position at Oxford University, involving a concert performance. Edward proposed Alice to apply for the role. Upon hearing this, Alice was perplexed by Edward's suggestion, as he had consistently demonstrated an inability to experience guilt or remorse. Moreover, it seemed unlikely that his recommendation stemmed from genuine support or appreciation of her talent, given that he had not attended any of her performances since their marriage.

The concert was scheduled for October, and Edward mentioned the opportunity in June, leaving Alice with a limited timeframe to prepare a complex musical piece. When she declined the offer, Edward responded dismissively, "I thought that this is exactly what you had asked for" (Morrison 146). This interaction underscores Edward's fundamental lack of understanding regarding Alice's aspirations and capabilities. Furthermore, when Alice explained that mastering the solo within five months was an unrealistic expectation, Edward disregarded her concerns without acknowledging the significant effort and challenges involved. Murray A. Straus in "Dominance and symmetry in partner violence by male and female university students in 32 nations" (2008) reinforced this idea as follows:

The results show that dominance by either the male or the female partner is associated with an increased probability of violence. These results, in combination with results from many other studies, call into question the assumption that PV is primarily a male crime and that, when women are violent, it is usually in self-defense. (252)

Mutuality of dependence is seen in the novel as follows. On the day of the concert, Alice experienced involuntary flexion of her fourth and fifth fingers, rendering her unable to use them. She reported this issue to Edward, who dismissed her concerns, accusing her of feigning illness to avoid performing. His primary concern appeared to be his reputation among his colleagues, which he prioritized over his wife's health and well-being. When Alice insisted, she was unable to play, Edward examined her hands and attempted to physically straighten her fingers. On this occasion, the intervention seemed effective, leading Alice to question the reality of her symptoms.

Immediately prior to the concert, "I lurched to the door, I almost fell. Edward grabbed my arm" (Morrison 155). This act left Alice feeling deeply embarrassed and powerless. Consequently, her performance suffered significantly, as her fingers continued to spasm uncontrollably while playing. Lacking both physical strength and emotional support, Alice was unable to

perform successfully, resulting in a failed concert. Later that night, Edward perpetrated physical violence against Alice for the first time, striking her forcefully in the abdomen just below the ribs. He was careful to inflict no visible injuries, explicitly stating his intention to avoid leaving any evidence of domestic abuse. This incident marked the beginning of a pattern of recurrent violence, which Edward began to perpetrate with increasing frequency. Michel Van Berkel and Nan Dirk De Graaf in “Husband’s and Wife’s Culture Participation and their Levels of Education: A Case of Male Dominance?” (1995) stated that, “a ‘status maximization’ effect the higher educated spouse adapts more strongly to the lower educated spouse” (131).

The third dimension is the basis of dependence which is portrayed as follows. Alice’s health began to decline as a result of persistent self-doubt and the psychological pressure exerted by Edward. Despite the evident deterioration in her well-being, Edward remained indifferent to her condition. Eventually, Alice ceased to resist and resumed her practice, “Edward no longer liked me to practice in the house when he was there. He said it was too loud and distracting” (Morrison 135). Furthermore, following episodes of physical violence, Edward would attempt to placate Alice by feigning concern—bringing her ice wrapped in a tea towel and tending to the injuries he had inflicted.

Wolfgang Wagner, et.al in “Male Dominance, Role Segregation and Spouses’ Interdependence in Conflict: A Cross-Cultural Study” (1990) expresses that, “The stronger the role-segregation in traditional societies, the less spouses depend upon each other in personal matters. It was also found that husbands are more autonomous in their decisions than wives, specifically in male-dominated Western families” (48).

The fourth dimension is covariation of interests. After several years of marriage, Alice eventually experienced the joy of motherhood with the birth of a son. Although she had faced setbacks in her professional life and endured a troubled marriage, the arrival of her child brought a renewed sense of purpose and fulfilment. Alice devoted herself wholeheartedly to her son, Richard, who became the central focus of her life. She began instructing Richard in music from an early age, personally teaching him piano and enrolling him in violin lessons.

However, when Edward, her husband, became aware of Alice’s aspirations for Richard, he made a decision that profoundly altered the course of Alice’s life: he resolved to send Richard to a boarding school. While Alice recognized the importance of education, she firmly opposed the idea of separating a young child from his parents. Edward, on the other hand, prioritized academic achievement above all else and did not consider the emotional and developmental experiences Richard might forfeit by being away from his family. When Alice attempted to prevent Richard’s enrolment in the boarding school, Edward responded with physical aggression, even in Richard’s presence, compelling Alice to acquiesce. Contemplating divorce as a means, “I worried about Richard’s future, son of a single mother, a cripple, a woman who had not got on in the world” (Morrison 176). Consequently, she

remained in the marriage.

Following Richard's admission to boarding school, Alice's health and emotional well-being deteriorated rapidly. Her distress intensified, and music, which had once been a source of solace, no longer provided comfort. When Richard later expressed a desire to attend the Royal Academy of Music, Alice was both astonished and overjoyed by his ambition. In contrast, Edward reacted with anger and declared that he would not support Richard's pursuit financially. Nevertheless, Richard secured a scholarship, enabling him to continue his musical education. Although Richard did not invite Alice to his performances or share details of his progress, she remained an ardent supporter by listening to his broadcasts and tracking his public appearances through newspaper reports. As Richard's reputation grew and he began to receive public recognition, Edward's attitude shifted, and he became more interested in engaging with his son.

Anne K. McCarrick, et.al in "Gender Differences in Competition and Dominance during Married-Couples Group Therapy" (1981) stated that, "However, males apparently interrupt females freely, thus suggesting that males assume a dominant position. Females tend to "interrupt back," an indication that male dominance is not acceptable. However, females are also more submissive toward husbands than toward other males" (164).

Temporal structure is the fifth dimension. A few days after their marriage, Edward's true character began to emerge, revealing a more disagreeable and unpleasant disposition to Alice. In an attempt to maintain appearances, he invited her to dinner and requested that she play the piano. Although he exhibited little genuine interest in her musical abilities, this gesture appeared to be an effort to reassure Alice that he remained the same person she had initially fallen in love with.

When Alice proposed the idea of organizing an interactive recital at the Hollywood Music Room, Edward responded with surprise and questioned the motivation behind her sudden request. At that moment, Alice experienced a profound sense of emotional pain, likening it to being stabbed in the heart. She responded simply, "I am a pianist. What? I am a pianist. He glanced down at his plate, peered at the stove to see if there was any left, and then he went back to work" (Morrison 114). Subsequently, Alice began to seek employment opportunities, but Edward learned of her efforts through an acquaintance and subjected her to verbal abuse. The psychological trauma resulting from this incident led Alice to abandon her job search. She also considered offering piano lessons at home, but the mere thought of Edward's presence deterred her from pursuing this idea. Birgit Pfau-Effinger in "Socio-historical paths of the male breadwinner model – an explanation of cross-national differences" (2004) stated as follows:

It is argued that the historical development of the urban bourgeoisie was especially significant for the historical destiny of this cultural model: the social and political strength of the urban bourgeoisie had central societal importance in the imposition of the housewife model of the male breadwinner

family as the dominant family form in a given society. (377)

The final dimension is information availability. Alice approached Edward with a request to introduce her to some of his colleagues who were musicians at Oxford University. Edward responded by questioning the rationale behind such a request. Upon Alice's explanation that she aspired to perform in concerts, Edward dismissed the idea, regarding it as an unproductive use of time. Due to her apprehension towards Edward, Alice reiterated her request in a more subdued manner, expressing her desire to pursue a career in music, "I could have taught the piano, but where? In that house? With him there? In any case I didn't want to" (Morrison 127). Nevertheless, Edward declined, asserting that his acquaintances were limited to economists rather than musicians. This stance was inconsistent with his previous assurances; when he had proposed marriage to Alice, he had promised to support her musical ambitions.

When Alice inquired about the musical event at the summer school where they had first met, Edward explained that the concert was organized solely for financial reasons and that the college otherwise had no genuine interest in music. Following a significant failure at a major concert, Alice ceased playing the piano altogether. Subsequently, Edward began to deride her, suggesting that she did not even conform to the principles of the demand and supply curve, and he increasingly treated her as someone of diminished significance.

Refti Handini Listyani, et.al in "Hegemonic Masculinity in the Tradition of Women Proposing Marriage" (2024) states, "despite women initiating marriage proposals, major decisions including marriage approval, dowry negotiations, and wedding arrangements are still controlled by the male's family, reinforcing gender hierarchies and positioning women in a subordinate role" (180).

Finally, there is a transformation process, according to the theory. Alice gradually internalized Edward's perspective on women. According to Edward, women were inherently deficient—characterized as helpless, weak, unintelligent, and lacking in capability. He believed that women required constant guidance, correction, and instruction, attributing their supposed inability to comprehend complex matters to an innate immaturity in their cognitive development. Alice's eventual acceptance of these notions contributed to her increasing subjugation within the marriage.

Following many years of marital dissatisfaction, Edward's death marked a significant turning point for Alice. Rather than experiencing grief, she was overcome by an overwhelming sense of liberation. She found it difficult to believe that she had survived Edward, and this realization inspired a renewed zest for life. For the first time in years, she felt compelled to breathe freely, sing, and engage in activities that brought her joy. The world appeared newly illuminated and full of possibility. In a symbolic act of reclaiming her autonomy, Alice sat at the piano and began to play "Concert A" once more.

The paper concludes by stating that social contact is an important component of personality traits, and comprehending how circumstances are structured and motives change is critical to understand a variety of social

psychology phenomena. Gender disparity in husband-wife relationships is influenced by institutional, cultural, and economic variables. It is necessary to question established conventions, advance equitable opportunities, and cultivate marital respect in order to address these inequities.

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**GRIEF, ABSENCE, AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY: A STUDY OF
HISHAM MATAR'S *THE RETURN: FATHERS, SONS AND THE LAND
IN BETWEEN***

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Abstract: The article analyses memory, trauma, and identity in Hisham Matar's *The Return* (2016), a memoir about personal grief and political witness. It looks at the framework of post memory and cultural memory in enforced disappearances during Gaddafi's regime. Matar's return becomes a search for the disappeared father and shows, in many ways, the resistant quality of trauma against closure and linear narration. The poetics of absence and silence in the memoir reflect the unfixed state of memory, thereby turning personal loss into cultural memory and a statement for political resistance in the context of diaspora.

Keywords: Memory Studies, Post Memory, Trauma Narrative, Exile and Cultural Memory.

Introduction

Hisham Matar's *The Return: Fathers, Sons and the Land in Between* (2016) takes a long hard look into the issues of enforced disappearance by authoritarian rule as they both affect personal lives and politics. Memory studies is a larger field in which this memoir is situated; it draws attention to the personal trauma and collective memory intersection through Matar's lens, through a search for one's father, Jaballa Matar; Libyan dissident, who was then abducted by the Gaddafi regime in 1990. A hybrid of memoir and political testimony, Matar's narrative articulates a poetics of absence-denying closure-however-that resists the closure of linear historical narratives. Adding to that, the narrative does not merely narrate events, it embodies all the fragmentation, indeterminacy, and silence that are characteristics of traumatic memory. In the light of this, the article under scrutiny investigates redefinitions of grief, identity, and cultural memory under exile and post memory as well as political violence by reading the novel.

Using memory studies, focusing especially on post memory and cultural memory, this paper would explore the memoir's narrative strategies and ethical claims. The novel throws light on the spectral presence of authoritarian violence in the lives of those, who will have to remember without evidence, to grieve without closure.

Trauma, Testimony, and the Politics of Absence

The theory of trauma emphasizes the rupture that the traumatic experience creates with memory, language, and identity. It deems trauma an ongoing process of a fictional wound that has left its mark over time, resisting narrative closure. One of the leading trauma theorists, Cathy Caruth, argues that trauma "is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available" (4). Hisham Matar, in *The Return*, testifies not so much from the direct experience of his father's disappearance as from an enduring and unresolved aftermath of

that loss. Caruth referred to this notion of prolonged mourning as belatedness or "afterwardness" of trauma conditions, the very form and content of the memoir.

Jaballa Matar, an eminent political dissident, was kidnapped by representatives of Libya's authoritarian regime and was lost inside the prison system, most likely in the infamous Abu Salim prison. The family was suspended in a limbo of hearing piecemeal reports and conflicting rumors, salted with mischief by the Gaddafi regime. This lack of closure becomes a psychological and narrative void that haunts every fiber of the memoir. Matar has no body to bury, no declaration of death, and no tangible past to reconstruct. This uncertainty becomes a signature of the memoir.

The absence of his father is not just a thematic concern; it is a structuring principle. Matar's writing is filled with silence, recursion, and ellipsis. Instead of proceeding in a linear fashion, the memoir circles and coalesces around crucial moments, repeating and visiting them in different registers of feeling. For instance, Matar writes: "I am not sure whether I imagined it, or whether it was true" (56). This summarizes the ambivalence and uncertainty that infuse his memories. This is parallel to what trauma theorists namely Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman identify as the incommensurable difficulty of putting traumatic events into words.

The disjointed narrative approach can be understood within Marianne Hirsch's notion of "post memory" that is, what the second generation bears to the trauma of their parents. Hirsch goes on to explain that post memory is marked by that deep connection to the past, rendered so affectively that it appears to the post memorial generation as though it is their own memory, even though it is mediated through an account of stories, images, and behaviours (5). Matar did not witness the abduction or imprisonment of his father, but the emotional weight of the event is what has shaped his identity and narrative voice. He inherits not only the memory of the trauma but its silences, its voids, and its unresolvable questions. In *The Return*, post memory offers to discuss the ethics of commemoration. One senses Matar's acute conscience regarding the ethics of the narrative of representation—How does one speak for the dead, or for those that may still be alive? How does one render suffering without appropriating it? His story is a careful balancing act: to honor his father without fictionalizing his memory, make visible what the regime sought to erase, yet not profess to know the unknowable. Thus, Matar stands in a "dialogical" mode toward trauma, an approach that remains open to uncertainty and presence-respecting absence, as stated by LaCapra (89).

Matar's mourning is lodged in the national context of silence and erasure. This interaction between the individual and the collective provides yet another layer to complicate the memoir. As Aleida Assmann notes, personal memory can be integrated into cultural memory when transmitted through public forms of representation, such as literature, monuments, or rituals (112). *The Return* functions as just such a form—literary monument to the disappeared, written act of resistance against forgetting.

The memoir thus fulfills a more testimonial function by probing the

interface between actual and fictional. While the text is nonfictional, it increasingly resorts to imaginative reconstruction wherever the cracks of history have swallowed facts. Matar speculates as to what his father might have experienced in the last moments of his life, reconstructs hypothetical conversations, and imagines alternative scenarios. Leigh Gilmore ascribes to the memoir a mixed space wherein memory, imagination, and history converge to create "truth-effects" rather than objective truth.

The memoir reminds repeatedly of the impossibility of ever fully integrating the trauma. Matar meditates upon reconciling the father he lived and on loving with the father from prison letters that reach him years later: he states, "I did not recognize his voice. It was as if the prison had taught him a new language" (163). This estrangement underscores the distance that trauma begets through time and emotion—not only between the survivor and the world but between the past and present self.

The word "his absence" referring to his father hurts him, but more so, it refers to home, cultural continuity, and a stable sense of belonging. Such a condition of displacement firmly supports fragmentation in the memoir. Home becomes memory and imagination instead of physical presence. As Edward Said argues, exile creates "contrapuntal consciousness," the consciousness of an identity always divided, always backward and forward at once (177). Such ambivalence shapes Matar's narrative voice: he shifts between personal and political, remembered and imagined.

The Return draws on a plethora of literary and philosophical references in evoking trauma. Much of what Matar constructs in style relies on classical Arabic literature, European modernism, and Islamic mysticism, rendering the memoir quite intellectually textured. He places the personal story within larger philosophic questions regarding suffering, justice, and the proper limits of knowledge. Matar often refers to Dante's *Divine Comedy*, although the nature of his return to Libya is far from being an opposite voyage; it is at least a descent into inferno.

The memoir also addresses the politics of visibility. Writing, in a regime that wanted to make its victims invisible, becomes a radical act. According to Michael Rothberg, memory can be just as much a tool of justice as a tool of reconciliation (19). By narrating his personal loss, Matar documents counter-history, challenging the state-sanctioned state of Libya.

Exile and the Fragmented Self

Exile, both physical and psychological, is central to the way the memoir is structured and what it is about. Said defines exile as: "the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place" (173). Matar was born in New York and raised in Libya and Cairo, then sent to school in London. He embodies all of those geographic realities, none of which can substitute for the one he lost: Libya remains mourning-filled and yearned for, as it does for danger and silence.

Exile thus becomes a permanent state of disorientation. The self is fractally out of joint; Matar's identity defines him as both insider and outsider, and simultaneously rooted and rootless. In this tense dichotomy, he narrates

with both intimacy and detachment. He reminisces saying, "To be in exile is to have the present continuously recede" (Matar 89).

Dislocation and compulsory forgetting define Matar's identity. "You are in mourning," he writes, "and yet you cannot grieve, because there is no confirmed death, only an absence" (Matar 78). This ambivalence between presence and absence, knowing and unknowing, shapes the ethical and emotional landscape of the memoir. Aleida Assmann, while writing on cultural memory, distinguishes between "functional memory," which serves national identity, and "storage memory," which preserves forgotten or repressed elements (98).

He returns to Libya following the fall of Gaddafi in 2011. Here, he will unearth such submerged memories. The memoir becomes a testament to this impossibility of complete return-geographically, historically, emotionally. The physical journey reflects a deeper, metaphorical journey into the labyrinths of loss, identity, and memory.

Memory and the Ethics of Witnessing

Memory unfolds in an ethical register in Matar's narrative. Under Rothberg's idea of "multidirectional memory," memory isn't a zero-sum game wherein different histories vainly beseech recognition for their truth. Rather, memory is a dialogical space, an arena for negotiation (3). *The Return* exemplifies the personal grief within the collective memory of political violence.

Matar's memoir ties the whole tale into a larger entity involving other authoritarian repressive histories, the diaspora yearning, and communal suffering. The voices that he recounts through his conversation with other former political prisoners, exiles, and relatives together reconstruct an individual and yet shared memory.

Paul Ricoeur's narrative identity also presents a clue here. According to Ricoeur, in *Memory, History, Forgetting*, narratives create the identity person with respect to their self, but traumatic events create a crisis in narrative identity because novelistic schemes totally resist integration into a coherent story (78). That is the tension with which Matar's memoir wrestles: telling a story that is resistant to closure, remembering without resolution. The fragmented narrative, the non-linear chronology, and the themes of disappearances recur within the book, thus forming part of an ethical charge.

The memoir becomes a scene of "wounded time" in the sense Ricoeur uses that expression: a time in which the past is neither fully recoverable nor completely lost. Matar does not try to cure the wound but seeks to bear witness to its ongoing presence. Such testimony, however, is not merely an act of narration but also an ethical posture.

Poetics of Absence, Aesthetics of Silence

One of the most powerful elements in *The Return* is its sustained engagement with absence, beyond plot, even in form and language. Matar constitutes poetics of absence to his entire narrative. The memoir registers absence-by-diction, by structure, by tone-not merely as a void but as an aesthetic and epistemological force. Under the pressure of ellipses, silences,

and pauses, it resists this logic that is conventionally assumed for narrative progression.

As Dominick LaCapra indicates in his book on trauma, narratives of trauma habitually oscillate between "acting out," or compulsively repeating the trauma, and "working through," or gradually understanding and integrating the event (70).

The poetics of absence is played out in Matar's restrained, elegant prose. He avoids any emotionalism and dramatic presentation, but his language is very simple, lyrical and introspective. The tone is often subdued, as if the very act of speaking about his father's disappearance might threaten to unravel the delicate threads of memory. At one point, Matar writes, "I am aware of the poverty of language in the face of such absence" (147). This confession is emblematic of the memoir's self-conscious style. Trauma resists articulation, that some losses are so profound they defy language.

The incidence of silence in *The Return* is a psychological condition or response to trauma and a great political deal too. Silence was institutionalized under Gaddafi. This was done through the uses of censorship, intimidation, and violence. But the families would not be silent out of fear alone; there would also be a lack of information. Under such circumstances, a symptom of repression becomes a means of protest. The memoir documents how entire generations were compelled to whisper; how propaganda would corrupt the language of truth; and even memory could be subject to erasure. In writing *The Return*, Matar is not just breaking his own silence but challenging a national history of induced muteness. Matar's aesthetics of silence have been imbued with a specific spirituality and philosophy. There are references in the memoir to the Islamic tradition, Sufi mysticism, and classical Arabic poetry. All these enrich the memoir's engagement with themes of loss, longing, and transcendence.

The memoir gently urges readers to attend to the unsaid, to speculate on meanings offered by fragmented utterances, and to honour the not-known dimension of trauma. *The Return* exemplifies what Michael Rothberg has termed multidirectional memory: memory that is not only linear or unidirectional but also relational and dialogic (3). It creates a meeting point between personal grief and collective history, where private testimony meets the global story of loss.

Cultural Memory and Political Resistance

The return of memory is, of course, more than a personal affair. Meshed deeply into collective identity and historical consciousness, memories work out this theme in Matar's memoir. The private mourning and public working interplay in Matar's memoir. Individual memory is transformed into cultural memory, which Aleida Assmann explains as a sort of "working memory" that serves to shape a particular group's identity by transmitting meaningful narratives across generations (110). While documenting his father's disappearance and the wider context of Libyan oppression, Matar adds to a counter-narrative resisting authoritarian historiography's erasure.

Thus, the memoir turns into political advocacy. Memory is about the past, but as Michael Rothberg argues, it is also an instrument for shaping the present and envisioning alternatives for the future. In its dual function, Rothberg observes, "a tool of justice as much as of reconciliation" (19). Matar's narrative fulfills both functions: it does not wish for revenge but recognition; not punishment but accountability.

Memory becomes a kind of counter-hegemonic act. It disrupts the state's planned narrative and the silence of dissent. By writing what was supposed to be consigned to oblivion, Matar seizes history. By naming, he restores the humanity of the vanished. The memoir affirms grief's legitimacy and the importance of memory.

The Return speaks beyond Libya. It addresses a world audience, touching upon the universal topics of exile, displacement, and enforced disappearance. Its international notoriety further affirms its place as a transnational testimony. Matar's story is deeply rooted in a specific historical and cultural context yet branches into more universal considerations of human rights, dignity, and the ethics of memory. It forms part of a larger archive of resistance literature—work that engages with and contests dominant histories while giving voice to the marginalized.

The formal structure of the memoir strengthens its political and cultural aspirations. Its fragmented and episodic sense serves as a parallel to the disjunctions of exile and the incompleteness of trauma memory. The photographs, letters, and historical documents augment the documentary dimension of the narrative and create a blur between literature, testimony, and historical record. Matar's memoir is not about resolution: it is about reckoning. It takes into account the limit of knowing, the agony of unknowing, and lends dignity to the grief of seeking.

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDIES: NARRATIVES OF CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN BARBARA KINGSOLVER'S *DEMON COPPERHEAD*

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Abstract: *Demon Copperhead* (2022) by Barbara Kingsolver is a tale set in Southern Appalachia which brings humanity and humaneness along with their relationships into picture. The novel explores Appalachian culture and identity through the eyes of its protagonist Demon who grapples with poverty, addiction and the complexities of his heritage. The novel emphasizes the importance of community and family in Appalachian culture. It highlights the strength and resilience of the people of Appalachia in the face of adversity. Demon's journey of self-discovery is intertwined with the exploration of his Appalachian identity.

Keywords: Appalachian Culture, Self -discovery, Community, Marginalization and Structural Violence.

Introduction

Anthropology is the study of human societies and cultures to find a unique narrative form in literature. Barbara Kingsolver is a biologist and novelist. Her fictional themes involve human behavior, belief system and identity information. Her characters are navigating through cultural boundaries, ecological transformations and social expectations. Kingsolver's writings that are deeply rooted into an anthropological principle help to identify changes shaped thorough interaction between culture and place.

Barbara Kingsolver, a celebrated American author is widely known for her deep connection with the natural world. 'Demon' is the nickname given to Damon by other kids. He changes his name as Demon the Copperhead because of his red hair and his attitude. He inherited his red hair from his dead father who was a Melungeon. Demon's ancestry lies in the Melungeon people, a group of people descended from Blacks, white Europeans and native Americans. These people intermingled and lived in isolated Appalachian settlements. They are known for their dark skin, red hair and blue or green eyes. His second name, Copperhead refers to a snake species.

Demon Copperhead is set in Appalachia. The novel explores contemporary issues. Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* powerfully portrays Appalachia through young Demon's eyes. It explores drug use, addiction and foster care. The tragedy of foster care controls the narrative and the painful depiction of the opioid crisis dominates the action.

Barbara Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* is a modern reimagining of David Copperfield. "Demon Copperhead" is a captivating story of survival that explores the unwavering strength of the human spirit that evolves while

confronting challenges. Kingsolver sets out in “Demon Copperhead” to wrestle with the region's complex history and its current social standing. Identity of this region and how it has created awareness is realised in the narrative. The name “Demon Copperhead” serves as both nickname and symbolic identity which reflects the protagonist's fiery hair and his rebellious character.

Damon's Childhood

Damon Fields is born to a young single mother in a trailer in a Lee County, nestled in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia. His mother battles drug and alcohol dependency. Demon often spends time with his neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Peggot, who are raising their grandson Matt Peggot. His nickname is Maggot. Maggot and Demon quickly form a deep bond and become best friends. When Demon's mother dies from an overdose of oxycontin, Demon is put into child services.

Themes of poverty, isolation and estrangement at different circumstances are explored through the character of Demon Copperhead. His entire life is a struggle for survival. The novel *Demon Copperhead* exposes how exploitative industries, including coal and pharmaceuticals, contribute to regional hardships. Kingsolver's novels that are often read like cultural pieces, explores the lives of people shaped with the help of an environment, beliefs, histories and interaction with others. She creates characters to build entire cultural world around, giving attention to the gender, ecology, community and post-colonial legacies. Set in Congo Appalachia, or the American Southwest, they provide portrayals of cultural adaptation, identity, conflict and collective resistance. This paper explores how Kingsolver's function as an anthropological storytelling focused on cultural identity, environmental consciousness and community formation. It is argued about her narrative strategies that not only serve as an artistic goal but also helps to understand about human life in its fullness, complexity and interdependence.

Cultural Identity

Culture in anthropological system includes meaning, language, belief and tradition. This novel becomes an ethnographic exploration of cultural arrogance which led to an ethical blindness.

Demon attempts various jobs but struggles to maintain any for long. He even takes to freelancing with a newspaper, where he begins publishing a comic strip with the goal of showing Appalachians in a positive light. It reveals his thirst for Appalachian identity. When the grief stricken Demon stays at a rehab center in Knoxville, he resumes drawing and decides to make a graphic novel about the history of the Appalachian people.

"Demon Copperhead" explores the culture and identity of Appalachia through the eyes of a young vibrant champion who grapples with poverty, addiction and the opioid crisis. The novel challenges negative stereotypes about the region and its people, highlighting the impact of systemic issues like poverty and the opioid epidemic on individuals and communities. Kingsolver tries to bring out the resilience, humor and humanity of Appalachian people, while also criticising the social and economic forces that have contributed to their struggles.

The novel challenges the idea that Appalachian people are solely marked by poverty or addiction, emphasising their individual stories and potential for good. Kingsolver aims to portray the region with nuance and complexity, showing the beauty, strength and cultural richness of Appalachia beyond these stereotyped labels. The novel honestly confronts derogatory terms like "redneck" and "hillbilly" which are used to stereotype impoverished white communities in the US.

"Demon Copperhead" explores the devastating consequences of poverty, the opioid crisis, and the lack of opportunities in rural America. The novel illustrates how these systemic issues disproportionately affect communities like those in Appalachia, leading to cycles of addiction, trauma, and loss. Kingsolver critiques the historical exploitation of the region by industries like coal mining, which has contributed to economic hardship and displacement.

In an attempt to raise awareness of child hunger and poverty in the United States, Kingsolver turns the lives of her characters into tales of misery and the inevitability of despondency and depression. Her characters wallow in dark hollows with little light, condemned forever to repeat the horrific mistakes of previous generations. She makes the people of Appalachia into objects of sympathy and compassion, but in doing so, also intimates that falling into drug abuse, devoid of education, and clinging to their erratic ways are moral choices.

Resilience and Humanity

Kingsolver emphasises the importance of human connection, love and creativity to overcome adversity. The novel showcases the ways in which people find strength and meaning in their lives even amidst hardship. Despite facing immense challenges, Demon and other characters in the novel exhibit resilience, humor and a strong sense of community. Dori, Demon's girlfriend, is a solace of comfort to the him. When Dori's father dies, she falls apart. So, Demon drops out of school and moves in with Dori. Dori grows increasingly disconnected, insecure and weak. She says she is pregnant but leads to miscarriage. Ultimately, Dori dies, leaving Demon to move in with Maggot. Such happenings make the life of Demon insecure and despondent. Nevertheless, Demon has the strength of mind to overcome such harrowing circumstances, he is resilient and firm to continue life with his objective of establishing the identity of his native country Appalachia.

Identity and Heritage

Demon's identity as a young man from Appalachia is moulded by his experiences with poverty, addiction and the anthropology of his family. On his way to discover Melungeon heritage, he adds another layer to the understanding of his identity and the complex racial and cultural landscape of the region. Demon reclaims and satirises stereotypes, finding a way to express his experiences and challenge the perceptions of others through his art, particularly his comic series "Red Neck".

Kingsolver also highlights about gendered nature of storytelling. Her female characters reclaim their voices through narrative, resisting the effects of patriarchy. Furthermore, she gives importance to oral tradition, folk wisdom and ecological insight and transmits cultural values across generations. They

use personal memory with collective history but her language position that are there in storytelling is an essential instrument of cultural identity, transformation and resistance. Kingsolver gives voice to those who offer critical insights into anthropological and political realities.

Community, Resistance and Collective Identity

Anthropological studies often emphasize kinship, ritual and social structure. Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* portrays an alternative form of community, capitalist, patriarchal or colonial systems. These communal bonds are enabled characters to resist modernized practices, reclaim agency and construct belonging. Kingsolver underscores the idea that culture is not merely inherited but actively maintained through solidarity and resistance. Her characters are often resisting cultural domination; colonialism and environmental destruction which passes through community ties. Kingsolver shows that language, memory and land act in cultural preservation and identity. Community characters help to define what are beyond individual trauma or displacement. Cultural identity is not only portrayed as a solitary, but it is deeply used in a relational and communal line.

Barbara Kingsolver's *Demon Copperhead* is operated as a crossroad of humanity, heritage, resilience and identity. Her characters serve as a case study in cultural negotiation, identity formation and resistance. Kingsolver works for a cultural background which functions as a dynamic force shaping lives.

Barbara Kingsolver dedicates her novel *Demon Copperhead* to survivors of the opioid crisis and foster care. Her narratives written in an ethnographic spirit speaks on how people live, what they believe, and also, how people can adapt to changes in their life. Kingsolver helps to transform literature into a form of cultural inquiry, inviting readers to reimagine identity that are relational, ecological and ever evolving human resistance to injustice and exploitation.

Kingsolver emphasizes the role of community and identity that are in a sustainable cultural values and collective memory. Kingsolver not only reflects human complexity but also actively participates in redefining and tells how one can understand culture, identity and relationship.

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WAR AND DEATH: TALE OF TWO STRANGERS IN ANUK ARUDPRAGASAM'S *THE STORY OF A BRIEF MARRIAGE*

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Abstract: The tragic Sri Lankan Civil War serves as the backdrop for Anuk Arudpragasam's *The Story of a Brief Marriage*. The novel centres on the brief but intricate connection between Dinesh and Ganga, two strangers who cross paths amid a violent upheaval. Due to an imbalance caused by emotional isolation brought on by traumatic experiences, their relationship is short-lived and unfulfilling. This article aims to examine how war affects the characters' thoughts, actions, and perceptions of each other by analysing the psychological aspects of their relationships. It concentrates on how Dinesh's and Ganga's unique psychological states and intimacy are impacted by the trauma of war, which eventually leads to a short and extremely taxing marriage.

Keywords: Trauma, Isolation, PTSD, Marriage and Brokenness.

Anuk Arudpragasam's debut novel, *The Story of a Brief Marriage* is a commentary on the wider impacts of war on interpersonal relationships in addition to being a personal account of love and sorrow. The story, revolves around Dinesh, a young man who lives in the war-torn North of Sri Lanka. The story's main event, Dinesh and Ganga's short-lived and mostly pointless marriage, serves as a metaphor for how transient human connections can be when subjected to the horrific stresses of war. The psychological analysis of the human condition in dire situations provided by Arudpragasam's work compels readers to acknowledge the degree to which trauma alters people's physical and psychological makeup. The relationship, or lack thereof, between Dinesh and Ganga highlights the psychological costs of existing in a society where the constant threat of death, violence, and misery diminishes human relationships.

Dinesh, a young man who has been living in a war zone for almost a year, is alienated from both the outside world and himself. The novel focuses on his extreme psychological loneliness. He is unable to connect with his emotions, his identity, or those around him because of the dissociation brought on by the trauma of war.

"In spite of having been surrounded for most of the past year by countless numbers of people, he couldn't tell when the last time was that he'd really felt connected to somebody else. He could not even remember what it was like to spend time with another person, to simply be in someone else's company..." (Arudpragasam 11, 12).

This clearly demonstrates Dinesh's incapacity to compose a communion with others or even a cohesive account of his own life which is a hallmark sign of the dissociative states frequently linked to trauma.

Psychoanalyst Judith Lewis Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* states that "Traumatic events call into question basic human relationships. They breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to others." (37). Traumatic events like war shatters an individual's self, robs their emotions, feelings that makes them human, and leaves them fragmented, numb

and dissociated, a condition that Dinesh exemplifies throughout the novel. Dinesh had been away from his home for a long time. He is isolated from his family, language and everything he has known all his life and above all his own body. He also witnessed his mother's death, while trying to escape shelling. Over time, he becomes an object deprived of anything that makes him human. He does not feel anything anymore. The narrator says, that the trauma has rendered him emotionless and made him forget his own past, "how could he be expected to feel the loss of things he could no longer even remember?" (Arudpragasam 19). In psychoanalytic terms, this could be interpreted as a defensive mechanism, a detachment from the self and the world to avoid the painful emotions that would otherwise arise from witnessing and experiencing violence.

The way Arudpragasam depicts Dinesh's inner world echoes a Freudian interpretation of "death drive." According to Freud's hypothesis, people who have experienced severe trauma may withdraw into a state of psychological immobility in which they reject any efforts to interact with the outside world. This psychological breakdown is reflected in Dinesh's passive acceptance of the violence around him, which turns him from an active player in his own life to an observer, "He felt at such times always strangely disembodied, as though observing himself from the outside." (15). Another indication of his withdrawal from life is his incapacity to interact emotionally with Ganga.

The subject of losing oneself in the midst of conflict is emphasised throughout the book. Dinesh is locked in a cycle of survival that allows little opportunity for psychological healing or personal growth, much like many people who live in war zones. His existence becomes one of sheer endurance without any deeper significance or purpose beyond the urgent necessity to survive because he lacks a stable identity. The moments, when he watches other people die with coldness or indifference, vividly depict the interior disintegration of his personality. Unconsciously, he has adapted to the continual fear of violence by emotionally withdrawing from the world.

Like Dinesh, Ganga and her father Somasundaram are also victims of war. Both father and daughter have reacted and dealt with their trauma differently. When she lost her mother and brother in the shelling, Ganga was in great pain but she accepted their deaths and engaged her mind by helping out in the clinic, "Her mother and brother had died, but the world wouldn't stop moving..." (30). By helping the injured and the ones in need, she was able to deal with the pain of losing her loved ones. Her father, on the other hand, did not react much and found it very hard to acknowledge their deaths. As time passed by, he slowly started to lose his mind. He became aloof, stopped talking and eating, isolated himself from his own daughter who needed his support more than ever. He could not even comprehend reality, which is evident in the scene where he tends to the Iyer's dead body, as if he is alive. He is ashamed of himself for not being able to protect his wife and son, and the shame has led him to lose his mind.

Human beings are made up of millions of memories, which help us to endure the life that we live in this world. Memories, whether good or bad, helps us navigate our life. It is a thread that connect us to our past, tethers us to the present and bridges us to our future. But war plunders people's memories, leaving them to be mere shells. Dinesh had completely forgotten the details of his past life. He was in a state of "stupefaction, devoid of memory, thought and perception, like a tortoise with its head and limbs retracted fully into its shell.." (112). Only after his encounter with Ganga, he tries to recollect his long forgotten past. He decides to clean himself to impress Ganga and it could also be seen as his reclamation or as his attempt to re-establish a connection with his own self. Washing away the grime and dirt stands for his symbolic purification from everything that he had to go through because of the war. He has turned himself into a new man, "his raw new skin ready, at last, for new memory and for new life." (123). Despite the grim circumstance that he finds himself in, he is able to feel alive and free himself from the bad and tormenting memories of the war.

Rape or any form of sexual violence against both women and men has been used as a weapon especially during wars since time immemorial. In the context of Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009), Sri Lankan Army sexually abused and tortured Tamil Women in various cruel ways. "For many Tamils, the high rates of sexual assault against Tamil women in the civil war represented an attack on the integrity of their community.", says Tasha Manoranjan, founder of the nonprofit organisation called People for Equality and Relief in Lanka (PEARL). When Dinesh received a marriage proposal from Ganga's father Somasundaram, he had no idea how to respond at first. Later he understands why Somasundaram is keen on getting his daughter married at such a dire condition, "many continued trying to marry their daughters girls that were married were less likely to be defiled..." (8). This unexpected proposal caught him off guard and brought him back to the reality that he had neglected to acknowledge.

War turns abnormal things into normal. In the beginning of the novel, Dinesh is tasked with disposing a severed hand of a little boy. He could not do it because of the softness and the warmth that the hand produced, which was just moments ago alive. As someone who deals with burying dead bodies this is not weird for him to do, and he ponders " There were plenty of naked body parts scattered around the camp....nobody would say a thing if he just left the arm under a bush or beside a tree." (5). Body parts were littered on the ground like garbage, proving how things which are not normal gets normalised during war. He also observes a woman compulsively eating sand to satiate her hunger but no-one does anything about it. The trauma people go through during war desensitise them, making them view things normally despite being cruel and violent.

War trauma leads to Post-traumatic stress disorder, which in turn sometimes results in erectile dysfunction in men. Dinesh suffers from PTSD and when he tries to have sexual intercourse with Ganga, he does not get aroused. He realises his impotence and in embarrassment begins to cry. Trauma

also causes insomnia, to which Dinesh is a victim. He finds it extremely hard to fall asleep, but in Ganga's presence he relaxes himself and falls into a deep sleep after many weeks of sleeplessness. His ability to sleep again was a slim hope, he held onto, believing that, with Ganga he could actually construct a life, after the war. But the hope fades away with Ganga's death at the end of the novel. He loses everything including his will to live. The war has literally taken every single thing from Dinesh and from every other countless people like him, leaving them physically and mentally impotent.

The Story of a Brief Marriage by Anuk Arudpragasam is a gripping psychological examination of how trauma destroys a person's psyche, especially during a war. The novel reveals the emotional and psychological disintegration of people's psyche, when they are forced to live through war. Dinesh, who experiences such traumatic disintegration, fails in interpersonal relationships, as depicted in the novel. His short-lived and meaningless marriage to Ganga serve as a microcosm of the greater existential misery that war causes to its victims.

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**RIVER, PROPHECY AND ANNIHILATION: DECIPHERING THE
ORACULAR WHISPERINGS OF ABULU IN CHIGOZIE OBIOMA'S
*THE FISHERMEN***

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Abstract: Postcolonial ecology, anticipates a comprehension of land as an active participant rather than a passive backdrop in postcolonial conversations. This paper applies postcolonial ecological framework in understanding Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen*. This comprehension heavily resonates with objectives of emerging interdisciplinary studies that consistently urge to embrace indigenous practices that aid in achieving a symbiotic balance between the environment and human.

Keywords: Postcolonial Ecology, Ecological Imperialism, Anthropocentrism, More-Than-Human and Indigenous Knowledge.

Introduction

Out of many reasons that has been contributing to topple the delicate equilibrium of earth's natural design, the paper focuses on the consequences of colonialism bequeathed with agential power to alter the 'landscapes' of the colonized country to their monetary benefits. It is becoming the need of the hour to understand literary productions from a climate-oriented perspective. The paper studies Chigozie Obioma's *The Fishermen* with theoretical foundation further validating with evidences and peeling out new interpretations.

Significance of Research

Chigozie Obioma's novel is open to different perspectives. Following this trail of thought, eschewing land from postcolonial arguments would be an aporia per se. Land, the physical place, is the junction where colonial conquests have been acted upon. Before the advent of colonizers, land cannot have been a passive element with no agency, it was deliberately reduced into one. The Western world due to biased and entitled comprehension of their limited exposure to the other parts of world did not understand indigenous life-style whose existence was symbiotic not superior to nature. Reflecting Obioma's novel to voice out postcolonial ecological concern is the novelty of the paper.

Theoretical Framework

Buell et al strongly substantiate the solvent nature of ecocriticism by noting down the intersections of ecocritical viewpoints found through other discourses such as gender, science, and indigeneity to name a few (Buell et al 426). Postcolonialism came into existence with insights from many foundational thinkers like Franz Fanon and Edward Said. The corollary of their works posed an ontological shift in thinking related to land and its irreversible damage inflicted by colonial machinations. DeLoughrey and Handley argue that land in postcolonial arguments "has infinite meanings and morphologies: it might be defined geographically, in terms of the expansion of empire; environmentally in terms of wilderness or urban settings; genealogically, in linking communal

ancestry to land; as well phenomenological, connecting body to place” (DeLoughrey and Handley 4). Discussing extensively about “Historicization” (DeLoughrey and Handley 4) in postcolonial ecological studies, it imbricates the dynamics of land (or earth) with history as put forth by Said and Fanon. According to their analysis Wilson Harris, the Guyanese poet advocates to construct a historical model of ecology and epistemology of space and time, by entering “a profound dialogue with the landscape” (DeLoughrey and Handley 4).

Studying about the African Epistemology, Dr.Ejikemeuwa J.O. Ndubisi and Umunya Anambra offer some *post priori* of the African knowledge system elaborating seven embodiments namely of African epistemology. The embodiments include “Wholistic Knowledge” (Ndubisi and Anambra 35) and others include “Perceptual Knowledge” (Ndubisi and Anambra 34), “Common sense knowledge” (Ndubisi and Anambra 34), “Old Age Knowledge” (Ndubisi and Anambra 34), “Inferential knowledge” (Ndubisi and Anambra 34), “Mystical Knowledge” (Ndubisi and Anambra 34), “Oral Tradition” (Ndubisi and Anambra 34). The section happens to be ubiquitous with current argument associated with postcolonial ecology. “It is the belief of the African person that knowledge cannot be gained if the individual person detaches himself from it. It therefore follow that there is a connection or a relationship that exists between the African person and his world. The African does not claim to know anything in isolation” (Ndubisi and Anambra 35). This kind of unanimity found in African epistemology is the congregation of thought which Obioma tries to pass down through his characters who unfortunately are severed from it because of their overdependence on colonial ideals. They believe that the British way of life is more organized and redeeming which is sadly untrue.

In his opening comments about postcolonial theory Pramod K Nayar methodically illustrates how colonialism had become the fodder for capitalist machines obliterated native knowledge orchestrated by agential means “that European countries began to look at Asia, South America and Africa as sites providing the much-required resources. In this way, modernity directly led to voyages of discovery (for trade routes) and conquest (for control over resources in other parts of the world)” (Nayar 153,154).

Cryptic Whisperings

Jill Didur in her reading of Kiran Desai’ *The Inheritance of Loss* tries to decipher “Desai’s depiction of Himalayan environment tracks how colonial landscapes are not only produced through material practices but also “through forms of reproductive print, visual and textual, that were to serve as prototypical models of colonial relandscaping”(2) (Didur 44). One could understand that Obioma opted for “relandscaping” (Didur 44) by setting the first page of the manuscript containing a pictorial representation of Akure. The very first page of the novel tries to subvert the canonical standards meant for typography of a book. This could be seen as an interpretation that subverts the Biblical inclusion of places and later the apostolic transmission of the Gospel. The map of the novel covers locations that do not trace the presence of a single

person but sketches the trajectory of a river along which the characters trod.

Sarah Heinz constructs her argument that revolves around the narrative technique adopted by Obioma which primarily incorporates parables as diegetic element that makes “both form and content, revises parable as radically relational. In both parable and adaption, meaning cannot be found but only emerges within ambiguous and ambivalent relations between sources, their histories, their new contexts, and readerly engagements (Heinz 2)”. Treating this map as a subtext where the physical setting of the novel gets adumbrated by bringing in agential power to ‘muted’ landscape which plays a pivotal role in driving the novel forward. The prologue contains an Igbo proverb and a poem by Mazisi Kunene, a Zulu poet and oral folk poetry performer. This inclusion of proverbial and lyric references loaded with allegorical meaning sets the stage for the cataclysmic events of the novel. They work with double layered interpretation;

The footsteps of one man cannot create a stampede

Igbo proverb(*The Fishermen* prologue)

The madman has entered our house with violence

Defiling our sacred grounds

Claiming the single truth of the universe

Bending down our high priests with iron

Ah! Yes the children,

Who walked on our Forefathers’ graves

Shall be stricken with madness.

And by ancient command

It is forbidden to stop them.

Mazisi Kunene (*The Fishermen* prologue)

As detailed in the opening comments of this article by bringing DeLoughrey and Handley’s comments about their contribution in the discourse of postcolonial ecology which delineates by “foreground the landscape (and seascape) as a participant in this historical process rather than a bystander to human experience” (DeLoughrey and Handley 4). The proverb and lyric which is the reservoir of human experience incorporate the indigeneity of the land simultaneously historicizing both nature and human histories and careful of not overriding which DeLoughrey and Handley draft as one of the discursive characteristic of postcolonial ecology. This way the proverbial inclusions of the novel, braids together land as an active agent that comes alive with meaning embroiled in the present context of the argument. Obvious allegorical nature of the foreword of the novel could be positively interpreted as the imminent colonial interference that has desecrated the sacred ground of the African culture. Claybrook quotes Mbiti, Korem, and Abissath for critical findings provided for proverbs. They conclude how proverbs despite their cryptic structure contain massive information about a culture:

African proverbs can often incapsulate complex philosophical and political issues into a few short lines. Korem and Abissath (2004), add that “African proverbs usually reflect the philosophy of life of a particular ethnic group, its traditional

customs, its moral and ethical standards, its understanding of nature, and so (Claybrook, 225).

It becomes more evident to learn another appendage of folklore named 'riddles'. Claybrook states how riddles encourage "deep thinking in a relaxed and culturally grounded way" (Claybrook 227). The entire novel revolves around the prophesy of Abulu which is delivered as a riddle to be solved by the readers themselves. Despite the malevolent origin of the augur, if the boys were guided to embrace their ethnic roots, Abulu need not have been vilified rather revered. The very presence of the presage is problematic, so does the colonial attitude. Obioma's novel contrasts *Things Fall Apart* as there is an absence of a foreigner in *The Fishermen* unlike *Things Fall Apart*. But the Africans who exert power (father, Abacha, Abulu, Ikenna) are pseudo-whites. They are amnesiac of their ancestry and cling to seemingly stable colonial mentality that ultimately wrecks them. The problematic essence of the riddle could be elucidated in two points. Firstly, the augur becomes an axel to the diegetic framework. Secondly, the prediction of Abulu becomes an acid-test to Nigerians, emphasizing to embrace the roots rather to deny them.

The Desecrated River

The prophesy works with the river Omi-Ala as the background. The river stands as the gateway of revival for lost African ideals that was once tandem to the African epistemology severed violently with colonial advent. *Things Fall Apart* exposes the reality with which colonialism was achieved by coerced erasure of African heritage by deeming it heathen, dangerous and inimical to Christianity, civilization and Europe per se. The result of colonial desecration is the demonization of the river Omi-Ala. *The Fishermen* is the new reality exposing the pseudo-identity which Nigerian people have created despite achieving independence which has far more dangerous consequences. Nigerians subjugate their fellow Nigerians becoming neo-colonisers. This makes their environment even more vulnerable to degradation and destroys people.

Probing a "range of traditions" (Sepie 1) as her reinforcement to recognize the oblique representations of indigenous and traditional life-ways rendered in westernized backdrop (Sepie 1). Declaring staunchly Sepie insists, "Indigenous and traditional life-ways around the world present numerous valuable understanding regarding the nature of the human being, other species, the planet we share, and how to live together;" (Sepie 2).

Like many such rivers in Africa, Omi-Ala was once believed to be a god; people worshipped it. This changed when colonialists came from Europe and introduced the Bible, which then prised Omi-Ala's adherents from it, and the people, now largely Christians began to see it as an evil place. A cradle besmeared (*The Fishermen* 25)

Omi-Ala, a waterfront had been once part of communal life, thereby existing in symbiotic relationship with the human community. After the advent colonialists who saw Africa as a vast land that was 'meant' to be utilized for its materialist needs, performed a psychological surgery by deeming all African epistemologies as worthless and heathen and eventually circulated this violent

ideology. Achebe shows the initial stage of the surgery and Obioma reveals the aftermath of the surgery. *The Fishermen* reveals that postcolonial ideology cannot be divorced from land.

Conclusion

The African continent that once existed with an autonomy of indigenous epistemology was systematically coerced for unquestionable subjugation that made Obioma's generation paralyzed to sustain their forgotten ideals. But Obioma's novel per se is a clarion call not only to the fellow Africans but to the rest of the world. Dangerous imposition of universal framework that is inherently hegemonic will annihilate both human and nonhuman communities. This universal framework has some 'fixed' prerequisites that will not be flexible to address all problems. Postcolonial ecology challenges this universal framework by admitting in the first place that problems in the world are not same because humans and their experience are unique.

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**BEYOND THE PASTORAL: RE-EVALUATING NATURE IN
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE: HINGLISH HEROINES: LANGUAGE
AND IDENTITY IN CHAUHAN AND MISRA'S CHICK LIT**

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Abstract: The rise of women from their traditional roles to crafting own stories has paved a strong female space today. Indian chick lit provided them a platform to express; blending English with Indian vernacular languages, slang, feminine punch lines and local idioms. *Those Pricey Thakur Girls* and *The Ineligible Bachelors* illustrate the use of Hinglish as a means of asserting identity. The conversational style of writing becomes a site of empowerment and can be analyzed through the lens of post-feminism and the concept of hybridity.

Keywords: Chick Lit, Code switching, Hinglish, Identity and Linguistic Rebels.

Introduction

Chick lit as a subgenre emerged in the post-liberalization period, it is a kind of selfhood flowing in the stream of her veins which gives her wings to fly out in colours. This pop fiction encompasses the experiences of women's life under the urban landscape, career, family, relationships, and identity. During the post 1990s, the novel, *Bridget Jones's Diary* by Helen Fielding, was published. It portrays where a single woman is seen through the lens of Western society. Gradually this brought ambitions, identity crisis, and romantic dilemmas into Indian writings too. It gained popularity and was redefined through women's voice and their autonomy. The protagonists are seen as rebels against societal pressures and marriage norms. The role of marriage is not alone the end of every story. Most of these heroines are self-made, working for their careers, and their narrative make the readers approach it warmly as it is in a familiar language.

Literature Review

Language as a medium of communication gradually grows to the fullest where the words are contributed from other languages too. British English itself is a mixture of Western Germanic and other Latin, French influences. Similarly the Indian English is influenced by Colonial, Post-colonial invasions like of other Europeans. While the Post Independent period remarked a version of English to their mother speech narration, combination of Hindi and English happened. It became as big that Code Switching or Code mixing, that is mixing words, phrases from English and Hindi speaking as a wide area conversation. Shruti Verma states that Hinglish is a fusion of language which portrays the advanced dynamic multicultural levels of Indian society. The harmonious society in which we are living now is achieved through managing and utilising linguistic diversity. Bhatia and Chand et al mentioned: "Hinglish as a colloquial umbrella-term expressing wildest borrowings, indigenised Indian lexigrams, within otherwise monolingual Hindi or English to rich code-

switching practices unintelligible to monolingual Hindi or English speakers”.

Hinglish is redefined by the cultural conventions in marketing, advertisements, Bollywood styles, communication media, social media and internet today. Hinglish has seeped into the fabric of Indian society. The morning newspaper is led by new structures accordingly. India allows the growth of bilingual speakers in metro cities like Mumbai and Delhi. Not only the youth speak it, but the ordinary people, taxi drivers, shopkeepers speak very fluently. Scholar Carmonica Carvalho, points out that Hinglish emerges not only as a linguistic tendency but as a deliberate feminist strategy reflecting identity negotiation rather than linguistic laziness. This hybridity in language, through its fluidity, refines the rigidity of English purity, providing an empowered cultural assertion.

Babli Moitra Saraf explains this discourse asserting that Hinglish should not be seen as a by-product of language deficiency or as a lower one. Instead, it is a choice made by urban people very consciously. Bilingual speakers are not only fluent in both these languages but capable of reshaping their own self through linguistic performance. Hinglish thus becomes a tool of resistance and creativity, particularly for heroines navigating between tradition and freedom in this new world. These narratives actually reject standardised English and favours a voice that is more expressive, intimate and politically charged.

Feminism is decisively aged as male & seen redundant while the change need not be modernized. It paved for post feminism after 1980s where feminism became an undermined one is the idea of Angela Robbie in Postfeminism and Popular Culture. While for Sarah Gamble, Postfeminism is: “joyous liberation from the ideological shackles of a hopelessly outdated feminist movement. We’re all postfeminist now; the term has lost its meaning, and the ones have carried it beyond, moved beyond it, but simply they themselves are beyond even pretending to care.”

The chick lit fiction speaks about women and is presented to adolescent girl audience mostly. This shows how subjective the discourse is. Scholars like Rosalind Gill and Angela McRobbie identify postfeminist contradictions. The illusion of choice is enquired when individualism and self-fashioning exist along with their romantic longing and the quiet reinforcement of marriage as a central aim. This duality in purpose is particularly visible in works that negotiate sexual agency and monogamy, reflecting on globalised, particularly the urban femininity.

Heike Missler’s Chick lit, does not always reinforce ideal womanhood; in fact it destabilises it, often teasing the tropes it puts on display. Also, Beverly Marie Francis and Cheryl Davis explore the tensions faced by female characters their protagonists who are in autonomy and career up leading ones, even then they are compelled to seek emotional fulfilment through relationships. These narratives present the complex and real women who embody the ambivalence of postfeminist identity not victims, but not entirely liberated either.

Theory

The mixing of Hindi and English in these novels reflect the reality of

urban middle-class speech. Anuja skillfully uses colloquial phrases to make her characters come alive, giving authenticity and vibrancy to the narrative. Debjani's assertion of autonomy is captured through the lines: "You don't give a damn about me—my life is not worth even a 15-minute conversation." Also in "I'm going to DD," she says curtly. "Bye. Shows her identity through words."

Debjani, a news anchor at Doordarshan, embodies a dual identity. One is a dutiful daughter and the other is a modern and independent professional woman. Her desires and the way of social expectations really differ a lot. This tension is evident in her inner monologue: "What was I thinking? That I could waltz in here and read the prime-time news live on DD? ... My voice is drying up. Maybe I should sneak off and do some voice modulation exercises in the loo?!"

The satire in *The Ineligible Bachelors* is often communicated through playful, ironic dialogues, especially between family members. The wit in the novel makes sharp critiques of patriarchal norms more palatable. Considering this line of Kasturi's mother: "Did you see the article? Tell her to practice wearing makeup every day... Has she got her threading done? And not to wear such small, sleeveless clothes – it's disgraceful!"

In *The Ineligible Bachelors*, the protagonist's emotional landscape is often drawn with metaphors. "Raghu sir looked into my eyes and smiled that extra-special smile of his. I felt as if my heart was a microwave. His smile is like a microwave—when the microwave is on, the butter melts." In a diary entry, the character reflects on her linguistic wit: "I can be really smart with words." Such moments of self-reflection reveal the protagonists' attempts to find identity and empowerment through public speech, private thought, or witty retorts.

In both novels, characters create a hybrid linguistic space that reflects modern Indian urban culture. "Namaste Namaste... Ji, Behenji... Namaste... Bhayji... Behenji..." The use of ji shows respect in Hindi language and is used reluctantly by them. This blending reveals code-switching as a stylistic tool that connects tradition and modernity.

The theory of gender performativity was introduced by Judith Butler in the book *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler challenges the traditional belief that gender is natural or fixed. Butler argues that gender is action oriented. Our behaviours, mannerisms, speech, dressing styles, and roles decide the gender. According to Butler, there is no core gender identity behind expressions of gender; identity is constructed and performed through repeated social acts.

In *Those Pricey Thakur Girls*, Debjani simultaneously represents sisterhood and daughterhood raised in a conservative Thakur family setup. She is often expected to behave in a sanskari, tradition bound way. However, Debjani defies these expectations by choosing to become a news anchor on DD, which is a highly visible position. Thereby challenging the silent, obedient image often associated with a daughter especially in Thakur family.: "I'm not some demure Dulhann-in-waiting!" and the expression like "I have a voice, and

I will use it” proves her strong willingness to achieve her dreams. Debjani’s confidence, her use of Hinglish, and her refusal to be a passive daughter signal her active gender performance.

In Ruchita Misra’s *The Ineligible Bachelors*, the protagonist Kasturi also performs her gender identity by resisting traditional norms. Like Debjani, she does not quietly follow the path laid out for her by her parents or society. Her mother constantly pushes her towards arranged marriage and a conventional femininity in their lifestyle. Yet Kasturi resists, choosing to focus on her career and romantic ideals. Kasturi expresses her discomfort, how society expects her to behave: “Is my only purpose in life to get married and wear matching dupattas? I am not going to pretend to be someone I’m not, just so I can be somebody’s good daughter-in-law”. Her character reveals how gender roles are imposed and how women negotiate their choices. Anuja Chauhan’s heroine Debjani, is the fourth and second last daughter of Justice Thakur family. She works as a newsreader in Doordarshan. Justice Thakur wants his daughters to settle down immediately after marriage. He argues: “Beta, girls should get married at the right time, not freely roam”. Marriage marks an endpoint of their life. This shows the generational conflict and patriarchal touch of thoughts from her father, the Justice. Here Hinglish becomes a mode of linguistic and anthropological feminism.

Alphabetically naming the children A, B, C, D, E is mocked “like we were housing blocks in Chittaranjan Park! It’s so dehumanizing”. Anjini, Binodini, Chandralekha all three of them were already married. He waits for twenty-three-year-old Debjani’s marriage while his last daughter Eshwari is just seventeen years old. Chauhan throws light over the gender crisis of these daughters with another statement, “Papa ke BP shoot kar gaye because Eshaan wore jeans”. Here the priority in deciding her choices is not a female subject anymore.

Kasturi Shukla is twenty-four and independent. She is the protagonist of Ruchita Misra. Kasturi’s mother constantly pressurizes her to get married soon. The setting of story is an urban landscape of Delhi, but the traditional concept of daughter’s marriage between the age of eighteen and twenty one is strictly followed by her parents too. But Kasturi fights against this society to prove her identity. She doesn’t find any eligible match. Later, she gets attracted to her boss, Dr. Purva Dixit. He is an ideal man who respects women. He gets attracted to her.

Kasturi evidently resists the social norms and stays economically independent and expresses her anti marriage sentiments throughout the story. Her moulding of language, mainly Hinglish becomes her weapon of rebellion in order to address her individuality. “Yeh kya bakwas hai!

Shaadi and me? Please, you’ve got to be kidding! Please, Yaar. I’d rather marry my job”. Kasturi speaking in these code switching pipes out her emotions, representing Hinglish as form of empowerment, rejection of colonial elitism and other patriarchal claims.

Conclusion

These portrayal of Kasturi and Debjani proves them as linguistic rebels, speak Hinglish to bring up their identity. More than being an obedient daughter to their parents or a perfect wife for their partner, the autonomous power of financial independence, the boldness to face the never-ending issues in their life sustains to great extent. It demands Hinglish as a powerful mode of communication leading to finalize the Hinglish protagonists as empowered figures. The local phrases and idioms clearly depict the urge of 'she' to have a stand of her own. Debjani stands on her ground, finds personal as well as professional fulfilment winning the love of Dylan Singh Shekhawat gives hope. Kasturi accepted Dr. Dixit, a romance blooming from their friendship. The use of Hinglish, witty banter, and women as central character, storytelling brings a cultural assertion of identity. These characters from both novels demonstrate how young Indian women in chick lit navigate identity through language, emotion, and profession.

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**FRACTURED INHERITANCE: GENERATIONAL MEMORY AND
NATIONAL TRAUMA IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S
*MIDNIGHT'S CHILDREN***

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Abstract: In post-conflict societies, generational memory and postmemory are the prevalent forms by which personal and collective experiences of life-altering, traumatic events are transmitted across generations. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* chronicles the family history across three generations of the Aziz-Sinai family whose lives are inevitably tied to the fractured legacy of the nation emerging from the slumbers of colonialism, Partition and the subsequent problems of nation- building. The novel's narrator, Saleem Sinai, represents the remembering self that is a receptacle of other people's histories in turn becoming a victim of inherited historical wounds. Emerging as an inheritor carrying not only the weight of his family's past but also the nation's past, Saleem's body transforms into a living embodiment of memory which eventually fractures under the weight of historical burden. Drawing from the concept of generational memory and Marianne Hirsch's ideas on postmemory that lie at the intersections of trauma studies and memory studies, this paper examines the embodiment of historical memory and the effect of inherited trauma in shaping national identity in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*.

Keywords: Generational Memory, Postmemory, Historical Wounds, Postcolonial Nation, Inherited Trauma and National Identity.

The contemporary concern with memory in fiction is a result of the shift in the historical knowledge of events, from what we know to how we remember it. Patrick Hutton, in his book *History as an Art of Memory*, states, "What is at issue here is not how history can recover memory, but, rather, what memory will bequeath to history" (72). The publication of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* in 1981 marked a significant moment in the post-independence development of the Indian English novel, inspiring a generation of Indian writers who dealt with memory and its relation to history and the nation. While popularly studied as a postmodern, metafictional, magical realist and historical novel, Rushdie himself characterized *Midnight's Children* as a "novel of memory and about memory" (10). Rushdie, both literally and metaphorically, engages in the chutnification of history and the pickling process of memory. Memory, in the novel, emerges as a complex process that is not just individual but collective, not simply personal but political, not merely experienced but embodied. The novel portrays how an individual's personal or familial stories are inevitably entwined with the national story. As Selma Bakkai and Daoudi Frid write in their article "The Politics of Memory: How Nations Remember and Forget Historical Atrocities," remembering

“serves as a form of moral accountability, compelling nations to confront and learn from their history” (693). Hence, to study memory in the context of the nation means to engage directly with the relations between historical narratives, personal memory and national identity. Generational memory proves that history is not simply acquired textually but can be cognitively lived through inherited emotions, traumas and stories. These inherited memories become a part of the collective consciousness, influencing the way an individual navigates the present world. This paper investigates the portrayal of generational memory and postmemory in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, examining how the individual is inextricably tied to the collective through inherited narratives and shared historical consciousness. By analysing the similarities, transformations, and repetitions across each generational level, it seeks to trace memory’s pattern and its importance for the future. This paper further addresses the national dimension of memory, highlighting how each generation represents the development of the nation at a particular historical milieu.

Memory can be described as a subjective dimension of history. The protagonist Saleem Sinai in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* reflects this sentiment by taking upon himself the task of narrating, as he puts it, “history, in my version” (269). Josna E. Rege, in her analysis of the novel, states that “The individual must either acquiesce to History’s grand narratives or be destroyed—swept aside, or crushed underfoot. Rushdie’s protagonist Saleem Sinai must also eventually succumb to the relentless march of History, but not before he tells his own story on his own terms” (349). In the novel, Saleem seeks to establish “Memory’s truth” as opposed to written history “because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else’s version more than his own” (292). Memory is often conceived as an individual mental faculty as opposed to history which is collective, shared and experienced by a group. However, *Midnight’s Children* portrays memory as plural, transactional and transformative, containing within itself multiple layers of generational history. Being the novel’s omniscient narrator, Saleem Sinai not only recounts his family inheritance but also asserts the nation’s collective inheritance as reflected in his saying, “it is your history I am keeping in my head” (13). Rushdie’s revolutionary steering to re-write history through a memorial lens is a result of what he calls the “collective failure of the imagination,” meaning that literature no longer creatively interpreted and thereby failed to offer alternate possible worldviews (158). This created the need for a new literary and conceptual model that opened new worlds of possibility for re-imagining and re-presenting, enabling relationships between the individual and collective generational past.

Generational memory plays a vital role in how cultures and societies remember political and social transitions. Pierre Nora described generations as “communities of remembrance” recognizing the role of generations as carriers of memorial activity (958). Jürgen Reulecke, in his chapter titled

“Generation/Generationality, Generativity, and Memory,” delineates recent approaches to generational memory, stating that memory within and between generations is a significant form of collective remembering. According to him, generational memory is sustained through family stories, cultural narratives and national history shared “by its members having grown up in the same particularly formative historical era . . . having experienced times of radical upheaval and new beginnings” (119). Memory, in this sense, is a transactive and transferential processes that is both cognitive and affective. Through acts of transfer, lived history is transformed into memory, enabling it to be shared across generations, constituting a generational identity. A study on generational memory raises pressing questions: What are the historical events or social changes that have marked a generation? How does the generational experience of traumatic national events frame the present existence?

A study of generational memory necessitates the categorization of societal members into various generational levels such as G1, G2, G3, in order to examine the changes and transformations that occurred at each level. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* delineates four generation of the Aziz-Sinai family: Aadam Aziz and Naseem Aziz (G1), Ahmed Sinai and Amina Sinai (G2), Saleem Sinai (G3) and Aadam Sinai (G4). With each of the four generations existing in different periods in Indian history, their experiences, moralities and personal ideologies are shaped by the nation’s development at that particular point of time. The contrast in the experiences between the four genealogical levels is striking. G1 represents the generation who directly witnessed India during colonialism, the nationalist movement and independence. Featuring Saleem’s grandparents, they represent old India, symbolising the clash between the scepticism of tradition and secular modernism of the West. G2 is marked by optimism, upholding lofty visions for the new emerging nation. Featuring Saleem’s parents, they represent the renamed India as a nation in process that must be loved in parts. G3 is coping with the uncertainty of future, caused by the failure of the once valorised Gandhian ideals and Nehruvite vision of the secular democratic nation. Saleem’s life is marked by fragmentation, having experienced the disintegration of societal standards and uncertainty of peaceful existence caused by religious extremism and border wars. He represents the generation that did not inherit the promised India but the unpleasant realities, unresolved conflicts, emotional scars and fractured identity. Saleem’s bodily disintegration further symbolises the erosion of idealism in postcolonial India. G4 represents the post-Emergency India as it emerges with the hope for renewal. Aadam Sinai idealises the new beginning and changed order. As Rushdie suggests, *Midnight’s Children* is a novel that reeks of endings and beginnings: “A chapter ends when one’s parents die, but a new kind of chapter also begins” (482).

The traumatic dimension of generational memory is termed “postmemory,” which refers to the transmission of not just knowledge but emotional scars and inherited trauma. Postmemory, as popularised by Marianne Hirsch, is described as,

the relationship that the “generation after” bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before . . . To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors . . . These events happened in the past, but their effects continue into the present. This is, I believe, the structure of post-memory and the process of its generation. (5)

Placing emphasis on the present that is displaced by narratives and events that precede one's existence, postmemory foregrounds the affective nature of generational memory. In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Saleem Sinai's life begins even before he comes to exist. He begins his narration saying, “I must commence the business of remaking my life from the point at which it really began, some thirty-two years before anything as obvious, as present” (4). His present is fragmented and displaced by the burden of generational past and inherited wounds, as he literally cracks under the weight of the lingering scars of colonialism, Partition, religious extremism, political conflicts and the Emergency. In an effort to preserve the past and thereby sustain the future, Saleem's narration is marked by the urgency to retell his story and by extension, the nation's story.

Being an allegory of the nation, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* intertwines family genealogy with the political history of postcolonial India. The major political events referenced in the novel, such as the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, burning of Muslim owned businesses, division of states based on language, the Five Year Plans, Indo-China war, India-Pakistan Wars and the Emergency, both positively and negatively influence the characters' lives. In his introduction to the novel, Rushdie himself states that the novel answers the question: “What is the relationship between society and the individual, between the macrocosm and the microcosm?” (xiii). The Aziz-Sinai family becomes a microcosm of the nation, which at every historical turn, directly influences and affects their personal lives, as Saleem states “Such historical coincidences have littered, and perhaps befouled, my family's existence in the world” (28). By remembering his family history, and by consequence, the nation's history, every personal experience becomes a testimony to what millions experienced. Saleem's postmemorial inheritance reflects the way the nation's identity is shaped by a traumatic past that newer generations must grapple with, reinterpret, and carry forward to make sense of the fragmented self and the fractured nation. According to Michael Rothberg, “colonialism involves a break in the intergenerational communicative memory of a colonized group” caused by “the imposition of a foreign canon of cultural memory” (365). This rupture in the past-present continuities that give meaning and coherence to communities is restored by memory, which seeks to preserve and reclaim the national consciousness that have been disfigured and distorted by colonial practices. A postcolonial nation, in this sense, will always remain a generation of postmemory. In the novel, Rushdie further complicates the idea of a national

inheritance by portraying Saleem not as a biological child, which further destabilises the logic of genealogy. Born of an illicit affair between an Englishman and an Indian woman, his inheritance is symbolic, reflecting the postcolonial nation struggling to reconcile its past with its present.

Claudia Mueller-Greene posits memory as located in an in-between zone, on the threshold between the inside (personal) and the outside (national), connecting the subjective and the objective, the real and the imaginary, the self and the other, the individual and the collective (264). She observes that Saleem Sinai “crosses certain boundaries when his remembering self overlays his remembered self or when he oscillates between his first-person perspective and a miraculous omniscience that makes him appear to be the receptacle of other people’s memories” (265-66). Throughout the novel, Rushdie uses the metaphor of “leaking into,” as Saleem states, “Things-even people-have a way of leaking into each other,” referring to the inherited life experiences (44). This quality of memory that permeates cognitive boundaries, resisting clear distinguishing between the individual, the ancestors and the national, leads to what Saleem calls “all-knowing memory, which encompasses most of the lives of mother father grandfather grandmother and everyone else” (116). Owing to Saleem’s magical midnight powers, he is able to lead collective lives and exist in multitude of realities, quite literally becoming a “swallower of lives”:

And there are so many stories to tell, too many, such an excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours, so dense a commingling of the improbable and the mundane! I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you'll have to swallow the lot as well. Consumed multitudes are jostling and shoving inside me. . . (4).

Maurice Halbwachs in his book *The Collective Memory* posits that all memory is collective and there is no such thing as personal or individual memory. He says, “we always carry with us and in us a number of distinct persons” (23). Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* can be said to thematically reflect Maurice Halbwach’s statement that individual memory does not exist in isolation, unaffected by social, cultural and political environment. Due to Saleem’s persisting generational consciousness, he no longer remains the individual “I” but becomes the collective “we” encapsulated in his assertion: “That is who I was — who we were” (277). In the novel, Saleem traces his fractured inheritance to his predecessors, whose life experiences confer meaning to his present frame of existence:

Thirty-two years before. . . my inheritance began to form — the blue of Kashmiri sky which dripped into my grandfather's eyes; the long sufferings of my great-grandmother which would become the forbearance of my own mother and the late steeliness of Naseem Aziz; my great-grandfather's gift of conversing with birds which would descend through meandering bloodlines into the veins of my sister the Brass Monkey; the conflict between grandpaternal scepticism and grandmaternal credulity; and above all the ghostly essence of

that perforated sheet, which doomed my mother to learn to love a man in segments, and which condemned me to see my own life — its meanings, its structures — in fragments also; so that by the time I understood it, it was far too late. (142-3)

Inheriting his family's traits, Saleem becomes an embodiment of generational memory that structures his selfhood. He also possesses an uncanny awareness of the thoughts, emotions, secrets, dreams and inner voices of his family members. He detects Ahmed Sinai's infidelity, Amina Sinai's dreams about Nadir Khan and Mary Pereira's secret, thereby establishing his collective existence: "I have been so-many too-many persons" (647). This unique talent obtained through midnight's magic is a metaphor for memory's porous nature, leaking between the personal and the collective.

Generational memory is marked by patterns of repetition, where stories, traumas, and behaviours recur across generations. In *Midnight's Children*, Saleem gradually becomes aware of these repetitions: "And already I can see the repetitions beginning; because didn't my grandmother also find enormous... and the stroke, too, was not the only... and the Brass Monkey had her birds... the curse begins already, and we haven't even got to the noses yet!" (8). The repetitions are portrayed through both physical and symbolic inheritances. The most vivid physical inheritance is Aadam Aziz's bulbous, cucumbersome nose which manifests differently in each family member:

On Aadam Aziz, the nose assumed a patriarchal aspect. On my mother, it looked noble and a little long-suffering; on my aunt Emerald, snobbish; on my aunt Alia, intellectual; on my uncle Hanif it was the organ of an unsuccessful genius; my uncle Mustapha made it a second-rater's sniffer; the Brass Monkey escaped it completely; but on me-on me, it was something else again (10).

Symbolic objects such as the silver spittoon and perforated sheet, reveal the continuity of the past across generations. The perforated sheet through which Aadam Aziz loves Naseem in fragments is repeated when Jamila uses the sheet to sing and make Pakistan fall in love with her. The spittoon which remains at the centre of relationship between Mumtaz and Nadir Khan, later in the novel, hits Saleem in the head leading to amnesia and loss of his inherited past. Similarly, events and situations of the past finds resonance in the present. Amina giving refuge to Lifafa Das during a time of political vulnerability resonates Aadam giving sanctuary to Nadir Khan. The act of renaming—Naseem Aziz becomes Reverend Mother, and Mumtaz becomes Amina—metaphorically signifies the reinvention of the nation after independence which assumes a new identity.

In Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, the concepts of generational memory and postmemory function both as a narrative device and a thematic concern. The novel's central metaphor is that the self acts as an archive and repository of history, where inherited memories form the core of individual and national identity:

Who what am I? My answer: I am the sum total of everything

that went before me, of all I have been seen done, of everything done-to-me. I am everyone everything whose being-in-the-world affected was affected by mine. I am anything that happens after I've gone which would not have happened if I had not come. Nor am I particularly exceptional in this matter; each 'I', every one of the now-six-hundred-million-plus of us, contains a similar multitude. I repeat for the last time: to understand me, you'll have to swallow a world. (535)

In the novel, Saleem not only inherits, but he also becomes the transmitter of generational memory and symbolically, the national history for the future generations. The birth of Aadam Sinai, connects the broken lineage making him “the true great-grandson of his great-grandfather” (587). Through Saleem’s narration, Rushdie underscores the importance of remembering the past for sustaining future generations: “My son will understand . . . I'm telling my story for him, so that afterwards, when I've lost my struggle against cracks, he will know. Morality, judgment, character . . . it all starts with memory . . . and I am keeping carbons” (292).

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ISOLATED MOTHERHOOD AND PAINFUL ABANDONMENT: SILENT STRUGGLES IN “ZIKORA”

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Abstract: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is an African-American writer well-known for her powerful insight on cultures and her themes mainly focus on identity, feminism especially black feminism, immigration and sufferings of women under patriarchy. The major themes of her short story include intersection of feminism, psychological and emotional aspects of motherhood, and patriarchal powers over women. “Zikora” serves as a portrayal on the struggles related to motherhood of African women in American culture. Adichie clearly shows that the expectations of the society towards women have not changed in the ancient and modern age. The pain builds the resilience on “Zikora” over the challenges she faced during her hard times in pregnancy.

Keywords: Identity, Feminism, Motherhood, Psychological and Resilience.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a famous novelist and Ted Speaker. Her speech has a greater influence on African culture, tradition, lifestyle and advocates for black feminism. Her works explore feminism especially black feminism, postcolonialism and the intersections of identity. Several critics mention her as a “global feminist icon”. She moved to United States after her completion of medicine in Nsukka. Still, Adichie stuck down her roots with Africa. She studied African history at Yale University. “Zikora” is a short story published by Amazon Original Stories in October 2020. Racism plays a greater role in the lives of immigrants in America. Race puts burden on the shoulders of black immigrant and colour of the skin matters a lot in America for every black immigrant over there. There has been a lot of infant mortality and death of black women during childbirth. Adichie mentions this social issue in her short story “Zikora”. She also mentions about the struggle and pain of a single mother to take care of the child. This is a state of many African black women who are struggling being a single mother.

Zikora is a lawyer who settled in America. The story begins with the delivery of Zikora in the hospital. She experiences pain on her knees, hands, belly, thighs that make her shout at the nurse over there. She is all alone in the hospital until her mother comes there. Then she gets the memory of her cousin’s cousin Chinyere who had died in the fancy Lagos hospital, in the labor ward. Chinyere already had two children and she died at her third delivery. The death of Chinyere makes her think about the child mortality. She questions herself the reasons behind the maternal morality of black women in America. She questions whether racism has a connection with maternal mortality. Zikora is worried about the changes happening in her body. She gets pacified by the doctors for some time. Zikora is admitted in the East Memorial hospital. There

were many hospitals in the city where better service could be provided but she chooses this hospital as her health insurance company is tied up there. She thinks even the health insurance companies have racist shades since white people have better health insurance companies and policies tied up to luxury hospitals.

The nostalgic scenes from her childhood come to her mind. Zikora is the only child of their family. Nigerian society barely needs a baby boy as a pride and heir to the family. Zikora's mother had many pregnancies after her, but all ended up in miscarriages. Zikora's father loves his family even then he married another woman for a boy child. Zikora's father came to her house and took care of her family often but later her half-brother was born and her father started to move away from this family and her mother started to have a lonely life. Aunt Nwanneka was her father's second wife. Her mother took her to visit Aunt Nwanneka after the birth of the boy. Her mother never wanted her to disgrace her in front of others. She remembered, "Bear it, that is what it means to be a woman" (Adichie 6) told during her cramps in period. Zikora's mother reached the hospital before her delivery. She took care of Zikora and gave her mental confidence to endure the pain during labor.

Kwame, a successful black lawyer and Zikora's partner lived in America. His father was a Ghanaian immigrant to America and mother was a biracial African American. He always had a dream and admiration for African life. They both met in Washington DC and dated for some time. They both had an attraction towards each other. Kwame proposed Zikora, even though she was two years older to him. Zikora and Kwame spend their quality time together until the news of her pregnancy was announced to him. The day she announced her pregnancy was the day when they both broke up physically and mentally. However Zikora could not come out of his memories. She daily read the past text messages and was lost in that world. Kwame did not want this child. He considered this child a burden to their carrier and relationship. Zikora explained that they were at the right age of thirty-nine and thirty-seven to have a child. They had the financial stability to take care of themselves and also the child but he did not want to listen to any of her words. He left Zikora by addressing this pregnancy as "This was a miscommunication" (Adichie 12). Slowly he moved away from her by not visiting her, not replying to her messages, not attending her phone calls and finally one day he returned the key of her apartment, which he usually had with him, in a plain envelope.

In contrast to him, Zikora started to take care of her health for the sake of her child. She took the stubborn decision of having this child. She started to take good food and medications. Her body underwent several changes at every trimester of pregnancy. She continuously texted him to have a conversation but he never replied. She shared her sufferings with her cousin, Mmiliaku. Mmiliaku suffered under traditional patriarchy by her husband Emmanuel. She shared about Kwame's behaviour to Mmiliaku about decision of having this baby "was he reconciling because I had made this decision already? If he was going to have a child, of course he should have a say, since the body was mine, since in creating a child, Nature demanded so much of the woman and so little

of the man” (Adichie 17). Men seemed to be unaware of female body completely. They do not know of their physical changes during periods and pregnancy. Mmiliaku carries her fifth child while Zikora announces her pregnancy news to her through phone. Mmiliaku was fed up in delivering children. Both Zikora and Mmiliaku does not have their control over their body. “There is nothing revolutionary whatsoever about the control of women’s bodies by men. The woman’s body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected” (Rich 55).

Adreienne Rich, a feminist thinker and theorist advocates mainly on motherhood and its complexities. Her work “*Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution*” examines the experiences of a women in her pregnancy and its complexities in her physique and mind. The child bearing is completely under the male control. This book contains the complexities of motherhood and experiences of difference in their body and mood swings in their mind. Rich also analyses how the institution of motherhood is being shaped by patriarchy and how most of the black women suffer through pregnancy and motherhood. According to Rich, abandoned motherhood is not a social issue, it affects mothers, their children and society. The institution of motherhood, she analyses as “ensuring that that potential- and all women- shall remain under male control” (Rich 13).

After struggling much in pressure and pain, cracking of flesh and bones, Zikora delivered a baby boy. Her mother conveyed her that she had a beautiful boy. Her mother once suffered from societal pressure of having a male child but she couldn’t fulfil her father’s wish and by the result she suffered from loneliness at a very young age. The same problem repeats to her daughter where she undergoes loneliness.

Zikora thought of modern way of welcoming the child like holding balloons and bouquets but she had nobody to do this. She checked her phone for any reply from Kwame. She repeatedly called, messaged, mailed him about their son. There was no reply from him and he blocked her number after sometime. She felt very bad about losing her dignity and her head flowed with emotions. Zikora did not want circumcision to her son as it might hurt him but her mother convinced her as it was their tradition. After circumcision, the little boy cried a lot and she worried for the pain her son undergoes.

It has been a long time Zikora and her mother shared some time together. Her mother was happy that she had a baby at least at this age. This made Zikora remind of her first pregnancy at an early age of nineteen by her boyfriend, a basketball player in America. Without proper knowledge and teenage anxiety, they both had their intimacy often. One time without any proper precaution, she became pregnant and later she aborted the child in parenthood clinic at Angel Street.

Her father called her on the next day of her delivery. She shared her moment with her father not as new mom to her son but as a daughter to her father. She always wanted her father to be with them. Her father wanted to ask her about Kwame but he did not ask and her mother also did not ask any question regarding Kwame. She could not confess the truth to her family that

Kwame left her due to her pregnancy. She recollected the memory of Kwame's visit to their home during last Christmas. Kwame and her family spend their time together very happily. She could not imagine a life without Kwame. She reminded him often.

Zikora's father promises to come and see the child as soon as possible. Her father makes fun and crack jokes on Aunt Nwanneka's menopausal symptoms. But he never makes fun of her mother's menopause or cracks jokes which disgrace her. He always respects her mother. Zikora's mother always bought presents on Aunt Nwanneka's son's birthdays and Christmas. Her mother gets the respect of senior wife in the family. Ugonna, Zikora's half-brother cheats often in school. His father worried thinking that the boys go wrong more easily than girls. Her father and mother had a strong argument and her father left the home. She was disappointed towards her mother due to her separation from her father. Zikora thought her mother was the reason for their separation so she cut down her conversation with her mother. Later slowly she realizes it was his father who destroyed her bond with his father not her mother. Her mother is a self-possessed woman who shadows her character too. Her father decided America was the right choice for her higher education. She goes as per her father's wish since her mother's wish was to send her UK because education there was more rigorous.

The Postpartum changes physical and mental conditions of Zikora. Constipation, throat pain, pain in the stitches and even sanitary pads too made some changes in mood. She worries that if she gets infection whether her son gets infected due to taint in breast milk or he could get breast milk properly. These worries disturb her a lot, so her mother supports her in arranging a nurse to guide her in taking care of her son. The support of her mother eases her pressure in the body and the mind. Her mother promised to stay with her as long as she needs her help. Zikora manages her career and son with the help of her mother.

African feminism speaks for the needs and expectations of the African women who are living within and outside Africa. Adichie always voices out for the women in African culture, their struggles due to patriarchy in and out Africa. "Zikora" is a portrayal of black women who are migrated to western countries, are abandoned by their partner and are under the struggles and judgements of society.

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THE FRAGMENTED SELF OF HANWELL: TRACING FEMININE ABSENCE IN ZADIE SMITH'S "HANWELL IN HELL"

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Abstract: Zadie Smith is a contemporary British writer whose characters deal with societal issues in a multicultural land. "Hanwell in Hell" is one of the short stories in Zadie Smith's collection *Martha and Hanwell*. It explores the themes of absence and marginalization through the character Hanwell. The absence of his wife and daughter in the story left Hanwell in solitude which unfolds as a reflection of his loss of identity, home and family. He is totally detached from society. Feminine absence plays a major role in shaping Hanwell's character. This absence is not only physical but also psychological and emotional which reinforces his sense of isolation. He feels marginalized in his workspace as well as in his private life as he is always caught between his past and present life. The detachment from his family implies his fragmented self. This paper aims to deal with how Hanwell's isolation is portrayed due to the absence of female characters in Hanwell's life which fractures his sense of self.

Keywords: Absence, Marginalization, Isolation, Detachment and Identity.

Zadie Smith is a contemporary British novelist, essayist and short-story writer who is known for her exploration of identity crisis, race, class and gender in a multicultural context. Her characters deal with the issues of identity and belonging in a multicultural land. This story deals with grief, family dynamics and emotional displacement of Hanwell. "Hanwell in Hell" is one of the short stories from the collection *Martha and Hanwell*. It was published in 2004. In *Martha*, Martha deals with emotional turmoil. "Hanwell in Hell" deals with Hanwell's fragmented self. Hanwell is caught between the spaces of existence; Smith portrays Hanwell as an individual who is caught between his past and present life.

Hanwell lost his wife and was detached from his daughter. The story opens with a personal advertisement given by one of the daughters of Hanwell, who was trying to gather information about him. *I am looking to enter into correspondence with anyone who remembers my father, Mr. — Hanwell, who was living in the central Bristol area between 1970 and 1973*(Smith 1066). The entire narrative is a letter of response by Clive Black for the advertisement, who met Hanwell just once in his lifetime. This reflects the personal recollection of Clive's meeting with Hanwell. The narrative technique used by Smith also portrays the fragmented self of Hanwell. He does not explain his state of mind after the death of his wife. The author portrays the life of Hanwell only through Clive's lens. He was seen as a man who was private and did not express his feelings to others. His self is identified only through gestures.

This story timeline recounts a single night which happened many years

ago when Clive met Hanwell in Bristol. He was employed by Frank at his restaurant as a dishwasher. Clive visited the restaurant where Hanwell was working. That happened to be their first meeting. After the restaurant got closed, he invited Clive to his home and offered shelter from rain. Through the journey to Hanwell's home, Clive faced many challenges and came to know him. Both Hanwell and Clive were struggling with their personal and professional lives. During that night, Hanwell uncovered his story. The absence of his wife and children generated a sense of isolation and emotional fragmentation in his life. Nevertheless he hopes for his daughter's revisit. The opening lines of the story set a tone of memory, reconstruction and loss that happened in Hanwell's life. The advertisement given by the daughter "trying to piece together" reveals that his life is fragmented, and his daughter was trying to set it right. Hanwell was living on the margins of society because he was not acknowledged by anyone else, and he was emotionally repressed.

The process of breaking apart or splitting a whole thing, like a person's identity, memory or social belonging, is called fragmentation. The fragmented self-denotes when a person's identity is broken or unstable because of their past trauma, loss of loved ones, or internal conflict. Smith presents the man Hanwell as a perfect example of a fragmented self. When Clive asked about his wife, he said she was in London. He was trying to forget the suicide of Laura, and so he was hiding it from Clive. Later on, he revealed the truth but the reason for the suicide of Laura was unknown to him. Even by thinking of that, he might be psychologically depressed. He sent a letter to his daughter, but it was never answered. He could not fully express his grief.

Hanwell's suppressed emotion about the suicide of his wife leads to his inner disintegration. To overcome the trauma and to feel his wife's presence at home, he decorated the living room with China plates, doilies and ornaments. He painted the room for his daughters. He wanted to paint it yellow, due to his colour blindness he painted the room Red. This repression is related to psychological fragmentation. He was trying to maintain his masculine identity, but was broken inside. He was using vague, euphemistic language to avoid emotional repression. He was also financially weak and performed domestic work.

Hanwell was not climbing up the social ladder. He was climbing down. When Clive had a conversation about the dish which Hanwell offered, he enquired about him. Hanwell replied that he was a soldier, and then he was working as a dishwasher in Betty Frank's restaurant. He was living a different life. The men in the story both connect through their life experiences. Earlier, both were in good professions. Clive ran his own business, and Hanwell was a soldier. But then both were at the margins of society. Both their lives were fragmented. This drastic change was due to the women in their lives. Clive was cheated by his woman partner in business, who was then working as a salesman. Hanwell was washing dishes after his wife's suicide and estrangement from his daughters.

Hanwell's self is fragmented by the absence of his wife and daughter.

This absence leads to a lack of emotional support. The story is about a single night spent by Hanwell and Clive together. His daughter tries to uncover the details about his father. The advertisement given by the daughter reveals the fragmented life of Hanwell. The daughter might have got some information about her father, and she is trying to put it together to know about it. So, she might have tried by giving an advertisement to gather more information. Only after Clive's narration, the daughter might have known about their father, his character and his life after the death of his wife and the separation from them.

In this narration, Clive recounts that the day he met Hanwell stays in his mind. Even before Clive's narration, one can understand how Clive remembers Hanwell after so many years. This shows how important Hanwell was to Clive. Even though Clive spent one night with Hanwell, he remembers every minute detail from his room. The reason for his remembrance might also connect with Clive's life because Clive and Hanwell's lives were the same when they met. Clive was also not in a good state. The advertisement not only serves as an introduction, but it also reflects the life of Hanwell- the fragmented life of Hanwell. Not only the daughter but also Clive was happy to share what happened that night when he visited Hanwell.

Clive Black, the narrator of the story, always presents the female character's voice as unheard. In his narrative, the female characters are reduced to objects. He brings a girl with him to Barry Frank's restaurant. The girl left the place, and the reason behind her leaving is not revealed in the story. The girl's perspective is not known. The woman lacks power as the narrator's voice is dominant. Clive shares his experience with her father, Hanwell. The daughter's voice, though present in the letter, is quickly overshadowed by the narrator. The narrator himself responds to his recollections of Hanwell. Hanwell's voice is also unheard in the narrative.

Hanwell and Clive's character reflects the emotional dependency on the feminine presence. They need women in all walks of life to pacify them. Clive knows this better and connects with Hanwell's state of mind. "Men like us don't know how to comfort each other. We need women for that" (Smith 1070). But they didn't know how to maintain a healthy relationship with their partners. According to Simon de Beauvoir, women are always reduced to objects. Clive did not have a good rapport with the girl he brought with him to the restaurant. He did not remember the name of the girl. He only remembers her by her physical appearance. "Her name is lost to me, but the outline of her chest is not---huge, carefully wrapped and cantilevered, like a present on a shelf which she had not yet decided to give away" (Smith 1067). The girl was represented as the other and reduced to an object. The girl left Clive, resulting in Clive's isolation.

Due to the absence of female characters, Hanwell's identity collapses. Hanwell cannot express his grief. The suicide of Laura was very traumatic. His identity was broken. Without his daughters and wife, he is no longer recognized as a father or husband in his life. His identity had totally collapsed, leading to fragmentation. In this whole narrative, Hanwell's identity was shaped by Clive's recollected memories. The delayed response of Hanwell about his

wife's suicide reflects his emotional repression. Only later did Hanwell admit to Clive about his wife. "She'd hung herself with the wotsit you tie a bathrobe with, the cord. It was a terrible thing" (Smith 1072). Clive could sense a feminine presence only through physical objects. Hanwell hangs photographs of his daughters and wife. The domestic objects he places in the house not only imply the false feminine presence for the visitors like Clive, but also comforts Hanwell's mind that his wife and daughters are with him.

"Laura's voice was never heard directly; she exists only through objects and memories of Hanwell. Laura made that" (Smith 1072). The physical absence of Hanwell's daughters was felt by Clive when he saw the picture of them, which was hung on the wall. But he removed it quickly from his view. Their voice and perspectives were unknown. Their absence not only left a physical gap in his life, but he could feel the emotional vacuum that nobody could fill in his life, and this significantly contributed to psychological fragmentation. Hanwell's home is a space where no love is felt by the people. Only the objects received love and care. Gayathri Spivak argues that subaltern people are never allowed to speak, especially women in a patriarchal society. In this short story, the female characters are remembered only through the narratives of others. They are never allowed to narrate their story, and their voice is never heard. The author does not create a space where the daughter could reply to Clive's narrative.

In "Hanwell in Hell", Hanwell's fragmented self reflects his emotion, identity, relationship and masculinity. The suicide of his wife and estrangement from his daughters reflect his emotional fragmentation. The feminine absence in his life leads to the fragmented self of Hanwell. He hopes to rebuild his imagined family life, filled with love for his daughters. His identity disintegrates due to the feminine absence, exposing that it is constructed not only through loss and memories but also through an unhealed silence.

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ECO-SPIRITUAL READING OF *JUNGLE NAMA* BY AMITAV GHOSH

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Abstract: The concept of eco-spirituality conveys that ecology and spirituality are interconnected. According to ecology, all living things are interdependent components of ecosystem. The belief that humans are part and parcel of a greater divine creation and the unity of all life is the ultimate message of spirituality. This paper analyses Amitav Ghosh's *Jungle Nama* in the light of spirituality that combines myth and environmental consciousness of Sundarbans. Ghosh indicates that environment preservation depends on spiritual principles and respect for nature. The study aims to focus on the Bengali myth of goddess Bonbibi and her divine role in protecting the ecology of Sundarbans. The paper also aims to highlight the significance of preserving nature to sustain human life on earth with practical instances portrayed by Amitav Ghosh in this verse novel.

Key Words: Eco-Spirituality, Sundarbans, Environment, Myth and Bonbibi.

Amitav Ghosh is one of the innovators of the idea of eco-spirituality. Most of his works contain ecological insights intertwined with historical importance in the backdrop of India. Amitav Ghosh expresses the way Indian people consider nature as sacred. He also expresses the scientific and political aspects of nature. Eco-spirituality conveys that a species has its own biological and spiritual importance. The complete extinction of a species from the earth is because of its habitat loss, global warming and climate crisis. The major reason behind all these problems is unwanted human activities. Biodiversity is life. Biodiversity is our life. It is the very basis for life on Earth. The sacredness of life in all its diversity has been central to all indigenous cosmologies and cultures (Shiva 68).

Eco-spiritual refers to the combination of ecology and spirituality. Eco-spirituality is defined as "a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment." More than a scientific perspective, ecology is connected to spirituality in many religions in India. Indian people believe in the idea of looking at the whole world as one family. All living things, including plants, animals, rivers and mountains are considered divine in Hinduism. For example, plants like tulsi, neem, peepal, lotus and animals like snake, cow, elephant, eagle and many more.

People in India generally believe that rivers like Ganga, Yamuna, Godavari and Kaveri, will remove all the sins and purify the soul of humans. The five elements of nature such as air, water, fire, earth and space are known as 'Pancha Mahabhutas'. These are considered as a sign of divine energy. Spirituality has been utilized to protect the environment in India and it helps to sustain healthy ecology and maintain good relationship with the nature. This concern for ecological and environmental issues is focused in Amitav Ghosh's fiction *Jungle Nama*.

Jungle Nama is a verse novel written by Amitav Ghosh which portrays ecological consciousness and eco-spiritual traditions. The Sundarbans play a special role in most of the works of Amitav Ghosh. It is the biggest mangrove forest in the world, also known as the “Lungs of Asia”. This unique ecosystem is endangering even though it is protected by both India and Bangladesh.

Amitav Ghosh narrates the story of Bonbibi, who is the forest goddess of the Sundarbans. The people of Sundarbans considered Bonbibi their guardian spirit.

The ancient Bengali story of the goddess Bonbibi is a well-known myth in the villages of Sundarbans. This story indicates that Bonbibi is a Sultan’s daughter who is lost in the jungles of Sunderbans. The animals of the forest raised her and teach her how to interact with them. As she gets older, she takes on the role of a guardian of the forest and all of its inhabitants, especially the people who go there to collect wood, fish and honey. She is also known as the ‘lady of the forest.’ The name Bonbibi is a hybrid word in which ‘Bon’ signifies forest in Bangla and ‘bibi’ means queen which has its Urdu origin. The two main religious groups in the Sundarbans are the Muslims and the Hindus. They worship Bonbibi because they both think that she will protect the life from evil spirits and the harsh environment.

Amitav Ghosh explores the theme of balance between human and nature. The story is about the goddess Bonbibi and her brother Shah Jongoli who protect the common man from the wrath of the evil, Dokkhin Rai. A greedy merchant, Dhona enters the forest in pursuit of more wealth. He offers a little boy named Dukhey as human sacrifice. Bonbibi punish the greed and defends the innocents to bring back peace. To her, nature is a living being with its own moral and spiritual laws and it should not be exploited.

Jungle Nama revolves around the theory of eco-spirituality. The Sundarbans is a divine place, more than just a setting of the novel. Ghosh raises the ecology to a holy position by depicting Bonbibi as the protector of the forest. It shows that traditional Indian beliefs considers nature a divine and motherly force that supports human life. People can take anything from nature for their own needs but must acquire a moral code. It warns that any disruption of this balance results in destruction as there is a spiritual connection between humans and the natural world.

The character Dhona in Ghosh’s story represents and critiques human greed. His decision to sacrifice a child for financial gain and his hatred for the laws of forest reflect the destructive nature of contemporary capitalist culture. Through the character Dhona, Amitav Ghosh portrays the exploitative mentality of people who consider nature, only as a way to get money. The narrative is an allegory of the disastrous consequences of environmental deterioration, especially in areas that are already suffering from habitat loss, climate change, and rising sea levels, such as Sundarbans.

With Ghosh’s charm and Toor’s illustrations, both the story and narrative have a universal appeal to readers of all ages. It can be considered a light read for those who are interested in a story, specifically coming from the Sundarban area (Biswas, 2022). Ghosh introduces his contemporary readers to the rhythm and melody of old story telling by using the verse structure of

dwipodi-poyar. It also echoes the oral traditions and the Bengali culture. The reader's connection to the writing is enhanced by the illustrations of Salman Toor.

This ecological novel connects different cultures and religions. In the Sundarbans, Bonbibi is a Muslim goddess who is adored by people from other religions. It represents a fusion of different religious traditions. It also indicates a long-standing legacy of communal harmony built on shared cultural and ecological spheres. This kind of acceptance is important in the current socio-political atmosphere. *Jungle Nama* is a reminder to the readers that conserving nature requires unity in diversity. The caring for the ecology descends religious and cultural barriers.

Conclusion

Jungle Nama speaks about the issues of contemporary life through traditional stories. Amitav Ghosh inspires the readers to redefine their relationship with environment. He portrays spirituality through the blending of ecological insight, myth and verse. The loss of biodiversity has its ecological impacts. Indian people consider the extinction of species as the loss of their spiritual relation. The protection of environment from the unwanted human activities will prevent the loss of biodiversity and it will create an ecological balance. Amitav Ghosh brought back myths and stories, which are the spiritual uprising against the loss of ecology. As environmental crises increase, *Jungle Nama* offers a vision of justice and balance that is both ancient and necessary for the future. Ghosh's eco-spiritual perspective in *Jungle Nama* reflects his socio-ecological consciousness and consideration of narrativization as a means of realizing the individuals' identity with nature.

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THE VISIBLE INVISIBILITY OF PRESENCE EXPLORED BY
POSTCOLONIAL ADVENTURERS IN RAY'S "BROWN SĀHĒBĒR
BĀRI" AND "CONWAY CASTLE-ĒR PRĒTĀTMĀ"

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Abstract: Satyajit Ray's Gothic oeuvre is centred around its adventurous Bengali protagonists, with children as its primary consumers. These stories were serialized in *Dēsh* and *Sandēsh patrikā*. The 'Visible Invisibility' of Simon, the cat in Ray's "Brown Sāhēbēr Bāri" and the floating hand's pulling of the "pānkhā" for his 'Shāhēbi' master in "Conway Castle-ēr Prētātmā," embodies the Freudian 'uncanny' in once-breathing architectures now begrimed with the horrors of its harrowing colonial past. Through a comparative analysis of the aforementioned stories, this paper aims to deconstruct the narrative framework, setting, gothic figure, and its social critique to foreground the forgotten and effaced voices within the South Asian context.

Keywords: Gothic, Ray, Visible Invisibility, Freud, Uncanny and Postcolonialism.

Introduction

Indian architecture bears the visible horrors of British colonial rule, even after their invisible presence in the postcolonial setting. Satyajit Ray's gothic figures are intrinsically linked to their colonial space. While the former presents a memory from the past, conjuring up in timely moments, the latter's invisible palpability fills the haunted space with a harrowing sublimity. Borrowing the idea of 'Transculturation', from ethnography, Mary Louis Pratt formulates the idea of the 'Contact Zone', a social space where disparate cultures meet and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations. The presence of proud, self-reliant, post-independence Indian subjects in such colonial locales is an anomaly that subverts this conventional dynamic, observed within the limits of such a space. However, the sublimity of the surroundings fills them with a sense of awful curiosity. It charges them with a sense of recklessness and garners within them the feeling of the "uncanny."

In *The Case of Peter Pan, or The Impossibility of Children's Fiction* Jacqueline Rose expounds on the didactic nature of Kid Lit, how the child is trained within the parameters of the book to secure them in the real world. The child Ray imagines in the serialized pages of *Dēsh* and *Sandēsh* is not obedient or trustful of situations; they are imbued with a sense of curiosity and a hint of reckless energy. The dilapidated, ruined places, originally intended to assert European dominance, are transplanted into an Indian milieu. The overgrown gardens, the spider webs, and the lonely structures reflect the ontological presence of repressed desires, returning in a spectral form to destabilize the setting. The areas defer and fracture the meaning of home and safety, so much so that protagonists are often unsettled at the best, or in dire situations, they are doomed to run for their lives.

The gothic has been presented through major concerns of the age over the centuries, and the representation of the supernatural, spectral imagery, and haunted surroundings. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*, the first of its genre,

unleashes the manifestations of psychological fear. In Bengal, ghost stories featuring gothic settings, ghosts, and spirits are a steady part of the Bengali reader's consumption, often catering to children. Ghosts in such situations manifest as alternate beings, as disruptions in the natural order. Ray's once carefree Tārinī Khuro is explored through fifteen stories, where Tarinicharan Bandopadhyay frequently encounters supernatural spirits steeped in colonial culture, Lucknow er Duel and Noriss Shāheber Bungalow are prime specimens of such tales. Moreover, his *Galpa 101* is a collection of stories that probe into the ecogothic with stories like Fritz or Mr. Shāshmal Shesh Rātri. The stories—"Brown Sāhēbēr Bāri" and "Conway Castle-ēr Prētātmā"—reveal that colonial anxieties and atrocities are still a part of post-independent India. A subjective analysis of these two texts demonstrates that, although they diverge in narrative style and intent, their bedraggled structures loom large to haunt explorers with their sheer barrenness.

The Imagined Child Inside and Outside

Jacqueline Rose expounds on the adult author's construction of "an image of the child inside the book" to "secure the child who is outside the book." This ideal and prescriptive image of a child also explicates Ray's authorial intent in designing his curious postcolonial adventurers, residing inside and outside of the text. Ray's stories, serialized in *Dēsh* and *Sandēsh* patrikā, imagine children as their primary receptors. Tarini Khuro (transliterate) narrating stories to children is similar to that of Dakshinaranjan Mitra Majumder's *Thakumar Jhuli*, which is considered a seminal work of Bengali Folktales.

The Unheimlich Nature of Visible Invisibility

In Act 1, Scene 4 of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, the once comforting familial figure manifests in front of his eyes and forces him to confront his anxieties. This Freudian "uncanny" is deeply interspersed with the narrative of the two texts in focus. Simon, as a black cat, has a heimlich presence for Brown Sāhēb, which is eventually rendered an unheimlich 'visible invisibility' as the narrative progresses. His emotional ensnarement to the place, even after 113 years, accompanied by his owner's child-like laugh, explicates a sense of belonging to nature's gothic abode.

Freud had mentioned that "an uncanny effect often arises when the boundary between fantasy and reality is blurred, when we are faced with the reality of something that we have until now considered imaginary, when a symbol takes on the full function and significance of what it symbolizes, and so forth." Likewise, the human skeleton and furniture, used as props in "Conway Castle-ēr Prētātmā," had horrified the spectators at first sight. Despite their revelation at the end, the Pānkhābardār arm performing the act of pulling the pankha embodies his trapped spirit that has no reprieve even after its colonizer's death. This speaks volumes about the treatment of the subaltern during the pre-independence era.

Positing the (N)Evergreen in Gothic

The concept of 'geopsyche' is that "which moves past the 'us versus them' or 'human versus wilderness' paradigm into a more encompassing

‘anotherness’ which reconsiders binary oppositions...” This deconstructionist approach seeks to redefine what might be termed as ecogothic. The ‘ecogothic’ presents “Nature” as “an avenging force – or, even more monstrous; an alien entity utterly indifferent to the fate of humanity,” almost as if “the natural world seems to reject humanity as expendable.” The bungalows, now begrimed with dust and green moss, are sites where the Gothic figures are spotted by the examining minds in “Brown Sāhēbēr Bāri” and “Conway Castle-ēr Prētātmā.” Under the circumstances, the environment and its components become a “perverse version of the Garden of Eden”, not existing to assist flourishing life but to stand as the bearer of the ‘unlife’; consequently, the once beautiful and well-groomed Evergreen Lodge is re-christened as the (N)Evergreen Lodge by a picnicker who had visited the house.

South Asian Gothic “can be read as a distinctive aesthetic, a narrative practice, or a process of signification, where conventional Gothic tropes and imagery are assessed anew...” Additionally, the unassimilable and irreducible alterity of Ray’s Gothic cannot be subsumed within a totalizing system of Western Gothic.

Deriving from the Latin ‘limen’, the word ‘liminal’ speaks of a passage or a moment of transition. It is an idea of an in-between state that is neither here nor there. Under the discipline of Anthropology, liminal was an idea that is primarily invoked to point to ‘rites of passage’. The central figures in the stories are such figures, who are ascribed to liminality between life and death. Hence, they are frozen in centuries-old houses, labouring or awakening in moments, and are doomed to be invisible spectral presences.

Animals, specifically cats, are at times deemed to naturally occupy liminal spaces, which guide or occupy a fellow human. Gaiman’s Cat in *Coraline* is one such character who helps the titular character navigate the ‘real world’ and the ‘other world’. Ray’s Simon, however, is not a free agent; he is transplanted to the area by Mr. Brown’s obsessive psyche. Despite this, he challenges the fixed boundaries of the human and non-human, as all readers initially mistake him to be human. This shows the inadequacy of the Cartesian logic, appearing in fractures of time to comfort a master who is incapable of accepting his companion’s death. Thus, even in death, Simon must manifest as a friend and playmate to a clapping and maniacally laughing Mr. Brown. In a similar note, the pānkhābardār, who occupies the second floor of the Conway Castle, is too bound by his servitude. Death comes to him in the form of the Shāhēb’s boot, but even so, his actions remain ceaseless. Even in the hottest month of tropical summer, the room remains cool and breezy. The owl’s hoot, which creates the ambience, seems to be the gatekeeper of the gothic space, informing the adventurers of what lies ahead.

Horrors of a Line Drawn Through Hearts

From the 1830s onwards, English, a part of the Indian curriculum in India, is implicated in colonialism. As a result, the class of comprador colonial elites was created, who would serve the interests of the Empire. Furthermore, in a seemingly postcolonial setting where one investigates the haunting of the present by the past, the curious investigators in “Brown Sāhēbēr Bāri” are

flummoxed and horrified at their expedition that unravels a series of uncanny experiences after Ranjan's sudden discovery of John Milton Brown's 113-year-old diary. His red, leather-bound journal is symbolic of his status, which emblemizes the asymmetrical power relation of Brown and the unnamed pāṅkhābardār. Brown, operating from the structural advantage of being an Anglo-Indian, settled in Bangalore of his own volition, while colonial subjects like Pāṅkhābardār had to vacate their native homes overnight and confront the horrors of Partition. Migration did not separate homes; it drew a line through hearts. Aristocrats like him were far removed from the systematic ravages experienced by innocuous eyes who were further scarred by the horrors of penury.

Ray's Gothic oeuvre involves the representation of marginalized voices that are often effaced from mainstream history. The pāṅkhābardār in "Conway Castle-ēr Prētātmā," as a Gothic figure, is not characteristically an agent, as his invisibly floating hand becomes a poignant reiteration of post-death enslavement incumbent on him. Though his invisible presence in history, written by a colonial pen, is known to all, his entrapment and unresolved purpose only become starkly visible in the perpetual action of servitude, especially through the Gothic mode.

Thus, this paper has examined the haunting of the present by the visible invisibility of spectral figures, emotional ensnarement, and post-death enslavement, offering a critique of caste and class hierarchy in society within the South Asian panorama of Gothic. By analysing the Freudian theory of "uncanny" and Mary Louis Pratt's "Contact Zone," this inquiry has further explored the reassigned positions of colonial architecture as spatial arenas for the gothic, even as the narratives diverge in intent. (N)Evergreen Lodge harbours the lingering presence of a life-long companion, whose uncertain identity invokes the domestic "uncanny." In contrast, Conway Castle posits the gothic through an invisible animation of the historical perpetration of injustice and marginalisation of the Pāṅkhābardār for his master's comfort in death. This reaffirms the position of the postcolonial lens and ongoing scholarly discourse in the gothic to foreground the forgotten and effaced voices within South Asian narrative forms.

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LEARNER AND LEARNING - CENTRED APPROACH TO TEACHING LITERATURE: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: The paper purports to examine the issues involved and the corresponding implications teaching Literature at the undergraduate level using the learner learning centred approaches for realising the two main objectives of teaching Literature that include developing both literary and language competence. The authors of the paper also underline the need for making teaching English language and literature more learning centred so as to develop among the learners an aesthetic sensibility through the study of literature.

Keywords: Competence, Learner Centredness, Learning Centredness and Aesthetic Sensibility.

Introduction

Teaching language and literature has twin objectives, such as developing language and literary competence. To realise the objectives, teachers need such content that caters to the development of the two competencies mentioned. This implies that the texts that are prescribed must have the nuances that go with the language of literature. By getting exposed to such a language that is said to be deviant in syntax and with heavy semantic shades and dimensions, the student of language not only gets exposed to the forms but also to the different aesthetics that govern the language of literature.

Developing literary competence presupposes the learners' linguistic or language competence. The language of literature has the potential to reveal only implicitly different shades of meaning. This further implies that the language of literature mostly hides the possibilities and reveals very little. To understand the hidden possibilities of meaning, the reader of literary texts needs to be equipped with or equip oneself with a set of skills, techniques, or strategies of reading that facilitate comprehension of the text in its entirety. The strategies can be learnt formally or acquired through a systematic practice. The language of literature has its own stylistic features.

Language Centredness and Strategies Use

Teaching the strategies can be both learner-centric and learning centric. Learner-centred teaching is facilitating learning, and learning centredness is a process where the learner manages on his or her own by acquiring strategies and using learning devices that can differ from learner to learner. These strategies need not be common to all.

The strategies must enable comprehension at different levels, including the ability to go between and beyond the lines in the process of attempting to interpret the text, which is a literary text that is rich with infinite meanings. The learner will have to engage himself or herself by interacting with the text and negotiating for. This means that the interaction with the text required better comprehension and interpretation may be initiated by the teacher in the

classroom in order to facilitate the learners' ability to draw contextual information that contains semantic, syntactic, and discourse features that affect interpretation. Reading is a problem-solving behaviour that actively involves the reader in the process of driving and assigning meaning. If the learner is provided by the teacher with a set of schemata, then it is teacher-centred. If the learner can design a schema on his or her own, then it becomes learning-centred. Learning-centredness looks at learning as a cognitive exercise, and it focuses on the learner's ability to manage the processes of learning. Different learners employ different schemes to arrive at the meaning in the process of decoding the text. This results in the creation of many interpretive communities.

During the process of reading, there is an active interweaving of anticipation and introspection, which on second reading may turn into a kind of advanced retrospection. Learner-centred teaching is sensitive to individual needs. It encourages the construction of knowledge, opens up space for discussion, learning preferences and styles, encourages learners to take more personal responsibility for learning, and draws on and integrates language learning with students' life experiences. A teacher of literature may find it more rewarding if he or she can make their class learner-centred and address the issues involved in learning and make the learner identify effective learning strategies, such as cognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies.

Teaching Literature

Teaching literature to develop literary competence also means developing the ability. Jane Spiro, in her book on *Teaching Literature*, defines literary competence as the ability to comprehend literary texts and respond. She has identified different levels of literary competence that include

Informed appreciation of literature

Ability to respond appropriately to all genres in the target language.

Ability to analyse and define responses

Ability to relate literature to one's personal experience.

Realising and getting to those levels call for a system of teaching and learning which is inherent in only learning-centred approach. It does focus on the learners becoming autonomous in their processes of comprehension and in this context responding to emotions, reflections, feelings and the like of the writer or the author embedded in the language of literature that has stylistic variations.

The stylistic variations add more aesthetics to the literary texts and compositions. It is said that beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder. The beauty of construction lies in the word choice, diction, and structural deviation, besides grammar, which are used to make the reader appreciate the content, not only for the meanings it proposes but also the way in which the proposition is made.

Literary competency includes understanding the plain sense of the text, learning to empathise and learning to be creative. The levels of response to literary texts vary depending on maturity levels and motivational levels, as well as the emotional intelligence of the readers of literary texts. Only learning-centred approach can further result to the acquisition of both language and

literary competence. Is there a method to develop literary competence? The answer is as plain as the many methods of teaching language. It is like answering the question, 'Is there a single text in the class?' In the process of decoding, the reader postulates, hypothesises, analyses, constructs, deconstructs and throws open many texts while responding, and that becomes the learner's or the text of the class.

Task-Based Language Teaching

However, if teaching can be task-based, there is every likelihood of the learner participating in the learning process in finding answers to the tasks (problem-solving activities) and through an interaction with the text by taking efforts. There is facilitation of learning, thus creating literarily competent learners too.

Task-based Language Learning – Task-based learning (TBLL) is an effective educational approach that uses meaningful tasks to promote language acquisition. This approach assumes great significance in fostering a learner-centred environment where language is acquired through meaningful use of vocabulary and tasks concerning the real world. Language learners get actively involved in their learning process. Task-based learning is deeply rooted in the principles of Communicative Language Teaching. Real-life Communication and lively interaction are among the common benefits for the learners. To quote N S Prabhu: 'Tasks in the classroom create a need to communicate which brings into play not just target language resources, but all the other resources learners have at their disposal, for example, conjecture, gesture, knowledge of conventions, numeracy and the mother tongue.' To be a task master or not to be? that's the question.

To conclude, since the language of literature has the potential to appeal to the affective domain and the cognitive domain, the teacher of literature must attempt to bring out the covert and overt responses to literary texts by being a humanist in his or her approach to the learners. The teacher also ensures to create an atmosphere in the classroom for the coexistence of learners of all kinds and learners with different and varied abilities.

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EXPLORING TRAUMATIC IMPACTS IN ANITA NAIR'S *EATING WASPS*

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Abstract: The interpretation of traumatic experiences and the issues of the repression in narratives have always been the major focus of trauma studies. Trauma is a disruptive experience that affects the individual's self and uniqueness. Trauma fictions expound the victimisation by verbalising the agonies and distress in life. Anita Nair's *Eating Wasps* unfolds the repression of ten women whose lives are traumatised by patriarchy, sexual abuse and acid attack. This paper tends to feature the representation of psychological trauma and resilience of women in *Eating Wasps*.

Keywords: Trauma, Repression, Victimisation, Patriarchy and Resilience.

Literature, a poignant creative imagination is coupled with the intensity of social awareness and transformation. It provides a cavernous insight into the human experience by sharpening the perception of social reality. It furnishes profound understanding of the different perspectives of treatment against women in the society which leave imprints of deep psychological traumatic sufferings.

The word 'trauma' is originated from the Greek word *titrōskein*, meaning 'wound', implying the internal wound on a person's psyche. Cathy Caruth defines trauma as "... an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other uncontrolled phenomenon" (11). In other words, it is a highly emotional and psychological response to an experience that is deeply frightening and devastating. It devastates the individual self and disorients psychologically.

Anita Nair is a promising novelist with a great sense of characterisation and vivid representation of South Indian landscape and its culture. Her novels are the manifestations of the scrupulous perceptions and the insights of her contemporary obnoxious human conditions. Her novels are the expedition of the inner apprehensions and alienation of her characters. She probes the exploration of the traumatized sensibility, resilience, quest for identity and survival. Nair's *Eating Wasps* unfolds the repression of ten women whose lives are traumatised by patriarchy, sexual abuse and acid attack.

Through the index finger of Sreelakshmi, the challenges of other women are reflected in *Eating Wasps*. Sreelakshmi, the narrator of the novel who is very bold during her childhood is distressed by the fake love of Maripose. Najma is another sufferer portrayed as a victim of acid attack. Theresa is psychologically tormented by her husband's deceit. Brinda, a badminton player is victimized by the negative criticism of her sports success. Megha is a victim of sexual abuse and her inner turmoil is presented to create caution against the existing cruelty of child sexual abuse. The novel also portrays the traumatic turmoil of other women Liliana, Urvashi, Maya and

Rupa.

Sreelakshmi, the narrator of *Eating Wasps* is very courageous during her childhood but after becoming a successful lecturer and a writer, she becomes the victim of the verbal inflictions of her relatives. The deception of love devastates her into a pathetic being. Her literary reputation makes her love Markose Mapila Karrukattil, a married priest. When she reveals her candid emotions for Markose in her stories, she is vehemently questioned by her mother as, “You are an unmarried woman. How would you know what men and women do together? How can you write such things? That, too, when you are a teacher!” (EW 236). Her writings receive vehement social objection and disapproval in the premises of her college which torment her inner self. She is unable to face the criticism. She is shocked on receiving many heavy blows of austerity as social disapproval. She is reproached by her relatives as, “Don’t you have any shame? Do you think you can write any rubbish and no one is going to mention it?” (EW 250). On the other hand, she is forsaken by Maripose after a day of their togetherness. Unable to bear the humiliation, she yields herself over the social contempt and commits suicide: “There was this writer Sreelakshmi. She killed herself in the mid - sixties ...” (EW 253). Her psychological upheaval forces her to end her life.

Nair has unveiled the traumatic dispute of abuse victims through Megha; how she is hardheartedly thwarted for sexual hunger. Megha, Lieutenant Colonel Naidu’s daughter, is sexually exploited by the school truck driver, Prem. He persuades the girl for his sexual desire: “‘Give me a kiss then,’ he said quietly... He pointed to his lips. She leaned forward and pressed her lips fleetingly against his ... ‘Tomorrow, my princess, Uncle will show you a few other ways in which you can make him happy’” (EW 32). Using her innocence, he exploits her. She becomes a confused being of fear and eroding sense of self. Her fear and anxiety frighten her. Unable to cope with harshness and bitterness of her trauma, she hides herself feeling insecure. Patricia Evans has expressed the traumatic condition of child abuse victims as, “People trying to survive abuse, especially if it occurs in childhood often suffer from trauma. If so, they may have endless conversations within their minds, conscious and unconscious drives, feeling powerless and rejected...” (70). Urvashi finds her inside a cupboard in dejected condition as, “Inside sat a little child with eyes that seemed frozen in fright, her thumb in mouth. Her face was pale and she sat crouched with her chin... ‘No, no ... uncle ... she whimpered’” (EW 39). The consequences of child sexual abuse endangering the self of the affected individual is illustrated by Sibnath Deb and Aparna Mukherjee as, Children and adolescents who have been sexually abused can suffer a range of psychological and behavioural problems, from mild to severe, in both the short and the long term. These problems typically include depression, anxiety, guilt, fear, sexual dysfunction, withdrawal and acting out. (34-35)

Rupa, the wife of the diplomat Keshav is a victim of the complexities of her husband’s silence and negligence. The strange perplexing attitude of him perturbs her. His strange calmness and silence puzzle her with great paradoxical confrontation. Keshav never reveals the oddity of his relationship

with his cousin Mini, with whom Rupa suspects his teen love. He makes her struggle with unhealthy imaginations about their relationship. Moreover, she has to filter her thoughts before speaking to him. At every defeated moment, she hides her submissive trounce with smile: “A lifetime of being with bureaucrats had turned the redness of her blood to a pale pink of compromise and unspoken words” (EW 150). She is ill - fated with emptiness because of her uncommunicative and unresponsive husband.

Theresa (Thelma) is strangled in depression by the adulterous attitude of her husband, Anto and her sister, Thomasina. When she is cheated by her husband’s secretive love for her sister, her trust collides and the betrayal devastates her. She punishes herself by alienating as a disabled being: “So I shut my eyes that day and all was blank and all was fine, I didn’t need to see If I could see, I would have had to witness the eighty - six thousand four hundred ways in which the two of them deceived me.... The doctors call it hysterical blindness” (EW 97). She becomes the victim of her husband’s deceitfulness. The traitorous behaviour of men affects the insight of women drastically that Nair has evidently shown with the character of Thelma.

Brinda, a badminton player gets traumatic repressions because of verbal denigration. She is a great player with all belligerence and determination and brings laurels and material prosperity with her sports. Her game shrouds her delicateness with masculinity. She is prejudiced vehemently as a person lacking feminine charm: “She’s like a boy dressed up. All angles and no curves. Girls need curves” (EW 128). She is shocked at her assessment of society. It perturbs her performance on the ground with violence and canniness: “Everything was combat thereafter” (129). Vidya G. Rao comments regarding the misinterpretation of women players: “The recurrent images of these women flashed across the social arena often sexualize and trivialize their efforts” (201). Brinda is troubled when she is criticised for the lack of feminine features.

When the reputation of Liliana is affected by the leakage of her playful video, she seeks refuge in the Dance Academy, Kerala, learning Mohiniattam. She has exiled herself from her real self, frightened by the prejudiced world. When she returns home (Italy) after a tough year in Cambridge, she relieves her stress by attending a night party. There she entertains the gathering pretending like a cat with drawn whiskers on either side of her mouth and fuschia lipstick. She paws and tugs at the zip of a man’s jeans, pulling it down with her teeth: “She was a furry feline; a huntress seeking her quarry that nestled within boxer shorts.... She had looked up sideways as a cat would, blink and meowed at the camera” (EW 170). The funny act of hers turns against her when the video is shared in the social media. Without any fault of hers, she is crucified in the social media with its power of imagination. Her distress continues when her dance mates teases her as ‘Kothichi’: “Listen Pussy-Mouth what we learn here is dance. It’s not for sluts like you I just told her that Mohiniattam isn’t for Koothichis,’ ...” (EW 177). She is trembled on learning the meaning of the word ‘Kothichi’ as prostitute. Her real character is assassinated by society and its conventions. Liliana struggles with the fear of inner conscience to face society.

Najma, the victim of acid attack is affected by the inveighs of Imtiaz. She is named after a star believing the destiny of great things. Her mother works as a kitchen helper for a catering company and brings up as a teacher. Imtiaz attacks her with acid when he is furious for the decline of the marriage proposal. So, he scolds her abusively and throws acid on her: "I won't let you become anyone else's wife," he said. And then he took out the bottle of acid he had brought with him and flung it in her face" (EW 63). The pain of her acid attack is expressed by Najma as, "Do You know what it feels like to have acid on your skin? Do you know what it does to you as your skin melts and your nerve vends scream?" (EW 63). The acid attack upturns her entire life. She is afraid to face and forbids the sight of others due to her damaged appearance. She hides herself inside burkha. She even considers killing herself as a solace to her painful body and mind. Najma, a normal girl with high aspiration becomes a confused being with no confidence and self-assurance because of the injustice done to her.

Urvashi, a young successful political journalist is dragged into trouble when she dates Raghu through a dating app. She gets excited on her relationship with him and takes it to the next level by becoming an epitome of his expectations: "... I have to be everything his wife is not. Sexy. Interesting. Reckless. Wanton, Tender" (EW 109). When she understands the pain to live with the phantom of another woman (Asha, Raghu's wife) in her life, she decides to end her relationship with him. But he pesters her with his tortures of threat calls and messages: "So you think you can run away and I won't find you?... 'You slut ...who are you fucking now?'" (EW 103-104). Frightening to tackle the hard realities, she seeks shelter at Nila resort. The harsh words of Raghu distress her to lose her self-reliance and hope in life. Even with great success and knowledge, she becomes a prey to the false intentional love of Raghu and gets into trouble.

Maya struggles as a single parent for her autism affected son, Naveen: "He is autistic...he has the mental age of a five-year-old at the most" (EW 192). Their life knows no struggle till the death of Koman who accepts them as his family. However after his death, she is perplexed and much worried about the future of her son after her death. The sense of fear and anxiety kills her every day. She does not want her son to suffer after her death. As an altruistic mother, she decides to end up their lives together on the birthday with the preparation of his son's favourite badusha coated with rat poison. She is panicked with haunting illusions and unknown anxiety on the safety of her son, Naveen. Her decision of killing themselves shows the traumatic confusion and dilemma.

Anita Nair has expressed the traumatic turmoil of Indian women through her characters in *Eating Wasps*. She also explores the resilience and survival of her women. The distressed predicaments of Sreelakshmi makes her struggle intervening, as a common woman and a writer. Unable to tackle the pressures, she ends her life. Megha, an innocent child suffers with post traumatic disorder due to her sexual harassment. Her fears and inability to associate with others burden her life. Her parent's care radiates the hope of her recovery in future. Rupa, like other women tolerates and sinks in her traumatic

disorders; expecting a change in her husband's behavior.

Najma, the victim of acid attack fears to face the world with her burnt face. So she hides inside burkha. After her mother's death, she relies that she has to face her life. She decides to be a fighter with a new job, avoiding burkha. Her courageous determination is revealed as, " 'I am Najma,' she said.... I will never hide behind a burkha again I am Najma" (EW 66-67). To emphasise her feminine traits, Brinda dates a T20 cricketer and goes to a spa retreat to get rid of her tiredness. Her life becomes normal after her spa visit and with the disappearance of the cricketer from her life; her game acquires a new aggression with the understanding that her game is everything of her life. She decides "This is her life.... There is no going back now, she thinks with a tremendous sense of relief" (EW132). While Liliana tires of escaping from reality, she reasserts herself by facing reality. She is prepared to tackle her criticism in social media with readiness. Urvashi regains her fearless attitude by counter attacking Raghu with determination. She furiously reprimands him: "I was never your prisoner, ... So listen to me: it's over. You and I are finished" (EW 205).

Maya's distress diminishes when her son begins to respond by greeting her back: "... he looked at Maya and said, ... 'appybdaama!'" (EW 202). She is quite astonished and overwhelmed with his reply. She takes resolution to provide a better life to her son until her death. The emotional intensity of mothering strengthens Maya. It is observed by Tuula Gordon, "Motherhood is a handicap but also a strength, a trial and an error; an achievement and a prize" (49). Taking the hysterical blindness as an excuse, Thelma torments the happiness of Molly for dwindling her happiness: "All my life she tormented me. Now I am her tormentor.... 'Once, I left an unniappam under the pillow in her bed. The ants bit almost every part of her 'Once, after I helped myself to the kanji ... I dropped half a bottle of salt into what was left in the vessel. I am a blind woman" (EW 98). Distrust makes her take revenge. By torturing her sister, she finds a kind of relief. Amar Nath Prasad says:

The traumatic experience, which presents a rude shock to the ego of a man, can be seen in the lives Its emotional blow is so violent that it leaves a permanent imprint in their mind. The sufferer of the traumatic experience unconsciously devises symbolic activities as a defense mechanism to overcome or overrule the disgusting experiences. (158)

Nair's *Eating Wasps* depicts traumatic tribulations as the means of transforming their victimhood to self-attainment. She has devised her characters not as enduring pains but as those trying to subvert their adversities and emerging as redeemed beings. She has conferred the agonies, frustrations, disappointments and traumas of different strata of women of which some esteemed their victory like Najma, Brinda, Liliana, Maya while some succumbed to the destruction like Sreelakshmi. Thus, Nair's *Eating Wasps* voices the turbulent traumas of women; intending to be transformed for their betterment of life.

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EXISTENTIAL DILEMMA AND ESCAPISM IN JOJO MOYES' *ME BEFORE YOU*: A MEDICAL HUMANITIES PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: The paper explores existential dilemma and escapism in Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You*: a medical humanities perspective through the character Will Traynor and Louisa Clark. Will struggles with his identity after the accident and his decision to pursue assisted suicide forms the central conflict of the novel. By applying medical humanities perspective to the novel, the ethical and emotional complexities of caregiving are revealed and the paper emphasizes the need for patient centred care in medical practice.

Keywords: Existential Dilemma, Escapism, Disability, Assisted Suicide and Medical Humanities.

Introduction

Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You* explores love, disability, meaning of life and it is deeply connected with medical humanities. The narrative revolves around Will, a once-active man who becomes quadriplegic after an accident, and Louisa Clark, the caregiver hired to improve his mental and emotional well-being. The novel explores existential and ethical questions. At the centre of the narrative is the existential dilemma of bodily autonomy, the search for meaning in suffering and the struggle between choosing either life or escape through death. The paper talks about existential dilemmas and escapism that reflect human concerns about suffering. Analysing the novel through the medical humanities perspective helps to understand emotional and ethical complexities surrounding disability. This paper portrays existential dilemma through the character of Will, how he confronts with his new identity and uses escapism to cope up with it. Using a medical humanities perspective, this paper examines how *Me Before You* reflects real-world ethical questions about euthanasia, caregiver, and the psychological struggle of disability.

Research Methodology

This study on medical humanities employs a qualitative research methodology, focusing on literary analysis and ethical question to explore the existential dilemmas and escapism in Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You*.

The Medical Humanities

Medical Humanities is a field that combines multiple disciplines like psychology, arts and literature, humanities, and medicine. Together, these form the medical humanities, an umbrella discipline that embraces the humanistic study of the ethical and social questions of health and caregiving ("What is Medical Humanities?").

In Medical Humanities it is believed that storytelling and narrative can portray the aspects of illness.

"How the patient tells of illness, how the doctor or ethicist represents it in words, who listens as the intern presents at rounds, what the audience is being moved to

feel or think – all these narrative dimensions of health care are of profound and defining importance in ethics and patient care.” (“Patients Are Humans Too: The Emergence of Medical Humanities” 198).

These lines highlight how narratives play a crucial role in health care. It can be related to Will, the quadriplegic protagonist. He tells his story through his behaviour, his mood and the decisions he make. His story shows the existential crises of Will. Often medical professionals like doctors describe illness in clinical terms. But this does not help to understand the sufferings of Will. The line “who listens as the intern presents rounds” describes the difference between who is speaking and who is listening in health care. In the novel *Me Before You*, Lou does not listen to Will as a doctor, but as a caregiver he becomes emotionally attached to him. *Me Before You* clearly shows how narrative is important to medicine as it is narrated by the patient, the patients’ caregiver or his/her family. It highlights that health care is not just physical healing but also mental and emotional healing.

The lived experience of a patient provides the emotional sufferings, the psychological and social conflict. Will Traynor’s story shows the emotional and existential conflict of disability. His loss of his active life reflects a deep loss of self. His narrative is not just about physical limitation, but of a deep internal conflict. Will expression, “I want to be in Paris as me, the old me” (Moyes 253), shows his longing for his old active self. Paris which is a symbol of freedom, culture, and life, contradicts with his present confinement to the wheel chair.

From a medical humanities perspective, it challenges society to consider what it means to truly live. It shows questions like: Is survival enough? Can a life with limitations still be fulfilling? What happens when someone no longer sees value in their existence?

Will’s experience shows the psychological and existential dilemmas of disability making healthcare professionals to treat patients as individuals with emotions. Will’s story shows the importance of listening. His family and his caregivers, struggle to understand the depth of his pain because they are focused on saving his life rather than understanding his perspective.

This can be seen when Will says “You thought you knew best. Everyone thinks they know what I need” (Moyes 73). This quote reveals Will’s frustration with the people around him like his family, caregivers who make decisions for him. Instead of asking Will what he wants, they impose their own values and beliefs on Will. His words show the need for patient-centred care, a key principle in medical humanities, where the patient’s voice and lived experience are placed at the centre. The assumption that others are strong in knowledge leads to emotional alienation, which is seen in the character of Will as he refuses to ask or receive help from others.

Existential Dilemma

Existentialism is a philosophical movement that focuses on the individual’s experience and the choices that people make. It emphasises that people are responsible for creating their own meaning and purpose in life.

Nietzsche's contribution to existentialism was the idea that men must accept that they are part of a material world. As part of this world, men must live as if there is nothing else beyond life. A failure to live, a failure to take risks, is a failure to realize human potential. The primary human instinct, according to Nietzsche, is the Will to Power. By advocating this philosophy, Nietzsche is rejecting the belief that sympathy was the proper and natural foundation for moral systems. In *The Will to Power* he states, "I assess the power of a will by how much resistance, pain, torture it endures and knows how to turn to its advantage" (Nietzsche 206). The strength of an individual's will is measured by their ability to endure life's challenges rather than being crushed by them.

Existentialism puts forward that suffering is an inevitable part of human existence, but it depends on how one responds to it which defines their sense of self and purpose.

Will Traynor's internal struggle with his new identity as a quadriplegic is the key element in the novel. Once an active and adventurous world man, Will has travelled many places.

"I climbed Mount Kilimanjaro when I hit thirty. That was pretty incredible."

"How high?"

"A little over nineteen thousand feet to Uhuru Peak. That said, I pretty much crawled the last thousand or so. The altitude hits you pretty hard."

"Was it cold?"

"No ..." he smiled at me. "It's not like Everest. Not the time of the year I went, anyway." He gazed off into the distance, briefly lost his remembrance. "It was beautiful. The roof of Africa, they call it. When you're up there, it's like you can actually see to the end of the world" (Moyes 250).

Will's memory of his adventures is an expression of his existential dilemma. It reveals the inner conflict between the self he used to be and the self he is now, living with a disability. His description not only shows the beauty of the places he has visited but a sense of freedom and control over his life before his accident. Will's sudden loss of physical ability throws him into a profound existential crisis. After the accident Will is confined to a wheelchair and is dependent on others for basic needs. He is no longer able to do any activities without help which makes him question his existence of life. His body no longer functions as it used to be but has become a site of suffering. His desire to end his life through assisted suicide at Dignitas in Switzerland reflects a yearning for control in a reality where he feels powerless.

Lou, Will's caregiver also undergoes existential transformation. At first, she is confined to her small town life. However, when she becomes a caregiver for Will, she explores new things. Will forces her to explore new things in life and to have a purpose in life. Will says "C'mon, Clark. Live a little. What's stopping you?". Will sees that Lou is confined to her comfort zone, despite his own disability he encourages Lou to take risks. Will, though disabled, is aware of what it means to feel alive, because he has lost it. But Lou, on the other hand, has physical freedom but is afraid. This shows that existential dilemmas are not only to the sick or disabled but they affect all human beings.

Escapism as a Coping Mechanism

There is escapism in both Will and Lou, his caregiver. For Lou escapism takes the form of avoidance. She remains in a small town and does not explore new things. She always avoids exploring new things by saying that it's not her cup of tea, or says that she does not like it, without even trying it. In the course of the novel it is revealed that her escapist behaviour is because of her past trauma of sexual assault. Nevertheless, Will encourages her to experience new things. He says these lines to encourage Lou "You only get one life. It's actually your duty to live it as fully as possible" (Moyes 252). It embodies the theme of escapism but instead of using escapism as a way to avoid reality, he encourages Lou to escape the limitations she has placed on herself and embrace life fully. He who led an adventurous existence before his accident, sees Lou as someone trapped, not by physical constraints like him, but by fear and self-doubt. His words push her, breaking her free from the small town life, her insecurities to explore the world. True escape is not about fleeting distractions but about actively pursuing experiences that make life meaningful.

Will's escapism is more complex. His wish to die is not only about his physical pain but it is a way for him to escape from the life that he sees unfit. For Will, assisted suicide is not an end but a return to his old self and having control over his life. "I don't want to live like this, Mother. This is not the life I chose. There is no prospect of my recovery, hence it is a perfectly reasonable request to ask to end it in a manner I see fit." (Moyes 140-141)

These lines express a form of escapism not from reality but from a life that no longer holds meaning. Will is not just expressing his desire to die because of his physical pain but because his present body does not allow him to do things he once did. Once active and adventurous, then he finds himself dependent and physically limited, unable to engage with life in the way he once did. Medicine often focuses on saving life at all costs, but Will's statement reveals that for some people, survival is not enough. Will choosing assisted suicide reflect the main principle of medical humanities, which is patient centred care.

Jojo Moyes' *Me Before You* explores existential dilemma and escapism through the characters Will Traynor and his caregiver Louisa Clark. Medical Humanities give insight not only about assisted suicide but also about the emotions of those who suffer and those who care for them. It raises questions about life, death and emotional suffering bringing them close to medical humanities. The novel revolves around the existential dilemmas faced by Will, a man who becomes quadriplegic after an accident, and the emotional growth of his caregiver, Lou.

Will Traynor's decision to seek assisted suicide at Dignitas is not because of physical pain but because he feels that his life is not worth living and he is robbed of his physical rights. Will's life shows that quality of life of an individual, does not depend on just the physical ability but it lies on the individuals' freedom and experiences. The main principle of medical humanities is patient centred care which emphasizes the individuals' emotions more than medicine. Lou undergoes a complete transformation, highlighting

that the existential dilemma is not only to individuals with illness or disability but it is also to those who take care of the patients. Lou, who avoids challenges and lives in fear due to the past trauma, comes out of her comfort zone with the help of Will.

Will's existential crises and Lou's escapism form the heart of the novel. Will confronts his situation head-on, deciding that death is preferable to the life he deems unfulfilling. He values quality of life over longevity. Lou on the other hand realizes that her avoidance of risk has kept her from truly living. With the help of Will, she realizes that life is about embracing challenges rather than retreating from them. The novel becomes more than a love story it is an exploration of the human condition. Through Will and Lou it is shown that care involves not just saving lives with medicine but understanding the individuals' emotions, that make life worth living.

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**ECHOES OF PARTITION: EXPLORING GENDERED MEMORY IN
KAMILA SHAMSIE'S *SALT AND SAFFRON* AND ANJALI ENJETI'S
*THE PARTED EARTH***

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Abstract: The Partition of India in 1947 inflicted profound psychological and emotional wounds on those who experienced it. While historical accounts have rigorously examined its political, economic, and communal dimensions, literature remains a powerful medium for expressing the intimate, lived realities of Partition, especially those of women whose voices are often absent from official histories. This paper explores how Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* (2000) and Anjali Enjeti's *The Parted Earth* (2021) represent gendered memory and intergenerational trauma as literary strategies to reclaim and restore women's erased or overlooked experiences. Through the critical lenses of Memory Studies, Feminist Theory, and Postcolonial criticism, the analysis investigates how personal testimonies, silences, and inherited emotional legacies construct a counter-memory that challenges patriarchal and nationalist historiographies. By conducting a close reading of both texts, the paper argues that memory, particularly when mediated through gender and diaspora, emerges as a vital site for feminist resistance, identity negotiation, and transgenerational healing.

Keywords: Partition, Gendered Memory, Feminist Theory, Trauma Studies, Postmemory and Women's Writing.

Introduction

The Partition of British India in 1947 stands as one of the most cataclysmic events in modern South Asian history, resulting in the displacement of over fourteen million people and the death of approximately one to two million individuals (Talbot and Singh 5). Beyond the violence and border-making that reshaped the geopolitical landscape, the Partition constituted a deep psychological and cultural rupture whose impact continues to reverberate across generations. Although much historical scholarship has focused on the political negotiations, administrative failures, and communal riots that defined this moment (Butalia 12; Pandey 31), the gendered dimensions of Partition violence, particularly the systematic victimization of women, have often been relegated to the periphery of mainstream historiography.

Women's experiences of Partition of India involved not only displacement and bereavement but also widespread sexual violence, abduction, forced conversions, and familial dishonor, which were frequently silenced within patriarchal cultural frameworks. Urvashi Butalia, in *The Other Side of Silence* (1998), underscores how women's trauma is submerged beneath the narratives of national pride and masculine heroism, thereby rendering their stories "unspeakable" and "inconvenient" to the postcolonial nation-state (Butalia 18). Similarly, Ritu Menon and Kamla Bhasin have argued that women's bodies became the battlegrounds on which communal and national identities are inscribed, often without their consent (*Borders and Boundaries*

42). These silences, both imposed and internalized, have necessitated alternative modes of remembrance and representation, which literature has been uniquely equipped to provide.

In this context, literary narratives emerge as critical spaces for articulating suppressed voices and re-inscribing erased subjectivities. Fiction allows for the imaginative reconstruction of lost or marginalized histories, particularly through the deployment of memory as a thematic and narrative device. As Marianne Hirsch argues in her seminal work on *postmemory*, the transmission of trauma from one generation to another, especially in the absence of direct testimony, becomes a crucial element of identity formation in diasporic and postcolonial communities (Hirsch 5). Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* (2000) and Anjali Enjeti's *The Parted Earth* (2021) are exemplary in this regard. Both novels engage with the legacy of Partition not as a closed historical episode but as a living, affective presence that shapes familial and personal identities across time and space.

This paper investigates how these two texts employ the constructs of gendered memory and intergenerational trauma to excavate the silenced histories of Partition. Through the lenses of Memory Studies, Feminist Theory, and Postcolonial Criticism, the study reveals how Shamsie and Enjeti challenge hegemonic, masculinist, and nationalist historiographies by privileging subjective, embodied, and gendered recollections. Their works foreground the affective labor of remembering and forgetting, constructing what Michel Foucault terms "counter-memory," a form of remembrance that resists the official narratives of power and nationhood (Foucault 160). By foregrounding female voices and experiences, these texts not only resist historical erasure but also propose literature as a vital medium for transgenerational healing and feminist resistance.

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in a triadic theoretical approach that combines Memory Studies, Feminist Theory, and Postcolonial Criticism, offering a multifaceted lens through which to explore the representation of Partition trauma and gendered memory in *Salt and Saffron* and *The Parted Earth*. Each of these frameworks contributes unique critical tools for unpacking how literature mediates silences, reclaims suppressed voices, and articulates the emotional and psychological residue of historical violence.

Memory Studies

At the heart of the inquiry is Marianne Hirsch's concept of postmemory, which refers to the relationship of the "generation after" to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before (Hirsch 5). In this framework, descendants inherit fragmented memories, often transmitted through stories, silences, or emotional residues, despite not having experienced the events directly. These inherited memories shape identity and cultural belonging, especially among diasporic communities, where memory acts as a bridge between dislocation and origin.

Additionally, the notion of lieux de mémoire or "sites of memory" proposed by Pierre Nora is central to understanding how Partition is

commemorated or elided within national and familial discourses. Nora argues that modern societies substitute living memory with institutionalized memory in fixed “sites”, texts, monuments, and rituals, that may simultaneously preserve and control the past (Nora 12). In literary contexts, these “sites” take the form of family legends, heirlooms, or narrative structures that both evoke and problematize historical remembrance.

Feminist Theory

This study also draws upon intersectional and subaltern feminist theories to explore how memory and trauma are mediated through gendered bodies and identities. Kimberlé Crenshaw’s intersectionality provides a lens to analyse how gender interacts with race, class, and nationality in shaping women’s Partition experiences (Crenshaw 140). More specifically, subaltern feminist scholars like Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emphasises the epistemic violence of historiography, which silences the voices of subaltern women by co-opting their narratives into dominant nationalist or patriarchal frameworks (Spivak 90).

This framework helps reveal how the women in Shamsie’s and Enjeti’s novels are not merely victims but complex subjects navigating layered oppressions. Their silences and trauma are not only symptoms of violence but also forms of resistance against the demand to conform to dominant discourses of honor, sacrifice, or shame. Feminist literary theory thereby becomes instrumental in recuperating women’s affective and embodied histories as legitimate sites of knowledge production.

Postcolonial Criticism

Finally, Postcolonial Criticism enables the analysis of how colonial legacies and national boundaries complicate identity formation, particularly in the context of diaspora. Concepts such as Homi Bhabha’s hybridity and Edward Said’s notion of contrapuntal reading allow the researcher to interrogate the multiplicity of voices, histories, and affiliations that characterise post-Partition literature. Bhabha’s theorization of cultural hybridity, the “third space” where identities are negotiated, aptly describes the liminal subjectivity of characters in both novels, who are often caught between national belonging and personal dislocation (Bhabha 56).

Diaspora, in this context, becomes not only a geographical displacement but also an epistemological site where historical memory is reconstituted through imagination, emotion, and intergenerational dialogue. As such, both *Salt and Saffron* and *The Parted Earth* articulate postcolonial counter-memories that contest the grand narratives of nationhood and offer alternative, gender-inflected histories rooted in affect and embodiment.

Gendered Memory and Postmemory in *Salt and Saffron*

Kamila Shamsie’s *Salt and Saffron* (2000) intricately explores the politics of memory through the protagonist Aliya, a diasporic Pakistani woman who returns to Karachi in search of a coherent familial past. Her narrative unfolds against a backdrop of fragmented recollections, ancestral myths, and concealed histories, particularly surrounding the Partition of 1947. The novel’s intergenerational structure foregrounds the silence and absence that often

characterizes women's historical experiences, revealing how memory is both gendered and mediated.

Aliya's inability to access a complete, linear narrative of her family's past resonates with Marianne Hirsch's concept of **postmemory**, wherein second-generation survivors inherit the traumatic experiences of their ancestors through stories, images, and affective traces, rather than direct experience (Hirsch 22). Although Aliya did not witness the violence of Partition, she bears its psychological and emotional weight. Her fragmented reconstruction of the past, most notably through the ancestral myth of the "not-quite twins", serves as an allegorical tool to represent the ruptures caused by colonial division and displacement (Shamsie 45). These "not-quite" siblings embody liminality and disjunction, mirroring the dislocated subjectivity of post-Partition generations.

Significantly, Shamsie critiques the patriarchal authority over memory and storytelling through Aliya's persistent inquiries into the obscured narrative of Mariam, a female ancestor whose silencing symbolizes the marginalization of women in family and national histories. In postcolonial societies, such gendered silences are not accidental but structurally embedded; as Gayatri Spivak contends, the subaltern woman is often doubly muted, first by colonial and then by patriarchal discourse (Spivak 104). Mariam's erasure thus stands as an indictment of how women's memories are systematically excluded from dominant historiographies.

Moreover, *Salt and Saffron* employs metafictional strategies, shifting narrative voices, speculative family lore, and unreliable memory fragments, to emphasise the epistemological instability of historical truth. As Pierre Nora notes in his theorization of *lieux de mémoire*, memory is not a static repository but a dynamic and contested site, shaped by cultural, political, and subjective forces (Nora 9). Aliya's act of narrativizing these silences and uncertainties becomes a form of resistance, a way for women to reenter the discourse of history not as passive victims, but as active agents of remembrance.

Through this gendered lens, Shamsie reclaims memory as a feminist and postcolonial act, reimagining history not as a chronicle of state and masculinity but as a space where the affective and the personal demand equal legitimacy. The novel ultimately insists that healing and identity in diaspora are contingent upon retrieving and re-inscribing these occluded memories into collective consciousness.

Intergenerational Trauma in *The Parted Earth*

Anjali Enjeti's *The Parted Earth* (2021) explores the enduring legacy of Partition through the intertwined lives of Deepa and her granddaughter Shan, examining how trauma not only scars those who experience it firsthand but is also passed down, often silently through generations. Deepa, a Hindu woman in Delhi during the 1947 Partition, endures the horrors of communal violence, sexual assault, and forced displacement. Ironically, her experiences that she suppresses in order to survive haunt her body and psyche. This inherited silence is what Marianne Hirsch defines as postmemory: the powerful, affective connection that descendants of trauma victims have to experience they did not live through but continue to feel deeply (Hirsch 22).

Shan, raised in the United States and estranged from her family's past, suffers from a profound sense of dislocation and emotional fragmentation, symptomatic of what Cathy Caruth calls "the belatedness of trauma" (Caruth 11). Her identity crisis is not merely a byproduct of diaspora, but the result of a narrative void, an intergenerational silence that renders her both culturally and emotionally unanchored. Enjeti portrays this psychological dislocation through the motifs of lost letters, incomplete stories, and estranged maternal relationships, all of which symbolize the fragmented transmission of memory.

Crucially, the novel presents silence not as forgetting, but as an active and gendered survival strategy. In feminist trauma theory, silence is often framed as a means of resisting re-traumatization, but it can also perpetuate psychic wounds across generations (Kaplan 38). Deepa's refusal to narrate her experiences reflects what Veena Das identifies as the "violence of everyday life" in post-Partition India, where trauma is internalized and domesticated rather than publicly mourned (Das 13). The cost of this silence becomes evident in Shan's story: her struggle with emotional intimacy, belonging, and identity is shaped by the ghost of a history she can feel but cannot fully access.

The novel's non-linear structure, shifting between 1947 Delhi and 2016 Atlanta, disrupts temporal and spatial continuity, mirroring the diasporic consciousness that theorists such as Homi K. Bhabha describe as "unhomed" and suspended between cultures (Bhabha 13). Enjeti's feminist sensibility underscores "personal is political," especially when personal memory becomes a battleground for postcolonial identity, gendered silence, and historical erasure.

By foregrounding female voices and their embodied experiences of inherited trauma, *The Parted Earth* (2021) aligns with subaltern feminist thought, which emphasizes the recovery of marginalized narratives excluded from nationalist historiography. Enjeti thus not only critiques the masculine framing of history but also illustrates how memory, silence, and trauma operate across generations to shape diasporic subjectivity.

Counter-memory and Feminist Resistance

Both Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* and Anjali Enjeti's *The Parted Earth* challenge the dominant, often masculinized, nationalist narratives of Partition that celebrate political independence while minimizing or erasing the gendered violence and psychological devastation endured by women. These novels construct what Michel Foucault calls counter-memory, a form of memory that "opposes the official versions of the past" and serves as an "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" (Foucault 81). Rather than reproducing hegemonic historical accounts, both texts foreground personal, affective, and fragmented recollections that resist state-authored historical closure.

In *Salt and Saffron*, Shamsie destabilises the nationalistic mythos by privileging Aliya's subjective search for meaning in familial silences and absences. Her narrative, woven from fragmented genealogies, feminine myths, and whispered secrets, becomes a site of resistance against the patriarchal control of memory. By uncovering the story of Mariam and the "not-quite twins," Shamsie gives voice to those figures left out of grand historical

accounts, emphasizing how women's stories are not marginal but foundational to understanding the trauma of Partition (Shamsie 88). This aligns with Foucault's assertion that history should account for the discontinuities, dislocations, and silences that official archives ignore (Foucault 70).

Similarly, Enjeti's *The Parted Earth* constructs counter-memory through Deepa's silence and Shan's inherited trauma. The intergenerational and transcontinental structure of the novel reflects the way memory travels through the body, emotion, and affect, rather than through state-sanctioned history books. Shan's search for her roots becomes an act of feminist recovery, a way to reclaim a silenced matrilineal past. As Bell Hooks notes, "the margin is a site of resistance" where oppressed voices speak back to dominant power structures (Hooks 207). Enjeti's focus on maternal trauma, sexual violence, and emotional inheritance repositions memory not as an objective record but as a feminist space of survival and agency.

Both novels thus participate in a broader feminist epistemological project that refuses to treat history as fixed or gender-neutral. As Joan Scott argues, "gender is a useful category of historical analysis" because it exposes how knowledge production is shaped by systems of power (Scott 1067). Shamsie and Enjeti center the female body as an archive of memory, challenging the Cartesian separation between knowledge and emotion, body and text. The affective residues of Partition, shame, guilt, longing, and silence, are not mere by-products of trauma but active modes of resistance against erasure.

In reconceptualising memory as affective, embodied, and gendered, both texts reject linear historiography and open space for a decolonial, feminist archive. Through this counter-memory, they inscribe women's experiences as both politically significant and narratively central, thereby reclaiming epistemic authority and challenging the masculinist frameworks that have long governed national memory.

Kamila Shamsie's *Salt and Saffron* and Anjali Enjeti's *The Parted Earth* offer powerful literary interventions that challenge the erasures of official historiography. By transforming memory into a political and feminist act, both authors center women's experiences as vital to understanding the legacies of Partition. Their narratives expose how trauma is not only lived but also inherited, etched into silences, relationships, and diasporic identities.

Foregrounding gendered memory as both a narrative form and a mode of resistance, these novels dismantle patriarchal and nationalist frameworks. They reveal how literature can function as a counter-archive, restoring agency to marginalized voices, contesting hegemonic histories, and fostering intergenerational healing. In doing so, Shamsie and Enjeti reimagine memory not as a passive recollection of the past, but as an active reclamation of self, voice, and history.

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THE INTERSECTION OF MAGIC AND TECHNOLOGY: A CYBORGIAN COMPARISON OF HARRY POTTER AND LORD VOLDEMORT

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Abstract: This paper explores how both Harry Potter and his nemesis, Lord Voldemort, can be interpreted as cyborg figures. It also connects the Harry Potter universe with posthumanist theory to highlight the series' lasting impact on literature. J.K. Rowling uses issues such as wand ownership and the rights of magical creatures to reflect tensions between social hierarchies and the treatment of the "other." Notably, the creatures in the narrative are portrayed as diverse and multi-dimensional, moving beyond simplistic stereotypes. Harry himself is a hybrid figure—an orphan whose identity in the magical realm is marked by fragmentation, marginalization, and disconnection. This paper explores the recurring theme of life and death.

Keywords: Harry Potter, Technology, Posthumanism, Voldemort and Cyborgs.

The early members of Gen Z—often dubbed "Generation Zoomers" spent much of the early teen years immersed in movies like the *GoopyBagha Trilogy*, the *Feluda Series*, the James Bond films, Johnny English, and Mr. Bean. Yet, the *Harry Potter series* remains closest to hearts. When these films were encountered first, one did not realize they are the adaptations of a book series by J.K. Rowling. It was not until the pandemic, when people were confined at home, that they began reading the original novels. Around the same time, Posthumanism and Cyborg theory are explored, which sparked new questions in the minds: Could magic be considered a (post)human trait? Is Voldemort a Cyborg? Could Harry be one as well? And what about the students at Hogwarts—are they Cyborgs, too, aside from those born to Muggles? The answer to that final question is definitely 'no'.

The word 'Cyborg'—short for 'cybernetic organism'—refers to a being that blends organic biological components with technological modifications. This idea appears frequently in science fiction and, at times, in real-life innovations. In J.K. Rowling's beloved *Harry Potter* series, the story begins when Harry turns eleven, a crucial moment that introduces him to the world of magic and sets him on the path to becoming a wizard. This narrative deeply connects with the fantasies—the hope of discovering secret realms and setting off on remarkable adventures. The term 'cyborg' was first introduced in 1960 by Manfred E. Clynes and Nathan S. Kline in their essay "*Cyborgs and Space*," where they envisioned a modified human being equipped to survive in the extreme conditions of outer space:

For the exogenously extended organisational complex functioning as an integrated homeostatic system unconsciously, we propose the term "Cyborg." The Cyborg deliberately incorporates exogenous components extending the self-

regulatory control function of the organism in order to adapt it to new environments. (27)

The *Harry Potter* series chronicles Harry's journey through the enchanting world of magic and his lifelong battle against his ultimate nemesis, Lord Voldemort—two figures who stand as symbolic opposites, representing the fine line between humanity and inhumanity. A mysterious mental link binds Harry and the dark wizard, an unseen thread that connects them. The nature of this connection is fully uncovered in the final installment of the series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* (2007). In the first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (1997), when Voldemort attempted to kill Harry and his mother, Lily Potter, she protects Harry with an ancient and powerful magical charm known as "sacrificial protection." This enchantment causes Voldemort's killing curse to rebound, wounding him instead. In that moment, a fragment of Voldemort's soul unknowingly breaks away and latches onto Harry, creating a deep, unintended bond between their minds.

While the *Harry Potter* series is typically categorised as fantasy literature, the intention is to reinterpret it through the framework of posthuman theory. In particular, the focus is on analysing the two central antagonists—Harry and Voldemort—as cyborg figures, viewing their magical objects as forms of prosthetic enhancement. This analysis is informed by Katherine N. Hayles' chapter "Toward Embodied Virtuality" from her book *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. By adopting this perspective, the aim of this study is to investigate how the convergence of magic and technology shapes the identities as hybrid, posthuman beings.

The earlier definition of cyborgs goes beyond merely combining mechanical and human components. It involves a deeper investigation into the complex systems of communication and control that operate within these hybrid forms. In the prologue of her book, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, Katherine N. Hayles begins her analysis by separating the physical body from the notion of information. She does this by intentionally removing any anthropomorphic qualities, which enables a more precise study of the structural and informational dynamics that characterize posthuman life. Hayles argues that information exists independently of the medium that conveys it:

It would also necessarily bring into question other characteristics of the liberal subject, for it made the crucial move of distinguishing between the enacted body, present in the flesh on one side of the computer screen, and the represented body, produced through the verbal and semiotic markers constituting it in an electronic environment. This construction necessarily makes the subject into a cyborg, for the enacted and represented bodies are brought into conjunction through the technology that connects them. (Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*, xiii)

The story of *Harry Potter* revolves around the young wizard's continuous battle against the dark and ruthless Lord Voldemort, whose ultimate ambition is to seize total control of the magical world and subjugate those with non-pure wizarding heritage, along with other non-human magical creatures.

What initially began as a children's book series gradually transforms into an expansive and intricately developed magical universe. With its detailed world-building and layered themes, the series grows in depth and sophistication over time, appealing not only to younger readers but also captivating audiences of all ages through its unique fusion of fantasy and adventure.

The central character, Harry, begins his journey as a seemingly kind-hearted and athletic young boy who is mistreated by his relatives. His aunt and cousin are portrayed in the classic mold of the wicked stepmother and jealous siblings, reminiscent of traditional fairy tales. Through his courage, compassion, and talent in sports, Harry earns the admiration of his peers and becomes a popular figure at school.

However, Harry does not fully align with the conventional image of a heroic, masculine figure. As the narrative unfolds, Harry displays qualities often seen as feminine—such as emotional sensitivity and vulnerability. He is described as thin and, although he closely resembles his father, it is repeatedly emphasized that he has his mother's eyes. This is poignantly highlighted in Professor Snape's final words to Harry: "Look at me, you have your mother's eyes" (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*). Interestingly, other aspects of Harry's physical appearance are frequently left unspecified by the author, perhaps deliberately, allowing readers to project themselves onto him. This relatability may help explain the series' massive global success and record-breaking popularity.

Throughout Harry's prolonged struggle against Lord Voldemort, many moments depict him experiencing emotional distress and frustration, particularly in the final three books of the series. His impulsive actions are often not driven by arrogance, but rather by instinct—an instinct frequently linked to his mother's influence. Additionally, his strong dependence on his close friend Hermione Granger, as well as his deep emotional bond with non-human beings like the house-elf Dobby, add layers of complexity to his character.

These multifaceted traits push Harry beyond the limits of a conventional fantasy hero or a traditional masculine figure. His emotional sensitivity, connections with others, and openness to non-human companions reflect qualities that challenge the humanist ideal. These aspects of his character invite the readers to view him not simply as a typical protagonist, but as a posthuman figure—one shaped by relationality, hybridity, and emotional depth.

In the series, Dumbledore—the headmaster of Hogwarts—confirms that Harry Potter and Voldemort share strikingly similar backgrounds and traits. This is made clear when he tells Professor Snape, "a part of Voldemort lives inside him." Despite these similarities, the two ultimately grow into very different individuals. (*Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows – Part 2*).

Both can be understood as cyborg figures, but the role of prostheses in their lives differs significantly. For Voldemort, prosthetic elements like his wand serve merely as mechanical tools—means to exert control and instill fear, not to form meaningful connections. His use of magical artifacts is rooted in domination rather than relationality.

In contrast, Harry's journey reveals that becoming a cyborg involves more than just technological or magical extension; it also requires forming bonds—with people, non-human beings, and the wider universe. Their diverging paths highlight that true posthuman identity involves not just augmentation, but also empathy, interconnectedness, and the capacity to engage with the world on a deeper, more humane level.

To view Harry Potter as a cyborg, one must first examine the prosthetic devices he relies on: his glasses, his wands (both the phoenix feather wand and the Elder Wand), the Resurrection Stone, and the Cloak of Invisibility. According to Katherine Hayles, a cyborg is defined by the interaction between an information-bearing body and its prosthetics—tools that extend and enhance its functions.

Harry is consistently depicted wearing glasses, a detail that becomes central to his identity. He is exposed to struggle without them, suggesting that his dependence on this object is fundamental, positioning him as a cyborg from the outset. J.K. Rowling repeatedly emphasizes Harry's reliance on his glasses, especially in moments of danger and discovery, portraying them not just as visual aids but as crucial tools through which he experiences and navigates the magical world.

Upon entering the wizarding world, Harry acquires his wand—another key prosthesis. In the magical universe, wands are far more than instruments for spell casting; they are vital extensions of a witch or wizard's identity. These tools form a direct link between the individual and the vast, intricate system of magic, functioning as cybernetic connectors. A wand's bond with its user is deeply personal, to the extent that it reflects status, power, and belonging within the magical community. This profound dependence on wands reveals how central prosthetic devices are in shaping magical identity, reinforcing the idea that characters like Harry are, in essence, magical cyborgs.

This idea is clearly demonstrated in the series' final book, which focuses on the fierce battle for control of the Elder Wand. After Harry loses his original wand and Voldemort realises his own wand lacks sufficient power, the pursuit of the Elder Wand becomes crucial. This struggle emphasises the vital role these magical prosthetics play in empowering and defining the witches and wizards who wield them. The intense conflicts surrounding the Elder Wand highlight just how central wands are within this magical world.

Throughout the story, many of Harry's physical characteristics are intentionally left vague by the author, making him a figure with whom many readers can identify—a fact reflected in the series' record-breaking popularity. During Harry's prolonged fight against Voldemort, numerous scenes depict his frustration and emotional vulnerability, especially in the last three books. His impulsive actions are often driven not by pride but by instinct, closely linked to

his mother's influence. Furthermore, his deep reliance on his close friend Hermione Granger and his strong bonds with non-human beings like the house-elf Dobby add further layers to his character.

These complex traits push Harry beyond the typical fantasy hero or masculine archetype, as well as beyond a purely humanist identity. His emotional sensitivity and connections with others, including non-human beings and external worlds, invite the readers to reconsider him as a posthuman figure.

Subsequently, the Resurrection Stone may not be considered a prosthesis in the traditional sense since it does not alter the physical body directly. However, it extends the user's consciousness. For example, when

Harry uses the stone, it manifests his deepest desire—to reunite with his lost family—acting as a protective layer around his mind. Lastly, the Cloak of Invisibility serves as an outer shield that envelops his entire body. Together, the Resurrection Stone and the Invisibility Cloak protect Harry both physically and mentally, blocking Voldemort's connection to him. These three powerful artifacts—the Elder Wand, the Invisibility Cloak, and the Resurrection Stone—are known as the Deathly Hallows, rare and valuable prosthetic extensions that safeguard Harry as a cyborg.

The story begins with Harry as a baby in his cradle, witnessing the murder of his mother by Voldemort. This traumatic event causes a fragment of Voldemort's soul to attach itself to Harry, effectively marking him as a cyborg from the very start. A key moment reinforcing this idea occurs when Ollivander, the wandmaker who sells Harry his wand, tells him that “the wand chooses the wizard,” a concept he repeats in the series' final book. This suggests the existence of the advanced technology that remains mysterious even to its users, much like the enigmatic nature of prosthetics. It also highlights the significant adaptation required by individuals who rely on these prosthetic devices, emphasising the complex relationship between the user and their technological extensions.

To contrast and further develop the idea of Harry and Voldemort as two opposing cyborgs, one turns to Voldemort's own prosthetics. His most important one is his wand, made from a phoenix feather—the same source as the feather in Harry's wand. Unaware that a part of his soul resides within Harry, Voldemort is confused by the connection between their wands and seeks the Elder Wand to resolve this issue. This plot raises questions about prosthetics, such as whether one person's prosthesis can be used by another, and how similarities in the nature or material of prostheses influence the cybernetic connection between individuals or between a person and his or her environment.

Another of Voldemort's prostheses is his snake, Nagini, which serves as one of the Horcruxes—containers for fragments of his soul. Unlike typical prostheses defined as mechanical or inorganic parts, Nagini is a living being with a degree of independent agency. Choosing a living creature as a prosthesis challenges the traditional concept of cyborgs and expands the idea of prosthetics into a broader cybernetic network rather than just replaceable mechanical parts.

Voldemort's Horcruxes, acting as his prostheses, fragment his soul, dividing and dispersing his essence into separate pieces that cannot be easily reunited. These portable "data downloads" are integrated into the cybernetic network, but also create a vulnerability: once all Horcruxes are destroyed, Voldemort himself can be defeated. As Katherine Hayles explains, "[T]he posthuman subject is an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a material-informational entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction." (Hayles, "Toward Embodied Virtuality," 3) Because Voldemort cannot fully reassemble his fragmented material-informational self, he ultimately faces defeat.

In conclusion, it is argued that there is an ideal form of a cyborg. Since it is impossible to isolate a completely independent will free from external influences, the emphasis shifts to how subjectivity is constructed. Voldemort, as a cyborg figure, embodies the seductive appeal of information technology—driven by desires for unlimited power and a disembodied form of immortality. Yet, it is essential to acknowledge human limitations and recognises that human existence remains deeply connected to the complex, material world.

When comparing Harry Potter and Voldemort, one can see two different but related types of cyborgs. Voldemort fragments his information (his soul) and body, attempting to infiltrate other cybernetic systems. In contrast, Harry seeks to preserve the unity of his information throughout, using his prosthetic connections to support and strengthen his sense of wholeness rather than breaking it apart.

Thus, it is proposed that while a subject should be linked to a cybernetic network, it must not be rigidly defined or constrained. The subject should maintain its wholeness, with prosthetic components that are both detachable and replaceable. This balance allows the subject to uphold its integrity within the cybernetic system, embracing technological enhancements while preserving its fundamental human core.

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NAYLOR'S MATRIARCHS: MATERNAL FIGURES IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S LITERARY UNIVERSE

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Abstract: African American literature encompasses the stories of the struggle, survival and victories of the African American people. African American women hold a precarious position, constantly grappling with issues of identity, power and social malice. Mothers and motherhood are often symbols of strength, solidarity and social resistance in these communities. Gloria Naylor strategically uses matriarchal figures in her works to depict these issues and to challenge both racial and gendered oppression. This paper intends to delineate Naylor's use of African American matriarchal figures in her works as an instrument of solidarity and a tool to subvert societal oppression.

Keywords: African American literature, Oppression, Matriarchal Tradition and Solidarity.

Introduction

African American literature is a body of work created by persons of African descent living in the United States. The African American community faces discrimination on the grounds of their race, culture and language, and are marginalised politically, economically and even geographically by the dominant white society. Further, the women of the community lead a doubly marginalised existence in the white patriarchal society, disadvantaged by both gender and race. Hence, the work of African American women authors is a ground rife with exploration of multiple issues affecting them. Gloria Naylor's works are emblematic of the African American women's experience. Her contemporaries, Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Maya Angelou, also deal with issues affecting African American women, but Naylor's portrayal stands apart with her use of magic realist spaces and the episodic narrative structure of her works, with multiplicity of voices.

Sociologically, matriarchy is a gender ideology where women are at the centre of social structure and exercise authority, and control power and wealth. However, as Jennifer Healy points out, it's *just* an ideology—not a dominant one, and certainly not hegemonic (3). Literary texts throughout cultures have still tried to explore themes of matriarchy and matrilineal societies, and African American literature dominates heavily in that space, commonly featuring the character of a mother or a matriarch. This character, however, is the site of a stereotype, portraying the African American mothers as domineering, emasculating and inherently responsible for the brokenness of black homes and societies. However, this stereotype also discounts the truth of black male incarceration, racial prejudice and the deeply entrenched patriarchal structures, even in black societies. Patricia Collins traces the genesis of this

black mother figure back to the slave societies where the men would work in the fields and the women would inadvertently work in the households of their white masters. She points out how “the Mammy [is] the faithful, devoted domestic servant” (286). However, “when she enters her own home, this same Mammy is transformed into the second image, the too-strong matriarch who raises weak sons and “unnaturally superior” daughters” (Collins 286). The unfortunate drawback of this stereotype is the lack of recognition given to African American women who have to step up to familial and communal responsibilities and are not given a choice.

Naylor’s Matriarchs

Gloria Naylor, in her works, tries to complicate these opposing views of black matriarchy through several characters in her works *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982), *Linden Hills* (1985), *Mama Day* (1988) and *Bailey’s Café* (1992). Through her characters, she showcases a diverse range of black mothers, often a source of strength and solidarity to the other characters, and also points out the misfortune of some characters in the face of the loss of black mothers. Motherhood, in Naylor’s works, and in most African American communities, is not restricted to women who are biological mothers, but often harkens the image of a ‘Mammy’ to be mothers or foster mothers to children in the black community and society. As Collins points out, “[i]n African-American communities, the boundaries distinguishing biological mothers of children from other women who care for children are often fluid and changing” (288). Through these filial relations, women often do the role of ‘other mothers’, step up to embrace children of other women, voluntarily or circumstantially, and often lead to an informal adoptive mother-like relationship. Women who accept this role at a larger scale of the entire community are often termed as ‘community othermothers’. Within African American societies, “[m]otherhood, whether blood mother, othermother, or community other mother, can be invoked by Black women as a symbol of power” (Collins 290). Similarly, in most of Naylor’s works, these maternal relationships are central to the characters’ development of self, and a lack of this relationship often turns detrimental to their very existence.

Foster Mother and Motherhood in *The Women of Brewster Place*

Brewster Place (BP) is a residential building on a dead end street, inhabited majorly by African American women. Mattie Michael is the primary character, who serves as the community othermother to the younger women of BP, following the steps of her own foster mother, Eva Turner. Mattie, originally from Tennessee, is an outcaste by her religious father after she gets pregnant. After multiple struggles to find housing with her infant boy, Basil, Mattie finally finds a foster mother in Eva Turner, who welcomes her into her house and let her board there for free. Eva, an ‘othermother’ to her granddaughter, Lucelia and caretaker of Mattie’s son, is a strong presence in Mattie’s life, who reinstalls Mattie’s faith in herself and gives her a financial footing, so that Mattie shall buy Eva’s house from her heirs after her death. As Eva’s life comes closer to an end, Mattie recognises Eva as an ‘othermother’ and thinks to herself how she “didn’t want to imagine facing the loss of another

mother” (*Brewster* 39). However, soon after Mattie buys Eva’s house, she loses it in trying to keep her son out of prison and lands up in Brewster Place as a middle-aged woman, caring for the other women as a support system. “She becomes community mother to the young women of Brewster Place, comforting them and being there in times of crisis” (*Khaleghi* 134). She advises and protects them from social and racial prejudice and even takes cares of grieving Lucelia, Eva’s granddaughter living in BP, after she loses her child. The birth mothers, both Eva and Mattie, end up mothering many others apart from their own children, bringing strength and solidarity to other women, while both fitting into and breaking apart from the stereotype of a black motherhood.

Matriarchy in *Mama Day*

Naylor’s third novel is set in Willow Springs, an island off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina, but not falling under the jurisdiction of either. Willow Springs is a magic realist island steeped in the legend of Sapphira Wade, a slave woman, conjurer and foremother of the islanders, who persuades her master, Bascombe Wade, to will the island to her. In their references to Sapphira, the islanders believe her to be goddess-like, “something older, more powerful, and truly divine” and from her legend, they receive strength, knowledge, comfort and their very identity (*Cowart* 451). Miranda “Mama” Day, the titular character, traces her lineage back to Sapphira, along with her sister Abigail and her granddaughter, Cocoa. Much like Sapphira, the community mother for the entire island, historically and spiritually, Miranda serves as the present community mother. As Collins asserts: In local Black communities, specific Black women are widely recognized as powerful figures, primarily because of their contributions to the community’s wellbeing through their roles as community othermothers. (290)

During her childhood, Mama Day was fondly named “Little Mama” (*Mama* 88) when she took care of her grieving mother and her younger sister Abigail after the untimely death of her sister Peace. Although Miranda is childless, she has birthed several children as a mid-wife “into the hundreds. [She’s] [e]verybody’s mama now” (*Mama* 89). Not just to the island, she also serves as another mother to Cocoa, Abigail’s granddaughter, who’s raised by the two grandmothers, in the absence of her own mother Grace. Cocoa herself muses, “together they were the perfect mother” (*Mama* 58). Miranda’s knowledge of the island’s topography, her magical powers, ancient knowledge and wisdom coupled with her kind demeanour, make her the Mama Day that the islanders revere. When Cocoa is attacked by Ruby’s black magic, Mama Day saves her life. Whenever there is a fight to be fought with dominant white authorities staking claim to their land, Mama Day steps up. Hence, even though both Sapphira Wade and Mama Day are synonymous to the black mother at first glance, their powers and their roles in their society set them apart as matriarchs who nurture, provide and care but can also wreak havoc or utilize stringent means to meet their community’s ends.

Motherhood in *Bailey’s Café*

Bailey’s Café (1992) is another magic realist novel by Gloria Naylor, where a magical street in the middle of nowhere houses three magical

structures: a Jewish Pawnshop that never opens for business, a Café that opens into the end of the world and a boarding-house for women in distress. The boarding-house is run by Eve, a woman who acts as a community mother to several boarders. However, unlike the notion of community mothers giving care and support, Eve propagates tough love. Coming from a religious adoptive family, Eve becomes an outcast from her home by her priest foster-father for the blasphemous act of female masturbation. Leaving her home behind, Eve travels for a thousand years and starts her boarding-house, alternatively a bordello, where she helps the women reconcile their past horrors and pain, rest and rejuvenate to face the future. She builds a personal relationship with all her boarders, and helps them equally. However, she goes the extra mile for Jesse Bell, a heroin addict who is on the verge of losing her life to addiction. Eve helps her sober up by putting her through the gruelling cycle of withdrawal, temptation and finally, sobriety. She also goes out of her way to accommodate Miriam, a young girl from the Ethiopian Jewish community, who ends up on the street, outcast by her family due to her virgin pregnancy. In spite of Eve's reputation as a tough person, when describing Miriam's story, the narrator notes, "I finally saw Eve cry" (*Bailey's* 143). Eve gives her a place to stay, and aids her in the birth of her child, reaffirming her role as an 'other mother.' Her strength, persistence, discipline, authority and tough love make her the matriarch that is aware of her considerable powers and wields them ably.

Lack of Mothers in *Linden Hills*

Linden Hills (1985) is the most pivotal one of Naylor's novels to break free from the image of the black matriarch. Yet, in breaking free, it leaves a gaping hole. The protagonist of the novel, Luther Needed, is the fifth-generation owner of Linden Hills, a highly aspirational and wealthy black neighbourhood. The first Luther Needed bought the land, ran a morgue-cum-funeral service and gave black families "a thousand year-and-a-day lease – provided only that they passed their property on to their children" (*Linden* 7). He also laid down a clear set of instructions for not just running the business, but of leading a personal life as well. He wrote of the criteria and process of choosing a wife, impregnating her in a particular manner and of raising the child, a male offspring that looked exactly like the father before him. The patriarchal nature of the Needed's pushes away Willa Prescott Needed, the fifth Luther's wife, when she gives birth to a seemingly white son. Luther suspects her of infidelity and incarcerates her in the basement with her son. Once her son dies, grief stricken, Willa searches for meaning and her own identity. She looks for a friend, a mother or a figure she can find solace in. She harkens back to previous Mrs. Needed's, the foremothers who bore all the previous Luther Needed's. In their recipe-books, the Bibles and belongings stored in trunks, she uncovers their identities, reconciles with her own and is able to find the strength to escape her imprisonment and fight off the final Luther, engulfing him, his house and his pride in an all-consuming fire. The lack of a maternal figure is very apparent in this novel, but Willa's search for the history of the Needed women's accounts emphasises the importance of a motherly figure in the lives of black women, to be their support and counsel in times of absolute

need.

Matriarchy, maternal figures and ‘othermothers’ are a common trope in African American women’s literature. However, these figures hold historical ties to the stereotype of domination, emasculation and degeneration within black communities. Many authors have tried to repaint this image, with efforts to subvert this stereotype. Gloria Naylor, too, in all four of her novels, uses the image of a matriarch, juxtaposed against this stereotype, and showcases through her characters an embracing of the stereotype while breaking away from it. In her first novel, *The Women of Brewster Place*, she portrays both Eva Turner and Mattie Michael as women who become othermothers to several other children apart from their own, nurturing them to brave life’s adversities and providing strength. In spite of a strong portrayal of motherhood in BP, Naylor chooses to write her second novel, *Linden Hills*, without a matriarchal figure, making apparent through her story, how indispensable black mothers are in their families and communities and how the lack of one can impact not just one woman, but an entire community. In her subsequent works, *Mama Day* and *Bailey’s Café*, she brings the matriarchal figure back with the powerful characters of Sapphira Wade, Miranda Day and Eve, reasserting the significance of such characters in the lives of their community. Thus, Naylor’s matriarchs, in presence or absence, break apart from the stereotype and enrich the literary canon of black motherhood through multifaceted portrayals of African American mothers, othermothers and community othermothers in her various works.

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UNCOVERING DIASPORIC IDENTITY IN RAJASREE VARIYAR'S *DAUGHTERS OF MADURAI*

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Abstract: This paper explores the theme of diasporic identity in Rajasree Variyar's novel, *Daughters of Madurai* and how it influences generational silence, emotional distance from homeland and a need to reconnect with one's roots. The protagonist, Nila, is raised in Australia with Indian roots. Her visits to Madurai mark a journey of self-discovery and uncover her mother's past. Her experience highlights the emotional struggles of living between two cultures and life as a second – generation immigrant.

Keywords: Cultures, Diasporic Identity, Homeland, Immigrants and Self- discovery.

Diasporic identity refers to a sense of self, belonging and cultural understanding experienced by individuals or communities who live outside their ancestral homeland. The major features of Diaspora are hybridity, displacement and generation difference. The aim of this paper is to critically engage with the theme of diasporic identity in the Rajasree Variyar's *The Daughters of Madurai*. This paper draws upon the theory of hybridity by Homi. K. Bhabha to contextualise the Protagonist's experience.

Rajasree Variyar was born in Bangalore and brought up in Sydney. Initially she started her career as a short story writer and won the second prize in Shooter Literary Magazine short story competition. *The Daughters of Madurai* is Variyar's debut novel published on February 28, 2023. The inspiration of this book is her childhood recollection of a news report about a case of a female infanticide in Bangalore. She is currently working at Grassroots Charity in Madurai to empower women, and educate girls and boys. This story is the compelling narrative of hybrid identity through the lens of gender memory and cultural duality.

In today's global world, people are constantly moving across borders. They migrate for work, flee from war or relocate for education. This created hybrid cultural identities that is an amalgamation of two or more cultures. Bhabha argues, because of migration, diaspora and displacement, cultural identity is no longer fixed. It becomes fluid and complex. This hybridity challenges fixed national identities and creates in between space, where meaning of identity is often negotiated and redefined. Bhabha suggests that culture is always in motion and reshaped by global movement. When people move across countries and cultures, their identity does not remain the same. Instead, they change, mix and create new form. This idea is clearly expressed through the character Nila, a second-generation Indian immigrant. Her character depicts the struggles of living between two cultures. The novel shifts between two time periods, the patriarchy society of 1990s Madurai, a place in Tamilnadu, India where Nila's mother Janani was born in Australia and where

Nila was raised. These clearly explain how cultural displacement manifests as both a burden and a bridge between generations.

Janani grows up in India, in a traditional Tamil family, where she is expected to follow strict customs including the pressure of giving birth to a son. However, when she escapes to Australia, her life begins to change. She slowly adapts to a new lifestyle, gains more freedom and raises her daughter in a different culture. This shift from India to Australia is not just physical but it is also an emotional, cultural and psychological struggle. Nila is living between two worlds, the modern liberal life in Australia and the traditional, hidden past of mother's Indian life. She represents a new cultural identity. She undergoes a hybrid experience in the entire novel.

The novel captures the duality of Nila's existence in her homeland. She was born in India but raised in Australia. She celebrates western customs. She identifies herself more with Australian values than Indian traditions, but her appearance, family traditions and heritage constantly remind her that she is from Australia. Her identity crises show up when she meets people in Madurai. Her confusion over language and discomfort with Indian traditions make her feel detach from her place.

Nila variyar shows the disconnection of second-generation immigrants from their homelands. She is floating in between different cultures. This clearly matches Homi. K. Bhabha's Third Space. He defines diasporic identity as hybrid. A mix of the old culture (homeland) and the new (host country). Nila is neither entirely Australian nor Indian. This sense makes her find the meaning of selfhood. According to Nila's mother, Madurai is a place of trauma and for Nila, it becomes a space of revelation. Initially the place is overwhelming for her. The crowded streets, unfamiliar language and social norms of India challenge her diasporic sensibility. When she uncovers her mother's past, she begins to understand her mother's silence, her family's pain and her own disconnection. Then the place Madurai transforms into a site of healing and rediscovery. Her sense of self grows from dislocation, and hybrid position (Indian- Australian) becomes the ground on which she finds meaning and voice. Bhabha urges one to rethink political and cultural ideas by accepting the ambivalence (mixed nature) of identities. Understanding the Third Space helps one move beyond rigid binaries and better express diverse experiences. His insight on cultural identity is ambivalent. It carries both empowerment and conflict. The postcolonial subject often resists and adopts aspects of the dominant culture. In the novel, Janani's life reflects ambivalence though she is oppressed by traditional practices like female infanticide. She also uses element of culture such as motherhood and silence as a tool of resistance and protection. On the other hand, Nila struggles between Tamil heritage and the norms of Western modernity. Their identities are marked by duality. This duality or ambivalence mirrors Homi. K. Bhabha's notion of cultural differences where identity is seen as fluid rather than a fixed identity. Janani's struggles become a reservoir of resilience, and her transitional experiences offer a fresh lens to view both her ancestral and cultural worlds. This leads to cultural survival and transformation.

At the end of the novel, Rajasree Variyar shows how living between two cultures can be both confusing and empowering. The protagonist Nila's journey allows her to embrace her bicultural identity without choosing one culture over the other but to find a balance and meaning in both the worlds. Bhabha's theory of hybridity helps one to understand Third Space. Rajasree's story unfolds a powerful life of a young woman and reminds the readers that identity is not fixed. Identity grows and is shaped by choices, memories and connections.

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WOUNDS THAT REMEMBER: MAPPING TRAUMA AND MEMORY THROUGH THE VOICES OF WOMEN

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Abstract: This paper explores trauma, memory and female voice under the lens of Cathy Caruth's trauma theory. The primary sources chosen to study this intersectionality are *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson and *Ruins* by Rajathi Salma. In common, both the texts depict how sexual trauma affects personal identity and shatters the memory spectrum. The protagonist Melinda in *Speak*, reclaims her voice through art and in *Ruins*, the voices are buried in name of culture and family pressure. This also shows how dealing with trauma also differs from one culture to another. The paper explores the universality of sexual violence and diverse paths to healing.

Keywords: Trauma, Memory Studies, Healing, Sexual Violence, Culture and Feminism.

Introduction

Trauma is a trans-boundary, trans-identity, trans-cultural concept that has a profound, albeit commonly damaging, influence on personal and collective memory. Cathy Caruth, one of the most influential scholars of trauma, places emphasis upon trauma's persistence, proposing that trauma is not an event of the past but an ongoing influence on the present. Her view offers profound understandings of the emotional and psychological effects of trauma, particularly with reference to sexual violence. This essay explores the complex relationships among trauma, memory, and the female voice in Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* and Rajathi Salma's *Ruins*. Although they are written in the context of different cultural settings—Western American and South Indian—these two novels synchronise in their portrayal of the way sexual trauma changes identity and memory, and how recovery differs based on sociocultural factors. By comparing both the narratives in the light of Caruth's trauma theory and feminist literary criticism, the paper underscores the universalisation of sexual trauma and the culturally specific forms that women take in addressing and attempting to heal from such trauma. It further reflects on larger societal effects, the function of institutions, and the necessity of promoting safe spaces where survivors can reveal their stories and be heard.

Cathy Caruth and the Theory of Trauma

Cathy Caruth defines trauma as a powerful occurrence that cannot be fully processed during the occurrence itself. She posits that trauma inherently has a connection with delayed understanding or a re-experiencing of the event through flashbacks, nightmares, and recurring events. This understanding presents trauma as an interruption in narrative wherein the person who experienced it tends to find difficulty in articulating the occurrence plainly. Her own theories owe a debt to Freud's work on trauma but emphasise the role of narrative and the disjunctive, piecemeal way in which trauma can be recalled. She identifies the paradox of trauma: an experience not fully perceived at the time but one that continuously and intrusively reappears later on. The survivor is caught in a cycle of remembering and reliving that never gets resolved. For

her, literature is the one and only domain that can possibly convey such complexity. She writes that literature "bears witness to a truth that cannot be fully known and yet demands to be told" (Caruth 4).

Narratives and texts are central in terms of gaining access to and communicating traumatic memory, as argued by Caruth. Trauma narratives break traditional linear narratives using fractured timelines, memory lacunae, and symbolism. For women who are the common victims of sexual violence, narratives become a site of struggle and a site of transformation where silence and speech struggle to dominate. Both *Speak* and *Ruins* demonstrate this struggle through their depictions of heroes who first lose their voices but then work to regain them through art or reflective writing.

Trauma and Memory in *Speak*

Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* is a novel about Melinda Sordino, a first-year high school student who becomes mute after being raped by one of the older students. The experience traumatises her and splits her identity and ability to engage with her environment. Melinda's muteness symbolises her internal pain and the society's failure to observe her pains. Her silence is not merely silence; it is an in-depth expression of the psychological hold of trauma. In *Speak*, memory is presented as disjointed and untrustworthy. Melinda cannot recall the full specifics of her assault, her memories are coming out sporadically in the form of visual and emotional references. Her art therapy is a safe space in which she slowly reconstructs the event and her response to it. Drawing a tree, she slowly brings her conflict out into the world, echoing Caruth's belief that trauma returns in oblique and symbolic ways. The process of art-making allows Melinda to convey what she cannot yet put into words. Melinda's solitude in school, compounded by the miscomprehension and ostracism by her peers, mirrors the social stigma normally experienced by sexual violence victims. She becomes emotionally withdrawn and does not obey the common teenage norms, thus creating a severance. She is not noticed by her parents, teachers, and peers as having symptoms of trauma, creating a shared breakdown of institutions responsible for protecting the teenager.

Melinda's final confrontation with her assailant and her newfound capability to speak about the crime mark the beginning of her healing process. Her voice, previously muted by degrees of guilt and terror, re-emerges as a powerful force of self-definition and rebellion. *Speak* makes clear that healing is not instantaneous and absolute, rather it is possible through self-expression and assertion. It also points out that even within communities that seem supportive, systemic apathy can prevail. As literary scholar Sarah Donovan notes, "Anderson crafts Melinda's voice not simply as a recovery of speech, but as a challenge to the silence that culture imposes on survivors of rape" (Donovan 89). Scholars like Leigh Gilmore have emphasized the significance of testimonial writing in feminist literature. In *The Limits of Autobiography*, Gilmore explains that the "credibility gap" faced by female survivors often silences them. *Speak*, in this context, functions as a literary testimonial, bridging the gap between trauma and belief (Gilmore 25).

Silenced Voices and Cultural Constraints in *Ruins*

Rajathi Salma's *Ruins* is a narrative that is thematically connected but otherwise quite different. The narrative considers the lives of women whose existence is governed by rigid patriarchal norms within a conservative Tamil Muslim society. In contrast to *Speak*, which takes place in a liberal high school, *Ruins* depicts a society where trauma and female desire are consistently subordinated in the name of cultural decency and family honor.

Salma's narrative highlights the cumulative effect of continued sexual and emotional suppression over a period of time instead of an isolated ghastly event. Metaphor and poetic contemplation shatter the voice of the protagonist. In this work, trauma touches generations of women brought up to depathologize pain so that it becomes both intimate and public. The house in *Ruins* itself is used as a metaphor for confinement and the repression of female agency.

To illustrate the way the pain of daily repression merges with lived experience, the memories of the protagonist often blur with dreams, hallucinations, and metaphors. These women are denied autonomy, schooling, and even their own bodies. Silence is not merely imposed but also passed down in this environment from mother to daughter as a means of survival.

In *Ruins*, memory is bound to the body, which is a battleground for domination and a source of desire. The protagonist recalls moments of forced marriage, brutality, and trampled dreams as an ongoing reality and not as specific events. Caruth's trauma as belated and recurring is incarnated in these memories, which disrupt the linear narrative structure. Salma's lyricism is a subversive space where the unthinkable reaches. As Suneetha Balakrishnan observes, "Salma transforms the personal into the political by weaving everyday female experiences into a larger tapestry of systemic oppression" (Balakrishnan). As Gayatri Spivak emphasizes in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", the voices of marginalized women are often overwritten by dominant discourses. *Ruins* echoes this argument, where the protagonist's silence becomes a symbol of structural erasure (Spivak 104).

Comparative Cultural Frameworks

The prism of culture through which trauma is dealt with and articulated is one of the most fascinating aspects of the contrast between *Speak* and *Ruins*. In *Speak*, Melinda battles her trauma in a relatively open society that allows for both therapy support and personal articulation, and she ultimately finds healing through art. Her progression is not without misunderstanding and social isolation. The school environment is a microcosm of victimization and societal apathy.

Conversely, however, the heroine's path to healing in *Ruins* is neither linear nor clear. The degree of healing is limited by the inability of the community to see the pain of women. Silence becomes a form of resistance and survival mechanism. This paradox shows how trauma is a culturally mediated as well as a psychological state. The exercise of remembering and speaking oneself is made revolutionary in Salma's universe, where reputation often overwhelms individual suffering. A more nuanced understanding of such

dynamics is facilitated by Caruth's theory. While trauma provokes narrative and memory disruption in all cases, cultural norms significantly influence how individuals cope with or conceal their suffering. A clear understanding of these texts is therefore enabled by the intersection of trauma theory with feminist and postcolonial critique. It allows one to see trauma as a state embedded in the dynamics of power instead of just as a personal sickness.

The Role of Art and Language in Healing

Both books express trauma in terms of artwork. Melinda discovers that the only way that she can safely articulate her feelings is on canvas. Her tree designs, symbols of renewal and strength, shift as she becomes emotionally mature. These expressive images precede her eventual vocal expression, which means healing often begins in nonverbal methods. Creation is a reluctant, broken, and highly personal process, much like healing.

In *Ruins*, the protagonist employs metaphor and poetry as tools for regaining agency. As a poet herself, Salma negotiates the intricacies of feminine sexuality and suffering in a culture that represses women using poetic diction. Following Caruth's assertion that trauma subverts conventional narrative, the fractured narrative mimics the traumatized subject's fractured mind. In this case, poetry can speak where language fails; it is used as form and resistance.

Language in both texts is communicative as much as transformational. It allows the protagonists to become something else besides victims. Expressing, either in poetry or visual work or in speech, is inherently therapeutic. Most importantly, the narrative power in both these texts challenges the institutional suppressing of women's narratives and offers individual catharsis.

Feminist Readings and the Politics of Voice

The institutionalized marginalization of female voice in Eastern and Western society, though differently, is exposed by a feminist reading of these texts. *Ruins* investigates how gender, religion, and class intersect in Indian society, while *Speak* subverts victim-blaming and culture of silence rampant in American secondary schools. The texts show how the core tenets of patriarchy persist even with differences in silencing techniques. Reclaiming the feminine voice becomes a political project in both cases. The patriarchal notion that victims must be silenced is violated by Melinda's voice. Likewise, *Ruins'* protagonist exposes her community's hypocrisies through reflexive narration. Regardless of their differing formats, their voices affirm female subjectivity and disrupt oppressive regimes. Voice, here, is a statement of being as well as a method of speaking.

This reading is enhanced by Caruth's theory, which focuses on how trauma disrupts linear chronology and narrative coherence. This is built on by feminist trauma theory, highlighting the gendered nature of pain and the sociopolitical barriers to healing. From this vantage point, both books underscore the paramount importance of sites that validate women's experiences and promote group healing. As Suzette Henke argues, "Narrative recovery is central to women's writing of trauma, offering a form of scrip to

therapy where the act of writing becomes itself a mode of healing” (Henke 13).

Trauma Beyond the Individual: Community and Solidarity

The role that communities have in enabling healing or perpetuating trauma is another significant element of these tales. In *Speak*, Melinda's art teacher and some students who come to empathise with her struggle figure into her eventual validation. These small but powerful moments illustrate the significance of group empathy and support to the recovery process. On the other hand, the majority of the people in *Ruins* participate in the continuation of trauma. Family expectations, religious doctrine, and patriarchal customs all work together to silence the main character and many other women who are similar to her. Nonetheless, there are hints of female solidarity—quiet resistance and shared stories—that raise the prospect of a societal awakening. Consequently, Salma's narrative shifts the focus from individual trauma to structural critique and the potential for grassroots female resistance. Memory, trauma, and the voice of women juxtaposes and compares *Speak* and *Ruins* to analyse the multifaceted dimension of sexual trauma. The article underscores how trauma reconstructs memory and identity, often silencing the female voice, using the lens of Cathy Caruth's theory of trauma. Yet, both works reveal that reconstruction through narrative and art can generate healing.

The heroine of *Ruins* evokes a more complex and culture-bound type of resistance, while Melinda in *Speak* chooses a path of recovery through art and eventual fighting back. Both these books show that trauma is a global experience. They are powerful testaments to the tenacity of the female spirit and the transfigurative power of language. They compel the reader to confront the prevalent reality of sexual assault and to acknowledge the multiple paths towards recovery and self-determination. They emphasise that speaking stories constitute an act of revolutionary agency, reclaiming within the context of trauma and they are not merely acts of expression.

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ECOCRITICISM - ECOLOGICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND LAND CONSERVATION THROUGH THE LENS OF JOHN STEINBECK'S LITERARY LANDSCAPES

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Abstract: Ecocriticism is a literary approach that explores the interconnection between literature and the natural environment. The theory of ecocriticism emerged in 1990s. This article uses the critical framework of ecocriticism to examine environmental degradation and cultural identity of the land through the themes of ecological loss and the interconnection of human and non-human relationship. This article analyses the ecological consciousness in Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* (1945) and *The Pearl* (1947) and the disruption of the harmony between family and natural world.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecological Consciousness, Human Impact and Protection of Land.

Introduction

The environment is constantly changing. It is so important to become aware of the problems that surround it. Global warming leads to the rising temperatures of the oceans and the earth's surface causing natural disasters like flooding, melting of polar ice caps, rise in sea levels and unnatural level of precipitation such as flash floods, hurricanes, wildfires, drought, excessive snow or desertification. At present, forest covers over 30% of the land but every year the tree cover is lost to make the land available for residential, industrial or commercial purpose. Due to the increase in temperature of the atmosphere, by burning fossil fuels and release of gases by industries, there is climatic change. Acid rain occurs due to the presence of certain pollutants in the atmosphere mainly because of the burning fossil fuels. Moreover, volcanoes release harmful gases into the atmosphere. The most important and significant cause of environment deterioration is the overuse of natural resources through which the natural environment is compromised by reducing the biological diversity, deforestation, land disturbance and landfills, increasing pollution, population growth, impacts of urbanisation, and increased transportation, ozone depletion are the most pressing challenges of the 21st century. In the face of the mounting environmental crises, literature has become a vital space for renewal. Ecocriticism, an critical approach exploring the relationship between literature and natural environment, plays a prominent role in reshaping human attitudes toward nature and the preservation of the Land. John Ernst Steinbeck (1902), a Pulitzer Prize winning renowned American author born in Salinas Valley, California won Nobel Prize in 1962. Most of his works are set in his native Salinas Valley. Steinbeck emphasises the balance in ecosystem as both natural and social in *Cannery Row* (1945). The tidal pool ecosystem reflects the lives of the characters in Monterey. Doc, the protagonist, a marine biologist stands

for moral and ecological center of the novel, loosely based on Steinbeck's real-life friend, Edward Ricketts. He is portrayed as a philosopher-naturalist who considers life an interconnected web. He reflects biocentrism as an idea that all life has value. Steinbeck's *The Pearl* (1947) through ecological perspectives analyse the relationship between people and nature. Steinbeck presents nature as powerful and responsive force. A natural object becomes a symbol of greed and environmental disruption. The protagonist Kino lives in harmony with nature. Kino embodies traditional ecological consciousness where human life is integrated with the environment.

Exploring Ecological Identity in the Fabric of *Cannery Row* (1945)

Cannery Row (1945) is set during the Great Depression in a small coastal town in Monterey, California on a street lined with Sardine Canneries known as Cannery Row. Doc, a marine biologist who runs the Western Biological Laboratory studies the local sea life. His character is based on Steinbeck's real-life friend, Ed Ricketts. His Lab symbolises the intersection of human and natural ecosystem. Doc is deeply connected with the natural world portrays with unique perspective. He is driven by the genuine love for the creatures he studies and desires to see them in their natural habitat. Mack, the leader of a ragtag group of vagabonds is good-hearted and lives in an old fishmeal shack. Hazel, Eddie, Hughie, and Jones are Mack's friends. Lee Chong, a Chinese grocer and a benevolent helping man, functions as the vital economic backbone of *Cannery Row*. He represents the steady persistence in the ecosystem. Mack and his friends stay together in the building which Lee Chong has bought from Horace Abbeville. Dora Flood is a business woman at the Bear Flag Restaurant. She represents a symbiotic relationship within a Row's Ecosystem. She creates a stable ecologically micro habitat for her operation which allows contribution to the larger Row. Steinbeck uses 'Tide Pool' as a metaphor for *Cannery Row*. The Pacific Ocean acts as the source of wonder providing food like sardines, crabs, frogs for Doc. Mack and his friends do nice things for Doc in order to get his appreciation they have an idea of throwing a success party. Since Mack realises there is no money to arrange the party, he asks Doc if he has some work for them. Doc needs frog to fulfill an order. He tells Mack that he will pay him nickel per frog. Mack borrows the truck from Lee Chong. Mack and his friends do ecological study of human adaptation. They demonstrate the environmental scarcity and natural ecosystem of Cannery Row. Mack and the boys camp out on a piece of land for their frog hunt. Doc drives to La Jolla to collect baby Octopi. When he peers off the edge of the reef he sees the dead girl in the water. The boys gather at Doc's laboratory and festivities starts however Doc does not return until the following morning. The party is over and all the frogs escaped. When Doc gets back to his lab, the records are smashed and the windows are broken. Mack meekly apologises, and Doc relents. Mack and the boys outcast. The party debacle and all of Cannery Row sinks into malaise. The boys' beloved puppy, Darling, falls ill. Later Doc's advice proves to be helpful and Darling recovers soon. Dora suggests throwing a party for Doc again. Mack plans to arrange a birthday party for Doc. All Cannery Row knows about the party except Doc. The night party

blossoms into a lively fun. Doc reads poem to the crow and renders them pensive and nostalgic for the lost ones.

***The Pearl* (1947) as a Mirror of Ecological Imbalance**

The Pearl (1947) is John Steinbeck's fourteenth novel. It is set in La Paz Mexico in 1940s, a coastal city in Baja California Sur, Mexico. The discovery of the pearl ironically acts as a catalyst for ecological and social imbalance. The sea provides the food, income, and spiritual connection to the world. Kino, Juana and their infant son, Coyotito lead a simple harmonious life close to nature. They totally depend on the sea for food. The protagonist, Kino, a poor pearl diver leads a simple life with his wife Juana, who is practical and wants to protect their son Coyotito. Their existence is deeply rooted into nature. They are dependent on the sea and maintains harmony with the rhythms of environment. Coyotito is stung by a Scorpion. Doctor refuses to come to give treatment. Kino, Juana, Coyotito and their neighbors proceed together to the city. The Doctor's servant informs Kino that the doctor will not be able to see them and insulted them by the mere notion "Cure insect bites for little Indians" without compensation. Kino infuriated by the Doctor's evident discrimination punches the gate. Kino and Juana set in their canoe and Kino dives into the sea floor and finds one oyster. He finds an enormous valuable pearl within it which quickly becomes a disruption. He starts reflecting the chaos with greed and ambition. Discovery of pearl results in exploitation, violence and ecological dissonance. 'The Pearl' symbolises human greed, desire to dominate nature. Kino becomes alienated from the natural world. Steinbeck critiques the capitalist that exploit both people and natural world. Kino sees the pearl as a means to rise socially and economically. The priest visits the brush house to remind Kino and Juana to thank God. The Doctor who initially refuses to treat Kino's son, later inspired by the news of the pearl arrives to give treatment for baby as a symbol of profit. Kino promises to pay Doctor by selling the pearl. The pearl dealers undervalue the pearl which shows how colonial economies exploit natural resources without respect. Kino and Juana visit pearl dealers. That night he kills the attacker and is guilt of the murder. They arrive to the canoe for their departure. As Kino tries to escape with his family into the mountains, the family seeks refuge in Juan Thomas's house. They left to the North at nighttime. The family retreats into a cave on a mountainside, pursued by the trackers, Kino attacks them, though Kino succeeds in killing the men, Coyotito has already been shot dead by the tracker's bullet. The cry explores the ecological and moral collapse. Juana and Kino walked back to the village with Coyotito's dead body in Juana's shawl, Kino throws the pearl back into the sea. The sea gives the pearl and receives it again. This moment shows the return to the ecological consciousness. Through Kino's journey, Steinbeck warns against the commodification of nature and advocates for a life well in balance with the natural world. Through the view of ecological crises, *The Pearl* resonates as a timeless urging of an ecological awareness, humility and ethical responsibility.

By foregrounding Doc's ecological perspective and portraying the community as a kind of social tide pool, Steinbeck dissolves the boundary

between human and nonhuman worlds. His characters are not isolated individuals but are a part of a larger environmental and moral order. *Cannery Row* embodies a form of ecological consciousness foreshadowing modern environmental thought. Steinbeck tide pool environment is a metaphor of life and underscores a delicate balance between nature and society. His ecocentric narrative challenges anthropocentric worldview human as participants within the broader ecological system. Steinbeck is influenced by his close friend Ed Ricketts and embeds ecological philosophy in the novel. Doc's scientific approach to life reflects Steinbeck belief in observation, interconnection across species and communities. The novel promotes the holistic and ecological ethic that values cooperation, cyclical processes and the Row itself make the ecosystem flawed, vibrant, and resilient towards the rhythm of nature. As climate crises deepens in the present time, *Cannery Row* is viewed as a poignant and relevant reminder of the need for ecological awareness, humility and reverence for life. In *The Pearl*, Steinbeck portrays human life deeply rooted with the natural life and environment. Through Kino's journey, the disruption of natural harmony caused by material desire and social corruption leads to personal and environmental devastation. The sea once the source of sustenance and spiritual connection becomes the symbol of loss and alienation when Kino seeks to exploit for wealth. The ecological message is rooted in that the humanity lives in respect with nature. The harmony between Kino's family and the natural world is contrasted with destruction. The pearl itself is the product of the sea and this natural wonder transforms into a symbol of corruption. *The Pearl* offers a cautionary tale of violating ecological and moral balance. It recognises the limits of domination over nature and the importance of humility, stewardship, and interconnection between human and nature.

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DECOLONISING GENDER: TWO-SPIRIT IDENTITY AND INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGIES IN LOUISE ERDRICH'S FICTION

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Abstract: This paper examines the representation of 'Two-Spirit' identity in the fiction of Native American Chippewa author Louise Erdrich. Drawing on Indigenous oral traditions that honour gender diversity, the study explores how Erdrich reclaims Indigenous epistemologies within a settler-colonial or postcolonial context. Her narratives challenge fixed Western gender binaries by presenting fluid, shifting and performed identities. The characters who embody deviant or indeterminate gender roles act as 'gender tricksters', subverting dominant ideologies. By highlighting 'Two-Spirit' experiences, Erdrich not only resists gender binaries but also reaffirms Indigenous worldviews in which gender is seen as dynamic and sacred.

Keywords: 'Two-Spirit', Gender Fluidity, Decoloniality, Indigeneity and Gender Tricksterism.

The paper analyses the representation of gender non-conformity, fluidity and diversity in select fiction by the Native American Chippewa author Louise Erdrich. It studies the 'Two-Spirit' characters in Erdrich's oeuvre who perform multiple genders or move beyond socially accepted identities. Unlike the Western tradition that imposes gender binaries and heteronormativity on individuals, tribal traditions have long recognised and revered gender-nonconforming individuals. Gender fluidity and indeterminacy are deeply embedded in tribal traditions and knowledge systems, and are manifested in their social, cultural, religious and spiritual life. Early Native American expressions denoting gender diversity include *tayagugux*, *aawowaakii*, *ininiikaazo* and *ikwekaazo*. The native expression *Niizh manidoowag*, meaning 'Two-Spirit', refers to individuals who embody both 'man-spirit' and 'woman-spirit', often taking on ceremonial roles as prophets, storytellers, healers or spiritual leaders. The term was formally adopted during the 1990 "Third Native American or First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Winnipeg" (2) to describe Indigenous individuals who challenge dominant binary gender expectations (Jacobs, *Two-Spirit People*, 1997).

In contemporary Native American writing, Indigenous epistemologies serve a decolonial purpose — to reclaim, negotiate, and assert cultural identity. In "Theorizing Settler Colonialism: Alternative Methodologies" (2019), native scholar and Professor Jennifer McLerran studies Indigenous "sovereignties grounded in local intelligence and environments" (466), resisting settler-colonial ideologies. In her *Critically Sovereign* (2017), Native American Lenape scholar Joanne Barker has extensively studied indigenous efforts to reclaim gender and sexuality, writing about same-sex marriages, eco-eroticism and Two-Spirit identities.

Louise Erdrich employs 'gender-tricksterism' to resist phallogentric and colonial ideologies. In *Writing Tricksters: Mythic Gambols in American Ethnic Literature*, Jeanne Rosier Smith describes tricksters as figures who

transgress norms and challenge binaries, embodying “the world’s oldest, and newest, creations” (1). They navigate cultural margins, resisting dominance with humour and subversion. The presence of such an aesthetic — the incorporation of a trickster trope — challenges ethnocentric, colonial and patriarchal frameworks in society (10–11). In Erdrich’s work, Two-Spirit identity and trickster mythology function as powerful devices for politicising underrepresented gender identities and challenging the structures that confine or limit subjectivity.

This paper focuses on three characters: Nanapush, a tribal chief; Father Damien Modeste, a Catholic priest; and Celestine James, a half-Chippewa woman, all from the state of North Dakota, USA. While Nanapush and Father Damien appear in multiple novels, Celestine figures in *The Beet Queen* (1985). The study limits itself to three texts: *The Beet Queen*, *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* (2000) and *Four Souls* (2004).

Native American cultures traditionally view identities like lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender as natural. In contrast, Western society often pathologises or marginalises gender diversity and fluidity. Queer and Transgender Studies foreground diverse nuanced experiences, opposing rigid binaries of gender. As Stryker and Whittle note, “‘transgender’ covers any strange gender practice, behaviour or identities including, but not limited to, that of transsexuals, transvestites, gay and lesbians, berdaches and two spirits” (254).

In native contexts, gender diversity was not stigmatised. ‘Queer’ often carries negative connotations in Western discourse, whereas ‘Two-Spirit’ is culturally affirming and very much positive, encompassing varied identities such as man-woman, woman-man, homosexual, bisexual and transgender. In *her fiction*, Erdrich portrays characters that subvert binary gender definitions, presenting gender as a fluid and evolving experience.

Erdrich’s Nanapush is drawn from the Native American myth of Nanabozho, a revered trickster and culture hero. Nanabozho appears as a shapeshifter, storyteller, mediator and healer, who can cross physical and gender boundaries. Erdrich’s Nanapush inherits these traits. In *Four Souls*, Nanapush is a quintessential Two-Spirit figure whose gender identity challenges convention. Unfulfilled in his masculinity and often neglected by Margaret, he longs to experience womanhood: “He longs to explore the experience of being a woman” (106). The key moment is when he does a ceremonial medicine dress, a sacred symbol of feminine power, triggering a transformation. He tells Margaret, “Get ready for some old-time traditional woman dancing. You take the drum! My feet move light as a doe’s!” (143). Dancing in the yard, he reflects, “I [move] like water... [lose] myself in the beat although the drum [has] stopped” (143).

Nanapush’s gender performance reaches its zenith when he seduces Shesheeb, who mistakes him for a woman and asks: “You beauty, have you come to tempt me?” Nanapush responds with a soft, gendered sigh: “Ahh... There is a chill in the air today...” (145). Richard Ekins’ concept of “erotic femaling” (54) points to the act of gender embodiment that becomes erotically

charged. Nanapush enjoys the attention and allure it brings. When the white family ridicules it, he visits the tribal council in the same attire and asserts: "Today... is the day we dress as women" (150). Despite recognising the social risk, he finds affirmation: "it [is] soft, and the air [is] cool, flowing up against me from underneath. Also, from what I [see] in the mirror, it [is] becoming to me" (151). He declares that such a gender performance will not compromise his manhood. His masculinity and femininity mediate into each other, so that neither is compromised. Through Nanapush, Erdrich subverts gender. It is represented as a performance and spiritual vocation, despite being a biological constant. His narrative defies fragile masculinity, embracing a sacred vision of gender fluidity rooted in Indigenous epistemologies.

Erdrich's representation of Celestine's masculinity in *The Beet Queen* surpasses the social expectations and norms of gender. From childhood, Celestine exhibits traditionally masculine traits, as her friend Mary describes: "She . . . is big and lean. She wore tailored suits instead of dresses and carried a leather shoulder bag. . . she was handsome like a man . . . she smoked Viceroys . . . I kept hoping I would get some of Celestine's height" (67). Celestine reflects the tomboy image discussed by Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity*, where tomboyism is defined as "an extended childhood period of female masculinity" (5). In *The Beet Queen*, Celestine's masculinity persists into adulthood, showing an enduring expression of freedom, strength and emotional autonomy.

When Celestine first meets Karl, she is unsure how women are supposed to behave in 'romantic' situations. Her uncertainty about gender expectations as well as Karl's unconventional attraction to her masculinity result in a queer association. She finds his eyes as "burning holes" and recognises, with hesitation, that this is how "men behave in the world of romance" (127).

In a very striking episode in the novel, when Karl tries to hug Celestine, she resists with physical force: ". . . I am more than equal to his weight-lifting arms . . . I could throw him to the side... but I grow curious" (128). She easily overpowers him. Later, she contrasts his too-polished fingernails with her own: "I have the hands of a woman who has handled too many knives, deep-nicked and marked with lines... even missing a tip and nail" (133). Their relationship never conforms to normative gender roles; Celestine remains rational, unemotional and stoic and never indulges in overt displays of romantic affection.

Celestine is the head of the household. While she works to earn their daily bread, Karl remains at home, "killing time" and "talking to himself" (134–135). When she returns at night, he greets her like a sleepwalker, passively embracing her. Celestine is portrayed as strong-bodied, assertive and independent—a woman who manages her life and family on her own terms. Even Karl's lovesickness is rendered ineffectual against her resolve. Erdrich portrays Celestine as a matriarch who exercises authority over her daughter Dot and exhibits emotional resilience. She is described as a "manly-hearted woman" (Lewis 173), especially in an episode when she throws Karl out while

pregnant with his child. In her cold dismissal, saying “With you around, I get no sleep” (136), Celestine flings his suitcase outside and yells, “Get out... I don’t love you . . . A souvenir. I don’t have anything to remember you” (138–139). She immediately calls Mary to say, “I got rid of him” (139).

Erdrich’s portrayal of Celestine challenges the Western convention that aligns masculinity solely with male bodies. In *The Beet Queen*, female masculinity is visible and valid. While mainstream culture often privileges male-bodied masculinity, Celestine’s character thrives in a hybrid cultural setting shaped by Native American and non-Western influences. As a mixed-descent Native American, Celestine embodies a unique intersection of gender, race and sovereignty.

Father Damien is a complex and fluid character, whose life traverses multiple identities. Damien began as Sister Cecilia, a nun with a deep love for music and a yearning for sensual experience. She took on the persona of Agnes De Witt for a time, but eventually shed that borrowed identity and transitions fully into Father Damien Modeste. This transformation marked a radical reconfiguration of gender and vocation. Damien’s journey, especially in *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse*, can be interpreted as an act of transgenering that transcends rigid categories of gender and spirit.

In this novel, Nanapush confronts Damien with a piercing question: “Why are you pretending to be a man priest?” (231), challenging not only the Catholic structure but also the limits of gender identity. Unlike Christianity, native religious traditions do not enforce celibacy. For Indigenous communities, sexuality is regarded as dynamic and life-giving. In “Celibacy and Native American Indians”, Carl Olson notes that Native Americans “do not exhibit any penchant for emphasising or embracing celibacy. There is instead a proclivity to emphasise sexuality” (285). Nanapush himself, though a spiritual figure, is far from celibate.

As a woman and living as a priest, Damien also disrupts Christian orthodoxy. When Father Gregory Wekkle proposes marriage, Agnes refuses, choosing herself to live as Father Damien. Though she has feelings for Gregory, her commitment to the Ojibwe people and her ceremonial role as ‘a spiritual master’ takes precedence. Gregory insists that she cannot be a priest because she is a woman, to which she calmly responds that she is “nothing but a priest” (207).

Damien’s identity evolves into a fusion of Catholic and Ojibwe beliefs. His openness allows the Ojibwe people to accept and revere him as a Two-Spirit figure, embodying both masculine and feminine gender attributes. Early in the novel, Kashpaw perceives Damien as “too womanly” (63) but later compares him to Wishkob, a respected man-woman figure in Ojibwe oral stories. This recognition solidifies Damien’s place within their spiritual cosmology.

Erdrich does not attribute Damien a fixed gender. Instead, she attributes a mediating identity: Damien is part priest, part woman, part trickster, oscillating between dual cultural worlds. As a gender and cultural trickster, Damien navigates masculinity and femininity, and Ojibwe and Catholic

traditions, undermining binary logic through his fluid identity performance.

Conclusion

Louise Erdrich, through her characters like Nanapush, Celestine and Father Damien, offers a powerful decolonial critique of Western gender constructs while also asserting the Indigenous ways of knowing, being and belonging. Her fiction destabilises the rigid binaries of male and female, sacred and profane, Native and non-Native, through its narrative strategies rooted in oral traditions, spiritual fluidity and gender-tricksterism. The Two-Spirit identity, as manifested in these characters, is not an anomaly but a culturally honoured position that holds ceremonial, communal and spiritual significance in the Native American tradition. Erdrich challenges the settler-colonial imposition of heteronormativity by recovering a tribal worldview where gender is neither fixed nor marginalised, but dynamic, relational, mutually-mediating and sacred. By integrating Indigenous epistemologies that welcome gender diversity and fluidity, Erdrich reclaims narrative sovereignty and repositions gender performances as a site of resistance and survival. Therefore, Erdrich's fiction carries out a decolonising project by problematising identity, spirituality and embodiment within a tribal framework that continues to resist erasure and assert cultural continuity and regeneration.

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WITNESSES OF THE UNRESOLVED: MEMORY, VIOLENCE, AND DETECTION IN NON-INDIAN SOUTH ASIAN CRIME FICTION

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Abstract: This paper perumes how the detective paradigms as a memory agent in crime fiction from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka is an agent of memory disputing state-authorised obliviousness. Employing Astrid Erll's and Michael Rothberg's theories of cultural memory, and scrutinising works such as *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Chinaman*, this paper investigates how testimonial fissure, inconsistent accounts and genre undermining. These narratives record memory, divulge brutality centring on non-Indian South Asian history.

Keywords: Detective Paradigm, Cultural Memory, Testimonial Fissure, Inconsistent Accounts and Non-Indian South Asian History.

Introduction

Pakistan and Sri Lanka had vociferous histories of totalitarianism, ethnic carnage, and disputed national memory since their inception as postcolonial states. These fissures, a combined result of military despotism, civil war, taboo and exemption and have been instrumental in building a cultural landscape in which reminiscences are highly politicised. While Indian narratives often subvert South Asian memory studies, this examination deliberately hones in on non-Indian settings, specifically Pakistan and Sri Lanka, where literary narratives answer to the brutal inhibition of public discussion. Even though the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh is thematically important, this research concentrates on the narrative techniques of the select pieces of literary works, with a main corpus restricted to Pakistan and Sri Lanka for meticulous comparative assessment.

This research peeks into how contemporary crime fiction from dissimilar contexts uses the role of a detective to decipher crimes and bring to light buried histories. Drawing on Astrid Erll's idea of "travelling memory" and Michael Rothberg's concept of "multidirectional memory", the study suggests that genre literature performs as a counter-archive, defying state-authored historical cessation. The detective is remodelled to serve dual purposes of a seeker of factual truth as well as an agent of memory who traverses testimonial fractures, archive gaps, and narrative inconsistencies.

The aim of this study is to prove how crime stories become protest literature. It attempts to do so by studying two texts in depth: Mohammed Hanif's *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* (2008) and Shehan Karunatilaka's *Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Mathew* (2010). Zia-ul-Haq's demise has been a mystery ever since its happening. It is as if the whole affair is under the influence of a smokescreen. Hanif tears the smokescreen apart with his signature grim mocking tone. In Karunatilaka's novel, sports journalism goes on an extra mile through the ghostly echoes of the civil war in Sri Lanka. These books become examples about how crime narrative can be a weapon against the unspoken knowledge.

The narratives do not show justification at the end of the story. However, they go on to present detection as a way of preserving memory. The desire to unveil the truth is carefully balanced with moral observation, and narrative termination with ongoing vagueness. The books perform multiple functions: they challenge official records, highlight the ability of the crime fiction to become something more. They do so with the help of untrustworthy narrative and time slip. They also create commemoration sites. In this way, crime fiction pushes its bounds, documenting response against past wrongdoings.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural memory questions how literature manages to make a stand especially when it comes to violence, official records are either politically regulated or become pawns of ideologies. Literature, film, and oral storytelling, help shape collective memory. This is the basis of “mediality of memory” by Astrid Erll. According to her, media alters historical understanding shaping memory. Fiction becomes an excellent medium for memory-related debate, when communities deal with trauma and erasing of memory by the state. Michael Rothberg bases “multidirectional memory” on this condition. It denies vehemently the arrogance of historical awareness. Rothberg does not waste time pointing out how traumas fight to be visible for all. He shows how violent memories cooperate with each other and spread out. This method becomes relevant in postcolonial South Asia, where borders dissect land and history. The ghostly remains of Partition, despotism, and civil war echo throughout populaces and their literature. It refuses to be bound by national records.

The genre plays an essential purpose in this paper. Crime fiction adjusts itself when set in post-despotic or postbellum settings despite being considered run-of-the-mill and unwavering. Scholars such as Lee Horsley and Stephen Knight recommend that the genre holds dormant political sedition, proficient in bringing out organised double-dealing, moral equivocation, and surveillance tactics. When implemented on Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the detective story becomes a space for cultural opposition and memory-creation.

In this article, the detectives are no longer a neutral adjudicator of truth. They evolve into a subject of memory: fractured, treacherous, and bogged down with personal or societal trauma. Investigations do not return of order. But they bring to limelight jumbled memories that are witnesses to what official repositories hide. South Asian crime narrative corroborates with the rules of recollection via testimony fissures, disconnected temporality, and narrative breaches. The genre’s customary framework breaks down to make room for disjointed evidence and unsettled brutality, transforming literature into an important repository against entrenched obscurity.

A Case of Exploding Mangoes: The Archive of Satire

A Case of Exploding Mangoes (2008) by Mohammed Hanif utilises diplomatic parody to remodel the rules of crime narrative, constructing an alternative seditious collection of information reenvisioning investigation as a method of reminiscence. General Zia-ul-Haq had died of a plane crash in 1988. Mohammed Hanif reimagines that incident through this novel. The narrative

becomes a satire about the investigations and infrastructures involved in those investigations. Ali Shigri is a junior Air Force officer who starts his own investigation but it all falls apart. The investigation becomes more and more absurd over time with the blames on the accident shifting from state intelligence, Islamist extremism to Cold War connections. He realises that it is very difficult finding the truth by legal channels in an administration that values secrecy and spying over everything else.

Hanif uses satire to make playful comfort and also helps to keep the memory afresh. Common themes like rotting mangoes, imaginary birds and unpredictable officials run throughout the novel as what is left of the hive minds. Marianne Hirsch calls such repetitions of themes as “postmemory”, which are just symbols reminding the political traumas. As a narrator, Shigri is fickle-minded, highly imaginative and always distracted. This method of emphasising emotional sincerities and denying narrative consistency is what Rothberg calls “traumatic realism”. The general rule of a detective novel is to end in revelation: the crime is explained and the criminal is brought to justice. But it does not happen here. According to Aroosa Kanwal, Hanif does this as he “disperses agency across multiple narrative threads”. This unfulfilling end reflects the way in which General Zia’s death remains an incident left in the fog of public consciousness. Several conflicting anecdotes, timelines and satirical administrative jargon show how detective fiction is not a deliverer of justice but just a way to express the puzzling situation.

Hanif does not let us forget the past. He goes on to etch the present with the past, through this novel. Many events become scarily relevant like General Zia’s political ambitions, foreign interventions and mass conversion to Islamic propaganda. Hanif’s novel is armed with satire and absurdity from head to foot. Unlike the usual detective stories which bring justice, this novel dissects memory with forensic precision. Thus, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* becomes a novel of protest against what historical records claim.

Chinaman: The Slippery Archive of Post-War Sri Lanka

In this novel, Shehan Karunatilaka tars apart the basics of a crime narrative. He does so by including a ‘detective-ish’ inquiry into a postwar story that decries abolition by history and government censorship. The narrative is set in Sri Lanka, torn by decades of Sinhalese-Tamil dispute, imposed retreats, and oppression of the press. It trails a drunk ex-sports author by the name of WG Karusena, on an all-consuming journey to bring to light the destiny of the unremembered cricketer Pradeep Mathew. A cavernous inquiry of national tragedy, unsuccessful reunion, and the politics of amnesia remains under the wraps of this apparently politically disinterested effort.

Karunatilaka utilises cricket as a metaphor for the nation’s fundamental anxieties. Cricket records transform into unconfirmed repositories, bringing together racial brutality, prohibition and propaganda. Neloufer de Mel examines that the novel uses cricket as both a sport and a veiled account of the nation’s fragmented recognition. The narrative hyperbolises the intellectual cacophony of post-traumatic anamnesis utilising Karunasena’s degenerating memory, unreliable narrative, and fractured storytelling. The refusal of the

nation to address traumatic history reflects his spiral into drinking and lunacy.

Importantly, Mathew's unsure entire existence mirrors the spectral state of individuals erased from official archives. The spiral structure of the novel alternating among theory, gossip and delusion, echoes what Cathy Caruth expresses, "trauma resists integration into narrative memory." The detective, who has traditionally helped as an anchor of truth, becomes a distressed chronicler unable to recreate a coordinated history. Investigation here is elegy, a gradual process of mnemonic fancy than a solution.

Karunatilaka's metafictional approaches further elaborate the genre. Appendices, fictitious interviews, and statistical records mimic the bureaucratic disarray of official archives, only to accentuate their impotence. The reader, like Karunasena, is dragged into the vertigo of insufficient details and lost conviction. Instead of disclosure, the novel supplies a poetics of incompleteness.

Ultimately, *Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Mathew* transforms criminal narrative into a national ghost story. The quest for an absentee cricketer also becomes a hunt for silenced political memory. It commemorates the unsettled losses of Sri Lanka's war-torn history while censuring the frail structure of its postwar narrative.

Comparative Insights: Detection Without Any Proper Answer

Chinaman and *A Case of Explosion Mangoes* reenvision the detective genre as a framework for unsettled trauma instead of being a way towards conclusion. While both novels are grounded in an explorative presupposition, Karunasena's hunt for a missing cricketer and Shigri's participation in a dictator's strange demise, they gradually subvert the logic of closure. Their heroes are expressive of a fractured national memory: unreliable, traumatised and distinguished by cognitive doubt instead of being riddle fixers. As a result, investigation transforms into a mnemonic comparison: occasional, teetering, and fundamentally imperfect.

Both narratives treat genre as an official position of hindrance, even if their artistic methods vary. Hanif utilises farcical caricature to condemn Pakistan's militarised condition and theocratic perspective. His sarcastic imagery of rotting mangoes, murmuring ravens, renegade intelligence agents ridicule the gravity of official documents, divulging their concoction and philosophical motive. On the other hand, Karunatilaka's self-reflexive fiction is mournful and not ludicrous. His supplements, false demographics and dubious attestations construct a web of mnemonic traces that reproduce Sri Lanka's broken postwar consciousness. If Hanif's caricature reflects discord through comic reduction, Karunatilaka's elegy accentuates haunting deficit. Together, they prove how South Asian crime narrative utilises various narrative elements to achieve mnemonic tasks.

These narrative ways are congruous with Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction", which highlights the purposeful concoction of history in literature. Both works obscure the difference between fiction and history, accentuating the duplicity of historical narratives and their alliance with authority. This introspection is more than just an aesthetic action. It also exemplifies an ethics of remembrance, in which genre withstands being co-

opted into state-driven closure.

Dominick LaCapra's distinction between "acting out" and "working through" trauma is pertinent here. Shigri and Karunasena do not achieve narrative catharsis. Instead, their investigation follows recurring memory circuits. Their impotence to reach the truth is not narrative defects, but ethical dissents to unravel tragedy. In rebuffing intention, these writings compel readers to live with the discomfiture of what cannot be certainly appreciated or contained.

In these conditions, crime fiction transforms into more than mere amusement or genre play. It develops into a location of political and emotive interposition, questioning the corrective methods of both law and history via the act of recounting.

A Case of Exploding Mangoes and *Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Mathew* are two instances of present-day South Asian crime fiction that break down the genre's basic structure in order to reprocess investigation as a mnemonic deed of ethical statement. Far from renovating order or maintaining mystery, these narratives bring to fore mnemonic fickleness, the quietudes suppressed in official records, and the emotional repercussions of unresolved brutality. The detective is transformed into a fractured witness, less a crime fixer and more a chronicler of erasure, oppression, and historical obscurity. Both novels reject the true ending pattern of a detective narrative, where justice prevails. They rather go for Michael Rothberg's famous "multidirectional" approach to deal with memory and trauma.

Dark humour and satire in case of Hanif, and narrative elegy for Karunatilaka help bring out the different ways to tackle abolition of memories by the government. Both novels show how fiction can be counter-archives to combat the official stories of the government. The characters are not heroic or well-balanced. This shows the emotional pressure of living in a past, resisting linear restoration. The imbalance in the characters is an official acceptance of how trauma keeps moving in circles. Cathy Caruth explains this trauma as the repetition of events that refuse to be put down under any circumstances.

Interpreting these two novels through Astrid Erll's "mediality of memory" shows how literature can help alter and shape history without pause. Dominick LaCapra and Linda Hutcheon argue that the cultural perspective after trauma should be towards holding its own against extinction. These novels perform that role. To avoid forgetting, the crime narrative is interpreted as a genre based on interruptions, that hamper memory, narrative and the genre itself.

In the end, *A Case of Exploding Mangoes* and *Chinaman* are not after absolute justice or truth. Alternatively, they display the moral obligation of resolute witnessing. It will happen through enduring loss without explanation, recalling without reunification. In this process the ability of literature to bear witness when institutions fail is confirmed. Crime fiction becomes a site of resistance, mourning and mnemonic struggle in the shattered landscapes of South Asian modernity.

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**UNSPOKEN PAST: MEMORY, TRAUMA AND IDENTITY IN
ABDULRAZAK GURNAH'S *THE LAST GIFT***

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Abstract: The paper explores the themes of memory, trauma and identity in the face of displacement and migration in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *The Last Gift*. It examines the survival strategies of Abbas, an East African immigrant in Britain and his family members. Gurnah portrays memory not as an individual suffering but as an intergenerational issue that affects the entire family. This research paper adopts a qualitative methodology and it is analysed through the lens of diasporic literature. A Tanzanian-born British writer Abdulrazak Gurnah has written ten novels and his novels deal with the questions of belongingness, colonialism, displacement, memory and migration. Gurnah demonstrates memory as an agency of displaced individuals in redefining their existence.

Keywords: Memory, Resilience, Displacement, Migration and Exile.

The research paper discusses memory, trauma and identity crisis experienced by the characters in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *The Last Gift*. *The Last Gift* is his eighth novel and it is about the East African Immigrant in England, Abbas and his family members. Abbas' repressed silence has transformed into physical illness. His long-silenced past has begun to surface as he confronts his mortality. His narrative shapes the identity of his children, the second-generation immigrants in England who felt fragmented in the society. Gurnah depicts the trauma and intergenerational disconnection within family narrative. The paper analyses the burden of unspoken past which complicates the familial bonding and creates emotional disconnection between the family members. Buried memories of Abbas and trauma rooted in migration passed on to the children and eventually generates identity crisis. The paper is analysed through the diasporic lens.

Abdulrazak Gurnah, the Nobel Prize winner of 2021 was born in Zanzibar in 1948 and lives in England. He is an emeritus Professor of Postcolonial Literatures at the University of Kent. He has written ten novels and his novels deal with the questions of belongingness, colonialism, displacement, memory and migration. *Memory of Departure* (1987), *Pilgrims Way* (1988), *Dottie* (1990), *Paradise* (1994), *Admiring Silence* (1996), *By the Sea* (2001), *Desertion* (2005), *The Last Gift* (2011), *Gravel Heart* (2017), and *Afterlives* (2020) are the ten novels. His works make the readers to rethink about the dominant migrant culture. His characters rediscover, reimagine and reconstruct their identities in the host country.

The term 'trauma' is a Greek word which originally refers to the injury inflicted on a body. Later, in the medical and psychiatric literature, it refers to

the injury inflicted on the mind. As Cathy Caruth defines Trauma in her book, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* in 1996 as “It is a wound not upon the body, but upon the mind” (3). In the novel, Abbas experiences trauma because of his undesirable marriage in Zanzibar and his escape from his home town to England. Caruth points out that the trauma inflicts the endless impact on a life even it can be the narrative of belated experience. The ‘crying wound’ of Abbas transforms into physical form. He is half paralysed because of stroke.

Throughout his life, Abbas kept his past life as a secret and utilized his silence as an individual resistance. “There was so much he should have said, but he had allowed the silence to set until it became immovable” (Gurnah 9). In the beginning of the novel, Abbas collapsed and Maryam, his wife called for the doctor. He was at the age of sixty-three, when the doctor enquired about the family history of diabetics. He was reluctant. He compared his physical illness to the beast that had slowly turned his head towards him. In his sick bed, he dreamt of moving away to the deep silent places and he hated to return from the dream. He uttered ill-tempered words to Maryam to reaffirm his silence in the sick bed. He considered him as a ‘sinful traveller fallen ill in a strange land.’ Abbas told the stories about the sea and sailors’ life. He never shared about his life at Zanzibar.

Maryam’s narrative about her childhood days is proof that she had a traumatic past. She lived with her foster family and frequently moved from one family to another. She experienced bully in the school and was commented as dark for her complexion. Later, she was fostered by Ferooz from Mauritius and Vijay from India. Hanna and Jamal are the children of Abbas and Maryam. The children knew that their mother was ‘an abandoned baby who had no idea of her real parents.’ Maryam’s fragmented storytelling depicts the emotional and psychological impact of trauma. According to Caruth, Trauma disrupts the linear narrative structure leading to a fragmented narrative of the self. “The stories of their Ma’s childhood came out in bits and pieces, an episode recalled or a feeling recollected in the middle of telling another story” (Gurnah 39). Maryam’s wish to find her foster parent illustrates her search for identity. Abbas opposes the idea of finding her foster parent, “Why do you worry yourself about those people?... They did not treat you well” (41).

As the individuals born or raised in the country different from that of their parent are the second-generation immigrants. Identity formation of the second-generation immigration is multifaceted which involves the tapestry of cultural, social and psychological dynamics. In the novel, the daughter Hanna and the son Jamal was born in England and raised between the British culture and African culture. They experience racial discrimination in England because of their unknown identity. As their father Abbas never discloses his past life and their mother Maryam is a foundling, they lack their identity. Hanna remarks that they are ‘a strange family, an odd family’ and ‘dysfunctional family.’ She wants to know the story of her parents but she receives the story that is tripped with hesitations and silences. She says that she is living a life of hiding and shame.

Jamal feels that “there was something to be ashamed of – had been with

him most of his life, even he did not know of its presence” (45). He called his family as a “vagabond family, wanderers without connection or duties” (47). He has grown up with the sense of difference and strangeness. He has learned to recognise that feeling of hostility, unkindness and teasing at school. He has faced the consequences of loss of identity in school. “The children asked about his country and its customs. It was years before he learned to say *this* is my country,” (45) as Hanna taught him. In school, the children chuckled at the glance of old and dark-skinned people. He pretended that he did not feel any discomfort.

Hanna was twenty-eight years old and had been teaching for five years. She tried to adopt English lifestyle to follow her boyfriend, Nick. She wanted to be accepted and respected by the British society. She preferred to be called as Anna outside the house. As her mother remarked, she was ‘deliberately remaking herself from someone’ and her tone of speech was changing. She hated her suppressed and dissembling lives. At university, she met new friends and her academic success raised her self-confidence. She was absolutely Anna at the university and it became an embellishment of her Britishness. She asked her younger brother Jamal to change his name as Jimmy. But Jamal could not call England as his home. He has started his doctoral research on Migration Movements in Europe.

Hanna moved with her friend Nick and she encountered humiliation because of her identity. Nick and his family members exercise superiority and questions Hanna regarding her homeland. Uncle Digby has assumed the ‘White Man’s Burden’ to help Hanna family. ‘White Man’s Burden’ refers “to the duty of Europe and the West to pay something back to the colonial world it had so long dominated, by spreading some of its infinite wisdom and ability around in order to ‘help’ those less fortunate parts of the world” (Wintle 22). Uncle Digby, the vicar asked “Where do you come from?” Nick replied she is British. Uncle Digby asked, “But what was she before she was British?” (116). Hanna replied her father is from East Africa and further she never knew. Hanna firmly said, “I am British” (117). Uncle Digby said that the families are falling apart because the children never knew where their parents are coming from. “To keep communities together, host and stranger need to know each other, but we cannot know each other if we don’t know ourselves...Those words *I am British* feel like a cold tragic blast to me sometimes” (117). Hanna understood the pain of her father when she experienced the alienation and his difficulty in coping with the strangeness all these years in Britain. She regretted for calling her father as a ‘bigoted immigrant.’

Jamal understands the struggles of Immigrant people when he started his doctoral research in Migration Movements in Europe. He participates in seminars, prayers and social activities. He accepts to stay with different people in his new apartment. His transformation through education and social activities makes him to accept his status of being an immigrant and empathizes with other immigrants.

Abbas’ narrative about his past life in Zanzibar gives identity to his children. His silence gaps his family’s collective narrative who struggle with

their own sense of identity. His storytelling after the stroke is the healing process and coping mechanism. He reconciles his fragmented self into coherent personal history. Hanna and Jamal reclaim their roots and cultural belonging through the narratives of their parents. Abbas dreamt of his father Othman as he was broken by disease in a stranger's land. His father Othman, a farmer, mother, two elder brothers and an elder sister occupied his dream. He fondly remembered his walk to school with his brothers. The image of his life in Mfenesini had a deep place in his memory. Maryam worried that Abbas was becoming stranger to her.

Maryam looked at the photograph taken at Birmingham and she reminded of olden days She thought about her meeting Abbas at Exeter, he was thirty-four when he met him at Exeter. They moved to Birmingham and stayed there for three years. Then they moved to Norwich. Maryam narrated her frightful days in Ferooz and Vijay's house where Dinesh, the nephew ill-treated and abused her. She was frightened to tell her foster parent. She ran away from the town with Abbas. Anna said, "Why are telling us this? Why are telling us now?" (192). Maryam said that his father has another wife. He abandoned her and her child in Zanzibar many years ago. Anna left the house and told the past life of his parents to Nick. He neglected her.

Abbas has recorded his past stories in the tape recorder. He describes the past life in detail. His life in Zanzibar, as a sailor and moving to different places of the world. At the end of his life, he said about his identity. Hanna and Jamal accepted their identity as the immigrant. They realise their identity and attempt to rebuild their cultural identity. Maryam met her foster parent and introduced her children to them. Hanna and Jamal plan to visit Zanzibar. Gurnah metaphorically employs the title *The Last Gift*, as Abbas revealed his past as the last gift to his family.

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MEMORY, DURATION, AND THE SELF: BERGSONIAN TIME IN *THE FAULT IN OUR STARS*

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Abstract: The shift from realism to modernism is marked by the shift from the perception of time as a collection of instants in sequence to time as duration. In the industrial chronology, time is spatialised as instants measurable by the clock. However, Bergson contradicted this and formulated the idea of *durée* as the true experience of time. The present study analyses this subjective experience of time in John Green's novel *The Fault in Our Stars*, wherein 'death' presents itself to be a reference point which attributes meaning and a sense of life. For Hazel and Gus, time is no longer the passing of hours. It is a constant movement through memory, action and expectation.

Keywords: Time, Cancer Narrative, Medical Humanities, Phenomenology and Narratology.

Introduction

Time and space reined a central position in human thought throughout the centuries. In philosophical musings, religious doctrinal divides and scientific quantifications, the time-enigma has been a vital stimulant to human thought. The idea of 'time' most often dawns upon us as the single-most coordinating factor of all experience. Hence, any interpretative discourse of existence- historical, philosophical or scientific- gets preoccupied with time. All these ages, philosophers have wrestled with concepts of time including death and eternity, linear and cyclical time, being and becoming. Newton's definition of "absolute, true and mathematical time" (*Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy* 805), to Einstein's path-breaking revelations on relativity showcased bizarre possibilities and revolutions in the perception of reality and time.

In the exploration of a coherent picture of the world and time, one encounters a bewildering range of disparate and endlessly fascinating ideas in philosophy, science, art and culture, religious belief and the ordinary commonsense of everyday life. Before plunging into these troubled waters, let the attention needs to linger on the shore awhile and the rest be assured in the time of "everydayness" (Heidegger 3). It is the determinate clock-time that is not subject to change through external influence. At this juncture, an identical temporal sequence is constantly repeated, and measures time in terms of the duration of an event compared with identical sequences on the clock (Heidegger 4). This common sense on the conception of time assumes that there is only one time-series; it does not speed up or slow down. Furthermore, the relations of simultaneity between any two events are the same for everybody (Smith and Oaklander 164). It amounts to a conception of an irreversible 'arrow of time' giving a certain linearity and direction to any course of events, and thus to the way one thinks of life.

Bergson perceives that the trespass of space into thinking about time is further assisted by the activity of the intellect, by its disposition to define, divide and categorize. Time, according to Bergson, could be truly understood

not through the divisive intellect, but by means of intuition, wherein one is able to apprehend the permeation of conscious states; the seamless flow of creative evolution and becoming. Such views of continuity and duration create in Bergson's work a central role for memory: in the evolving flow of conscious states, past ones do not disappear but coexist with and interpenetrate present ones. In *Time and Free Will* (1889) Bergson asks directly for "some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego able to show the infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under the juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known better than we know ourselves" (Bergson 133). Marcel Proust's monumental work *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* offers the right response. Hence, it is not accidental that Bergson and his time-philosophy exactly corresponds to Proust, the abstract for the other's concrete.

The Death Knell

A remarkable shift from realism to modernism is the perception of time, as a collection of instants in sequence to time as duration. In the industrial chronology, time is spatialised as instants measurable by the clock. Bergson contradicted this and formulated the idea of *durée* as the true experience of time. "Bergson rhapsodized on the effects of pure memory which in his view originated in the nonmaterial realm of consciousness and its *durée*" (Nalbantian 10). Martin Heidegger radicalised the understanding of time and paved the road trod on by the existentialists with the publication of *Being and Time* (1927), inaugurating the age of Phenomenology. He drew his ideas mainly from the existentialism of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche as well as the ancients. Eventually, he reformulated the most basic concepts underlying the thinking about oneself, emphasizing the "sense of being" (*dasein*) over other interpretations of conscious existence. He argues that specific and concrete ideas form the bases of one's perceptions and provides an ontological turn to the notion of time based on the '*dasein*.' For Heidegger, only time holds meaning only as it is experienced in everyday activities. Time as a mere concept is not meaningful.

Bergson's theory of time, however, stressed the subjectivity and relativity of time within a philosophical mould, anticipating Einstein's space-time in physics by about 16 years. Einstein's setting of time in relation to the observer and his motion in space, and Bergson's stress on subjectivity are seen as identical. In reality, both their ideas amounted to the rejection of absolute universal time. Einstein's theory ascertains that "each observer would have his own measure of time as recorded by a clock that he carried: clocks carried by different observers would not necessarily agree. Thus time became a more personal concept, relative to the observer who measured it" (Hawking 151).

This paper analyses this subjective experience of time wherein 'death' presents itself to be the reference point which attributes meaning and a sense of life. For Hazel and Gus, like most other cancer kids, it is their proximity to death that marks the days and years of life. Their unique state of existence makes them less compliant with the 'clock-time'. Time is no longer the passing

of hours for them; it is a constant movement through memory, action and expectation. They, thus, construct a novel narrative of their own lives.

This engulfing nature of time, which is very much akin to death, is presented at the very outset in the prologue of the text under consideration:

As the tide washed in, the Dutch Tulip Man faced the ocean:
“conjoiner rejoinder poisoner concealer revelator. Look at it,
rising up and rising down, taking everything with it.”

“What’s that?” I asked

“Water,” the Dutchman said. “well, and time.”

-Peter Van Houten, *An Imperial Affliction* (TFiOS Prologue)

This very idea is further underpinned when Hazel considers everything a side effect of dying. She says “Depression is a side effect of dying. Cancer is a side effect of dying. Almost everything is, really” (1).

A person’s identity is largely represented by his or her relations with time and space. For these kids, the disease that ‘devoured’ them is so ingrained into their selves that they cannot exclude its overwhelming presence and hence very much a part of their identity. Each member of the support group, while introducing himself or herself mentioned their “Name. Age. Diagnosis” (5). The Support Group sadly “featured a rotating cast of characters in various states of tumor-driven unwellness” (142). The group is rotating, as with the passage of time, some of them were forced into a state of ‘voluntary retirement.’

The romantic idea of ‘living one’s best life today,’ which is addressed as *carpe dieum* in the writings of Horace, is very much intimate to these kids considering the immanent and inevitable death encircling the life of a cancer patient. Issac, who is a friend to both Hazel and Gus, is awaiting a surgery in ten days. So, after the Support Group he rushes out to meet his girlfriend, telling “I should go. Monica is waiting for me. I gotta look at her a lot while I can” (16).

Paradoxically, the chief concern is what could be termed as ‘events’ in the life of these teenagers. Quite contrary to the busy life of people teeming with a whole lot of queries and worries, these unfortunate ones are most often silent witnesses to their own despicable predicament. At times, they simply forget the fact that they are alive, being sucked into a state of comma or ‘oblivion.’ This is well elucidated in the conversation between Hazel and her nurse Alison

“So you’ve been gone a couple days. Hmm, what’d you miss...A celebrity did drugs. Politicians disagreed. A different celebrity wore a bikini that revealed a bodily imperfection. A team won a sporting event, but another team lost. You can’t go disappearing on everybody like this, Hazel. You miss too much.” (TFiOS 107)

What Alison gives is a pretty fair account of the daily happenings of a ‘clock regulated world.’ It vividly exposes the boredom and pettiness of existence. The narrated incidents are cyclic and go on endless repetitions. The only change is with the name and place. The history of humanity, hence, more or

less is the same.

However, when it comes to the life of people like Hazel, the story is different. Their 'sense of time' is significantly different from what one reads in a daily. They quiet often lose the uninterrupted flow of life. What they could best expect are some 'excruciating moments of pain.'

Time and space are devoid of meaning without a human consciousness perceiving it. It is the human consciousness that turns Kronos into Kairos, and space into place. Kronos may turn to Kairos by a kind of 'humanising' process. Similarly, space, which is characterised by extension is turned into a 'place' by a perceiving human consciousness. Space becomes 'place' when it is given a local habitation and a name. "... Space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process," observes Edward Said, "whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here. The same process occurs when we deal with time. Much of what we associate with or even know about such periods as 'long ago' or 'the beginning' or 'at the end of time' is poetic - made up" (Said 55).

The question regarding whether this time has a beginning or end is a matter of debate among philosophers, each of them comes up with a different speculative hypothesis. The very same issue affects Hazel first and later Gus after reading the fictional book, *An Imperial Affliction* by Peter Van Houten. The book ends with "right in the middle of a" (49). She ponders over this abrupt ending thus:

I know it's a very literary decision and everything and probably part of the reason I love the book so much, but there is something to recommend a story that ends. And if it can't end then it should at least continue into perpetuity...I understood the story ended because Anna died or got too sick to write and this midsentence thing was supposed to reflect how life really ends and whatever, but there were characters other than Anna in the story, and it seemed unfair that I would never find out what happened to them. (TFiOS 50)

The problems encountering other characters are the main concerns for both Hazel and Gus. They are stuck with the idea that when one day they cease to exist, how the other characters would bear with it. Also, there is this question of eternal oblivion or perpetual remembrance.

Throughout the novel, one can observe the use of the technique of prolepses. It gives the readers a glimpse into the future. This device may be a spoiler of suspense as to 'what happened;' but, it surely increases the anticipation, raising the questions of why and how.

In the novel, *The Fault in Our Stars*, prolepses is rather used as a tool which foresees death. Death is the anticipated sure future. How far and how long is the only matter, yet to be decided. Gus arranges a eulogy speech for his anticipated funeral at the Sacred Heart church from Hazel and Issac. He remains there as a witness to his own dramatic obituary service. He was very much pleased by it as he says: "Awesome, I'm hopeful I'll get to attend as a ghost" (257).

However, the prolepsis is not always optimistic. Hazel writes to Van Houten with the hope that she would be able to unveil the mysteries surrounding Anna's life. The reader gets an impression that their Amsterdam journey would reveal the same. In contrast, the 'author' Hazel encounters at Amsterdam is beyond her expectations- a drunkard, who is a heartless human being. She once thinks that the writer is the only one who could understand her, even better than her parents. The prolepses, thus, could be misleading as well.

An improvised version of the narrative behind the imminent death is the great story of evolution behind the physical ailment the kids live through. Cancer is a disease caused by the mutation of genes. It is this same mutation that help human beings in acquiring a seemingly sophisticated physical form and mental framework. Hence, without this grand process of mutation, one can never be on this planet. As an answer to Hazel's queries, Houten says "*omnis cellula e cellula*" (276), which meant all cells come from cells. Thus it is from the same process that both life and death assumes their grandeur.

At Amsterdam, Van Houten speaks about Zeno, the philosopher behind the tortoise paradox. He sheds light on the minute variations existing even when one assumes there is none. It is particularly significant in the life of Hazel and Gus, as for them each fraction of their life is valuable, however small it might be. Hazel makes it clear thus:

"There are infinite numbers between 0 and 1. There's .1 and .12 and .112 and an infinite collection of others. Of course, there is a bigger infinite set of numbers between 0 and 2, or between 0 and a million. Some infinities are bigger than other infinities....I want more numbers than I'm likely to get, and God, I want more numbers for Augustus Waters than he got. But, Gus, my love, I cannot tell you how thankful I am for our little infinity. I wouldn't trade it for the world. You gave me a forever within the numbered days, and I am grateful." (*TFiOS* 260)

This depicts how time is conceived differently by the two. It is not the unending number that matters. What really matters is how they make the best out of it, living their best life each day. Hence, it is an account of the highly subjective experience of time which is different from the speculative numerical calculations.

Time is a vital element in human life; something that defines human existence; yet perhaps the most enigmatic and engaging of philosophical problems. With the coming of modern science in the seventeenth century, this discussion pertaining time got intensified at all levels. Modern art and literature attempt to turn time and space experience into an integral part of their methods and not merely a subject of contemplation.

The most influential thinker of the early decades of the twentieth century was Henri Bergson, who attempted to project human intuition as deeper and superior to the intellect. His position in the history of modernism is unique. His philosophical ideas are seen as part of the modernist reaction to the tyranny of the clock. If the enlightenment thought placed supremacy of the intellect

over other aspects of human intelligence, Bergson reversed that thinking. He attempted to integrate the new ideas developed in the field of biological sciences and psychology, and to formulate a new theory of human consciousness. Bergson assumed a radical ontological opposition between objectified socialised spatiality and a subjective inward duration. He undermined the Aristotelian concept of time as ‘nothing but space’ to replace it with the primacy of the ‘*durée*.’ He declared that “...time, conceived under the form of a homogeneous medium, is some spurious concept, due to the trespassing of the idea of space upon the field of pure consciousness” (*Time and Free Will* 98).

The paper aims at reevaluating ‘time’ in the life of Hazel and Gus. The attention is upon the subjective experience of time as against the cosmological understanding. Any reference to time in life is an obvious reflection on death. In a way it is ‘death’ that takes the role of the ‘wall clock’ in the life of Gus and Hazel.

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ILLUSTRATING NOMITA'S UNRESOLVED TRAUMA AND SOCIETAL SILENCE IN ANURADHA ROY'S *SLEEPING ON JUPITER*

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Abstract: In Anuradha Roy's third novel, *Sleeping on Jupiter*, the protagonist Nomita Frederiksen is an orphaned child who is later adopted by a Norway woman named Lisa Frederiksen. She returns to her village, Jarmuli, to work as a production assistant to film a documentary. Her revisit recollects her childhood abuse, trauma, and helplessness. She encourages herself to confront the trauma and conflicts of her childhood abuse. Throughout her journey, the wounds and pains remain unresolved. This paper aims to explore Nomita's psychological impact of childhood trauma and why society fails to support, neglects crisis and remains silent.

Keywords: Trauma, Conflict, Memory, Abuse, Silence, and Institutional Power.

Anuradha Roy is an Indian novelist, journalist, and editor. She had written five novels. *Sleeping on Jupiter* is her third novel which was published in 2015 and won the DSC prize for South Asia Literature. Further, it was longlisted for the Man Booker Prize. Her novels often focus on the female-centric roles and their impacts on social and political events of individual's life, exploring the themes of memory, identity, trauma, and conflict they face in society. She and her husband Rukun Adani, founded a publishing company, Permanent Black. She is famous for her renowned works, and she has received many awards and has been shortlisted for all her novels.

Nomita, the protagonist of the novel, at the age of seven, lost her father and brother by armed men. Her mother took her through the forest. She sets Nomita on the boat and left the place. She asked Nomita to wait until her mother comes back. At this young age, she was abandoned by her mother. It made her feel isolated. It was a painful memory of her life. A man came and took her to the end of the sea. There were many children in the van, including her. She was taken to an ashram, where abandoned children were provided food, clothes, and education. The children were initially. Later, they found out that the place was not normal. They heard painful screams at night and were threatened not to get out of the ashram, saying if did, God would punish them. In the name of spirituality, Guruji abused the orphaned children. *Changing Attitudes, Changing Lives: Ontario's Sexual Violence Action Plan*, "Definitions of sexual violence vary in specifics but generally acknowledge that sexual violence is about exerting power and aggression (not sexual desire) over someone else in order to undermine an individual's sexual or gender integrity" (Government of Ontario 50). Psychological trauma is a deeply disturbing experience that happens in an individual's life. It affects mental and physical health and leads to anxiety, fear, and lack of courage to face problems. The trauma and memory will haunt lives of people until they bravely overcome the traumatic experiences.

At the age of twenty five, Nomita returns to Jarmuli. Currently she works as a documentary film maker. Her boss wanted to makes a film about

Indian traditional culture, rituals and sculptures. His boss chose Jarmuli where many temples, coastal sea, and the place which is famous for traditional temples, cultures and religious place. Nomita returned to Jarmuli by train, where two men stared at her costume, then she slapped one of them. At the same time, the train started moving. She ran fast to catch a train. The two men tried to catch her. She again experienced violation and fear but escaped. She reached Jarmuli. She arranged for a tour guide to assist for her research. The next day, she reached the temple to capture its culture and sculptures. Badal, a temple worker and a temple tourist, did not permit her to enter the temple because of her clothes. She wears western clothes, so he suggested buying a sari near the temple. She got furious and left the place. She fought for her rights with society. After that, Badal banged her car window, said that will take you in the temple, without me not allowed to the temple and cameras are not allowed to the temple. She admired the Vishnu temple and planned to shoot everything for the documentary.

Back to the ashram in childhood, she played with her friend and accidentally fell from the tree. Guruji noticed that and treated her kindly. He grabbed her hands towards his cottage. Guruji asked her to sit on his laps and he started to touch her body and abused her physically without knowing that she was abused. Guruji said that "That is not true. I am your father and your mother now. I am your country. I am your teacher. I am your God" (Roy 37).

Guruji consoled and treated her wounds like a father. The children and the ashram workers blindly followed his words and believed him. For the outside world, he was a great spiritual guru but he abused the orphaned children. Nomita and other children know only Puja hall, Guruji's cottage, pilgrimage cottage, dormitory, and school. Guruji threatened the orphaned children that if they tried to get out of the ashram the police would arrest them.

Back in Nomita's present life, she and her assistant took a shot at the beach. Johnny Toppo, a tea stall owner, sang a song and made tea for his customers. Nomita saw his wounds, and he looked like an ashram gardener. She repeatedly asked questions about the ashram but Johnny refused to respond, neglected her eye contact, and soon closed his shop. Nomita doubted his behavior. In her childhood, the gardener Jugnu, was her friend. He told the story of *Ramayanam*. The moral of the story, "Don't wait for God. If you wait for God, the entire life will be futile."

Piku, Nomita's orphaned friend, was standing up and shouting in the Puja hall. All the foreigners and pilgrimages noticed her. Ashram workers tried to find out where the sound was coming from. Nomita grabbed Piku and hid her in the bushes. Finally, Bhola, an ashram worker, found them. Bhola handed over Piku to Guruji and he punished her. Nomita was locked in a dog space for two days without food for helping her friend. She recollected all her memories of what happened in the ashram, making her anxious and afraid. She recalled the memory of the ashram under the shower because she was not able to overcome the trauma.

One morning, the Chief Minister of the State was visiting the ashram. The foreigners, devotees, and pilgrims entered into the Puja hall. Guruji sat on

his throne and kept his feet off the floor with the help of a satin cushion. Over hundreds of people gathered there. The orphaned children kept silent. All of them were blessed by Guruji. The media people came to the ashram to take photos of the ashram. Nomita felt that she wanted to run out of the hall and tore out her dress. Guruji used institutional power, to abuse children and hide from the authorized people.

Nomita attained her puberty. For five to seven days, she was separated from others and was given a separate room. On the last day, Padma Devi bathed her, and put on some jewels and new clothes. Guruji asked her to sit on his lap and speak in a smooth voice. He undressed her dress and raped her. She tried to escape, but he slapped and pushed her to the wall. She was wounded and hurt by Guruji. Guruji said that these are a spiritual ritual. This day made her life miserable, and she was afraid to share the incident. Rosemary Gartner and Bill McCarthy in their book entitled *The Oxford Handbook of Gender, Sex and Crime*, asserts, "Child sexual abuse has strong associations with a range of mental health problems, including affective disorders, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, personality disorders, and psychosis" (388). *Malala Yousafzai addresses United Nations Youth Assembly*. "We realize the importance of our voice only when silenced" (United Nations, 8:00).

Champa, an orphaned girl escaped two times but at last returned to the ashram. As a result of her escape from the ashram, Bhola brutally tortured her and kicked her stomach with his foot. Third time she planned to escape with Nomita. Nomita had no courage to escape because if they got caught by the ashram workers, they would beat them cruelly. Champa motivated her. The next day, Nomita and Champa successfully escaped from the ashram. She tried to help Piku. Champa stopped Nomita and saved her life. Champa and Nomita are adopted by foreigners. Nomita felt guilty for not being able to help Piku.

Nomita takes photos of the temple. In the end, Suraj grabbed her into the bathroom and raped her. She tried to get out of the bathroom, and she kicked and stabbed him. On this trip, Nomita didn't get a chance to meet Guruji or know about the ashram and the orphaned children. Nomita did not try to resolve her trauma and conflicts throughout her entire journey.

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QUEERING THE ENCOUNTER: HOMOEROTIC DESIRE AND FORBIDDEN GAZE IN D. H. LAWRENCE'S "SNAKE"

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Abstract: The poem, "Snake", written by D. H. Lawrence is typically read as a moral reflection on the conflict between societal education and primal instinct. This paper offers a queer reading of the poem, interpreting the snake not merely as a symbol of nature, but as an eroticized 'Other' that symbolizes repressed homoerotic desire and gender ambiguity. Through close textual analysis and the application of queer theory, it explores how the speaker's fascinated gaze upon the snake reflects forbidden attraction, guilt and identity confusion, whereas the act of throwing a log at the snake becomes a symbolic rejection of this desire. By revealing the poem's psychological and gendered conflicts, this paper attempts to situate "Snake" as a powerful narrative of shame, fascination and the struggle for self-acceptance within the context of fluid sexuality.

Keywords: Homoeroticism, Repression, Identity, Desire and Gaze.

Introduction

D.H. Lawrence is well known for his interest in instinct, sensuality, and emotional depth, often challenging the moral values of early 20th-century England. While much critical attention has focused on the sexual themes in his prose and poetry, the poem *Snake* (1923) is usually read as a reflection on the conflict between social learning and instinct. However, such readings can overlook the deeper psychological and sexual dimensions within the poem.

This paper offers a queer reading of *Snake*, moving beyond traditional interpretations that focus only on moral or ecological themes. It explores how the poem represents feelings of forbidden desire through the speaker's conflicting emotions of fascination, guilt, shame and hesitation towards the snake. These emotions suggest a deeper struggle with non-normative attraction in a society governed by heterosexual norms. In this light, the snake is not simply considered an animal but becomes a symbol of the erotic 'Other' that challenges the fixed notions of masculinity and moral behaviour. By drawing on the ideas of queer theorists such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler and Leo Bersani, this paper argues that *Snake* reflects homoerotic tension and internalized homophobia. The speaker's mixed feelings for the snake reveal a personal crisis where desire and identity come into conflict. Through this lens, the poem can be viewed as a subtle yet powerful exploration of repressed queer desire and emotional ambiguity.

Queer Theory and the Forbidden Gaze

Reading D.H. Lawrence's "Snake" through the lens of queer theory reveals a deeper layer of emotional and psychological conflict that is often missed in more traditional interpretations. In this reading, the superficial encounter with a snake becomes a moment filled with forbidden desire and inner struggle. The speaker's intense focus on the snake reflects not just curiosity or fear but a kind of repressed attraction that challenges fixed ideas of

masculinity and heterosexual identity.

Queer theorists like Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler and Leo Bersani have questioned the assumption that gender and desire follow clear, binary patterns. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick argues that the boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality are socially constructed and the things that cannot be openly spoken often becomes central to queer experience (Sedgwick 3, 71). In "Snake", the speaker's discomfort does not come from the reptile itself, but from his unspoken emotional response that he later transforms into guilt and aggression. The idea of the "gaze" is key to this interpretation. The speaker watches the snake with deep attention; his gaze is filled with admiration and awe. This gaze does not reflect fear or mere observation; it is emotionally charged. The snake becomes more than a creature that takes on the role of the erotic Other, someone or something that draws out feelings the speaker is not supposed to have. This moment mirrors the queer experience of desiring what society tells one to suppress, bringing the speaker into conflict with parts of himself he tries to deny.

Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance also helps us understand this moment. When the speaker expresses awe and humility in front of the snake, he steps away from what is expected of a "masculine" response. However, under pressure to behave like a "proper man", he reacts violently—throwing a log at the snake. This act is more than just instinct; it is a way to perform and restore masculinity. The violence becomes symbolic, showing how social norms force individuals to reject parts of themselves to fit into expected roles.

Leo Bersani adds another layer to this reading by suggesting that same-sex desire is often viewed as something that threatens the ego or self-image (Bersani 222). The speaker's act of driving the snake away can be seen as an effort to protect his sense of identity. However, the regret he feels afterwards suggests that this act is not just about the snake; it is about rejecting a hidden part of himself. The guilt shows that the violence is not just against the snake, but against his own repressed desire.

In this way, "Snake" becomes a quiet but powerful story of queer repression. Rather than teaching a moral or environmental lesson, the poem becomes a psychological portrait of a person caught between genuine feelings and the pressure to conform.

Close Reading of the Poem: Desire, Gaze, and the Snake as Erotic 'Other'

At the centre of D.H. Lawrence's "Snake", there is a powerful moment of emotional and psychological tension. The speaker's encounter with the snake is more than a simple observation of nature; it becomes an experience filled with admiration, desire, confusion and guilt. Through a queer reading that focuses on Lawrence's choice of words, imagery and tone, the snake can be seen as more than just a natural creature or symbol of danger. It becomes an erotic 'Other' that disturbs fixed ideas about identity, masculinity and desire.

From the beginning, the speaker does not show fear but a kind of deep respect for the snake. He describes it as coming down "... from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom / And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied

down, over the edge of the stone trough" (Lawrence, lines 7–8). Words like "slackness," "soft-bellied," and "trailed" give the snake a soft, almost delicate quality. This creates a tone that feels tender and intimate, suggesting that the speaker is emotionally moved by the creature's presence. The physical description feels more sensual than scientific, hinting at a quiet kind of longing.

As the snake drinks, the speaker quietly waits, calling himself a "second-comer". This shows a kind of submission or humility, as though he is giving the snake a higher place. He also describes the snake as moving "in the burning bowels of this earth" (line 19), giving it a mysterious and almost sacred power. The speaker becomes still and absorbed in watching the snake. This is not just curiosity—it is a gaze filled with emotion, perhaps even desire.

The speaker goes on to say, "And I, like a second-comer, waiting / He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do, /And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do, /And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment" (lines 15–17). These lines suggest satisfaction and peace, almost as if the snake has enjoyed a sensual experience. The snake seems calm, elegant and exhibits self-assured—qualities that make it even more fascinating to the speaker.

The speaker's inner conflict between societal education and his instinct or feeling is highlighted in the line – "The voice of my education said to me/He must be killed,/For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold/are venomous" (lines 21-23). Here, "the voice of education" refers to the typical education of the society that has always become the flagbearer of heteronormativity by ostracizing all other sexual minorities from the mainstream of society. According to that society, the "black snakes", the representative of the heterosexual community are the "innocent" ones, whereas the "golden snakes" which represent the homosexual people are considered to be "venomous" and harmful to society. This societal education does not only discriminate but also takes part in instigating the toxic masculine self – "...If you were a man/You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off."(lines 24-25) which mostly results into certain acts of violence.

Later in the poem, the speaker confesses, "...how I liked him,/How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink/at my water-trough" (lines 26-27). This act of confession is quite meaningful; it shows emotional intensity and unspoken desire. The speaker's fascinated gaze upon the snake becomes a way of expressing feelings that he cannot name out loud. Film theorist Laura Mulvey's idea of the "male gaze," which usually refers to how men objectify women in cinema, can be applied differently here. The speaker's gaze is directed not at a woman but at a snake—an ambiguous, possibly an erotic figure that challenges traditional ideas of desire (Mulvey 11).

As the speaker's inner conflict grows, he again hears the "voices of my accursed human education"— "*If you were not afraid, you would kill him*" (line 35). These voices represent the rules and expectations that society imposes, especially about what it means to be a man and how one should act. As Eve Sedgwick points out in *Epistemology of the Closet*, such cultural rules force people to hide or deny queer desires, creating a binary where anything outside

of heterosexuality must be suppressed (Sedgwick 71).

In response to this internal pressure, the speaker suddenly throws a log at the snake: "I picked up a clumsy log / And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter" (lines 55–56). This violent act is not justified by any threat from the snake. It is not about survival, but a reaction to feelings the speaker does not want to admit. Leo Bersani, in his essay, *Is the Rectum a Grave?*, describes how same-sex desire is often seen as a threat to the self, leading to defensive or destructive actions (Bersani 207). The speaker's outburst seems to be an effort to deny and erase the emotional connection he felt.

Almost immediately, the speaker feels regret: "And immediately I regretted it. / I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!" (lines 62–63). He is not just sorry for scaring the snake, but he is ashamed of himself. The act seems small and cruel, especially compared to the quiet dignity of the snake. The violence has not restored any control or pride; it has only exposed the speaker's weakness and inner conflict.

The poem ends with a painful admission: "And I have something to expiate: / A pettiness" (lines 72–73). The word "expiate" suggests that the speaker feels he has committed a moral or emotional wrong. His sense of guilt is not just about harming the snake, but about denying a part of himself. The regret comes from rejecting a feeling that he could not fully understand or accept.

Through this close reading, it becomes clear that "Snake" is much more than a poem about nature or morality. The gaze, the respectful language, the inner conflict and the final remorse all suggest a moment of homoerotic tension. The snake stands as a figure of erotic 'Otherness', revealing the speaker's struggle with his own identity and the painful consequences of living under rigid social expectations.

The Snake as the Queer 'Other': Ambiguity, Beauty and Power

In D.H. Lawrence's "Snake", the creature at the centre of the poem takes on a much deeper meaning than simply that of a wild animal or a biblical symbol of evil. Through a queer lens, the snake becomes a powerful symbol of 'otherness'—strange yet beautiful, calm yet commanding. It represents a queer presence that unsettles the speaker, not because it threatens him physically, but because it challenges the way he understands gender, power and identity.

The snake is described using soft, graceful imagery. Phrases like "soft-bellied" and "slackly" suggest smooth, flowing movement and a kind of quiet elegance. These qualities go against the typical traits often associated with masculinity, such as strength, control or aggression. Instead, the snake's gentle presence creates a kind of emotional tension—it is powerful, but not through force. This mix of strength and softness suggests a more fluid understanding of gender, one that does not fit into fixed male/female roles. Judith Butler's theory of gender as performance helps one understand this further. Butler argues that gender is not something one is born with but something one expresses through actions and appearances (Butler 25). The snake, by simply existing as it is—graceful, calm and unaffected by the speaker's gaze and refuses to perform according to human expectations. It does not act aggressive, submissive or

sexualized. It just exists confidently and freely, and that freedom challenges traditional gender roles.

When the speaker throws a log at the snake, it is not an act of bravery, but a response to this discomfort. The violence is symbolic—a way to reject what the snake represents and to reassure himself of his normalcy. But instead of feeling powerful, the speaker immediately regrets it. He describes the act as "mean", "vulgar" and "petty." The snake leaves with dignity, while the speaker is left feeling small and ashamed. This reversal shows that true power lies not in dominance, but in self-possession. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick points out, queer identity is often full of contradictions, emotional tension and unspoken feelings (Sedgwick 3). The snake reflects this—being both beautiful and unsettling, strong and soft, masculine and ambiguous. It offers the speaker a different possibility, a more fluid and honest version of identity that he ultimately cannot accept. "Snake" reimagines the serpent not as a danger but as a symbol of queer potential. Its presence reveals how fragile gender norms are and how much effort it takes to maintain them.

Lawrence's Homoerotic Undercurrent: A Brief Comparative Glance

The homoerotic tension found in "Snake" is not a one-time occurrence in D.H. Lawrence's writing. Many of his works are also known for questioning the traditional ideas about masculinity and same-sex desire. When "Snake" is compared with novels like *Women in Love* and *The White Peacock*, one can see a recurring pattern where Lawrence explores emotional and physical closeness among men in ways that often go beyond what is socially accepted.

In *Women in Love* (1920), the bond between Rupert Birkin and Gerald Crich contains strong homoerotic undertones. Their famous nude wrestling scene, described in rich and sensual language, blurs the line between friendship and desire. Literary critic Mark Kinkead-Weekes points out that Lawrence was "constantly fascinated by male beauty and the possibilities of emotional, even erotic, bonding between men" (Kinkead-Weekes 413). A similar fascination appears in "Snake", where the speaker's emotional response to the male-coded serpent hints at a repressed form of attraction.

Lawrence's earlier novel *The White Peacock* (1911) also explores intense male friendships that feel more emotionally charged than ordinary companionship. According to biographer Jeffrey Meyers, Lawrence's early work reveals "a yearning for a freer, more tender form of male bonding" (Meyers 109)—a kind of closeness that society often ignored or discouraged. From this perspective, the guilt the speaker expresses in "Snake" after throwing the log at the snake may reflect the inner damage caused by repressing such feelings.

What makes "Snake" different from these novels is its poetic style. In just over sixty lines, the poem captures an emotional journey from admiration and desire to violence and regret. While the novels have space to explore these themes through storylines and character development, "Snake" conveys the same inner conflict using brief but powerful images and silences. In this way, "Snake" offers a condensed but meaningful example of the queer themes that appear more fully developed in his longer fiction.

Conclusion

D.H. Lawrence's "Snake" is a deeply layered poem that explores desire, inner conflict and identity in a subtle yet powerful way. Beneath the surface of a man's encounter with a snake lies a complex emotional story. Through a queer reading, the snake becomes a symbol of forbidden attraction. The speaker's fascination with the snake, shaped by his prolonged gaze and growing discomfort, reflects a hidden longing that cannot be expressed openly.

"Snake" becomes a quiet but powerful portrayal of queer repression—not through direct statements, but through subtle images, silences, and the speaker's inner struggle. The poem invites readers to think differently about masculinity, vulnerability and desire and offers a space to imagine identities beyond rigid heteronormative roles.

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FROM TORTURE TO TRAUMA: ANALYSING SURVIVOR'S GUILT AND MORAL INJURY IN *BROTHERS*

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Abstract: *Brothers* (2009) is a psychological war thriller film directed by Jim Sheridan that follows Sam Cahill, an army officer who is presumed dead. This paper examines the survivor's guilt and moral injury the protagonist undergoes and how these experiences alter his outlook on life. It aims to shed light on the lasting psychological impacts that persist long after a war ends.

Keywords: Psychological Trauma, Moral Injury, Survivor's Guilt, and Post-Traumatic Stress.

Introduction

Brothers (2009) is an American film directed by Jim Sheridan. The film closely follows the story of Sam Cahill, a United States Marine Corps officer sent on a mission to war in Afghanistan in 2007. Before his departure, the film's exposition provides a glimpse of his immediate family. Sam is married to his high school girlfriend Grace, and they have two daughters, Isabelle and Maggie. He has a brother named Tommy Cahill, whom he helps get out of prison on parole. After being shot down from a helicopter while on a mission, Sam is presumed killed in action. The remainder of the film deals with the aftermath of the incident. In reality, Sam is taken prisoner by the Taliban along with Private Joe Willis. After both endure torture for several weeks, Sam is forced by his captors to kill Willis by beating him to death with a metal rod. Upon being rescued and brought back as a war hero, Sam is overtaken by inner turmoil and survivor's guilt. His experience makes him suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which his daughters cannot understand, and thus they get distanced from him. Sam ends up thinking that his moral sacrifice was in vain when he begins to doubt that his wife is having an affair with his brother. While Sam is viewed as a war hero, he is laden with guilt and contemplates suicide, unable to accept the harsh aftermath of his war life. The effect of war is not only physical but also deep-rooted in the human psyche. The effects of war include a scarred mind, which is deeply psychological. His altered life and story are a scathing critique of war and its toll on not only human lives but the human mind.

Survivor's Guilt

Dr. William G. Niederland introduced the concept of "survivor syndrome" through his work with Holocaust survivors. A closely related term, survivor's guilt, first appeared in the 1960 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-I), originally linked to Holocaust trauma. Today, it is widely recognized as a symptom associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), especially among war veterans. Survivor's guilt, as described by *Psychology Today*, involves the emotional suffering of individuals who survive a traumatic event in which others did not. Even if the

survivor had no control over the outcome, feelings of guilt can still arise (“Survivor Guilt”). The same article also notes that “a person may experience survivor’s guilt, despite bearing no responsibility for the outcomes that occurred.” The story of Sam Cahill, however, is highly complicated. He is responsible for the outcome directly—although under coercion, Sam is the one who brutally beats Private Joe Willis to death using a metal rod. This results in the survivor’s guilt faced by Sam Cahill being not a usual one, but an intense form that drowns him in deep guilt. Sam says, “I’m drowning, Tommy” (*Brothers* 01:34:08), as he is being persuaded by Tommy, Grace, and a number of policemen to drop the gun as he contemplates suicide. According to *Psychology Today*, common symptoms of survivor’s guilt include numbness, disconnection, shame, sadness, headaches, trouble sleeping, and social disconnection—almost all of which are evident in Sam’s behavior throughout the film (“Survivor Guilt”). *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (DSM-IV) later removed survivor guilt as a recognized clinical diagnosis and redefined it as a significant symptom of PTSD.

Moral Injury

Guilt alone, however, cannot account for the full weight that Sam carries. Moral injury extends this burden. Philosopher Andrew Jameton first introduced the term moral distress in his 1984 book *Nursing Practice: The Ethical Issues*, where he explained that “moral distress arises when one knows the right thing to do, but institutional constraints make it nearly impossible to pursue the right course of action.” (Jameton). Sonya B. Norman of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs writes, “In traumatic or unusually stressful circumstances, people may perpetrate, fail to prevent, or witness events that contradict deeply held moral beliefs and expectations” (Norman). This form of psychological distress is commonly known as moral injury, and it becomes especially relevant in the case of Sam Cahill, who is forced to kill a fellow soldier to secure his own survival. Sam is made to transgress his own morality through this violent act, which torments him mentally throughout the rest of the film. Norman states that “Guilt, shame, disgust and anger are the result of moral injury,” and explains that guilt often manifests as distress and remorse over one’s actions, such as the feeling, “I did something bad” (Norman).

Shame, guilt, and disgust are all displayed by Sam’s outburst when he starts breaking things in the kitchen. His guilt is displayed deftly through dialogue when he says, “I’m no fucking hero, you know what I did?” (*Brothers* 01:32:46). He also tells Grace in a fit of rage what he had to do: “You know what I had to do with these fucking hands, Grace?” These instances display the moral injury experienced by Sam and its consequent guilt trapping him and tormenting his mental state. Norman writes again in the same article, “Exposure to morally injurious events is associated with both suicidal ideation as well as suicide attempts” (Norman). Sam briefly contemplates suicide near the end of the film. He points a pistol to his head and threatens to shoot the policemen who are present there trying to dissuade his attempt. These instances show the moral injury inflicted upon Sam and its deadly consequences.

Expectations of a War Hero

The title, “War Hero” carries with it certain expectations. Throughout the film, Sam is referred to as a hero by various people, including his father, Hank Cahill, and later, by the policemen during the climactic standoff. Hank appears to have significantly influenced Sam’s decision to become an army officer. At the start of the film, during a family dinner following Tommy’s parole, Hank proudly praises Sam and says to Tommy, “Your brother’s a hero. He’s serving his country, and don’t you ever forget that” (*Brothers* 00:08:36). Further criticizing Tommy, he adds, “Why don’t you try mimicking your brother for a change?” (*Brothers* 00:09:35). Later, Tommy reproaches his father, suggesting that Hank’s ideals pushed Sam into the military: “That’s why you put all that shit in his head. Huh?” (*Brothers* 00:23:24). These moments highlight the societal and familial expectations placed on Sam—expectations that become suffocating when he no longer sees himself as worthy of the ‘hero’ label.

Later, after Sam suffers from PTSD and his father notices Sam’s emotional distancing and numbness, he asks if Sam is okay and tells him, “‘Cause after I got back from Nam, I couldn’t talk to your mother. I guess I took it out on you and Tommy, you know, I... I don’t know why. Look, if you ever wanna talk, let me know. All right?” (*Brothers* 01:07:19). The dialogue reveals Hank’s subtle but unmistakable guilt for influencing Sam’s decision to join the army, realizing what he went through after the Vietnam War is now being experienced by Sam. Hank lends his emotional support, offering to listen lest Sam ever wanted to share something.

Mrs. Joe Willis visits Sam’s wife, Grace. Sam overhears their conversation about Mrs. Willis’ recurring nightmare where Joe Willis brutally dies in front of her. In one dream, she says that she saw Sam, and tells Grace, “But I hated him. In the dream, I hated him for being alive. That’s why I came over to apologize, I’m sorry” (*Brothers* 01:11:30). While Mrs. Willis apologizes to Grace, Sam is unable to forgive himself for the life he took and the violent way he was forced to do so. His survivor guilt is evident in this.

Tommy brings a date, Tina, to Maggie’s birthday party. She talks about how people cannot be trained to kill; they can be trained to handle weapons but not to kill humans and handle the trauma. She says, “They’re Marines, but they’re still people, and I don’t think that anybody is trained to shoot somebody” (*Brothers* 01:24:17). She also adds, “Nobody can really be trained to watch someone die. That’s just something that you’re not taught” (*Brothers* 01:24:30). This dialogue is particularly true with Sam’s experience. He not only had to watch Private Joe Willis die but was forced to use deadly force to kill him with a metal rod. Sam is weighed down by his conscience as Tina unknowingly talks about the subject which is already haunting Sam with profound guilt, which leaves him with a feeling of unworthiness of being alive.

Torture Leads to Trauma

Cathy Caruth, in *Unclaimed Experience*, explains trauma as an experience that is not fully grasped in the moment but recurs unexpectedly later in life. She writes, “Trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original

event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth 4). In the case of Sam Cahill, the traumatic experience of being forced to brutally beat Private Willis to death with a metal rod does not seem to haunt him at the time of the act. It is only after he returns home that the effects of trauma, as defined by Caruth, begin to manifest. Sam grows increasingly alienated from his wife and daughters. He reacts with heightened startle responses to ordinary sounds, including those made by his daughter Isabelle. This culminates in a violent emotional outburst when Sam destroys the kitchen with a fire poker—a symbolic object that visually recalls the metal rod he used to kill Willis. The return of trauma is thus not just emotional but also material, embedded in the objects and spaces of his domestic life.

According to the Mayo Clinic, PTSD is a psychological condition that arises after a person experiences or witnesses a traumatic or highly distressing event ("Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)"). Sam exhibits traditional symptoms of PTSD, such as flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts about the traumatic event (Mayo Clinic). These symptoms are evident in his abrupt reaction when Isabelle makes noise with a balloon at Maggie's birthday party, and in the way he grows distant from his own daughters due to his violent outbursts and irritable behavior.

Sam is also reluctant to share his experience with his family, emotionally shutting himself off. He lies to Mrs. Joe Willis when asked if he saw Private Willis die, and continues to remain silent throughout the film, showing no intention of disclosing the truth to anyone.

It is only towards the very end of the film that Sam finally confesses the root cause of his guilt to Grace. He tells her, "I killed him. I killed Joe Willis" (*Brothers* 01:39:44). They then embrace and ostensibly reconcile with each other. Sam says, "I don't know who said, 'Only the dead have seen the end of war.' I have seen the end of war. The question is, can I live again?" (*Brothers* 01:40:06). These lines encapsulate Sam's PTSD and overpowering survivor's guilt, along with the moral injury that has made it impossible for him to return to a normal life. By the end of the film, Sam is still uncertain whether he can become normal again. The confession to Grace acts as a bridge that Sam crosses—it is the first step toward his transition. In doing so, *Brothers* does not offer easy resolution but rather highlights how trauma lingers, festers, and reshapes identity long after the battlefield is left behind. Sam's story stands as a quiet yet powerful critique of the burdens soldiers carry, long after the war is over. Thus, from torture to trauma, Sam Cahill's journey reveals the inner wounds that war leaves behind. The film captures the lingering effect of war on its survivors.

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TRANSFORMING LAW FROM WITHIN: LAN WANGJI AND THE POLITICS OF MORAL DEFIANCE

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Abstract: This paper explores Lan Wangji, a character from *Mo Dao Zu Shi* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu, through Michel Foucault's theory of power and discipline. As a subject shaped by the Gusu Lan Sect's rigid institutional laws, Lan Wangji appears complicit in the system of moral regulation. Yet, his quiet defiance and protection of Wei Wuxian despite his punishment reveals a subversive agency. This study argues that through Lan Wangji, law is neither upheld nor shattered, but transformed by the quiet force of love, loyalty, and moral dissent.

Keywords: Foucault, Power, Discipline, Silence, Resistance, Morality and Identity.

Law, at its core, is a set of rules that a society establishes to guide how people behave and to keep things in order. These rules can be driven from many places, from government statutes to long-standing social customs. The relationship between power and rules is fundamental to understanding how law operates within any society. They are intricately linked, with each influencing and shaping the others. The major features are power, discipline and morality. This theory of power and discipline and its consequences is used to critically analyse the novels of *Mo Dao Zu Shi* by Mo Xiang Tong Xiu.

Michel Foucault delineates a shift in the mechanisms of power—from overt violence and spectacle to subtle forms of control rooted in surveillance, normalization, and discipline. This disciplinary power no longer manifests through spectacular punishment but rather through a meticulous micro-physics of power that renders individuals docile and self-regulating. A cultivator of the esteemed Gusu Lan Sect, Lan Wangji embodies the sect's strict adherence to discipline, restraint, and moral rectitude. Renowned for his stoicism, integrity, and mastery of cultivation, he serves as both a symbol and enforcer of the sect's rigid rules. The Lan Sect operates under 3000 rules of conduct and each one is deeply ingrained in its disciples, embodying Foucault's concept of normalization. This comprehensive rule stone governs all aspects of life, from emotional regulation to daily routines. Its power lies not in physical retribution, but in a moral and social framework that cultivates profound self-discipline among its members. The second youngmaster of Gusu Lan Wangji can also be called a man of walking rules. One of his peers Nie Huaisang calls him stiff and strict when introducing him to his peers. The gusu rules and punishment has taken a strong hold on Lan Wangji that shaped the 15 years old into a boy of more maturity than his peers, that also made others misunderstand him. Lan rules become a form of Foucauldian surveillance distributed, internal, and constant. Even without a physical observer, the presence of discipline is always

felt, much like the panopticon where the possibility of being watched ensures conformity. Lan Wangji's emotional repression, his silent adherence to ritual, and his bodily comportment reflect the "docile body" trained, restrained, and productive within the moral and social order of the Lan Sect. His every movement, from his gait to his speech, is a product of this conditioning. "wei-xiong, listen to my heartfelt advice," Nie Huaisang said. "The Cloud recesses can't be compared to Lotus pier. Now that you've come to Gusu remember to never provoke a certain person."

"Who?" Wei Wuxian asked. "Lan Qiren" "Not that old man." Nie Huaisang replied. "The one you have to be careful of is his favourite disciple, Lan Zhan."

Foucault attempts to exemplify that the new structure of disciplinary power works through individual bodies and their conduct. In the context of the Gusu Lan Clan, this is evident in the 3000 rules—a list so comprehensive and internalized that it ceases to be questioned. Wangji, bound by these rules from childhood, undergoes a form of subject formation where his freedom is both defined and denied by discipline. His silence is not merely a personality trait but a product of a system that suppresses expression in favor of obedience and order. His yearning for self-expression, connection, and emotional truth is consistently repressed until it threatens the coherence of his subjecthood.

Foucault posits that the modern exercise of power is the most efficient one when it becomes invisible and internalized. In the Cloud Recesses, rules are omnipresent and absolute, shaping conduct not by physical force but by expectation. As Foucault argues, discipline "makes individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (170). Lan Wangji is one such individual—meticulously shaped by the Lan Clan's disciplinary regime, his conduct reflects a deeply internalized normativity where deviation is severely punished. When Lan Wangji tried to help Wei Wuxian, his soulmate by providing books on demonic cultivation, he is ordered to kneel outside the ancestral hall for three days as according to Gusu Lan clan, demonic cultivation is an unorthodox method of cultivation and Lan Wangji being an orthodox cultivator belonging to the Old orthodox traditional cultivation clan helping a demonic cultivator is viewed as a sin against Gusu 3000 rules. Once again here the law becomes a rule and is judged for disobeying the rules of clan.

Wangji's inability to act freely when confronted with love, grief, or defiance shows how the discipline and rules control him in his life, thus making him puppet. The disciplinary force he encounters is diffuse—it comes from elders, peers, tradition, and most of all, from himself. This internalisation of power causes his suffering. The system no longer needs to punish him externally; Wangji punishes himself when he was accidentally tricked into drinking wine by Wei Wuxian as the rules of Gusu prohibits alcohol. He knelt down and got beatings. He finds the purpose of his life and assumes discipline, rules and thought as the fundamentals of morality. "Lan wangji lifted the hem of his white robe and also knelt next to Wei Wuxian. Wei Wuxian was greatly shocked at the sight and struggled to get up, but Lan Wangji said 'Strike'" (157).

Lan Wangji is perpetually caught between duty and desire, silence and speech, law and love. The system, though appearing benevolent in its emphasis on moral cultivation, strips away spontaneity and self-actualization. Wangji's journey is thus a Foucauldian tragedy of a subject made by power, who can only reclaim agency by breaking the very structure that constitutes him

Foucault notes, power is not merely repressive but productive. The very same system that controls Lan Wangji also constructs his identity—as a cultivator, a moral authority, and a protector. However, his affection for Wei Wuxian and his occasional disobedience when helping Wei Wuxian bring out his morality and reveals the cracks in this disciplinary structure. Lan Wangji's struggle mirrors what Foucault sees as the tension within subject formation: "The soul is the prison of the body" (30). His selfhood, produced through Lan discipline, becomes the site of resistance to that very power.

It can thus be argued that the Gusu Lan system's rigid rules strip individuals of their will, turning them into functioning units within a moral hierarchy. Lan Wangji's pain is not only physical or emotional but ontological—he is disciplined to the point that he cannot articulate resistance without undermining his identity. As Foucault states, "the law operates more and more as a norm," and the Lan Clan's system does just that—it classifies behavior, enforces uniformity, and punishes not through overt violence but through exclusion, isolation, and internalized guilt.

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**POSTCOLONIAL EXPLORATION OF CULTURAL TRAUMA AND
ORAL RESISTANCE IN *A NAGA VILLAGE REMEMBERED* BY
EASTERINE KIRE**

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Abstract: *A Naga Village Remembered* explores the cultural trauma and ancient reminiscence of the 1879 British invasion of Khonoma, a Naga village, revealing the complicated intersections of colonial violence, indigenous resistance, and oral lifestyle. Through a culturally grounded narrative, the unconventional reconstructs collective reminiscence and identity, hard dominant colonial historiography. It foregrounds indigenous epistemologies and the resilience of traditional Naga social systems, while concurrently critiquing the erasure of native voices in ancient discourse. This survey interprets the unconventional as a postcolonial cultural archive that reclaims subaltern enterprise and preserves ethnic historical past through literary expression.

Keywords: Postcolonial Memory, Indigenous Identity, Cultural Trauma, Oral Historiography, Ethnic Resistance and Colonial Encounter.

Introduction

An important figure in Northeast Indian literature, Easterine Kire is renowned for her contributions to the documentation of the Naga people's sociopolitical struggles, oral traditions and lived experiences. Kire has been instrumental in introducing Naga stories into the mainstream of Indian and international literary discourses as the first Naga woman to publish a novel in English. The intricate historical and cultural fabric of Northeast India is affirmed by her works which reject stereotypical depictions of the area and are firmly anchored in indigenous identity historical memory and cultural resilience. Her first book *A Naga Village Remembered* rebuilds the horrific history of the British invasion of Khonoma a village in modern-day Nagaland in 1879. Kire challenges the official colonial records and recovers a suppressed chapter of resistance and survival through powerful stories derived from Naga oral tradition. This study explores how oral tradition, memory and trauma are employed as forms of resistance to colonial historiography by critically analysing *A Naga Village Remembered* through the lens of postcolonial theory. In particular the frameworks proposed by theorists like Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty, Spivak, and Homi Bhabha provide a critical foundation for examining the colonial archive and reclaiming the underrepresented voices that imperial narratives have obscured. According to the paper, the novel is a counter-historical narrative that reframes historical trauma as a site of agency and resilience rather than passive suffering and elevates indigenous memory. By tackling the novels' thematic concerns, the study looks at how colonial violence is embedded in historical representation and how literature can act as a decolonial archive. Examining the intersection of indigenous historiography and cultural trauma in a postcolonial context is the primary goal of this study. It

looks at how Kire's narrative style revives oral traditions to recover collective memory and challenges the veracity of written colonial accounts. By doing this, the study shows how trauma is remembered and reimagined, forming the basis of an alternative historical consciousness grounded in local epistemologies.

Ancestral memory community storytelling and firsthand accounts are used to place the book within a broader framework of political resistance and cultural survival. By opposing the epistemic violence of colonialism, these narrative modes highlight an inclusive, pluralistic and historically based model of the Naga people.

Additionally, this paper makes the case that *A Naga Village Remembered* is a postcolonial act of resistance that reshapes national memory from the margins and recovers indigenous knowledge, going beyond a literary account of colonial aggression. The book offers an alternative approach to historiography by highlighting the marginalized voices of Khonoma's villagers and integrating historical resistance into a story of cultural continuity. Thus, this study adds to the expanding conversation about how postcolonial literature can reframe memory and history especially from the viewpoint of the Indian nation-states marginalised ethnic communities.

Imperial Violence and the Silencing of Subaltern Histories

This novel uses the lived experiences of the Naga people especially those of Khonoma village during the British invasion in 1879 to powerfully and disturbingly reimagine the imperial encounter. The book is a sharp indictment of colonial historiography which frequently obscures or ignores indigenous stories. The narrative of Kire challenges the epistemic domination of imperial discourse in the tradition of postcolonial thought particularly in the writings of Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. British authorities' perception and documentation of Naga resistance reflect Said's concept of Orientalism which explains how the coloniser portrays the colonised as inferior and voiceless. By purposefully leaving out the nuanced sociopolitical reasons for the resistance, the colonial archive portrays the Naga uprising as savage and illogical. By providing Khonoma subalterns with subjectivity, voice and dignity Kire challenges this narrative. "Can the subaltern speak?" is a crucial query raised by Spivak—finds an implicit answer in Kire's work, where the subaltern not only speaks but does so through an assertive cultural and narrative framework that subverts the imperial monologue.

Kire's portrayal of the British invasion dismantles the sanitised myths of benevolent colonialism. The text vividly recounts the calculated cruelty inflicted upon the villagers of Khonoma—both in terms of physical violence and psychological trauma. The British imperial campaign is depicted not as an administrative mission but as a systematic attempt to annihilate a people's way of life, their autonomy, and their memory. The violence is not restricted to military action; it is epistemic, designed to erase oral knowledge, dismantle kinship structures, and install colonial order as normative. In postcolonial terms, this reflects what Aimé Césaire called the "thingification" of the colonised—the transformation of living, breathing cultures into passive objects of domination. In one powerful moment, an elder villager voices this erasure:

They came not just with guns but with laws and silence. They broke our stones and tore our rice fields. They took away the names of our warriors. They called our honour rebellion. And in their books, we became shadows (ANVR 81) This quote encapsulates the deep cultural and symbolic violence inflicted upon Khonoma, underscoring the systematic deletion of Naga resistance from the imperial record. The absence of Khonoma's perspective from official documentation is a historical injustice that Kire rectifies through fiction, drawing attention to the silencing mechanisms embedded in colonial archives.

However, Kire does not merely narrate violence; she interrogates its aftermath on cultural memory. The subaltern voices, once deemed unworthy of record, emerge through the novel's use of oral testimony, ancestral remembrance, and localized language. This technique disrupts the authority of Western historiography and inserts an indigenous epistemology rooted in community, land, and spirituality. The villagers' memories are not static recollections but living narratives that contest official truth. Postcolonial theory recognizes this act as counter- hegemonic—resisting the “textual colonization” of the past.

Cultural Trauma and the Narrative Reconstruction of Identity

Using cultural trauma as both a narrative device and a way to tell historical truth, Easterine Kire crafts a deeply moving literary landscape in *A Naga Village Remembered*. Through the lens of trauma theory, particularly the works of Cathy Caruth and Dominick LaCapra, the novel explores the lasting effects of colonial violence that continue to influence the Naga people's collective memory. Caruth's argument that trauma is not merely an event but rather a haunting repetition that defies linear narration is reflected in Kire's fractured multi-voiced narrative which is based on ancestral storytelling. The terrible experience of the British invasion in 1879 is not portrayed as a closed historical event but rather as a living generational wound that resurfaces through memory rituals and oral accounts. The memories of the villagers serve as both personal testimonies and cultural archives repositories of identity formed through survival and defiance of adversity. LaCapra describes the characters frequent alternating memory between reflection and reenactment as acting out and working through trauma. As a result, the trauma forms the basis for the reconstruction of postcolonial identity which is distinguished by memory resilience as opposed to victimhood.

The book illustrates how trauma is passed down through generations as a narrative device to declare cultural continuity and thwart erasure. Trauma, in this context, is not just psychological but cultural—embedded in rituals, oral storytelling, music, and the land itself. Kire portrays this collective trauma through the voices of elders and descendants who refuse to let the memory of Khonoma's resistance be buried by colonial narratives. Their memories function as living resistance against what postcolonial scholars identify as “epistemic violence”—the systemic silencing of non-Western ways of knowing. This cultural transmission is vividly captured in one of the elder's powerful recollections: My grandfather never told it as a tale of sorrow. He told it as a fire we kept alive. He said the red coats came to crush our bones, but we danced

in ashes and sang the names of the fallen. We never let their silence become ours.”(ANVR 107)

This moment captures the narrative reconstruction of identity through trauma—not as brokenness but as continuity. The metaphor of “dancing in ashes” speaks to a postcolonial aesthetic of survival, where mourning becomes a mode of resistance and memory an act of political defiance.

Furthermore, Kire’s portrayal of trauma resists Western clinical understandings by embedding it in indigenous epistemologies. While Western trauma theory often emphasises individual psychological rupture, Kire locates trauma in the communal body—experienced, processed, and healed collectively. The reconstruction of identity in the novel is intrinsically tied to space, ancestry, and orality. Postcolonial theory helps illuminate how this communal processing of trauma serves as a counter-narrative to colonial historiography that aimed to displace and fragment indigenous communities.

Decolonizing Knowledge: Literary Reclamation of Indigenous Agency

“*A Naga Village Remembered*” is an effective act of decolonisation that retrieves narrative power from Eurocentric knowledge productions hegemonic structures. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said argues that colonial subjects are constructed as objects of knowledge rather than agents of history. This is why the novel purposefully challenges the colonial historiographical tradition. By placing the lived experiences oral histories and epistemological frameworks of the Naga people back in the center Kire reverses this objectification. The book challenges what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o refers to as the imperial archive—a corpus of knowledge that prioritizes Western rationality while undervaluing local worldviews—by rejecting colonial modes of documentation and embracing indigenous storytelling techniques.

By means of its narrative framework, *A Naga Village Remembered* affirms the validity of indigenous knowledge systems that are rooted in land and memory community spirituality—elements that are commonly ignored or left out of colonial discourse. It is a political and ontological reclamation that restores intellectual sovereignty and identity to the Naga community. Kire accomplishes this decolonisation of knowledge by integrating the story into the Naga people’s orality subverting the authority of the colonial archive through the use of language memory and ancestral voice. In addition to their physical defiance, the villagers also show their resistance by preserving their own knowledge systems. This process embodies what Walter D. Mignolo calls “epistemic disobedience,” a refusal to conform to the dominant colonial logic that seeks to universalise European ways of knowing. In the novel, the elders function as custodians of indigenous epistemology, transmitting historical consciousness through stories, proverbs, and collective rituals. In one of the most evocative moments, an elder recounts how their people preserved knowledge beyond colonial reach:

We did not write it in books because our truths were sung under the moon. They carved themselves into our wood, our stone, our bones. They say what is not written will be forgotten. But they forget we remember by firelight, in chants and in

silence. We speak to our children through rivers, through trees,
through names they cannot spell. And when their books rot, our
voices will still echo in the hills (ANVR 121).

This quote powerfully encapsulates the centrality of orality and the material-symbolic world in preserving indigenous knowledge. It challenges the Western belief that permanence lies only in the written word and instead asserts the endurance of cultural memory through non-textual means.

Moreover, Kire's literary project affirms indigenous subjectivity by constructing a narrative world where colonial presence is peripheral to Naga life. The British characters, though historically powerful, are narratively diminished—they appear not as central agents but as intruders within a pre-existing cultural and spiritual ecosystem. This narrative strategy decenters colonial authority and reasserts the primacy of Naga perspectives, beliefs, and social order. The novel privileges indigenous temporality, wherein time is cyclical and tied to land, harvests, and ritual rather than the linearity imposed by colonial administration.

This paper explores how *A Naga Village Remembered* by Easterine Kire serves as a postcolonial cultural archive that contest imperial historiography while preserving the ethnic memory of the Naga people. The study illustrates the ways the novel reconstructs suppressed histories, voices subaltern perspectives and reclaims indigenous epistemologies silenced by colonial narratives by applying postcolonial theory and trauma studies. Kire reaffirmed the cultural and intellectual agency of the Naga people by subverting Eurocentric historical representations through the use of oral traditions, ancestral memory and local knowledge systems. The research additionally demonstrates how trauma is narrativised as a generative force that aided in identity formation and historical continuity rather than as a rupture. Kire's narrative—which re-inscribes native histories within the literary domain and gives marginalized communities the opportunity to reclaim authorship over their past—emerges as a decolonial act of resistance by decentering colonial authority and elevating indigenous voices.

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FROM SONGS TO SKULLS: WOMEN, MEMORY, AND POWER AMONG THE HALAKKIS OF ANKOLA AND THE KONYAKS OF NAGALAND

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyse the cultural narratives of the Halakkis of Ankola and the Konyaks of Nagaland as presented in Nidhi Dugar Kundalia's *White as Milk and Rice*. It examines the matrifocal traditions and the central role of women among the Halakkis, where oral traditions function as cultural archives preserving ecological and spiritual knowledge. In contrast, the Konyak's history is deeply intertwined with the legacy of headhunting, colonial encounters, and state interventions, revealing complex layers of tribal politics and historical interpretation. By juxtaposing these two communities, the paper highlights how indigenous traditions engage with change, power, and historical consciousness.

Keywords: Headhunting, Oral Tradition, Indigenous Studies, Oral Archives and Matrifocal Tradition.

Nidhi Dugar Kundalia is an Indian journalist and nonfiction author well known for her insightful coverage of marginalized populations and dying cultural practices, as well as her compelling narrative style. In her first book, *White as Milk and Rice: Stories of India's Isolated Tribes*, she examines the lives, traditions, and oral histories of seven lesser-known tribal groups in India, such as the Halakkis of Karnataka and the Konyaks of Nagaland. Her writing is noted for its immersive detail, ethical engagement, and literary quality, making her a significant voice in contemporary Indian non-fiction. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, an Indian writer and the author of *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* says about Nidhi Dugar Kundalia, "Nidhi tempers her surprise and curiosity with empathy and fine writing, which has resulted in this book that does not intrude like a voyeur but places the reader in the midst of these people like a benign eyewitness" (Shekhar).

Role of Women and Matrifocal Traditions

Sukri Bommagowda, known as the Nightingale of the Halakkis, is a folk singer and activist from the Halakki Vokkaliga tribe of Ankola, Karnataka. She was born into the Halakki tribal community in Gokarna, a coastal area near Ankola, Karnataka. She was married at a young age to Bommagowda, who was 45 years old, in Badageri, Ankola District. She led a hard life, filled with domestic responsibilities and community duties, as Kundalia describes "women in short saris that fall till just below their Knees pick the stockfish in their palms, let the water run through their fingers and deposit the slippery fish in the pots" (Kundalia 4). Despite neglect and emotional hardships from her husband, she managed the household, raised children, tended to cattle and fields, and cared for her husband. Halakki women embody the strength of mothers and wives. Although often unrecognized by the wider public, they shoulder the responsibility of preserving life and cultural heritage.

The mother or senior woman, as part of a matrifocal tradition, plays an important but often subtle role in family structure, social memory, and cultural survival. Matrifocality, as conceptualized by anthropologist, Raymond T. Smith, refers to a social structure in which women, especially mothers, serve as the central pillars of emotional bonding, family organisation, and cultural reproduction, even in societies where patriarchal systems coexist. As Kundalia mentions, “The day’s forest produce that she has collected will hardly bring her any money at the market; her roof has to be repaired, and the moneylender she has taken a loan from for her husband’s medicine will soon come knocking on her door” (Kundalia 18). Indigenous societies frequently exhibit matrifocality through ecological management, ritual leadership, and oral transmission, all led by women. Raymond T. Smith, in his book *The Matrifocal Family: Power, Pluralism, and Politics* states, “A matrifocal family is one in which the mother occupies a central position and plays a dominant role in the maintenance of the family unit” (Smith; ch .4).

The Oral Tradition and Cultural Archives

The Halakki Vokkalu, an Indigenous agrarian community in the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka, is considered among the earliest inhabitants of the Western Ghats region. Oral histories and ethnographic accounts provide important insights into their ancestral roots and cultural evolution, although their exact historical origins remain a subject of debate owing to the absence of written records. The name Halakki is derived from *halu*, meaning “milk”, and *akki*, meaning “rice” in Kannada, denoting a society which is deeply intertwined with agriculture further symbolising self reliance, fertility, and purity. Kundalia points out, “The true origin of the term Halakki is possibly lost, with only verbal records of its history still available. According to Halakki elders, a *holati* or an outcast woman held control over Kongan’s coastal lands” (Kundalia 19). The Halakkis are thought to have migrated from the plains to the coastal and forested regions of Western Ghats. Andre Beteille, a renowned Indian sociologist says, “The notion of the ‘original inhabitant’ is more a matter of belief and politics than of historical fact, especially in a land where migration has been a constant feature” (Beteille 189). They speak a dialect of Kannada known as Halakki Kannada, which is preserved in folk songs and everyday speech. Their language, Achchagannada, resembles Telugu in some respects. The author says,

In the beginning, Halakki Vokkaligas are said to have migrated from Andhra. Anthropologists assume this because the Halakki Vokkaligas are staunch followers of Thirupathi Thimmappa of Tirupati, Andhra Pradesh. and their songs often mention the Bay of Bengal. Their language, Achchagannada also resembles Telugu. On their arrival on the Konkan coast, they stayed around Karwar. Like the Todas of Nilgiri, they lived near the foothills and forest borders and depended on the Kumbri system of agriculture, often also hunting for a living (Kundalia 20).

Halakki women adorn themselves with intricate beaded necklaces, nose rings, and bangles, and wear traditional saris, typically without a blouse. The author

says,

All four wear silver halkaddis and gutki mani: layers of colourful bead around their neck, all the way down to the shoulder. Made of Polishes sand grains and strung on threads of pineapple leaves their favourite beads are coloured yellow, black and Prussian blue They put them on for each other, layering them, letting the beads intermingle, which, like a turban, support their necks when they carry firewood on their heads. Their middle-parted hair is oiled; a pendulous bun is adorned with the red abbalige or white jasmine flowers plucked fresh every morning. Each of them has a silver nose pin, the mugati (Kundalia 11).

The most significant traditions followed by the Halakkis are oral storytelling and folk singing. During birth, marriage, harvest, and mourning, they perform songs that have been passed down through generations. Maria Mies, an ecofeminist, states, “women’s knowledge rooted in bodily experience is ecological and historical passed through generation not in books” (Mies and Shiva 24). Festivals like Huliveshwa, Karthika Deepa, and Yellama Puja are integral to Halakki traditions. The customs adhered to by the Halakkis of Ankola are dynamic manifestations of resistance, ecology and memorialization. Each practice, from oral songs to dress forms to festivities, reflects a deeply ingrained worldview that sees nature, culture and spirituality as inseparable.

Head Hunting and Warrior Culture

The Konyaks are one of the main Naga tribes living in the Mon district of the northeastern Indian state of Nagaland. Historically, they are known for headhunting practices, facial tattoos, nature-based cosmologies, and clan myths. Kundalia says, “Longwa, in the Mon district of Nagaland, has border that runs through the middle of the angh’s home: the last” (Kundalia 177). According to the oral histories of the Konyaks, they trace their origins to a mythical village called Sheanghah Chingnyu in the Mon district. The Konyaks belong to the Tibeto-Burman language family, and anthropological studies have traced their ancestry to Southeast Asia. She narrates, “The Nagas seem to have no written historical record about their origin and the route of migration to their present habitation. Some writers believe that the Nagas immigrated from three directions: north-east, north-west and south east” (186). Each village was originally governed by an Angh (chief), who possessed administrative, military, and spiritual authority. The tribe is organized around villages. Anghs were considered semi divine and traced their lineage to a common ancestral ruler. Pangshong, an elderly Konyak man, returned to his hometown, Sheanghah, where he learned in detail about his traditions. Morungs, commonly known as men’s houses, are large communal dormitories for unmarried boys. They served as schools of indigenous knowledge, where oral history, folklore, headhunting, and the use of traditional weapons were taught. Boys were trained to make weapons, hunt, play music, and fight. Kundalia narrates, “They cross a longhouse, known as the morung or boys dormitory that his uncle had told him about: It was a bachelor house of sorts for the boys where they trained for wars

and prepared for village festivals, hunting expeditions and other social engagements” (180-181).

One of the most distinguished features of the Konyak’s past was the practice of headhunting. Headhunting was a ritual warfare tradition that persisted until the mid 20th century. Bringing back an enemies’ head was regarded as a mark of honor, as it was believed to elevate the warrior’s status, protect the village from evil, and bring fertility to women and crops. Skulls were believed to contain supernatural energy and were kept in the Morung. Rituals, songs, and dances were performed after victorious raids. She tells, “Our village must grow bigger, stronger and for that, enemies heads must be secured, brought to the village and fed rice beer. This would bring prosperity and, for the naomei, some virility. The more the heads, the more the reverence” (184). As Christoph von Furer Haimendorf, an Austrian British anthropologist, observed, “The head was not simply a trophy but a spiritual symbol... a living connection between the warrior and the ancestors” (Furer-Haimendorf 122). The skulls were taken home and put on display in the Morung following the headhunting. In celebration of the warrior, the entire village took part in feasts, rites, and dances. Skulls were frequently preserved and decorated with lime paste or carved into geometric designs. Kundalia argues “The Skulls, according to animism, would bring them Prosperity, Virility and fertility of soil” (Kundalia 194). This practice began to decline under the influence of the British colonial government and was eventually banned in the twentieth century. Kundalia conveyed “The Indian ban against head hunting was another decade away but the church had already started affecting the morals of the Konyaks” (Kundalia 201).

Another iconic aspect of Konyak identity is the facial and body tattoos. These were earned through acts of bravery during battle. She says, “Warriors typically received their tattoos just days after a successful kill. Mostly, everyone who went to war deserved to be tattooed, and those who assisted with the killing or performed heroic deeds during the war got a few extra lines on their face” (195). For men, tattoos are inscribed on the forehead, chest, and arms, signifying their status and identity. For women, tattoos are earned on the neck, arms, and legs, symbolising their connection to marriage, readiness, fertility, and beauty. She says “For the men, the tattoos defined their rites of passage from boyhood to manhood, and their achievement in battle. For the woman, it defined her cycle of life having passes from one stage of life to the other” (195). The tattoos were made using natural ink and thorns and were often accompanied by chanting or rituals. As per T. B. Subba and S. Sinha in *Anthropology of North-East India*: “Tattooing, once a powerful medium of tribal identity, was gradually erased under pressure from religion, education, and bureaucracy” (Subba and Sinha 52). For Konyaks, tattoos served as mnemonic devices that held memories in the body. They served as memory makers, recording personal and communal histories.

State Intervention and Tribal politics

Later than other Naga clans, Christianity made its way into the Konyak area in the 1950s, mostly because of American Baptist missionaries. Traditional

beliefs were vilified by Christianity; headhunting, heathenism, and ancestral rites were all branded as “satanic”. The Morung was either shut down or turned into a school or church. Education was offered by mission schools in return for baptism and commitment to Christian principles. The value of oral knowledge was diminished by the Christian focus on the Bible and the print culture. Storytellers and ritual experts have become less valuable in society.

The inclusion of Nagaland in the Indian Union (1963) brought new layers of governance, development, and legal codification, and while the Indian Constitution recognizes tribal customary laws (Article 371 A), their interpretation is now state mediated. Village and tribal councils have become bureaucratic arms of the state. As Clark observes, “Christianity was not just a spiritual movement; it was a civilizational mission aimed at moral reform and cultural realignment” (Clark 112). The state started supporting tribal gatherings, but in a touristic, sanitized way. Despite being outlawed, headhunting is still remembered and spoken stories about. Kundalia says,

The government of Nagaland ratified the Wildlife Protection Act in 1981; the Act makes hunting and killing any protected animal a crime, but most village councils and Nagas assume they are protected by the special provisions of Article 371(A), which states that ‘no act of Parliament with respect to religious or social practices of the Nagas, Naga customary law and procedure’ etc. shall apply to the state unless the Legislative Assembly decides so by a resolution (Kundalia 203).

The Konyaks today live in a hybrid space, navigating between tradition and modernity, between the Bible and ancestral lore. Thus, the cultural narratives of the Halakkis and Konyaks reflect distinct yet intersecting trajectories of identity, memory, and resistance. Their traditions whether matrifocal or martial serve as living testimonies of the indigenous resilience.

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POSTCOLONIAL READING OF DORIS LESSING'S *SWEET DREAMS*: EXPLORING UTOPIA, ESCAPISM, AND IMPERIAL LEGACIES

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Abstract: Doris Lessing's *Sweet Dreams* exposes the enduring presence of imperial ideologies in bourgeois consciousness and critiques utopian fantasies through a postcolonial perspective. The book depicts a metaphysical journey that exposes the covert workings of neocolonial power beneath idealised societies and, undermines Western epistemologies. Lessing forces the reader to deal with post-imperial narratives myth of progress, ethical apathy and historical amnesia. *Sweet Dreams* is an allegorical critique of escapist modernity and dormant colonial structures through the integration of speculative fiction and philosophical investigation. In the end, the story raises doubts about utopias feasibility in a society plagued by colonial memories.

Keywords: Neocolonialism, Ideological Disillusionment, Speculative Allegory, and Utopia.

Introduction

Doris Lessing, one of the most intellectually daring writers of the 20th century, consistently interrogated the ideological underpinnings of Western civilisation in her vast body of work. Doris Lessing was born in Persia in 1919 and raised in colonial Southern Rhodesia, which is now Zimbabwe. The social and political dynamics of colonial rule had an impact on her life and writing. He examined gender politics, collective consciousness and imperial ideologies through a variety of literary genres such as science fiction, psychological allegory and realism. Through postcolonial and Marxist critiques, she examined how individuals internalise dominante structures. *Memoirs of a Survivor*, *The Golden Notebook*, and *The Grass Is Singing* are just a few of Lessing's works that deal with historical rupture and memory power. Her 1973 speculative novel *Sweet Dreams* exposes deeper ethical apathy and historical denial by criticising the moral and intellectual stagnation of post-imperial societies through a speculative framework. To reveal the psychological effects of empire on the privileged postcolonial subject, Lessing employs speculative fiction.

By emphasising the unresolved tensions of colonial history, the surface narrative gradually dispels the utopian aspirations it suggests. Utilising the theoretical understandings of Edward Said, Homi K Bhabha, and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, she highlights how *Sweet Dreams* calls into question the postcolonial West's ability to maintain identity, memory and ethical advancement. Consequently, the text serves as an allegorical repository of colonial fears functioning through a critical contemplation of the imperial self rather than through resistance from the colonized.

This paper's goal is to advance postcolonial scholarship by reimagining *Sweet Dreams* as a counter-utopian story that analyses the psychological

framework of neocolonial theory. In order to emphasise the contradiction between the Western subjects yearning for harmony and the lingering ghosts of imperialism, the novel defies closure and coherence. Lessing confronts the myth of post-imperial innocence through the protagonist's internal journey, through imagined realities. This study emphasises how speculative fiction which is frequently overlooked in the scholarly discourse on postcolonialism has the capacity to reveal the complicity of privilege, the delusion of historical rupture and the enduring systems of global power.

Colonial Consciousness and the Bourgeois Imagination

This novel delves into the colonial legacies within the Western bourgeois psyche exposing how imperial ideologies endure through cultural, psychological and aesthetic means instead of overt political dominance. Brennan explains how the protagonist, a middle-class woman serves as a conduit for Lessing's exploration of the internalized neo-colonialist structures. Her imperial impulse to dominate, categorize and control is the source of her enduring desire for order, beauty and escape. Her shift through bizarre dreamscapes is a reflection of the post-imperial subject's consumerist idealism as she seeks solace in manufactured utopias rather than facing the moral decline of contemporary society. Suppressing historical memory and avoiding the moral ramifications of empire are two ideologically charged aspects of this escapism.

According to Lessing, narrative spaces are ideological domains that mirror the ways in which the post-imperial subject disassociates herself from injustice in the world. The pristine highly aestheticised and the idyllic settings serve as metaphors for the Western privilege that were established on colonial underpinnings. The protagonist demonstrates the pointlessness of upholding an identity separate from historical responsibility by failing to find fulfilment in the most customized utopias. In addition to economic and political domination, the novel quietly demonstrates how neocolonialism also flourishes through cultural production and psychological insulation. Lessing asks the reader to consider how the aestheticisation of comfort and selective amnesia allow privilege to persist.

In one of the novel's most pointed passages, Lessing lays bare the inner workings of this insulated psyche:

I sat in a garden where the grass was velvet, and the air held no discord. It was the kind of place one always imagined paradise would be. Everyone around me spoke softly, smiled often, and there was no hunger, no sadness, no pain. Yet a silence pressed on me not from without, but within as if history had been erased and my thoughts floated rootless in the air (Lessing, 84).

This passage illustrates the seductive nature of bourgeois utopianism and the underlying void it conceals. The character exists in a space of apparent perfection, yet it is precisely the absence of historical consciousness that produces existential disquiet. Here, Lessing critiques how colonial legacies are not merely forgotten but actively erased to maintain the illusion of moral purity and intellectual serenity. The protagonist's discomfort is not caused by external

threats, but by the hollowness of a life, detached from the truth of empir; a life curated for pleasure but empty of ethical anchorage. The narrative thus dramatises the psychological cost of such detachment, reinforcing the idea that the colonial consciousness does not vanish with decolonization; it mutates into subtler forms, infiltrating imagination, desire, and aesthetic sensibility.

Speculative Fiction as a Tool of Postcolonial Subversion

Through speculative fiction, the author challenges Eurocentric thinking and undermines colonial and neocolonial ideologies. Its dreamlike narrative challenges dominant epistemologies that allowed imperial conquest and classification by subverting linear temporality and fixed spatial coordinates. The protagonist's journey through alternate realities is similar to a postcolonial journey through distorted histories, symbolic geographies and fractured identities. By using metaphor and allegory, these imaginary worlds become cognitive maps that reveal colonial repression and historical amnesia.

Lessing embraces speculative fiction in support of postcolonial theorist, Edward Said's contrapuntal reading which listens for dissonance beneath dominant narratives. The fantastical architecture in the book serves as a subversive force by exposing the violence concealed behind the civilised modernity façade. By bringing suppressed colonial histories into the readers view through the manipulation of metaphysical elements, Lessing dramatises the psychological fragmentation of the Western subject who attempts to evade historical responsibility. The bizarre becomes a vehicle for exposing ideologies.

Lessing's fictional architecture prioritises emotional intuitive and spiritual modes of engagement over logical knowledge systems by exposing the enduring influence of colonial ghosts. The protagonist grows more conscious of the fallacy of her cultural presumptions.

This thematic layering is made explicit in one of the novel's most evocative passages:

Reality shifted again, and I was in a city made entirely of glass, where people walked without casting shadows. They spoke languages I couldn't understand, yet I felt I had spoken them before. There were no maps, no clocks, no leaders. Every building reflected every other, and I knew this was a world that remembered everything it had once chosen to forget (Lessing 117).

This moment crystallises how Lessing uses speculative fiction to gesture toward a postcolonial archive, a reflective, nonlinear space where forgotten histories surface through affect rather than articulation. The glass city metaphorically represents both transparency and fragility: the visibility of suppressed knowledge and the ease with which it can be shattered or distorted by dominant ideologies. Lessing constructs these fantastical worlds not as escapes but as confrontational terrains, where the reader is forced to engage with uncomfortable truths hidden beneath the grand narratives of enlightenment and progress.

Escapism, Ethical Apathy, and the Postcolonial Subject

In *Sweet Dreams*, Doris Lessing develops a protagonist whose constant

desire to escape into other idealized worlds becomes a metaphor for post-imperial avoidance. A Western postcolonial subject who prioritises self-curated utopias over the weight of history is embodied by the protagonist who is at ease and appreciates beauty. By investigating surreal dreamscapes, she discovers a more profound moral and psychological disengagement apathy that mirrors the larger social trend of forgetting colonial exploitation.

In order to avoid feeling emotionally invested or responsible for her actions, the protagonist resorts to abstraction rather than confronting the injustices or traumas connected to imperialism. This yearning to flee, framed within a bourgeois consciousness reflects what Gayatri Spivak calls sanctioned ignorance, a deliberate refusal to learn about or experience the consequences of the colonial past. As her own pursuit of beauty and peace is entwined with a cultural system that has historically benefited from global asymmetry and continues to do so through subtle disavowals, Lessing's protagonist is not merely a dreamer in this sense rather, she is a symbol of neocolonial detachment.

Emotional detachment is positioned in the story as a post-imperial subjects pathology and privilege. Although the protagonist does not directly experience loss conflict or displacement, her intense discontent and quest for a perfect world reveal the meaninglessness of her life. This hollow centre is not coincidental but rather it is the result of a civilisation that has long built its own peace by erasing the suffering of others. Ethical apathy, therefore, becomes the affective terrain of neocolonial continuity. The protagonist's emotional numbing is not a psychological anomaly but an ideological product. Lessing suggests that such numbness is necessary for the preservation of the imperial psyche in a postcolonial world where accountability would otherwise demand recognition of violence and complicity. This becomes particularly evident in a moment of narrative introspection:

I passed through world after world, each more soothing than the last, and yet something gnawed at me. There were no wars, no cries, no wounds but also, no questions. No one asked where we came from or who paid for this calm. I began to feel the silence not as peace, but as absence (Lessing 102).

Here, Lessing illuminates how the illusion of tranquility depends on the silencing of history and suffering. The protagonist's growing discomfort in environments that present themselves as utopias signals an underlying recognition however repressed that such serenity is complicit in the denial of global inequity. Escapism, in this frame, is not freedom but moral inertia, allowing the postcolonial subject to remain blissfully unaccountable in a world built upon forgotten or ignored violence.

Utopian Collapse and the Myth of Post-Imperial Progress

In *Sweet Dreams*, Doris Lessing dismantles the illusion of utopia by exposing the hollowness at the heart of Western progress narratives, which are deeply rooted in colonial ideology and historical erasure. The protagonist's repeated transition through idealised worlds, mirrors the Western belief in linear, teleological development. However, rather than offering fulfillment,

these so-called utopias reveal an emotional void, underlining how such visions are constructed on the exclusion of memory and the silencing of colonial trauma. Lessing critiques the sanitized surface of modernity, where the language of progress masks complicity in a violent imperial past. The post-imperial subject, represented by the protagonist, seeks affirmation in these artificial environments, only to encounter the limits of a worldview that denies historical accountability. As Frantz Fanon argues, colonialism not only exploits but also distorts the future by embedding false promises of development and peace that are contingent upon violence. This critique becomes evident in a passage where Lessing stages the disintegration of a seemingly perfect realm:

I walked through cities where nothing was broken, and children sang in schools of glass. People smiled and lived without fear, and I was told we had reached the end of suffering. Yet no one spoke of how we got here, or who had disappeared along the way. Their silence was as polished as the streets (Lessing 133).

Here, the gleam of the utopia becomes a metaphor for repression—its beauty dependent on the erasure of history and pain. Lessing thus uses the failure of these constructed paradises to critique the Western myth of post-imperial progress, revealing that without a reckoning with colonial violence, any claim to modernity remains ethically bankrupt and narratively unstable.

This research examines Doris Lessing's *Sweet Dreams* as a postcolonial allegory that subverts Western narratives of progress, modernity, and moral superiority through speculative fiction. It reveals how the protagonist's metaphysical journey reflects the latent colonial consciousness embedded within the bourgeois imagination, exposing ethical apathy and the illusion of utopia sustained by historical amnesia. By employing surreal and metaphysical landscapes, Lessing destabilises Eurocentric epistemologies and exposes the deep psychological and cultural mechanisms through which neocolonial ideologies persisted. The study also emphasizes that *Sweet Dreams* critiques escapism and moral detachment by urging a reimagining of the future that acknowledges the spectral presence of colonial histories haunting the post-imperial present.

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TWISTS OF TRUTH: SUSPENSEFUL ENDINGS IN *VERITY* AND *THE SILENT PATIENT*

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Abstract: *Verity* by Colleen Hoover and *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides deliver suspenseful endings through unreliable narrators and shocking twists. In *Verity*, Lowen's discovery of a disturbing manuscript blurs truth and deception, questioning Verity's motives. Similarly, *The Silent Patient* unveils Alicia's silence via Theo's obsessive pursuit, redefining their connection. Both novels use psychological depth and ambiguity for lasting impact. *Verity* harnesses a manuscript's eerie power, while *The Silent Patient* employs silence as a haunting narrative tool.

Keywords: Deceptive, Manuscript, Misleading, Psyche, Silence, Suspense, Twist and Uncertainty.

Comparative literature is traditionally known as the study of two or more literature in comparison, often examines literature across language, culture and national borders. This study focuses on the comparison of genres of the book *Verity* by Colleen Hoover and *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides. Margaret Colleen Hoover is primarily known for her romantic fiction genres. *Verity* is her first psychological thriller novel written and published in 2018. It has been translated into seven languages. According to her, this book is a brief departure from the emotional love stories that she usually writes. Alex Michaelides is the bestselling British Cypriot author. *The Silent Patient* was his debut novel. It is a psychological thriller published by Celadon books in 2019 this book is widely known for its shocking twists and sophisticated suspense.

Verity by Colleen Hoover and *The Silent Patient* by Alex Michaelides are psychological thrillers that use unreliable narrators and plot twists to keep readers guessing. While they tell different kinds of stories, both books explore themes like twists, truth, trauma, and manipulation. In *Verity*, the main character, Lowen Ashleigh, is a struggling writer who gets hired to finish a famous book series of the original author, Verity Crawford. When Lowen moves into Verity's house, she finds a disturbing manuscript that seems to be Verity's private autobiography. The more Lowen reads, the more she starts to question everything - Verity's past, her current condition, and what really happens in the house. The story switches between Lowen's present-day experiences and the events described in Verity's manuscript. Things get even more confusing when a letter is found at the end, suggesting that the manuscript might have been a lie. This leaves readers unsure about what was true and what was made up. *The Silent Patient* takes a different approach. It follows Theo Faber, a psychotherapist who becomes obsessed with helping Alicia Berenson, a woman who stopped speaking after she was accused of killing her husband. The book moves between Theo's perspective and Alicia's diary. As the story continues, it becomes clear that Theo is not just a curious therapist he has a personal connection to Alicia's past and may have played a role in the events

leading to the murder. The final twist changes the readers' thoughts about him and the story. The characters Lowen Ashleigh and Theo Faber are portrayed as outsiders who were with or without willingness pulled into the horrific atmosphere. However, in Theo's case, the truth unfolds in the final chapter as he was the anonymous intruder who was set out to be the mastermind behind the murder.

Although both novels employ unreliable narrators, they accomplish this in a unique manner. *Verity* is dark, emotional, and mysterious, particularly due to the horrific manuscript. It makes readers question what actually occurred. *The Silent Patient* is more psychological, unveiling the secrets and emotional turmoil of Theo gradually. Its twist at the end provides an explicit solution, whereas *Verity* remains open to interpretation. The characters also have these differences. Lowen is emotionally confused and becomes attracted to Jeremy, Verity's husband, which influences the way she perceives things. Verity's autobiography can be entirely false, which contributes to the mystery. In *The Silent Patient*, Theo appears collected on the surface, but his fixation on Alicia evidences greater issues. Alicia never speaks, and even her diary is not telling the whole story, keeping her character mysterious. Both novels are great specimens of psychological thrillers. *Verity* keeps readers questioning and unsettled, whereas *The Silent Patient* provides a definitive and surprising ending. Further, they leave readers wondering very hard about what is real, whom to trust, and the influence of trauma on people's minds.

Both the novels play with the issue of truth in ambiguous ways, but Hoover's *Verity* has a more emotional blow. In *The Silent Patient*, truth comes across as a tricky riddle. Alicia is silent after her husband, Gabriel's murder. Seeking truth, Theo Faber attempts to unravel by uncovering her diary and paintings. One significant scene is where Theo reads Alicia's diary, and she describes how much she loves Gabriel and feels like someone is following her. Initially, this appears to be the reality, but subsequently, the twist reveals that Theo himself is involved in the story, concealing his own secrets. This twist illustrates how reality can be distorted by one's perspective or intention. Michaelides ties everything up in a bow, leaving no doubt about how truth can be molded and dictated by what one decides to reveal or conceal. *Verity*, on the other hand, assaults readers with raw emotions, combining love and horror to make truth raw and disturbing. Lowen discovers Verity's secret book, which appears to confess horrific acts, such as Verity's involvement in her daughter's murders. In one of the terrifying scenes, Lowen reads how Verity had abandoned her child, resulting in a tragedy that is so personal and terrifying. It finally costs the lives of Verity's daughters, Harper and Chastin. Then comes the discovery of Verity's last letter under her bed, which leaves Lowen and readers confused about the reality. Even questioning Jeremy's real motive when he kills his neighbor Patricia who had just talked to Lowen and Crew, leaves the readers and Lowen in total horror and disbelief. Hoover leaves the truth undefined, ending the novel without clear answers, which is how life can be messy and undefined at times. The ambiguity of the story makes it more emotional because Lowen struggles with trust, love, and fear. Both novels

employ written records, Alicia's diary and Verity's manuscript to toy with truth and demonstrate how words can bring out or cover up reality. The diary in *The Silent Patient* appears truthful but omits essential facts, allowing Theo's prejudices fill the gaps. In *Verity*, the manuscript feels like a confession, but its truth is questionable, forcing Lowen to decide what to believe. Theo's hidden motives and Verity's uncertain manuscript show that the truth depends on who tells the story. While *The Silent Patient* deals more with the psyche, addressing betrayal and masterful plot twists, *Verity* tugs at the heartstrings, mixing romance and terror to make truth hurtful and intimate. Michaelides provides an unequivocal resolution, whereas Hoover leaves it hanging, mirroring the unanswered questions of life. Both novels compel readers to question what is true, demonstrating that seeking the truth can be as dangerous as hiding it. Theo's psyche plays a vital role in the construction of the novel. He was the one behind the murder who drove Alicia to kill Gabriel. The novels' narratives style burs his intention. Another point to be noted is Theo's weakness; who happens to be his wife Kathy. Although Kathy and Gabriel's affair is mutual Theo shows most of his rage only towards Gabriel. He also forgives Kathy as she remains dark on her lover's death. Whereas, Alicia decides to take her revenge in an instant when he gave up on her to save his own life. This double betrayal is hinted with her painting named "*Alcestis*." As Theo tries to unfold the truth, Alicia's story makes readers turn a blind eye towards Theo's story.

The presence of Crew in *Verity* adds to the thrilling atmosphere. His words have certain significance that plays a role in the plot twists and turns. According to Lowen, in the beginning she saw him as a pathetic five-year-old boy who was traumatized by his sister's death and his mother's immobility. The novel's rigid tension breaks when he confesses to Jeremy about the day when Harper died. He tells him that his mother asked him to hold his breath before the accident. His actions were abnormal and emotionless. Lowen was scared to leave her 3 months old daughter, Nova alone with him.

Unreliable narrators are used in both novels to build suspense. Using deceptive tools like manuscripts and diaries, the reality is blurred. In *Verity*, Lowen's perspective, while reading Verity's chilling manuscript, confesses to awful things like child abuse. Verity is not as helpless as she seems because she manipulates everyone. This dialogue between Lowen's tale and the manuscript connects to the ideas of deceit and fixation. The manuscript is dark and eerie, evoking suspicions on everything. *The Silent Patient* is narrated through Theo. Theo's story appears to be genuine initially, but he has been covering up his own complicity and orchestrates Alicia's crime. Alicia's diary found after the murder is not trustworthy because of her trauma. Theo silences Alicia injecting her. This portrays the themes of guilt and the psyche of human beings. Alicia's silence and Theo's secrets hold the tension of the novel. *Verity* has the essence of a domestic soap opera. *The Silent Patient* goes deeper into psychology, with Theo's fixation and Alicia's journal, constructing a clinical, mind-twisting tale. *Verity* grapples with truth or lies, and *The Silent Patient* delves into psyche and trauma. Both novels use deception to hold readers' interest.

Verity and *The Silent Patient* are masterclasses in employing unreliable

narrators to craft suspense and play with the minds. Verity's eerie manuscript and Alicia's silence keep readers engaging and delve deep into the human psyche. Both novels demonstrate unreliable narrative's strength in psychological thrillers, employing techniques such as manuscripts and silence to provide suspenseful conclusions.

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QUEST FOR WOMEN'S ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE IN SHOBHAN BANTWAL'S *THE DOWRY BRIDE*

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Abstract: In the patriarchal society, women are forced to depend on men financially and emotionally. The social structure never allows women's financial autonomy but women's economic independence is the key element of gender equality. Many feminists give their voices for women's financial freedom. One among them is Shobhan Bantwal, an Indo American novelist, essayist and short story writer. She wrote six novels that focus on the state of women in the Indian patriarchal society. Her debut novel, *The Dowry Bride* depicts how a woman becomes a victim of the dowry system and rescues herself from those clutches. The purview of this article is to exhibit women's agony in economic dependency with reference to Shobhan Bantwal's *The Dowry Bride*. It pins the focal point that women's economic independence is their identity, which leads them to feel equality.

Keywords: Patriarchal, Autonomy, Financial, Agony, Economic and Dependency.

Shobhan Bantwal is a trailblazing, award winning and prolific Indo American writer. She was born in 1951 in Belgaum, Karnataka, India, into a traditional Hindu Brahmin family. She earned a prestigious master degree in sociology from Karnataka University, Dharwad. In 1974, after an arranged marriage with Girish, she shifted to New Jersey, where she pursued M.A in public administration from Rider University. She then embarked on a distinguished nineteen year career in the New Jersey Department of Labor. This period honed her deep understanding and keen observation on immigrant life. Based on her experience, she started fiction writing in her early 50's. Her debut novel *The Dowry Bride* (2007) won the Golden leaf award. Her works including *The Forbidden daughter* (2008), *The Sari Shop Widow* (2009), *The Unexpected Son* (2010), *The Full Moon Bride* (2011), and *The Reluctant Matchmaker* (2012) throw light on the authentic Indian traditions and contemporary women's issues. She received National Indie Excellence Award for *The Unexpected son* and Coffee Time Romance Reviewer award for *The Full Moon Bride*. At present residing in Arizona, she balances her writing career with the motive of mentoring young writers and speaking at cultural forums.

Women's economic independence is the core element in gender equality. However, many social structures enforce women to depend on men in all aspects, especially economic dependency. This economic dependency leads women to psychological and emotional sufferings. Many marital relationships break up due to financial struggle. The paper explores Shobhan Bantwal's key points to unlock women's financial autonomy with reference to her novel *The Dowry Bride*.

Shobhan Bantwal's *The Dowry Bride* highlights the stark reality of

dowry abuse through the protagonist Megha whose journey from victimhood to self-reliance challenges the brutal patriarchal norms. Megha's life is governed by this blind tradition – her inability to bring sufficient dowry positions her in a vulnerable situation, ultimately forcing her to flee from marital home after discovering that her husband Suresh and her mother in law Chandramma plot to murder her. Her journey towards self-reliance symbolises the hardship that every woman is forced to face in her marital life. Her parents named her Megha, which means “cloud” in Sanskrit, perhaps because she cast a gray shadow over their lives at a time when they didn't expect overcast skies. She was an unexpected, unpleasant surprise – rather late in their lives. (1)

The novel opens with the metaphorical description of Megha, whose birth is considered to be a burden. The most beautiful, flawless, bright and energetic Megha is the third girl child to Lakshman Shastry and Mangala. At the age of twenty one, she is compelled to marry Suresh, a bank officer. As her family fails to give dowry, her in-laws and her husband Suresh begin plotting her murder.

Thousands of young brides perished each year in India because of dowry, or the lack of it – heartlessly killed – some crushed to death, some thrown out of high buildings, others strangled or poisoned, many burned like so much refuse. How could one human being do that to another? In this day and age, in a middle class, educated family no less? How could his aunt and cousin dream of doing that to a sweet, innocent daughter of the house? And all that, for money. How sickening! (47-48)

Megha, the representation of women, starts her economic quest from her marriage itself. If she had the financial autonomy, she would not be the victim of this dowry delay but she has no access to personal income and education making her entirely dependent on her in-laws. In *Feminine Aesthetics of Indian Women Writers* Sujatha criticises that once the bride is taken to her husband's house, she is treated like a puppy. She is fondled, taken care of and fed on milk and rice. After sometimes she becomes an unpaid servant. She cannot be sure of love all the times. She survives by fawning her husband with an exhibition of devotion and flattery. (97)

Tugged into the familial power dynamics, Megha is subjugated. When she realises, no one is ready to safeguard her, she prefers to flee from her husband's house. She embarks,

Every instinct prompted her to keep running, put distance between herself and the Ramnaths and their evil house. *Move! Keep running. Don't let them find you. Run woman*, her adrenaline crazed brain repeated furiously. She knew she was trespassing on people's private properties but she didn't care. Wet grass, sharp stones, root clumps, fractured cement and thorns grated on her feet. Twice she ran into prickly bushes and trees, tripped and fell, and got her arms and face scratched. But she managed to get up and find her way around them. (14)

A barefoot escape from her marriage becomes a metaphorical shedding of charged dependency. She worries about her father's inability to give dowry, family members' indifference and her in-law's brutal plot. The traumatic bird Megha finds her sanctuary in Kiran's home – her husband's cousin. The one and only good soul in her husband's house is Kiran, who helps her to learn typing, computers, websites, search engines, and keywords. Though the novel criticises patriarchal oppression, it also acknowledges the role of male allies through Kiran. An alternative model of masculinity is Kiran, Megha's protector, who supports women's independence, particularly economic freedom. His emotional and psychological support uplifts Megha to overcome all the hurdles. She wonders how her darkened world is transformed into a bright one with Kiran's encouragement.

Years pass by and Megha realises the importance of her life. She picks education as a weapon to break the financial dependency. As she navigates her new life, she encounters many challenges in securing a job. Her guardian angel Kiran motivates her in all aspects. When she gets the courage to step into her own path, he proposes. Unexpectedly Megha too accepts his love, but the scars of her marriage with Suresh drag her to withdraw Kiran's marriage proposal. She admits, "I've been doing some serious thinking for quite some time, Kiran. I don't want to live with you while I'm still married to Suresh. I feel like... like...cheap... kept woman" (326).

The real love and care of Kiran stimulate her to accept his marriage proposal later. She wants to lead a financial autonomous life even after marriage. So, she studies Journalism that enables her to work for a magazine or newspaper. It is her ultimate goal. She wants to stand on her own feet, never to be someone's mercy, not even Kiran. Throughout her life, men have taken all the decisions for her – first her father Lakshman Shastry, then her husband Suresh and recently her lover Kiran. Henceforth, she decides to charge her life by herself. Literary scholar M.Vennila depicts Megha's fleeing and self-esteem as a vehicle of transformation, "from marginalization to women (who) get transformed into an independent woman" (137).

One day, when Megha returns from her friend Harini's house, she is trapped by her mother-in-law Chandramma's second murdering plan. Chandramma arranges two killers to murder her. However, she escapes from their clutches with the help of Kiran. Since her second escape from the Ramnaths, she wants to avenge them. Her financial autonomy and educational independence provide confidence to her. So, she assures boldly,

She was no longer the cowering, snivelling young girl the Ramnaths had taken to their home as a private slave. There would be no better revenge than standing before Amma and Suresh as a thriving career woman, and perhaps as the well-loved and indulged wife of a good-looking and wealthy man – especially the man who was their nephew and cousin. Wouldn't that be a fabulous feeling? A beautiful baby in her arms – a product of Kiran's and her love would be the ultimate triumph, if she could pull it off. (323)

Her independent wings fly with the colourful love of Kiran. Megha's financial autonomy brings courage, boldness and self-identity. Her journey reflects the importance of economic self-sufficiency, education and employment in achieving gender equality.

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REVELATION AND DENIAL: A FREUDIAN ANALYSIS OF DEFENSE MECHANISM IN SUDHA MURTY'S NARRATIVE

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Abstract: The concept 'defense mechanism' is one of the factors in psychoanalytic literary criticism which promotes a deep character analysis. The research paper wholly focuses on the projection of the novel and explains the behavioural pattern of the characters. The researcher attempts to analyze the author's psyche with the help of the chosen text. Sudha Murty is known for her versatile writing and simple narratives. In the book, *Common Yet Uncommon*, she has attempted to portray the uncommon personalities whom she came across in her life. Denial is one among the features of defense mechanism which makes an individual to refuse to accept the reality in life. It is used to reveal the inner conflict or traumatic experiences. The paradigm of both denial and revelation is well expressed through her writings. Thus, the paper also deals with the application of Freudian notions.

Keywords: Revelation, Denial, Psychoanalysis, Experience and Trauma.

India boasts a vibrant tapestry of multiple cultures. In *Common Yet Uncommon*, Sudha Murthy projects the culture of North Karnataka. She herself belongs to that region, which made her bring out the clear ideology about the people and their behavioral pattern. The concept 'Denial' and 'Revelation' bind together throughout the fiction. She has expressed her thoughts on the people individually and that resulted in multiple emotions. By recollection of those incidents, the writer manifests the repressed impressions in her psyche. The research paper concentrates on the writer's view and her characters of *Common Yet Uncommon*.

Nostalgia helps an individual to revive the past incidents. The study uses psychoanalytic theory to examine the characters of the select work. She wrote her personal experiences with the people in the fiction. So that she denoted each individual with their nickname, which exhibits their nature exclusively. She handled the term 'Rasas', an emotional flavor or sentiments of the characters and her emotions too in every single fable. She utilized allegory to bring out the nature of each character. The chapters Jealous Janaki, Selfish Sumana and Miser Jeevaraj are the names of the characters.

In fourteen memorable stories from daily life, Sudha Murty began to narrate the characteristics, attitude, and the psyche of the fourteen multiple characters. The fiction commenced with bundle Bindi, who had always exaggerated anything happened in and around his native.

"I consider him one of the most influential people from my childhood" (CYU 13).

The writer gave credit to him for making her enthusiastic about history. Even though he possessed knowledge, he had a nature of gossiping and exaggeration. She kept an episode to project his character. There is a woman

named Leela Desai in her place went to lose her silver mangalasutra which costs three hundred rupees, Bundle Bindhu changed silver mangal sutra as a gold one while gossiping with others.

The characters in the fiction help readers to associate the term 'defense mechanism' with the text. It is used to project the psychological dimensions of the characters as well as the writer. She depicts herself in the fiction and named the character 'Nalini'. Story revolves around Nalini wholly. In that way, the readers can analyze the psychological pattern of the narration. Generally, human being's psyche does not accept the heart break situations. The concept of 'Denial' plays a major role when the writer lost her closed one name 'Parvati'. The following lines in the text reflect how hard it is to accept the reality. "My parakka had just died. I remember her in many forms... I just could not imagine! My tears flowed uncontrollably" (CYU 72, 73).

In the chapter 'Jayant the Shopkeeper', the writer remembered Jayant, a man with a desire to run a business. But he was very emotional that made him unsuccessful in business in his maiden attempt at a young age. Later, he became a teacher in his village. In the later part of his life, the idea of business bloomed again. At the time of his retirement, he received gratuity of ten lakhs out of which he started his business. The people around came to his new gift shop and bought gifts by paying minimal money and cheated Jayant. "Poor Jayant was unaware of such unsaid rules and only dreamed of profit" (CYU 25). The narrator sympathizes with Jayant. This is one of her memories and brought out the behavioral pattern which was signaled by the psyche of characters.

The following chapter is named 'Jealous Janaki'. The title expresses the nature of the character. The readers can understand both writer and character's psyche. Her nature brought the emotion to envy. She was a gossip monger in the village. The emotion in her mind turned her to spread rumors. This was observed by the writer and she remarked, "she is bold and bright with a great memory. She has tremendous creativity and enormous energy. It has to be dissipated somewhere. She did not have proper schooling and the entire energy was diverted into many parts. Hence, she doesn't have peace of mind. If she concentrates, she can learn many new things, but she doesn't. She has misplaced intentions or bad values, but she wastes her energy on the wrong things. It is better that I am at peace" (CYU 40).

She was known for her beauty in the village. But along with the beauty, she was possessed with arrogance. She had negative comments about the beauty of men who came for marriage proposal. By analyzing the nature and behavior of Ganga, the writer voluntarily wanted to give a statement that, "I wanted to tell her that, a marriage or a relationship requires compromise on both sides" (CYU 47). Here, the readers can clearly understand the psyche of Ganga.

The greatness of an individual inspires others. As a philanthropist, the writer brought out the quality of the character 'Hema' in her fifth chapter. The lines make readers understand the character, "In my view, Hema aunt is one of the best philanthropists I have ever met. I bowed my head and touched her feet"

(CYU 63). The chapter explains the philosophical thought of Hema and her helping tendency. She has influenced the writer to become a philanthropist. Human life is meaningless without emotions. She has introduced another character named Parvati. She was well versed in cooking. She desired to cook food for her husband. But she did not get appreciation from him and he is reserved in nature. Parvati felt lonely at all the time. But the couple was deeply connected psychologically. This was expressed with the death scene in the fiction. After twenty-four hours of Parvati's death, Banabhatta was passed away. The factor of denial was experienced by the writer with the traumatic experience when she lost the character Parvati.

The notion of influence is central to psychoanalytic theory. Influence can be either positive or in negative connotation. In the upcoming chapter, the writer puts forth negative influence on the character, Suman. The chapter begins with 'selfish as Suman's surname'. The nature of selfishness created an impact on Suman's psyche and that made her follow the footsteps of her parents. They ill-treated people around them and she did the same. The behavioral pattern of the character was clearly analyzed by the writer.

Bhagirathi's character projected will power. She struggled a lot to face the property issue of her husband's family. She filed a case and won the property which belonged to her husband. So, the writer named her as 'Adventurous Baghirathi'. "We all felt embarrassed at his behavior. Some of us bet to make Jeevraj spend money one day...I started pestering Jeevraj" (CYU 107). The above statement makes the readers understand the demeanor of Jeevraj. The writer named him, 'Miser Jeevaraj'. At the beginning of the chapter, he was a penny-pincher. But his life gave random experience to understand it through another dimension. The psychological changes made him donate money to build a girl's residential hostel. "It was the first time that I had a glimpse of a changed Jeevraj." (CYU 113)

Ambika, a friend of the writer, is very affectionate towards her. She is well-versed in cooking. She has started a cooking course in her village. But her husband was not happy with her decision. He was a Kannada lecturer. So, he insisted her to learn literature. But she did not lend her ears to him. Everyone appreciated her skill. Suddenly, Amba suffered from typhoid. Her husband, Anand arranged food from hotel. Days moved on and he got tired of eating food from the restaurant. Then he realized his wife's affection was expressed through her cooking. "Thanks and dhanyavad don't suffice for the people who are dead to us, who always think of us...I hugged Amba" (CYU 127). The writer showed her gratitude towards her friend who showered the deep affection on her.

In the chapter 'Made for each other' she spoke about the materialistic desire and arrogant attitude of an individual through the characters which she came across in her life. The desire of grabbing wealth changed the psychological pattern of human. "Give me a Mercedes Benz car; my status will be good" (CYU 140). This explains Vani's daughter, Lakshmi, wanted to enjoy the luxury in her life. The adaptation of attaining materialistic desire from the people around her makes her become covetous person.

The domestic violence and turbulence to live a life in the family was projected in the twelfth chapter through the character, Sharada. She was beautiful and innocent. She belonged to the poor family background. But she got an alliance from Desai's family. Her beauty was mesmerized by the groom. He was arrogant in nature. His family ill-treated her except Umesh, a brother of a groom. They went on a trip. She became a maid to the family. Due to natural calamity, many lost their lives. Sharada used the situation, and did not return to Desai's family.

Umesh joined with Sharada and started a new life. He accepted her and understood what she had gone through. Many years later, the writer visited Rishikesh where the incident happened. "I visited the Lakshman Jhula with tears in my eyes, lost in memories and of Sharada, my grandmother and my mother" (CYU 151). The writer thought that she died in the incident but she was alive. In India, it is common for happy endings in films and fictions. The concepts of defense mechanism, denial and revelation added flavors to the fiction.

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AN ANALYSIS OF FEMALE ANGUISH AND RESILIENCE IN SHOBHA RAO'S *GIRLS BURN BRIGHTER*: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: *Girls Burn Brighter*, a 2018 novel written by Indian-American author Shobha Rao is a feminist work that portrays the struggles of two young girls Poornima and Savitha, from the rural village of Indravalli in Telangana. Poornima is subjected to sexual violence and is eventually forced into prostitution. Meanwhile, Savitha endures a brutal act of violence at the hands of her husband. This paper aims at exploring the gender inequality and social injustice experienced by marginalized women from rural background. It highlights their hidden suffering, anguish, resilience, and the need for recognition of such experiences. The trauma often ignored by society due to deep-rooted prejudices is taken into account for discussion.

Keywords: Sexual Abuse, Poverty, Domestic Violence, Exploitation and Human Trafficking.

Introduction to Feminism and Patriarchy

Feminism is a broad concept that addresses how societies are predominantly patriarchal. They prioritize the male point of view, while women are treated unjustly. Women face domestic violence, social injustice, patriarchy, and sexual abuse. These experiences affect them both physically and psychologically. In the select novels, the female characters endure both domestic and sexual violence. Their anguish, and the ways in which they survive and resist, are central to the discussion. According to Margaret Atwood, "Men are afraid that women will laugh at them. Women are afraid that men will kill them" (Atwood 413). Even in 2025, women have not attained complete freedom and security. They are still objectified. A woman cannot feel safe walking alone at night or traveling after dark. They are not safe either inside or outside the home. She is expected to depend on a man for support. Why do these inequalities persist? Why is man always seen as the stronger sex, while woman is labeled the weaker one?

Masculine Dominance and Gender-Based Injustice

In patriarchal societies, men often use dominance and control to silence women. Such behavior reflects a desire to maintain power. The belief is that after enduring abuse, women will be silenced and stop resisting. Even today, many women in rural areas continue to face these issues. The focus of this research is how the female protagonists survive these traumatic events from a feminist perspective — highlighting not only their suffering but also their strength, resistance, and emotional resilience. As Bell Hooks asserts, "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Hooks 1). This study aligns with that vision by emphasizing the need to recognize and challenge the structures that perpetuate gender-based violence.

Female Suffering and Resistance in *Girls Burn Brighter*

Shobha Rao's debut novel, *Girls Burn Brighter* vividly portrays the challenges that women face — including domestic abuse, human trafficking, forced prostitution, physical and sexual violence, marital rape, and the denial of basic rights. The narrative centers around two rural girls, Savitha and Poornima, who experience extreme poverty, physical pain, emotional trauma, and mental isolation. Despite these hardships, the novel powerfully captures their determination and resilience as they strive to rise above an oppressive system.

Domestic Violence and Forced Marriages

The novel first introduces the theme of domestic violence through Poornima's experiences—both in her father's house and later in her in-laws' home. In many rural settings, women have no right to refuse or express their choice when it comes to selection of a life partner. Marriages are often arranged by fathers or elders without considering the girl's consent or happiness. Poornima's father clearly represents this mindset. He arranges her marriage to a man named Kishore, whom she had never met or spoken before, completely disregarding her opinion or consent.

In such communities, female children are often seen as burdens, while male children are celebrated as blessings. Many families believe it is enough to simply marry off their daughters, without prioritizing their education or ensuring they are married into respectful families. This belief system leads to physical and emotional harm. When Poornima refuses to sing in front of a groom, her father grabs her by the hair, scolds her harshly, and insists on proceeding with the marriage. "You see this? You see what you've done?" His grip on her hair tightened and he said, "The next time somebody asks you to sing, what're you going to do?" (Rao 47). This powerful scene reflects the harsh reality that girls in such situations often face violence and control in both households, with no space for their voice, freedom, or dreams.

Despite being a human with thoughts, emotions, and aspirations, Poornima is often treated as an object—compared to an ox, valued only for her physical labor. The phrase by her father "*Forget the oxen*" highlights the disregard for her identity and dreams. This dehumanization weighs heavily on her spirit, making her feel invisible and insignificant.

The Dowry System and Abuse:

After suffering in her father's house, she faces further challenges in her married life due to the dowry system. Her father had promised to pay half of the dowry at the time of marriage and the rest later. "Poornima's father would add an extra ten thousand to the dowry, paying out five thousand now and five thousand within a year of the marriage, along with a scooter" (Rao 84). However, when he fails to fulfill this promise, she is subjected to constant humiliation. Her mother-in-law criticizes her for everything,

'Even the rice you eat is not free,' and 'We are paying for the borewell water you drink.' "You think that water's free? That pump we installed cost three thousand rupees. So *you* wouldn't have to go to the well. And where do you think we got that three thousand rupees? Where? Not from your father, not from

him. That's for sure, the thief. Both of you. Thieves" (Rao 115).

These comments reflect how she is seen as a financial burden because the promised dowry remains unpaid. They started to attack her by words. These incidents not only happened to Poornima but girls around India.

Marital Rape

Poornima's husband offers no comfort. He abuses her both physically and sexually, without seeking her consent. Their sexual relationship is marked by aggression and violence. In scenes that depict marital rape, he yanks her hair and slams her into the bed with such force that her head hits the wall. This form of abuse further dehumanizes her. "He'd grab her hair, yank her around the bed by it, slam into her with such force that her head would hit the wall behind the bed" (Rao 113).

This type of abuse - sex without consent - is known as marital rape, which is defined as "a spouse having sexual intercourse with their partner without consent" (Marital Rape and law). The husband's commands and Poornima's lack of resistance reflect his dominance and her helplessness respectively. The repetitive and oppressive nature of this abuse causes her to suffer both psychologically and emotionally.

Infertility and Social Rejection

In many rural societies, women are expected to bear children within the first year of marriage. When they cannot, they are often blamed and mistreated. Poornima experiences this injustice in her own life. Because of her inability to conceive, her mother-in-law calls her a curse and blames her for everything that goes wrong in the household. When a marriage broker visits to arrange her sister-in-law Aruna's marriage, Poornima is told to stay away, as her mother-in-law believes she brings bad luck and might ruin the alliance.

Extreme Violence and Escape

The abuse reaches to extreme level when one day, Poornima tells her husband that he is barren. Her mother-in-law gets angry and slaps her. Not only that, both her mother-in-law and husband try to douse her with burning oil. The oil spills on Poornima's face, and she is admitted to the hospital.

Resilience and Rebuilding Life

After that incident, she could no longer take care of herself. She moved to Vijayawada in search of her friend. Everyone she met along the way was disgusted by her appearance because of the scars caused by the oil spill. Many people criticized her and were not willing to speak with her—but she didn't care. She worked as an accountant in a brothel to support herself. Later, she joined an academy to learn the English language. With the help of Guru, she moved forward in life and continued her search for her friend. Poornima had a strong will. Born and brought up in a rural village with limited opportunities, she never gave up. With determination and hard work, she learned English and, and moved abroad—to pursue a better future, and to find her lost friend. Her strength and resilience are truly admirable.

Sexual Violence

Women face two kinds of violence: one is physical, and the other is sexual. , Poornima before and after her marriage, experiences domestic

violence. On the other hand, her friend Savitha faces sexual violence. Savitha was working in Poornima's house. Poornima's father had appointed Savitha to work there, weaving cloth. During this time, both Poornima and Savitha became friends. However, one day, Savitha was raped by Poornima's father. "Savitha had shrunk. Retreated like a wounded animal. Scraps of her blouse fell from her shoulders. Her shoulders brown and denuded like distant hills. They stood around them; the questions and gasps and exclamations singing past Poornima like arrows" (Rao 75).

The village head did not punish Poornima's father; instead, they proposed that he should marry Savitha. Savitha was not willing to become Poornima's stepmother, so she left Poornima's house without informing anyone, in the early morning. Such sufferings happen in many rural families. Injustice is dismissed based on status or caste. Society often holds men and women to different standards.

When a man makes a mistake, he frequently escapes punishment. However, a woman in a similar situation is judged, blamed, and turned into a subject of gossip, rather than being treated with empathy or justice. In both rural and urban settings, women continue to face domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. Yet many remain silent, fearing shame or blame. Society tends to scrutinize a woman's character rather than question the abuser's actions. As a result, survivors of physical abuse also carry the weight of psychological trauma, especially when their voices are met with suspicion and not with support.

Human Trafficking and Forced Prostitution

Savitha escaped from Indravalli to Vijayawada. On the way, she was mistreated by a lorry driver but managed to escape. However, she was caught again by another man, who forcefully took her into prostitution. For the first three days, she was in a drowsy state. After that, she began performing the duties of prostitution without her consent. Day by day, new men arrived, and she was forced to engage with them. "The mechanics of it all became routine: the five to six customers she had per day" (Rao 159).

Later, the brothel owner, Guru, sent Savitha to a place called Seattle in America, promising her a higher payment for her services. Thinking of her family, Savitha agreed. However, as a condition, she had to give up one of her arms. With only one hand, she moved to Seattle to work as a domestic helper. There, she carried out household chores along with two other girls who were engaged in similar work. During her stay, she met the owner's sons, Suresh and Mohan. Once again, she willingly slept with Mohan. After enduring all these hardships, she finally decided to leave Seattle. She tries to move to New York. On the way, she was molested by three strangers in a truck. "The two men left her there, in the clearing, and she heard the turning of the truck's ignition and then the sound of the engine going up the road, becoming, at last, only the night. Silent and unforgiving" (Rao 311).

In the end, she lost everything—her money, her food, and even her virginity. She realized how alone and helpless she was, and that no one could save her. Even now, she remembers how hard it was to survive. She held on to

small hopes, and every day was a fight against fear. The memories still hurt, but they also show her how strong she has become. She is not defined by her past, but by how she moved forward after it.

The analysis of *Girls Burn Brighter* through a feminist lens reveals the deep-rooted gender inequalities that continue to affect women in both rural and urban settings. By portraying the physical and emotional struggles of Savitha and Poornima, the novel highlights the impact of patriarchy, violence, and social injustice on women's lives. It also emphasizes their strength, resilience, and ability to resist oppression. The novel also reflects the harsh realities faced by women when they are denied parental support, proper education, and financial stability. Without these basic necessities, they often fall victim to exploitation and abuse. Sadly, such brutal violence still occurs in our country and continues to rise. To reduce and prevent these crimes, it is essential to enforce strict punishment for offenders and create a safer environment for women.

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REDEFINING HUMANITY: EXPLORING PHILIP K. DICK'S NOVEL *DO ANDROIDS DREAM OF ELECTRIC SHEEP?*

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Abstract: Philip K. Dick sets the novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* in a post-apocalyptic world, which challenges the traditional notions of humanity, identity, human relations, and empathy. The protagonist, Rick, finds it challenging to occupy himself in a world that redefines humanity. By engaging with post-humanist theories, this paper explores how the novel redefines human identity with the involvement of technology that has blurred the line that distinguishes humans from non-humans. This is achieved by analysing how the novelist distinguishes 'real' and 'fake' in the world of technology.

Keywords: Humanity, Identity, Technology, Real, Fake and Post-Humanism.

Philip K. Dick sets his science fiction *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1968) in a world that is devastated by the World War Terminus. It unfolds Earth as polluted, deserted, dirty and uninhabitable and the people flee to Mars or other planets in search of shelter. The narrative portrays a time where animals are rare, precious, and holds a symbol of wealth and moral worth. Rick, the protagonist is a bounty hunter who is occupied in retiring advanced androids, like Nexus- 6, which challenge the traditional notion of human existence, relations, empathy, and emotions. He struggles to fit himself in a broken world, where the line that separates human and non-human becomes ambiguous. The novel deals with thought provoking themes like human existence, identity, human relations and empathy. At the heart of this, the novel explores how the indulgence of advanced technology challenges the existence of humans and how it redefines humanity by sidelining the importance of humans and their potential. In the article "Posthumanism", the Science Direct emphasizes states "Rather than privileging human subjectivity, post humanists seek instead to disrupt biological and social hierarchies—focusing on the interrelated, dynamic agencies of organisms and that flow through complex systems and networks" (2023).

Rick's world emphasizes the influence of technology on human existence. Empathy is considered as one of the factors that hold the essence of human life. The novel presents androids like Rachael Rosen, Luba Luft, and Pris Stratton, mimicking human emotions and narrowing the line that exist between humans and androids. This questions the value of humanity and also creates ambiguity in what is has been labeled as real and fake. In the speech "The Android and the Human", which Dick delivered after four years of the publication of the novel, he states that:

Our environment, and I mean our man-made world of machines, artificial constructs, computers, electronic systems, interlinking homeostatic components – all of this is in fact

beginning more and more to possess what the earnest psychologists fear the primitive sees in his environments: animation. In a very real sense, our environment is becoming alive, or at least quasi-alive, and in ways specially and fundamentally analogous onto ourselves (1833).

Using post- humanist theories, this paper tries to explore Philip K. Dick's novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and analyses how the various aspects in the novel tries to redefine humanity. This is accomplished by examining how Dick explores the idea of real versus fake through its characters and situational instances.

Humanity denotes the biological form, mental spheres, the abilities of humans, and also how humans together form complex communities. It also refers to the moral and emotional qualities that creates real man. This includes empathy, kindness, compassion, moral reasoning, conscience, the ability to love and many more. In the article "Humanism Philosophy", K. Suresh Kumar states that "Humanism stands for the building of a more humane society through an ethics based on human and other natural values in a spirit of reason and free inquiry through human capabilities" (81). Therefore, humanity becomes the essence of human existence. But the post- humanist ideas contradict this by decentralizing humans and emphasizing the link between humans, environment, technology. Humans are no longer considered as a superior entity, instead they form only a part of a larger co-existing sphere. In the article "Post- Humanism: Beyond the Human- Machine Boundary & Dispute Resolution with AI Podcast", Robert Bergman states that, "As technology rapidly advances—through innovations like smartphones, neural implants, and artificial intelligence—post-humanist thought becomes increasingly relevant. The notion of humans transitioning into cyborgs—part human, part machine—reflects a profound shift in our relationship with technology" (2024).

The narrative exhibits a world where humanity is just defined through empathy and emotions. Empathy, which is considered as a significant marker of humanity takes its charge over the physical and biological existence of humans. This is evident through the Voigt- Kampff test which could measure the emotional response to examine if a subject is an android. This is evident through the line "An android doesn't care what happens to another android. That's one of the indications we look for" (Dick 55). While being in the task of hunting androids, Rick and his team considered lack of empathy as an indication of humanity. In the article "Analysis of the Human-Android Divide in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* And its Implications on Authenticity", Komal Mayur Chorge states that "The empathy test administered by Deckard is intended to reveal the absence of empathic responses in androids. However, this test becomes a reflection of human frailty, as characters struggle to empathize with others amidst a desensitized and dehumanized world" (4). This shows how humanity is merely narrowed down to 'the presence of empathy' and the broader existence of man in physical or biological means is ignored.

The power to live as a family is a unique quality and an ability of humans to lead an interconnected life makes man distinguishable from all the other creatures in the world. The narrative *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* opens with a conversation between Rick and his wife Iran about the mood programming that replaces natural feelings. Their conversation reveals that they live in a very mechanised world where people select their emotions and feelings mechanically. When Rick programmed a merry mood for himself, Iran states that: “My schedule for lists a six- hour self- accusatory depression” (Dick 3). This shows how the basic existence of man has been mechanised with the indulgence of advanced technology. The bond and connection which bind the various factors of family, relationship and human existence has been demolished. People no longer live their emotions instead they programme them, thereby creating an ambiguity between what is real and fake. In the article “Entering the Posthuman Collective in Philip K. Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*”, Jill Galvan states that:

Do Androids Dream thus interrogates a fixed definition of the human subject and at last acknowledges him as only one component of the living scene. In effect, the narrative repudiates the idea of a confined human community and envisions a community of the posthuman, in which human and machine commiserate and comaterialise, vitally shaping one another's existence. (414)

Through this Galvan tries to critically analyse how the traditional understanding of humanity and identity is challenged in a technological world. Humans are mechanized whereby showcasing the decline of humanity and its essence. Subsequently it tries to redefine humanity as mechanised and revolves beyond human values. This could be further substantiated through the post humanist agenda: “the second post-humanist agenda is the prioritization of practices over individuals (or individual subjects), which, they say, constitute the individual” (Schatzki 10).

Further analysis of the narrative demonstrates that in a technology driven world, the line that distinguishes human and non- humans is depleting. Subsequently, it becomes highly challenging to distinguish humans from androids. The novel brings in the romantic relation that was built between Rick and the android, Rachel Rosen, and interrogates what truly separates humans from androids when a human can love an android and feel conflicted? His relation with her makes him tell Rosen that “You’re not like the others” (Dick 90). This shows how his emotions and human existence are altered for something that is so mechanical and intended to be killed. This relation not only takes over his family and breaks the values that are attached to family and relationship but also merges the gap between humans and androids.

Another instance that demonstrates this convergence is Luba Luft, the androids’ artistic passion. Creativity and artistic qualities are often attributed to humans as they are unique to humans. But the novel takes another route where this has been attributed to the android, Luba Luft. The line “You like the music? That’s Schubert” (Dick 82) shows her genuineness of passion for opera and

classical music. Therefore, the novel shows how androids take the place and uniqueness that humans once enjoyed. The guilty and empathy that is created in Rick for killing Luba demonstrates the superiority that the android has taken in the advanced world of technology. This is substantiated through the following arguments:

“Dick masterfully challenges conventional notions of authenticity by blurring the lines between human and artificial identities. The novel raises profound questions about the nature of consciousness and self-awareness. By portraying the androids as possessing emotional depth and introspection, the novel challenges the idea that true consciousness is exclusive to humans. The empathic responses displayed by the androids complicate the human-Android divide and prompt readers to re-evaluate the basis for authentic emotional connections. The novel suggests that genuine emotions and empathic experiences can exist beyond human beings, challenging the idea that only humans can experience authentic emotions. It blurs the boundaries of identity, emphasizing the fluid and evolving nature of individuality. Characters like Rachael Rosen and Roy Batty defy easy categorization, highlighting the complexities of selfhood and challenging the notion of fixed identities” (Chorge 5)

The superior place that Rosan and Luft sheds light on the diminishing line that distinguishes humans and androids. This directly redefined humanity as an idea that comprises both human and non- human attributes, and the moral and emotional attributes which were once bestowed on humans cross this line and convergence with androids.

The novel is a depiction of the post- apocalyptic setting where real animals are rare and have become a symbol of luxury, wealth and status. Rick’s struggle to mask his electric sheep as a real sheep before his neighbours and his desire to own a real sheep show his intense desire to go back into a humanistic world. His insecurity and shame of owning an electric sheep are evident when he says “We’ll have to get our electric animals together sometimes and let them compare notes” (Dick 7). Therefore, humanity has been expressed as a challenging situation to go back to a humanistic era and incorporate living things over the fake. It is also evident from his conversation with his neighbour, Bill, that in the post- apocalyptic world, human-animal relationship has become a moral standard. Owning a real animal is considered as a symbol of empathy and Rick wants to own a real animal to maintain his social status and also a sense of identity. The involvement of technology in human- animal relation takes us away from the humanist ideology of centralizing humans and gives priority to inculcate the potential of technology in every sphere of human existence. Thus, favouring the post- humanist approaches.

Rick is portrayed as a bounty hunter of androids that brings evil to humans. Initially he considers it as his moral duty to kill the androids, but towards the end of the narrative, he starts questioning his own humanity as he

gets confused if it's actually humane to kills androids that are equivalent to humans. Therefore, Rick finds himself in mental dilemma and the narrative puts forward the identity crisis that he faces in the world governed by technology. "The novel challenges the ethical justifications for treating androids as disposable, raising questions about the moral responsibility towards artificial beings capable of experiencing emotions and seeking authenticity" (Chorge 6). Rick's empathic responses to the androids diminish the boundaries of human genuineness and the stimulated existence of the androids. Therefore, the novel challenges the conventional notions of humanity and ethics.

The narrative emphasizes the importance of technology-driven world, imagining a world that is altered by advanced technology. The various instances from the novel which create ambiguity between the real and the fake, promote a departure from the traditional notion of humanity. The technological world attributes further meaning to humanity with the association of technology. Humanity has been merely defined with the presence of empathy, where all the other significant biological aspects unique to humans are neglected. The novel provides the readers with an understanding of how the gap between humans and androids has diminished. Androids become a part of humans, and the characters like Rick, in the novel emphasizes that androids are also human-like. Therefore, humanity is redefined as an idea that inculcates larger sphere which include humans governed by advanced technological aspects.

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NARRATING THE WESTERN GHATS: ECOLOGY, INDIGENOUS LIVES, AND RESISTANCE IN SHEELA TOMY'S *VALLI*

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Abstract: This article explores *Valli*, a novel by Sheela Tomy, through an ecocritical lens, focusing on the sacred ecology of the Western Ghats and the lives of its indigenous people. It shows how the pure land is degraded by urban development and tourism. The novel presents the forest as a living being—respected and worshipped by tribes like the Paniya and Kurichiya. Through rituals, myths, and oral stories, the community's deep bond with the land is highlighted. The paper also examines how, capitalism, caste, and gender violence work together to displace indigenous people. Women face double oppression—through sexual violence and economic suffering. Yet, *Valli* is also a story of hope and resistance. By weaving memory, myth, and folklore, the novel becomes a powerful voice for indigenous ecology and justice. It questions who benefits from so-called progress and who pays the price.

Keywords: Eco-resistance, Environmental Degradation, Environmental Justice, Exploitation Indigenous and Resilience.

Introduction

Literature has long served as a mirror to human-nature relationships. It plays a crucial role in voicing out the ecological degradation. Ecocritical literary studies have gained traction as a powerful mode of interrogating the cultural narratives that address environmental crises. Sheela Tomy's *Valli*, a polyphonic and frame narrative set in the biodiverse and contested terrain of Kerala's Western Ghats stands out as a literary intervention that features the indigenous perspectives on ecology. More than an endemic, *Valli* is a protest text. It emphasizes the Adivasi worldview, which endorses the forest as animate, relational, and sacred. Through its vivid portrayal of the land, community, memory, and myth. The novel functions both as a lament for what is lost and a call to defend what remains. The central argument of this article is that *Valli* critiques ecological exploitation through the lens of indigenous resilience, offering an alternative model of environmental ethics based on kinship, divinity, and cordial relationship with nature. This indigenous ecology challenges the dominant western ecological discourse that, the recent shifts in western discourse has often viewed nature through a utilitarian or conservationist lens. But for the communities in *Valli*, sustainability is not a strategy—it is a lived, ancestral imperative, a way of life.

Kalluvayal: Sacred Ecology

In *Valli*, the Western Ghats are not merely a setting but a subject embedded with myth, history, and sanctity. The indigenous inhabitants of Wayanad, including the Paniya and Kurichiya tribes, do not perceive the forest as a passive resource but as a relative, maternal, nourishing, and divine. Kalluvayal and the river Kabani were not just a habitat for the indigenous Paniya community; it is their kin, deity, and their way of life that incorporates ecological rituals. They had lived and got nourished in that land being a part of

all good and bad. They had accepted the dainty and deluge given by the land. They had experienced landslides and floods of Kabani river which took many lives. Yet they worshiped the land, “It rained for seven days and seven nights. Everything was washed away, in one of the two rivers of Kalluvayal carcasses of hens, goats, and dogs. The swollen body of a bull calf bobbed in the water its eyes staring at the sky” (Tomy 89).

Tomy’s narrative thus aligns with what environmental philosopher Robin Wall Kimmerer terms “the grammar of animacy”, a way of speaking about the land that acknowledges its aliveness and agency. She coins the term in her text *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. The novel reverberates with this relational worldview. Crops are not cultivated without ritual; rivers are not crossed without reverence. Every act of farming and their daily activities associated with the forest of Kalluvayal and Thambrankannu hills is a worship for the indigenous. The forest and the inanimate beings have a bond as family. The Indigenous are obliged to the forest. The titular character *Valli* overtly signifies the goddess from the tribal community who Lord Murugan marries. This denotes the sacred interconnection. Tomy’s prose lyrical, oral, and rooted in local idiom—resists anthropocentric hierarchies that ravage and bring havoc to the ecology. The indigenous oral tradition in *Valli* foregrounds an exemplary ecosystem that is balanced where human and non-human lives are deeply interwoven. Humans are a part of nature and nature is a part of human

Exploitation and Violence upon Indigenous and their Ecology

The arrival of extractive economies in Wayanad, first through colonial timber extraction and later via the expansion of commercial crop plantations like rubber and coffee marks a rupture in the ecological continuity of the indigenous way of life. Tomy does not present this as a neutral development; she critiques how capitalist logics transform sacred landscapes into profit-generating zones. Plantations of tea, coffee, and cardamom are depicted not as symbols of progress but as instruments of ecological and cultural erasure. These monocultures not only destroy biodiversity but also alienate indigenous communities from their ancestral lands, forcefully dragging them to the status of labourers on the place that was once their own soil. The novel echoes Vandana Shiva’s argument in *Staying Alive* that capitalist development is predicated on “a war against nature and women.” Vandana Shiva argues that indigenous knowledge, especially held by women—is not only vital for ecological sustainability but is often dismissed or destroyed by capitalist and patriarchal systems. She highlights how tribal and peasant women across India maintain biodiversity and resist ecological degradation through everyday practices. Both texts signify the indigenous ecological epistemology. Furthermore, the modern plantation system and the immigrants from the lowland make the society inseparable from caste and class violence. The affluent landlords who migrated from the lowlands introduced discrimination in the society that once lived a compliant life with humans.

The plantation changes the wilderness into tamed terrain which changes the biodiversity of the region. The indigenous inhabitants have intense

knowledge about the land's characteristics and they have experienced the mirth and wrath of Kalluvayal. The indigenous knowledge about medicinal plants has been exploited by wealth seekers. Meanwhile, the lower-caste and tribal bodies are forcefully driven to bear the burdens of environmental collapse. They have been exploited by the landlords to seek profit. "The land-owning farmers and jenmis take Adivasi people on lease as laborers and make them work on their lands. It's called 'Vallippani'- laboring in return for *Valli* a share in the crop. Bonded labor, That's what it is" (Tomy 31). The wage they work for and they have to work day and night in the fields transplanting, threshing, and winnowing the crops providing fine profits to their jenmis but giving a meagre amount of crops as their wage. Even the Indigenous children are also made to work there as laborers. The jenmis leads a cozy lifestyle sucking the blood of the laborers from generation to generation. The indigenous children who were starving to get a meal a day dies of illness and deluge. They live a pathetic life in the lands of Kalluvayal. Though they are the owners of the land, their lives are in the grapple of lowland immigrants who decide their fate. They toil in the scorching sun for the sake of landlords and are displaced from their land in the name of development.

One of the most chilling aspects of *Valli* is its documentation of forced displacement. Forest-dwelling communities are relocated under the pretext of development, and the lavish resorts are built after encroaching the lands of inhabitants and attracting tourists. They ruin the unadulterated nature and take them away from the spiritual and material sources of their life. The state, acting in collusion with corporate and upper-caste interests, forces the inhabitants to disown their land ending up in disowning their identity. The result is an ecological apartheid, where indigenous people are rendered outsiders in their habitat. Additionally, *Valli* highlights epistemic violence—the suppression of indigenous knowledge systems. There are caves and hidden spots known only to the indigenous community. An inhabitant named Basavan knows the nooks and corners of Kalluvayal. Tomy's act of writing is thus itself a political gesture: to archive what is being erased, to narrate what is silenced.

Gender, Ecology, and Intersectional Injustice

While the entire community suffers under the weight of ecological injustice, *Valli* foregrounds how this suffering is gendered. Indigenous women bear the double burden of patriarchy and ecological marginalization. Indigenous women suffer sexual exploitation by Luca, commonly called as 'kuchumothalali'. He is the proud son of Ivachan, the owner of the mansion 'Anjalikkunil'. He sexually assaults the inhabitant females irrespective of their age starting from a little mischievous kid to a mad woman and kills them to conceal the crime. He is a notorious being who had done many immoral crimes such as smuggling and murder.

Paniya tribal women have been physically and sexually exploited by their landlords. They are suffering economically, unable to feed their hungry children. Simultaneously they are facing abuses. Here the tribal women are doubly marginalised. Women in the novel undergo trauma emotionally and mentally. The inhabitant women are abandoned by the men of their families.

Irrespective of their relationship status mothers, daughters, and wives all have to lead a wretched life with the wayward men who bring dismay to the women. Women have to work as laborers for livelihood and the misfortunes of their dilettante men fall on them. They are driven to face the repercussions of their men's acts. When the drunkard Varky dies in the floods his wife and two young daughters have to give their house and the little land they own to Ivachan, the landlord who lends money to Varky " 'Your Husband is gone', 'what are you going to do to pay us back, Theyya?. No way it will be paid, even if you work all your life (Tomy, 95)". They gave their assets and left Kalluvayal. The daughters are sent to Kolkata to join a nunnery. Not only the indigenous but also the immigrant women, who are financially able face psychological trauma because of the lack of moral support by their men. This intersectional ecological analysis is crucial. It shifts the focus from abstract "environmental" concerns to grounded, lived experiences. *Valli* highlights the perception that we cannot speak of ecology without speaking of caste, gender, and indigeneity.

Urbanization: Adulterating the Sanctity

Thambrankannu Hills, a beautiful and sacred place, is destroyed in the name of urban development and profit-making. Big companies and business people come to this area saying they want to build tourist resorts to help the economy and bring progress. But in reality, they only care about making money, not about the land or the people living there. These resorts are built by cutting down forests, digging up the hills, and destroying natural water sources. The animals that once lived there run away, the plants that were used for medicine disappear, and the sacred places where tribal people worshipped their gods are wiped out. The natural balance of the hills is broken. The tribal people have lived in harmony with the hills for generations. They know the land deeply and respect it as something holy. But their voices are ignored. They are either forced to leave or are made to feel like their beliefs do not matter. The hills, which once gave them food, shelter, and spiritual strength, are now turned into luxury resorts for tourists. Thambrankannu becomes a symbol of destruction. What was once full of life, peace, and meaning is now full of machines, noise, and outsiders. The people in the novel feel deep sadness and anger because they are losing not just land, but also their culture, memories, and future. The novel shows that this kind of development is not real progress. It is violence against nature and indigenous people, hidden behind pretty buildings and tourist promises. The story tells to think about who really benefits from such progress and who suffers because of it.

Memory, Myth, and Resistance: Reclaiming Indigenous Voice

The novel interweaves the memory and myth to assert indigenous subjectivity. Characters in *Valli* constantly recall ancestral stories, local deities, and historical struggles. These acts of remembrance serve not just as cultural expression but as resistance against cultural homogenization. The use of oral storytelling traditions folktales, acrophyll, and ritual chants transforms the novel into an archive of subaltern ecological knowledge. Particularly Unniyachi, a girl from the Devadasi community who stayed in the forest caves in the eleventh century from Tamizhakam to Bayalnad ruled by Malayalam-speaking

kings. She falls in love with a Dravida warrior Azhakan in the forest caves. She turns out to be the deity and this legend is narrated by the old woman of Kalluvayal, Umminithara to the children. Later one of the children named Susan made her story, a fable and published it as a series in her college. Tessa learned about Unniyachi through her diary. Susan and Tessa believed that this legend was a real historical incident transferred orally and both believe that a shrine for the Unniyachi deity exists in the depths of the forest. The orally transmitted myth and folklore give them a robust connection with the land. The novel aligns parallel to that of other indigenous writers such as Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's works like "Islands of Decolonial Love", Simpson shows how storytelling can serve as a form of resistance and relational rebuilding. Her stories often feature non-human relations (animals, trees, water) as part of Indigenous kinship networks. Through this aesthetic, *Valli* asserts that the fight for ecological justice is also a fight for narrative sovereignty. Who gets to tell the story of the forest? Who is remembered, and who is forgotten? By giving voice to the silenced, Tomy gives life to the oral storytelling tradition through the characters which keeps the forest alive.

From Grief to Action: Resilience for Environmental Justice

Although *Valli* is filled with sadness from loss, betrayal, and the destruction of nature, it is not a hopeless story. Instead, it shows a sense of hope that comes from fighting back. The younger generation in the story starts to come together, driven by strong beliefs, to protect the forest and defend the rights of indigenous people. Sheela Tomy shows that there is a possibility of unity between Adivasi communities, environmental activists, and concerned people from society. For the Paniya community, Kalluvayal and the Kabani River are more than just a place to live they are like family, sacred beings, and a way of life. The people have grown up on this land, sharing both joyful and painful experiences. They have gone through disasters like landslides and floods caused by the Kabani River, which have taken many lives.

Despite going through such terrible events, their love and care for the land do not lessen. They stand up against the powerful forces trying to take over their land. Their strength in fighting back is led by educated migrants who want to protect the indigenous and their ecology. Together, they work to bring fairness to the community and support the growth and success of the younger indigenous generation. The rationalist, communist activist of Thambrankannu Padmanabhan raised against the injustice done to the indigenous. Padmanabhan and Thommichan are school teachers in Kalluvayal together with Peter, a righteous and meek sibling of maleficent Luca, established a school called 'kadoram' for the indigenous children to give them a cardinal education. The indigenous children are discriminated in Kalluvayal School because of untidiness. The trio of the Kalluvayal disseminates the communist moto striving to get equity and fight for fair wages for the laborers. The Kadoram schools made the indigenous oral tradition and their language alive which is almost on the brink of havoc. The defiance activities undertaken by Padmanabhan with the young men gave them what they demanded and they together turn to be the sentries of the forest from the landlord Marauders. The

rebels were under threat which made them hide in the uninhabited caves of the forest which in turn made the forest protect its sentries who protected it. However, Padmanabhan was beaten to death tortured by the police under false accusation and Peter went unseen in the forest. The spirit to combat environmental justice and social justice does not face away.

The novel *Valli* is an ethical provocation. It confronts the historical and ongoing violence perpetrated against indigenous peoples and the ecologies they protect. It reveals that the environmental crisis is not just about carbon emissions or species extinction, but about stolen land, suppressed knowledge, and violated relationships. By centering the Wayanad terrain and its forest communities, Tomy challenges the dominant narratives of development and conservation. In the place of alienation, she offers to belong; in the place of adversary, harmony; in the place of silence, voice. The novel rises up for the voiceless. It features the foliage and divine ecology of western ghats and the simple life of indigenous, interwoven with ecology. It glorifies their lifestyle which is constructive and their knowledge system which a modern civilisation lacks. They lived a sustainable life which has become indispensable in the contemporary era. Their knowledge about weather, species, medicines, food and their primitive skills are highlighted and the novel signifies the urge to conserve and preserve it. It asserts environmental justice along with social justice. The popular Western discourse addresses climate change, and global warming but fails to address the indigenous ecosystem which is deteriorating. *Valli* insists that true ecological healing cannot occur without justice; justice for the land, and justice for the people who have always cared for it. In doing so, the novel contributes not only to literature but to the urgent reimagining of what it means to live well with the earth.

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**THE BURDEN OF BELONGING: A POSTCOLONIAL
INTERROGATION OF IDENTITY IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *THE
NEW TRIBE***

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Abstract: The portrayal of Chester with mixed identity in Emecheta's *The New Tribe* exposes the psychological turmoil of identity fragmentation, which can be examined through the postcolonial lens of Frantz Fanon and Homi Bhabha. Chester's racial awareness in his White adoptive family results from what Fanon calls "epidermalisation of inferiority." This internalisation of racial inferiority entreats him to desperately search for his roots, for which Homi Bhabha's concepts of in-between space and hybridity can be instrumentalised to understand Chester's identity crisis. The study aims to argue that Chester's search for identity is not just personal but also deeply political, providing the scope for analysing the intersections of power, race and history.

Keywords: Identity, Hybridity, Racial Inferiority, Alienation and Postcolonialism.

In recent times, postcolonialism has emerged as one of the most important areas of literary theory and criticism, with a wide range of concepts in the field of academia. Especially, the study of diasporic experiences under postcolonialism has gained popularity in research to expose the ambivalence of identity. An exemplary postcolonial scholar, John McLeod records, "The literature produced by 'diaspora writers,' such as Buchi Emecheta, Amitav Ghosh, Hanif Kureishi, Bharati Mukherjee, Caryl Phillips, and Ben Zephaniah, has proved immensely popular in Western literary criticism" (208). Emecheta's significance in diasporic writing draws global attention, and her novel, *The New Tribe*, is chosen for interrogation of postcolonial identity.

The research aims to study the construction and representation of the mixed identity and the diasporic experiences of the protagonist in the postcolonial context through the close reading of Buchi Emecheta's novel *The New Tribe*. It focuses mainly on the protagonist, Chester's journey of self-discovery while navigating the pressures of identity fragmentation and the burden of belonging experienced as a result of systemic structures such as race, adoption, and cultural displacement. The argument of the paper is that Chester's search for identity and longing to find his roots is not just personal but becomes more political leading to the intersections of power, race, and history.

Chester, a young Nigerian boy, is abandoned as an eighteen-month-old child with a letter displaying the interest of his actual mother, Catherine. She gave him for adoption to the Arlingtons, the missionary White couple, when she came across in a newspaper about their parental venture for a helpless child, Julia, left in a Tesco shopping bag. Chester's cross-cultural identity complicates his existence within his adopted family, resulting in alienation. He often

escapes reality by entering his dream world, which he believes to exist far away somewhere in Africa.

The Arlingtons are very kind and gentle in their parenting and took genuine care of both their adopted children as their own. It becomes comparatively easy for Julia to assimilate with the family because she appears more of their kind in looks, unlike Chester, who is outwardly oblivious to being part of them. Chester's black skin becomes the symbol of otherness. The sense of alienation stems from the racial inferiority, which Fanon calls 'epidermalization of inferiority'. The internalisation of inferiority results from thinking of himself as a universal subject actively contributing to a society that advocates dignity supposedly given for personal appearance. This kind of biased belief is socially circulated to be internalised, which influences the consciousness of the black subject, forming a disjuncture between the subject's consciousness and body, resulting in alienation.

Emecheta captures the essence of racial awareness and the emotional burden in these lines: "It began as a glimmer and gradually became a solid awareness, established, but somehow imprisoned inside him. However, even at the age of four or five, he felt a sense of unbelonging" (9). The cultural divide of race, nationality, and heritage kindles the fear of unbelonging, and that conflict fuels the progression of the storyline with Chester's quest for identity. Nyongesa et al. rightly bring out the feeling of alienation, as "selves that feel different in relation to others may end up isolating themselves even without being discriminated against."

When Chester questions the Arlingtons about his biological parents, he thinks of Julia as their daughter. "'It's OK, Julia,' he said, 'you're white, like them. You're their child, but I'm different (13)'"'. As a result, Arthur Arlington reveals how both the children are adopted and consoles them that they are not burdens instead blessings in their lives. After the revelation, Chester starts to have a recurring dream of his kingdom, and Julia finds solace in silence, turning into introverted. The constant fear of acceptance always lurked inside Chester's heart. He had to be extra conscious of his acts and words to feel worthy and belonging.

Though his parents never made him feel his being adopted was an act of charity, yet he knew he had to be good. Not only was he a vicar's son, but he was also the only black boy in the community. Nothing was ever said, but he was made aware of his difference by subtle gestures, which made him feel that much was expected of him. He had to try that much harder to be accepted, to show what he was worth, and at times he was so overwhelmed by this that he would escape into his 'city' and stay there for hours on end. (20)

Chester's blackness becomes the focal point under the colonial gaze. As he is brought up in a white family, it fosters tension between his appearance and belonging. Despite the fact that both Julia and Chester are adopted, the visual contrast between him and his sister becomes a conscious reminder of his racial and cultural difference. He is neither accepted as Nigerian nor English;

he is in-between. In postcolonial terms, he exists in what Bhabha calls 'the in-between space.' His black skin makes his own body a site of contest between his home country's culture and host country's culture to inscribe legacies of race and belonging. His quest for his roots symbolises the craving for a coherent self, which is now fractured under the cultural dislocation.

In *The Location of the Culture*, Homi Bhabha propounds his most significant postcolonial concept of hybridity. In order to understand the nuances of Chester's experiences of hybridity, it is essential to know about Bhabha's concept of 'unhomeliness'. He posits that the colonised (adopted Chester) has two distinctive perspectives in viewing himself and the world, which are his own perspective as a subject and the coloniser's perspective as a colonised object. This puts him in limbo and makes him feel alienated from both his home culture and host culture which defines 'unhomeliness'. This duality resonates with W. E. B. Du Bois's concept of double consciousness, where he talks about how the Black subject views himself through his eyes as well as through the eyes of a society that devalues him for his racial difference.

Chester starts to see himself through the colonial gaze of the white society, resulting in a fragmented self-image when his adopted mother, Ginny, unintentionally answers him like they are "your people" from the east when he questions about the Orient king. "He thought about her words. 'Your people.' He thought the Arlingtons were his people. The sense of unbelonging strengthened" (12). This alleviates Chester's disdain towards the role of the Orient king in their school play. Chester's words are, "'Mother, I don't want to be a king any longer. The others call me king of the devils'" (22), and when he was allocated a job backstage, he readily accepted "and was happy with his invisibility" (22). Initially, he feels happy to play the king's role with all innocence without knowing the racially charged rationale behind it. Not just once, but he is chosen consecutively for years, as everybody sees him a perfect fit because of his skin colour. The racial awareness prevents him from being a part of the play, and he consciously resists the identity imposed on him.

Unexpected turns of events, like Julia's pregnancy and her departure, and taking church's money without telling anyone, put pressure on Chester. He feels cornered without doing anything wrong, and soon he too leaves, thinking that the Arlingtons suspect him for the loss. It is evident that Chester's unbelongingness drives him to move out without proper confrontation with his parents. He moves in with Mr. Ugwu in Liverpool, the man he met during his summer job. The burden of carrying a traitor's image inside him bursts out when he mistakenly thinks Mr. Ugwu started to see him as a thief after a brief visit to St. Simon, Chester's place. Mr. Ugwu clarifies the misunderstanding and asks to move on from his past trauma and to talk to his parents, citing his innocence. The conversation between them is, "'But you're innocent! You have nothing to be ashamed of.' 'Yes, but I'm black. That's enough to make me suspect'" (105).

Chester's paternal identity is one of anonymity, and that drives the subconscious desire for a fatherly figure of his kind to feel complacent about belonging. He could not emotionally connect with Mr. Arlington because of his

English ways of upbringing. He has felt biologically distant from Arlington, which has been further complicated by the downplay of fatherly nurturing in English culture. That is why when he meets Mr. Ugwu, he becomes more accustomed to him for his ways in parenting his two sons. Chester experiences something new, like “he felt he had entered a new world. He had never been in the home of a Black family, and he liked what he was seeing” (78). Chester is always left to be on his own yet takes care of his needs. His parents give him space to think and act instead of dictating to him what they want. But Chester is in need of emotional involvement. He felt “that extra parental enthusiasm Mr. Ugwu showed towards his children during the summer holidays had been lacking in his upbringing” (80).

Being an adopted black child in a white family, Chester himself was not sure of his identity, but Mr. Ugwu casually called him a Nigerian. His astonishment could be sensed when he asked, “Mr. Ugwu, how do you know I’m a Nigerian?” (81). His physical features are of a Nigerian and so Mr. Ugwu identifies his racial inclination and nationality, unlike Chester, who was brought up among white faces and fails to recognise the differences in African country civilians. Chester’s anxiousness for acceptance mellowed down when he was with Mr. Ugwu’s family in Liverpool, giving him a sense of communal bonding as a part of the Black community. Chester’s acquaintance with the man helped him to know the Nigerian ways of life. As Pramod K. Nayar rightly points out in his *Contemporary Literary Theory and Cultural Theory* about race and collective identity, “Race and ethnicity are forms of collective, communitarian identity—one that is shared and not necessarily unique to an individual” (217).

In the latter part of the novel, besides his educational and material success in London, Chester wanted to go to Nigeria to learn about his origins. Esther, a young, well-educated African girl working in England, tries to explain to Chester about the realities of the new tribe (hybrids) to dispel the charm of attaining his dream kingdom. She said, “‘You don’t seem ready to accept reality, Chester. We don’t belong in Africa, we’re British. Black British maybe, but this is home now (...) all the roots stuff is so dated. Look how black people have changed the face of British culture. Don’t you want to be part of that?’” (113). Bhabha comes up with this idea of hybridity: “Colonial hybridity is not a problem of genealogy or identity between two different cultures...[it] is that the difference of cultures can no longer be identified or evaluated as objects of epistemological or moral contemplation” (114).

This journey, emblematic of the postcolonial subject’s return to the ‘home’, is dealt with both revelation and disillusionment. The difficulty of returning to the homeland can be understood from the words of John McLeod, who explains the diasporic experiences of V. S. Naipaul in his work, *Beginning Postcolonialism*, writes that the homeland “exists primarily in the mind, and no act of actual, physical return can facilitate it. The idea of the home country becomes a split from the experience of returning home” (209). Chester anticipates Africa to be a place of answers and clarity, but he finds more questions and perplexity. His English mannerisms and upbringing make him an

outsider even among Nigerians.

Emecheta critiques the romanticisation of ‘home’ as static and recoverable origin. The home becomes the symbol of dislocation, fragmentation, and an inconsumable entity. When two different cultures meet, it produces a new culture that is influenced by both cultures through hybridisation. Bhabha’s hybrid space is an “interstitial passage” that entertains “difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (4). This type of cultural encounter will be highly ambivalent and cannot be pure, for which it keeps on revising based on the context.

Chester’s return exemplifies the fact that identity does not rely on appearance but on the choice made in the negotiation between the host and home culture. The past may inform the self of its identity, but it cannot completely restore it. In Nigeria, Chester meets people who share his skin colour but not his history. The tribal elders, community members, local customs, and food all reflect a world that is ancestrally his but experientially foreign. Racial similarity does not necessarily establish one’s identity as coherent and unified. Avtar Brah states in *Cartographies of Diaspora*, “‘Home’ is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of ‘origin’”(192). Thus, the return of home confronts with hybridity. Chester is neither fully British nor fully Nigerian; he belongs to a new tribe of postcolonial subjects shaped by histories of displacement, adoption, and diaspora. The unhomely self cannot go home because home no longer exists as a singular entity.

Chester’s journey in quest of identity depicts the postcolonial condition of cultural and territorial displacement. He embodies hybridity, but this hybridity is dealt with through emotional distress rather than the liberatory cause posited by Bhabha. Emecheta resists the romanticisation of mixed identity by portraying Chester’s internal fragmentation as the product of displacement and interracial adoption. Chester understands the reality of his mixed identity. The title *The New Tribe* suggests a possibility of forging a new identity outside traditional tribal, racial, or national categories. However, the novel shows how structural forces such as racial prejudice, colonial history, and symbolic absence impede Chester’s self-actualisation.

Chester’s identity crisis in *The New Tribe* reflects the deep entanglement of psychological desire and colonial history. His unconscious longing for origins and wholeness reveals the trauma of symbolic loss. His dream is nothing but a coping mechanism to compensate for his sense of unbelonging. At the end of the novel, Emecheta reveals that the dream of Chester was given to him by Ginny through storytelling with a pictorial book prepared by her for representing Africa. From a postcolonial perspective, his fragmented identity exposes the enduring impact of colonial structures on the Black subject. Emecheta’s novel ultimately interrogates whether a ‘new tribe’ of hybrid identities can truly emerge in a world still governed by the legacies of empire.

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RECLAIMING THE SELF: A HERMANIAN READING OF TRAUMA RECOVERY IN TADE THOMPSON'S *ROSEWATER*

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Abstract: Traumatic experiences leave an enduring effect on human behaviour and memory, hindering one's ability to function within society. This study applies Judith Herman's concept of three stages of trauma recovery, as explained in her book *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, as a theoretical framework, to examine the psychological journey of Kaaro, the protagonist in *Rosewater* by Tade Thompson. The study focuses on understanding trauma and its recovery in speculative settings by analysing Kaaro's initial struggle for physical and psychological safety amidst violence and manipulation, which ultimately culminates in his reconnection with others as a part of the healing process.

Keywords: Trauma Studies, Tade Thompson, Judith Herman, Speculative Fiction and Psychological Healing.

Physical or psychological trauma affects the human psyche, and disrupts one's safety and identity. Understanding the profound impact of trauma is inevitable to explore its role in shaping human behaviour and development. The concept of trauma has been expanded in the field of psychology, in past decades, and it is integrated into a vast domain of literature in the form of Trauma Studies. Trauma Studies in literature emerged in the 1990s and was developed by the scholars like Cathy Caruth, Shoshana Felman and Geoffery H. Hartman and became one of the seminal areas of investigation.

Cathy Caruth, in her work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narratives, and History* defines trauma as "In its most general definition, trauma describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, and uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other uncontrolled phenomenon" (11). However, Caruth's model of trauma is criticised as narrow and western biased, and therefore, a shift in trauma theory from classical Caruth to post-colonial and globalised trauma encounters has been marked with the publication of *Future of Trauma Theory: Contemporary Literary and Cultural Criticism*. Roger Luckhurst's essay *Future Shocks: Science Fiction and the Trauma Paradigm* indicates the transformed notion of trauma in the imaginable future.

Trauma, in realistic narratives are grounded in real world contexts, and explore the psychological aftermath of traumatic experiences such as war, exploitation, displacement, loss and so on. Speculative fiction serves as a powerful medium to delve into trauma in imaginative yet poignant way. A core strength of speculative fiction lies in its ability to express internal struggles through the metaphorical representation of alien invasion, transgression or

dystopian regime. In Octavia Butler's *Kindred*, time travel becomes a strategy through which the protagonist experiences the inherited trauma of slavery.

Tade Thompson is a British-born Nigerian writer and psychiatrist. He is also an illustrator and artist. His writings are a blend of Afrofuturism, speculative fiction and psychological horror. He is best known for his work *The Wormwood Trilogy*. *Rosewater*, the first book in *The Wormwood Trilogy*, was published in 2016. Tade Thompson's *Rosewater* unpacks trauma through the lens of a dystopian future marked by alien invasion and biological intrusion. Due to the alien contact, hybrid-like beings with psychic abilities named sensitives are formed, which helped the Nigerian government to sustain control over people. As a sensitive, Kaaro carries deep psychological scars from personal loss and state violence. This article seeks to examine Kaaro's traumatic experiences and healing process by employing Judith Herman's Three stages of recovery as a theoretical framework.

Judith Lewis Herman is an American psychiatrist, researcher, teacher, and author who has focused on the understanding and treatment of incest and traumatic stress. Her book *Trauma and Recovery : The Aftermath of Violence – From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror*, is a decades of research and clinical work with the survivors of sexual and domestic violence. Unlike earlier psychiatric models, Herman recognises trauma as a rupture in self and community and offers a structured, humane model for recovery to regain memory, control and meaning in life. As Judith Herman puts it,

Psychological trauma is an affiliation of the powerless. At the moment of trauma, the victim is rendered helpless by overwhelming force. When the force is that of nature, we speak of disasters. When the force is that of other human beings, we speak of atrocities. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning (33).

Judith Herman has proposed three stages of recovery from trauma - safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection. This study utilises Herman's observations on trauma recovery to analyse the psychological state of the protagonist, Kaaro from the novel *Rosewater*. Kaaro's trauma is complex as it has developed over an extended period and also involves multiple perpetrators. Kaaro acquired psychic abilities at the age of eight, which is used for his personal gain by stealing neighbours' money and indulging in morally inappropriate activities. His first traumatic event happened when his mother caught him stealing from their own home and alerted the neighbours. According to African societal norms, theft is met with communal punishment often resulting in mob justice or death. Kaaro is also chased by an angry mob but he managed to escape with the help of other sensitives from the brink of death. This incident has become a foundation for his chronic aversion and mistrust towards mankind. Consequently, the trajectory of his later life is shaped by the stigma of being identified as a thief, which influences his relationships, perceptions and sense of self.

In Herman's three stages of recovery, she asserts that establishing

safety is the fundamental mechanism. It involves reconstructing a sense of control, physical security and psychological stability after a traumatic experience. Kaaro's mind reading ability plays a vital role in his life to ensure physical safety. Unlike other individuals, Kaaro can access the minds of others which he utilises vigilantly to shield himself from potential harm. Despite relocating to another place Kaaro feels to experience an acute sense of threat. This persistent paranoia reveals the enduring nature of trauma and its impact on an individual's ability to feel secure even in the absence of immediate danger. His dependence on Xenosphere is evident when he says, "I am uncomfortable without access to the Xenosphere. I wish I had my gun with me" (Thompson 65) during his visits to Aminat's sterile home and feels insecure. Although Kaaro's recruitment into section 45 was an act of enforcement and accompanied by threats, it has provided him with physical safety at a certain level. The position gives him a new identity and has granted him the official authority to access the minds of others.

For Kaaro the notion of emotional safety remains distant to achieve. When Kaaro's psychic awareness deepens, his detachment from the society increases. His aversion towards emotional bonds has rooted in the early betrayal from his mother who exposed him to mob, and remains a memory that continues to haunt him. The subsequent experiences of exploitation reinforce his fear of intimacy. Klaus, a Belgian man offers paternal guidance to Kaaro but end up in exploiting his abilities. Similarly, the section 45 recruits him not out of concern but to exploit his psychic abilities for interrogation and surveillance. These repeated deception leads Kaaro to internalise the fact that his value lies in his utility to others, rather than in his inherent humanity. Kaaro perceives emotional bonding as a potential weakness and a threat to his emotional boundaries. It is evident in his interaction with Clement, a fellow sensitive who makes an effort to initiate a conversation but Kaaro reacts with emotional detachment and constructs an emotional barrier as an act of self-preservation. Thompson has explained Kaaro's self-protective instincts through the following lines:

This boy is rather nosy. I had hoped for a brief, polite exchange, but now I find myself having to concentrate on him, on my answers. He is smiling, being friendly, sociable. I should reciprocate. "I'm going with my family," says Clement. "Why don't you come with us? I'm sending my number to your phone. All of Rosewater will be there". That is the part that bothers me, but I say nothing to Clement. I accept his number, and text mine to his phone implant out of politeness, but I do not commit. (5,6)

The recurrent exploitation of his abilities makes Kaaro maintain superficial relationships and evade vulnerabilities through sarcasm and avoidance. Unlike others, Aminat is an exception who does not use or manipulate him. One of the significant indicators of his entry into recovery process is his relationship with Aminat. Despite his defensive and flippant nature, Aminat's calm and composed nature enables him to establish a sense of

emotional safety. Kaaro's experience affirms Herman's assertion that the path to heal is not remembering the trauma but with the painstaking effort of rebuilding a sense of safety in one's body, mind and relationship.

The second stage in Herman's recovery model involves remembering and mourning over traumatic past. In this stage, the survivor reviews or discusses memories to lessen their emotional intensity, revisit the meaning of one's life and identity to reduce flashbacks and nightmares of past traumatic incidents. It also involves confronting with moral dimensions of guilt and responsibility which are often suppressed as a coping mechanism. In this stage Wormwood plays the role of a therapist and compels Kaaro to contend with his past particularly, those that implicate him in the suffering of others.

The most significant among them was the death of Fadeke, Kaaro's former girlfriend. Fadeke is burnt to death by the mob which has happened as the consequence of Kaaro's morally corrupt behaviour using his manipulative power and his history of theft. Furthermore, Wormwood exposes how life of others were similarly affected and reminds Kaaro the cascading consequences of his actions on individuals and communities. His lack of guilt and indifference to the past deeds are explained through these lines:

A Chinese woman I do not know stands before me, her head twisted at a forty-five-degree angle. A reanimate, perhaps? There is nothing around her, no street, no context. Her eyes follow me and blink with disconcerting regularity.

"This is not a friend of mine", I say.

"Oh? Odd. Why are we here then? Oh, I know. Her name is Zhang Wang. You stole her money in Lagos. She got into a taxi and thought she could pay. She could not. The taxi driver threw her out in a rough part of the city and she was knocked down by a truck and killed".

"I didn't"

"Oh, but you did, Kaaro". (Thompson 229)

Prior to this encounter, Kaaro has refused to hold accountability for his actions and justified his actions as survival strategies within a hostile system. But Wormwood's intervention marks a pivotal shift in Kaaro's life by awakening his sense of guilt and responsibility for his deeds. When Kaaro is forced into remembrance, he could no longer subdue the moral weight of his choices. This confrontation with truth is both painful and transformative as Kaaro begins to mourn for the loss.

Herman's final stage of recovery talks about the reconnection. This stage shows the survivor's ability to reconcile with life through meaningful relationships and obtaining a renewed sense of self. In *Rosewater*, Kaaro's relationship with Aminat indicates the subtle yet profound process of reconnection. His early betrayals forced his perception to equate closeness with danger. All his relationships with women are short lived. Kaaro realises the intensity of his relationship with Aminat in a critical moment when government officials arrive to interrogate him and he exhibits a protective instinct towards Aminat which ensures emotional priorities. His willingness to protect her from

danger reflects a developing sense of relational accountability which is a key component in the reconnection stage. Thompson has explained Kaaro's emerging trust towards Aminat through the following lines:

The temptation to look into her head is overwhelming, but I resist. This is one of the reasons I do not date. Once you've been in the xenosphere, you get used to rapid familiarity. You scan quickly and know that the person in front of you is hiding a second wife or has a secret vice. The usual mutual self-disclosure, which regular people do, is plodding and inaccurate, but this equality is necessary for a real relationship. Patience. (38)

Kaaro's reconnection can also be observed when he accompanies Aminat to Lagos, a place which stands as an embodiment of his tragic past. His decision to join Aminat to Lagos in meeting her family demonstrates an evolving willingness to confront painful memories in a relationship. This stage shows the shift in Kaaro's mindset from a survivor to a decision maker.

This study demonstrates that the process of healing is relational and it does not occur in isolation. Kaaro's psychic abilities and early betrayals cultivate a deep mistrust in others due to which he exists in a state of psychological isolation and has relied on surveillance, sarcasm and avoidance to shield himself from further harms. However, Kaaro's genuine reconnection with Aminat affirms Herman's statement that trauma recovery is a social process which depends on survivor's ability to develop trustworthy and respectful human connections.

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‘STORY WITHIN A STORY’ IN FOLKTALES AND ITS APPEAL TO A DIVERSE AUDIENCE – A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF *THE PANCHATANTRA*

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Abstract: Folk tales are commonly narrated for entertainment to guide people toward peaceful life. The diversity in characters and plot devices within the regional folktales mirror the myriad nature of the people who inhabit those places. ‘Stories within a story’, is a common technique used in narration to capture and maintain the attention of the audience. This paper analyses this technique in the select stories from *The Panchatantra* and attempts to ascertain how it contributes to the universal appeal of these folk tales.

Keywords: Language, Narration, Analysis, Folktales and Diversity.

Introduction

Story narration is an art and a form of entertainment to people, helping them to dwell momentarily in a fantasy or surreal world. Stories are built on key elements like plot, theme, settings, characters, tone, emotions, narrative style and point-of-view of the author.

There are a number of narrative techniques at the writer’s disposal such as flashback, imagery, subversion of myths, setting, symbolism, dialogue, simile, metaphor, alliteration, personification, irony, hyperbole, story within story, point of view and so on (Kohli et al). Folk tales have always been an active, dynamic, oral rendering medium of communication. These stories help the community to maximize their strengths in order to be able to live comfortably in cultural diversity (Cubitt).

The Panchatantra is an old collection of animal fables with specific moral value in each story. The tale told of its origin is thus - It is believed that there once lived a king who had three sons whose intellect lacked lustre. A wise teacher named Vishnu Sarma took it as his mission to teach the princes nitishastras in six months at their father’s request. He did this through stories. He told them tale after tale, each one imparting unique wisdom and knowledge that would help the princes learn the essentials of ruling. These stories he grouped into five *tantras*:

1. Mitra-bheda: Conflict amongst friends
2. Mitra-lābha or Mitra-samprāpti: Gaining of friends
3. Kākolūkīyam: Tales of Crows and Owls
4. Labdhapraṇāśam: The forfeit/loss of profits
5. Aparīksitakāraṇam: Action without due consideration/ Rash Deeds (Cubitt).

The meaning of the word Panchatantra is ‘group of five principles.’ Monier Williams has defined the word tantra as an ‘essential part, main point, framework, model, characteristic feature, system’ (1899). V. S. Apte has given

different meanings of the word tantra as state, nation, administration and governance (Apte). According to some scholars of the Indo-European languages, *the Panchatantra* is the oldest collection of Indian fables surviving. (Chandiramani)

Though the original text of *the Panchatantra* was written in Sanskrit around 200 B.C. Some of the stories are much older, going back to the period of the Rig Veda and Upanishads (from 1500 B.C. to 500 B.C.). Many stories from India and beyond utilise ‘story within a story’ as a prominent narrative technique. A ‘story within a story’ is a literary device in which a character within a story becomes the narrator of a second story (within the first one). Multiple layers of stories within stories are called nested stories. The other similar forms are known as embedded stories or framed stories.

The Panchatantra as well as Hindu epics such as *Puranas* and the *Mahabharata* prominently utilise ‘story within a story’ technique. The technique has also found favour with Sanskrit prose writers like Banbhatta and Dandin. (Adatiya). The objective of this technique might be for entertainment or an example to the other characters. *The Panchatantra’s* ‘story within a story’ a nested narrative structure fosters inclusiveness by weaving diverse voices, perspectives, and moral lessons, resonating across cultures and ages.

In order to substantiate this, the researcher have selected three stories of the first tantra - Mitra-bheda: ‘Conflict amongst friends’ from the Chandiramani translation of *the Panchatantra*. The stories are analysed under areas of cohesion, narrative functionality (story within a story) and appeal to diverse audiences.

The title of the three stories analysed are:

1. “The Monkey and the Log (Wedge)”
2. “The Hungry Jackal and the Drum”
3. “The Merchant Dantila”

The basic outline of Mitra-bheda is the friendship between a lion, Pingalaka and a bull, Sanjivaka and of how two jackals - Karataka and Damanaka plot to get back their place as ministers for the lion king by making the lion kill his trusted friend, the bull.

Methodology

Qualitative method is applied for the study. The emphasis is on how *the Panchatantra* executes the ‘story within a story’ technique to create a layered narrative structure, incorporating moral teachings and how it appeals to diverse audiences. The paper also aims to critically evaluate and interpret the advantages and possible shortcomings in the story telling format.

Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

To examine how the stories from the first tantra (Mitra-bheda) execute ‘story within a story’ technique to create a layered narrative structure.

To find out how moral instructions through interconnected story telling elevate the depth of the stories.

Story Structural Breakdown

The first tantra - Mitra-bheda: ‘Conflict amongst friends’ begins with a

merchant, Vardhamanaka of *Mahilaropyam* city who is travelling to Mathura with his wares on his two bulls - Sanjivaka and Nandaka. After a few days of travel, on the banks of river Yamuna, Sanjivaka's leg is broken and he collapses. He is abandoned by his master but is destined to live longer. He survives miraculously by feeding on small plants and decides to hide in a cave nearby. When Pingalaka, the lion king, comes to the banks of Yamuna and hears the bull's hideous roar, he becomes terrified and leaves the place without drinking water. His retinue, including two jackals named Karataka and Damanaka gather under a banyan tree equally terrified. Seeing this as an opportunity to ingratiate themselves with a king who has cast them aside, the jackals use one of the six diplomatic methods all through the first tantra.

Karataka narrates the story of "The Monkey and the Log (Wedge)" to warn Damanaka into minding his business as the lion king had ignored them. Damanaka, determined to appease the king, meets with the king and requests to be allowed to help the king. The king, unaware of the fact that a mere bull's roar was the cause for his terrific condition, hesitantly confesses his fear to Damanaka. At this point, Damanaka uses the diplomatic method, 'to make peace' with the lion king as well as the bull. But the lion or the bull had no clue of this tactic.

Damanaka finds out that a bull named Sanjivaka, equally scared of the jungle, is roaring from a cave. Damanaka, taking advantage of the situation, narrates the story of "The Hungry Jackal and the Drum" to the lion king. Here, Damanaka uses the diplomatic method, 'to take protection under a powerful ally' and succeeds in gaining a chance to prove his loyalty. He goes to the bull and negotiates well with him. He reminds the bull to respect him once his life is spared by the lion and not act too bossy when he becomes the king's favourite.

Damanaka then narrates the story of 'The merchant Dantila' to Sanjivaka warning him how Dantila, a merchant in the city of Vardhamana and the favourite of the king is insulted and ruined because he humiliates the king's servant. Damanaka uses the diplomatic method, 'to entrench' and establishes his firm place as a Minister for the king despite the closeness the bull might become to the king.

The most noticeable thing is that each story has a moral or a principle of practical wisdom. The jackals, according to their comfort and safety, orchestrate the friendship between the lion and the bull and later cause discord between the lion and the bull craftily.

Narrative Functionality

The story within the story in the first tantra, is in the form of dialogues between the characters. The jackals, Damanaka and Karataka, sons of the previous Minister of Pingalaka, the lion king, are dismissed from their posts. Damanaka is always thinking about being re-posted but Karataka had accepted the present situation. Karataka narrates the story of "The Monkey and the Log (Wedge)" to Damanaka reminding him of their deposed position and not to indulge with the lion king who does not value loyalty.

Damanaka is hell bound to get his Ministership back, going against Karataka's advice. He narrates the story of "The Hungry Jackal and the Drum"

to the lion king exactly when the king is too terrified. Damanaka willfully turns the helplessness of the king to his own advantage. By narrating the story of “The merchant Dantila” to Sanjivaka, the bull, Damanaka uses the weakness of the bull and the lion to his advantage.

Moral Values

Panchatantra stories explore universal themes of love, betrayal, deception, friendship, compassion, hatred, jealousy, meanness, tactfulness, generosity and wisdom. Pandit Vishnu Sharma has explicitly struck a balance between universal moral principles and pragmatic life lessons.

The teachings from the three selected stories for the research are:

The moral of the story, “The Monkey and the Log (Wedge)” is ‘never to meddle in other people’s business.’

The moral of the story, “The Hungry Jackal and the Drum” is ‘one should never be afraid of mere noise.’

The moral of the story, “The Merchant Dantila” is ‘when a person engulfed by pride does not properly handle the people, they shall be ruined.’

Appeal to a Diverse Audience

The stories and the translated versions appeal to both children (since it is a fable consisting of animals as the main character) and adults (as it covers themes like politics and ethics.) The story within a story technique is not only an entertaining tool but also can be used as an effective tool in academics. There is a lot of scope for curiosity, imagination, sequence learning, and surprise elements in this technique that would truly intrigue students to explore, focus and create.

Diversity and Inclusiveness in the Select Stories from Panchatantra

The Panchatantra is one of the oldest fables wherein diversity and inclusiveness are seen in many ways.

Universality: The selected stories contain universal moral values like love and hatred; compassion and betrayal; loyalty and cunningness, that all people and cultures can appreciate.

Characters in the story: Animals and birds are the predominant characters in these stories. Each represents different human traits, behaviour, status and position in society. The lion king depicts the throne that comes with thorns; the jackals depict how adverse situations bring out either the best or worst in us; the bull teaches the role of friendship in difficult situations.

Interconnectedness: The stories honestly and effortlessly portray different animals- a direct analogy to the different kinds of people- and their nuanced relationships with one another. The lion needs jackals to solve his problem; the jackals need the support and benevolence of the lion and be the mediator between the bull and the lion. The bull needs to be in a safe and better place than the cave. The stories analysed here therefore promote coexistence, mutual benefits, timely wisdom and decisiveness which are inclusive principles that surpass cultural and social boundaries.

The ‘story within a story’ technique is seen in other folktales across the globe like *Aesop’s Fables*, *Arabian Nights*, *Vikram and Betal*, Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet* and R. K. Narayan’s *The Guide*.

The original Sanskrit work of *Panchatantra* probably was written about 200 B.C by a great Hindu scholar, Pandit Vishnu Sharma. While the selected stories from *Panchatantra* do not explicitly address modern concepts of diversity and inclusiveness, its themes and narratives inherently promote understanding and harmony among different entities. The uniqueness seen in these stories appeals to diverse audience and makes this work evergreen and a guide for life. Millions of readers and listeners of the last 2200 years have benefited from this most unique book. *Panchatantra* is a fountain of nectar and contains Indian Philosophical wisdom.

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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS BETWEEN THE MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS AND PATIENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN DR. VISHWA RATAN'S NARRATIVES

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Abstract: The COVID-19 pandemic created widespread anxiety, tension, and fear in society and placed extraordinary stress and pressure on the medical field. Besides physical ailments, it caused emotional stress. In such cases, emotional support and compassionate care, alongside physical treatments and medical interventions, became powerful forms of medicine. The intersubjective connection between medical professionals and patients allowed both to understand each other in a better manner. Stories represent the difficulties and hardships of COVID-19 patients and their healthcare providers. They help to develop empathy in medical professionals and assist them in building stronger bonds with their patients. This paper aims to explore how the intersubjective connection between medical professionals and COVID-19 patients enhances their ability to provide compassionate care and alleviate the suffering of both by analysing two short stories titled “Her Last Wish” and “I also have a feeling I am not a Hero” from *Pandemic Stories: Around the World* by Dr. Vishwa Ratan.

Keywords: COVID-19, Pandemic, Health Humanities, Care, Compassion and Intersubjectivity.

Health Humanities combines various fields of art, social science and humanities to explore the experiences of health, illness, and care. Fields like music, fine arts, performing arts, literature, religion and history play significant roles in this interdisciplinary field to understand and humanise healthcare practices. Unlike the clinical and scientific focus of traditional medical practice, health humanities emphasise the social, cultural and personal aspects of disease. It brings attention to the often overlooked, underappreciated, or unspoken aspects of the illness experience. The primary focus of medical humanities is the doctor-patient relationship whereas health humanities takes a broader approach, incorporating perspectives from patients, caregivers and other stakeholders. Literature is an important discipline within health humanities. It explores the cultural and social, political and ethical dimensions of medicine and illness. It helps the medical professionals with a deeper understanding of the medical field and the experiences of patients. Hence literature plays a major role in transforming the medical professionals more humane to their patients. COVID-19 stories delve into human experience during the pandemic. This paper aims to explore how the intersubjective connection between medical professionals and COVID-19 patients enhances their ability to provide compassionate care. This study analyses two short stories by Dr. Vishwa Ratan, a medical practitioner, titled “Her Last Wish” and “I also have feeling I am not a Hero” from *Pandemic Stories: Around the World*. Both these stories are set

against the backdrop of COVID-19 outbreak. The two stories are approached through the lens of intersubjectivity to explore its importance in fostering compassionate care.

COVID-19 patients experienced fear, anxiety and depression due to isolation and uncertainty about their illness. Along with medical treatment, compassionate care became essential for the patients to alleviate their suffering. The word 'cura', Latin root of 'care', means a strong sense of affection expressed towards others in the form of care for their comfort and well-being (Bruyns 67-76). In *Moral Boundaries*, Tronto describes care as a "practice" involving "thought and action...directed toward some end" (108). A compassionate person recognises and experiences another person's pain and suffering, and takes action to alleviate it (Ruddick152). In "Can Politics Practice Compassion?" Elizabeth Porter defines how a compassionate person should be:

First, the compassionate person feels the pain of others, and in experiencing some anguish, becomes a co-sufferer, whether this other is known personally to us or not. Second, the compassionate person tries to identify imaginatively with the other in order to understand the sufferer's viewpoint on their suffering and what might relieve their pain. The sufferer is not a passive victim. Hence, in this stage, the compassionate person attends to their interests, listens, heeds, and judges perceptively in order to discern how best to respond to the sufferer's needs. Third, the compassionate person responds to the suffering and needs of the sufferer with compassionate practical wisdom (102).

According to Pellegrino compassion is one of the six virtues essential for medical professionals (8). Compassion played a significant role in the healing process of COVID-19 patients. To become compassionate persons, the medical professionals strived to understand the patient's experience by seeing the world through their eyes. This required active listening to patients, acknowledging their fears, and validating their emotional and physical struggles. In this process, the intersubjective connection between medical professionals and patients was established.

The concept of intersubjectivity has its roots in phenomenological thoughts of Edmund Husserl. Intersubjectivity refers to the shared understanding and mutual exchange of thoughts, feelings, and experiences between individuals. This interaction, which involves both conscious and unconscious elements, is often facilitated through empathy, allowing for a deeper connection and comprehension between people (Cooper-White 1183-86). In her book *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness*, Rita Charon defines "intersubjectivity...is the situation that occurs when two subjects, or two authentic selves, meet" (51). This is what happens in the relationship between the medical professional and the patient. Two authentic selves -the medical professional and the patient -meet to communicate to each other. In intersubjective communication, the patients openly share their fears,

symptoms, and emotional struggles, which in turn helps the doctor understand their unique experience and tailor the treatment accordingly. It reduces the stress and emotional burden of patients. The intersubjective connection between doctors and patients became even more crucial in treating COVID-19 patients, as it helped to bridge the emotional and psychological distance caused by isolation.

The intersubjective connection between doctor and patient helps themselves to reduce the emotional strain because “the doctor, too, undergoes deep and painful emotions in his or her care of the sick. Although the patient’s suffering must remain at the heart of medicine, it is undeniable that doctors, too, suffer through the illnesses of their patients” (Charon 32). The experience of medical professionals and frontline workers caring for COVID-19 patients were not different from what Charon argues. Healthcare workers experienced significant stress while witnessing the trauma of isolated COVID-19 patients and caring for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and children. At the same time, they faced the ongoing fear of contracting the virus.

Drawing the metaphor of parallel play from child psychology, Charon explains, both patients and doctors appear to experience parallel suffering in the course of the treatment. During parallel play, infants play independently next to each other, but they do not directly interact with one another in meaningful ways. When their intersubjective ability develops, infants begin to engage in more interactive forms of play. In this way, both doctor and patient suffer parallelly. This does not help to lessen their suffering. It is only through intersubjectivity that the suffering becomes lighter (32-33). Hence intersubjectivity is useful for doctors and patients in the overall healing process.

In the short story “Her Last Wish,” Dr. Alice and her patient Morris share a profound intersubjective connection that deepens Dr. Alice’s compassion. Dr. Alice, a sixty-year-old eye specialist with many years of experience at Lombardy City Hospital, meets Morris for the first time when Morris seeks treatment for her cataract issues. Through a series of medical sessions, this connection allows Dr. Alice to gain a deeper understanding of Morris, a seventy-nine-year-old woman who lives alone and grapples with both her cataracts and the anxiety of undergoing surgery during the emergence of a new virus. Despite these challenges, Dr. Alice successfully performs the cataract surgery in her home clinic.

This understanding of Morris enables Dr. Alice to become more compassionate to Morris during her cataract and COVID-19 treatments. Dr. Alice recognises that Morris requires “all kindness and medical attention” (Ratan 5) due to her “not only being old but also leading a lonely life” (Ratan 5). Noddings argues that “when we care, we consider the other’s point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us...” (24). When Morris contracts COVID-19, Dr. Alice promptly responds to her needs. Upon learning about Morris’s wish to see her, Dr. Alice immediately visits the hospital, recognising that this elderly woman, living alone, requires assistance and care. At the hospital, Dr. Alice comforts Morris and reassures her, saying, “...soon doctors will put you on Ventilator and gradually you will improve”(8). Dr. Alice’s

words reflect her deep compassion in caring for her patient, Morris.

Through their previous intersubjective connection during Morris's cataract treatment, Dr. Alice learned about her age and solitary life, and "had developed some kind of attachment and love for the old lady" (Ratan 7). When Dr. Alice meets Morris, she requests, "please tell the doctors, that I have completed my life's wonderful journey. It was a great experience, loved by all and I have no regrets and again she affirmed that please, tell the doctors, I do not want to be put on ventilator" (8). Despite Dr. Alice's attempts to persuade Morris, she ultimately leaves the final decision in her hands. As a compassionate person, Dr. Alice attends to Morris's needs. According to Thomas Percival "the physician is obligated to respect the *"feelings and emotions"* of patients, including the choice to refuse treatment" (Cole et al.ch.1). Here, Dr. Alice respects Morris's feelings and emotions, when Morris refuses to be put on a ventilator.

As Charon describes, Dr. Alice in the story also experiences emotional challenges while caring for her patient Morris. She feels anxious about performing cataract surgery on elderly Morris amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Her concerns about Morris's age and solitary life stir deep, painful emotions in Dr. Alice. In addition to these anxieties, the uncertainties brought on by the pandemic also profoundly impact Dr. Alice's emotions. As COVID-19 cases rise, she loses her job at Lombardy City Hospital and is forced to close her home clinic after performing Morris's cataract surgery. She loses her means of social connections. As her son is living far away, Dr. Alice is left alone in her home, experiencing complete isolation. All these cause anxieties in Dr. Alice. Here intersubjective communication with Morris helps her a lot to reduce stress and anxiety.

As Charon suggests, the doctor and the patient can alleviate each other's pain. Dr. Alice and Morris share their emotions and provide mutual comfort. During the post-surgery check-up, Dr. Alice gently touches Morris's hand and wishes her a speedy recovery. For a brief moment, Morris feels sad and express motherly affection for Dr. Alice. She touches Dr. Alice's cheek and says, "God bless you, Alice be happy" (Ratan 6), with filled eyes. Morris's expression of love and blessings brings comfort to Dr. Alice, who is deeply shaken by the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic. The relationship between Dr. Alice and Morris serves as an exemplary model of the doctor-patient connection.

In another story, "I Also Have Feeling I Am Not a Hero," the intersubjective connection between Popchop, a nurse and her patients enables her to understand their needs and see things from their perspective, making her a co-sufferer. This deep empathy allows her to be compassionate. Popchop is a registered nurse at Alabama Medical Centre who travels from her home in Florence to New York to work as a frontline worker during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the hospital, she is tasked with managing a COVID-19 ward with thirty patients. The senior nurse provides her with written instructions for each patient, giving a clear understanding of their conditions. She learns that five patients are on ventilators, while the others are receiving oxygen and various

fluids. This knowledge enables her to offer comfort and lessen the emotional distress of patients confronting the life-threatening challenges of the pandemic. When one of her patients, Mrs. Morrison expresses her wish to deliver her final message that “Granny loves you a lot, be a good human being” (Ratan 54) to her granddaughter, Popchop promises to convey it and reassures her that she will recover soon. At this moment, Popchop considers Mrs. Morrison’s perspective and prioritises her wishes. By referring to Mrs. Morrison as “Grandma,” Popchop fosters a deeper connection with her patient.

Popchop is in intersubjective relationship with another patient. When a man of nearly seventy years old who is in ventilator requests her to convey his message to his son that he should “give up drinking and take care of his family” (Ratan 55) and he also says that he has given all his properties to him. To this request Popchop replies “definitely, I will tell him. Sleep well” (Ratan 55). Her care and loving words comfort him. He finally closes “his eyes and went into deep sleep, with peace written all over his face” (Ratan 55). This communication between the nurse and the patient helps each other to reduce their stress and anxiety. The patient has a peaceful death after communicating his message to Popchop. Popchop also feels relieved that she can ease her patient’s inevitable death. Perez-Bret et al. describe compassion as “the sensitivity shown to understand another person’s suffering,...” (559-606). Here, Popchop demonstrates sensitivity toward the elderly man, empathising with his feelings and helping him find peace in his final moments. Healing goes beyond curing; it encompasses supporting the sick during their last moments and ensuring a serene departure from this world. Her ability to provide such care stems from her intersubjective recognition of patient.

Similar to Dr. Alice in “Her Last Wish,” Popchop also experiences deep emotional turmoil while caring for her patients. Her mind is deeply disturbed by the tragic events occurring in the COVID -19 ward, where she is in charge. The dead silence in the ward creates fear in her mind. The only sound in the ward is that of the ventilator. She feels that “as if death was walking with her and at any moment, everything will be over” (Ratan 53). In this ward, she witnesses the final moments of many patients, which haunts her and become nightmares. The death of Mrs. Morrison deeply affects her, causing her to cry uncontrollably. Popchop finds solace from her emotional pain through intersubjective communication with her patients and their recoveries. When she sees Mr. Harry, one of her patients, breathing normally, she feels a surge of happiness. Mr. Harry, too, cannot control his emotions and cries with gratitude. Here, both express their emotions through what Charon refers to as intersubjective recognition.

Diseases are not only a concern of the body but also of the mind. The COVID-19 pandemic exemplifies this, as anxiety and fear surrounding the illness were amplified by the isolation from their loved ones, facing an unknown disease. In such situations, care from medical practitioners was crucial to alleviate patients’ anxiety and stress. Medical professionals also experienced tension and anxiety as they navigated the challenges of dealing with this novel disease. To reduce the anxiety of both patients and medical

professionals, an intersubjective connection between them was essential. It allowed them to understand each other better. Through the intersubjective bond, medical professionals gained insight into the patient's needs and struggles, enabling them to be compassionate.

Intersubjective connection is pivotal in improving medical professionals' capacity to deliver compassionate care, ultimately helping both caregivers and patients alleviate their suffering. Literature that delves into the challenges of the medical field and the experiences of illness and disease holds significant role in health humanities, providing profound insights into the emotional and psychological dimensions of healthcare. Such narratives are instrumental in shaping more empathetic and effective medical professionals by fostering a deeper compassionate connection with their patients.

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FRAGMENTED HOMES AND INHERITED HAUNTINGS: MEMORY, TRAUMA, AND IDENTITY IN *SALT HOUSES* AND *THE UNGRATEFUL REFUGEE*

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Abstract: This paper examines how memory and trauma operate in contemporary refugee narratives through a comparative study of Hala Alyan's novel *Salt Houses* (2017) and Dina Nayeri's memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee* (2019). It argues that both texts frame memory not merely as personal recollection but as a political, inherited, and often contested force shaped by dislocation, war, and exile. This study examines how storytelling, silence, and narrative form mirror the psychological upheavals that displaced communities go through, drawing on trauma theory and cultural memory studies. In the end, these texts assert literature as a vehicle for memory activism and identity reconstruction, challenging prevailing depictions of refugees as passive subjects.

Keywords: Memory, Inherited Trauma, Diasporic Identity, Cultural Displacement, Narrative Fragmentation and Modern Middle Eastern Narratives.

Introduction

Refugee stories simplify complex experiences into categories of victim and hero, overlooking the nuanced emotional and psychological effects of displacement. However, contemporary literature is increasingly challenging these simplistic views, exploring themes of memory, trauma, and the fragmented self. Hala Alyan's novel *Salt Houses* (2017) and Dina Nayeri's memoir *The Ungrateful Refugee* (2019) illustrate this change. Both works complicate prevailing narratives of exile and belonging by emphasizing the lasting effects of war and the persistent nature of inherited trauma.

Alyan's multigenerational saga looks at how displacement disrupts family memory and identity, while Nayeri combines personal stories with journalistic investigation to reveal the emotional struggles faced by refugees in the West. Both authors emphasize fragmentation of homes, stories, and identities as key aspects of the refugee experience. This paper explores how *Salt Houses* and *The Ungrateful Refugee* portray memory and trauma as cultural and inherited forces rather than individual experiences using trauma theory, cultural memory studies and postcolonial ideas. They highlight storytelling, silence, and fragmented narratives as essential tools for reconstructing identities broken by exile. Ultimately, they suggest that literature itself can act as a form of memory activism creating a space where silenced histories are expressed and fragmented identities become clearer.

Cathy Caruth, a key figure in trauma studies, states that trauma has a latency, a delayed understanding that disrupts a coherent narrative. She writes, "To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth 5). Trauma does not allow for closure and disrupts time; it recurs in a non-linear and hard-to-narrate way.

Dominick LaCapra expands this by distinguishing between "acting

out” and “working through” trauma. Refugees often live in the former state, caught between remembering and forgetting, and repeat traumatic events without truly processing them (LaCapra 144). This can be seen in Alyan’s characters, who inherit traumas they did not directly experience, and in Nayeri’s constant return to scenes of questioning, displacement, and cultural isolation.

Postmemory describes how trauma is passed down through generations, allowing descendants of survivors to deeply internalize experiences they never faced themselves. Hirsch explains, “Postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection” (Hirsch 22). In *Salt Houses*, younger character, Manar is haunted by stories of Palestine in *The Ungrateful Refugee*, Nayeri represents the refugee experience and its long-lasting psychological effects on her family.

Michael Rothberg’s idea of “multidirectional memory” adds another layer. He argues that different cultural traumas do not compete for attention; instead, memory can be dialogic and mutually supportive. Alyan and Nayeri embrace this approach, intertwining personal trauma with larger historical and cultural wounds, allowing their stories to resonate across national and generational borders.

Additionally, Edward Said’s concept of exile as both a physical and a mental state enriches this discussion. In *Reflections on Exile*, Said writes, “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place” (Said 173). This tension between longing and loss, and between memory and reinvention, shapes the inner experiences of both novels.

Memory and Trauma in *Salt Houses*

Hala Alyan’s *Salt Houses* is structured as a mosaic of lives affected by war, exile, and changing political landscapes. Each chapter focuses on a different member of the Yacoub family, illustrating how personal and collective memory are expressed through silence, ritual, and reinvention. The novel starts with Salma, a mother who conceals the fortune teller’s prophecy from her daughter, Alia to shield her from despair. This concealment creates a generational pattern of silence that recurs throughout the story. The Yacoub’s forced departure from Palestine is not detailed at length; it exists as an unseen presence a “ghost homeland.” Alia, for example, can barely recall her birthplace and tries to recreate it in her new homes through cooking, prayers, and storytelling. These actions become forms of embodied memory what Paul Connerton describes as “habit-memory,” where the body becomes a place of remembering (Connerton 72).

Riham copes through her religious devotion, while Souad’s adoption of western freedom hides her deep sense of alienation. The Yacoub men, particularly Atef and Karam, demonstrate a reserved masculinity and internalized trauma. Karam’s return to Palestine is both a pilgrimage and a quiet mourning. These male characters often do not articulate their pain, showing how cultural norms influence the gendered experience of trauma. Alyan’s fragmented and non-linear storytelling reflects the psychological breaks of her

characters.

Events are remembered differently by family members, indicating that memory is never stable. In a chapter, Alia recalls a bombing in Kuwait; in another, her son sees it distant and unclear. These shifts in narrative highlight how trauma disrupts coherence and splinters both memory and identity.

The novel's geographic transitions from Nablus to Kuwait and Beirut to Boston further disrupt the idea of "home." Home is never stable, safe, or fully reclaimed. In the final chapters, set in the U.S., characters like Manar attempt to piece family history together through faded photos and incomplete stories. "There's something ghostly about our family," Manar notes. "We live in places we don't belong to, speaking languages that aren't ours" (Alyan 237). This ghostliness represents the haunting legacy of inherited trauma.

Inherited Trauma and Narrative Voice in *The Ungrateful Refugee*

Dina Nayeri's *The Ungrateful Refugee* challenges the typical refugee story by avoiding a strict timeline or excessive emotion. Her memoir blends autobiography, social commentary, and a reflection on storytelling. Unlike *Salt Houses*, which uses fictional multiple voices, Nayeri's perspective feels personal and is enriched with journalistic research and shared memories. Her story resists closure, mirroring the unpredictable nature of trauma. Nayeri starts with her escape from Iran at eight years old and the long stay of her family in an Italian refugee camp. She revisits these memories throughout the memoir, each time uncovering different emotional layers. Caruth argues that trauma does not stay in the past; it reappears in the present. Nayeri revisits childhood moments often to share these experiences: "I am always translating my pain, my culture, my family into something digestible for others" (Nayeri 98).

Language becomes a space for empowerment and loss. When Nayeri discusses her asylum interviews, she shows how refugees must perform their trauma, explaining their suffering in ways that legal systems and aid workers find acceptable. "A good refugee," she notes, "must be both eloquent and broken, grateful yet not too proud" (Nayeri 124). This performance demands the splitting of one's identity into what is acceptable and what is hidden.

Nayeri includes the voices of Afghani boys, Iraqi fathers and Syrian women which represent Rothberg's "multidirectional memory." Her story calls for a shared and interconnected view of trauma. These enrich her narrative, showing how inherited trauma affects families and communities.

In Nayeri's memoir, silence often has an institutional source. Bureaucratic systems silence nuance, forcing simplification. She argues that refugees are not allowed to be complicated or imperfect. "We are expected to be thankful, obedient, and invisible," she expresses (Nayeri 143). By resisting these pressures, Nayeri's memoir serves as a form of narrative resistance. By avoiding a neat story of redemption, she reclaims the complexity of human experience. Additionally, her identity as a daughter adds complexity to the narrative. Her mother's religious conversion and emotional sacrifices evoke admiration and guilt. Nayeri wonders if her success in the west validates her family's suffering. This generational tension reflects Hirsch's idea of postmemory: Nayeri carries not only her trauma but also the moral and

emotional impacts of her family's choices.

Storytelling, Silence, and Narrative Fragmentation

In both texts, storytelling is an active and a political act. Alyan and Nayeri use literary fragmentation not just for stylistic reasons, but to depict psychological breakdown. Traumatic memories resist clear narration; they return in bursts, omissions, and contradictions. Their fragmented styles reflect the instability. In *Salt Houses*, stories are partially told or left untold. Generational silences exist throughout. Younger characters grow up with a haphazard grasp of their history, filled with gaps, myths, and guarded memories. The death of Atef's friend Mustafa hardly gets mentioned, yet it looms over his emotions. "Some memories are too sacred to touch," Alia observes (Alyan 143). This silence is not forgetting but respect and repression.

Dori Laub stresses how hard it is to witness trauma, noting that giving testimony can be a traumatic experience itself (Laub 64). For Alyan's characters, memories come through objects prayer beads, photographs and spices. In *Salt Houses*, silence becomes a survival strategy. In contrast, Nayeri uses storytelling as a form of confrontation. Her memoir includes interruptions, digressions, debates, and internal arguments that urge the reader to rethink what a refugee story is. She emphasizes that she is creating her story, choosing what to reveal and what to hide. This self-awareness is part of the trauma response a defense against the expectation of confession.

Nayeri's tone often includes anger and irony, which is rare but impactful in refugee literature. She critiques how western media and publishing industries commodify refugee experiences: "We are more valuable when we suffer in silence, when we accept the role of the grateful survivor" (Nayeri 161). By challenging this role, she empowers others to do the same.

The storytelling methods in both texts resist conclusions and certainty. The broken timelines, changing viewpoints, and layered voices reflect the fragmented identity of refugees. Storytelling becomes an act of control a way to reclaim one's identity from systems that demand simplicity.

Identity, Displacement, and the Search for Belonging

Both *Salt Houses* and *The Ungrateful Refugee* challenge fixed ideas of identity. In exile, identity is shaped not by geography but by memory, performance, and change. A refugee is not a static being but a mix of histories, fears, and dreams.

In *Salt Houses*, identity shifts across generations. Salma, who is born in Palestine, clings to a national identity tied to place and tradition. Alia, her daughter, is more uncertain, seeking comfort in family and rituals instead of politics. The third generation, including Souad and Manar, embodies diasporic identities fluid, mixed, and often conflicted. Manar, raised in America, represents postmemory. Her identity is built from stories she hasn't lived: "I feel Palestinian, even though I've never been there," she admits (Alyan 229).

Alyan suggests that identity is not passed down unchanged but rebuilt through emotional effort. Cultural practices like cooking, prayer and storytelling serve to recover a broken past. Stuart Hall's idea of cultural identity argues that identity is not an essence but a position (Hall 225). The Yacoub

family constantly repositions themselves in relation to place, memory, and loss.

In *The Ungrateful Refugee*, identity is fluid. Nayeri is an Iranian, an American, a refugee, an immigrant, a woman and a daughter who represents each identity depending on the situation. “I belong everywhere and nowhere,” she writes (Nayeri 202). This in-between state is isolating and empowering. It invites scrutiny, especially from western institutions that expect conformity.

Nayeri’s memoir also highlights the emotional impact of cultural negotiation. As a child, she tries to hide her Iranian identity to admit at American schools. Later, she feels the loss of her language and accent, feeling disconnected.

Both texts reject the idea of return. For characters in *Salt Houses*, the idea of returning to Palestine is more symbolic than literal. It embodies longing, not a destination. Nayeri similarly turns away from nostalgia. She criticizes the romantic view of homeland and shows how memory is an anchor and a prison. For her, identity is about surviving, not reclaiming what was lost.

In *Salt Houses* and *The Ungrateful Refugee*, memory and trauma are core aspects of the refugee experience. Both texts show that refugee narratives shall be viewed as psychological, cultural, and generational experiences that need new narrative forms. Alyan and Nayeri resist conclusions, performances, and the reduction of identity to gratitude or victimhood. Their works illustrate how literature can carry the weight of memory preserving what history might erase and voicing what politics may silence. Through narrative fragmentation, silences, and mixed forms, they express a refugee identity that is complex, haunted, and resilient. *Salt Houses* and *The Ungrateful Refugee* shed light on how literature can witness the realities of fractured homes and inherited struggles.

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COMMODIFIED SELVES: BIOCAPITALISM AND THE POSTHUMAN IN ATWOOD AND ISHIGURO

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Abstract: *Oryx and Crake* and *Klara and the Sun* offer future worlds, introducing bio-engineered species and artificial friends into the ecosystem. Drawing on theories of posthumanism and biopolitical critiques and focusing on genetically engineered species and artificial friends, this article investigates the commodification of life. Engaging with theorists, such as Rosi Braidotti, Melinda Cooper, Nancy K. Hayles and Foucault, this article explores the intricate layers of criticism for optimizing the life and human emotions within the structures of biocapitalism. This article re-imagines the human condition under the technological shifts, biopolitical power regimes, and modes of agency and resistance.

Keywords: Posthumanism, Biocapitalism, Commodification, Emotional Labour, Power, Artificial Intelligence and Genetic Engineering.

Introduction

Speculative fiction offers multiple realms to reconfigure power, biocapitalism, commodification and human identity, particularly when it comes to posthuman and dystopian worlds. The ideals of posthumanism reveal the importance of looking into power structures that are not limited to human-centric thinking. Instead of sticking to the traditional human centric notion, posthumanism highlights the shifting nature of identity and the significance of non-human entities.

Philosophical posthumanism critiques enlightenment humanism and explores what comes in the future of humanity. Human beings are often blinded by power of technology and wealth, and thus creating serious setbacks in the future of the world. Michel Foucault's insights into power and specifically his views on biopolitics, governance, and discipline help to scrutinize identity, agency, and control in the shifting landscapes of political control, technological evolutions, environmental challenges, and many more factors that are shaping the modern world.

The study focuses on how power, biocapitalism and commodification function in speculative fiction. The select novels for the study are *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. It considers how authority influences the role of identity, agency, and technology in shaping the world. The study engages with the commodification of life by portraying the instrumentalization and dehumanization of life in advance capitalistic worlds. Using Foucault's framework, the study looks at how power operates across different entities—humans, non-humans, and artificial beings. Power is ubiquitous and dispersed, and not just political and physical, but it branches out into knowledge, discipline, and surveillance. Literature not only helps in identifying power relations, but it also highlights the impending dangers of capitalism, corporate power, and environmental catastrophe. Both *Klara and*

the Sun and *Oryx and Crake* explicitly show the cost of scientific progress, advanced technology, and commodification of life in society by promoting to the fantasy of techno-utopias. Using the theories of posthumanism and biopolitics, the study explores the commodification of posthuman life shaped by biocapitalism and systemic power regimes.

Posthumanism calls for a fresh look at power structures that go beyond human-centered thinking. With rapid technological advancements, environmental challenges, and increasing political control shaping today's world, Michel Foucault's insights into power—especially his views on biopolitics, governance, and discipline—provide a useful way to examine identity, agency, and control in these shifting landscapes. The study not only recognizes the significant effect of power on technology and the commodification of life, but it also opens up the possibility of resistance and reclaiming agency.

Biocapitalism, Commodification and Power

Posthumanism challenges the longstanding perspective of the centrality of human beings. It highlights fluid subjectivities and non-human others, incorporating the shift of focus of humans at the center.

The post-apocalyptic worlds in *Klara and the Sun* and *Oryx and Crake* resonate the idea of 'human', as a commodified identity, shaped by institutions of power and technology. In-depth explorations of these novels unravel the power dynamics, biopolitics, resistance, and survival in speculative fiction. Foucault introduced the idea of disciplinary power in his *Discipline and Punish*. Power in a posthumanist spectrum that extends to digital surveillance, algorithmic governance, and the normalization of posthuman bodies. Technology and artificial intelligence exert power over people, regulating their behaviors and social systems. Foucault's idea of biopolitics is seen in his *The History of Sexuality* and *Society Must Be Defended*. According to Foucault, power is not a static or centralized force; it is dispersed and ubiquitous. Power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific discourse, and truth. Power is everywhere, such as in social norms and knowledge systems, and it influences and controls each other. Power is also productive; it creates discourses, knowledge, and social realities. Discourse is the production of knowledge through language and then by practice. Discourse shapes human thinking and manifests 'truth' or 'reality.'. Institutions such as medicine, law and enforcement, and educational institutions pave the way for it. Institutions and discourses optimize and control both individuals and society as a whole. The subtle control of human bodies at a biological level by governments is called biopolitics. With the assistance of sociocultural systems and surveillance, people have become docile bodies, ready to do whatever they instruct. They self-disciplined themselves with CCTV cameras and supervisions. Foucault used the idea of the panopticon from Jeremy Bentham as a metaphor for modern surveillance. Posthumanism takes humans out of the center; hence, biopolitics in posthuman scenarios navigates beyond species of humans.

Humans are obsessed with technology, and they ignore its consequences. The posthumanist view introduced by Rosi Braidotti and Nancy

Katharine Hayles, promotes the vision of interconnectedness while disregarding traditional hierarchies. Braidotti emphasized Spinoza's monistic universe, where there is no dualistic opposition. Similarly, Hayles concept of 'technogenesis' also comes into play in the posthuman realm.

In *Oryx and Crake*, the combination of corporate control of human life and genetic engineering has led the planet towards destruction. Crake, a scientist, justifies his actions of genetic engineering of humanoid herbivores called crakers in the name of progress. The novel explores and identifies how power manipulates human bodies through biotechnologies and corporate control. They control human lives by creating diseases and then curing them with medicines. Crake's creation of crakers is an exercise in biopower. The ecologically harmonious crakers are the representation of commodified life. Their efficiency and docility are commodified against the flawed human race. Crake's view of utopia ends with the extinction of the human civilization. He finds the innocent and peaceful crakers as the future of the world. He expressed his ideology with scientific experiments. He developed a virus capable of wiping out the entire civilization. Here, scientific authority and knowledge of power shape human beings. Crake embodies the ultimate entity, who has total power and control over humanity. Power is not exercised through force, but a subtle control through media, advertisement, and policies. The question of consent often arises in this novel, where common people have no agency over themselves. The world is divided into two strata: for those who have wealth and for those who do not have. The elite people have easy access to medicine and technology, whereas the poor suffer from disease and poverty. The constant surveillance and control are an integral part of this novel. The novel extends the idea of commodification of life to every species, such as pigoons (genetically modified pigs for organ transplants), wolvgos (wolf-dog hybrids designed to appear friendly but are highly aggressive), chickie nobs (headless, genetically modified chickens grown solely for meat). These are artificial species designed to satisfy the corporate greed. In *Oryx and Crake*, biotechnology and corporate greed devastated the city. The commercialization of medicines for both killing and surviving exploits humanity. Here crakers symbolise commodification are the product of biotechnological dystopia dominated by corporations.

In *Klara and the Sun*, Ishiguro underscores posthuman commodification through a whole new emotional scale. Artificial friends are androids to satisfy the emotional needs of the consumer. They become the symbol of love, care and loyalty. Some children are lifted or genetically engineered for academic activity. Josie is one of them. Despite being ill, she chooses Klara, an artificial friend, as her companion. The novel progresses with the selfless love of Klara towards Josie and the instability and complexity of human emotions of Josie as well. Even though artificial friends are designed for functionality and emotional labour, Klara would not mind sacrificing herself for the benefit of Josie. The advancement of artificial friends in markets makes the commodification of love, empathy and loyalty possible. Society is reduced to two strata by privileging the genetically engineered or "lifted" children for

their bright futures and giving a cold shoulder to the rest. Rick, a friend of Josie, becomes a victim of this social stratification. His education becomes compromised in the storm of biocapitalism. The emotional sense of Klara questions and challenges the human and machine boundaries. Klara is willing to sacrifice herself for the wellbeing of Josie. She does not hesitate to break the limits when it concerns Josie's health. In *Oryx and Crake*, biocapitalism exercise commodification through education and companionships. In this postapocalyptic society, everything has a price, including friendships. Klara possesses sharp observational qualities. When Josie's health weakens, her mother wants Klara to become Josie. Klara did everything to protect Josie and this mode of agency indicates the non-human subjectivity of artificial friends or androids.

In *The Posthuman*, Braidotti says, advanced capitalism is a spinning machine that actively produces differences for the sake of commodification. It is a multiplier of deterritorialized differences, which are packaged and marketed under the labels of 'new, dynamic and negotiable identities' and an endless choice of consumer goods. (p.58) and she adds that, In substance, advanced capitalism both invests and profits from the scientific and economic control and the commodification of all that lives. This context produces a paradoxical and rather opportunistic form of post-anthropocentrism on the part of market forces which happily trade on Life itself. (p. 59). According to her, commodification of life is the logic of capitalism. Hence in market economy, everyone is equal. Scientific control and commodification in advance capitalism reduce life into marketable products of utility.

Antihumanism is one of the paths that leads to posthuman ideology and power dynamics. The concept of eurocentrism and its affection to humanism is outrightly rejected in posthuman realms. She also argues in *The Posthuman*,

that power formations not only function at the material level but are also expressed in systems of theoretical and cultural representation, political and normative narratives and social modes of identification. These are neither coherent, nor rational and their makeshift nature is instrumental to their hegemonic force. The awareness of the instability and the lack of coherence of the narratives that compose the social structures and relations, far from resulting in a suspension of political and moral action, become the starting point to elaborate new forms of resistance suited to the polycentric and dynamic structure of contemporary power (Patton, 2000). This engenders a pragmatic form of micro-politics that reflects the complex and nomadic nature of contemporary social systems and of the subjects that inhabit them. If power is complex, scattered and productive, so must be our resistance to it. Once this deconstructive move is activated, both the standard notion of Man and his second sex, Woman, are challenged in terms of their internal complexities. (Braidotti 26)

She points out though the power structures are fragmented and

inconsistent, their instability determines their dominance. The incoherence in the power structures also opens up new forms of resistance and survival. This micropolitics challenges fixed identities, including the rigid distinction between men and women. She also elaborated Foucault's idea of discourse, the political currency that is attributed to certain meanings, or systems of meaning, in such a way to invest them with scientific legitimacy; there is nothing neutral or given about it. Thus, a critical, materialist link is established between scientific truth, discursive currency and power relations. This approach of discourse analysis primarily aims at dislodging the belief in the 'natural' foundations of socially coded and enforced 'differences' and of the systems of scientific validity, ethical values and representation which they support.

In both the novels, the power is manifested through science and corporate control. In *Oryx and Crake*, there is a deliberate attempt to replace the natural world with an artificial ecosystem. They genetically modified organisms to satisfy their greed and interests. Crake exerts artificial dominance by destroying human beings and creating a bleak world of crakers. This genetically engineered crakers replaces humanity. Similarly, commodification and genetic engineering are major themes in *Klara and the Sun*. This involves the commodification of intelligence and emotion. The post-apocalyptic society puts a price tag on everything, and, the value of life is determined by its productivity. Even though the novels are different in theme and treatment, they seek the same answer to reconfiguring human identity in technologically mediated biopolitical regimes. The subtle control of children's productivity, academics and future, and the regulated presence of artificial friends are the outcomes of the invisible power dynamics of society. Commodification and power dynamics are intrinsically connected to resistance. This involves the major challenge of resisting commodification of life and power structures, and reclaiming agency in posthuman realms.

Posthumanism emphasized decentring power structures and hierarchy, but it goes back to the new forms of power structures. Surveillance capitalism and digital systems are typical examples. They exert power in digital and physical spaces and shape human behaviour. This led people to lose agency and authority in decision making. People are struggling in the post-apocalyptic worlds of technological domination. In *Oryx and Crake*, Snowman's survival in the world populated by crakers is an example of resistance. Oryx's existence in two worlds of victim and supporter is her survival mechanism. Through survival and resistance, characters are toppling down the power structures. They redefine the popular ideology in order to exist, but the question is whether they succeeded in their task or not. *MadAddam* resistance group challenged corporate biotechnological control and finally succeeded in their task. The designed crackers also act as passive resistance, they intend to disapprove Crake's commands. In *Klara and the Sun*, Klara navigates her limitations as an android by exhibiting a range of emotions. Her faith in the healing ritual rather than in logic substantiates Klara's evolving cognition. Even though Klara's inbuilt system of programming provides love, care and emotional labour, but her involvement in rescuing Josie moves to an elevated stage.

The navigation of the commodification of life and power regimes in posthuman realms provides alternative pathways to reconfigure human identity. The study analyzes biopolitics, governmentality, exponential technological growth, and commodification of life. It highlights the disciplinary mechanism of genetic engineering to regulate and control human bodies, thereby propagating the dominant ideologies. Posthumanism helps in reconfiguring self by resisting commodification of life and power dynamics in the face of advanced technology and capitalism.

The fluid identity and interconnected subjectivity are not entirely controlled by power within the futuristic settings, but they are identifying their agency and thereby resisting and surviving the technological and corporate dominance. The study also underscores the regulatory bodies and disciplinary structures for shaping humans and non-human others. Speculative fiction condemns dominant power dynamics, commodification of life and regulatory structures and works like exposes the dangers of uncontrolled technological growth, mass extinction, capitalist biopower, and environmental degradation. The paper challenges human exceptionalism in imagining power and commodification in futuristic worlds of unprecedented technological growth and climate change. The study unveils the significant effect of the commodification of life and the power mechanism on society, and thereby resistance and agency. *Oryx and Crake* and *Klara and the Sun* challenge power dynamics and commodification, by elaborating new perspectives on autonomy and identity. Literature offers a transformative medium for imagining the future of human beings and power in a world not dominated by human beings.

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**MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH THE LENS OF CULTURAL
NARRATIVE: A PSYCHO- CULTURAL READING OF MATT HAIG'S
*REASONS TO STAY ALIVE***

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Abstract: The paper presents the view of psycho-cultural analysis of Matt Haig's Memoir, *Reasons to Stay Alive*. This study integrates psychological and cultural insights of how Haig experiences the struggle of mental health internally and how the cultural society shaped his personality externally. This study examines how society perceives the mental health issue of depression as weakness and selfishness, and the silence of the dominant culture when it comes to mental health, especially for men. Haig always pretended to be strong and normal because that is how society wants men to be. He is traumatized and connects his mental health with the modern way of living of overloaded technology, and Western capitalist society. Ultimately, this paper analyses how the memoir sheds light on how the culture and society constrain the behaviour and personality of an individual.

Keywords: Mental health, Depression, Anxiety, Psycho-culture, Modern Culture and Healing.

Cultural psychology refers to how one's identity and behaviour are embedded in cultural roots and society. Culture plays a major role in shaping one's personality. It explores the connectivity and interplay between cultural factors and psychological processes. The cultural values, norms and expectations shape the psychological process and vice versa. The internal imbalance and mental ill health affect the whole system of our body.

The theory of cultural psychology was proposed by Lev Vygotsky. His sociocultural theories poised how the cultural tools shape the human psyche. According to Vygotsky, the social interactions in a particular family or a society are generally transmitted to the next generations. The growth of children is structured by the social and cultural practices of the family or particular society. This clearly states that mind and culture are inseparable and mutually connected. In the book, *Thinking Through Cultures: Expeditions in Cultural Psychology* by Richard A. Shweder, he quotes that, "Cultural psychology is the study of how cultural traditions and social practices regulate, express and transform the human psyche" (Shweder 73).

The culture and society transform individuals. Thus, the identity of oneself is destroyed by society and it makes the individuals pretend their being. Societal perceptions and prejudices make it even worse. This creates depression and anxiety.

The book *Reasons to Stay Alive* by Matt Haig is a memoir that tells the story of his own life and his struggles with mental health issues. Matt Haig is one of the renowned writers among all contemporary writers. Most of his books

talk about mental health and the coping mechanism to overcome from his personal experience.

Events like camping and college presentation hyperventilated him and resulted in anxiety and depression. Matt Haig isolated himself when he underwent depression. Eventually, he learnt and practiced some coping mechanisms to overcome his mental illness. The first practice he tells the readers is that read a book which helps the person forget their own illness. The focus on book makes one imagine a superficial character who has the same illness or problem so that one will not feel that he or she is not alone. Book serves as a medium of escapism from unwanted feelings. According to Haig, the right book at the right time will act as a good medicine to overcome any mental health issues.

The second is that every major leader of the world has gone through the same situation. Mental illness has some benefits like improved empathy towards everything around them and also changes ones's perception of men and matters. The final mechanism, Haig tells is that recovering from the mental illness is not easy. He has used several methods to overcome it. Eating healthy food and getting a sufficient sleep play a vital role in the recovery process.

Matt Haig divides this book namely Falling, Landing, Rising, Living and Being. The major aspect that affected Haig is society and its norms. Haig wants to come out of all the issues and wants to spend his life with his loved ones but society does not allow him to overcome the struggles peacefully. He says, Men traditionally see mental illness as a sign of weakness and are reluctant to seek help (Haig, 49). According to this society, men are not supposed to cry or weep. If they do, they are considered to be weak. In this book, Haig says that when he weeps every time he feels better for a while. Haig states the fact that more number of men kill themselves than women. Because of the social traits, the ratio of depressed in the UK is 3:1, in the USA, it is 4:1 and in Greece, it is about 6:1. In most of the countries, the ratio of men is higher than women. They kill themselves, because of depression. He says that act of talking is a therapy. Where talk exists, so does hope (Haig, 50) with this quote, Haig tries to tell that speaking out about one's issues to a comfortable person is a therapy to heal the struggling person. The healing begins when a person feels free to talk and finds outlet to his or her suppressed and depressed feelings.

Through the lens of cultural psychology this paper explains how one's personality and behaviour are shaped by culture and society. This work of Haig acts as a guide to the depressed ones to find a new way of hope and happiness.

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UNCOVERING THE TRAUMA OF MISCARRIAGE AND MAPPING THE RECOVERY

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Abstract: Miscarriage - a jarring issue buried with a myriad untold emotions has become common, as one in ten women undergo miscarriages today, as studies show. Yet, there exists a thick cloud of stigma around miscarriages worldwide, even though there are some cutting-edge developments when it comes to women's health. And the space carved in literature for the sufferers is nearly invisible. This research will venture into highlighting the real trauma behind miscarriages by applying the lens of Health Humanities, which could be called the future of Medical Humanities. It will further explore, through the chosen memoirs, how the sufferers can recover from their loss by breaking their silence.

Keywords: Miscarriage, Trauma, Women's Health, Health Humanities, Medical Humanities, Silence, Stigma and Recovery.

Being one of the well-hidden health issues of women that puts lives at stake, miscarriage continues to be a highly taunting one since it goes beyond just physical health. Miscarriages have become very common, as about 30% of pregnancies end in miscarriage globally, the studies show. There exists a thick cloud of silence around miscarriages, even though there are some cutting-edge developments when it comes to women's health. The untold emotions and silent struggles behind each miscarriage are being bolted and buried just because the 'fetus' is less than 20 weeks old. But a miscarriage is more than just a malady since it has the power to kill a promise, a future and a dream.

This study uses the approach of health humanities as this field, unlike medical humanities, aids one to look beyond just the physician-patient relationship. This field, which opens up a wider scope, bringing in an expansive range of target audiences, can be considered the future of medical humanities. Klugman rightly puts it that health humanities focuses on health, which is broader than medicine. Beyond that, this field picks up major real-life problems, choosing to work towards social justice constantly. By facilitating the integration of literary texts into the human experiences of health, it renders a highly relevant lens for this study.

The two memoirs, *The Face of Miscarriage* by Soniah Kamal and *A Dream Deferred* by Marcie Rendon from the anthology *What God is Honored Here?*, edited by Shannon Gibney and Kao Kalia Yang, are the primary sources for this study. This anthology is a compilation of works directly from the hands of the native women and women of colour who are miscarriage and stillbirth veterans. The theories of Catherine Malabou and Judith Herman are employed for the study.

This study proves to be a need of the hour because miscarriage has

become nearly invisible. It is high time that this tabooed topic saw the surface breaking all the barriers, carving out a space for itself.

Miscarriage, cannot be treated like a mere physical ailment because it weighs in an inability of the sufferer or her organ in question, like the term suggests. Dr. Sabina Dosani in her blog post writes, “This medical terminology, especially the word ‘miscarriage’, jarred. Did it mean I was a faulty container? (Dosani)”.

It attacks the sufferer emotionally, mentally and psychologically. She gets attached to the ‘baby’ once it starts growing inside her womb. In her memoir, *The Face of Miscarriage* Sonia Kamal says, “but now, thanks to the early testing, women could get attached at conception even” (183), as she recalls why she could not call her ‘baby’, a ‘fetus’ anymore. Hence, a mother loses the ability to call what is growing inside her a ‘fetus’ as soon as she gets attached to it and it becomes her ‘baby’ or ‘child’, unmistakably.

So, at the stage of acknowledging the growth of a baby inside a mother’s womb, she gives birth to the hope, the future and the dream. When the seamless flow of life is ‘interrupted’ by miscarriage, it creates a ‘rupture’ or a violent explosion of the sufferer’s identity, overwriting her ‘self’, as Malabou explains it through her theory of plasticity. So, this experience proves to be traumatic. It ‘inflects’ the course of life. In *Dream Deferred*, Marcie Rendon expresses after her first miscarriage, “I had no framework of what was occurring, but I knew things were seriously bending out of reality’s shape” (189).

The sufferer is forever changed under the impact of such a traumatic event, and there is no denial of it. “According to science, it was an unviable fetus; according to my heart, it was my baby” (182), writes Kamal when her husband chooses to be in denial. There are studies proving that pregnancies can leave ‘lasting imprints’ on the female brain and they can be detected even after decades. This makes it impossible for a mother to stay in denial after a miscarriage, irrespective of the gestational age.

The emotional unavailability of the people around the sufferer worsens the situation, pushing to a state of perpetual numbness, loneliness and neglect. “Too many said, “It wasn’t a stillbirth. You weren’t full term. Stop being so sad!” No one, not even my husband, could quite understand why I was so gutted. Fetus, he kept telling me, unviable fetus” (182), says Kamal as she pours her heart out in her memoir. She expresses herself by saying, “Their words left me upset, alone, and angry at having conditions put on grief and attachment” (183). In *Dream Deferred*, Marcie Rendon narrates, “Nine blocks of early morning darkness after the loss of a child and a D&C. Again, numb with emotional shock. At the house I crawled into bed and stayed there for two or three days. No one other than my boyfriend, mentioned the baby I mourned for” (188).

One can see that even after the writer’s own denial and her decision to get on with her life “as if all were normal” (Rendon 189), the numbness returns and haunts her. This trauma of numbness sucks the colour and light out of her life. One can feel the grief engulfing the writer like a big gray blanket as she

writes,

Without warning, with no sense of impending doom, for me the room went dark. Where before the room had been filled with sunshine pouring in the windows, the entire room now turned gray. I looked at everyone sitting at the table. No one else seemed to notice. But for me, the room remained devoid of colour. Devoid of the sunshine I knew was shining outside the windows. (Rendon 189)

One can clearly state from the above lines, that the overwhelming trauma, or in Malabou's words a "radical metamorphosis" (*Ontology of the Accident* 17) of the narrative of self, created in the face of a future imagined being suddenly crushed and the gaping void, is trying to swallow the sufferer whole. She says that, such a sudden disruption in the space of selfhood, which is supposed to be linear and seamless, is like the "one that cuts the thread of life in two or more segments that no longer meet" (*Ontology of the Accident* 6).

The trauma behind miscarriages proves to be much more complex, profound and destructive in nature. The series of events differ from person to person but they all are equally cruel and debilitating. Kamal describing her traumatic experience of miscarriage says,

I wish the OB - GYN had mentioned the possibility. I wish she'd warned me that if I sat on the toilet seat, catching expelled blood clots in toilet tissue, I could very well deliver my baby's face into my hands...In those few moments, I'd accumulated decades of grief, and I felt old, forever divided between "before seeing his face" and "after seeing his face". (182-183)

She goes on to say that, "Fresh raw grief sliced me open" (183) when she has to decide what should be done with the remains of her dead baby. Rendon in her heart-wrenching memoir describes her experiences of miscarriage as, "I felt a pain in my lower right side. As the evening wore on, the pain became intense. The pain became excruciating. I couldn't bear anyone touching me. I felt like an animal caught in a trap, ready to attack even the rescuer who tries to free it" (190).

Wading through these memoirs of miscarriage, one can say that the experiences of miscarriage are less narrated and discussed, being revealed can attack the sufferer's identity by crawling into her psyche. Malabou describes miscarriage in her work *Ontology of the Accident* as 'destructive plasticity' which is "a vital hitch, a threatening detour that opens up another pathway, one that is unexpected, unpredictable, dark" (6).

The sufferers are blamed for their miscarriages, which in turn intensifies their suffering. In an era where women refuse to fit into society's mould, breaking barriers and glass ceilings, the complexities behind becoming a mother often go unnoticed. Even in today's world, the 'veterans' of miscarriage are being marginalised with disgust, scrutinized with a cruel lens and silenced with iron hands.

But one has to acknowledge that the experiences of miscarriages can

neither be silenced nor ignored, as they pose a great threat to women's health on the whole. Dr. Ann-Marie de Lang puts it this way in her TedX talk, "When we overlook women in research, it creates massive knowledge gaps and we end up jeopardising the health of half the world's population" (de Lang 6:33 - 6:44). So, it is high time that a safe space is created for the miscarriage survivors to heal and that brings them towards recovery from a chronic trauma suggested by Judith Herman.

Herman stresses on creating a safe and a sympathetic space around the sufferers who crave consolation and comfort. She believes in the influence of a good, open-hearted and kind community around the survivors, which can enable them to rebuild a positive view of the self. "Recovery can take place only within the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (94) says Herman, emphasizing the necessity of surrounding the survivors with their loved ones Kamal writes, "A chaplain held my hand and prayed with me. I told him I was a Muslim, but that prayers are prayers" (182), appreciating warm gesture from a stranger at such a crucial point of time. Rendon wades through her first miscarriage with the help of her boyfriend who was there holding her tight, "On his visits he would lie in bed with me and hold me, just hold me" (189). This is how safety is established around the survivors of miscarriage and it empowers the survivor to gain control of her life.

In Herman's model of recovery, 'remembrance and mourning' comes next. At this stage, it becomes crucial for a miscarriage survivor to detach themselves from the trauma in order to remember and mourn. The survivor should be given enough space and attention for her to 'name' and 'reconstruct' the story of her trauma by narrating every detail. Kamal can be seen evading through this stage in her own way. She calls all her kith and kin, and shares the story of her miscarriage. She declares beautifully that,

It was as if I was confessing and my confession had opened gates to a taboo subject. Family, friends, neighbours, strangers—everyone came out. Either they shared their story of their own miscarriage or else someone else's. It turned out that even my mother had miscarried before. (Kamal 182)

The remembrance and reconstruction come along with 'mourning' at this stage. This shakes the survivor awake from their denial, helping them face the issue. One can see how a survivor can prepare herself for this stage in the memoir of Rendon. She says for the first and last time after her third miscarriage,

I was ready for the grief. I told myself I would grieve as long as I needed to reach full acceptance that my days as a creator of children were over... That I would grieve the loss of babies, the loss of life, the loss of hope, the loss of dreams, the loss of family. I would grieve until I knew what other plan the Creator had for me. I would grieve fully, completely so that as a woman I could continue to create. (Rendon 191)

This powerful confession of Rendon shows not only the mourning of a mother who had lost a child but also opens up a remarkable agency for women

to know that they can be creators even if the circumstances say that they cannot have babies anymore. This can be interpreted as recovery from miscarriage is possible when a mother, with or without babies, knows that she can rise above the limitations and she can still be a creator.

The third and final stage of recovery, according to Herman's *Trauma and Recovery*, is "reconnection with ordinary life" (110). This is where the survivor would be exposed to the world around her. She presents herself as a new being. Each survivor has their own way of wading through this stage. Kamal in her memoir, reaches this stage as she puts herself together and attends the funeral of her dead 'baby'. She comes to the culmination point of the process of healing and she writes, "We sat for a while. I recited a prayer for my baby. I recited a prayer for all the babies" (186). And Rendon ends her memoir with this note: "And myself? I became a full-time writer. Pouring my creative energy into stories, poems, plays, and novels" (191). This downright shows that she, indeed, became a creator.

There is a possibility of recovering from the chronic trauma of miscarriage though it has the power to put a person's identity upside down and the narratives of the mothers who resurrects from the ashes of miscarriage goes well with that of the story of 'creative motherhood' from *The Baby on the Fire Escape*,

It's the story of a central figure who goes on a journey of self-discovery. Someone who follows a trail of breadcrumbs (and anecdotes, and incoherent moments). Someone who descends into the underworld and comes back. A protagonist who got lost in the forest and finds her way. (Philips 31)

Hence, the silenced narratives of the miscarriage veterans are beautiful and resilient stories of self-discovery with greater potential and purpose when they are voiced out.

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TRADITION AND TRANSITION: A STUDY OF IDENTITY IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S *KEHINDE*

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Abstract: Post-colonial writings examine the concepts of disruption and acceptance of different cultural beliefs. This dispute leads to the dissociation of individual identity and their norms. This paper explores the novel *Kehinde* by Buchi Emecheta, in which the characters Albert and Kehinde reside in a post-colonial society among the Whites in London. Albert firmly hopes to return to his native to reclaim his identity as a patriarchal Igbo man, rooted in its values. On the contrary, his wife Kehinde feels independent and happy in embracing her identity as a working-class woman. Disruption occurs when Albert wishes Kehinde to return to Igbo society to abide by the rules of Igbo women. Emecheta portrays Kehinde as a free-spirited woman who considers her life and happiness over the oppressive cultural norms. The novel explores the struggles of identity, gender and cultural transition.

Keywords: Cultural Conflict, Transition, Identity, Igbo Society and Gender Roles.

Post-colonial studies deals with the aftermath of colonial intrusion in the colonised countries. After colonisation, various factors like white supremacy, racism and oppression persisted. The colonial countries reshaped power structures that helped them dominate the colonised countries on the whole. African people faced a greater impact of colonialism, both in the land of the coloniser and in their native countries. This leads to various contradictions between tradition and modernity, coloniser and colonised, as people adapt to assimilate both cultures based on their needs, resulting in hybridity, assimilation, and alienation. Colonisation had a profound impact on their lives, leaving them unable to entirely escape its influences, even if they wished to return to their cultural roots.

African people in the post-colonial era faced a crisis in understanding their identity. The people living in their native land tried to adopt western policies without losing their cultural roots. Although some individuals voiced the need for ethnicity, western ideologies continued to dominate through the intrusion of education, christianity and capitalism. Some Africans migrated to western countries in search of a better life, longed for their tradition and roots, while others accepted and assimilated into western ideologies, living among colonisers. This cultural shift further questioned the identity of African men and women. In pre-colonial Africa, men were said to be in power and had control over external affairs. Women remained domestic, taking care of families and children. Colonisation shifted this power. It took the authority of African men and suppressed African people on the whole.

Buchi Emecheta, in her novels, explores the themes of identity crisis, feminism and colonial power in the inner circle, through events occurring within the family. The impact of colonisation and cultural ideals was viewed from the perspective of women. Her novels have female protagonists who

navigate the tension between the ideologies of tradition and modernity. Emecheta's novel *Kehinde* portrays the journey of Albert and Kehinde grappling with their identity in a post-colonial world. Albert and Kehinde were living in London for more than eighteen years. Emecheta portrays them as first-generation Black immigrants who desired to improve their livelihood in London. Albert's family urges him to return to Nigeria since he has been separated long enough from his cultural roots.

Albert represents African men living in western countries, working along with other immigrants. But he never considers himself to be part of it. He dreams of returning to his homeland. Albert's behaviours represent the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the control, authority and dominance. It is a state of power exercised by males that gives them control over their surroundings. He wishes to return to Nigeria to be a man, a chief, earning respect and power. As the firstborn son of the family, his sisters view him the head of the family, which further reinforces his masculine tendency. Hegemonic masculinity shows how the masculine tendencies are supported by other factors in the culture that give power to men to dominate them.

Albert lacks a sense of power while living in London, which results in a form of emasculation. He never feels his identity to be whole and complete in London. Working as a store keeper for meagre wages, he is not greatly respected and feels like losing a sense of masculine pride. This sense of powerlessness is further kindled by the truth that his wife earns more than him. Yet, the influences of colonisation remain evident in Albert's actions as he feels that the money earned in London could give him power when returning to Nigeria. He encourages Kehinde to work and earn more money so that they can return with enough resources to reclaim a higher status in Nigeria.

Albert showcases his masculine tendencies by trying to exercise control over Kehinde's body. He pressures Kehinde to abort the child, which disrupts their plan to return to Nigeria. Albert expects Kehinde to follow his demands. He wants her to support him financially to claim his power and obey his demands as a wife. This contradicts African gender norms, as women were not allowed to work outside. Albert uses Kehinde as a tool in his pursuit of masculine identity. Though Kehinde is unwilling to lose her child, she agrees with Albert. He sees children a necessity part of fulfilling his masculine role.

Kehinde, an independent working woman, has other thoughts. She abides with her husband by aborting her child; her understanding of Igbo women's identity is not only centred on power. Kehinde's view of returning to Nigeria is not power-oriented. She hopes to enjoy a peaceful life, returning to Nigeria. She holds power and autonomy in London and returning to Nigeria would strip her of freedom and identity of a self-sufficient working-class woman. Albert takes pride in male identity shaped by cultural expectations. On the other side, Kehinde's understanding of her identity is of personal growth.

Kehinde has lived in London for many years away from the cultural practices of her country. Her earlier life in Nigeria offers no power. In London, she feels independent and equal to Albert. Unlike Albert, Kehinde dreams of a contented life after moving to Nigeria. She hopes for a better retirement life in

Nigeria along with her children. Her children Joshua and Bimpe hope to return to the Nigerian Ibuza village to reunite and live with their relatives. Kehinde feels a lack of affection from her children, as they respected Albert more than her. After the departure of her children and husband, Kehinde longs for a reunion with them. Kehinde thoroughly supports her husband and children by earning money. Kehinde supports her family for more than eighteen years, and the sudden departure of her husband and children leaves her hopeless. She longs to be reunited with her children and even quit her well-paying job to return to them. Emotionally bonded to her family, Kehinde feels aghast when she discovers the betrayal of Albert, who marries another woman.

Her bond with her family is shattered when she learns about Albert's new wife, Rike. Kehinde starts to feel alienated and humiliated by the Igbo values in her country. She experiences a loss of identity and a sense of powerlessness. She is identified as the senior wife, and Albert's sisters expected her to adapt to this change. Even her children and her sister urge her to conform to the ways of Nigeria. She has limited interaction with her husband and is forbidden to call him by name. She thinks of her life in England and resents Albert for breaking his marriage vows. Though the traditional Igbo society allows their men to have many wives, the western society where they live forbids it. As Basden claims, "Polygamy is favoured and fostered equally by men and women, in some respects, the latter are the chief supporters of the system.... The ambition of every Ibo man is to become a polygamist. (97) Kehinde is shocked by this sudden change in Albert.

Kehinde falls into a state of despair as everyone around her, except herself, accepts the system of polygamy. Her personal space and her house are invaded and raided by another woman. Her financial dependence on Albert further fuels her resentment as she has to kneel and bow to receive money from her husband. Even though she lives with Albert and her family members, she feels alienated. Her dream of a peaceful life in Nigeria got shattered. She feels the dominance of males and how they are highly respected in Ibuza. Her expectation of being respected as a 'been to', a term used for people who lived in the coloniser's country, turns hopeless and disillusioned. Kehinde longs to return to London after such a turn of events.

Kehinde's return to London without informing her husband marks the powerful act of breaking the cultural fetters that tried to control her. In a way, she escapes from her husband in his absence, as Albert will not allow Kehinde to leave him. She decides not to sell the house and begins to feel a sense of belonging in a foreign land. Kehinde reestablishes her identity once again from the ground and gets a degree. She takes on meagre and modest jobs and supports her children by sending money to them. Kehinde no longer wishes to return to Nigeria to be controlled by Albert. She understands herself and her stance in a foreign country. She gains independence by being a self-sufficient working-class woman.

Albert and Kehinde make distinct life decisions. Kehinde does not confront Albert for his betrayal, and Albert does not force her to return to Nigeria. Both are influenced by traditional values as well as colonial ideals. As

individuals, they choose to follow their paths and faced setbacks along the way. Albert, who is highly respected for being a 'been to' soon lost his financial standing after losing his job. Albert is indeed respected as a head of the family but he starts to depend on his new wife for his financial needs. The subtle emasculation of masculinity resurfaces once again, though it is not very prominent.

Kehinde's new job as a maid in a hotel reflects the condition of black women in England. She cannot regain her previous financial stability, yet she finds solace in living among an egalitarian society. She is no longer bothered by the traditional values that suppressed her. She adapts to her new role in society. The house she and Albert own in England becomes a symbol of power. Her son, Joshua, tries to hold authority over the house in England. Albert instils the values of Igbo and male supremacy in Joshua. He makes his son understand the importance of being the first son and man of the house. Albert encourages Joshua to claim ownership over the house as he believes Kehinde will give up the house for his son, following Igbo rules. Albert has a capitalist view of earning money in England. Kehinde is protected by the colonial laws and is seen as an individual owning property. Joshua is not allowed to have a legal claim on the house.

Kehinde's transition is evident in the novel. She no longer repeats the mistakes of blindly following certain Igbo principles that subjugates her identity to be trampled by the men in her society. As Kehinde affirms to Joshua, "Claiming my rights doesn't make me less of a mother, not less of a woman. If anything, it makes me more human" (Emecheta 141). There is a shift of authority, when the children who follows Albert to live in Ibuza village, desires to return to Kehinde in England to earn money and improve their economic opportunities. The struggle over the house between Albert and Kehinde shows the tension between tradition and colonial ideals. Emecheta analyses the complex negotiations faced by individuals living in the post-colonial era. This tension suggests that the characters reformed and transformed at the end, following their principles.

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**A PSYCHOANALYTIC READING OF MELISSA PAYNE'S
*THE SECRETS OF LOST STONES***

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Abstract: Melissa Payne's *The Secrets of Lost Stones* is a psychological narrative that delves into the complexities of grief, guilt, trauma and healing, portrayed through the life of the protagonist. Payne's exploration of overwhelming loss mirrors deep psychoanalytic concepts. Through the protagonist's journey of reconciling her past, this paper analyzes how unconscious guilt, repression, defense mechanisms and forgiveness are manifested in the narrative. By applying Freud's psychoanalytic theory, this paper examines the subconscious forces in trauma and how the supernatural elements guide toward catharsis and healing. This paper explores how Payne uses psychoanalytic concepts to structure the protagonist's journey from initial repression to eventual catharsis.

Keywords: Psychoanalysis, Defense Mechanism, Guilt, Repression and Catharsis.

Trauma is one of the devastating experiences in human life. When it is coupled with the loss of a loved one, its emotional weight intensifies, often resulting in deep psychological distress. The individuals who are undergoing trauma may not exhibit visible signs of their suffering. They appear composed, yet internally, they are battling with overwhelming emotional fragmentation. The trauma of loss when combined with feelings of guilt, whether rational or irrational, amplifies the pain, creating interconnected elements of sorrow and self-blame. Despite such immense psychological turmoil, resilience emerges as a crucial force. It serves an inner reservoir of strength that enables individuals to gradually confront, process, and ultimately transcend their suffering.

The novel, *The Secrets of Lost Stones*, explores the psychoanalytic dimensions of Jess, a 32-year-old woman torn between the emotional devastation of losing her son and the unresolved conflict with her past. Her life is torn apart not just by grief, but by the invisible wounds of her past that she has never fully healed. "In her experience, there were no days off, no holidays, no sick leave, and definitely no celebrating a barrel falling through the ice when she could be working" (Payne 9). Jess' heart is filled with guilt, pain and trauma silently grows like shadows in the dark. Payne uses Jess' breakdown and emotional chaos using Sigmund Freud's theories concept of unconsciousness.

Jess' experience reflects the human tendency to repress painful emotions and the inevitable consequences of doing so, echoing Freud's assertion that "the ego is not master in its own house" (Freud 17). As Jess tries to move forward, strange and supernatural events begin to unfold, revealing how trauma that is pushed down will always find a way to rise, sometimes in haunting and unexplainable ways. Through Jess, Payne shows how the mind can be a prison when grief is hidden, and how pain always finds a way to return if not faced

head-on.

The fiction sheds light on Jess's unconscious guilt, a dominant psychological theme that deeply shapes her character and actions throughout the novel. Jess is driven by a feeling of overwhelming guilt, which stems from her belief that she could have prevented her son's death. "It was nothing but her grief that made her see those things. Nothing but her guilt that on that night her son was alone and she couldn't help him" (Payne 152). She strongly believes that her son, Chance would still be alive if only she had been there that night. This becomes a heavy burden in her mind and soul. Though Jess does not talk about it, the guilt hides deep inside her subconscious, secretly controlling how she thinks, feels and behaves.

Freud explains, unconscious guilt is "an emotion that lies hidden in the subconscious but influences behaviors and thoughts, even when the individual is unaware of its origin" (Freud 44). Jess' pain is not only emotional but becomes physical, visible in her repeated suicide attempts and complete withdrawal from others. She punishes herself believing that she deserves to suffer. The writer uses Jess' inner breakdown to show how dangerous and powerful guilt is when left unresolved. Jess is emotionally frozen, unable to heal or move on. Her story becomes a vivid example of Freud's theory that

hidden guilt does not disappear, it grows stronger and more destructive. Payne's portrayal of Jess perfectly captures how repressed guilt can trap a person in endless suffering and lead them down a path of emotional destruction.

The novel emphasizes the psychological state of Jess through the role of repression. Repression, according to Freud, is a defense mechanism that pushes painful memories out of conscious awareness to avoid distress (Freud 147).

Jess unconsciously represses the trauma of Chance's death, which leads her to avoid confronting her grief directly. Instead, she becomes consumed by guilt and convinced of her own responsibility. Her emotional numbness and detachment reflect Freud's assertion that repression stalls emotional processing and healing (Freud 52). Jess' retreat to Pine Lake serves as a metaphor for her efforts to escape confronting her trauma. It is only through the appearance of Chance's spirit that she is forced to face her suppressed emotions, signaling the beginning of emotional journey towards healing.

The narrative also highlights Jess' use of defense mechanisms like denial and displacement, which Freud identifies as strategies the psyche employs to protect from overwhelming emotions. Her denial manifests in her refusal to acknowledge the broader circumstances of Chance's death, focusing solely on her absence. This narrow perspective prevents her from accepting other contributing factors, such as Ben's role. Furthermore, by blaming herself rather than confronting external truths, Jess engages in displacement. Freud notes that displacement shifts emotional energy from its true source to a safer substitute (Freud 184). Jess' displacement of blame onto herself delays healing, locking in a cycle of self-punishment.

The sequence of events draws attention to Jess's suicidal tendencies, which align with Freud's concept of the death drive or Thanatos. This theory posits that individuals possess an unconscious drive toward self-destruction, a

desire to return to an inorganic state (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle* 38). Jess's repeated suicide attempts reflect this drive, propelled by unresolved guilt and emotional exhaustion. Jess's eventual decision to forgive Ben, urged by Chance's ghost, marks her break from this destructive pattern. This moment illustrates Freud's belief that confronting repressed emotions disrupt the death drive and lead to psychological reintegration.

Payne showcases Jess's involvement in repetition compulsion, a Freudian concept, describing the unconscious urge to repeat traumatic events in an attempt to master them in the novel. Jess mentally replays the night of Chance's death, obsessively reliving the details. This reflects Freud's observation that trauma often leads to cyclical behavior as the individual unconsciously seeks resolution (*The Ego and the Id* 73). Jess's relationship with Star, a girl burdened by her own trauma, helps to recognize her own cyclical patterns. "Jess wanted to comfort her; she felt it in the way her arms tingled from an instinct to wrap the girl in a hug" (*Secrets* 161). Through helping Star, Jess begins to face her grief and break the cycle of repetition, illustrating the healing power of empathy and emotional connection.

The fiction imbues Chance and Star with symbolic meaning, reflecting Jess's psychological state and the stages of her healing process. Chance, whose name itself suggests redemption and possibility, symbolizes Jess's lost opportunity for emotional closure. His ghost becomes a personification of Jess's unresolved guilt, mirroring Freud's concept of the "uncanny," where the familiar returns in an unsettling form (Freud 124). Chance returns as another worldly being "Red sweatshirt, dark jeans. From his size he looked to be about seven or eight" (*Secrets* 6). In contrast, Star represents renewal and hope. Her presence initiates a maternal response in Jess, allowing her to re-engage with the nurturing part of herself that had been suppressed. Star's arrival mirrors Lacan's "mirror stage," in which an individual forms identity through recognizing the self in another. By bonding with Star, Jess pieces together her fragmented identity and moves closer to emotional wholeness.

The plot emphasizes the profound psychological journey that Jess undergoes in her quest for emotional recovery. Through the lens of psychoanalytic theory, *The Secrets of Lost Stones* highlights the intricate relationship between the unconscious mind and the healing process. Jess's path from repression and self-blame to forgiveness and catharsis exemplifies Freud's understanding of emotional resolution. As Freud writes, "No mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his fingertips" (55). Jess's healing begins when her silence ends. By confronting repressed emotions and accepting the truth of her son's death, Jess breaks free from the cycle of guilt and embraces the possibility of healing. Payne's novel ultimately suggests that emotional recovery is not only possible, but transformative when individuals confront their inner selves and allow the unconscious to be acknowledged.

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SILENT STRUGGLES: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *AMERICANAH*

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Abstract: The paper explores human rights violations in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Americanah* through the lens of postcolonial theory, particularly through Homi K. Bhabha's concepts of hybridity, mimicry, and the third space. The novel opens a window into the harsh realities encountered by individuals who are denied basic human dignity. This paper sheds light on different kinds of human rights violations and racial discrimination faced by immigrants. By following the journey of Ifemelu and other characters, Adichie depicts how race, class, and gender significantly influence people's access to rights and freedom. Adichie's narrative becomes a powerful medium for exposing the shadows of colonialism in contemporary global experiences.

Keywords: Human Rights, Race, Violation, Freedom and Colonialism.

Americanah is a novel by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, published in 2013. The novel explores the themes of race, identity, migration and the lingering effects of colonialism in Nigeria. Through her writing, Adichie has been frequently exploring the intersections of class, culture, gender, post-imperialism, power, race and religion. Struggles are one of the predominant themes that are evident in African literature, and her works are following the tradition of examining struggles in families, communities, and relationships. Her explorations have been extending beyond the political strife and the fight for their rights. Her work specifically offers deep insights into what it is to be like a human. Many of her writings are dealt with how her characters are reconciled with traumas in life and how have they been moving from silenced and voiceless to self-empowered and voicing out to tell their own stories.

This novel is about a young Nigerian woman, Ifemelu, who immigrates to the US, where she confronts racism and the complexities of racial identity for the first time in her life. Her experiences, including her blog posts which analyse American race relations, highlight the systemic nature of racism and the impact of racial constructs on individuals. This novel also explores how race interfere with other aspects of identity, such as class and gender, and the way these intersections shape the characters' experiences.

Human rights are a fundamental right and every person is entitled to have their rights regardless of their background or circumstance. These rights include the freedom of opinion and speech, the right to equality, the right to liberty, and the right to life. Human rights violation occurs when any of these basic rights are denied, ignored, or compromised. This paper examines the novel, *Americanah's* human rights violations and the attempts to overcome them. Through the encounter of the characters, Adichie criticises racial

hierarchies, gendered oppression, and cultural erasure, revealing how institutionalised discrimination denies individuals their fundamental rights to dignity, equality, and self-expression.

In the novel, *Americanah*, it is apparent that racial discrimination is the primary cause of human rights violations. They are made to feel self-conscious about their accent, hair colour, and hairstyle. Obinze, who immigrated to the UK, faced challenges living there. He had to take up menial jobs like cleaning toilets and was even falsely accused of fraud. His pride crumbled when he was forced to depend upon a white woman for marriage papers. Similarly, despite passing her medical exams in both countries Nigeria and America, Auntie Uju is still seen by some white people as less qualified, just because of her skin colour. They are turned down for a job, denied opportunities, even though they meet all of the requirements. "The physical appearance of the Africans, especially their skin colour and hair texture, was interpreted by most beneficiaries of slavery as a statement of the inferiority, both moral and intellectual, of black slaves." (Pardiñas, 11-12)

The most important event was when Auntie Uju's son was denied sunscreen due to his skin tone. His group leader indicated he did not need it, but it was handed to everyone else. "My group leader, Haley? She gave sunscreen to everyone, but she would not give me any. She said I did not need it" (Adichie 183). Despite his attempts to laugh it off, this incident significantly affects his mental health. His suicide attempt shows the emotional turmoil among black youths who are trying to navigate systematic marginalisation. Ifemelu looked for work, but she found it challenging. She was turned down due to her race. Adichie's characters depict how racism is not only systematic but deeply personal. Racism is like a force that dictates where they live and how they speak. Black bodies become battlegrounds with no dignity. "Racism should never have happened, and so you do not get a cookie for reducing it" (Adichie 305).

Homi K. Bhabha discusses third space, hybridity, and mimicry in his book *Location of Culture* (2013). The term "hybridity" describes the way colonised people frequently develop new cultural forms that combine aspects of both indigenous and colonising cultures. In hybridity, colonial subjects live in a transitional state where they must choose between their indigenous identity and the coloniser's-imposed culture. Ifemelu has struggled continuously to be herself while blending into the culture that has been forced upon her.

Bhabha's idea of the third space also connects to hybridity, where colonial subjectivities of cultural negotiation and transformation are contested and redefined. Third space is a conflicted identity that is neither fully assimilated nor entirely rooted in tradition. Auntie Uju once answered her phone and her name was pronounced differently. Moreover, she tells Ifemelu this is how people call her. She is trying to fit into society. As she clears her medical exam, she immediately wants to remove her braids and relax her hair for interviews, as it does not fit into the Americans' professionalism. This relation of the relaxed hair linking with professionalism has explained by Nollwe Rooks in "Hair Raising: Beauty, Culture, and African American Women" states: "Its

style could lead to acceptance or rejection from certain groups and social classes, and its styling could provide the possibility of a career” (Rooks 5-6). Aunt Uju has learned to “subdue” her natural hair to be considered respectful and professional as an American doctor. Aunt Uju’s son wants to be treated as a normal person, but the classmates discriminate him because of his race.

Ifemelu thinks that dark black women are invisible in American culture except as a mammy or sassy friend, but they are hopeful for the change because of Michelle Obama. Black women, particularly dark-skinned, are forced to feel inferior because of the beauty standards of Americans; thus, loving themselves is also a powerful act of resistance against racism. They are compelled to feel inferior due to their colour.

“They want Obama to win because maybe finally somebody will cast a beautiful chocolate babe in a big-budget rom-com that opens in theatres all over the country, not just three arty theatres in New York City. You see, in American pop culture, beautiful, dark women are invisible. In movies, dark black women often get to be the fat, nice, mammy or the strong, sassy, sometimes scary sidekick standing by supportively. They get to dish out wisdom and attitude while the white woman finds love. However, they never get to be the hot woman, beautiful and desired and all. So dark black women hope Obama will change that.” (Adichie 214)

Bhabha examines mimicry, where colonised peoples often adopt the cultural practices, language, and behaviours of the colonisers. The colonised subject’s imitation of the coloniser reveals the psychological damage of systemic oppression. Black women are expected to straighten and style their hair the way white women style their hair, according to American beauty and professionalism standards. Hair is a part of who they are. However, they do this cultural practice to be accepted. This makes them lose their identity. Wealthy parents send their children to British or French schools where they face inequality. This mindset shows the lingering effects of colonialism.

Homi K. Bhabha considers hybridity, third space, and mimicry as an interplay between power and resistance. According to Bhabha, hybridity challenges imperialism’s fundamental presumptions about cultural purity and superiority and upends fixed cultural identities, making it a form of resistance to colonial rule. “This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that Entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, 1994). According to Bhabha, the third space is not only a zone of mixing or merging cultures but an area of tension, ambiguity, and creativity, where new meanings are created. Mimicry can be seen as a form of compliance or adaptation. Bhabha argues that it is a form of resistance because it exposes the contradictions that is present in colonial authority. “These in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation in the act of defining the idea of society itself” (Bhabha 01). Mimicry will never be a perfect imitation.

Instead, it will always carry a sense of difference, or a slight deviation, which will undermine the authority of the coloniser. As the article, “The struggle to pretend and belong: *Americanah*’s Case” states that:

“Identity struggle is represented in the novel by means of different battles and circumstances the different characters have to face. Some battles are related to ideas and assumptions and others are related to something that might seem -for the exterior eye- simple or superficial as someone's appearance. For example, the hair is a topic of discussion in different instances of the novel, marking the relevance it has in black people’s lives and describing how it is connected to racism.”

In *Americanah*, Ifemelu, Obinze, Obinze’s mother, and Dike resist societal pressures to conform to eurocentric ideals, redefining their sense of self despite systemic oppression. Ifemelu’s struggle with her hair, from chemically straightening to embracing her natural curls, becomes a symbol of journey to self-acceptance and embracing her authentic self.

Obinze’s mother, who the university silenced due to her activism, refuses to compromise her principles and embodies resistance against institutional sexism. Auntie Uju, despite advising Ifemelu to straighten her hair, later abandons such performative conformity after experiencing personal and professional disillusionment. Obinze, who got humiliated in London, returns to Nigeria and builds a real estate empire, thereby becoming rich. He never internalises inferiority. Dike, after his suicide attempt, channels his pain into writing and tries to get control over his life. These characters navigate oppressive structures, though there were moments of defiance, they choose self-definition over external validation. Their struggles highlight the constant negotiation of identity in a world that demands erasure, illustrating that redefining the self is an act of resistance against dehumanising norms.

Ultimately, *Americanah* challenges the readers to stand up to the lingering legacies of colonialism and racism while celebrating the resilience of those who refuse to be silenced. The novel’s characters embody the transformative power of self-definition, proving that resistance is not only about survival but about reclaiming one’s humanity in a world determined to deny it.

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NAVIGATING THE GENDERED PANOPTIC GAZE IN CYBERPUNK NARRATIVES

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Abstract: The matrix of power in a cybernetic Techno-society exerts the pressure of perpetual surveillance on its citizens. As intense monitoring is predominant in cyberpunk narratives, it is essential to address the implications of such surveillance on everyday life. Employing Jeremy Bentham's theory of the Panopticon, this paper is an attempt to address the implications of surveillance on societal expectations of gender roles. This paper highlights the gendered gaze and monitoring in the select short stories of William Gibson through qualitative research. Such an analysis would provide an understanding of the boundary where technology, human identity and gender converge.

Keywords: Panopticon, Cyberpunk, Surveillance Studies, Gender and Human Identity.

Cyberpunk fiction, which emerged in the 1980s, a new era of speculative science fiction, unfolds in the nexus where technology and human existence converge. Building on this exploration of technology and human relations, cyberpunk frequently scrutinises the intersection of surveillance and control over gender performance. In the virtual worlds of cyberpunk, human bodies are constantly under the threat of strict surveillance, regulation and exercise of power, which is fueled by the hierarchies of gender and power. The human body is reckoned as a hyper-mediated landscape and is required to cater to the commercial spectacle. Therefore, bodily enhancements like cybernetic implants aid the commoditisation of bodies within the tech-driven culture. This predicament intensifies as a certain patriarchal autonomy that enables panoptic surveillance of hyper-visualised women under the guise of technological progress. Despite extensive research on surveillance in cyberpunk, there persists a gap where the perpetuation of surveillance reinforces gendered systems in the tech-driven society. Therefore, the study necessitates an understanding of how cyberpunk narratives extend the Foucauldian 'Panopticon' through surveillance technologies. The study attempts to assess how women's bodies are modified and monitored through internalised surveillance and normalisation of gaze. Such an investigation would provide an understanding of how technology is misused to enable patriarchal control of the representation of bodies in digital environments.

Jeremy Bentham proposed 'Panopticon' as an architectural structure that facilitated constant surveillance of the inmates from the centre, thereby making the inmates internalise surveillance. It was originally intended as a penitentiary model based on the assumption that even when the inmates cannot see the guard, they normalise the gaze. The philosophical historian, Michel Foucault, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), adopted the concept of the Panopticon and viewed it as a metaphor for modern disciplinary society, where

the role of surveillance extended from penitentiary institutions to all sites of observation and knowledge accumulation.

The study focuses on *The Winter Market*, a novelette by the American-Canadian cyberpunk writer, William Gibson published in his anthology *Burning Chrome* (1986). The story set in Vancouver, follows the life of Lise, a young woman crippled by an anonymous congenital disease, who is reliant on an exoskeleton for her survival. It follows Lise's cybernetic enhancement led by Rubin Stark – “Gomi no sensei. Master of junk” (Gibson 164) who reworks with/recycles junk, and Casey, a film editor dealing with recordings of sensations and emotions. Panoptic surveillance in *The Winter Market* is enabled through the virtual cyberspace, where the protagonist Lise confronts the vulnerability created by the panoptic gaze that dominates and controls her life. Therefore, Lise is the focus of this study through whom the ideas of panoptic gaze and gender identity are revealed.

Lise emerges from the margins of the society as a woman with physical limitations and societal exclusion. She is introduced in the narrative by Casey as gomi -Japanese for garbage, and is physically and mentally crippled by the pain caused by an unnamed congenital disease. Pain serves as a powerful symbol of the struggles endured by Lise before she is transformed by Rubin. It is Rubin's tendency to alter washed-out garbage into full-functioning entities. Lise, enfeebled and disadvantaged, undergoes a cybernetic enhancement for survival.

Lise's exoskeleton becomes the symbol of her suffering, which limits her by facilitating impartial power structures. Approaching from a socio-economic perspective of the novelette, Paul Delany writes, “Things are offered, priced, bought, delivered ... it follows that even garbage, if properly “marketed,” can be turned into wealth” (179). This reinforces the idea that the characters of the novelette face this commoditisation of bodies to survive in a consumerist society. Passing references to symbols like “severed heads of hundreds of Barbie dolls” (Gibson 177) waiting for transformation by Rubin, reinforces the idea that Lise too, is one such doll – designed as per certain norms, lacking agency, and is ultimately toyed with. Her identity as a human being and a woman is at stake, when she is forced to conform to existing expectations.

Rubin aids the alchemical process of making Lise mobile with an exoskeleton, but this is followed by hyper-visualising her. Lise's body is remodelled to satiate the gendered gaze as “they brought in hairdressers and makeup artists, too, and wardrobe people and image builders and articulate little PR hamsters, and she endured it with something that might almost have been a smile” (Gibson 185). Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, addressing the vulnerable position held by ‘the watched’ in a surveillance system writes, “He is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication” (200). Lise, thus, navigates society like an object of information, a hyper-sexualised and hyper-visualised woman where Casey remarks –“like a model down a runway” (Gibson 169). The same technology

which serves the medium of surveillance in society paradoxically becomes the ultimate determinant of leaving Lise's body open to normalising surveillance and control.

Rubin Stark emerges a direct contrast to the situation Lise finds herself in. While she is immobile and disabled, awaiting a much-needed metamorphosis to not be considered gomi, Rubin Stark exercises impressive agency. He is an artist, who utilises, bends and blends materials and people to transform them. He is sanctioned with an inherent autonomy to alter the identities of things, and surprisingly, of people. Even though Lise and Rubin are both artists, Lise is seen an "object of knowledge over all the surface of which power is exercised" (Foucault 204), but Rubin, like Foucault declares in *Power/knowledge* (1980), "reaches into the very grain of individuals ... into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (39). Thus, there exists a stark difference in agency between Lise and Rubin, provided by the flawed hierarchy of power in the society.

Lise's journey to establish her true identity instead of accepting a constructed identity begins when she approaches Casey to showcase her talent in multimedia recordings, which will be released in Hollywood. Lise's only path to achieve autonomy is through her submission of the self, which is "locked up in her head the way her body was locked in that exoskeleton" (Gibson 182) to public surveillance. This adds to how the critic Pramod K. Nayar criticises *The Winter Market* by addressing the depiction of bodies as "as a vehicle for experiencing dreams edited into Hollywood thriller" (118). What Lise reveals part of her emotions and sensations which would be made into fragments of the movie, leaves Casey dumbfounded. But determined Lise devises plan to escape surveillance. Rubin highlights her genius, "she's sure as hell the first person you ever met who went and translated herself into a hardwired program" (Gibson 182). The recording of Lise's emotions and sensations, edited as a movie by Casey is bought by a Los Angeles entertainment corporation named Kings Sleep. Her work hits a cultural nerve and she attains stardom almost immediately. This is a result of her most intimate and intense selfhood open to public consumption; nevertheless, Lise escapes the burden of physical surveillance and projects her best self into the digital space to ascertain and reclaim her autonomy. This reinforces Foucault's idea of how surveillance is accepted as the norm.

The movie is Lise's rendition of her unconscious mind, home to her unknown emotions and sensations. When the Jungian aspect of unconsciousness is adapted to Lise, her 'personal unconscious', transcends into society's 'collective consciousness'. Therefore, this reinforces the Foucauldian idea of Lise being an object of information and observation. With Casey observing and catalysing her personal emotions, the process enlightens him with knowledge "accumulated from his observations of actions in a circular fashion, with knowledge and power reinforcing each other" (Mason 2).

While Casey gains power from his knowledge of Lise, it is her body and mind (the source of knowledge, therefore, the movie too) which is constantly monitored and commoditised. While Lise is the true bearer of

knowledge, it is ultimately Casey, who is seen the maker of knowledge. This proves how Casey is privileged, but Lise is a smothered voice from the margins of the tech-driven society.

Several aspects of Lise's life are overlooked in the narrative due to it being unravelled through Casey's perspective. Influenced by the normalisation of gaze, a certain obscurity lies beneath Casey's account of Lise, portraying her either seductive or passive. Casey is the ambiguous narrator who views Lise with confusion and admiration simultaneously; he finds her similar to a love interest, then is intimidated by her passivity. This reinforces how the 'male gaze' materializes through Casey. He views Lise as polar archetypes –either a seductress or indifferent, a by-product of hyper-sexualising women. Even from the narrative technique, it is evident that Casey views Lise with a stereotypical gaze endemic to a patriarchal society, where any form of deviation of behaviour is considered a fearful concept. This is evidenced by his feeling on encountering Lise, like when he says, "people who know exactly what they want have always frightened me, and Lise had known what she wanted for a long time, and wanted nothing else at all" (Gibson 173). Lise is constantly expected to adhere to the idealised female identity and when she refrains herself from doing so, she is criticised for being "out of character" (Gibson 188). Throughout the novelette, it is through Casey's gaze, the story of Lise unfolds, and not herself. Casey's rendition of Lise's life is his perspective from a panoptic point of observation inherently flawed by stereotypical expectations. The narrative itself allows very few instances where Lise expresses herself vocally, and it is mostly Casey's gendered point-of-view that dominates the story.

Considering the artistic expression of the self, Lise's character showcases a resemblance to the woman in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Oval Portrait*. Both narratives deal with artists frantically creating art by being indifferent to the suffering muse, which ultimately results in the demise of the muse.

The artist in *The Oval Portrait* exclaims,

"And when many weeks had passed, and but little remained to do, save one... tint upon the eye, the spirit of the lady again flickered ... And then ... the painter stood entranced before the work ... with a loud voice, 'This is indeed Life itself!' turned suddenly to regard his beloved:—She was dead!" (Poe 292).

Similar to this, is Casey's predicament in *The Winter Market*, "And seeing that, seeing her there, I knew a whole lot of things at once. That she really was dying..." (Gibson 199). Both women gain immortality -Poe's unnamed woman through timeless literary fame and Lise through her escapade into the virtual realm. The parallel between Casey and the artist in *The Oval Portrait* depicts a shared negligence and disregard towards the suffering and pain of their muses. After days of fervent work boosted by an artistic frenzy, Lise momentarily rises to a stature of cult figure, but eventually demises, a fate shared by the woman in Poe's tale.

While Poe's woman offers a passive acceptance of societal expectations by being obedient, Lise uses the technological means she can access to improve

her agency and assure her participation in society. With the same technology which limited her, Lise rejects a forced acceptance of suffering and enhances her existence by implants and achieves a place in the cyberspace. Lise is dead due to complications of health, but is simultaneously immortalised. Therefore, Lise is treated a Schrödinger's paradox that escapes the physical plane of surveillance, but is still immortal in the digital plane.

Gibson compares her escapade to that of St. Joan, strengthening the idea that she rose to stardom like St. Joan, and was eventually sacrificed like St. Joan.

... our hi-tech Saint Joan burning for union with that hardwired godhead in Hollywood, that nothing mattered to her except the hour of her departure. That she threw away that sad body with a cry of release, free of the bonds of polycarbon and hated flesh. Well, maybe, after all, she did. Maybe it was that way. I'm sure that's the way she expected it to be. (Gibson 200)

Similar to Saint Joan of Arc, Lise transcends gender roles, rises to stardom and achieves great fame. St. Joan was a symbol of independence and Lise attains material, physical and spatial independence.

Lise initially navigates the margins of the society, with very little autonomy, under the constant stress of institutionalised surveillance. Later, her memories, wishes, and experiences as a woman are bricolaged into a commodity (her movie) for public consumption. Her identity becomes a space of monitoring, alteration and consumption -all stages of her own journey to survival. Nevertheless, Lise found a loophole to resist such dehumanisation, leave behind the modified body, and transcends into the cyber realm, where she supposedly achieves immortality.

Lise's pathway to attaining agency and autonomy necessary for navigating the cyberspace was initially supported by the financial freedom she obtains when her filmmaker pays her for her contribution. Next, she attains spatial and physical freedom and sheds the exoskeleton, which cocooned and curtailed her transformative process. Ultimately, she claims agency in the cyberspace, where she can refrain from being an object on which power is exercised, and emerge an active participant in the discursive practices of the society. Her transformation from being a woman crippled physically and mentally into a woman who was "... past all that. That's what made her so strong. She was past it" (Gibson 189) ensured that.

The study of *The Winter Market* affirms that the panopticon not only functions a metaphor for surveillance systems in cyberpunk, but also demonstrates the gendered power imbalance that constantly tries to shape gender identities. This study further hints at the possibility of considering the power politics in *The Winter Market*, one maintains in a 'bio-capitalist' society, which profits by means of commoditising human experiences. Foucault too deliberates on this process of harnessing 'biopower' by modern nation states to control various aspects of life. In Lise's case, her human body was an accessory, a modifiable object, which added to her sense of alienation and loss of autonomy. More serious implications on her individuality and gender

performance materialised out of the tech-driven society's inherent nature to monitor the public. The extent of Gibson's world in *The Winter Market* being a purely bio-capitalist society is worth investigating. Ultimately, Gibson was able to provide a balanced view of Lise's situation, giving her enough autonomy to carve out a space for herself, where she can escape the constant panoptic gaze on her life.

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NEGOTIATING CULTURAL IDENTITY IN JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *INTERPRETER OF MALADIES*

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Abstract: Jhumpa Lahiri is an Indian American author recognised for her portrayal of the internal and external struggles of Indian immigrants and diasporic identity. This study examines how her short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* explores cultural displacement and the negotiation of identity among Indian immigrants. The characters in Lahiri's stories reveal how ordinary elements such as food, language, shelter, and interpersonal relationships carry cultural values that become complex sites of identity conflict. The immigrant figures are caught between the cultural expectations of their homeland and the realities of their adopted country. Using Homi Bhabha's concept of the "third space" and Stuart Hall's notion of cultural identity, this paper discusses how emotional dissonance and the fragmented sense of self result in an identity crisis.

Keywords: Immigrants, Displacement, Conflict, Third Space and Identity Crisis.

Jhumpa Lahiri is a well-known Indian-American author known for her portrayal of cultural identity, displacement and conflict among Indian immigrants. She was born to Bengali parents on 11 July 1967 in West Bengal. Lahiri grew up with a dual cultural identity that would be the result of her passionate writing about Indian immigrants. She has pursued her multiple degrees at Boston University. Lahiri's literary debut, *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999), is a short story collection which explores the lives of Indian immigrants and their struggles towards isolation, identity, cultural displacement and human connection. A central theme in Jhumpa Lahiri's writing is the complex negotiation of identity, belonging and cultural displacement, particularly with Indian-American immigrants. Her characters often live between two cultures – the tradition of their Indian heritage and the one they are residing with, which is the unfamiliar, often alienating culture of the west. This tension is exhibited in her personal choices and her relationships. Lahiri's protagonists frequently struggle with emotional disconnection from their families, everyday instances of miscommunication, cultural misunderstanding and the quiet burdens of diasporic life.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, there are nine stories which evolve the theme of cultural conflict and displacement among immigrants. The stories are "A Temporary Matter", "When Mister Pirzada Came to Dine", "The Interpreter of Maladies", "A Real Durwan", "Sexy", "Mrs Sen's", "The Blessed House", "The Treatment of Bibi Halder" and "The Third and Final Continent". Across nine stories, Lahiri portrays the internal and external conflicts of Indian immigrants and how their cultural identity is negotiated in each story, highlighting the emotional conflict to depict diasporic life. The people of India have certain beliefs, values and customs. It is passed down from generation to generation and shapes people's act of living. By adopting other cultures, one

has to face certain conflicts emotionally. One is very strong in one's culture; in order to accept other cultures, one may emotionally break out. People will alienate from others, thinking that they are odd. It encloses both material and non-material aspects, such as food, clothing, language and religion. When moved to another country, one experiences cultural displacement. It often leads to emotional distress and identity confusion.

In *Interpreter of Maladies*, Jhumpa Lahiri presents her characters with questions of identity, home or belonging. Each story illustrates individual and collective struggles of Indian immigrants. Lahiri's second story, "Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine", explores how cultural identity is shaped, confused and negotiated. The story is set in 1971 during the Bangladesh Liberation War. The story follows an Indian-American family who lives in the United States. Mr Pirzada, a Pakistani scholar from Dacca, comes to the United States for his research, and he frequently visits Lilia's family for dinner. Both are culturally similar, so they share more about food, language and customs; political borders separate their true identities. "We all grew up on the same soil, in the same schools. Now I am separated by history and war" (Lahiri 26). Being a second-generation immigrant, Lilia gets confused when her father told her "Mr Pirzada is no longer considered Indian" (Lahiri 25). Lilia's parents come to know about the war of Pakistan and India's violent independence through the visit of Mr Pirzada. They feel very proud that her daughter is born in America - "In her estimation, I knew, I was assured a safe life, an easy life, fine education, every opportunity. I would never have to eat rationed food, or obey curfews, or watch riots from my roof-top, or hide neighbours in water tanks to prevent them being shot, as she and my father had" (Lahiri 26, 27). The pain of displacement is prevailing with Pirzada, who feels far from his family during war. Lilia, a second-generation immigrant, struggles to identify her place between Indian heritage and American life.

Mr. Kapasi, in *Interpreter of Maladies*, is an Indian tour guide and an interpreter for a doctor. He works as a cultural translator for an Indian-American family who is visiting India. The family, though they are ethnically Indian, are disconnected from Indian culture. Raised in America, their appearance, accent and behaviour are more like tourists than people returning to their ancestral land. Especially Mrs Das, who seems emotionally distant and uninterested in Indian customs. Here, Lahiri explores the complexities of cultural negotiation and their western counterparts.

All the other stories are about an Indian immigrant negotiating identity in western settings. "A Real Durwan" examines displacement and cultural identity within the borders of post-partition India. This story is set in Kolkata and follows Boori Ma, an elderly woman who serves as a durwan to an apartment. Boori Ma is not an immigrant; she is culturally displaced in her own country like a refugee from East Bengal, now Bangladesh, after the partition. She is a self-appointed durwan, and does not hold any social status. But she had a luxurious past - silk sarees, servants and grand homes - "I had a house, four stories tall. I had a gatekeeper, a cook, a driver, and a gardener" (Lahiri 72). Though her stories are real, it seems like they are exaggerated by others - "It

was difficult to tell whether Boori Ma's claims were fact or fiction" (Lahiri 71). She wants to reclaim her own cultural identity that has been lost due to displacement. "Believe me, don't believe me; my life is something you will never understand" (Lahiri 70) - this repeated phrase of Boori Ma shows that she still holds on to her past and wants to reclaim her own cultural identity.

Lahiri highlights the uncertainty of cultural memory in diasporic lives. In an apartment, the residents mock and blame her for a theft. When a theft occurs, the residents scapegoat her without proof, accusing her of inviting strangers. Here, partition is the major source for cultural displacement. Boori Ma is a victim of partition. Her homelessness and the loss of belongings lead to internal displacement and cultural fragmentation. Usually, Indian immigrants negotiate foreign culture, but, Boori Ma negotiates her own culture for leaving her disconnected.

Mrs Sen, an immigrant from India living in the United States, works as a babysitter for an American boy named Eliot. She follows the tradition of homeland; she cuts vegetables on the floor, writes a letter to her family, and listens to Indian music. She laments the absence of fresh fish. Eliot is under the care of Mrs Sen, neglected by his own parents. Her understanding of her inability to survive there and his negotiation of cultural identity. Her inability to drive, to socialise, or to embrace the American way of life shows how she is deeply affected by cultural displacement and her refusal to accept her immigrant culture.

The short story, "This Blessed House", explores how cultural identity is different for a couple from the same background and also shows how cultural identity causes problems in relationships. A young Indian-American couple, Sanjeev and Twinkle, has moved into a new house in the U.S. As they unpack the things, they find Christian objects left by the former owners. Twinkle is modern, confident and open-minded. She is very curious to collect those Christian statues. She is comfortable with the blending of two cultures. But Sanjeev is more serious and cultured, used to maintaining his Indian culture, and he also wants Twinkle to do the same. 'We're not Christian,' Sanjeev said. 'No, we're good little Hindus,' Twinkle replied, not turning from the mantel, 'but we're also good little Americans'" (Lahiri 145). This shows that she has no conflict in accepting different cultures. Lahiri explains that living in a new country creates cultural displacement. Some accept the blending of cultures whereas a few like Sanjeev negotiate foreign culture and stick to own.

Bibi in "The Treat of Bibi Halder" is a victim of the society. Lahiri shows how society holds on to cultural expectations. Bibi, a 29-year-old woman suffering from a mysterious illness, lives with her cousin and his wife. She is treated like an outsider by her cousin. Here, cultural identity is shaped by gender, health and social status. She negotiates her identity within her culture because society refuses to accept her. Her cousin and his wife locked her in a room, limiting her interactions with others.

"The Third and Final Continent" is the final short story, that handles cultural displacement with patience and respect rather than dramatic conflict. An unnamed Indian immigrant moves to London and finally to America. He

visits three continents and experiences three different cultures. In each place, he must adjust to its language, culture and society where he lives. In London, he shares an apartment with other immigrants. In America, he starts a new life with his wife, adopting its culture without leaving old culture. While he lives in Boston, he rents a room from Mrs Croft, a 103-year-old American woman who teaches him to be polite, hard-working and open-minded- “She was the first American I came to know” (Lahiri 181). She respects American values, and she treats everyone the same without cultural differences.

Using Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of third space and Stuart Hall’s cultural identity, one can understand how Lahiri’s characters negotiate their cultural identities in between home and foreign culture. They live in a hybrid culture, struggling to construct their new identities. Homi Bhabha’s third space theory argues that cultural identity is formed in-between spaces. According to him, the third space is a hybrid zone where two cultures merge and identity is continuously negotiated (Bhabha 38). People are negotiating, refining and sometimes resisting cultural norms. Stuart Hall’s concept of cultural identity shows that identity is not fixed; it varies through history, culture and experience. So, Lahiri’s characters are caught between the memory of their homeland and the displacement of culture in which they live at present.

According to the concept of third space, people from different cultures negotiate cultural identity and belonging. In the third space, Bhabha says, “the boundaries of authority...become the site of resistance and negotiation (Bhabha 38). Lilia from “When Pirzada Came to Dine” negotiates her identity in Bhabha’s third space, torn between her American culture and Indian cultural memory (Bhabha 37). She eats American food, but she is very curious to know Indian and Pakistani stories. Mrs Sen in “Mrs Sen’s” lives in America, but she follows Indian cultural practices, which shows her struggle in the space, unable to adapt to American culture, remaining culturally isolated. Sanjeev and Twinkle from “This Blessed House”, belongs to the different culture and their home is a third space where Indian tradition meets with American religion. They have different cultural notions, which create problem between them. Bibi in “The Treatment of Bibi Halder” is culturally displaced from her own culture. By opening a small shop and raising a child on her own, Bibi reconstructs her identity within a fragmented cultural space, resisting the norms imposed on her by society (Hall 227). She creates a new kind of third space by opening a new shop and becoming a single mother. Jhumpa Lahiri’s characters live in Bhabha’s third space, negotiating their identity between past and present, home culture and host culture.

According to Stuart Hall, cultural identity is not something we recover but something we produce through experience (Hall 227). It is understood in two ways: one is shared identity, which is a collective cultural background like language, religion and customs and the other one is constructed identity, which is not stable, formed through migration and its experience. Lahiri’s characters create a new identity by remembering their past and also adopting their present. The characters, like Lilia and Mrs. Sen, are deeply rooted in Indian culture but settled in U.S., forming their identity between their home culture and host

culture. Miranda in “Sexy” is not an Indian, but she tries to understand Indian culture through Dev. Twinkle in “This Blessed House” blends American and Indian tradition, creating a hybrid identity. Lahiri’s characters are not fixed in one identity but constantly evolving.

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A STUDY OF PSYCHOANALYTIC SYMBOLISM OF FIRE IN *A WOMAN BURNT BY IMAYAM*

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Abstract: Imayam's *A Woman Burnt* narrates a heartbreaking story of how caste, gender violence, and age-old traditions conspire against women in rural Tamil Nadu. This paper explores that fire is far more than a destructive blaze; it becomes a living symbol of fear and control. From the Freudian perspective of repression and the death drive, Revathi's immolation is viewed as a gloomy ritual that reflects the community's innermost fears rather than a singular act of cruelty. The fire protects a fragile notion of honour, strengthens patriarchal authority, and destroys anything that could bring disgrace to the family. The fire extends beyond the fireplace to guard people's hearts and thoughts. This study positions *A Woman Burnt* as a powerful literary critique of the unconscious involvement of culture in the burning of women, including physically, psychologically and symbolically.

Keywords: Violence, Purity, Psycho-Socio Control, Cultural Trauma and Fire.

A Woman Burnt is a poignant tale of Revathi, an engineering graduate who falls in love with Ravi, an auto driver. It is the translated version of Tamil novel, *Sellatha Panam* by Imayam. Though their social status and lifestyle are different, Revathi gets married to Ravi, opposing their parents. But she immolates herself in the end as she is no longer able to endure the verbal and physical attack of her husband, society's cruel judgement, hypocrisy and parents' lack of support. The paper attempts to analyse the novel using Sigmund Freud's concept of repression and death drive to explore the fact that the fire that Revathi uses to end her life is the manifestation of social and cultural violence. Fire is the means to put an end to women who resist the subjugation. It is not just an act of physical destruction, but a violent untold practice to silence the women who resist the restrictions of the conservative male dominated society.

Repression is one of the central mechanisms of Freud's Psychoanalytic theory. Sigmund Freud first introduced repression in *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900) and further developed it in *Repression* (1915). Repression is the process of pushing distressing or unacceptable thoughts and feelings into the unconscious mind. This mechanism serves as a protective function, allowing individuals to avoid the emotional turmoil associated with traumatic or distressing experiences. (*Understanding Repression as a Defense Mechanism | Relational Psych*)

Repression refers to the unconscious process, where the mind pushes away moments, memories, thoughts, or desire that are painful to the conscious self. In the novel, *A Woman Burnt*, repression is not only a singular act on an individual but a collective repression from society and her own family. Revathi's personal desire, freedom and autonomy are repressed by her own

family's social expectations. When the family comes to learn about the love between Revathi and Ravi, they verbally abuse her. Especially her mother, who believed that death is better for Revathi than marrying him. Her mother says, "A girl who makes her mother hang her head in shame, why can't she die?" (Imayam 16). Her father, Natesan is a headmaster. Though he is concerned about Revathi's future, he is more concerned about his reputation and social standing. "I am a Headmaster. If people realise that my daughter herself is acting like this, will they have any respect for me? If you yourself don't listen to me or respect what I say, why would the teachers who work with me, the students who study with me, listen to me or respect me?" (Imayam 8)

Even her sibling, Murugan sees her as filth and wishes her to die because she does not fulfill the societal expectation of marriage. He says, "This is just extremely disgusting. A disgust we will continue to feel even if she dies" (Imayam 34). The family members have degraded and not ready to respect her as a human being because their only concern is honour. The community represses open discussion of desire to preserve the illusion of honour. "If we have to live with honour, we should do it in front of society, print invitation cards, and conduct the damned obsequies in a wedding hall" (Imayam 34). Every family member of Revathi reminds her that marrying of her own choice is equal to killing her own self, "Then we can give up her as dead. One way or other this wretched one must leave the house" (Imayam 35). Unfortunately, the marriage is filled with physical and verbal abuse from her husband. She is unable to face her parents and cannot find a way to share her sufferings and suppresses everything. She has no place to escape.

"The essence of repression lies simply in turning something away and keeping it at a distance, from the conscious" (Freud *Standard Edition* 147). Thus, repression is a defense mechanism in which the ego (the conscious mind) protects itself against the distressing memory from the id (the reservoir of unconscious instincts). These repressions are not erased or destroyed, they are buried unconscious but continue to exert influence, often resurface in the form of dreams, slips of tongue, neurosis or symbolic actions. Revathi is a woman who yearns for freedom and desire for happiness remains unspoken. Her emotional detachment from her family before the marriage and dissatisfaction with her domestic life after the marriage are the signs of repressed desire of autonomy, desire and escape. Especially in her cultural setting, the rural places, where men take upper hand in women's life, these desires are condemned.

A woman must suppress desires to maintain honour and dignity in society. Here both society and her family, considered the superego, judge her constantly, demands obedience, equating her suffering and silence with virtue. Thus, her ego is caught in the middle trying to protect her from punishment for repressed desire. According to Freud, the repressed desire always returns but in symbolic or destructive form if severe. "As Freud famously said there is always a return of the repressed" (Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*). Thus, Revathi's immolation is considered a symbolic return of her repressed desire. Her anger erupts as flames. Her despair buried under submission emerges as flames. When the repression is severe and

unable to let out, it comes back in the forms of psychic implosion or symbolic explosion. In this case, it results in symbolic explosion, that helps to fulfill her final wish of death by attacking society and her family.

The concept of death drive or Thanatos was first introduced by Sigmund Freud in his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. He stated that human is inclined towards death and destruction as they revisit or relive their painful past or trauma. According to Freud, the death drive manifests in the psyche a tendency toward self-destruction, or more precisely the elimination of tension, which can also be turned outwards, whereby it becomes aggression. (“Oxford Reference - Answers With Authority”)

Revathi’s immolation is not a physical punishment; it is but an internal collapse. It shall be viewed through the lens of death drive. After her marriage, there is no space for external expression. Her voice, desire and sufferings are silenced since her marriage is filled with domestic abuse, frustrations and loneliness. All her pent-up feelings turn inward and drive towards her self-destruction. Even before the marriage when she failed to convince her parents, she resorts to self-destruction. It eventually led to her marriage. “When we said let us find a groom and set the date, she poured kerosene on herself” (Imayam 68). At first, Revathi uses it a mean to make her parents agree, but the abuse in marriage life pushes to burn herself. “If you continue like this, I will die” (Imayam 234). This statement is considered an indication to return to inorganic state. Though in her testimony, she states that the fire is an accident, based on her earlier attempts of pouring kerosene and releasing gas, indicates the presence of death drive that arises from years of compliance and emotional repression. Thus, what cannot be expressed outwardly by Revathi turns inward and erupts as fire.

Immolation is a culmination of deeply embedded psychic structure where death drive responds to unbearable repression with annihilation. Fire, like the sun, brings both positive and negative impact. Similarly, in the protagonist’s life, fire has become a symbol of purifying agent that purifies her soul and all unwanted choices at the cost of her own life. Through the psychoanalytic study, it is clear that fire is not a symbol but a language of fear and repression.

The fire that consumed Revathi is fueled by both conscious cruelty and unconscious cultural fears. Thus, fire becomes the return of the repressed, and also the culmination of slow psychic implosion. Imayam's *A Woman Burnt* employs fire as a symbol to criticize not only the acts of violence but also society's structures that let violence grow, spread, and eventually consume. In pre-colonial India, the practice of ‘Sati’ kills widows. Those women’s lives are considered vain without men. At present, well-educated women are forced to kill themselves when they have no space to express. Their quest for freedom from the conservative and cultural ties of the prejudiced male dominated society, induces women to end their lives, finding it a final solution.

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**REPRESENTATION OF COLLECTIVE MEMORY IN DERVLA
MURPHY'S *ON A SHOESTRING TO COORG: AN EXPERIENCE OF
SOUTHERN INDIA***

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Abstract: Memory is the specific experience of acts and personalities which, when recalled, evoke residual emotions and past events. Dervla Murphy's *On a Shoestring to Coorg: An Experience of Southern India* (1976) portrays how cultural and collective memories shape the social construct of a community. The work pictures the traveller's experience in the southern part of India, mostly of Coorg, with the locals, her 'Indianized' friends and their families, traditions and beliefs. The traveller describes how memory plays a prominent role in shaping people's cultural practices in their houses and connecting people through the remembrance of their ancestors. This paper deals with how the writer brings to light the memories' ability to build a community through the generational passing of culture, which is reflected in their cultural practices that are valued by the people. The paper uses Maurice Halbwachs' theory of Collective Memory as its theoretical framework, emphasizing how memories of people take the form of a social construct and way of living as a society.

Keywords: Culture, Memory, Travel, Social Structure and Behaviour.

Travel writing explores the unexplored and records the traveller's experience by creating a new arena to understand the identified land and its people. Travel writers outline their journey by revealing the beauty of the place, people, culture, traditional practices and food habits. The writings of the author-traveller amaze the readers. They delve into the actual facts about the location and also provide an elaborate description of the people. Carl Thompson in his book, *Travel Writing* (2011) defines travel as "the negotiation between self and other that is brought about by movement in space" (9) where he mentions mobility of human beings as a travel. Travel writers examine the landscape, its significance along with the history and cultural practices, and this perspective varies from person to person depending on the objective of travel and of how they perceive things around them. Women's travel writing gains specific attention among its audience for its unique way of exploring the locations that differ from the writings of men. In *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (2002), Susan Bassnett states that "Women travellers are therefore categorised as doubly different: they differ from other, more orthodox, socially conformist women, and from male travellers who use the journey as a means of discovering more about their own masculinity" (226). The narration of the writer and the perspective distinguishes a woman's travel writing from the other travel texts.

Dervla Murphy is a celebrated Irish woman travel writer who gained global recognition for her adventurous and insightful travel books. Her works deal with travel as a journey and not as an expedition; she records her journey to different countries adapting sustainable and local transportation facilities.

Dervla Murphy's *On a Shoestring to Coorg: An Experience of Southern India* is an explicit travel book that elaborates on her journey exploring people and their complex behaviour often influenced and shaped by socio-economic and cultural factors.

Memory plays a dynamic role in constructing the social framework of a community irrespective of its nature. Although the term, collective memory was first coined by Hugo Van Hofmannsthal, Maurice Halbwachs developed the concept whereby the individual memory is influenced by collective memory and social setting prevalent in both past and present. The concept of collective memory states that every social group develops a memory of its past which is preserved and passed on to the upcoming generations resulting in the communal unity and social framework. Halbwachs emphasized that shared memories stand as a constructive feature for cultural differentiation and rebuilding of identity of the community. Memory and travel writing have a distinct relation which helps the reader to understand the journey's significance, community, people's attitude and people's cultural nuances that help building a society.

Murphy's work *On a Shoestring to Coorg: An Experience of Southern India* reinstates the legacy of an observer who writes about the shared memories of the communities which reconstruct the community from the past events and practices. Murphy and her daughter went to the ancient Karnataka - Vijayanagar kingdom which has its origin around seventeenth century and has been preserved for the next three hundred years by the ancient Hindu society from the attacks of Islam. This preservation not only saved the kingdom's structure but also the ancient people's cultural restoration. She said that the presence of such kingdoms gave an emotional stability to social structure. The author-traveller describes how she felt appalled when she witnessed a little shabby man angrily shouting at her when she stood for a photograph near Zenana wing which was guarded by him. A Zenana wing is a building of historical importance especially for women. Women are isolated from the outside world and they stay in Zenana wing guarded by men. This results in the representation of shared memory of a shabby little man whose words resonated the reverence and loyalty he had towards his Maharana which is evident when Murphy writes "He paused, and suddenly the right word came. 'Private here!' he exclaimed triumphantly. Away! Private! No looking! This only for Maharana!', 'Away with quickness!' Private! Here lives our Maharana!" (76-77). The memory of the kingship which resides in the past continues to knit people together.

Halbwachs advocates that collective memory stays intact with the help of the cohort memories etched deep in the people's mind and lifestyle. Memory studies in travel writing helps the readers understand how the memory of people and their lives are interpenetrated from the existing practices to present life. Memory plays a significant role in elucidating the details of the social construct in the location and through travel writing, the traveller explores not only the untouched but also the unknown sect of people and their lives. Travelling to different areas by local transports and minimal help from the

officials help the writer to analyse the lifestyle and tradition of the people.

Travel writing is not only a geographic movement from one place to another, but it is also about studying culture and learning the nuances. By viewing it through the lens of Halbwachs' collective memory, it is understood that the cultural practices shape the community and the interconnectedness of communities irrespective of the hierarchy.

Halbwachs in his book *The Collective Memory* (1980) observes that "A remembrance is gained not merely by reconstituting the image of a past event a piece at a time. That reconstruction must start from shared data or conceptions" (31). Memory is not built by mere remembrance of past events but a reconstruct of the cohort information from people who lived and from those living at present who are a passage that may result in the transmission of cultural heritage along with cultural identity.

Maurice Halbwachs' concept of collective memory helps in comprehending how shared memories that existed in the past are restored and continued in the present. People's communal living comprises of familial bonds knitted to the ancestral lineage and cultural practices celebrated and nurtured by the people. Murphy's travel experience paves way to learn about the people of Coorg and their lifestyle to taste the essence of culture, commemorated by customary habits that are foreign to her knowledge and comprehension. The writer's admiration towards the nature of the people stands an adduce on how collective memory shared among people of a particular location leads to the construction and maintenance of a social structure and identity. Halbwachs advocates that collective memory is in opposition to the formal history which narrates only what remains alive in the consciousness of the group. The idea of collective memory transcending the shared memories that get manifested in many ways take part in everyday living, specifically during Huthri festival. Holeyas and Harijans have different musical traditions in which the former group organize a solemn warm musical treat and the latter uses various props to entertain the audience. The uniqueness of Coorg's landscape fixes a setting where communities come together and the shared memories of the people are brought alive from the past to the present which made it more meaningful.

Murphy shares her experience of having taken part in the Huthri festival celebrated in Coorg. Huthri means new rice crop and it is celebrated by the locals for a week. She narrates how people shared and exchanged memory connected to the past and brought alive while celebrating Huthri festival. The ritual of cutting the first sheaf of paddy with the treasured ancestral sword "Kuthi" by her host in Coorg, Mr. Thimmiah and his family pass on the ancestral legacy and continuity of their culture. The event is organized after the Kaniyas (astrologers) declare an auspicious time which must fall on the night of a full moon in the months of November or December. Each member of the community makes contribution for Huthri, the potter bringing new pot, mat weaver, a new mat and so on kept in the Nellakki Nadubade (inner hall of the house which stands as family chapel). The writer observes that "One has to admire the Coorgs' devotion to their own customs. Observing the Thimmiah family today, I noticed that when junior members meet their elders, they bow

respectfully to touch the older person's knees with the fingertips, which are then pressed to their own forehead and finally to their superior's feet" (96).

The writer describes how the stay in European countries affected the lifestyle of Mr. Thimmiah and his family by describing on their attire, drinking habits and way of thinking. Yet the author-traveller manages to stay connected to the ancestral practices which resulted in the lively celebration of the festival organized since the days of their elders. During the Huthri festival, people decorate the houses and the surrounding areas with festoons of mango, palm leaves and colorful flowers where shared memory of the location brought different sets of people together to welcome the new shaft of rice crop. The inauguration of the festival starts with Holeyas dance and music which consist of beating of drums, clashing of cymbals and synchronizing note of a horn. The shared memories blurred the differences among people and brought them together as a community. The author - traveller felt that "A strong streak of egalitarianism runs through Coorg society and at ceremonial gatherings it is impossible to tell the difference, by their attire, between the poorest farmer and the richest coffee planter" (100).

Murphy shares her experience on how she had the chance to capture serenity and purity of people's reverence for the Huthri festival that draws them together through shared memories. "Landowners and labourers recognize each other as being equally important, in different ways, and where this family is concerned- are truly united in mutual loyalty and respect" (102). The traveller plays the role of an observer where the intricacies of memory shared by the people are recorded in her work tracing the influence of memory on the social structure, she set her foot. The interconnection of memories paves way to understand the social structure maintained by the people through the means of cultural practices including space, time and music which acts as the evidence of how the writer employs memory as a tool to connect people together.

Dervla Murphy addresses cultural practices, attire and music of people. Her journey sheds light on the beauty of human existence which constitutes a shared society built by communities. The segmented society comes together when the memory is reconstructed through shared experiences. It is a celebration of togetherness when people irrespective of their positions, join hands to celebrate a festival rooted in their memory as a whole. In spite of Thimmiah's liking for the influence of Western society, the elite family of Mr. Thimmiah still intends to stick to the ancestral legacy and pay respect to the traditional practices. Social groups shape collective memory by providing frameworks, contexts, and shared experiences that influence how individuals perceive, organize, and recall memories.

Maurice Halbwachs argues that memory is primarily a collective process deeply embedded in the social organization. The novel is a perfect example of how collective memory brings about a reconstruction of social structure and people's attitude. The work elucidates how physical surroundings, such as homes, cities, and religious spaces, are the anchors for collective memory. Groups imprint their identity on these spaces, and the stability of these environments help humanity to preserve these dynamic memories.

Memory is often reconstructed through interaction with others. People connect present to past events, creating a sense of continuity as illustrated in the customs followed by Thimmiah. Halbwachs emphasizes that even individual memories are shaped by social contexts, as people remember events by situating themselves within the reach of the groups to which they belong. In case of Coorgs, people organize the Huthri festival which helps in envisioning the borders and breaking boundaries increasing the possibility of unison among different people as a community.

Dervla Murphy's travel book is a good tool to comprehend the memory's role among different groups of people who live as a community and strive to build a society. By applying Maurice Halbwachs' concept of collective memory, this article demonstrates how shared experiences and memories assume importance and power in building a community which in turn facilitates the social, political and cultural well-being of the society.

By upholding traditional practices, the people of Coorg evince a spirit of togetherness which results in the celebration of collective memory and the shared responsibility of people to bring about a social transformation irrespective of differences. Through this research work, travel writing helps in understanding how shared memories reconstruct the society by the interpenetration of the former practices to the present constituting to a harmonious community.

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THE POWER OF LITERACY: EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT IN SUDHA MURTY'S "HOW I TAUGHT MY GRAND MOTHER TO READ"

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Abstract: The paper aims to explore the theme of education or literacy as a tool for empowerment in Sudha Murty's *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories*. Through a detailed analysis of the title and other stories within the collection, the paper investigates how literacy becomes a revolutionary power for personal growth, social mobility and gender equality. Sudha's narratives portray the major influence of learning by self-education and the experience of knowledge in everyday life. By concentrating on characters from the various economic backgrounds, this study highlights how education can overcome the social barriers or norms and terms. Sudha stands as an example for everyone that money does not make you everything. Ultimately, her work demonstrates the important role of education in shaping an enlightened society.

Keywords: Literacy, Empowerment, Education, Gender Equality and Social Mobility.

Sudha Murty is a prominent Indian author, educator and philanthropist. She is known for her significant contribution to literature in both Kannada and English with numerous books that inspire readers of all ages. As the chairperson of the Infosys Foundation, she has played a crucial role in various social initiatives, focusing on education, and rural development. She has received many awards for her writings and social works like Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan. Her life exemplifies dedication to social changes and empowerment through education and literature. She has written stories about Indian cultures and values. *How I Taught My Grandmother to Read and Other Stories* was written by Sudha Murty. Her writings are always focused on village life and real-life stories.

The story "How I Taught My Grandmother to Read" is the first story of the book. It deals with Sudha Murty's grandmother, who did not know how to read. Long time back in India, people did not receive proper education, especially women. So, she had not received education. So, her grandmother had no idea how to read. "I got married very young and had children. I became very busy. Later I had grandchildren and always felt so much happiness in cooking and feeding all of you. At times I used to regret not going to school, so I made sure that my children and grandchildren studied well . . . (5)"

Every week Sudha Murty used to read a story to her. One day, her grandmother started crying. Sudha had never seen her grandmother crying. Her grandmother told to her that she hated to be dependent on others to read. She felt embarrassed that she had to depend on others which she could read herself. So, she asked Sudha Murty to teach her how to read. Later, Sudha Murty teaches alphabets to her grandmother and teaches how to pronounce and

how to read. Her grandmother slowly started to read. It was a day when the author decided to gift her grandmother, a book. When she gifted it, her grandmother touched her feet. Sudha Murty was shocked. Her grandmother said that she paid respect to her teacher.

I am touching the feet of a teacher, not my granddaughter; a teacher who taught me so well, with so much of affection that I can read any novel confidently in such a short period. Now I am independent. It is my duty to respect a teacher. Is it not written in our scriptures that a teacher should be respected, irrespective of gender and age? (8)

Sudha Murty in return paid respect to her grandmother and then handed her the book. Thus, she knew her grandmother had succeeded when she read the title and the author of the book.

Lindeman is a critical thinker who believed that “Adult learners are those whose intellectual aspirations are least likely to be aroused by the rigid, uncompromising requirements of authoritative, conventionalized institutions of learning” (19). The central motif of literacy is the major theme of Sudha Murty’s stories. Her narratives illustrate the transformative power of education in a person’s life, especially in the context of personal growth, social mobility and empowerment. One of the most striking examples appears in the story “How I Taught My Grandmother to Read”, where education becomes an instrument for connecting gaps among generations, genders, and socio-economic classes. Murty highlights the power of literacy not only as a tool for personal growth but also to challenge society. In this story, a little girl teaches her grandmother to read which inspires a powerful message of empowerment. The grandmother, an old wife, old mother of age and tradition has been the captive of illiteracy and chains of prejudice for years. In *A Room of One’s Own*, Virginia Woolf points out:

Women have burnt like beacons in all the works of all the poets from the beginning of time . . . She dominates the lives of kings and conquerors in fiction; in fact she was the slave of any boy whose parents forced a ring upon her finger. Some of the most inspired words, some of the most profound thoughts in literature fall from her lips; in real life she could hardly read; could scarcely spell, and was the property of her husband. (64-66)

Although far too wise, there are limitations to her full participation in the world. Her inability to read is a testament to the generation gap and societal mores that keep countless women from the privilege of formal education. However, she wants to learn and she does not get constrained from the desire. The act of teaching not only empowers the grandmother but also expresses an act of love and respect. The story is a strong indication of the impact of education in connecting the generations. The role of granddaughter demonstrates that youth are the agents of change in their communities. The grandmother joins the world of reading and creates a metaphor for what society achieves when education is available to everyone.

Sudha Murty's narrative emphasizes the profound impact that literacy has on promoting gender equality. Similar to many conventional women in society, the grandmother initially experiences a lack of education and knowledge. Through the character of grandmother, Murty illustrates the gender inequality where women are abandoned from being educated. Sudha helps her grandmother to read and she gains a renewed sense of independence. Her grandmother uses reading as a weapon for personal empowerment and it makes her acquire control over her life.

This path towards literacy shows women's empowerment in society. Murthy accentuates that gaining education is not only essential for individual development and self-actualization but also a means to transform societal frameworks. The narrative highlights that everyone, particularly women, has the right to engage in the world of ideas and knowledge. It also challenges the notion that education is a luxury meant for only a handful of people.

Beyond the main narrative, Murty's entire collection implies that education has the power to change people's lives in all of its forms, formal or informal, academic or autodidactic. In other stories, characters who have faced challenges or been marginalized are able to overcome their situation by pursuing knowledge. Murthy constructs the story in which education is a core part of both personal transformation and social changes. It is evident that despite the stories straightforward structure, they convey profound messages of literacy in personal growth and societal advancement.

Sudha Murty's "How I Taught My Grandmother to Read" reminds us about the role of education and how it helps in creating a more equitable society. Through this narrative, Murty effectively illustrates how education can serve a tool for empowerment, dismantling barriers and allowing individuals, especially women and marginalized groups, to access opportunities that were previously unattainable. Murty's stories serve a powerful call to action in a society where education is still a privilege for many. They inspire to acknowledge the transformative power of literacy and to work towards a future where everyone, irrespective of gender, age, or background has the possibility to interact with the world of knowledge and helps to construct a society that is more equitable and enlightened.

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**UNSAID VOICES IN AN ALIENATED LAND: A CRITICAL
EXPLORATION OF DIASPORA AND IDENTITY CRISIS IN
CHIMAMANDA NGOZI ADICHIE'S *THE THING AROUND YOUR
NECK***

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Abstract: The paper explores the unheard voices of immigrants who silently endure in an unknown land through the lens of Adichie's short story "The Thing Around Your Neck". A prominent diasporic Nigerian writer, Adichie, challenges the concept of the "American Dream", which leads to identity crisis and marginalization. This paper exposes the hidden realities, such as identity crisis, inferiority complex, and cultural hegemony, behind the illusion of the American Dream and its impact on immigrant identities.

Keywords: Immigrants, Diaspora, Identity Crisis, the American Dream and Marginalization.

Introduction

Chimamanda Adichie is a prominent Nigerian author and feminist who has the experience of diaspora. Her writings are powerful stories and constant exploration of identity, diaspora, and identity crisis. She gains international acclaim with her novels *Purple Hibiscus* (2003) and *Half of a Yellow Sun* (2006), as well as her short story collection *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009). Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* is a collection of twelve short stories that highlights the complexities of the African diaspora, particularly Nigerian immigrants in the United States. In particular, the title, *The Thing Around Your Neck* signifies the unsaid voices, the silences, and the marginalization of a particular community in white society. This paper focuses on the diaspora and identity crisis and how Adichie portrays the struggles of characters in alienated circumstances.

Diaspora and the American Dream

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, diaspora means "a group of people who spread from one original country to other countries, or the act of spreading in this way." This short story is set against "The American Dream" and "Visa Lottery" concepts, where the immigrants find an opportunity for the betterment of life; unfortunately, they experience psychological alienation and search for belongingness. The concept of the "American Dream" is explained well in Britannica, which states that, "American Dream: the ideal that the United States is a land of opportunity that allows the possibility of upward mobility, freedom, and equality for people of all classes who work hard and have the will to succeed."

The twelve stories bring out the inner silences into realizations. For instance, characters like Akunna in the story "The Thing Around Your Neck" embody the struggle. Akunna, a Nigerian woman who wins the visa lottery and shifts to the US with the dream of leveling up the standard of living. "She wins

the visa 'lottery,' and her family members tell her that she'll soon have a big car and a house..." This shows how every Nigerian has dreamt of having a standard lifestyle in the US. After arriving at America, she finds homely attachment at her uncle's home. Unfortunately, she experiences sexual threat from her uncle. She leaves the place and finds herself to fit in the white community. Further, she faces exploitation, racism, disillusionment, and alienation. Diaspora is not just a physical relocation but a psychological and cultural dislocation. The title gives a metaphorical meaning of unarticulated trauma or unsaid voices of the global immigrants.

Identity Crisis and Cultural Hybridity

The term, hybridity, means the combination of two cultures and identities. Ultimately, it results in a distinct new culture, new identity and cultural crisis. According to Antony Easthope, a British scholar who challenges the term hybridity, which was brought up by Indian scholar K. Bhabha, says that,

"However, Bhabha goes beyond this initial response to Said to work out a theoretical position of his own based in the notion of 'hybridity' and relying heavily on the ideas of Jacques Derrida. Currently, this notion is proving to be enormously influential, and it is this I want to engage with, especially since it provides a way to consider the wider opposition between Derrida and Lacan. Bhabha claims there is a space "in-between the designations of identity" and that "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (Location 4) (147).

Her protagonist, Akunna, inhabits a liminal space, a term by Homi K. Bhabha, where diasporic identities are neither wholly Nigerian nor fully assimilated into western culture. Antony Easthope elaborates that Bhabha's hybridity challenges fixed identities, creating a space for cultural negotiation that resonates with Akunna's experience between her Nigerian heritage and American expectations. For instance, when Akunna falls in love with the white man, she confuses her feeling with her identity and culture.

"She doesn't tell the boy that her mother cooks with cubes that are pure MSG, because the boy believes MSG causes cancer."/>

"At Chang's one night, the boy tells the waiter he speaks some Mandarin. The waiter asks the boy if he has a girlfriend in Shanghai, and Akunna loses her appetite when the boy says nothing." (Litchart)

She feels ashamed to reveal her culture and afraid of the social stigma of the Blacks in white society. Adichie critiques the American host society for perpetuating Akunna's identity crisis through systematic and interpersonal views. Her relationship is a spark in case of an identity crisis. This reflects Frantz Fanon's theory of the inferiority complex, where immigrants feel inferior in a dislocated country; it leads to self-alienation (*Black Skin, White Masks*, Pluto Press, 1986, cited in Academia.edu). Gender further complicates

Akunna's identity crisis. She experiences extra vulnerabilities, sexual harassment, and social expectations, compounded oppressions due to race and gender (44).

Alienation and Unsaid Voices

The idea of alienation, in other words, the feeling of "the other," is a constant vehicle that drags throughout the story. Akunna's alienation is a result of systematic exploitation and lack of social support. These silences align with Said's concept of cultural hegemony, where western societies impose norms to demolish the immigrants' identities.

"In 1939 Aimé Césaire published his searing, long poem "Cahier d'un retour au pays natal." In it he wrote of his native Martinique, of colonial oppression, and of rediscovered African sources; he coined the term Négritude. His poem was written in the language of Lautréamont and Rimbaud, but it was a French spattered with neologisms, punctuated by new rhythms. For Césaire, a "native land" was something complex and hybrid, salvaged from a lost origin, constructed out of a squalid present, and articulated within and against a colonial tongue. (Clifford 204)

Clifford explores that Said's "othering" reveals how western representations marginalize non-western cultures, a dynamic evident in Akunna's experience of being exoticized in America (207). Following that, her unsaid voices are her inner thoughts and dilemma. The title, "The Thing Around Your Neck," is a metaphor for invisible trauma that haunts her throughout the life. Her inferior complexity has caused her to let go of her American boyfriend, with whom she could have had a better life. Her guilt towards her father's death, which would be irrelevant, Adichie adds,

"Akunna writes home and receives a letter that her father died five months ago. Her family had used the money from Akunna to give him a good funeral. Akunna curls up in bed and thinks of her father. The boy holds her and offers to fly them both to Nigeria. Akunna insists on going alone, and the boy asks if she'll "come back." Akunna mentions that she has to return in a year to maintain her green card. The boy drops her off at the airport, and Akunna hugs him tightly before letting go." (Litchart)

Adichie highlights how the silences of a woman have turned into a lifetime of guilt. The protagonist has lost two important men in her life, who show real love and protection. This ending navigates many conclusions for the readers. Social and cultural stigmas towards women shut the doors. Further, Akunna's guilt navigates into an unbearable pain.

Theoretical and Comparative Context

The story explores postcolonial and feminist frameworks. Bhabha's third space and hybridity, capture Akunna's hybrid identity. Akunna has placed herself in the middle of two identities, neither fully Nigerian nor American, as she navigates cultural expectations (Bhabha 36). Internalization of western

judgement, feeling of “the other,” contributing to all the concepts such as identity crisis, alienation, and social and cultural silences (Fanon, cited in [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu)). Hooks’ compounded oppression underscores gender marginalization (Hooks 44).

Similarly, we can witness these concepts in all diasporic literary work of other writers, such as Jhumpa Lahiri’s *Interpreters of Maladies*, which showcases the Indian immigrants’ struggle in America and the protagonist’s dilemma towards her relationships. This shows the struggles are common and hidden by society. Adichie’s story uniquely highlights the Nigerian context and specific colonial legacies to show the vulnerable state of the Nigerian community.

Adichie’s story, “The Thing Around Your Neck,” is a powerful exploration of the unsaid voices and Akunna’s struggle with alienation, identity crisis, and search for belonging in an alienated landscape. Through the titular metaphor and a post-colonial feminist lens, Adichie explores the psychological and social toll of displacement and marginalization. Yet, Akunna’s return to Nigeria highlights resilience as well as her agency of silence. Adichie’s writing is a mirror of immigrant society and western myths among the other countries in the world. The projection of challenging stereotypes and amplifying the complexities of diasporic experiences play a significant role in the contemporary literature.

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ECHOES OF AUDIBLE THREAD: A SENSORY REFLECTION IN CECELIA AHERN'S *LYREBIRD*

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Abstract: Among the five sensory organs of human beings, the sense of hearing is a crucial aid for communication between human beings and nature. The necessity of hearing is thought-provokingly shown in Cecelia Ahern's *Lyrebird* (2016). The essence of sensory experience in her novel gives a remarkable outstanding into her characterization, demonstrating the true reality of human relationships and communication purpose. Ahern's work delves into different aspects of life, throwing a stable pillar in the field of sensory literature. Also, it explores the deeper dimensions of life and establishes a strong foundation in the realm of the sensory world. This paper exhibits the auditory images' advantages and their role in fostering a harmonious relationship between human beings and nature in accordance with the senses.

Keywords: Auditory, Sensory, Nature and Communication.

The daily life of human beings is sustainable due to communication. The process of communication is possible only because of our sensory organs in our human body. Each sensory organ prevails with a certain ability. Accordingly, the hearing sense prompts human beings to have a better communicative world in the universe of digitalization. Ear is an inevitable tool, a messenger, to deliver messages. Cecelia Ahern, an Irish born writer, her innovative writing style and soulful masterpieces get the attention of audience. Ahern has written *Lyrebird* in 2016 for which many critics praises her writing style. The river is a barren land without a water stream. Similarly, humans are nothing without hearing ability.

The auditory system of human beings plays a crucial role in having better communication. Ahern indicates the significance of hearing in her writing. In *Lyrebird*, the author points out the documentary crew members, the life of two brothers, "Three years ago they had spent a year following and filming a pair of twins, Joe and Tom Toolin, who were seventy seven years old at the time. They were farmers who lived in an isolated part of the cork countryside, west of Macroom" (Ahern 9). The above line conveys the solitary life of two brothers and the author portrays their conversation in an abrupt manner. The author connotes that, "There was little conversation between them, they had no need of explanation or description. Instead their communication relied on sounds that to them had meaning, nods of the head, shrugs, a wave of the hand, few words here and there" (Ahern 12). The sound plays a vital role in communication. Oprah says that, "Great communication begins with a connection" (Winfrey). Verbal communication is one of the earliest forms of human communication. The development of communication in oral form is based on certain historical periods.

The mimicry is one of the archaic skill practices during the ancient

period. It is of two types: defensive mimicry and non defensive mimicry. Defensive mimicry is made when the animals feel distress in their surroundings and to increase their survival during that time. Non defensive mimicry is made as a happy tone indicating happiness. Ahern poignantly narrates the protagonist's life in the forest living a carefree life by mimicking the sound of living creatures and other creepy noises. The profound characterization of Ahern enthralls into a mystical vision and provokes the human soul to find the hidden treasure in the forest. The documentary crew set up their eyes over the bat house, meanwhile they find a voice behind the tree and think it is a girl. The documentary crew analyzes the sound and says, "The sound is like a squawk, from a bird, or something not human, but it comes from a human, from the woman standing at the tree" (Ahern 29). It is evident that Laura, the protagonist, seems to live a carefree life in the forest.

The forest is filled with surprises and suspicions. The crew members are doubtful about the identity and the existence of a little girl amidst the deep forest. Experts condemn Finland to stand foremost for leading a euphoric life because seventy five percent of trees cover up Finland and this results in the happiness of the people. Finnish people claim that, "The Finnish people have a close connection with nature, enjoying clean air, pure water and walking in the woods. These simple pleasures create a peaceful type of happiness, and an appreciation for the little things in life. All of these things are linked to lower stress level and increased well-being" (Brasier). Forests often create long-lasting memories bound with joy and answers to all the questions. In order to solve the puzzle regarding the sound, the crew enters deep into the forest. The one among the crew, Solomon says, "'We have to talk to the girl.' 'She's not a girl. She's a woman, and her name is Laura,'" (Ahern 34). After knowing the truth about the woman in the forest, crew members are scared and raise questions about her existence. Victoria Erickson in her writings, describes forest as,

Forests will always hold your secrets, for that's what forests are for. To separate and hide things. To protect, to comfort, to hold, to envelop, to demonstrate, to slow down, to teach. Go to the trees to explore your questions and dreams. Go to the trees to desire and seek. The world will listen as you walk, watch, soften, and breathe. (Erickson)

Here the above lines confront the mystery of forest and it is similar to Ahern's view on forest as it holds treasures left for human beings to dig out. The protagonist, Laura is the treasure which forest holds and never brings her out to the outer world because, according to forest, the outer world is very dangerous.

The mesmerizing sound or mimicry tends to feel like magic to the world casting a stress buster. The documentary crew, after leaving the forest, argue on what they heard in the forest. They are not able to accept the fact that Laura makes the sound. One among them claim mimicry to be magic and he says, "Laura did, those sounds she made, it was like magic. And I don't believe in magic. I've never heard anything like that before" (Ahern 39). The voice of Laura seems to be mesmerizing, soothing the soul in the deep forest. Socrates

states that, “An imitative poet puts a bad constitution in the soul of each individual by making images that are far removed from the truth” (290). For the betterment of the environment, humans use several anecdotes to engage the human soul with nature.

The sound paves the way to promote better relationships between human beings and environment. The study of the relationships between living beings and their sonic environment, or soundscape is called acoustic ecology or soundscape ecology. Ahern's character, Laura lives in the forest amidst the living organisms promoting a better relation with the forest. The crew members ask Laura about her existence in the forest and she replies as such, “When was the last time you left the mountain?” he asks, she hides her face behind her hair, uncomfortable with the question. ‘How long have you lived here?’ he asks. She takes a while to answer the question. ‘Since I was sixteen. Ten years ago,’” (Ahern 46). Ahern paints the protagonist's life in forest to ensure the relationship between forest and human beings. The most powerful role of the protagonist, Laura, is mimicking the sound of animals, birds and human beings. It is said as, “sound is like a squawk, from a bird, or something not human, but it comes from a human, from the woman standing at the tree(LB 29). According to Feld, the kaluli men of Papua New Guinea can “... imitate the sound of at least 100 birds, but few can provide visual descriptive information on nearly that many”(1994). Similarly, environmental sounds for the Kaluli tribe comprise a continuum offering a limitless range of subtleties. Thus, the soundscape ecology prompted a prominent role in the ecological relation with humans.

The novel brings forth the overlooked auditory dimension of storytelling, showing how listening can be profound like speaking, and how silence can be louder than words. Ahern draws on sensory and eco-acoustic lenses. This paper illustrates how Ahern uses soundscapes. *Lyrebird* is a literary echo chamber where every sound carries weight, every silence holds space, and every auditory thread binds the characters and readers into a shared, deeply felt human experience.

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SILENCE UNDER THE WAVES: DISCOVERING THE NEGLECTED HISTORIES OF THE PAMBAN CHANNEL IN SU VENKATESAN'S *THE BASTION*

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Abstract: The Pamban Channel, located at the southern end of Tamil Nadu, separates the Pamban Island from the mainland of India. During the British colonial rule in India, the Pamban channel was constructed using the expertise of experienced coastal communities, driven by the need for trade purposes. The people from the seaside villages were imprisoned and forced to participate. Many died during its construction. However, official historical documents rarely record these details. Apart from oral traditions, the letters written by Christian missionaries reveal the neglected history of these coastal communities. The proposed research attempts to uncover the forgotten history of the Pambam Channel by applying a Blue Humanities framework. It also claims that cultural and literary texts provide counter-narratives against the mainstream account of history. The present study concludes that the channel functions not only as a geographic passage with historical significance but also as a symbol of a drowned memory and trauma.

Key words: Coastal Villages, Christian Missionaries, Counter Narratives, Blue Humanities, Memory and Trauma.

The Pamban bridge serves as a symbol of colonial ambition and the drowned memories. Pamban Island, also known as Rameshwaram Island, is situated between the southernmost part of India and Sri Lanka. The Bay of Bengal surrounds it; the Pamban bridge connects the Mandapam of Ramanathapuram and the Pamban of Rameshwaram island. During the 1870s, the British government proposed a plan to build a connecting bridge between Mandapam in Ramanathapuram district and Pamban in Rameshwaram, followed by another connecting bridge from Dhanushkodi in Rameshwaram to Thalaimannar in Sri Lanka, under a budget of 2 crores and 99 lakhs in the British Parliament. But the plan was disapproved by the London government. The government allotted 70 lakhs to build a bridge only between Mandapam and Pamban (Kathiravan). The British government decided to build the bridge in 1911, and the work was completed in 1913. Lord John Sinclair, the Governor of Madras (1912-1919), inaugurated it on 25th February, 1914 (Dash).

The history of the Pamban bridge is often considered in relation to the construction of the old rail bridge, which is renowned for its majestic structure. It is India's first sea bridge, connecting the Rameshwaram island with the mainland of India. The total length of the bridge is 2.2 kilometres. Its unique feature is that it can be opened vertically while the ship passes through it. It withstood the 1964 cyclone, the most tragic natural calamity that devastated the entire Danushkodi town, and it caused some minor damage to the Pamban

Bridge. However, in 2022, the bridge was closed entirely due to the discovery of cracks in it. On 6th April 2025, the new bridge was inaugurated by our Honourable Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi (Mishra).

The Pambam rail bridge was built for trade purposes. The British established numerous tea plantations in Ceylon, the present-day Sri Lanka, from the late 19th century to the early 20th century, and sent many Indians to Ceylon to work in those tea settlements, for which they needed a transport facility. Earlier, people reached Thoothukudi from Chennai, and then from Thoothukudi, they reached the capital of Sri Lanka via steamboats (Kathiravan). The period from 1876 to 1878 was marked by the Great Famine in the Madras Province. It was the time when India was under the direct rule of the British Government. There were many famine campaigns in which people were given food in exchange for the work they did. During the famine, many canals were dug by those who stayed in the famine camps. The Buckingham Canal in Chennai is one of the canals dug during this period (MuthuKrishnan 120).

Su Venkatesan, a prominent Tamil writer and Member of Parliament representing Madurai Constituency, in his debut historical fiction *Kaaval Kottam* (2008), translated into English as *The Bastion* (2021) records that the local communities of the coastal areas were imprisoned in the Rameshwaram jail and involved in the Pamban Canal related works through a letter of missionary. The sufferings of the local communities are often overlooked while recording the facts. The history of the Pamban Bridge is considered to begin only from the date its construction started. The struggles of the indigenous people are often ignored. Historical fictions and cultural narratives offer a counterhistory, highlighting the neglected history of indigenous peoples and their struggles.

Rameshwaram is considered one of the most sacred places for Hindus in India. It is associated with the epic *Ramayana*. The name Rameshwaram is a combination of the two words “Rama” and “Iswaram.” It is believed that the Ramanathaswamy temple originated from the sand linga that Lord Rama formed during his march to Sri Lanka to kill Ravana (History of Rameshwaram Temple). The religious significance of the place was not only significant to the Hindus, but also the coastal areas were heavily influenced by the traders from various Western countries before the arrival of the British East India Company. St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), one of the foremost Jesuit saints from Portugal, came to India to provide medical treatment to the sick and later began preaching the religion in various places across India. According to the records of R. Sathyanatha Aiyar, as cited in his *History of the Nayaks of Madurai* (1924), it is evident that in 1639, during his reign over Rameshwaram, the Nayak King Thirumalai Nayak granted permission to the Portuguese to construct churches within the region. The Madurai Nayak dynasty entered into a naval treaty with the Portuguese, whereby the latter assisted the Nayaks in their military engagements. Later, the Nayak King was not satisfied with the activities of Fr. Antonie Criminalie, whose preaching was ardent in the coastal districts, and he offered his services to the people in the coastal area. The Paravas from the coastal region converted to Catholicism themselves and

carried many Catholic beliefs with them when they went fishing (Rameshwaram and its significance).

An illuminating extract from F. C. Danvers is worth quoting: 'The Naique of Madure sent his ambassador, Ramapa, to the Viceroy, on the 13th August, 1639, to give an assurance on his account to the King of Portugal that, in consideration of the assistance sent him when he wished to take Marava, he undertook to give the King of Portugal a fortress in Pampa, called Uthear, or wherever he might desire one, with a Portuguese captain, 50 Portuguese soldiers, 100 lascars, and 3,000 pardaos, for the maintenance of the same; also to build at his own expense a church at Ramanacor, and seven churches between Bambam (Pamban) and Tomddy (Tondi) (Aiyar 123).

Venkatesan allows his readers to read the letters of the missionary who gave voice to the native people, enabling them to identify the cruel treatment imposed by the British government on the local communities. He recounts the experience of Mr James Frederick during his stay at Mandapam in a letter to the Governor of Madras Presidency, dated 3rd April, 1879. Rajaiya, aged 20, who was very much involved in the church activities, was arrested for some reason and suddenly died in prison. He further records that not only Rajaiya, but 60 percentage of the prisoners died in the prison mysteriously. 'Sixty percent of those who had thus been jailed until then had perished. During the week Rajaiya died about forty six people had died. They were dropped into the sea and dragged away by the stormy high tided waves' (*The Bastion* 583). Because they were unofficially involved in the construction works of the Pamban during the famine campaigns, he did not do anything wrong; the reason for his imprisonment is that 'those men who had experience of sea shore jobs and hard working ones' (*The Bastion* 583).

Through Father James's letter, Venkatesan reveals the injustices committed against the innocent people of southern Tamil Nadu by the British government. As discussed earlier, it was a time of famine, and the British government never attempted to alleviate it; instead, they were very conscious of the salaries they provided to people in the famine campaigns. Father James, in his letter, wrote about the Periyar Dam, suggesting that if the government had concentrated on the Periyar project, it would have been easy for them to tackle the famine. Instead of exploiting trade to gain instant profit, they involved innocent people from various places to dig in the deep sea, as they could not always rely on machines (*The Bastion* 584).

Su Venkatesan, in his Author's note, writes that he drew on the missionary documents, government archives, chronicles, and information collected from local communities to gain a deeper understanding of the real history. The documents with the Missionaries, the records preserved in the archives of the government, the details contained in the chronicles, and the information about events embedded in the memories of the people everywhere-I had gone in search of, and gathered all of them. It was my attempt to realise the truth. It shaped my way of life. (*The Bastion* 955)

It is possible that the Author could have used fictional characters and places, and even the dates of the event may differ; still, he informs readers about the incident that has rarely been documented. The official historical documents alone can never fully cover the history of the indigenous peoples. The literary and cultural narratives can also provide a detailed account of a specific historical event. In this way, although the sources cited help to understand the surface-level history, the literary counter-narrative always helps to comprehend things properly. Thus, the neglected history of the native people can be understood through both historical and literary narratives. Su Venkatesan's *The Bastion* is one such counter-narrative that helps us understand a specific historical event with complete sense. Whenever the struggles of people on the Rameshwaram island are discussed, it is often the 1964 cyclone that comes to mind. However, colonial cruelty has taken too many souls for profit and to expand trade opportunities.

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TRANSLATING PAIN: HOW LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE HUMANIZE THE ALIEN WORLD OF CANCER

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Abstract: The language of medicine often alienates cancer patients, already burdened by illness. Clinical jargon can reduce people to mere diagnoses. ‘Narrative medicine’ helps patients reclaim their stories. Through stories, metaphors, and literature, language becomes a powerful source of healing. It allows patients to be heard, not just treated. Susan Sontag’s insights from *Illness as Metaphor* reveal how metaphors can both harm and heal. This paper explores how the humanities can help reimagine the cancer experience. Language, when used with care, can humanise illness, restore dignity and bridge the emotional gap between a patient and the health-care system.

Keywords: Medical Humanities, Narrative Medicine, Cancer Discourse, Illness Narrative and Patient Voice.

Introduction

To be diagnosed with cancer is to be expelled from the familiar. It is to cross into what Susan Sontag calls “the kingdom of the sick” (3). There, the rules are different, the air is filled with uncertainty, and the body eventually becomes unfamiliar through mutation. Clinical jargon struggles to hold the weight of a patient’s lived experience. Terms like “lesion,” “thrombosis,” “metastasis,” “remission,” may describe processes of the body, but they often fail to explain what it feels like to live inside that body. “Cancer, we now know, is a disease caused by the uncontrolled growth of a single cell. This growth is unleashed by mutations—changes in DNA that specifically affect genes that incite unlimited cell growth” (Mukherjee 20). While this definition helps explain cancer’s biology, it fails to capture its psychological disruption. As a consequence, suffering becomes unspeakable.

Medicine in practice while scientific, is also deeply interpretive. But too often, the interpretive space of cancer care is left unexamined. This paper argues that the humanities—particularly the discipline of literature can help reorient how cancer is discussed, understood, and lived through. The words used matter, not because they describe reality, but because they shape it.

Origin of Cancer Metaphors

Before the science of oncology was established, cancer was confined to metaphors and myth. The term ‘cancer’ finds its roots in the Greek word ‘karkinos’, signifying a crab. This imagery likely stems from the way tumors spread outward, resembling crab limbs. Another Greek term ‘onkos’ meaning weight, or burden, reflects how cancer was seen as a burden, the body had to bear. This word would later form the basis of the modern discipline of Oncology. In modern times, cancer symbolizes moral corruption, psychological repression, and even divine punishment. Sontag observed that “as long as a particular disease is treated as an evil, invincible predator... most people with cancer will indeed be demoralized” (7). These metaphors were not innocent, they carried judgments. They transformed illness from a medical condition into a statement about one’s character, and in doing so, they added shame to

suffering.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, cancer was viewed as something shameful. Sontag notes, “Cancer patients are lied to, not just because the disease is (or is thought to be) a death sentence, but because it is felt to be obscene... repugnant to the senses” (2). Unlike say, tuberculosis, which was once romanticized as poetic, cancer has always been considered grotesque. Where TB invoked “superior sensitivity” (30) cancer evoked silence as a consequence of fear. This silence is part of what makes cancer so isolating.

The metaphor of cancer as an invader emerged in this climate of fear and uncertainty. “Now it is cancer’s turn to be the disease that doesn’t knock before it enters,” Sontag wrote, describing it as a “ruthless, secret invasion” (5). This militaristic metaphor would go on to dominate public discourse, to the point where ‘cancer’ has now become a metaphor for societal decay and corruption. By describing cancer in terms of war, society positions patients as soldiers and frames outcomes as either winning or losing. Such implications are far-reaching and often harmful as they place additional emotional burden on those already in pain.

Susan Sontag’s Case Against Metaphors

In *Illness as Metaphor*, Susan Sontag launches a powerful critique of how metaphors distort our understanding of disease. Her central argument is simple: metaphors cause harm. They do not explain illness, they complicate it, moralize it, and in some cases, make it hard to bear. She insists that “illness is not a metaphor, and the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking” (3). Sontag takes particular aim at cancer metaphors that frame disease as a battle. Treating cancer as a “demonic enemy,” she writes, “make[s] cancer not just a lethal disease but a shameful one.” (57). In this framework, survival is deemed heroic, while death is viewed as a personal failure. The patient’s character is then scrutinized—were they brave enough? strong enough? positive enough? Metaphors impose expectations that reality cannot always fulfill.

Moreover, Sontag is wary of psychological theories that link cancer to repressed emotion. “According to the mythology of cancer,” she writes, “it is generally a steady repression of feeling that causes the disease”. (22) Such assumptions shift blame onto patients. According to Sontag, “Psychological theories of illness are a powerful means of placing the blame on the ill. Patients who are instructed they have, unwittingly, caused their disease are also made to feel they have deserved it”. (57) Sontag warns against such psychological explanations of illness, as they rely on metaphorical thinking and thereby reinforce silence, shame, and stigma.

For Sontag, the solution is not to replace bad metaphors with better ones, but to eliminate metaphors altogether from the illness discourse. She insists that illness should be seen plainly, without ornamentation or distortion. While this view has influenced several scholars and clinicians, it has also sparked crucial counter-arguments.

Alan Bleakley's Case in Favour of Metaphors

Alan Bleakley's *Thinking with Metaphors in Medicine* challenges Sontag's aversion to metaphor. While he shares her concern about harmful metaphors, particularly the "war metaphor," he argues that metaphors are not only inevitable in medicine, but beneficial. Bleakley writes, "medicine is a practice riddled with uncertainty and soaked in metaphor." (1) He recognizes that metaphors can mislead, but believes they can also reveal. They allow patients and doctors to explore complex experiences in language that feels relatable and honest. "Metaphors can, then, be antidotes, shields... mirrors... and levers... to reveal a hidden reality" (20).

The dominant metaphors in medicine—"the body as machine," "the doctor as heroic warrior" "medicine as war"(18)—have grown outdated as they are doctor-centric. Bleakley writes, "imagining the body as a machine... negates the body-mind reality of human experience" (58). Instead of relying on such mechanised imagery, he encourages patient-centric metaphors that reflect emotional and ethical dimensions of care.

One among Bleakley's most compelling arguments is that metaphors are not barriers but guides to clinical objectivity. The "extended metaphor" in the form of patients' stories of illness, open therapeutic possibilities. For example, a patient who says, "I'm down in the dumps" evokes a different clinical response than one who says, "I can't see a way out". Such "metaphors invite differing therapeutic responses" (118). They reveal how patients make sense of their suffering and what kind of help they may need.

Rita Charon's Narrative Medicine and Pathography

While Sontag critiques the usage of metaphor and Bleakley repurposes it, Rita Charon describes how storytelling can serve as a tool for care. In *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness*, Charon argues that illness is not merely a "biological phenomena"(22), it is a patient's life experience. Effective healing is dependent on the clinician's ability to listen, to bear witness, and to interpret the patient's experience. In 2000, Charon introduced the term "narrative medicine" to describe a model of care, rooted in what she calls "narrative competence," defined as the capacity to "recognize, absorb, metabolize, interpret, and be moved by the stories of illness" (vii).

Narrative competence is not a soft skill, it is a clinical necessity. Charon argues that story-telling restores the patient's humanity. "what patients long for, ...[is] a form of health care that recognizes suffering, provides comfort, and honors the stories of illness."(ix). A patient cannot be reduced to a mere case-sheet or a diagnosis, he/she is a person whose life has been disrupted by illness. To help their patients heal, clinicians must learn to listen with the intent to understand and not act. Charon writes, "A scientifically competent medicine alone cannot help a patient grapple with the loss of health and find meaning in illness and dying...doctors need the expertise to listen to their patients, to understand as best they can the ordeals of illness, to honor the meanings of their patients' narratives of illness, and to be moved by what they behold so that they can act on their patients' behalf" (3). An illness narrative is more than an emotional outlet, it serves as a diagnostic aid. When doctors pay

enough attention to the metaphors patients use—how they describe their bodies, their pain, and their fears, they gain insight into the patient’s experience of the illness. Charon argues that listening to these stories is not separate from treatment, it is integral to it. Charon’s work also draws critical attention to the importance of ‘pathography’ in understanding disease, defined as a patient’s autobiographical/biographical narrative of his/her illness. Pathographies are more than memoirs, they help illuminate the lived experience of a patient and facilitate self-healing.

The experience of cancer or any illness for that matter, cannot be reduced to lab reports or patient survival rates. It is a crisis of language, identity, and meaning. A patient’s medical summary chart may document symptoms and test results, but it cannot summarize a person’s life. The metaphors patients use, whether violent, mechanical, or poetic, do more than describe. While Sontag cautions against this power, Bleakley urges clinicians to use it wisely. Charon notes how language can be the basis for connection and care.

Together, their works call for a new kind of ‘medical literacy’—one rooted in metaphorical awareness and responsible listening. Listening, as Joanne Trautmann argued, is not a “gentlemanly veneer on the true business of medicine”(48). Listening has an instrumental value. The patient’s own language—hesitations and metaphors, offer diagnostic clues. Bleakley’s ‘patient-led medicine’ is one in which diagnosis is co-constructed rather than dictated. While the language of medical records, like that of law, must be precise and impersonal, the practice of medicine, as it deals with human lives, must be inclusive, empathetic, and open to interpretation. Cancer is not a failure of the body, it is neither a war to be won or lost. It is an experience that needs to be named, listened to, and discussed. Language, then, becomes a form of healing, delivered not only through prescriptions and diagnoses, but through metaphors that heal, and stories that restore dignity to those who suffer.

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**ECO-MAGICAL REALISM: AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF
ANTHROPOCENTRICISM IN GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ'S *ONE
HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE***

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Abstract: The paper aims to analyse the transformation of the landscape of Macondo with the trace of anthropocentric patterns in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The conflation of Ecocriticism and Magical Realism explores how Márquez critiques anthropocentrism through an Eco-Magical Realism. Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has been widely celebrated for its portrayal of Latin American identity, magical realism, and postcolonial narrative structures. However, this study tries to analyse how anthropocentrism attempts to dominate nature, manipulate and exploit the environment. Therefore, this paper analyses how the foundation and the eventual destruction of Macondo occur due to José Arcadio Buendía's pursuit of scientific knowledge, dominance and control over nature.

Keywords: Eco-Magical Realism, Ecocriticism, Anthropocentrism and Landscape of Macondo.

The paper aims to analyse the transformation of the landscape of Macondo with the trace of anthropocentric patterns in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. The conflation of Ecocriticism and Magical Realism explores how Marquez critiques anthropocentrism through an Eco - magical Realism. Marquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude* has been widely celebrated for its portrayal of Latin American identity, magical realism, and postcolonial narrative structures. However, this study tries to analyse how anthropocentrism attempts to dominate nature, manipulate and exploit the environment. Therefore, this paper analyses how the foundation and the eventual destruction of Macondo occur due to the pursuit of scientific knowledge, dominance and control over nature.

One Hundred Years of Solitude critiques anthropocentric ideologies by portraying their consequences through environmental degradation, cyclical historical repetition, and symbolic natural events. Through the Buendia family's pursuit of knowledge, control, and power; the novel exposes the consequences of alienation from the natural world. By examining symbolic elements such as the insomnia plague, the endless rain and the banana company, this paper argues that *One Hundred Years of Solitude* transcends the anthropocentric status quo to the ecological apocalypse.

Marquez portrays Macondo as a product of human imagination and ambition. It appears to be the backdrop to the history of the Buendia family. Macondo is not merely a town but it is a utopia in the beginning of the novel. Marquez opens with imagery that paints the river and its surroundings as primordial:

At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like

prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point. (1)

In the beginning, Macondo is a wild and untamed land. When Buendia family and others settled in the new world on the bank of a river, the land is not yet domesticated. After the settlement, over the period of time, its trajectory is witnessed by the advent of anthropocentrism where the human history records the utmost level of environmental degradation. Marquez's portrayal of Macondo as Eden shows his eco-magical representation of the untamed Macondo which reminds the creation of the earth. *The Holy Bible* says, "The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heaven and to every beast of the field" (Gen. 2.20). The idea of anthropocentric manipulation begins with the naming of the objects especially the biotic and abiotic. The natural environment of Macondo has got its name and undergoes domestication. Macondo's evolution over the period of time reflects not only its cyclic history and civil war but also the ecological destructions. The Buendias' progress in cultural, historical and political dimensions results in their anthropocentric pursuits for knowledge and power.

The history echoes that the purity of Macondo is despoiled by the intervention of human beings and furthermore that leads to the anthropocentric notion. Anthropocentrism represents human-centered world which means exploiting nature for human need and greed especially by extracting its resources for material gain. M. H. Abrams said that "they are oriented to the interests of human beings, who are viewed as opposed to and superior to nature, and as free to exploit natural resources and animal species for their own purpose" (97). The people are driven by the profit motive and ignore the ecological damage created by them.

After entering the swamp region which is untampered by the human settlement, the families of Jose Arcadio Buendía along with his villagers think that the wilderness of the swamp is an endangered place to the new settlers. This thought process is anthropocentric in nature as the swamp seems to be a trap; "The great swamp in the west mingled with a boundless extension of water where there were soft-skinned cetaceans that had the head and torso of a woman, causing the ruination of sailors with the charm of their extraordinary breasts (11). The natural entity of the swamp region seems to be horrid and dire. Marquez describes the swamp in the west by employing eco-magical realism. Here, 'the soft skinned mammal' and 'the head and torso of a woman' refer to mermaids. The eco-magical element used here is the imaginary existence of mermaids. From an eco-feministic perspective, it is understood that the women are portrayed in the dark shade as the reason for ruination as well as the wild natural entity. Marquez usage of this element is very anthropocentric because it describes the beauty and charm of wilderness that jeopardizes human beings. So to escape from the predators and peril of natural entities, human beings acquire anthropocentric notions. Thereby, the uninhabitant Macondo is tamed and altered according to their convenience. This action of modifying the natural environment is inevitable in the human history that would extend to the

domination of nature.

Marquez's vivid idea of freedom and enslavement is symbolically expressed with the action of the people of Macondo, "Since the time of its founding, Jose Arcadio Buendia had built traps and cages. In a short time he filled not only his own house but all of those in the village with troupials, canaries, bee eaters, and redbreasts" (9-10). Caging the birds symbolizes the situation of people in Macondo that seems to be trapped in the swamps of solitude. The people think that they are caged in the swamp disconnected from the outside world. Jose Arcadio Buendia shouts, "Macondo is surrounded by water on all sides. . . .We'll never get anywhere," he lamented to Ursula. "We're going to rot our lives away here without receiving the benefits of science" (13). They live within the limited space like the caged birds. On the other view, caging the birds represents people controlling the whole ecosystem by dominating it. This dominance does not stop there; it goes in a vicious circle by reverting the dominance of nature making human beings victims of their own plot.

Foster, in his *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, conveys his idea of domination as, "the notion of the human 'domination of nature', while tending toward anthropocentrism, does not necessarily imply extreme disregard of nature or its laws . . . the mastery of nature was rooted in understanding and following her laws" (12). Their settlement begins with the construction of their own houses on the bank of the river and they start to cultivate for their livelihood. They do not have any outside world influence. "Within a few years Macondo was a village that was more orderly and hard-working than any known until then by its three hundred inhabitants. It was a truly happy village where no one was over thirty years of age and where no one had died" (9). The only outside contact they have is by the arrival of gypsies. Soon the people are surprised by the scientific inventions introduced by the gypsies and become curious to know more. The land gradually becomes anthropocentric. Jose Arcadio Buendia "whose unbridled imagination always went beyond the genius of nature and beyond miracles and magic . . . (2)". He believes in mastering nature through science and reason. "Science has eliminated distance," Melquiades proclaimed. "In a short time, man will be able to see what is happening in any place in the world without leaving his own house" (3). His obsession with technological invention and discovery reflects an anthropocentric belief that nature exists for human manipulation.

The insomnia plague that afflicts Macondo is a symbolic representation of eco-magical element that foretells the impending dire consequences of the collapse in natural order. People begin to forget the names and uses of everyday objects. This condition of memory loss suggests a crisis caused by excessive abstraction and detachment from the natural world. Jose Arcadio Buendia attempts to label everything, but this only deepens the mechanistic view of the world. The detachment from the natural world is the realistic element that brings out how nature becomes objectified and alienated.

The other eco-magical realism employed by Marquez is 'the four-year rain' which symbolizes a natural correctiveness to human excessiveness. After

the massacre of the banana plantation workers, the deluge begins and it is the symbolical judgment of nature. It has rained for four years, eleven months, and two days. This deluge is considered a symbolic ecological punishment for anthropocentric attitude. It is also understood that nature reclaims its space. The magical element employed here is a four year rain which is a mere exaggeration of the biblical reference to Noah and the flood, "For in seven days I will send rain on the earth forty days and forty nights, and every living thing that I have made I will blot out from the face of the ground" (Gen. 7. 4). Therefore, the flood can be seen as an eco-magical embodiment of climate change which in reality addresses the contemporary environmental crisis.

The arrival of the banana company marks the zenith of anthropocentric capitalism. Marquez brings out the capitalocene and modification of the natural entity for benefiting the anthropocentric needs as, "... they changed the pattern of the rams, accelerated the cycle of harvest, and moved the river from where it had always been and put it with its white stones and icy currents on the other side of the town, behind the cemetery" (233). The landscape of Macondo undergoes rapid changes over the period of time especially after the arrival of people flooded to Macondo. Forests are cleared, railroads built, and the establishment of transnational banana company leads to the exploitation of laborers and thereby this corporate colonization turns nature into a commodity.

The banana company marks a turning point in the ecological history of Macondo. It brings not only economic exploitation but ecological degradation. However, the novel by infusing magical elements critiques monoculture, deforestation, and capitalocene; the massacre of the workers and the destruction of other species are realistic elements that reveal the silencing of both human and non-human suffering. It discloses the realistic features of environmental racism and materialism, where profit is prioritized over ecological and social welfare. The destruction caused by the banana company is not only merely economic and social, but also ecological.

The non-human environment could not withstand the rapid change that occurs due to the establishment of human institutions such as market culture, classes and companies. "Marquez artistically crafts the environmental transformation, the overwhelming flow of wealth in the region, and the equal destruction of the poor people and Macondo's landscape, emphasizing the intersection between ecological justice and social justice" (Gulter 20). The abovementioned change marks the transformation of Macondo from ecological localism to ecological globalism which eventually leads to ecological apocalypse. Marquez depicts the apocalyptic Macondo as:

Macondo was in ruins. In the swampy streets there were the remains of furniture, animal skeletons covered with red lilies, the last memories of the hordes of newcomers who had fled Macondo as wildly as they had arrived. The houses that had been built with such haste during the banana fever had been abandoned. The banana company tore down its installations. All that remained of the former wired-in city were the ruins. (336)

It is because of anthropocentric attitude the happy utopia Macondo becomes a deserted dystopia. It is through eco-magical realism, Marquez articulates the ecological justice through the agents of nature such as rivers, insomnia plague, rain, extremely hot weather and wind. “Indeed, nature wars with man to reclaim the space taken by both traditional ‘civilisation’ and modern technological progress” (Williams 65). Marquez depicts the destruction and the rejuvenation of nature, as if in Macondo the rivers mourn, rain punishes, and wind restores balance. Therefore, Marquez’s *One Hundred Years of Solitude* is a profound ecological allegory packed with the essence of magical realism. It critiques anthropocentric ideologies by depicting the downfall of Macondo that occurs due to human-centric attitude, disconnection from nature, and the exploitation of the environment.

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NAVIGATING THE 'IMPERFECT' BODY: INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES AND SUBVERSIVE NARRATIVES IN FIRDAUS KANGA'S *TRYING TO GROW*

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Abstract: Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* (1990) offers a vital, often humorous, counter-narrative to conventional portrayals of disability. This paper argues that the novel subverts dominant medicalized discourses and ableist bodily ideals by positioning protagonist Brit's multifaceted identity—a confluence of disability, Parsi heritage, and queer sexuality—as a powerful space for defiance and self-determination. Drawing on Medical Humanities (including Narrative Medicine and the Social Model of Disability), Queer Crip Theory, and Intersectionality, this analysis unpacks how Brit's narrative reclaims agency from the medical gaze, redefines desire, and challenges corporeal norms within a postcolonial setting. It thus enriches discussions on diverse, embodied identities.

Keywords: Disability, Medical Humanities, Queer Crip Theory, Intersectionality, Parsi Identity, and Body Normativity.

Introduction

The human body is multifaceted and context-dependent, which includes biological, psychological, and socio-cultural aspects. The 'body' biologically stands for the physical structure of a human, comprising systems, organs, and tissues that function collaboratively to maintain life and facilitate reproduction (Tortora & Derrickson, 2017). This perspective considers the body as an objective and quantifiable entity regulated by physiological principles. Nonetheless, in the realm of social sciences, this comprehension is considerably broadened. The body is not solely a biological entity but also a socio-cultural construct infused with meanings influenced by temporal, spatial, and power dynamics (Turner, 1992; Shilling, 2003). The sociological approach asserts that the body serves as a locus for identity construction, cultural representation, and social regulation, frequently governed by ideologies of gender, race, class, and ability (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1977).

Within this broader context, the idea of the "imperfect body" is a term used to describe those bodies that deviate from stereotypical standards of beauty, functionality, and health. These include bodies that are disabled, aged, fat, scarred, or otherwise considered non normative or 'rarely seen' in appearance or gender expression (Garland-Thomson, 1997). Importantly, such bodies are not inherently flawed; rather, their "imperfection" is a social construct rooted in socio-cultural norms that is positively biased towards certain bodily forms while marginalizing others. Institutions such as media, medicine, and fashion industries contribute to this process by producing and preaching ideals of thinness, youth, and fitness, thus relegating bodily differences to the category of deviance (Bordo, 1993; Davis, 1995).

Consequently, the so-called imperfect body becomes a focal point for analysing how societal valuation systems intersect with embodiment.

This paper focuses on this notion of the “imperfect body” within contemporary critical frameworks such as Disability Studies, Medical Humanities, Queer Theory, and Intersectionality. These interdisciplinary approaches question the power structures that define bodily normalcy and challenge the limited representations of disabled or non conforming individuals as devoid of agency, depth, or desire (Garland-Thomson, 1997; Charon, 2006; Kafer, 2013; Crenshaw, 1989). Firdaus Kanga’s semi-autobiographical novel *Trying to Grow* (1990) offers a compelling space for such an analysis. The book is set in postcolonial Bombay, it narrates the life of Brit who is a boy with osteogenesis imperfecta, whose body, far from being reduced to a symbol of limitation, is rendered as a source of resistance, sensuality, and self-assertion.

With the use of humour and first-person narrative, *Trying to Grow* critiques ableist, medicalized, and heteronormative views of how society views a non-normative protagonist, while at the same time celebrating the intersectionality of disability, Parsi cultural identity, and queer aspiration. This study argues that the novel redefines the “imperfect body” by portraying it as a locus of narrative agency and multiplicity, rather than deviance. By engaging with the Social Model of Disability (Oliver), Narrative Medicine (Charon), Queer Crip Theory (Kafer), and the theory of Intersectionality (Crenshaw), the paper examines how Kanga’s narrative subverts the medical gaze, challenges rigid identity categories, and articulates alternative, marginalized forms of embodiment.

Research Objective

Trying to Grow (1990), widely read under disability studies, is examined to understand how it respropriates the idea of ‘imperfect body’. The study explores this notion by further investigating the underlying intersecting identities in the novel. The prime objective of the research work delves into the identity of the protagonist, Brit, as an individual, and how the novel shows the medicalized, heteronormative, and abelist viewpoints through his character; and further, how his life is directed by his physical challenges, socio-cultural background and queer fluidity.

This research work discusses the following aims to achieve the prime objective:

1. To investigate how Brit, as a first-person narrator, articulates his lived experiences of being a physically challenged person, and still manages to stand himself as an independent individual.
2. To critically examine how societal impediments affect Brit’s life as a physically challenged person.
3. To analyse how Brit’s queer sexuality disrupts conventional norms of desire and embodiment.
4. To investigate how Brit’s Parsi cultural background interacts with his disability and sexuality, contributing to his unique self-construction.

Research Methodology

This qualitative study employs an interdisciplinary literary analysis to examine how *Trying to Grow* (1990) critiques normative discourses of

embodiment. The methodology integrates Medical Humanities, Critical Body Studies, Queer Crip Theory, and Intersectionality to explore the representation of disability, identity, and desire through the protagonist, Brit.

Medical Humanities

Medical Humanities allows for a reading of the body beyond clinical objectification. Through Narrative Medicine, this study examines how Brit's first-person narration resists the medical gaze and asserts narrative agency (Charon 4). Phenomenology of the Lived Body considers his embodied experience as central to identity formation, not as pathology (Merleau Ponty 93). The Social Model of Disability is used to highlight how Brit's limitations are socially constructed rather than biologically determined (Oliver 33).

Critical Body Studies

Critical Body Studies critiques dominant norms of physicality and appearance. Drawing on feminist and fat studies discourse, this framework interrogates how Brit's non-normative body disrupts ideals of beauty, productivity, and bodily competence (LeBesco 75; Garland Thomson 526).

Queer Crip Theory

Queer Crip Theory examines the interrelation of queerness and disability. It provides a lens through which Brit's body and desire emerge as sites of resistance to compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness (Kafer 13; McRuer 2).

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is employed to explore how Brit's disability, Parsi heritage, and queer identity intersect to shape his lived experience. This approach emphasizes the compounded effects of social marginalization across multiple identity axes (Crenshaw 1245; Garland Thomson 525).

Resisting the Medical Gaze: Narrative and Embodiment

Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* offers a sharp critique of the medical gaze, which, as Michel Foucault argues, abstracts the body from the person, reducing individuals to clinical cases (Foucault 89). From birth, Brit is subjected to this gaze. The doctor's diagnosis—"Your boy is born with bones brittle as glass... He'll probably be toothless, too" (Kanga 30)—defines him solely through impairment, erasing complexity and foreclosing agency.

However, Brit's first-person narration functions as a form of resistance. His self-aware, humorous, and emotionally nuanced voice challenges the depersonalizing effects of medical discourse. Reflecting on his own pain, he observes: "Not because of the pain but because of the terror..." (Kanga 43), revealing an inner life absent from clinical assessments.

This narrative strategy aligns with Narrative Medicine, which, as Rita Charon suggests, reclaims patient agency by centering lived experience over diagnosis (Charon 4). Brit's storytelling reframes his body not as deficient but as a site of meaning and identity.

A phenomenological reading further emphasizes this shift. According to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, the body is a way of being in the world, not merely a physical object (93). Brit's descriptions of pain—"Bone-deep fear stays... Four times worse than anyone else's" (Kanga 44)—highlight how he

experiences his body from within, asserting subjectivity in the face of objectification.

In *Trying to Grow*, Brit's narrative becomes an act of reclamation. Rather than submitting to clinical definitions, he constructs a self-rooted in embodied experience. Kanga thus resists the medical gaze by privileging lived reality over biomedical reductionism, a gesture echoed in contemporary disability studies (Garland-Thomson 525).

Disability as a Social Construct: Challenging Ableist Structures

Building on its critique of the medical gaze, *Trying to Grow* advances a nuanced interrogation of disability through the lens of the Social Model. This model, central to disability studies, distinguishes between physical impairment and disability, arguing that the latter is constructed by societal exclusion, not inherent deficit (Oliver 33). Kanga's narrative consistently reflects this distinction by situating Brit's limitations within a broader ableist framework.

Brit's physical environment often restricts his autonomy, not because of his condition, but due to a lack of structural accessibility. His dependence on others is frequently dictated by design, as when he requires help getting into a taxi: "The taxi-driver came to my rescue... I knew he might crush my ribs, but what the heck, I was desperate" (Kanga 187). The moment highlights not only the physical challenges posed by the city's infrastructure but also the normalization of such inaccessibility. Amy's gendered remark—"It needs a man to lift a man"—reinforces the cultural scripting of dependency and masculinity around able-bodied norms.

Social stigma compounds these structural barriers. Brit is consistently misread due to his stature and mobility. Madame Manekshaw's comment—"To a lot of people you seem stupid because you are so short and... because you can't walk" (Kanga 63)—exemplifies the conflation of physical difference with intellectual or emotional inadequacy. Such statements echo widespread attitudinal barriers that infantilize or marginalize disabled individuals, limiting their participation in social, educational, and romantic spheres (Garland-Thomson 527).

Rather than portraying disability as a personal tragedy, Kanga reframes it as a socio-political condition. Brit's frustrations emerge not from his body but from the world's refusal to accommodate it. As a disability scholar Tom Shakespeare notes, "disabling barriers exist not just in architecture, but in attitudes, organization, and culture" (Shakespeare 1996). Kanga's novel brings these dimensions into sharp relief.

Through Brit's experiences, *Trying to Grow* critiques the systemic failure of society to adapt to embodied difference. In doing so, it aligns with the Social Model's core premise: disability is less about broken bodies and more about broken systems.

Queer Crip Embodiment: Redefining Desire

Trying to Grow subverts cultural narratives that desexualize disabled bodies by presenting Brit's queer, disabled identity as a site of desire and self-assertion. Drawing from Queer Crip Theory, which critiques compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness (McRuer 2; Kafer 13), Kanga reframes

Brit's body not as lack, but as a source of agency and erotic power.

Brit's remark—"They thought my bones were brittle, but my desires were made of steel" (Kanga 152)—defies ableist assumptions of passivity and asexuality. His "single-minded pursuit of lust" (Kanga 88) further asserts his sexual autonomy, challenging dominant norms that equate desirability with physical perfection.

Through the lens of critical body studies, Brit's experiences challenge normative aesthetics by emphasizing relational and emotional intimacy. His interactions with other marginalized characters affirm a broader spectrum of attraction beyond bodily normativity (LeBesco 80; Garland-Thomson 528). Amy's affirmation—"Brit, you are the sexiest man I've ever met" (Kanga 225)—signals a redefinition of desire rooted in mutual recognition rather than social ideals.

Brit's queer crip embodiment becomes a means of reclaiming sexuality on his own terms. Kanga's narrative not only resists heteronormative and ableist scripts but reconstructs desire as inclusive, embodied, and liberating.

Intersectionality and Parsi Identity

In *Trying to Grow*, Brit's Parsi heritage functions as a crucial intersectional layer that shapes his experience of disability and queerness. Drawing on Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, which highlights how overlapping identities produce distinct forms of marginalization (1245), Kanga presents Brit's cultural identity as both a support system and a source of constraint. Although Brit's family offers an impressive emotional support system—"built a wall of love around my brittle bones" (Kanga 130)—his quest to self-expression is hindered by cultural norms related to marriage, religion, and propriety. This is visible when Brit's father Sam, condemns the proposal of inter-religious marriage of his daughter Dolly. He says, "How will you live without pork curry and smoked ham?" (Kanga 145). This remark is out of strict Parsi values which is reiterated multiple times in the novel that 'Good Parsi girls, marry Good Parsi Boys.' Such cultural utterances also condition Brit, where he also has to think before taking any such decisions in life which might go against the cultural values of his social milieu.

Similarly, such cultural limitations imposed on Brit become challenging for him, even though he comes from the Parsi community, which benefits from many socio-economic advantages. One such example: as a Parsi, Sera was an embodiment of the community's longstanding infatuation with Englishness and foreign prestige which was evident in her defence of Campion School's foreign (Spanish and Irish) priests and her dismissal of other local schools. In contrast, Madame Manekshaw advocated for Brit's admission into a co-educational school, expressing concern about the potential impact of an all-boys environment on what she termed Brit's "budding sexuality." As readers, one may also feel that Manekshaw's decision might have helped Brit make better choices around this sexual orientation. Her discomfort with an all-boys school hinted at the omnipresent fear and misunderstanding surrounding queerness, especially in the context of disability and childhood. Homosexuality is still a taboo in the Indian society. When talking about the Parsi community,

such an orientation is more or less equivalent to another kind of deformity, which intersects with the physical challenges and limitations that a person with disability has; clearly evident in the case of Brit. Hence, in such a complicated position, he is continuously confused and entangled in social expectations/cultural obligations and inherent desires. He is not able to take a firm stand when he is already facing challenges due to his physical deformity. Hence, Kanga presents Brit as a complex character who keeps struggling in this intersectionality of his disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, self-consciousness and socio-cultural norms. This criticises the 'normal' categorisations of identity in society and how the complexity of intersectionality also becomes a source of resilience to a person like Brit.

Resistance and Resilience: Venting through Humour and Irony

Trying to Grow surfaces many crucial issues through Brit's mouth as words of humour. It not only brings relief to Brit but also helps him voice his inner thoughts and show resistance to the societal outlook and attitude towards him. Wit and irony become instruments to expose the ableist sympathies of people towards him and their assumptions related to his physical limitations. It also aids Brit to assert his narrative authority. Brit often uses irony to highlight society's discomfort with disability. When Madame Manekshaw worries about "breaking him," he quips, "You likely will," (Kanga 56) turning her concern into sharp humor. In another scene, he avoids an emotional interaction by counting toothbrush colors (Kanga 45), subtly resisting the expected sentimentality tied to disability. These moments show Brit's refusal to conform to how society expects disabled individuals to think or feel.

The absurdity of a world that is not fit for bodies like Brit's own is brought to light through his wit and humour, which helps him cope up with self-consciousness and bear the challenges as a physically challenged individual. Through his ironic interpretation of "normalcy," he deconstructs constraining ideas of ability and strength, thereby reinventing fragility as a type of insight. According to Garland-Thomson's theory, this type of humour has the potential to re-establish agency by disrupting cultural narratives from within (528). Through the use of irony, Kanga is able to construct a protagonist that challenges marginalisation with brilliance, so transforming humour into a powerful instrument of self-definition.

Interpersonal Relationships: Between Acceptance and Constraint

Interpersonal relationships play a crucial role in shaping an individual. In case of Brit, his interpersonal relationships with family, friends and acquaintances act as safe spaces for him where his disability, emotions, and sense of identity can come together. Using the Social Model of Disability and Intersectionality, *Trying to Grow* shows how these relationships both help Brit feel accepted and also make his understanding of himself more nuanced.

Brit's interpersonal relationships—particularly with family and close friends—function as private spaces where disability, warmth, and negotiation of identity converge. Guided by the Social Model of Disability and Intersectionality, *Trying to Grow* depicts these interactions as spheres that both validate and complicate Brit's self-perception.

In his Parsi family, affection and protection coexist with latent ableist beliefs. His mother's overprotectiveness, however sincere, frequently constrains his autonomy. Brit expresses, "I didn't want someone always to be there" (Kanga 59), highlighting the conflict between reliance and the aspiration for autonomy—fundamental to numerous disabled experiences (Oliver 33).

Beyond familial relationships, friendships provide a range of reactions. Certain characters appreciate Brit's intellect and wit, offering him opportunities for meaningful conversations. These positive interactions immediately confront societal marginalization and enhance Brit's self-esteem, but, intrinsic biases remain. Ruby's remark—"You're awfully ugly... I could forget the way you looked" (Kanga 91)—illustrates how internalized ableism may undermine even intimate relationships.

An intersectional perspective elucidates how Brit's cultural and sexual identities influence these relationships. Negotiating queerness inside a strict Parsi milieu complicates his social position. As a result, relationships serve as places for the ongoing negotiation of identity; while these connections may be supportive, they are frequently limited by cultural standards of normalcy and acceptability (Crenshaw 1245). Kanga illustrates that human relationships are not solely emotional connections but significant social landscapes where Brit's developing identity is challenged, validated, and transformed.

Findings

The present research's thorough examination of Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* reveals several significant insights on the novel's nuanced subversion of traditional disability narratives and its complex representation of identity. The analysis reveals that Brit's first person narrative voice serves as a powerful tool for reclaiming agency, actively countering the depersonalizing effects of the medical gaze. Kanga, by emphasizing his subjective, embodied experience, effectively contests the reduction of individuals with impairments to mere clinical diagnoses, thus agreeing with the core tenets of Narrative Medicine and phenomenology (Charon 4; Merleau-Ponty 93).

Secondly, the data clearly highlight the novel's significant engagement with the Social Model of Disability. Brit's daily struggles are regularly identified as direct results of cultural restrictions and widespread ableist frameworks, rather than as intrinsic weakness. This contrast emphasizes that the prevailing environment and cultural attitudes, rather than the impairment itself, substantially shape disability, hence validating Oliver's foundational view (Oliver 33).

Moreover, the research clarifies how Brit's queer sexuality expressly redefines the boundaries of desire, challenging existing ideals of desirability and physical embodiment. The novel presents a radical re-conceptualization of erotic power through Brit's "single-minded pursuit of lust" (Kanga 88) and his affirmative interpersonal interactions, directly contesting compulsory able-bodiedness and heteronormativity, as extensively theorized by Queer Crip Theory (McRuer 2; Kafer 13).

The study conclusively demonstrates the critical importance of intersectionality in the complex formation of Brit's identity. His Parsi ancestry,

intricately linked to his disability and queerness, fosters a unique lived experience marked by communal support and evident cultural limitations. This layered portrayal meticulously illustrates Crenshaw's assertion that the confluence of overlapping identities engenders unique manifestations of marginalization and resilience (Crenshaw 1245), thereby significantly enriching the novel's contribution to scholarly discourse on diverse, embodied subjectivities.

Firdaus Kanga's *Trying to Grow* functions as a compelling counter-narrative to prevailing depictions of disability, contesting medicalized discourses and conventional body standards. This paper demonstrates resistance and self-definition through Brit's lived experiences with an intersectional identity- being a disabled person, homosexual and a Parsi. The first-person narrative of Brit challenges the medical gaze by emphasising lived and subjective experiences over abstract clinical objectivity, adhering to the concept of Narrative Medicine and phenomenology. The Social Model of Disability reframes limitations as products of societal and cultural barriers rather than inherent physical impairments (Oliver, 33). Brit's non-conforming sexuality, interpreted through the lens of Queer Crip Theory, resists normative expectations of able-bodiedness and heteronormativity. Simultaneously, his Parsi identity, understood through an intersectional perspective, adds a culturally specific layer to his experiences of both marginalization and resilience (Crenshaw, 1245).

In addition to this, Brit makes strategic use of humour and irony as weapons of empowerment, changing potential tales of pity into affirmations of selfhood and agency. The complex and ever-evolving creation of identity at the edges is brought to light by his relationships with his family, friends, and the larger society. These encounters reflect a subtle dynamic of acceptance, tension, and ongoing negotiation.

Trying to Grow is an important literary intervention that may be found within the disciplines of Medical Humanities, Disability Studies, and Queer Studies. Thereader is compelled to rethink and reevaluate conventional ideals of normalcy, worth, and inclusion as a result of Kanga's portrayal of Brit, which is complex. The story makes a compelling argument that identity is not something that is derived from a lack of resources or limitations, but rather from the lived experience, cultural situatedness, and the unapologetic assertion of one's own selfhood.

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HAUNTING DIASPORAS AND THE UNDEAD PAST IN COLSON WHITEHEAD'S *ZONE ONE*

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Abstract: Colson Whitehead's *Zone One* is a post-apocalyptic novel that presents Manhattan to be ravaged by zombies. Through the character of Mark Spitz, the protagonist and a diasporic survivor, themes like culture, memory and trauma are explored. The zombies do not just become symbols of a poignant past but also function as indicators of black diasporic consciousness. Paul Gillroy's *Black Atlantic*, which acts as the major theoretical framework to understand hybridity and post-national consciousness, helps to highlight the undead residue of history and dislocation in the novel. This paper bridges the gap between speculative fiction and diasporic narrative to demonstrate how diasporic memory can be reframed by catastrophes and conjectural possibilities.

Keywords: Diasporic Memory, Speculative Fiction, Cultural Trauma, Dislocation, Hybridity and Double Consciousness.

Paul Gillroy's *Black Atlantic* identifies how Black identity is influenced by various societal factors like slavery, racial oppression and identity crisis. He also adds a clear comprehension of W.E.B Du Bois' "double consciousness," which notes the acquired tendency of people belonging to the coloured race to live with the consciousness of how they see themselves and how they are seen. He further notes how the Blacks are left voiceless in the modern world which gives an entirely different complexion. Gilroy not just stops with these aspects but extends till the notions of national identity and fluid diasporic identity that define geographical boundaries.

Zone One by Colson Whitehead is a novel which is post-apocalyptic with New York City as its setting. It goes through a major zombie outbreak which indeed makes it a story of survival and trauma. But it also explores some intense concepts like race and the undead past which align with the ideas presented in *The Black Atlantic*, especially in the contexts of double consciousness and cultural identity. This paper presents the influence of the past, race and identity crisis in survival through the protagonist, Mark Spitz, who struggles to keep himself in a broken world.

Colonialism and slavery have indispensable roles in the Western Culture, according to Paul Gillroy, whereas the modern world focuses on freedom and growth. As he notes, "racial slavery was integral to western culture" (Gillroy, Preface) and all the growth it marks can never be attained without the sufferings of the Blacks. Modernity might promise freedom but in compromise it takes absolute control and undeniable violence. *Zone One* shows the failure of the modern society and all the advancements by the coercion of people to rebuild and restore Manhattan which is filled with deaths. Whitehead describes Manhattan as "intricate delusion" filled with lies which can associated with the comments of Gillroy about the modern world. The usage of

slave ship moving across the Atlantic by Gilroy marks transformation and the persistence to survive with the metaphors of micro-cultural and political systems. *Zone One* pictures Manhattan as a city which is shipwrecked and without any future. Being a prey to the zombie attack, the city in contrast to its joyful past has been filled with survivors walking back and forth for a living.

The idea of double consciousness can be traced all throughout the novel and Du Bois notes that as, “One ever feels his two-ness – an American, a Negro: two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings” (*The Souls of Black Folk*, 1903) and he also stresses the tension and the plight of transnational identity as, “Striving to be both European and black requires some specific forms of double consciousness (Gilroy, 1). Even if the novel does not overtly emphasize racial tensions, it persistently shows racial awareness in a post-apocalyptic world. The protagonist, Mark Spitz directly embodies this from a very mediocre American life and he has “strange facility for the mandatory” and had “successfully executed all the hurdles of his life’s stages... with unwavering competence and nary a wobble into exceptionality or failure” (107). This shows that he is far away from being normal. Even his nickname “Mark Spitz” which is a reference to the Olympic swimmer marks his inability to swim.

Gilroy in his *Black Atlantic* notes that someone must occupy the space between dominant identities and their exclusions. Spitz witnesses the failure of modernity which makes him carry his consciousness with a greater hardship. “Modernity not only facilitated the cruelty of slavery but also enabled the philosophical and political challenge to it” (Gilroy, 47). This idea makes modernity both oppressive and redemptive which can be associated with Manhattan. It becomes an example to failure and erasure of identity. The protagonist struggles to establish a balance between the pre-apocalyptic world which he belongs to and the world which has lost its course after the outbreak of zombies. This makes him a victim of an undead past and absurdity that handcuffs him in the present.

The concept of “the slave sublime” represents the historical trauma that came as a result of colonialization, slavery and imperialism. This affects cultural memory in the sense that it is often associated with a community and the struggles it had been facing. Gilroy notes that memory is a continual recollection which evolves during the oath of survival and the experience attained is often transmitted to arts and literature. This has been the case with *Black Atlantic* cultures which has a memory capturing devised and unforgettable incidents. Also, the trauma is not just merely a psychological factor but also a political and spatial entity that makes those cities an abditory for all the suffering.

The persistence of a fragile cultural memory can be noted throughout Whitehead’s novel and the protagonist has been constantly reminded of his undead past which makes him a victim of Post-Apocalyptic Stress Disorder. Regarding the present, “skels” who are the walking dead function as symbols that highlight the traumatizing memory, which refuse to stay inert. Also, “stragglers” which are zombie-like figures that stand still in certain spaces are

riveted of their common routine. This embodies the historical memory of their past that, “They weren’t going anywhere, locked in old loops of behavior... history as repetition” (53). This shows that Whitehead is particular about using the zombies as memory aids reflecting their burial as act, that is beyond remembering their past. While discussing the trauma of society, one cannot ignore Gilroy’s views on diasporic memory. He notes that memory in Black Atlantic is “without the consolation of tears” (Gilroy, 146) which can also be seen in *Zone One* which shows the process of losing personal emotions on the path to survive. This has also been the factor that forces him to remember all the memory that he has disconnected himself from.

Gilroy proposes a counter argument to all the definitions of Black Identity with cultural hybridity. As he notes, The history of the black Atlantic yields a course of lessons as to the instability and mutability of identities which are always unfinished, always being remade. It is, after all, essentially an essay about the inescapable hybridity and intermixture of ideas (Gilroy, Preface)

Through *Zone One*, Whitehead explores cultural identity in a bodily medium establishing the differences between humans and zombies. The phenomenal survivors often address themselves in a short form as “pheenies” which not just mean that they are survivors but also gives the sense that they are altered beings. Also, the protagonist categorizes people as alive but haunted, human but scare and individual yet representative. Whitehead’s picturisation matches with Gilroy’s idea of cultural hybridity which does not glorify multiculturalism. It suggests that a “counterculture of modernity” is a result of all the sufferings and trauma.

Hybridity is not just limited to the cultural aspect but also extends to political identification. Tracing back to the Reconstruction era after the American Civil war, the government promised inclusivity but separated them. This is also the attempt to rebuild Manhattan for the sake of hiding the pain and trauma underneath. Spitz mocks this as, “They’ll fix it when they move in” (215). Gilroy’s slave ship highlights the immigration and hybridity of those individuals who lack a specific identity, and the Atlantic Ocean as a factor that binds people and their cultural values. This fractal structure of the Black Atlantic linear historical narrative and blurs national frontiers.

Manhattan, as referred by Whitehead, is a zone where these diasporic subjects wander through the city with the memory of their undead past. The protagonist who has a serious goal of living in a sleek apartment spends his life roaming around the ruins. The contrast between his pre-apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic life mirrors Black Atlantic’s restless motion with no homeland and nowhere to escape. *Zone One* shows how all the ideas and efforts taken to promote nationalism land in failure, and hybridity functions between these spaces, which can be related to Mark Spitz’s identity. Stuart Hall’s view of identity substantiates these ideas that identity is the by-product of forceful history, the desperation to end up as someone and the role of a person constructed in this society. As Hall notes, “Identity is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think. It is always constructed through memory, fantasy, narrative.”

Achille Mbembe's *Necropolitics* gives a significant understanding on the lives of the people. The government or any authoritative body which has exercisable power takes the pivotal role of deciding who needs to be alive and who can be left to die. As Mbembe writes, "Under conditions of necropower, the human body becomes the ultimate expression of state control" (Mbembe, 18). *t* also shares the state driven survival scenarios which pus the marginalized and voiceless segment of society into the category that they can be left to die. This also acts as a medium to establish the fact that the government prefers order over justice and reconstruction of the city; ignoring the past seems to be the priority than saving innocent lives. *Zone One* shows the state's sovereign power through the incident in which Mark Spitz participates to clean the dead lives in the process of reconstructing the city and establishing order. Mbembe presents this as, "Death is not simply an act but a space where sovereignty is performed" (Mbembe, 23).

Zone One shows post-racial irony in terms that survival happens even beneath systemic absurdity. Stuart Hall warns the act of hiding such racial differences in postmodern discourse which notes the modality in which the class is lived. But these understandings of race and hybridity cannot be universalized and there is a need to understand this with certain historical contexts and cultural background. Whitehead's novel satirizes by highlighting the Buffalo government's act of hiding violence and hierarchy through the reconstruction of the city. This is reflected in the words, "There was no more gossip and no more news" (113) in which these hierarchical structures are used to manipulate and deny the undeniable truth. The following are the words from the preface, "the closure of the categories with which we conduct our political lives" which show the denial for redemption and closure.

Zone One, while seen with the lens of Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* resonates trauma, collapse of modernity and hybridity in a dead post-apocalyptic world. The association of late-capitalist and post-apocalyptic forms with respect to *The Black Atlantic* and *Zone One* shows the ambivalence of identity formation. From the ideas of both Whitehead and Gilroy, identity is not stationary but flexible and changing. It changes based on the situations and during the path of survival, which takes an indispensable place in memory and keeps haunting. This integration with Du Bois' "twoness," fluidity of identity by Stuart Hall and Mbembe's necropolitics portrays how diaspora is stemmed in modernity. This paper also presents a significant understanding of the undead past in the sense that manipulation and erasure of memory can never pave the way for resilience and survival. It suggests that crossing the barrier of all those haunting memories can only be the answer to the exile and the diasporic consciousness.

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TRAUMATIC MEMORY IN STEPHEN KING'S *DOCTOR SLEEP*

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Abstract: The paper talks about the protagonists and their families who are facing traumatic memories in Stephen King's *Doctor Sleep*. It explores the dimensions of evil in each person's character and the secrets which bring trauma. *Doctor Sleep* is about human frailty to amplify both the fear and the psychological tension in a story. Traumatic memories are also used sporadically throughout Danny Torrance's adult life. He overcomes psychological struggles and comes to grip with himself as an adult. Stephen King was a horror writer because he used human psychology and otherworldly elements in his works. *Doctor Sleep* demonstrates how Stephen King uses normal spaces to create psychological effects with traumatic memory. In *Doctor Sleep*, Danny's psychic ability consists of something endemic.

Keywords: Trauma, Evil, Fear and Psychological Tension.

Introduction

Doctor Sleep is a ghost story about a family of three that decides to spend the winter in a deserted mountain hotel for financial reasons and to sort out a family problem. Jack Torrance, father of Danny, is an alcoholic. He starts a new life by accepting the job as a caretaker at the Overlook Hotel in order to earn money and reunite with his family.

The story begins with a strange thing that happens to the Torrances when they are alone. Moving hedges, unexplained sounds, weird dreams, and ghost's appearances are part of the terrific experiences the family goes through at this haunted place where the hotel is trying to possess them. The hotel Overlook is isolated. So Jack restarts his drinking habits, after seeing the alcohols and starts acting like a crazy fellow.

Doctor Sleep has the extreme violence and abuse perpetrated against children. In *Doctor Sleep*, traumatic memory manifests through Danny Torrance's psychic gift. The haunted Overlook Hotel merges supernatural horror with the exploration of internal human struggles. It tells about the origins of psychic powers and their implications for personal redemption and interpersonal connections. Jack Torrance and his family move to the hotel after Jack takes the role of caretaker. When the Torrance family stays inside the hotel they discover that their son Danny possesses a supernatural power called the shining. The psychic power of Danny enables him to witness unsightly hotel histories while conversing with imprisoned spirits walking through its hallways. It demonstrates how Stephen King uses normal spaces to create magical enigmas with extraordinary effects.

Trauma theory is a prevalent theory that started to gain more attention in the 1990s. Trauma theory is a way to identify the different ways in which trauma affects one's past and the present and also the ways in which traumatic memory is affecting the narrator to narrate the past events and to bear witness to certain traumatic events. In *Doctor Sleep*, Stephen King blends psychology with horror to create a narrative, deeply layered and complex with both genres. King embeds the trauma within every character's life to create a world where

they connect with the emotion and psychological problems are connected. The child has the power of shining which brings a ghost near him that makes the child afraid. The husband's drinking habit and the child's problem brings trouble to Wendy Torrance, wife of Jack. The shining has a violent power which brings good and bad ghosts near the child.

Patrick McAleer points out how King employs this technique to obscure the boundaries between the ordinary and the weird with which he toys in *Doctor Sleep*. Danny Torrance's psychic talent, "the shining", is written in a more natural way and accepted in the narrative, as opposed to rightly in his character.

Doctor sleep tells about Danny's struggle to overcome his past, which affects the central narrative interest of addiction and redemption. Danny's use of his psychic powers becomes a symbol of the way Danny learns to work with them constructively and continues to recover and pull through emotional lows. The trauma consists of faith in humanity, human weakness, and human strength.

Danny's unresolved psychological scars, instead of the ghosts of the Overlook Hotel's myriad haunting residents, like Mrs. Massey, are the ghosts of the Overlook Hotel. King externalizes Danny's spiritual and emotional dilemmas with the use of psychology trauma, to disappear abstract emotional conflicts making these spirits physical. The dual character of the shining as a gift and a burden has emotional connection to the shining as a symbol of Danny's ongoing war with the legacies of his abusive father and with his addictions.

Through this normalization, King concentrates on Danny's internal troubles: his trauma, and his addiction, choosing the supernatural to serve as a vehicle rather than a cause for these struggles. Similarly, the True Knot, a seemingly ordinary group of people traveling in recreational vehicles, represents a chilling duality: This outer normalcy also hides their psychic vampire nature and their predatory behavior feeding on children's gifts (McAleer 222). The shining operates as a metaphor for Danny's struggle to overcome his past that affects the central narrative interest of Kno's exploration of addiction and redemption.

King's interweaves the magical with the mundane to create a host of horrors. The True Knot as a whole does not seem like anything out of the ordinary roaming around the RV lifestyle, with them blending in so nicely to the picture of America But as psychic predators feeding on the 'steam' of gifted children their awful true nature is used (King 250–320). This duality is personified by the charismatic and ruthless leader of the True Knot, Rose the Hat. Her charm and guile hide her malice, making her a genuinely sinister villain.

Doctor Sleep shows that trauma is about the human resilience, and vulnerability. The traumatic memory is an embedded part of a character's reality. It has an emotionally powerful story that assemblages the psychological that expresses the fear and the personality of the characters. In the story the main three characters have psychological problems.

Wendy Torrance is worried about her son Danny who has a

psychological trauma in the hotel Overlook. Danny has a power of shinning which attack ghost near him and there are many ghosts in the hotel. Wendy Torrance is a modern woman but she does her duty properly as a housewife.

Psychology and emotions lift the horror beyond its traditional limit of fear and shock. *Doctor Sleep* shows the deep personal and psychological trauma. Jack Torrance is possessed by the evil spirits. He is completely occupied by negative thoughts and he tries to kill his wife and son Danny in the state of trance. His wife tries her best to protect her son from her possessed husband. At the end of the story, she is severely injured. In the attempt to save her son, she pushes her husband in the floor and he falls down and bleeds to death. Then she, with her son, leaves the hotel Overlook to start a new life.

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**METAMORPHOSIS OF THE HUMAN MIND: ANALYZING
SUBALTERN PERSPECTIVES IN REVATHY'S *THE TRUTH ABOUT
ME: A HIJRA LIFE STORY* AND SHYAM SELVADURAI'S
*FUNNY BOY***

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Abstract: Revathy is a transgender activist and writer based in Bangalore. Shyam Selvadurai is a Sri Lankan Canadian novelist. *A Hijra Life Story* deals with Revathy's ordeal to be an independent individual in a world where she is restricted from expressing herself. *Funny Boy* details the life of Arjie, a boy at the cusp of his manhood, who uncovers his homosexual feelings against the backdrop of ethnic war. This research paper analyzes the lives of the different genders and their existence in a hostile environment.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, Gender, Subaltern, Culture, Hybridity and Agency.

The patriarchal society manifests the power of autonomy, which it exercises through colonialism and chauvinistic propaganda over the gendered communities. Women, the second sex, have created a safe space for themselves through feminism, away from the influence of patriarchy, but the third sex, the gender subalterns, are left vulnerable, and their existence is impacted by the postcolonial perspective prevalent in society.

The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story deals with the life of Revathi, a transgender, and her ordeal to be an independent individual. The novel captures her heart-rending journey of transforming into a woman. *Funny Boy* is a novel which details the life of Arjie, a boy at the verge of his manhood, who uncovers his homosexual feelings and their consequences, surrounded by the tumultuous background of the Sinhalese and Tamil ethnic war. The novel delineates how the gender subalterns are excluded from society and are alienated from their own bodies and feelings.

This research paper analyzes the lives of queers and their existence in the hostile environment, which is examined through the lens of postcolonialism. All those who are suppressed and marginalized in society can be termed as subalterns. "Gramsci's use of the term 'subaltern' further invites us to appreciate the common properties of subordinate groups as a whole - the shared fact of their subordination, their intrinsic weaknesses, their limited strengths" (Arnold 33).

A. Revathi is a transgender activist based in Bangalore and is a member of the Hijra community. She writes about her life experiences in books to create understanding towards Hijras. She works towards the upliftment of the LGBT community. Shyam Selvadurai is a renowned Sri Lankan-Canadian novelist. He has won the prestigious Lambda Literary Award for Gay Fiction. He is a writer, who focuses on gender and ethnicity in his novels. *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Life Story* is an autobiography about how Doraisamy became Revathi. It records the troubles and tribulations she made to go through even after her sex reassignment surgery. Due to her status as a transgender, she

went through a lot of ordeals, starting from longing for love, losing her family members, humiliation by individuals and society at large, starvation, and a lack of respect from people. *Funny Boy* is a coming-of-age novel loosely based on Shyam Selvadurai's childhood. The novel features Arjie, a Tamil Sri Lankan boy, and his family in Sri Lanka amidst the ethnic riots and mob uprisings. Arjie's identity as a Tamil puts him and his family in a precarious state; further, his sexual identity double marginalizes him. Both of these writers record their experiences of being a gender subaltern in a world filled with the chaos of patriarchy. The matrix of domination, charged with postcolonial aspects, eliminates the subalterns from society, and they stand defiant in the face of alienation, echoing their voices through these novels.

The protagonists of both the novels are set against aggressive surroundings. Arjie and Revathi are both rejected by society under three levels. Firstly, their sexuality and gender identity are highlighted to marginalize them. Secondly, their minority status: Arjie is a Sri Lankan Tamil, and Revathi is a Hijra. Thirdly, their economic background—the class and caste that the characters fit into also play a vital part in their position in society. Both Arjie and Revathi are isolated by society, which uses different names to highlight their deviance. Arjie is ridiculed as a funny boy, sissy, faggot, and pansy. Revathi is called number 9, a female thing, and a female boy. By labelling them with these names, they are estranged from mainstream society. Their deviation from heteronormativity impacts their identity formation and perception of life.

In *Funny Boy*, the children talk about "territoriality and leadership" where they divide their territories according to their gender and play games. Arjie joins the girls." There is also hierarchy in the game they play, called Bride-bride, in which the groom has the least importance and the bride has the most attention. Arjie always played as the bride in the game. When Arjie's distant female cousin, Tanuja, "Her Fatness" questions the authority he holds over the game Bride-bride and remarks, "A boy cannot be the bride" (Selvadurai 11). Revathi, in her childhood as Doraisamy, got bullied by almost everyone around her. He finds interest in playing with the girls, doing household chores, and dancing in disguise. There is evidence of the invasion of childhood by the patriarchy, which promotes gender-related stereotypes, casteism, and class consciousness in children. Arjie and Doraisamy are both policed for their interest in playing feminine games. Doraisamy's mother forbids him from playing with low-caste Chakkili children. Arjie harbours a dislike for Tanuja; although she is from America, she belongs to the working class. As children face these kinds of discrimination in their early life, it influences their character development as individuals.

The novels are set in a postcolonial world where the subalterns strive to survive. Spivak's concept of strategic essentialism is evident in these novels, as in *Funny Boy* the Tigers fight for a separate nation for the Tamils: "There was a group in Jaffna called the Tamil Tigers. They wanted a separate country and the Sinhalese were very angry about this. Ammachi often talked about the Tigers. She was on their side and declared that if they did get a separate state, which they would call Eelam, she would be the first to go and live in it." (Selvadurai

61) In *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Story*, the Hijras have a separate space called Jamaat, a forum which settles disputes: "There is no rule or law of the land. That tells us to do this, but hijras have their own rules, culture, and rituals. The jamaat is their forum for mediating and pronouncing what is good and bad" (Revathi 62). The NGO organization Sangama, where Revathi is employed, also serves as a temporary abode. "Homosexuality is not abnormal, it is natural. Yet Indian law considers it a crime. Indian customs too criminalize it. Homosexuals cannot be open about their sexual orientation and cannot express their feelings in public. Sangama provides a space for them to be who they are. Here, they can ask questions, address anxieties about their sexuality" (Revathi 239).

The economically weak characters are exploited by capitalism and class consciousness in both the novels. In *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Story*, Revathi, due to her Hijra identity, is denied any respectable job and is pushed to work as a prostitute and take part in menial labour. Initially, she is denied her right to claim her property and is given a meagre amount later. Revathi has undergone psychological and physical torture in a police station as they take advantage of her sexual identity and marginalized status. In *Funny Boy*, there is an ethnic conflict between the Sinhalese and Tamils, but evidently, it is a veiled attack on the weaker section of society by the elites. Somaratne, a young Sinhalese boy who belongs to an economically backward family, is exploited by the police authorities as they arrest him under a fabricated case in order to hide the suspicions surrounding Daryl, an Australian journalist's death. As the police officer remarks, "Unfortunately, dishonesty is instinctive for this class" (Selvadurai 131); it is evident that class plays a vital role in the materialistic modern society.

Apart from the protagonists, there are also other characters who are exploited in terms of their minority status. In *Funny Boy*, Jegan Parameshwaran, a young Sri Lankan Tamil, although intelligent and hardworking, gets into trouble for his ethnic identity and past connection to Gandhiyam. He is oppressed and treated as a second-class citizen in his own country. He shows his resistance by stating, "On the other hand, what is the alternative? We cannot live like this under constant threat from the Sinhalese, always second-class citizens in our own country. As my father used to say 'It's small choices of rotten apples. Here you can be killed by the Sinhalese and there you can be killed by the police or the Tigers'" (Selvadurai 176).

In *The Truth About Me: A Hijra Story*, Shakuntala, a Hijra, is independent, earns money on her own and lives life on her terms. Due to her minority status, she is assaulted by a rogue and is also blackmailed to give him money. Minorities require agency from the outside world, like the Chelvaratnams getting the help of their neighbours to escape the mob attack and Revathi joining Sangama. The Sri Lankan Tamils and the Hijras are dehumanized by predominant ideological groups. Revathi opens up, stating, "There is this power in me, this urge to fight wrong. I don't know if it's because I was born a man and became a woman. I am not sure I'd have thus stood on a road and shouted had I been born a woman" (Revathi 229).

If *Funny Boy* is analysed from a postcolonial perspective, there is a clear indication of a metaphorical war among the characters Mr. Abeysinghe, also known as Black Tie, Principal of The Queen Victoria Academy, and Lokubandara, Vice Principal and political appointee in the same Academy. Black Tie is a product of a colonial upbringing; he strictly believes in European principles, but Lokubandara gives importance to Sinhalese culture and desires to change the school into a Buddhist school, monopolizing admissions only for Sinhalese students. Arjie thwarts Black Tie's plan to sustain the school's colonized history by showing his resistance and intentionally not reciting the poem correctly on stage. Therefore, Lokubandara might take over and initiate the school in native Sinhalese ideologies, though referred to as wicked. Similarly, in *Truth About Me: A Hijra Story*, there is a mention of the respected and prominent positions Hijras held before European colonialism. "In the old days, hijras waited upon queens and princesses. But today there are no queens; the rule of kings and queens has given way to the rule of ministers." (Revathi 44). In their Third Space, the Hijra community exercises rituals and practices which help them sustain their culture. The rituals and cultural practices of Hijras are considered strange according to Western standards, thereby causing epistemic violence that alienates them from society.

The enunciation that occurs in the Third Space helps the subalterns to evolve. Their epistemic knowledge and experience help them become hybrids, and they transgress from their subordinate position and the limitations of society. At the end of the story, Revathi, apart from all her differences, starts working at Sangama, an NGO. The Chelvaratnams move to Canada from Sri Lanka and start their lives as refugees for the betterment of their future.

There are incidents that echo cultural imperialism and the growing Western influence. The Chelvaratnams mimic Western culture in their food, dress, and habits. After going to Mumbai, Revathi takes keen interest in dressing in a modern way to highlight her feminine identity. Although they mimic Western culture in their lifestyle, they are neither accepted by modern/white society nor Indian society. "Mimicry returned as menacing mockery. An assertion of mastery countered the threat that the ambivalence of this mimicry posed to the binary opposition of the colonizer and the colonized..." (Prakash 333). The power and knowledge of the subalterns enable them to derive epistemic knowledge. In *Funny Boy*, Arjie's father remarks, "As Tamils, you have to learn how to play the game. Play it right, and you can do very well for yourself. The trick is not to make yourself conspicuous. Go around quietly, make your money, and don't step on anyone's toes" (Selvadurai 173).

Arjie and Revathi both believed in ideas that supported their feelings. Arjie genuinely thought that "if two people loved each other, everything was possible" (Selvadurai 100), and Revathi felt trapped as "a woman inside a man's body" (Revathi 15). Even as children, they were victims of playground politics. They are caught in between and not included, marginalized due to their gender: I would be caught between the boys' and the girls' worlds, not belonging or wanted in either" (Selvadurai 39). Arjie and Revathi's

ambivalence results in a split in their personalities. Their inability neither to submit to their feelings nor to oppose them becomes the crux of their suffering. It is clearly evident that their 'Self' and 'Other' are always in conflict.

Homi Bhabha's concept of 'Unhomeliness' divides the alienation of marginalized people in three ways. Firstly, psychologically, Arjie and Revathi are confused about their sexual orientation. The trauma they suffer due to their secrecy plagues them. Secondly, corporally, Arjie is humiliated and estranged by his parents, and Revathi suffers from violent beatings and confinement. And thirdly, geographically, Arjie's family moves to Canada to escape the ethnic conflict, and Revathi moves to Mumbai to be with her community. The unhomeliness they suffer at the hands of postcolonial society mars their identities. "The identity formation of postcolonial, diasporic peoples through an understanding of place and location is, I believe, integral in 'discovering' oneself" (Burney 44). Their subaltern status culminates in rootlessness. They are displaced from one place to another, which is due to the alienation and estrangement they experienced at the hands of the dominant matrix. *Funny Boy* and *Truth About Me: A Hijra Story* details the sufferings of the Others. These novels record their experience of being subaltern and their resistance to it in a postcolonial setting.

"It is impossible to retrieve the woman's voice when she was not given a subject-position from which to speak. This argument appears to run counter to the historiographical convention of retrieval to recover the histories of the traditionally ignored-women, workers, peasants, and minorities. Spivak's point, however, is not that such retrievals should not be undertaken but that the very project of recovery depends on the historical erasure of the subaltern "voice." (Prakash 1488)

Through these novels, minorities are given a chance to voice their experiences. The novels detail events from their perspective. As Arjie remarks, "I tried to muffle the sound of my weeping, but my voice cried out loudly as if it were the only weapon, I had against those who had destroyed my life." (Selvadurai 311). These poignant narratives shed light on the subalterns and the social injustices that they underwent in representation and forming an identity.

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GENDER STUDIES IN SUDHA MURTHY'S *GENTLY FALLS*

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Abstract: The paper deals with gender studies. It states that the woman suppresses their dreams and desires for their families, but they are ignored by their partners, and their marital relationship turns out to be fragile. In Sudha Murthy's *Gently Falls*, Shrimati sacrifices her studies and becomes a tourist guide. She gets a scholarship offer from Mike Collins, a foreign visiting professor. Shrimati's mother didn't allow her to marry Shrikant as both families were rivals. Bakula is a tree which shows the love blossoms between Shrimati and Shrikant. This novel consists of the traditional culture, which completely changes the lives of women. The role of gender made a drastic change in the life of women through financial, social and economic structures of the people.

Keywords: Gender Studies, Women, Suppression, Sacrifice and Culture.

Introduction

Sudha Murthy's novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* is a powerful exploration of gender roles, female identity, and societal norms within Indian middle-class society. Through the main character of Shrimati, the story talks about women's individuality which is often suppressed by societal expectations, marriage, and ambition of men, especially in the framework of traditional gender dynamics.

Gently Falls the Bakula, a novel by Sudha Murthy has the themes of love, marriage, and the pursuit of one's dreams. The story talks about the lives of Shrikant and Shrimati. The two bright students meet in college. Shrimati is a dedicated and ambitious student who falls in love with Shrikant who is more focused on his studies and future career.

The central concerns of Sudha Murthy's novels are women issues. The novel *Gently Falls the Bakula* talks about psychological problems. It consists of a marriage that loses the life of women like ambition and selfishness through the ideologies of family conflicts, Orthodoxy. The mother-in-law and the sister-in-law hate their daughter-in-law, Shrimati because of her higher educational qualification. Shrimati is dutiful, devoted, honest and affectionate wife to her husband. She leaves the pinnacle of glory of her profession in his IT field for the sake of her family. Though she sacrifices all her practical desires and dedicates her life to husband, Srikanth is unable to recognize her feelings. Finally, she loses her ability and decides to live her life as an individual in society without regret.

Shrimati falls in love with her neighbor Shrikant and the two get married. Srikanth joins an information technology company where he rapidly starts hiking in the corporate like a ladder. He works tirelessly and rises in the industry but Shrimati abandons her academic progress. After ten days of marriage, she moves to Bombay with her husband and wants to live a happy life. The mother-in-law of Shrimati demands more money which forces Shrimati to join a company. She also calls Shrimati as a barren woman.

Shrimati discovers that love between her and Shrikant has waned over

time. Women's position in marriage and society is characterised by the sacrifices they make to provide for their husbands and families. Shrimati, the primary character, uses her own goals and social expectations to represent the difficulties and obstacles she faces. Through Shrimati's story, Sudha Murty illustrates the difficulties of marriage and the value of respect, understanding, and compromise in a partnership. Due to a conflict between traditional and emotional components of culture, Shrimati chooses to break away from her culture and forges her own identity. Conversely, it pushes Shrikant's character in the direction of materialism. Bakula has eloquently illustrated how culture shapes people's lives, particularly for women.

The love between Shrimati and Shrikant is symbolised by the Bakula flower. The book tells the story of a love marriage that slowly falls apart because of the egotism of a husband who disregards his devoted wife's needs and uses her as a rung on the ladder to success. Shrimati leaves Shrikant because he puts his aspirations ahead of her. Even though the story finishes on a depressing note, the novel's conclusion fully lives up to the title. By asserting their positions as successful spouses, obedient life partners, and victims of society expectations in the guise of marriage, Sudha skilfully captures the modern woman, who is constantly willing to become a sacrifice.

However, Shrimati breaks free, makes a difficult choice, and recognises the need and chance to pursue her long-held desire of going to college—a dream she had given up on the altar of her husband's marriage and work. Shrimati comes to the realisation that her entire life has accomplished nothing in the years that have gone by. She frequently loses her temper and becomes frustrated over little matters since she is really concerned about Shrikant's disdain for her passions. She rarely lashes out at him with forceful statements, but when she does, Shrikant is full.

This paper discusses women's lives, marriages, goals, equal rights, and chances, as well as how they accept the fact that they must put up with their husbands' ignorance and lack of faith. Traditional and cultural norms should be used by society to govern women. The woman is powerful, but her silence does not imply acquiescence. At last, Shrimati decides to leave her emotionally empty marriage. She takes back her identity as a woman, a scholar, and a rebel who has the guts to live her own life. This encourages women to pursue education. She is forced to consider the significance of emotional recognition, independent identity, and self-worth in gender relations as a result of the schooling. The experiences of innumerable women torn between tradition and ambition are reflected in Shrimati's journey, which is both personal and regional.

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COUNTER NARRATIVE OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION: A NEW HISTORIC READING OF JOSEPH BRUCHAC'S *TWO ROADS*

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Abstract: Joseph Bruchac, a celebrated Native American novelist, sheds light on the struggles of the Native Americans during the Great Depression in his novel *Two Roads*. A New Historic reading unravels the conceals of cultural trauma and systemic inequalities of the minorities. This paper explores the marginal narrative of the Native Americans— their stories of survival, the hobo lifestyle as a resistance to the dominant culture and the largely ignored historical narratives preserved through oral literature.

Keywords: New Historicism, Indigenous Rights, Resilience, Survival and Counter Culture.

Introduction

Generally speaking, when writing a novel, the author creates a fictional world and picks a hero to tell his story. The story usually revolves around what happened to the hero. The hero is at the centre of the plot and all the scenarios are played out from his perspective. He draws the moral line and he is always the saviour. The hero's episodes become the dominant narrative that everything else becomes trivial. Thus, the author creates a world where his narrative is supreme. The same can be said about a journalist covering a news story. A small change in the narrative could altogether change the course of an event. Just like an author and a journalist, a historian yields the power to set narratives. He decides on the importance of the event; how certain things should be remembered, moreover if it should be remembered or not. Thus, history is never objective but a collection of prejudiced facts of people.

A traditional historical account of the historian is highly subjective. It is a subjective reproduction of 'facts' that focuses on the question 'what'. Traditional historians prefer and believe in a linear narrative of events as it helps them justify the chain of events that led to a particular event. This helps them analyse things through the prism of 'Zeitgeist' that is the spirit of the age. They collect the dominant ideas and place them on a pedestal and trivialize others. Thus, setting one particular narrative of an event. A New Historicist on the other hand is always on the search for the question 'how'. One wants to know how a particular event is represented in literature and other media such as periodicals. New Historicists want to understand how an event was interpreted in the past. They don't believe in linear narration of history and are open to all interpretations. To them, every information available is an interpretation and not a fact.

New Historicists believe that every narrative is a product of culture. Thus, when a historian records an event, it is very hard to produce an objective

analysis. The moral factor inspired by one's own culture churns in the labyrinth of the historian that his recordings are consciously or unconsciously inspired. Commenting on the influence and interplay of culture on narratives, Lois Tyson observes,

Any given event—whether it be a political election or a children's cartoon show—is a product of its culture, but it also affects that culture in return. In other words, all events—including everything from the creation of an art work, to a televised murder trial, to the persistence of or change in the condition of the poor—are shaped by and shape the culture in which they emerge. (Tyson 284)

Every narrative is culturally charged. So when a particular narrative is prescribed or rejected, it has undertones of culture. It is true for every recorded event in history. It is the ones who enjoy the perks of power that decide to set the panorama and the vantage from where things have to be looked at. The United States of the mid 1920s and 1930s was no different when it was reeling in a huge economic depression. Every narrative of recorded history is dominated by the white middle class Americans as if no people of other races even existed. They were the central figures and were portrayed as the most affected during the Great Depression.

Joseph Bruchac, a Native American novelist of Abenaki origin, brings to the forefront the struggles of the Native American people and the African American people during the tumultuous times in his novel *Two Roads*. A New Historic reading of the novel offers a counter narration of the Great Depression. It unravels the mysteries of hobo culture and the systemic inequalities of the minorities. It mainstreams the marginal narratives of the native Americans—their cultural trauma which was long ignored in the dominant historical narratives.

Counter Narrative of the Great Depression: A New Historic Reading Of Joseph Bruchac's Novel *Two Roads*

Joseph Bruchac brings to life the period of the Great Depression in his novel *Two Roads*. The mid 1920s and 1930s was a time of misery and misfortune for the United States of America. The nation that was riding the highs of the World War I victory suddenly saw its economy shattered. The stock market crashed, banks and companies filing for bankruptcy; industries that profited from war had nothing much to do. Veterans returned home and found their jobs taken away and unemployment skyrocketed. The economy largely built on the credit system couldn't mortgage any further and lost their houses, businesses, and agricultural farmlands. One such family that lost its livelihood overnight was William Black.

After losing everything, William Black and his son Cal Black, rode the railcars and lived the life of hobos. They were the Knights of the Road who followed and adhered to the ethical code. They travelled across the country in search of menial jobs and ate from their hard-earned money. They had rules that guided their lives, the first of which was, "Try to be a gentleman at all times" (Bruchac 16). The Great Depression saw a return and rise in hobos and tramps. Although there is no definite record of the etymology of the word hobo,

it is usually associated with the home bound soldiers who hopped on to the rail cars after their service in the Civil War. Prof. Clark C Spence, a professor of history at the University of Illinois differentiates between the hobos and tramps. He says, “hobo is a migratory worker, a tramp is a migratory non worker” (Spence 6).

William Black was a Corporal in the Second Division during World War I and returned home to find his farms taken away by the bank. After the death of his wife, he and his son chose to be a hobo. He was so well respected amongst the hobo community that he was better known as Railroad Will. His life in the army helped him adapt to the hobo lifestyle better. The discipline of the army and the life skills that he learnt while in the military came handy. Prof. Spence records an interaction with an army veteran who chose to be a hobo where he says, “among other things which war teaches a nation, are the arts of marching, –of finding shelter and forage, –the habit of living on the country, – and the disposition to trust tomorrow to take care of tomorrow” (Spence 7).

As the hobos population grew and they frequented the cities often, the locals were not much pleased. Some locals were friendly and would offer food or lodging but some would often shoot the hobos. The local authorities fearing law and order issues would often arrest them and put them in jail. They would be taken to courts where they were sentenced to six months in prison or imposed fine. To warn their fellow knights of the road, the hobos use signs and symbols to alert the hobos. Although the hobos were considered a menace with regards to maintaining law and order, The National Security Agency and the Cryptologic museum recognizes them as a cultural phenomenon today. Commenting on their signs, they say,

The hobo community developed a written communication system of signs.

Mysterious and temporary, these signs helped hobos move more safely around the country looking for work. A symbol on a mailbox, fence post, signpost, or tree told other hobos what to expect in the town or from the homeowner. (National Security Agency/Central Security Service)

Will teaches Cal these signs so that he can be well prepared of what to expect from a town. Recalling his father’s words, Cal says, “The first sign, older by the way it’s withered, is a square missing its top line. It’s the sort of sign a hobo loves to see. It means this is a safe place to stop for the night” (Bruchac 17). He further states, “That second sign, the one of a house with an X through it–meant that the hobos were no longer welcome. The third one, that triangle with two hands on it, that was even worse. It meant a homeowner with a gun!” (Bruchac18).

When Will reads about the Bonus Army March in a newspaper, he tells Cal a long kept secret. He tells him that they are Creek Indians. He tells Cal that he has to go to Challagi, a school for Native Americans where he can be educated while he goes to Washington DC to participate in the Bonus Army March. Cal, surprised by this secret, asks why his parents chose to hide his true identity to which Will says, “ We did it, your mother and I to protect you”

(Bruchac 85). He explains to Cal, “it's not easy being Indian. People look at you different, treat you different. This may be the land of the free and the home of the brave, but when you are seen as a brave you are a lot less free” (Bruchac 85).

The federal government started many missionary and industrial schools for Native American students. These schools were part of the assimilation project. The motto of the schools was “Kill the Indian to save the man” (US National Park service). Will prepares Cal about the hardships that he would be facing in Challagi. He tells his son,

Things were hard at Indian school. Idea was to get rid of everything in you that was Indian. Drill it out of you, teach it out of you, beat it out of you. Told you never ever speak Indian again. Punish you hard if you forgot, uttered even one Indian word. Just saying *hers'ce* would earn you a whipping or two nights in the guard house. (Bruchac 67)

When Cal escapes Challagi to meet his father in WDC, he is surprised to see the army with tanks and cavalry blocking the Bonus Army at the command of President Herbert Hoover. He is startled to see the army not supporting their veterans who fought for the country during World War I. People who were given a hero's welcome a few years ago were now labelled communist just because they demanded their rightful bonus that was promised. Cal is baffled to see the army thrash the veterans and the children who sat peacefully at their campsite Camp Glassford. He says, “The men with gas masks are lobbing grenades into the Camp Glassford encampment. Vets are coughing, stumbling, falling back among the ruined buildings. Cloud of smoke arise as MacArthur's soldier torch tents and rough built shelters” (Bruchac 304-305).

The effect of the Great Depression varied from one race to the other. The dominant narrative fails to address these indifferences. To the White Americans, the government's efforts were that of protective and reformatory while the colored races saw the government being oppressive and indifferent. To some it memorialized the test of American determination but to others it was a struggle for survival and resistance. Even the government policies stuck to the old ways of being ‘separate but equal’. Analysing the Great Depression through the New Historicist perspective allows interpretation from the ones who were long ignored historically thereby challenging the dominant narratives. It helps to understand the less talked about hobo lifestyle, the Indian policies and the Veterans fight for their due payment.

New Historicism challenges the dominant narratives of history. It provides space for different interpretations of events to coexist. It helps in bringing the voice of the marginalized to the forefront. It dispels the notion of “monolithic spirit of an age” (Tyson 290). By equally yoking literature and artifacts, it allows for multiple interpretation of events of the past and helps it to be objective with no culturally influenced subjective biases.

A New Historic analysis of the novel *Two Roads* introduces the reader to the world of hobos and their lifestyle. Little awareness about the hobo culture

and their ethical code created a hostile environment for the hobo during the Great Depression. Those who knew about their values and their hard-working ability welcomed them. But to a larger crowd, they were bums. By providing a space for counter narrative and interpretation of the age, one is enlightened about the knights of the road- their contribution to cryptology and counter culture.

New Historic reading of the age also unravels the concealed cultural trauma of hundreds of Native American tribal nations. It educates the masses about government disparity and economic negligence. It brings to public knowledge about the tortures of the Indian Industrial schools. It questions the policy of assimilation and cultural and racial genocide of Native American tribal nations. It questions the idea of America being the land of opportunities and melting point of cultures.

The reading also brings to forefront the lesser discussed mismanagement of the World War I veterans. It shows their plight of how they were rejected and betrayed by the country for which they once fought for. It questions how their rightful fight was dismissed and labelled them as communist by the ones in power. It gives them the platform to set their narrative.

A New Historic reading of the novel throws light on the age of the Great Depression. By equally yoking literature and other artifacts, it authorizes literature to provide insightful interpretations of the past. It helps to question the traditional narratives and offer different perspectives of historical events. It debrands the marginal and mainstream narratives and provides equal space for different interpretations to exist.

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CLASS STRUGGLE IN PONNEELAN'S *BLACK SOIL*

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Abstract: Ponneelan's *Black Soil* (Karisal, 1976) critiques landlordism, corruption in the political system, loopholes in the educational system, social class discrimination, and other social evils. It follows the newly appointed primary school teacher Kannappan in a fictional village called Perumalpuram in Tirunelveli. It is the 1960s and follows the implementation of the mid-day meal scheme in the rural villages of Tamil Nadu. The novel portrays the rich-poor gap in rural India in the post-independence period, where the entire village land is owned and governed by a landlord under whom the villagers work for wages. The landlord exploits the workers in terms of labour and physical pleasures. The novel highlights issues such as child marriage, school dropouts, gender discrimination, which are branched out from the primary issues like class struggle and peasant insurgency that led to the formation of a farmers' union in the village. The novel is rooted in the Marxist philosophy.

Keywords: Class Struggle, Rural Tamil Nadu, South Tamil Nadu, Marxism and Social Realism.

Introduction

Class struggle refers to the ongoing conflict between different classes in society, primarily between the rich and the poor. It is a central concept in Marxist theory, which posits that history is shaped by the struggles between social classes, such as the bourgeoisie (capitalists) and the proletariat (working class). This struggle is seen as a driving force for social and political change, as the working class seeks to challenge the inequalities imposed by the ruling class. Critics of Marx argue that his focus on class struggle oversimplifies societal complexities, yet many acknowledge its relevance in analysing economic and social inequalities today (Chambre et al.). The present research article describes the nuanced class struggle that is presented in Ponneelan's narrative *Black Soil* (2023), which initially came out in Tamil in 1976 under the title *Karisal*.

Class Struggle

Class struggle gets manifested through social segregation, like the caste system, economic differences in terms of landholdings, as it was the transition from feudalism to democracy in post-independence India. Class system has a lot of divisive and negative effects in society which include the condition of rural school education such as low attendance, corruption in the educational and police systems, malnutrition, child marriage, labour exploitation through suppressive feudalism, patriarchy and the woman question, the destruction of hutments and the strong holding of the landlord's house during climactic extremes of drought and flooding rain, peasants' struggle for livelihood. Set in the backdrop of the land reform movements of the 1960s such as the abolition of the zamindari system (Mizushima 22–33), the land ceilings acts, rules for

tenancy, etc., peasant insurgency and the establishment of farmers' unions against the mediating hands of the local landlords is seen as a resurgence of the agency of the marginalised and lateralised sections of the society.

The novel centres around the experiences of a newly recruited government teacher named Kannappan in Perumalpuram, a fictional feudalistic village located on the northern border of Tirunelveli district and the southwestern border of Ramanathapuram district during the 1960s. Based on the description, the fictional location can be located in the region around Kovilpatti, in the present-day Thoothukudi district. The researcher also clarifies this in her interview with the author Ponneelan on 20-07-2025, in which the author described his locality, where he served as Inspector of Schools. This region is known for its dry and arid karisal soil that is drought-some during hot weather and provides much yield when it rains, as it is described in the novel that the climate is as extreme as the people's character in the village (Ponneelan 165). It is set against the backdrop of the mid-day meal scheme of the Tamil Nadu government under the Chief Ministership of Kamaraj.

The plot begins with Kannappan arriving in Perumalpuram as the new teacher at the government primary school following his teacher training. He is exhausted from the tiredness that the hot sun and the dry lands exude. He is met in the road by a labourer called Veerayyan, who leads him to the Master, a landlord who is also the Panchayat President. Kannappan meets Sarkaraisamy, the "Master" and the President of the Panchayat Union, who literally controls every aspect of the village. He oversees storing the supplies for the mid-day meals. He discusses the condition of the local children, about how they do not know to read and write because of their generational bonded labour, but are forced to attend school by the government at the compulsion of the mid-day meal scheme. The "Master" also hints at the old school teacher, how he dwindled the mid-day meal fund for himself.

It is important to note that the entire village land is owned and governed by the landlord, which is a resonance of the zaminadari and the mirasi systems in colonial India. Bandopadhyay tracks the metamorphosis of the mirasi system in Tamil Nadu over the nineteenth century and posits that agrarian change and social mobility were a direct outcome (249–51).

Kannappan meets the locals along with Veerayyan, who grows to be Kannappan's foremost friend. Next, the first day of Kannappan's career in school is described. He is shocked at the sight of the malnourished children, all in one class but separated into five grades by chalk markings in the ground. When it is time for lunch, kanji is collected from the Master's house and is distributed to all the students. Kannappan notes the low attendance records in the attendance register, and when the inspector visits the school, he shows false records and gets warned. When dejected Kannappan meets an old retired teacher named Subramaniam, he gets to know about the corruption in the government sector and his dream of imparting education, uplifting and reforming the lowly gets questioned. Subramaniam says that many who joined as teachers along with him misused the government funds for various purposes, such as investing in land, securing higher degrees for higher job prospects, etc.

and highlights that the world does not value their service.

The issue of child marriage and early child dropouts from school is highlighted in the character of Ramasamy, the Master's twelve-year-old son. He is married to a twenty-year-old woman named Ponni, the Master's wife's younger sister, with the motive of the Master's sexual gratification and the production of more heirs to his vast properties. Ramasamy abandons attending school just to see to it that his father does not sleep with his wife when he is away. So, the Master asks Kannappan to convince Ramasamy to attend school.

The people in the village are highly materialistic. Their focus is on wealth, land, and assets. The villagers kidnap a four-month pregnant girl to marry her off to her lover from college, as her father delays her marriage to secure the seven-acre land that is in her name, bestowed by her deceased mother.

This incident is followed by the theft of Kannappan's money from his suitcase, the custody of the thief by the Master and his eventual escape with the help of Kannappan himself, who pities the thief.

The Master tries to rape Ponni, but his attempt fails. Nevertheless, Ponni is traumatised and pained to be in such a condition. Ramasamy consoles her. Ponni develops an affection for the teacher Kannappan and meets him late at night at his shack along with Mookayi, her maid and Veerayyan's lover. Kannappan is also enamoured by the beauty of Ponni and loses his guard.

The Kaliyamman village temple festival is celebrated with vigour and colour. It is the only day in the year that the malnourished children in the school get to eat rice with curry. Other days, they have only kanji. So, Kannappan sends off the students early on the day of the festival. The various rituals, dancing and singing at the festival are described. A huge torrential rain follows, and many of the workers' hutments are damaged, and they are brought to the streets. In a brief episode, the Master's advances towards Ponni and Mookayi on a night is described. The Master refuses to help the families in the rain-demolished hutments. So, the people plead with Kannappan to help them. Kannappan beseeches the Master to open the panchayat office and the school for the welfare of the suffering villagers, and the Master concedes, yet being irritated at the fact that an outsider gets to poke his nose in his village's administration.

Rakamma, a woman suffering from hunger for two days, visits Kannappan for help. She tells about the previous teacher and how he helped her by offering her money regularly out of pity. As a result, her husband doubted her, and the teacher applied for a transfer to save his honour. Likewise, Kannappan gets an opposite picture of the old teacher from the picture of him provided by the Master. Later that evening, due to the heavy rains, his mud house fell off. Kannappan informs this to the Master who offers Kannappan to stay at his house upstairs. Master's motive in letting him stay is to convince Ramasamy to attend school. Staying at the Master's house gives Kannappan and Ponni the opportunity to see each other often. They get into physical exchanges of affection, and one day Ramasamy sees them together, and Ponni tries to explain herself. In a similar vein, the Master catches Veerayyan and

Mookayi on an early morning and fires Veerayyan from his job at the Master's farm.

The Inspector pays a visit to the school and the panchayat office. There is a hassle over the quantity of midday meal provisions. Four bags of corn flour have gone missing. To add fuel to the fire, the villagers also testify against the Master. They complain about him to the Inspector. Later, it is revealed that when the provisions were shifted to the first floor of the Master's house, the four bags of corn had been left downstairs. It is also hinted that Ponni gives some rice to the locals who beg her after the heavy rains.

As the villagers complained about the Master to the Inspector, the Master Sarkaraisamy fires all the village workers. Veerayyan, who was fired previously, gets into cutting the velikaruvai bushes around the village without the Panchayat's approval, and sells the velikaruvai bunches and earns money. Later, the Master orders that no one should cut the velikaruvai without his permission. Instead of the fired workers, Sarkaraisamy says that he will hire farmers from Aruvapatti, a neighbouring village. The farmers of Perumalpuram are heartbroken and deem it unacceptable that their native soil is to be ploughed by foreign hands.

Meanwhile, Veerayyan marries Mookayi, who is also fired by the Master along with the farmers of Perumalpuram for speaking against the Master in support of Veerayyan at the Panchayat meeting.

The farmers of Perumalpuram gather to discuss their situation. Kondappan, a farmer, delivers a speech about the value of labour. In an unexpected turn, the farmers of Aruvapatti ransack the village, drag the Master around the village, and create chaos. The farmers of Perumalpuram take on the farmers of Aruvapatti and drive them away. The farmers of Perumalpuram work and demand wages from the Master. Meanwhile, the Master injures a farmer named Rangannan, who owns some cattle.

A complaint about the Master has been registered at the nearby police station, and so two police men come to arrest the Master. The policemen are firm in taking the Master for an enquiry as they cannot disobey the order of the higher officials. The Master tries to bribe the policemen. The policemen exploit the Master for a while, but still, they are firm in not slanting from the higher official's order. They insist that the Master come along with them. Through the conversation, the Master comes to know that the complaint has been filed by Kannappan, the school teacher. Kannappan comes to the Master's house and witnesses the corrupted system in action as the policemen squeeze money out of the Master. Kannappan feels thwarted that his deed of registering a complaint with the police is futile. The Master forces the policemen away and arranges a cart to send them in the middle of the night. The bribe they exploited from the Master is ransacked by bandits. The next day, the Master finds himself in a place among trees and bushes with his head injured.

There is a severe rain and the village is flooded. Veerayyan has been making coal from wood and tries to guard the coal from being drifted away. Rangannan sells his goats despite his wife's disapproval to provide wages for the farmers. As a result, Rangannan's wife hangs herself. Wages are given to

the folk. Kannappan gets back to teaching. At this point, the Inspector who was supportive of Kannappan gets transferred, and soon Kannappan gets suspended. Due to the deep bond he has developed with the karisal soil, Kannappan affirms that he will stay in the village and farm with Veerayyan.

As the whole village has turned against and become a threat to him, the Master consults the neighbouring village landlord – the “Mathathupatti Master” – on how they could control the farmers’ uprising. Briefly, the scene shifts back to a Pongal festivity amid the loss in flood and the recent ravages. The Master beats up Kannappan and sets fire to the villagers’ houses. There is also a hint of the Master hanging himself.

The farmers gather under the leadership of Kannappan, who suggests that a farmers’ union be established like the one in the nearby village. He suggests they collaborate and have regular meet-ups. The establishment of the farmers’ union is described in detail. It is a ceremonious occasion. The narrator ends the narrative stating that more challenges await the village.

Analysing the class struggle in Karisal, the spatiality of the dwellings of the people of various classes is highlighted. Rao-Cavale studies the spatial segregation of a village, Kilakottai, near Tirunelveli, into the ur settlement for the non-Dalits and the cheri settlement for the Dalits. This segregation of rural settings along caste lines is described in *Black Soil* in the palatial house of the landlord (Ponneelan 12–13), the government funded Panchayat office and school that does not get washed away in the flood induced by rain. The word “hutments” in the English version of 2023 literally appears as cheri in the original Tamil version of 1976 (Ponneelan 154). Kilakottai, in Rao-Cavale’s study, is known for Dalit assertion and social mobility as observed in the symbolic ending of Ponneelan’s Karisal.

Conclusion

Seeing the determined efforts of the farmers, the Master exclaims, “They managed to grow the crops even without wages” (Ponneelan 312). One of the Master’s household workers says, “In many villages, the workers are threatening their masters, asking for better wages” (Ponneelan 314). The landlord’s classist ideology is revealed in his statement to the police: “That’s my land owned by my ancestors for generations, Ayya. I’ve put all my efforts into my land. The villagers have decided to reap the harvest and share it” (Ponneelan 316). The narrative expounds that suppressive forces cannot prevail long but will be subdued in the meantime by just forces. Thus, the novel stresses the importance of equality and propounds the importance of a classless society.

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EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES FOR THE TRIBAL STUDENTS IN TAMIL NADU - A HISTORICAL STUDY

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Abstract: In Tamil Nadu, the tribal group referred to as *Dravidian Kudis* resides in certain regions of the hilly areas of Tamil Nadu. Although these tribal communities may be considered marginalised in some areas, the Tamil Nadu government has established various welfare initiatives aimed at supporting the tribes and promoting educational advancement for underprivileged students. These initiatives are actively being executed by the government for the benefit of the tribal community's students. It is important to note that many social activists believe that these efforts are contributing to the educational progress of these communities. Consequently, this research article examines the welfare programs implemented by the Tamil Nadu government to enhance the educational development of these students.

Keywords: Tribes, Government Schemes, Welfare and Development.

Introduction

Tribals are an ethnic group living in the most beautiful natural environment, dense forests and mountainous areas. With their unique customs and cultural traditions, this tribal community is a community that has been living by following their own unique traditions even today, avoiding global development. In the case of Tamil Nadu, tribal people are found in the vast Western Ghats Mountain range. These people live in villages adjacent to the mountains and in dense forests. In India, there is global development but the tribals are still backward in education due to insufficient awareness in some places. Despite this, the Tamil Nadu government has been formulating and implementing various schemes for the educational development of these tribal students. The purpose of this article is to examine the welfare programs implemented by the Tamil Nadu government for the educational development of students from this community, taking into account the context in which they are lagging behind in terms of education in today's modern environment.

Tribal Welfare Department in Tamil Nadu

The Government of Tamil Nadu issued a list of communities recognized as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu on 23.6.1984. In this list, 36 communities were recognized as Scheduled Tribes. The Government of Tamil Nadu created the Directorate of Tribal Welfare on 01.04.2000 for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. Earlier, it was associated with the Adi Dravidar Welfare Department, but after 2000, it became a separate Directorate. In order to give additional powers to this Directorate, the Government of Tamil Nadu granted permission on 28.8.2017 to function as an independent organization with full powers in terms of subjects related to the

welfare of Scheduled Tribes, administration and finance. This Directorate plays an important role in implementing the welfare schemes announced by the Government of Tamil Nadu for the students of the Scheduled Tribes.

Pre – Matric Scholarship Scheme

In order to encourage the Secondary School education of these tribal students, an incentive is provided annually under this scheme to the tribal students of IX and X. Rs.3000/- is provided to day scholar students and Rs.6250/- to students who stay in hostels. This incentive is paid directly to the bank accounts of these students every year. This scheme works to encourage secondary school education of these students and to prevent dropout. About 16,314 tribal students in Tamil Nadu have benefited under this scheme during the last financial year from 2024 to 2025. The Tamil Nadu government allocated about Rs.4.80 crores for this scheme in the last financial year and this amount has been paid directly to the tribal students as an incentive in their bank accounts.

Post – Matric Scholarship Scheme

This post-matric scholarship is a specific program for tribal students who finish their secondary school education and continue their studies in order to support their higher secondary education. When eligible students register for this program, the government pays a monthly stipend of Rs.1580/- for hostel students and Rs.780/- for day scholar students straight into their bank accounts. Students who are tribal students and whose parents earn less than Rs.2,50,000 per year are eligible to get benefits under this initiative. Notably, during the financial year 2024–2025, around 21,490 tribal students benefited from this program. The Tamil Nadu government allotted about 11.56 crores for this scheme in the last financial year.

Higher Education Special Scholarship Scheme

The government covers tuition fees, hostel fees, exam fees and other government-fixed costs for tribal students attending self-financing educational institutions and pursuing higher education at self-financing educational institutions. Under this special assistance scheme, the students eligible for benefit will be directly credited with Rs.7500 per year if they are pursuing undergraduate studies and Rs.8000 for postgraduate studies. About 1047 students have benefited under this higher education special assistance scheme in the last financial year 2024-2025. It is noteworthy that the Tamil Nadu government has spent about Rs. 80 lakhs for this scheme in the last financial year. This scheme is a major project for the higher education of tribal students and their dreams. This scheme is very important as it provides incentives for these tribal students to pursue their desired studies to achieve independent development in education.

Girls Incentive Scheme

In a society that is very backward, the educational development of the female community is very important for that community to achieve an unparalleled level of education. Considering this, this scheme is a special scheme for them to pay special attention to the female children of this tribal community. This scheme is a scheme to promote female education and to

prevent female dropout. This scheme is for a student of the tribal community. It is noteworthy that there are no conditions such as annual income. Rs.500/- annually is paid directly to the bank accounts of these students studying from III to V standards. Rs.1000/- for students studying from VI standard and Rs.1500/- for students studying from VII to VIII standard. Under this scheme to promote female education, about 29,913 tribal students have benefited in the financial year 2024 to 2025. It is noteworthy that the Tamil Nadu government allocated approximately 2.92 crores for this purpose in the last financial year and paid the amount directly into the bank accounts of these students.

Tribal Students - Residential Schools

By following the traditional values of the Scheduled Tribes, and with a view to increase the literacy rate of the Tribal people, Tribal residential schools with food and lodging facilities are set up. These boarding schools for tribal students in Tamil Nadu are operational only in a few districts. A total of 20 schools are being implemented, including middle, secondary and high schools. According to the 2025 report, about 24,430 tribal students are studying in these boarding schools in Tamil Nadu. Special attention is paid to tribal students through these schools. The government fully covers the expenses of uniforms, hostels and food for them. These schools are mostly located in places where tribal people live. It is important to note that despite various efforts to improve the educational development of these tribal students, they still refuse to come to the general social change. However, these schools are being implemented by the Tamil Nadu government with the aim of not hindering their educational development due to this reason.

Tholkudi Fellowship Scheme

Tholkudi fellowship scheme is seen as a special scheme in Tamil Nadu by researchers, because the scheme works to encourage undergraduate, postgraduate and research students to conduct research on this backward tribal community in Tamil Nadu. This scheme is an incentive for young researchers to conduct research on the culture of this community, their society, their traditions, their professions, their daily problems they face in the society, new projects to improve their education, etc. Under this scheme, a monthly stipend of Rs. 10,000/- is provided to the undergraduate and postgraduate students selected for a period of six months. A monthly stipend of Rs. 25,000/- is provided to the selected research students under the scheme. This fellowship scheme is the first in the state of India to encourage researchers to conduct research on a specific community. Under this scheme, about 70 students have been selected and are receiving incentives in the last financial year 2024 to 2025. Approximately 1.50 crore was allocated for this project in the last financial year and incentives were given to the students selected for this project. It is gratifying that this project is a project that encourages young researchers to engage in new research.

The purpose of this research article is that even though this tribal community has not yet joined the global development, it has its own unique cultures and traditions. The Tamil Nadu government is promoting and implementing programs with the aim of improving the education of the

community. Many more programs are being implemented in Tamil Nadu for the benefit of the students of this community. It is strongly believed that there is still a situation where education is avoided in specific places without awareness. In the coming years, this community will achieve one hundred percent improvement in literacy due to such educational programs.

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A READING ON YETI AS COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS IN BRUCE CHATWIN'S *WHAT AM I DOING HERE*

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Abstract: In human existence, individuals undertake different kinds of journeys which can be spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual. Life itself is a journey that starts with conception and concludes with death. However, the journeys of travel writers are quite significant. The accounts of travel by a traveller are in many ways related to the traveller's first-hand experiences with locations, cuisines, people and things. This paper presents the comprehensive insights of British travel writer Bruce Chatwin's search for a mythical creature said to inhabit the mountainous region of the Himalaya. He interviews many residents of Nepal about Yeti, the mythical creature and ultimately concludes that it is a collective unconscious of the human mind. Jung's 'Collective Unconscious' represents the archetypes or facts present in the subconscious minds of a particular community, passed down through generations. This article delves into the deep insight that the strange creature, Yeti, represents the Collective Unconscious of mountaineers and local communities.

Keywords: Journey, Collective Unconscious, Travel and Mountaineers.

In human life, various journeys are undertaken which include spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual ones. Life is a journey that begins with birth and ends with death. However, the journeys undertaken by travel writers are quite different. The accounts of travel by a traveller reflect the traveller's first hand experiences with places, foods, people and things. This paper presents the comprehensive insights of a British travel writer, as the writer searches for a mythical creature which dwells on the highest altitude of the mountainous region of Himalaya. He interviews many inhabitants of Nepal about Yeti, the mythical creature and comes to a conclusion that Yeti symbolizes the collective unconscious of the human mind. Jung's 'Collective Unconscious' represents the archetypes or facts present in the subconscious minds of a particular community, transferred from generation to generation. This article provides a deep insight that the strange creature Yeti is the 'Collective Unconscious' of both the mountain climbers and the local people.

Journey refers to the act of moving from one place to another. There are different types of journeys in the world. Human beings undergo different types of journeys in his/her life like spiritual journey, intellectual journey, emotional journey, and physical journey. Life itself is a journey where individuals seek the meaning of their existence from birth to death. Death acts as a bridging gap for the eternal journey. Similarly, a travel writer plays an analogous role between a reader and the travel destination. His own journey with his destination spot and its features is transferred to readers. It is quite a different journey where both the writer and the reader travels through pages. Paul Smethurst asserts the importance of travel writing in gaining knowledge in

his work, *Travel Writing, Form and Empire* as follows, “

Mobility, through which knowledge was garnered and returned, often haphazardly, to imperial centers, where it was refined, systematized, and used to inform further exploration and discovery. As Knowledge was mobilized, so were the imagination and the desire for far-off places, and this provide huge demand for travel writing" (01)

The accounts of the traveller often reflect his personal first-hand experiences with places, food, people, and things. It blends writer's imagination with fact. However, travel writing is not a documentation of the places which the writer likes or the food he likes. Rather than the mere documentation of what the writer likes, it provides the detailed description of the destination. It actually transports the readers to a new world. The purpose of travel writing is to make readers filled with information, experiences and inspiration.

Travel narratives detail even the smells of places, aroma of food, structures of buildings, sounds of various towns etc,. Travel writer who uses his own lens, moves away from home and explores the nuances of the surroundings. Travel experiences of the travel writer is transferable to the readers and it also paves the way for the development of the inner growth of the reader in many aspects. At the turn of the twentieth century, in the post- modern era, writers expand and evolve to write the things to be felt and seen by the readers. Burtor in his work, *Travel and Writing* highlights the importance of travel,

Death halts wandering abruptly. The individual journey has a limit. Birth, on the other hand, is produced in movement itself; the child moves in his mother' womb even as she herself moves; the child can be born anywhere. On the other hand, he who does is abandoned on the spot; ...To travel is to live once again (06).

During ancient times, travel is unavoidable and crucial for all human beings. Before the emergence of the civilization, human beings were the nomadic society, which means that mobility and movement are part and parcel of their lives. Every individual in this world is constantly travelling in search for his or her desired needs. Travel writers not only document the places they explore but also capture the wonders of the places they visited including cultures, traditions and food.

Travel literature, in one perspective can be viewed as a genre of adventure and it stimulates the minds of the reader in all its forms. It caters to all the senses of the readers and it is one of the beautiful aspects of travel literature. Travel writer's passion for exploring the outside world would develop an unknown interest and desire to visit the unfathomed part of the world. Many researches have been done on the mysterious creature, Yeti. Some travellers have even searched for the physical evidence of the creation. But they could get only footprints or fur like remnants as evidences. The academic studies about Yeti sightings are the first-hand experiences from the local people of the Himalayan region who believe that the Yeti is indeed real. However, the

creature is inaccessible and there is no concrete proof for the existence of such creature. The concept of the strange creature attracted many travellers' attention and it has been the subject of many articles. Many articles have focused on the existence of Yeti, with the help of one or two photographs of footprints taken by explorers. Moreover, all the research articles are searching for the proofs as well as the genetic evidence to make it a living legend. Some of the recent studies conclude that it is a kind of species belonging to the bear family. This article presents the strange concept of Yeti which is present in the folklore of local cultures. The tribal people in the Himalayan region have folk beliefs which are full of magical creatures, superstitious beings and dynamic spiritual realm.

Indeed, some local inhabitants even suggest that Yeti is a kind of spirit which is helpful for hunting. But nobody can definitively report that he or she has seen it in flesh. Bruce Chatwin travels to the unfathomed land of Himalayas and observes the local myth about Yeti. He concludes that Yeti is a collective unconscious of the mountain climbers and the local people. This article makes a study of Jung's Collective Unconscious and its relevance to the mythical creature, Yeti.

One of the renowned travel writers is Bruce Chatwin. He is a British travel writer has travelled to different remote places of the world. He has resigned his job for his desire to travel. Among his adventurous journeys, he visited Pantagonia, which is situated at the remote place of

America in search of the skin of Brontosarus which he discovered in his grandmother's house. This journey results in a book titled *In Pantagonia*. Other notable works are as follows: *Utz*, *The Songlines*, *The viceroy of Ouidh*, *On the Black Hill*, and *What am I doing here?* Chatwin's specific quality as a travel writer is his ability to document the information not only about the land but about the ability to give a detailed narration of his childhood memories, anecdotes, fragments of stories and his future dreams. *What am I doing here?* is an essay collection which details his relentless wanderlust. Throughout his journeys, he explores different parts of the world like Afghanistan, Russia, China, India, and America and encountered notable figures including Indira Gandhi, a politician; Ernst Junger, a German Writer; Donald Evans, an American artist; Werner Herzong, a flim artist; and Shamdev, a wolfboy.

This article discusses his curiosity in searching Yeti in the foothills of Himalayas. He believes in Rosseau's notion of man as inherently good, and finds his inspiration from Robert Byron. Following their paths, he travels to the most exotic and eccentric foothills of Himalayas in search of Yeti, a cross of a cow and a yak. Filled with the utmost optimistic spirit and vibrancy, he searches the exotic breed Yeti. He broods over the notion of being a nomad for his whole life time, expressing a dislike for being rooted in a sedentary lifestyle.

People in Nepal are afraid of Yeti, as it is similar to a Caliban like creature among the natives. No one wants to even see the creature as it is believed to destroy the possessions and life of Nepalis whereas Bruce Chatwin travels to Nepal only in search of this villanic creature. Broadly speaking, no one knows exactly the appearance of it and many believes that it does not really

exist at all. Reinhold Messner, an Italian mountaineer, has recorded his own encounter with Yeti, the strange creature. He exclaims,

The fast-moving Silhouette dashed behind a curtain of leaves and branches, only to step out into clearing some ten yards away for a few seconds. It moved upright. It was as if my own shadow had been projected on the thicket. For one heartbeat it stood motionless, then turned away and disappeared into the bank. (5)

Many Westerners called the creature an abominable snowman. Many mountaineers, trekkers and zoologists travel to the region in search of Yeti. A vast number of individuals are eager to uncover the mystery of Yeti. Reinhold Messner, a world-famous mountaineer encountered this mythical creature on his trekking. He has documented his own experience in his book *My Quest for the Yeti: Confronting the Himalayas Deepest Secret*. He provides a very different data about yeti. Every inhabitants of Nepal believes that Yeti is a combination of ape and humans. But Reinhold Messners' documentation is quite different. He states that it looks like a combination of bear and a wild animal. He discovers the footprints, photographs and testimonies of this mighty creature. Chatwin undertakes an impetus journey in search of the strange creature and interviews all the natives and Buddhist pilgrims in Nepal. Having travelled in the central Australian desert, he wants to tour the untravelled mountains and he has a constant desire to be always on move.

However, Chatwin visits numerous Buddhist monasteries in the exotic land. An obvious thread which connects *What am I Doing Here* and *In Patagonia*, is the search of exoticism. In both works, he delves into the aim of exploring the unexplored. Travelling to the remote regions of pantagonia in search of the skin of Brontosarus parallels his journey through the trekking hills of Nepal in search of Yeti. He has the spirit of inquiry in search of exoticism. He points out all the superfluous information about this creation and his own observations in his essay *On Yeti Tracks*. He highlights, "As for the Yeti, I wanted to explore, at first hand, that nebulous area of Zoology where the Beast of Linnaean classification meets the Beast of Imagination" (271).

Yeti is believed to dwell in the highest mountain regions of Nepal. Almost all the highest mountainous regions of the world have legends of mythical creatures which are the combinations of humans and animals. Chatwin is fascinated with the ideas of this exotic creature and follows the track of Yeti. In Namche, a place in Nepal, he interviews Sangye Dorje about Yeti. He describes two kinds of Yeti, "the mih-teh, which killed people, and the dzu- teh which killed only animals. But yeti he added sombrelly, is some kind of God" (275). Following this, he interviews a woman who has been attacked by the beast. Sangye Dorje introduces herself as "a person who looked into yeti's eyes was doomed to die. But she had been the exception" (276). The woman describes Yeti as "The beast had the same yellow eyes- big brow – ridges and hollow temples. Some policemen came up from Namche to examine the Yak carcasses and stated, categorically, that the killer had never been a man" (277).

Furthermore, Chatwin explores the inner regions of Khumbu Himal in

search of Yeti. He states that this mythical creature Yeti, is a kind of species similar to the species living in the mountains of Imaeus. Mountaineers such as Eric Shipton or Sir John Hunt have photographed its footprints in the snow. According to Chatwin, "Yeti was a creature of the Collective unconscious. Man, after all, is the inventor of his own monsters. Babies see monsters long before they are shown them in picture books. Milarepa, the Himalayan sage, 'saw' a yeti at the entrance to his cave. St. Antony saw his fantastical menagerie in the Desert" (280).

Chatwin ultimately concludes that individuals who report Yetis are Schizophrenics. It is a severe brain disorder which affects a person's thinking, feelings and behaviours. Those who have claimed to witness Yeti would have seen the creature only in the high altitude with a diminished supply of oxygen to the brain. He argues that there is no creature called Yeti but rather it is a form of mountain hallucination. But the inhabitants of Nepal believe Yeti as a kind of God. Looking for Yeti, along with Sangye, he moves to Yeti tracks. He declares, "My whole life has been a search for the miraculous. Yet at the first flavour of the uncanny, I tend to turn rational and scientific" (282).

Collective Unconscious is a term referred by Carl Jung. He defines it as "A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the "personal unconscious". But this personal layer rests upon a deep layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition and is inborn. The deep layer I call the Collective Unconscious" (104). In the psychic realm, of humans, there exists a repository of memories and dreams which are evolved among ancestors and shared by the members of society. This collective conscious is not based on an individual's personal experiences whereas it emerges from ancestors and is transferred to the next generation. Carl Jung definitely believed that all the myths are the result of collective unconscious. Chatwin, though he moves into Nepal in search of Yeti, as a source of exoticism, he comes to the conclusion that the creature represents a manifestation of collective unconscious.

Perhaps he does not have enough eyewitness for the existence of this creature. The mental hallucination of creating a creature in mind is not a new thing in psychology. Carl Jung and Freud elaborates this concept as instincts, memories, dreams and archetypes in their works. The creation of God, Legends, myths, folklores and tales are based on archetypes which are nothing but memories stored in human mind. They are not out of personal experience but transcended from prior generation. Yeti is also such a creature that might be formed out of the mind of collective unconscious of the inhabitants of the hilly regions. Chatwin makes his point valid by pointing out the people who have encountered Yeti are in the highest peak regions where there is no supply of oxygen. So, he states that the creature Yeti would be formed out of mental hallucination of the trekkers and climbers. Jung's psychic realm of collective unconscious is the base for every legend that is circulating in the rural areas. There are many remnants of stories one has heard while he/she is growing up. Since time immemorial, each and every culture of this world, has a peculiar story and tale that is travelled beyond boundaries. Similarly, the stories about

Yeti have been created in such a way among the inhabitants of Nepal. The creature like giants, and dragons are formed in this way. Examples of such giants are Grendel in the epic *Beowulf*, Khumbakarna in *Mahabharatha*, and the dragons in the Chinese culture.

Jung discusses the collective conscious through the lens of a mythical creature asserting that every individual possesses the collective unconscious irrespective of region and culture. This universality explains why many cultures share similar folklore and legendary background. Every mountainous region has the set of tales regarding mythical creatures. Almost all these mystical creatures are in psyche looks same in the stories. One such notable creature is Yeti, according to Chatwin. For Jung, “the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious” (6). According to him, each person is born with the same shared images that are projected into mythologies of their culture. Before the emergence of science and technology, it is these stories which connects people from all over the world. Further scope of research on this area would be speculating on the collective unconscious of human mind behind every mythology and legends, lifestyle of tribal people and human kinds notion of movement. This article finds that the Himalayan mythical creature is created among the local people and mountain climbers. It is the result of the hallucinated mind of these people which created Yeti. When people are out of oxygen supply in the highest peak, their mind creates an unusual creature which suffocates them and people call it Yeti. Chatwin firmly believes the non-existence of Yeti. After making the observation from the local people, he concludes that Yeti is unreal.

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AN INSIGHTFUL EXPLORATION OF MEMORY AND TRAUMA IN KAZUO ISHIGURO'S *WHEN WE WERE ORPHANS*

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Abstract: Memory plays a pivotal role in the life of every individual at every stage of life. Traumatic memory could be a symptom of the mental conflict of human beings. Kazuo Ishiguro, a great Japanese-born British writer, in his chosen novel *When We Were Orphans*, depicts the life of Christopher Banks, a famous detective whose life is intervened by the distorted and suppressed version of memories resulted out of trauma. It makes him travel back and forth in time to unravel the mysteries of his past in the present with the help of his instincts and efforts. Thus, this novel can be a testimony to Ishiguro's poignant yet adventurous journey from present to past to solve the unresolved conflict of Christopher Banks in Shanghai.

Keywords: Traumatic memory, Distortion, Memories, Conflict and Existence.

Kazuo Ishiguro is a reputed Japanese born English novelist, short story writer, screen writer and musician. He is able to capture human emotions and feelings. He weaves the stories with a web of memories which triggers the suppressive thoughts that could be a result of trauma and other disastrous events. As an appreciation of Kazuo Ishiguro's contribution to literature and his exploration of the human emotions in the in-depth level of the mind, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in 2017 by the Swedish Academy.

His novel *When We Were Orphans* published in 2000 revolves around the life of Christopher Banks, the greatest detective in England. The entire story creates an impact in the minds of the readers about trauma and memory, the impact of traumatic memory and the hidden stories of victims of trauma. It also highlights the efforts in retaining the spirit in the aftermath of trauma. It raises questions about Chinese drug trade, opium trade and the heated argument over the borders of China.

All the characters in the story speak about this heated crisis of China. The novel presents a different version of Christopher's individual trauma with the broader historical and political context of Shanghai, including the opium trade, the Sino-Japanese War, and the political tensions between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Communists. This juxtaposition highlights how personal experiences are shaped by and interwoven with larger historical events.

The protagonist in 1930s England, Christopher Banks, the most reputed and renowned detective of England sets the story on fire. His clever mind and brave attempts in solving the most unresolved cases in London create a remarkable impression in the minds of the readers. He is a central character who became an orphan in Shanghai when he was a small kid in 1930s. The story focuses on Christopher Bank's memories of his childhood days and his efforts in the present to find out his lost parents in Shanghai.

The story *When We Were Orphans* is primarily set in England. The

story is considered a part of detective fiction. The story deals with the major themes of trauma and memory. These ideal concepts of trauma and memory are projected through the eyes of Christopher Banks in bringing out the truth. The novel portrays the conflict of the characters.

Trauma is a key term that denotes a state of great shock or sadness. Any person can be traumatized after facing a stressful situation, a turbulent behavior or an unexpected accident. When a person is highly traumatized, he may feel mentally helpless and powerless to handle the situation. In this novel, the protagonist has faced a number of traumatic experiences after the disappearance of his parents. His unreliable nature of narrating the story telling proves to be a manifestation of trauma. Memories could not be reliable for the victims of trauma. The traumatized individuals can reframe and retell history with the distorted version of reality.

Memory is an unreliable one in the story *When We Were Orphans* because the entire story is set in the 1930s. The leading character, Christopher Banks, using memories, vividly explains the strange and tragic story of his life as an orphan in Shanghai, China. In the narration of Banks, he intentionally or unintentionally bridges his emotions and past events in order to protect his mind from harmful and painful memories.

Christopher was born and brought up in the International Settlement in Shanghai, China in the early 1900s, where his lovable father worked sincerely for a British trading company. At the age of 10, Christopher's father went missing on his way to work. After this traumatic incident, Christopher's mother disappeared without any evidence. He lived all alone in a foreign country. His relatives sent him to start a new life in England under the guidance of his aunt who was the only blood relative of Christopher.

Christopher did everything to fit into the British society and started his life from the scratch. He experienced longingness as his parents have disappeared. In his school days, others considered him an odd bird without sources. His memories brought his parents' images often in his dreams. After college, he wanted to become a reputed detective mainly to bring out the truth behind the disappearance of his parents. Their disappearance seemed to be a mystery for the people in Shanghai. He used to read the stories of Sherlock Holmes to learn the techniques used by the detectives. He solved number of cases in England. He earned a name among the people of England.

Later, Banks tried to focus mainly on the mysterious past and he firmly set his mind to find out his lost parents in Shanghai. He had been traumatised in his journey to find his parents. Eventually, he recalled his childhood days with his mother, father, uncle and friends. His memories paved him a way to get clues about his lost parents. He returned to his homeland China to track down his parents. Later in Shanghai he realized that he had developed unrealistic hope and desires related to the fate of his lovely parents. In the backdrop of the Second World War, Kazuo Ishiguro depicts the impact of trauma and memory in the life of Christopher Banks. According to Banks, trauma is a result of racism and discrimination that prevails in society.

In this novel, memory and trauma are deeply interconnected terms.

Ishiguro shows how the protagonist has undergone a journey after the traumatic incident in his life and how he copes up to retrieve his memories of the past in the present. He appreciates the way in which Banks explores the cause and effect of the traumatic memories and finds solace for his issues. He realises that his memories are unreliable but still he tries to take efforts to overcome fear and negative thoughts in uncovering the truth about the traumatic incidents in his life.

The trauma disrupts his memories and splits up his thoughts. In spite of the defects and difficulties in his memories, he instills positive energy in his mind to brighten his life with a new hope for the upcoming future. Thus, Kazuo Ishiguro's work proves to be exemplified for the examination of trauma and memory and the intricate relationship between trauma and memory. His depiction of the inner conflict of the protagonist and the traumatic experiences of the characters proves to be testimonies for the deep connection of psychology to literature.

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ARVIND MALAGATTI'S *GOVERNMENT BRAHMANA*: A DISCOURSE ON SUPPRESSION, SUBALTERNITY AND SURVIVAL

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Abstract: The paper attempts to situate Arvind Mallagati's autobiographical text, *Government Brahmana*, at the interfaces of suppressed subaltern identity and the dissent for survival therewith. Beginning with a cursory vindication of autobiography as a poignant genre in life writing of Dalit experiences, it posits Malagathi's accounts as a testament of trauma and collective sufferings as ensued by systemic caste hierarchy which pervades both the mundane and profound social fabric of India. This study thereby hopes to contribute to the ongoing scholarship of caste and its discontents.

Keywords: Dalit Writing and Subaltern Experiences.

Over the decades, Dalit experiences have found a relative burgeoning in spaces and modes of expression. From literary landscapes to cultural productions to scholarly discourses, an active attempt in galvanizing the Dalit voice is at work. It then becomes pivotal to understand the nuances of the nomenclature of this term. The Kannada Dalit author, Aravind Malagatti underlines the social category of Dalits as structurally and multifariously marginalized. For him "The people who are economically, socially, politically exploited from centuries, unable to live in the society of human beings have been living outside the village depending on lower level of occupation, and unable to spell out their names, lived as 'untouchable', are regarded as Dalit" (qtd. In Bhagat 41-42). For Malagatti as is for several other advocates for Dalit enfranchisement, the social category is marked by manifold levels of stigmatization. Their writings therefore naturally encompass a stark and unapologetic account and critique respectively thereof. Subsequently, Arjun Dangle defines Dalit literature as one which acquaints people with the caste system and untouchability in India, it is appalling nature and its system of exploitation. An important function hence also comes forth as that of informing and unravelling the facts of their life which have hitherto been muffled in mainstream literature, media and academia at large.

Owning to their brutal social—and essentially 'lived'—realities, Dalit writers strongly hold their literature to be read from a sociological and realistic perspective. In contra-distinction with the Savarna values of Truth, Beauty and Godliness, Dalit narratives are perfused with gruesome, appealing and crude delineations of their mundane misfortunes, which an exclusively aesthetic consideration of the subject would have obscured.

Dalit literature is that which exposes and expresses "the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits (Limble 15). The human right activist, Eleanor Zelliot holds that like in the American movements, the Dalit and Dalit oeuvre manifests various contours of defiance and dissent. The stylistics in itself is coded with inherent denial of ideologically justified caste hierarchy. Zelliot lays out two primary methods for understanding the situation of Dalits in India closely: the first being to

carefully examine the statistical records of violence and discrimination against them and the second would be a scholarly scrutiny of their autobiographies.

Dalit life-writings are different from the mainstream autobiographies because they zero in on the ordinariness of Dalits' life rather than effecting their idiosyncrasies. Citing the significance of the autobiographical genre, Omprakash Valmiki sees it as imperative for emancipation and reclamation of identity: "Dalit writer should write autobiographies so that not only our history will stay alive but also our true portrayals of wrong doers. Dalit autobiographies will provide inspiration to our future generations" (xviii). The study reads one such autobiographical text which artfully and painfully peels the layers of social circumstances of Dalit communities. This life writing offers a piercing tale of suffering and sustenance, etched within his experiences of everyday life.

Significance of the Title - Government Brahmana

The phrase Government Brahmana – as a deriding designation underscores the caste hierarchy that plagues Institutional apparatuses. Since the Hindu canonical texts, particularly the *Dharmasutras* and *Dharmashastras*, establish the Brahmin as the highest-ranking varna in the hierarchical system. The autobiography of a Dalit writer being titled as such appears intriguing and ironic. Malagatti glosses over the use of the epithet 'government Brahmanas' for Dalits of Karnataka as a common practice. The very appellation is an interpellative act seeped in superciliousness. In urban India, caste discrimination in the field of education and employment is a grave issue. Reservation in the educational institutions and in the government jobs for Scheduled caste candidates has been helpful for the development of the Dalit community. But due to this reservation, on many occasions, many upper caste students and professors in the higher educational institutions become prejudiced against the Dalit students; their low caste and reservation become the cause of physical and mental abuse which they undergo in different academic settings. Malagatti reflects on the incidents of his college days when his upper caste classmates would scold and scorn him for using his caste and the reserved quota, him "Government Brahmana". Dalits were perceived by his superiors as endeavoring to uplift themselves to the Brahmanical status quo by leveraging benefits from the governmental reservation policy. Here, the term "Brahmin" carries the connotations of "high status" and the privileges therewith. In essence, whereas Brahmins get both the "high status" in society and privileges just by being born into that caste, the fact that some educated Dalits benefit in terms of education and jobs through such reservations is seen by the upper caste people to be an act of sheer charity by the government, and hence the disparaging phrase "Government Brahmana". The title bears the burden of caste hierarchy which pushes their community to the locus of the underdogs. In this regard the understanding of Government Brahmana as a text of the subaltern becomes particularly relevant.

From Classroom to Congregations: Subalternity and Suppression

In the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'subaltern' is derived from the Latin root 'subalternus' (sub- 'next below' + alternus 'every other') and is

defined as “a person and or thing of inferior rank or status.” The term, first used by Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks* has been understood in the field of “subaltern studies” — a scholarly rubric introduced by Ranajit Guha as “a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way” (35). Such a definition of subalternity clearly entails Dalit studies under this paradigm. This text embodies all the traits of subaltern social denominations characterized by their marginalization, subordination, and a lack of agency within a societal stratification.

At the very outset of the text, Malagatti dives into a conversation with the readers to familiarize his readers (implicitly both Dalit and non Dalit) about the Dalit consciousness which has been delineated in the forthcoming pages. He sketches out the life of himself and his family as they lived in the margins of their village. He revisits the past to take the readers on a tour, almost simulating them to witness the atrocities committed against him and his community constantly. He comments on the disjunctive reality of his selfhood,

You may have seen Aravind Malagatti as a white-clad, thorough-bred gentleman. To those of you who have seen him or would like to see him so, these words may come as surprise. Some of you may raise eye brows; while some others may smirk some may even view the words with suspicion. I am certain that the cause for these reactions is the Aravind Malagatti who stands in front of you as you read. But you have not seen this Maali (the nickname my family and neighbors employ to tease me) as a child. (1)

Accounting of the distance between his former self as an outcast child to his now attained stature as an accomplished writer, he plainly chronicles what it meant to live one’s life as a Dalit.

Economically and socially, they were only a bit higher than the people who beg for their living. A certain set of rituals were relegated to be performed by the Dalits. For example, when the corpse of a caste Hindu was taken to graveyard, it was a practice that a handful of coins be thrown all the way and no person other than the lower caste would touch these coins. Malagatti questions the logic of this practice, asking “If there were no dalits what worth would their coins have?” (1). The construction of Dalits as a subordinate category reinforces and ensures this upper caste supremacy. These rituals highlight how the ideological instruments are employed and culturally embedded to relentlessly hold the Dalits at the very same position in the social fabric.

“Do you know what the offences were that deserved such severe punishments? Not that we did not do our homework; nor were we untidy. The reason was that we skipped sweeping the class room sometimes before the morning prayers at school. It was mandatory that we, friends from the lane, should come early to the school and sweep it fully” (14)

This excerpt highlights the excruciating mental anguish that has forever tainted

the writer's memory. Usually, reminiscences of early days in school evoke fond memories among people as the times of naiveté, shenanigans and uncouth joy. For Malagatti however his school life was an incessant string of harassment and humiliation. Caste based segregation started from the primary school itself where the aforementioned "untidy" was associated not as much to bodily cleanliness but more to demarcate the sanitization of upper caste as a seemingly homogenous group untouched by and shut to, the Dalits. This was endured through constant routines and rituals meant for interpellating them into performing their identities as outcasts. For instance, Malagatti and his streetmates were not allowed to sit on the desk- they were forced to sit on the floor. Further the name of the student who was supposed to sweep the floor next day would also be written on the board. Dalit students thus suffered manifold humiliation, subjugation and oppression, right from the very outset of their educational endeavors.

As the narrative progresses, he unmasks how subtle acts of discrimination bring out the prejudices harbored by apparently emancipatory thinkers. "I don't believe in caste discrimination. Many harijans come home, have tea and food" (97) : such condescending comment by an upper caste friend who invited Malagatti to his house over tea is symptomatic of the inherent prerogative which the Brahmanical discriminatory demeanor hinges upon. He expresses his utter exasperation and mortification over such conducts. "Why was I invited here? To be offered tea? Or to be reminded that I am a harijan?" (98).

Malagatti recounts another incident that illuminates the dichotomy between the professed progressive ideals and the actual casteist attitudes of educated upper-caste individuals. These individuals often engage in intellectual discourse on caste issues, crafting a public image as enlightened and progressive writers. However, as Malagatti's experience reveals, their private lives frequently belie this façade. Malagatti's senior, a distinguished writer and self-proclaimed progressive thinker, consistently espoused egalitarian sentiments, advising Malagatti to "walk hand in hand with progressive thinkers... Only then can revolution take place. You should mingle with us. Just literature is not enough, my boy. Life should be reflected in your writings." Notably, Malagatti's senior highlighted his inter-caste marriage as evidence of his commitment to social progress. However, a subsequent incident starkly contradicted this façade of progressivism. Following dinner, Malagatti's senior permitted his son to retrieve the utensils he had used, while deliberately leaving Malagatti's utensils outside. This overt display of caste-based discrimination profoundly unsettled Malagatti, who grappled with the disjuncture between his senior's avowed progressive ideology and his overtly discriminatory behavior. His duplicitous attitude induced emotional anguish and anger in Malagatti. Hurt and betrayed, he is reminded of his grandmother who in great detail explains the mechanisms of 'purification' undertaken if a Dalit happened to touch an upper caste's vessel: from being smeared with cowdung and burned in fire to being immersed in a solution of tamarind and salt and finally being soaked in cow urine (102). This seemingly absurd and irrational ritual of utensil

purification is another practice which entails the customary bigotry and insecurity posed against Dalit communities.

Incidentally, the upper caste people he encounters were often indignant about his dressing and suggested him to carry a 'Dalit-look'. Malagatti is therefore subjected to persistent social stigmatization, wherein his Dalit identity is repeatedly invoked to reinforce his marginalized position. If his childhood was beset with physical assaults, the discriminations in adulthood were redressed as intellectual misconduct, revealing how the instruments of casteism oscillate from coercive to ideologically mutable modes of misconduct.

The aforementioned interview with Malagatti further expresses his disillusionment about the deep-rootedness of Untouchability in the dominant Indian ethos. He narrates how caste-based prejudice even pervades the mythology and folklore, citing an incident from his autobiography, of sacrificing the buffalo before goddess Marama- "The folk story behind the incident talks about an inter-caste marriage, wherein a Dalit boy marries a Brahmin girl by convincing her that he was a Brahmin. When she comes to know of it, she kills him and then he becomes a buffalo. Thus, the practice of sacrificing the buffalo to goddess Marama remains (Simon 725). The folklore, traditions and mythoreligious tales too thereby become encoders of caste-based discrimination and the barbarity that is relentlessly thrust unto groups ascribed to the lower caste. The sigma plagues both oral and written forms of living traditions and collective histories.

Conclusion: Collectivizing the Experiences of Trauma and Survival

Dalit literature nullifies the notion of art for Art's sake, as the narratives are imbued with experiences of trauma and quest for sheer survival primarily. For the Dalit community, life has been a series of traumatic events of varying degrees, forcing them to live in a perpetual survival mode. The nature of Dalit trauma is inevitably intergenerational. In the case of Dalit autobiographies, it is possible to claim that the community collectively plays the role of the protagonist as does the author himself. In his critical text on the stylistics of Dalit writing *Towards an Aesthetic of Dalit Literature*, Saran Kumar Limbale argues that "Dalit Literature is not only concerned with the life of individual but of the community" (12). As depicted in the text, every individual experience harks back to the social and emotional costs suffered by the community. The narrative delineates the experience not of Malagatti himself but through him of the entire Dalit community, thereby giving a collective voice to their experiences. In an interview, Malagatti was asked: if his work is a Dalit story or is this an individual Dalit's story; to which he replied: Both! It is an individual's Dalit story and it is the society's story. It is not only Aravind Malagatti's story but also of the experiences of many Dalits, like me" (Simon 726). Dalit life narratives speak of and for the collective, through and alongside the individual. Their agenda is not localized in individualism but links the individual to his entire caste community as a way of gaining power and support in a group struggle against similarly experienced oppression (Beth 4). Thus, the survival in Dalit community is also manifested in Malagatti's literary attempt of unifying and voicing their unheard struggles

as a community.

Dalit literary study is yet to attain its due recognition as it remains relatively marginalized in pedagogical approaches and classroom spaces; there is a need for further proliferation of Dalit voices and vantage points of understanding subaltern experiences in the South Asia sociopolitical fabric. *Government Brahmana* stands as a profound and piercing account of the Dalit communities, their everyday sufferings alongside the struggles for survival and emancipation from the shackles of caste-based oppression.

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**SILENCED SURVIVORS: INFLUENCE OF ECOLOGY ON
BEHAVIOUR IN ANITA RAU BADAMI'S *TELL IT TO THE TREE***

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Abstract: Man depends on the other for existence. Interrelation not only facilitates co-existence, but it also has a firm hold on the making. Though man is biologically made, the moment he is exposed to the world, other factors like society, the surroundings, and genealogical characteristics. Anita Rau Badami's *Tell it to the Trees*, her fourth book of fiction, focuses more on man and nature. The novel being set in the farthest place, Merrit's Point in British Columbia, discusses the life of an Indian family settled there. The family consists of three generations of characters, paving the way to study their characteristics from one to another. Having a deeper insight into the novel helps in justifying that the ecological features that surround have a predominant role in the other life forms.

Keywords: Ecology, Influence, Inter-relation, Co-existence and Behaviour.

Man is a social being, he can never live in isolation, so does all life forms. Universe is home to innumerable life forms that are interdependent and interconnected. This paper makes an attempt to highlight that the inter-relation happens not only between life forms, but also with non-life forms of nature. There is always a connect between man and the elements of nature that surround him. Along with genetical and societal influence, the ecological elements that surround also have a prominent role in moulding the psychological and behavioural aspects of man.

The novel taken up for study is unique in a way that it is a story of man and nature *Tell It to The Trees*, the fourth fictional work of Indo-Canadian novelist, Anita Rau Badami, is a novel that is set in a fictional locale, the Merrits Point that is said to be the coldest and farthest point of Canada. Most part of the novel happens in Canada, bringing in just a glimpse of Madras in Southern India.

The novel opens with the digging out of a corpse of a woman found mysteriously dead in the snow, very close to J.K. Sharma's house. The house shelters three generations of people. The eldest in the house is Bhagirathi who is fondly addressed as Akka, her son Vickram, daughter-in-law Suman and her grand children Varsha and Hemant. Along with these human characters there are the tree, the snow, the mountain and the lake.

Badami does not give a linear narration of the story, instead it is in the form of a narration given by the four main characters, Suman, Varsha, Anu and Hemant like a Postmodern text. Each one takes the role of narrating his or her part of the story from his or her point of view alternatively. The reader themselves become a detective looking for clues to analyze the incident.

The novel consists of three generation of characters. They could be categorized into two groups. Bhagirathi, Suman and Anu form one group.

These women individually belonged to another places, and for certain domestic and personal reasons had landed up in Merritts Point. Bhagirathi and Suman are women who belong to India. They were born and brought up in India. During the later part of their lives after thirty years of age, they landed up in Merritts Point, due to their marriage. Anu's ancestors lived in India. She was grown up as a Westerner in the US, lived in Vancouver and temporarily shifted to Merritts Point, hoping to become a story writer. For Anu, it is just a temporary stay and if she chooses to leave the place, she can do so whenever she wishes. For Akka and Suman, their stay is not optional, it is a compelled act. They are stuck to the place, like the birds that are caged. These two women encounter an entirely contrasting life from the life they had lived during the early thirty years of their lives. "Oh yes, in this place winter is always lurking around the corner, a wicked creature, roaming these lonely spaces, waiting to pounce on your bones, freeze your blood" (242).

Both Akka and Suman were brought up in Triplicane in Madras. Not much gets disclosed about the past life of Akka. Her parents were freedom fighters and she herself was grown up with revolutionary thoughts. She had gone to college and had learnt more than six different languages. She had married a man of her own choice and had moved to Canada and had never returned to India. Suman also grew up in the same place but years later. It had been a place full of people and all other life forms. Always crowded, noisy and full of life – "Our home was on the third floor of a rickety old building and in order to get to it you had to enter through the living room of the ground floor tenant Rama Shastri... as if to celebrate the teeming life within the small space" (17).

Nothing could be concealed. Everyone knew about everyone else. There was love, concern, hatred, jealousy and noise. Nothing could be kept a secret. People were so closely knit. "I was part of a tight-knit, contained universe. In this world, secrets could never be kept" (44). The brightness of the sun brought everything to light. People live together in harmony.

If it wasn't the closeness of one house to another that kept us all within the unwritten code of conduct that nobody dared to break, then there was the fear of alienation from the community. It was like being exiled from the world, set one alone in to the unknowing silence of outer space it filled me with fear. (44)

The collective togetherness creates a kind of warmth, that makes Suman feel more confident, happy and safe. Though a motherless single child, she is never exposed to the fear of loneliness. She is always surrounded by people, embraced by the love of her father, care of her aunt Madhu Kaki and concern of people like Chandra. All the goodness that had surrounded the life of Suman during her early ages shapes Suman in to a tolerant, harmless, innocent and considerate woman. She had been showered with so much of love, care and concern that she is able to show the same back to others

I can say with a complete certainty that despite the dirt and the chaos and the lack of finery, we had that one thing that most

people spend a life time looking for and never finding: happiness. I was a happy girl and it is perhaps that deep and sturdy foundation of happiness that has sustained me this far.
(18)

In spite of all the bitterness created by Varsha and Vickram, she continues to be a dutiful wife, who takes care of her children and mother-in-law. Even though she is strictly monitored all the time, she manages to visit her tenant, Anu now and then, enquiring about her comfort, sharing food and warmth. Of all the housemates in J.K. Dharma's household, it is Akka and Suman who are hospitable and polite to Anu. "She held out a tray covered with a cloth. Something for your lunch" (127). Akka and Suman find happiness is sharing, whereas allowing others to come closer is seen as a threat by Vikram and Varsha.

Even after so many years, J.K. Dharama, is remembered by Akka only as 'a demon', 'a drunkard' and 'a bastard husband', who had ruined all her happiness. The loneliness, the silence and the coldness of the place infuriates the anger within her. Having been brought up in a country like India with people all around Akka experiences hell in Merritts Point, surrounded by snow. The freaky cold and the callous silence experienced by Akka has an impact on her psyche. From her narration of J.K. Dharma and from the comparison of her son to her husband shows that J.K. Dharma had not been a caring pleasant husband "What is amazing is that I used none of my talents. My knowledge has rotted from disuse. What use all knowledge, tell me? I ended up in this Jehannum where nobody cares about my past or my abilities" (160).

The cruellest pain is experienced when one finds no ears to vent out the sorrow. All that Akka finds around her is the snow, the mountain, the lake and the trees. The lane, the lake, the trees, the mountains, the abandoned house, the main road that pretty much defines, her immediate surroundings. The silence, especially is astonishing. I can hear my own breath even in the middle of the moving. (112)

This silence fuels up Bhagirathi's anger which paves way to hatred and finally ends up in a murder – 'a murder without evidence'. Like the frozen snow that surrounds the place, Akka's heart also hardens. Accusing J.K. Dharma for all her misery, she kills the killer of her joy. The love that she had had for her husband when she was in India, deteriorates. She should have also seen a different man in J.K. Dharma after their arrival in Canada. She wantonly keeps the door closed on a snowy day and gives her husband a frozen death. The savage cold and the strong silence transform Bhagirathi in to a cold hearted murderer. It is an act for which she never regrets, the truth lays hidden deep in her heart like the snow that covers up the things around. "She says her bones are fuelled with ice from having lived for so many years in Canada" (142). Years later the inmates increase in her house and when she finds human listeners around her, she finds vent to tell his buried stories, like the melting snow that brings all concealed objects to vicinity. Akka's stories slowly unravels her past secrets that had been buried in her heart for so many years.

The other characters in the novel Varsha and Vickram totally contrast

with the characters of Suman and Bhagirathi. The above mentioned women are characters who have had their characters influenced by both the surroundings of India and Merrits Point. Vickram, the son of J.K. Dharma, Bhagirathi and Varsha, the granddaughter of Bhagirathi and daughter of Vickram are the two characters who are completely exposed only to the surroundings of Merrits Point. Both of them are closed characters. The nature of snow has a strong influence on them.

The nature of snow is to possess everything that is beneath its hold. It never lets things go off. This attitude of the snow is found both in Vickram and Varsha. The attitude to possess slowly leads to arrogance. Vickram's hold over Suman is atrocious, even when Suman lands in the airport, Vickram does not acknowledge his wife speaking to other men. He becomes suspicious "why were you smiling at him then" (86). He leaves Suman alone in a foreign land and goes off. "I stood there like a fool teeth chattering, eyes and nose watering from the cold, while he accelerated away down the lot" (86). He orders Suman to wear sari throughout the year even during the wintery months. Suman is like an object in the hands of Vickram who succeeds in having total control over her like the snow that makes everything around it remains still without any movement.

The traces of Vickram are found in Varsha also. She is also very possessive, never ready to loosen the grip she has over the people around her, "She told Anu I'm not hers. But *she* is mine and Hem too. He's most definitely mine. *I* saw him first" (222). She never wants anyone else to come closer to the ones that belong to her. Anu's casual act of being friendly brings her closer to Suman and Hem. This irritates Varsha. "Then you must cut up the T-shirt Anu gave you and throw of away" (223). Like the snow that immobilizes the object lying beneath it, Vickram takes complete control over Suman, keeping her fully engaged and never allowing her to think beyond her house hold. Similarly, Varsha has a satanic hold on Hemant, by emotionally threatening him and bullying him. "If you do, you will go to jail and rot there your whole life. And if you are wuss and a blabber mouth and if you tell, you will break my heart. And if my heart breaks I will be dead and won't be able to help you" Varsha said" (233).

This vicious holding on to her possessions paves the way to her hatred towards Anu. To keep her possessions safe, she goes to an extent of murdering Anu, a cold blooded murder done by a 13 year old child, causing a silent death again a murder without evidence. Snow covers up everything giving new space for fresh stories like the inmates in J.K. Dharma's house who conceal all truth. "She *fell* Hem. Fell. On her *own*. He was a baby. He needed to be taught how to keep secrets. Family secrets. *Our* family. *Our* secrets. Nobody else had to know" (51). Varsha and Vickram are very particular in covering up all abuses that happen within the walls of the house, like the snow that piles up covering the house, the secrets within the house remain concealed and is never let out. They feel safe and secure, only by keeping themselves secluded from others who live in the surrounding.

As B.S. Korde points out, "Human being is as we all know, ultimately,

not only a part and parcel of, but also a product of, nature and landscape". Vickram and Varsha have identical behavioural aspects not only because they are genetically linked but also due to the influence of the surrounding that encompasses them. In a nation like India where people are everywhere much of one's influence is procured from the people who surround him or her, but in an isolated place with meagre population, where people are located far away from one another, the surrounding has an impact on human nature. This could be clearly understood through the astounding words of Varsha, who compares every act of hers to that of the objects of nature,

I *will* find a way
I am cunning as the snow.
I am sharp as the winter wind.
I am strong as Tree.
I can find a way.
I am Varsha Dharma, graddaughte of Mr. J.K. Dharam (late)
and Bhagirathi Bai (late)... his is *my* house, this is *my* family."
(225)

Vickram and Varsha who had been exposed only to the deserted snowy, develop qualities like being cunning, brutal, aloof, unfriendly and unsympathetic towards others. They are both selfish and dare to do anything to fulfil their desires, whereas in contrast Akka and Suman are accommodative, friendly, tolerant, and approachable. These qualities could be attributed to the Indian surrounding in which they grew during the early years of their lives. Akka who has lived in Merrits Point for many decades now, develops another contrasting nature that transforms her in to a cold hearted murderer; she is also capable of concealing it for more than three decades. This demonic nature in Akka relates her to the deserted snowy surrounding of Merrits Point in which she has spent her later part of her life.

The above findings prove that man and nature not only co-exist, but also strongly influence each other. Human characteristics are most often related to genetics and society, but the ecological surroundings that envelopes man has a predominant role in shaping his psyche. The influence of the surrounding forms of nature on man can neither be ignored nor be denied.

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AFROFUTURISM AND RADICAL RESISTANCE: BLACK SPECULATIVE FICTION AS A SITE OF CULTURAL RECLAMATION AND LIBERATION

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Abstract: The paper explores Afrofuturism as a powerful and interdisciplinary genre of Black speculative fiction that functions as a dynamic site of cultural reclamation and radical resistance. It examines how Black authors employ elements of science fiction, fantasy and historical fiction to reclaim agency over their historical narratives, critique systemic injustices and envision alternative realities where Blackness is celebrated. The central argument asserts that Afrofuturism's radical potential lies in its ability to deconstruct and reconstruct Black identity, history and cultural expression. By re-interpreting historical traumas through speculative frameworks, Afrofuturistic narratives open spaces for healing, empowerment and futuristic self-determination within African and African diasporic communities.

Keywords: Afrofuturism, Radical Resistance, Speculative Fiction, Cultural Reclamation and Empowerment.

Introduction

Black Speculative Fiction in Literary and Cultural Studies

"Speculative fiction is an umbrella term for a collection of non-realist genres including science fiction, fantasy, horror, magical realism, utopian and dystopian literature, alternative history, futuristic fiction, and more" (Schalk). Black speculative fiction came forth as a critical and revolutionary power in the modern literary and cultural studies because it drastically re-envisions Black histories, their current experiences and futures. Black speculative fiction is where science fiction, fantasy and myth intersect in order to challenge hegemonic narratives along with colonial epistemologies by foregrounding just how African diasporic communities represent the realities for resistance. Through the application of this genre, authors revive their culture and they assert agency over identity and knowledge production, as they prioritize reclaiming narrative space.

Black speculative fiction is crucial in literary and cultural studies as it challenges the misconception that speculative literature is predominantly a white and Western domain. By highlighting the contributions of authors like Martin Delany, Pauline Hopkins, Octavia E. Butler, and Rivers Solomon, it reveals a rich history of Black narratives that have shaped the genre since the nineteenth century (Morris).

The works of Octavia Butler, Nnedi Okorafor, Samuel R. Delany and similar Afrofuturist writers serve speculative structures as tools of radical resistance as mere forms of escapism. They challenge the consequent systemic injustices while envisioning spheres where Blackness is the foremost in technological

innovation and socio-political transformation. “Black SF offers unique and important ways of theorizing key concepts in contemporary Black studies, including pleasure, power, and death” (Mann).

Research Objectives and Questions

1. To examine how Black speculative fiction functions as a channel of radical resistance against racial hegemonies
2. To explore the ways in which Afrofuturist narratives reclaim and reconstruct Black cultural identities and histories.
3. To analyze the intersection of technology, futurity and cultural memory within Black speculative fiction as tools for emancipation.

These Research objectives serve as a pathway, helping to maintain focus. They ensure that the study remains aligned with its central themes.

The Research questions are as follows:

1. How does Black speculative fiction challenge dominant Western epistemologies and ongoing systemic injustices?
2. How do Afrofuturist writers reclaim and reimagine Black cultural identities and histories through speculative narratives?
3. What role do technology and futurity play in Black speculative fiction as mechanisms for envisioning liberation?

These questions address underexplored intersections in Afrofuturist scholarship.

Scope and Significance

This study is an emerging area in Afrofuturist scholarship and it focuses particularly on Black speculative fiction as a site of radical resistance, cultural reclamation and alternative futures. The scope of this research comprises key Afrofuturist writers, whose narratives challenge colonial histories and hegemonic structures through speculative frameworks. The significance lies in its interrogation of underexplored intersections of racial resistance, technology and cultural memory. Black speculative fiction resists dominant Western knowledges and constructs empowering futures that are deeply rooted in ancestral wisdom and technological imagination. Moreover, it offers literary and cultural studies by positioning Black speculative narratives a critical mode of socio-cultural engagement and epistemic recovery.

Literature Review

Historical Roots and Early Afrofuturist Fiction

“The notion of Afrofuturism gives rise to the troubling antinomy: Can a community whose part has been deliberately rubbed out, and whose energies have subsequently been consumed by the search for legible traces of its history, imagine possible futures?” (Dery). Afrofuturism reclaims erased histories and employs imagination, memory and speculative tools to construct futures rooted in cultural survival, resistance and resilience.

Afrofuturism has roots in the nineteenth century, with early Black speculative fiction addressing themes of racial injustice and resistance against white supremacy. Authors like Martin Delany and Sutton Griggs used speculative narratives to critique societal structures and imagine revolutionary futures (Godfrey).

As Mollie Godfrey explains, these early texts used speculative elements to critique imperialism and white supremacy, setting the foundation for modern Afrofuturist discourse. Thus, Afrofuturism is not a postmodern invention but a part of a sustained literary lineage that reclaims narrative agency through futurity. C. Lee attests, “one cannot adequately read the literature of a people without knowing something of the culture and the historical circumstances of that people” (Kumari, Sharma). “Afrofuturism describes a range of techniques that center Black people and their relation to past, present, and future. Black voices in speculative genres were relatively few when Mark Dery coined the term Afrofuturism in 1994” (Larkin). “The relevance of Afrofuturism beyond African American communities is viewed through heightened “infrapolitical” tactics – such as dismissal, evasion, escapism, and the reimagining of oppressive histories. Afrofuturism provides a safe haven for marginalized voices” (Manoudakis). “Black speculative fiction has been increasingly at the core of the new cultural productions of literature, film, horror, comics, fantasy, and music which tell the story of African descendant people. Afrofuturism is an analytic for exploration of the liberative revisioning of Black humanity in the face of persistent practices of structural injustice” (Young-Scaggs).

Feminist Afrofuturism and Embodied Resistance

“Intersectionality is a term used to describe the idea that social relations involve multiple intersecting forms of discrimination. This means that a person might experience several forms of discrimination, such as sexism, racism, and ableism, all at the same time” (Nedera). “Intersectionality exposes in the African setting how socioeconomic inequalities and colonial pasts worsen women's marginalization” (Kasu). Intersectionality, a theoretical framework by Kimberle Crenshaw, elucidates the interconnectedness of multiple forms of oppression and how their convergence compounds the marginalization of individuals. The phenomenon cannot be comprehended in isolation but must be analyzed through the prism of overlapping social identities and systemic structures.

Research Gap and Transitional Focus

While Afrofuturism is increasingly recognized in literary and cultural studies, existing scholarship often emphasizes its aesthetic or posthuman dimensions, neglecting the socio-cultural implications of intersectionality and historical memory. The tendency to focus on spectacle overlooks how Afrofuturist texts encode resistance through temporal disruptions, somatic experiences, and cultural reclamation.

This study addresses that lacuna by centering the convergence of intersectionality, speculative temporality, and narrative resistance. It contributes to emerging discourses that understand Afrofuturism not merely as a genre of escape or fantasy, but as a grounded, embodied strategy of survival, remembrance, and political imagination.

Methodology

Approach

This study adopts a qualitative, intersectional approach rooted in close textual analysis. This method foregrounds how meaning is constructed through

language, imagery, and characterization, which are essential for understanding how Afrofuturist narratives articulate resistance, reclamation, and liberation. The primary sources analyzed include *Kindred* by Octavia Butler, *Who Fears Death* by Nnedi Okorafor, and the film *Black Panther* (2018) directed by Ryan Coogler. These texts are selected due to their cultural relevance, their overt engagement with Afrofuturist themes, and their use of speculative tools to critique intersecting hegemonies. These particular texts are based on their significance within Afrofuturist discourse and their narrative focus on Black identity, technological innovation, ancestral memory, and intersectional oppression. The analysis highlights the narrative structure, character development, symbolism, and the deployment of speculative elements to critique overlapping systems of oppression. Intersectionality, as the guiding theoretical framework, informs how these texts present complex subjectivities shaped by race, gender, and class. This intersectional lens allows the study to reveal the layered strategies of resistance embedded in each narrative.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that this study tends to employ as a lens is 'Intersectionality' by Kimberlé Crenshaw. "Originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, intersectionality has gained popularity and is often discussed as a theory, methodology, paradigm, lens or framework" (Intersectionality). "In essence, however, intersectionality is "a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power" (Intersectionality). "As a concept, intersectional theory contrasts monism, which is the idea that each factor of an individual (e.g., race and gender) can be adequately understood or investigated separately from one another, as a single dimension" (Guy-Evans). Applying this framework permits for an investigation of how Afrofuturist narratives portray complex subjectivities that address and resist overlapping systems of hegemony. It emphasizes how characters navigate oppressive landscapes by drawing on ancestral memory, cultural heritage and technological innovation.

Analysis and Discussion

Rewriting History through Speculative Temporality

"Black speculative fiction often incorporates themes of resistance, identity, and the critique of scientific racism, as seen in works that challenge dominant narratives and envision utopian futures" (Sehlo). "In science fiction, the depth of Eurocentrism is found in the ways that Western Europe sets the standards, not just for Earth, but the whole galaxy" (Ethan). Afrofuturism, in contrast, resists this narrative by asserting Africa's technological potential and rejecting the notion that the continent is incapable of innovation. In Womack's seminal work *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*, Ytasha Womack highlights how Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of Blackness. She asserts, "Afrofuturists redefine culture and notions of blackness for today and the future" (Womack, 9). Womack also emphasizes the intersection of science fiction with the cultural history of African-descended peoples, noting that "Alondra Nelson was a sci-fi fan and saw parallels between popular themes in science fiction and themes in the history and culture of people of African descent in the Americas" (Womack, 18).

“Non-iconic chronology is understood here as the reversal of natural order of events...This technique is frequently found in various English literary texts, where authors utilize specific syntactic structures to depict reversed sequences, enhancing thematic depth” (Yevseyev). Afrofuturist texts reconfigure linear conceptions of time, using speculative temporality as a means to revisit and challenge traumatic Black histories. Afrofuturism eradicates the Western chronological narrative of linear progression from past to present to future and incorporates cyclical, fragmented and multidirectional temporalities. Afrofuturism adopts the narrative technique of Involuntary Time Loops (ITL), “These are stories in which the protagonist repeatedly lives through a certain period of time while all or most of the other characters do not experience the repetition” (Schniedermann).

In *Kindred*, Dana, the protagonist is involuntarily pulled back in time.

I began to feel dizzy, nauseated. The room seemed to blur and darken around me. I stayed on my feet for a moment holding on to a bookcase and wondering what was wrong, then finally, I collapsed to my knees. I heard Kevin make a wordless sound of surprise, heard him ask, “What happened?” (*Kindred*, p.13).

This is the beginning of temporal dislocation of Dana, where her body and mind neglect to be controlled. The narrative depicts that Rufus, the white slaveowner, cries out for help whenever he is in mortal danger. Her constant time travel is a temporal loop that fragments the traditional, progressive flow of history. “Butler uses time travel to demystify gender and race relations” (Velamuri). “Temporal disruptions shape and define the genre. It explores the convergence of dystopia and science fiction, highlighting the deliberate construction of time to serve specific purposes within these narratives” (Hajiyeva)

In *Who Fears Death* by Nnedi Okorafor, Onyesonwu, a biracial female protagonist has the potential to shapeshift, travel to the spiritual realm and rewrite the Great Book. These are mediums of temporal and narrative disruption. Rewriting the Great Book modifies the false history and provides variant emancipated realities. “The novel critiques necropolitics, positioning Onyesonwu as a Black woman at the forefront of alternative futures, emphasizing the importance of her lineage in resisting systemic violence” (Adeniyi)

Radical Resistance through Embodied Blackness

“This genre serves as a platform for marginalized voices, allowing for a richer understanding of intersectionality and its implications in contemporary society” (Cernat). Afrofuturist literature aligns intersectionality with speculative futures, highlighting how liberation must account for embodied difference. Afrofuturism suggests that the reclamation of the future should begin with an acknowledgement of historical and present forms of embodied resistance, trauma and resilience. “By combining science fiction and fantasy, Afrofuturism reconstructs futures thinking with a focus on the Black experience, offering a deeper insight into how the future can be imagined differently” (Brooks).

By employing intersectionality as a lens for this study, this analysis explores how gender, embodiment and trauma are central to forms of radical resistance. In the movie *Black Panther* (2018) by Ryan Kyle Coogler, black women characters are given huge responsibilities and positions. “The portrayal of female characters in “Black Panther” challenges traditional gender roles, reflecting the historical context of the Black Panther Party (BPP), where women played crucial roles in advocating for gender equality within a predominantly male organization” (Spencer). In a key scene, Agent Ross comments, “Wakanda is a third world country. So, how could there be technological advancements that are lacking in every other country?” (*Black Panther*, 56:58). The film denies this stereotypical global perception of Wakanda, which is a fictional place in Africa. “King T’Challa, the protagonist, hid Wakanda from the rest of the world, allowing their technology to develop independently from the rest of the world, aided by the use of vibranium. The resulting technology is the most powerful and advanced in the world” (Alexander). Afrofuturism denies the Eurocentric ideologies of Africans which are incapable of inventing new technologies and are primitive. In a scene, Okoye, the general, remarks that “guns are primitive” in comparison to Wakanda’s weapons.

Women characters like Nakia, Okoye and Shuri embody intersectional resistance through their roles as innovators, warriors and strategists. Their gendered identities intersect race, gender and culture to display multifaceted embodiments of power that disregard patriarchal frameworks. “Shuri - a Black girl nerd who is manifestly her brother's equal in the arts of war and technology - stops short of a complete depatriarchalisation of the norm that reserves superhero status for men” (Byrne). “Shuri’s character challenges stereotypes of Black women, presenting them as capable leaders in technology and warfare, thus promoting a narrative of empowerment and agency” (Isoke).

Conclusion

This study explores how Afrofuturism and Black speculative fiction powerfully resist and reclaim culture, and liberate, particularly as they reconfigure time, represent and intersect identities. Drawing from *Kindred*, *Who Fears Death* and the film *Black Panther*, it is prominent that Afrofuturist narratives contradict Western epistemologies by centering Black histories, bodies and futures in transformative ways. These works resist linear historical frameworks, enabling characters to confront traumatic pasts while envisioning liberated futures through the technique of speculative temporality. Conclusively, Afrofuturism delivers a radical vision of emancipation, where history is reclaimed, identity is redefined and futures are engaged with the structures of oppression and resistance.

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GENDERED ECOLOGIES AND SUSTAINABLE GOALS: AN ECOFEMINIST READING OF GOSWAMI'S *THE BLUE-NECKED GOD* THROUGH SDG 5 AND SDG 6

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Abstract: Indira Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God* intricately portrays the entwined struggles of women and nature within the socio-religious landscape of Vrindavan, a city steeped in exploitative traditions and marked by environmental degradation. This paper explores the symbolic connection between the suffering of widows and the depletion of natural resources, viewing both through the lens of ecofeminism. This aligns closely with SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), advocating for women's full participation in decision-making and equitable access to natural resources. By situating the novel within the framework of the SDGs, this study affirms the relevance of Goswami's work to contemporary debates on ecofeminism, sustainability, and gendered justice.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, River Symbolism, Gender Oppression, Environmental Justice, SDGS and Resilience.

Introduction

The environmental crisis of the twenty first century paved the way for the literary scholars, environmentalists, and activists to reconsider the relationship among nature, culture and gender. Rooted in the understanding that both nature and women are subjugated by the patriarchal system, the interdisciplinary field of ecofeminism emerged as the environmental degradation disproportionately affects women "while he enjoys the looted bounty, women and nature suffer" (Rao, et al., 49). Ecological Feminism or Ecofeminism is a philosophical and ecological movement that critiques the exploitation of both women and nature and advocates for a holistic sustainable living. Ecofeminism as a term was first coined by Françoise d'Eaubonne in her seminal work, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (1974) that foregrounds the interconnected dominance of both women and nature by the anthropocentric system. Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature* (1980) traces how technological development transformed the idea of nurturing nature into a machine mirroring the objectification of women. Various ecofeminist scholars contributed to this discourse by critiquing the patriarchal dualisms such as man and woman; culture and nature; mind and body; reason and emotion and advocate for the interconnected liberation of both women and nature. In literature, ecofeminism as a theoretical framework, helps in understanding the text that situates women's oppression in relation to the environmental degradation. Cheryll Glotfelty (1996), a prominent figure in ecofeminist literary criticism focuses on the works of the women writers who represent nature as a female principle and critique the capitalist patriarchy.

Indira Goswami, a powerful literary voice from Northeast India, uses

fiction as a platform to expose the violence against the natural world and the marginalized communities. Most of her works not implicitly focus on the environmental issues, but her narratives expose the decaying condition of specific which also mirrors the condition of women. Through her characters, Goswami reclaims the ecological landscapes and envisions a sustainable future. This paper aims to explore Goswami's novel *The Blue Necked God* (Nilakanthi Braja), through the lens of ecofeminism, aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) focusing on SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation).

Literature Review

The central premise of ecofeminism is that the exploitation of natural resources and domination of women are interconnected manifestations of patriarchal power (Shiva, 1989). Vandana Shiva's *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Survival in India* (1989) critiques the development models that displace women from their environment which also devalue their contribution to society. Shiva positions Indian women as both victims of developmental violence and also the stewards of ecological knowledge. Similarly, Nandhini Sahu (2014) emphasizes that Indian ecofeminist literature dismantles the colonial and patriarchal narratives by foregrounding women's relationships with land, water, and community.

Goswami's work contributes to what Nandini Sahu describes as "indigenous ecofeminism," one that does not mimic Western ecofeminist models but arises from India's own socio-cultural and spiritual contexts (Sahu 63). Her fiction represents a form of grassroots literary resistance, where the intertwined oppressions of gender and ecology are narrated not just as injustices, but as urgent calls for transformation, a calling for a reimagining of social norms, environmental policy, and spiritual practice.

According to Rao, and other literary scholars, Indian ecofeminist literature "reveals the subtle and overt mechanisms through which women's bodies and the environment are jointly controlled, commodified, and regulated by socio-religious institutions" (Rao, 4). This is evident in *The Blue-Necked God*, where sacred geography, the polluted environment both land and water, and patriarchal control intersect and form an ecofeminist discourse of resistance.

Most of the ecofeminist literary scholarships within Indian contexts have focused prominently on well-known feminist writers like Kamala Markandaya and Arundhati Roy. The existing research on Indira Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God* often centred on the themes of on Brahmanical orthodoxy, spiritual marginalization and widowhood. However, the ecological aspect of the novel through the lens of ecofeminism and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) remains underexplored. This paper thus fills a critical gap by offering an ecofeminist reading of the novel *The Blue-Necked God* foregrounding how the novel critiques the oppression of women and the ecological neglect in a sacred land through a narrative framework that aligns closely with SDG 5 and SDG 6.

Methodology

This paper employs a qualitative methodology grounded in ecofeminist

theory aligning with United Nations' The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 5 and SDG 6. The paper involves a close textual analysis of the novel *The Blue-Necked God*, focusing on the lived experiences of women, particularly widows in relation with the environmental degradation in the sacred city of Vrindavan.

Analysis and Discussion

Vrindavan as a Gendered Ecological Space

Vrindavan, a city located on the banks of the Yamuna River in Uttar Pradesh, India, is one of the most sacred pilgrimage sites, often associated with the life and legends of Lord Krishna. Paradoxically, Vrindavan is also known for its deterioration of the environment and social exclusion. Once regarded as a purifying force, the Yamuna River has become extremely polluted due to unchecked ritual practices, urban encroachment, and ineffective waste management. Vrinda Nabar states that widows of Vrindavan are "ritually ostracized and socially abandoned in the name of piety and austerity" (Nabar 72).

The sacred Yamuna River in Vrindavan is now extremely polluted by the people for their own benefits, which was once considered purifying and divine. The pollution is mainly because of the unchecked urbanization, and ritual dumping in the name of tradition and poor waste management. The monitoring data of the Yamuna River in Vrindavan (2022) exposes the quality of the water, that says the water is far exceeding the safety threshold with the alarming pollution levels, with "Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) values exceeding 6 mg/L and fecal coliform counts surpassing 10,000 MPN/100 ml" that are well above the permissible limits for bathing water (Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board 2022).

From an ecofeminist perspective, this environmental crisis is deeply gendered. Widows who reside in Vrindavan, abandoned by their families under the pretext of religious merit, are disproportionately affected by the ecological neglect. A 2019 UN report observed that "in places like Vrindavan, the absence of sanitation infrastructure and polluted water sources compound the everyday suffering of women, especially widows, who lack both voice and visibility in environmental planning" (UN Women 28). Thus, Goswami reimagines Vrindavan as a gendered ecology of suffering, where the sacred and the profane collapse, where ecological degradation reinforces patriarchal violence.

Gender Equality and Structural Oppression

Gender roles in India have been structured according to the religious, cultural and patriarchal ideologies. Women were expected and made to believe certain characteristics, particularly to embody sacrifice. These contributed to the imbalance in society creating deep rooted structural inequalities for women, especially widows. As stated by Nabar in his work, *Caste as Woman*, "a widow's body is no longer her own; it becomes a site upon which tradition, caste, and community inscribe loss, silence, and submission" (Nabar 69). Colonial and Postcolonial India witnessed various transformations against the gendered practices with respect to sati and child marriage. However, widowhood remained deeply rooted in the practices of gendered

marginalization. The 2023 UN report *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot* emphasizes that women in India are still severely impacted in society from low political representation, wage inequality to unpaid caregiving. “Despite legal protections, deeply embedded social norms continue to limit women’s agency, particularly in religious and rural contexts” (UN Women 2023). Contemporary India has seen constitutional and legal changes towards gender equality which is evident in the United Nations. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) segregating a specific goal for Gender Equality (SDG 5) as a global development priority, aim to empower all women and girls.

Ecofeminism extends the discourse on gender equality emphasizing women’s oppression that is interconnected with the exploitation of nature. Ecofeminism demands not only justice but a new consciousness where relationships between people and between humans and nature are grounded in equality and mutual care (Sahu 63). Shiva argues that gender inequality is not just a social issue, but an ecological issue as women are more connected to the environment and possess traditional knowledge “The marginalization of women is mirrored in the marginalization of nature. Both are treated as dispensable by dominant systems of power” (Shiva 45).

Indira Goswami’s *The Blue-Necked God* provides a stark literary portrayal of such systemic inequalities, particularly portraying the harsh realities of widows living in Vrindavan. Through a close reading of the text using the lens of ecofeminism, the novel exposes gender inequality as intricately tied to socio-religious ideologies that perpetuate the marginalization of women under the guise of culture and tradition. The protagonist Saudamini serves as a symbol of resistance in society who uses religious orthodoxy to legitimize gender discrimination. As a widow, she was forced to live in Vrindavan after being widowed at a young age, there she navigated a world where her value is defined not by her humanity but by her adherence to rituals that celebrate suffering and sacrifice. The big shots in the city like priests, temple authorities, and male caretakers take advantage of the abandoned widows who live in a pigeon hole kind of place. The widows were called Radheshyamis in Vrindavan.

Saudamini’s resistance is emblematic of the potential for ecofeminist consciousness within such spaces of oppression. Her refusal to participate in religious hypocrisy and her critique of the traditional practices that claim to offer salvation is a rejection of structural patriarchy. Her affair with a Christian youth has become a serious issue as it was against the customs that a widow should not marry again and that too of a different religion which was totally sinful and this made people look down on her. It is only for a few days. After that, no power on earth will be able to keep your mother alive. After that, you will be at liberty to go where you will, to a Christian, Muslim, Sikh, Punjabi, or wherever you like... (Goswami, 117)

She wondered if she was really a sinful woman. However, she resisted against the will of others:

She came to the conclusion that she was a dissolute woman.

She had lost everything that was important in life. Yet here she was, willing to sacrifice all for the sake of love that could only bring untold misery. She found herself poised delicately on the threshold of a vital point in her life, at the point of a crossroad as it were. (Goswami, 118).

Her journey becomes a literary embodiment of SDG 5's vision: empowering women to make decisions about their own lives, bodies, and futures. Goswami disrupts this binary, giving voice to the voiceless and presenting the widows not as symbols of religious virtue but as agents of critique and transformation. The path towards SDG 5 cannot be achieved without dismantling the structural mechanisms that legitimize gendered suffering, especially in spaces cloaked in spiritual authority. Goswami's novel serves as a literary intervention that not only reflects the lived realities of marginalized women but also calls for a more inclusive, feminist approach to development and sustainability.

Water, Sanitation, and Environmental Injustice

Water as both a life-sustaining resource and a symbol of purity, holds profound cultural significance in Indian society. Despite global progress, over 2.2 billion people still lack safely managed drinking water, and approximately 3.5 billion people lack safely managed sanitation as of the 2023 UN progress report (UN Water 2023). In Hinduism, rivers like the Ganga and the Yamuna are worshipped as holy and treated as goddesses, for their purity and divine motherhood. However, this sacred symbolism often masks the contamination of water which is evident in the reports of the Central Pollution Control Board that reveals the quality of the water in the rivers that are far beyond the permissible safety limits.

From an ecofeminist perspective, water is both a source of life and a site of gendered struggle. Women, particularly in rural and marginalized communities, are the stewards of household water, yet they have limited control over water governance. As Vandana Shiva argues, "Water, like women, is commodified, controlled, and depleted by patriarchal development" (Shiva 50). In order to have control over the quality of the water, The Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG 6) "ensures availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" providing access to clean water and hygienic living conditions.

In Indira Goswami's *The Blue-Necked God*, polluted water of the rivers is not just a backdrop but acts as a metaphor for systemic injustice. The widows of Vrindavan are compelled to bathe in the polluted Yamuna, highlighting how ritualized notions of purity can obscure bodily and ecological harm. *The Blue-Necked God*, the sacred city of Vrindavan emerges not as a site of salvation, but as a geography of suffering, where structural neglect, religious patriarchy, and ecological degradation converge to marginalize women, particularly widows. This, aligns with both SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality), which emphasize access to water as a human right and recognize the disproportionate impact of water insecurity on women.

The banks of the river are contaminated, "littered with the shells of

dead tortoises, the half-burnt chadors of the married women who had been cremated there, and other similar gruesome things” (Goswami, 24). The ritual immersion in the Yamuna river for the widows is not just a spiritual act but a daily risk to their health. Also, when Saudamini and her mother had to cross a man’s camp, they felt: “there was a peculiar smell in the waters of the Jamuna river, I don’t know what the smell was, but it was not at all pleasant, like the smell of newly butchered meat.” (Goswami, 78).

Goswami also highlights the harsh realities of the sacred city that gets disguised during the times of Ekadesi and other religious festivals. “There was no foul smell from the filthy drains of Vrindavan. Instead, jasmine and perfume fragrances filled the air” (Goswami, 83). This can be found during a festival or religious gathering where the environment is deliberately made pleasant. However, beneath this temporary illusion of purity lies a powerful critique where the suffering and the polluted water are masked as Shiva asserts “disguises violence as progress,” wherein both women and nature are made invisible through cosmetic acts of purification and control (Shiva 46). Goswami’s ecofeminist critique reveals how water, ritual, and womanhood are entangled in a logic of disposability. Vandana Shiva has argued that such domination emerges from the same patriarchal logic that seeks to control, commodify, and exploit (Shiva 45). The sacred city’s refusal to protect its most vulnerable mirrors global failures to align tradition with sustainable, inclusive development.

Indira Goswami’s *The Blue-Necked God* transcends the realm of literary narrative to function as a socio-environmental critique. Through the lens of ecofeminism, the novel becomes a site of resistance and revelation, shedding light on the harsh realities of the widows who are abandoned in the sacred city Vrindavan and the polluted Yamuna River. This study illustrates how Goswami’s fiction serves not only as a critique of religious and social structures but also as a call to action in the context of global sustainability efforts.

The reading of *The Blue-Necked God* through the lens of ecofeminism and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, aligns with the argument that the domination of women and the exploitation of nature stem from the same patriarchal system. Goswami’s critique of a sacred city, polluted rivers, and widowhood reveals uncomfortable truths: religious sanctity can coexist with social neglect, and that the politics of purity can enable both ecological collapse and gendered suffering. As ecofeminist theorist Susan Griffin notes, “when nature is desecrated, so too are the bodies of those who are symbolically linked with it especially women” (Griffin 32).

Ultimately, this study reaffirms literature’s capacity to serve not only as a mirror of society’s ills but as a catalyst for reimagining ethical, inclusive, and sustainable development. *The Blue-Necked God* calls upon and urges readers, policymakers, and scholars that the path toward environmental sustainability and gender equality must involve not just the infrastructural reform but also a fundamental rethinking of cultural values. This paper contributes to that vision by demonstrating how literary ecofeminism can

meaningfully engage with and deepen the objectives of the global SDG framework.

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**NATURE AND MEMORY: A CRITICAL READING OF ELIF
SHAFAK'S *THE ISLAND OF MISSING TREES***

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Abstract: Set against the backdrop of war-torn Cyprus, Elif Shafak's 2021 novel *The Island of Missing Trees* explores the effects of conflict, displacement, and memory across generations. The daughter of Kostas and Defne, Ada, grows up unaware of her parents' painful past. After her mother's death and while facing emotional distance from her father, she suffers an identity crisis that leads to an emotional outburst. Through the arrival of her aunt and the symbolic presence of the fig tree, Ada begins to uncover the hidden layers of family trauma and her cultural roots. This research paper analyzes the fig tree not only as a narrative medium and emblem of magical realism but also as a powerful representation of intergenerational memory and healing. It further explores how Ada's personal journey toward identity is deeply intertwined with nature and the silent stories of the past.

Keywords: Nature, Memory, Diaspora and Migration.

Elif Shafak, a British-Turkish novelist, wrote *The Island of Missing Trees*, which deals with the themes of memory, trauma, and identity. Marianne Hirsch introduced the idea of post memory, which explains how the children of trauma survivors inherit and carry the weight of experiences that they have never directly lived through. Even without being present, they are shaped by their parents' past in both direct and indirect ways. Memory therefore plays a crucial role in showing how pain and trauma are passed on, whether through life stories, testimonies, or cultural traditions.

Human lives are intertwined with memories from childhood to the final stages of life. Memories play a significant role in shaping individuals. In the midst of a mechanical and busy life, memories allow people to pause, reflect, and refresh their sense of self. In this novel, Elif Shafak explores how memory lingers in Ada's mind, leaving her frustrated during her school years and shrouding her childhood in mystery. Childhood, as the novel suggests, can shape both trauma and joy, remaining deeply imprinted in one's life. Ada, the daughter of Defne and Costas, undergoes the painful effects of these traumas. At school, she is bullied by other students because of the mystery surrounding her origins, since she was born and raised in a different place. After her mother's death, Ada feels abandoned, as her father had been preoccupied with her own struggles and unable to spend enough time with her. Shafak chooses the fig tree as a reciter because it holds memory from beginning to end, recalling both Kostas and Defne's unseen love story along with the eventual demolition of the tavern where they met. The tree even responds to Kostas, saying, "I wish I could have told him that loneliness is a human invention. Trees are never lonely" (Shafak 30). By giving voice to a tree, Shafak transforms it

into a living witness of history. The tree becomes not just a silent observer but a memory collector, symbolizing how nature preserves the stories and traumas that humans often try to forget. Shafak enhances powerful metaphor when she compares the trees with bone which reflects and makes the readers understand the lost traces and marks of agonies of their lives. She also illustrates the alternation of soil and roots by narrating how the trauma is absorbed and being preserved in world. "A tree is a memory keeper. Tangled beneath our roots, hidden inside our trunks, are the sinews of history, the ruins of wars nobody came to win, the bones of the missing" (213). In this perspective, she tells nature as a living archive which bodyguards both the love story and violences of war. "Nature was always talking, telling things, though the human ear was too limited to hear them"(207). So, by giving this as an evidence, it stands more than a tree of a living witness. "Family traumas are like thick, translucent resin dripping from a cut in the bark. They trickle down generations"(128). Shafak magnanimously tells traumas are like resin which backdrops from the cutting of barks which tunes the past aggressions, and not letting to be in present by giving fear of combat. The fig tree challenges human notions of loneliness by emphasizing interconnections within ecosystems. In the context of Cyprus, the war divided the island along ethnic lines, creating fragmentation and isolation. Shafak invites readers to recognize memory as something realistic and enduring rather than suppressed or erased. The fig tree becomes an evidence of fondness and unity once present in a shared home, ensuring that these experiences are not subdued by conflict.

"Human-time is linear, a neat continuum from a past that is supposed to be over and done with towards a future deemed to be untouched, untarnished. [...] Arboreal-time is equivalent to story-time [...] does not grow in perfectly straight lines, flawless curves or exact right angles, but bends and twists and bifurcates into fantastical shapes..." (47) . Through this metaphor, she suggests that human life is unpredictable, full of ruptures and sudden turns, while memory like arboreal time does not follow a smooth trajectory. Instead, it grows in uneven patterns, sometimes painful, sometimes creative, evolving across generations. The fig tree's survival through changing seasons and the aggressions of war symbolizes this endurance and flexibility, showing that memory, like trees, adapts and persists. This paper interlinks Ecocriticism and Memory Studies together by exploring how nature and memory are embedded. Ecocriticism is the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation. Ecocriticism is an area of study that combines both literature and the environment. It is a multifaceted field that brings together different disciplines for a better understanding of ecological concerns. It helps humans relate themselves to nature and explores how literature examines ecosystems. In the beginning, Western critics often saw nature mainly as something that served human welfare. But from the eighteenth century onwards, many thinkers began to question this view and encouraged people to see a deeper connection between humans, nature, and its phenomena. "Most arboreal

suffering is caused by humankind” (44) . Further, the author says, “And on an island plagued by years of ethnic violence and brutal atrocities, humans were not the only ones that suffered. So did we trees and animals too, experienced hardship and pain as their habitats came to disappear. It never meant anything to anyone, what happened to us.” (190).

Here Shafak takes the tree from a biocentric view. Trees and animals also suffer like humans. The fig tree becomes a silent witness of violence and loss. This makes readers see trauma and memory as not only a human experience but also as that of environment, where nature is treated not as scenery to admire but as a co-sufferer. “Humans! After observing them for so long, I have arrived at a bleak conclusion: they do not really want to know more about plants. They do not want to ascertain whether we may be capable of volition, altruism and kinship” (44).

From this, Shafak speaks about anthropocentrism. Humans mostly see nature only for their needs, not as having agency or emotions. The fig tree’s words provoke the readers to think about how flora also endures hardships and deserves recognition. It pushes the readers to change the perspective, and connect humans and nature more deeply. The role for Ada is typically woven into the identity crisis by questioning where she truly belongs, and her family history affects her deeply. This is called post memory, imagining things or recalling them in the mind that creates traumas of old memory. The fig tree serves as a resilience and memory holder. It requires genuine and comfortable movement, a recognition and realization of the past, and commitments to evolve both land and humans for recovery. From its narratives, *The Island of Missing Trees* is a profound modulation of how memory studies connect with nature, illustrating the past that is twined with trauma and reshapes individuals and their identities. In a snippet, it is a unanimous work to read, especially for nature lovers, and reconnects them with memories of their old phases that change the fitness into reality.

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ETHICAL USE OF AI IN THE CLASSROOM: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR A HUMAN-TECH FUTURE

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Abstract: Artificial intelligence tools like Chat GPT, Gemini, Deepseek and many more have become a part of a student's everyday life, making it essential for classrooms to evolve and critically examine their use. This paper argues for the urgent need for schools and colleges to integrate the teaching of the ethics of AI. Students must think critically about their reliance on these tools. The usage must be thought about through analyzing the originality, truth and the accountability of human knowledge. Instead of getting scared of AI, one must prepare the upcoming learners to use it wisely, responsibly and reflectively. This paper explores simple and practical ways to integrate AI ethics into classroom learning, empowering students to thrive in a human-tech future.

Keywords: AI Ethics in Education, Chat GPT, Human-Tech learning, Student Accountability and Digital Responsibility.

Introduction

Artificial Intelligence tools like ChatGPT, Gemini, DeepSeek, and many others have quietly become part of students' everyday routines. From helping with homework to generating instant essays, these tools are being used with or without institutional approval. While students are embracing AI, education systems debate whether to ban, tolerate, or ignore it, the real question is not about whether AI should be used or not, but about how it should be used. This paper argues that the ethics of AI must be taught proactively in classrooms, not just as a policy requirement but as a practice for everyday life. The students must be equipped with AI reflectively, responsibly, and ethically. Education must take the lead to prepare the students to face the upcoming age of AI.

Additionally, the paper draws on classroom-level experiences to illustrate how students are engaging with AI tools and what ethical challenges emerge in real learning environments.

Research Questions

This paper is guided by the following key questions:

1. How can ethical awareness about AI be effectively cultivated in classrooms?
2. What are the practical challenges students and teachers face while engaging with AI tools?
3. What level of awareness do students and teachers have about the ethical implications of AI-generated content in academic work?
4. How can educators meaningfully integrate AI ethics into classroom practice without reducing learning to fear-based compliance or punishment?

Literature Review

In recent years, Artificial Intelligence has moved from a speculative future-tech into a functional tool embedded within education, sparking debates about its ethical, pedagogical, and practical implications. Scholars across disciplines have examined the dual nature of AI as an enabler of innovation and

as a potential disruptor of critical thinking, authorship, and human agency.

Brian Christian, in *The Alignment Problem*, argues that machine intelligence often mirrors human biases while lacking human understanding. He highlights the fundamental dilemma of alignment: that AI tools can produce coherent responses without moral or cognitive depth (Christian, 2020). This view aligns with Mark Coeckelbergh's *AI Ethics*, which emphasizes that ethical AI use is less about technology itself and more about how humans understand and shape it. Coeckelbergh insists that students must not only be technically aware but also ethically literate in their interaction with AI (Coeckelbergh, 2020).

Educational institutions have responded variably to AI's growing presence. According to a UNESCO policy document, AI in education must be accompanied by clear ethical frameworks that help students distinguish between assistance and substitution (UNESCO, 2021). However, in the Indian context, Kumar notes that formal AI ethics training is largely absent, and classroom integration is uneven (Kumar, 2023). This gap between global recommendations and local execution forms the crux of the challenge.

Meanwhile, public discourse—reflected in sources like *The New York Times* and MIT Technology Review—advocates for proactive engagement rather than reactive bans. Kevin Roose urges educators to "teach with it, not fear it," emphasizing the importance of guiding student interaction with AI tools (Roose, 2023). Will Heaven similarly argues that students learn better when they are taught to critique AI rather than simply consume its outputs (Heaven, 2023).

Collectively, these voices suggest a growing consensus: that ethical engagement with AI is not optional. It is a necessary literacy in the digital age. This paper addresses the disconnect between theoretical frameworks and actual student experiences by incorporating reflective classroom observations into the discussion.

Methodology

This paper employs a conceptual and reflective methodology, combining critical analysis of secondary literature with practice-based classroom observations. It aims to explore and propose ethical frameworks for integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into educational settings. The arguments and strategies presented are informed by the close reading of policy documents (such as UNESCO's *AI in Education* guidelines), critical academic texts (e.g., Christian's *The Alignment Problem*, Coeckelbergh's *AI Ethics*), and reputable journalistic sources (*The New York Times*, MIT Technology Review, *The Hindu*).

In addition to these secondary sources, the paper includes reflective insights from undergraduate English classrooms, where students were encouraged to explore tools like ChatGPT and Gemini in their writing, research, and discussion tasks. These classroom moments, though informal and anecdotal, serve as practical illustrations of how students encounter ethical dilemmas while interacting with AI. Rather than conducting formal interviews or surveys, the method here is interpretive and experiential, rooted in real teaching

situations and critical reflection.

This approach suits the aims of the paper, which is not to test a hypothesis but to provoke ethical awareness, encourage responsible AI use, and inspire pedagogical innovation. It prioritizes educator judgment, classroom realities, and practical integration over rigid data collection, offering a grounded yet flexible framework for engaging with AI ethics in education.

Understanding AI in the Classroom: Ethics, Misconceptions, and Everyday Challenges

Artificial Intelligence is no longer an emerging trend—it is embedded in the daily academic life. Tools like ChatGPT and Gemini assist students with essays, ideas, and even complex problem-solving. However, many students use these tools without questioning the authorship, accuracy, or ethical boundaries of the generated content. As Brian Christian observes, everyone inhabits a space where “machines can behave intelligently but without understanding, and humans can respond without thinking” (Christian, 73).

This blurred space between human and machine-generated work leads to confusion over originality and responsibility. A common misconception among students is that using AI is not plagiarism, especially when the content does not match with any existing source. But as UNESCO cautions, ethical use of AI requires learners to understand where help ends and substitution begins (UNESCO, 16). Unfortunately, that distinction is rarely taught.

Students often treat ChatGPT like a digital tutor—trusting its responses without scrutiny. They may not realize that these models generate content based on probabilities, not understanding, and may reflect built-in biases or errors. Open AI itself admits the system “may occasionally generate incorrect or misleading information and produce biased content” (OpenAI). As Coeckelbergh explains, ethical AI use requires “a critical awareness of its impact on human agency, authorship, and values” (Coeckelbergh, 42).

In practice, ethical dilemmas around AI show up in small but significant ways. For instance, a student who copies AI-generated content into their assignment without citation may not realize they are misrepresenting authorship. Instructors, meanwhile, face difficulty proving misconduct when traditional plagiarism checkers miss AI-written text. Kevin Roose argues that banning AI tools is unproductive; instead, students must be taught to engage with them critically—not fearfully (Roose)

Conversely, when students use AI to generate ideas and then revise, challenge, and supplement them with original thought, ethical usage is in action. Will Douglas Heaven writes that such engagement teaches students “not just to use technology but to think with it” (Heaven).

These scenarios underscore the urgent need for AI ethics in education. It is not enough to block or ignore these tools. Students must be taught how to think with them, about them, and beyond them.

Reflective Classroom Observations

Observation 1: The Plagiarism Misconception

During a writing assignment in a third-year literature class, a student submitted an essay that appeared well-organized and highly polished but

noticeably lacked her usual tone and phrasing. When questioned, she admitted to using ChatGPT to generate a large portion of the draft. Interestingly, she did not perceive this as plagiarism, explaining, “*I didn’t copy it from a book or a person, so I thought it was okay.*”

The class discussion that followed revealed that several students held similar assumptions. Many expressed surprise when told that AI-generated text can constitute academic dishonesty if used without attribution. One student even compared ChatGPT to a calculator, saying, “*It’s just a tool, right?*” This comparison sparked a productive dialogue about the difference between tools that calculate objective answers and those that simulate human reasoning and creativity.

This observation highlights the urgent need to teach students the difference between assistance and authorship. Without guidance, students are likely to misuse AI tools not out of dishonesty but out of confusion. Embedding these discussions into regular coursework helps students develop a more nuanced understanding of originality, ethical citation, and personal accountability in a digital age.

Observation 2: Brainstorming with AI productively

In a communication skills class, students were asked to prepare arguments for a debate on the topic: “*Social Media: Empowerment or Manipulation?*” A group of students used Gemini AI to generate possible viewpoints and counterarguments. However, instead of copying the points directly, they treated the AI suggestions as raw input. They cross-verified the AI-generated content with real-world examples, checked facts from reliable news sources, and added their own personal experiences and cultural insights.

During their presentation, the students made it a point to acknowledge the use of AI, noting that they had used Gemini to help identify key angles of the debate but had revised and expanded the arguments themselves. This transparency not only demonstrated ethical responsibility but also reinforced their credibility as speakers. The teacher encouraged this approach, praising the students for using AI as a collaborative tool rather than a shortcut.

This classroom moment exemplifies what reflective, human-led use of AI can look like in educational spaces. Moreover, the activity helped demystify AI: students began to see it as a thinking partner rather than an answer machine. This observation supports the paper’s argument that AI tools should not be banned or feared, but ethically embedded into learning practices. With the right framing, students can be taught to use AI not as a replacement for their voice, but to enhance it.

Integrating AI Ethics into Classroom Practice

A foundational consideration in contemporary pedagogy involves the effective integration of AI ethics into classroom instruction. Thus, the ethical dimension of AI integration is focused on providing informed and reflective engagement among students and educators alike.

Below are several pedagogically sound strategies for embedding AI ethics into everyday practice:

- Facilitate open discussions

Encourage students to articulate how they engage with AI tools. Guide them to consider: What aspects are helpful? What seems problematic? Did the tool enhance their thinking or replace it?

- Implement reflective writing exercises
Permit students to use AI to generate outlines or brainstorm ideas, but require them to write reflective commentaries evaluating the reliability, tone, and ethical implications of the AI-generated content.
- Use comparative analysis task
Assign students to compare AI-generated and human-written texts on similar topics. Ask them to assess differences in argumentation, tone, nuances, and originality.
- Introduce citation protocols
Provide clear guidelines on how to cite AI tools like ChatGPT in academic work. Emphasise transparency and the importance of acknowledging digital assistance.
- Assign AI fact-checking activities
Have students identify factual inaccuracies or biases in AI-generated content and revise the output with sourced corrections.

As UNESCO advises, “Teachers must be empowered to guide students not just in using AI tools but in understanding their implications” (UNESCO, 24). In this way, the classroom becomes a space not just for digital participation but also for responsible digital citizenship.

Role of a Teacher in a Human-Tech Classroom

In a world with AI, the teacher’s role is never less or unimportant; instead, it becomes more. They are no longer just deliverers of content but facilitators of judgement, mentors of curiosity, and models of responsible thinking.

Teachers must actively engage with AI by experimenting with it, discussing its limitations, and showing students how to use it ethically. As *MIT Technology Review* highlights, “Educators who lean into the presence of AI tools, rather than banning them, tend to foster more resilient and critical learners” (Heaven).

This shift also calls for revised curricular frameworks that support interdisciplinary teaching of AI ethics across subjects. Moreover, the educational institutions’ support is also important. This is particularly urgent in the Indian educational context, where classroom engagement with AI remains uneven and there is an absence of formal ethical guidelines for it. As Kumar notes, “There is no clear framework yet on how AI should be ethically and effectively integrated into classrooms (Kumar). Colleges and schools must provide guidelines that go beyond plagiarism. There should be policies coming up for AI citation, training for teachers, and platforms for students to ask ethical questions.

Artificial Intelligence is no longer a distant innovation; it is an active participant in contemporary educational practices. This paper has argued for the integration of AI ethics into classroom settings as a foundational component of

preparing students for a human-tech future. Ethical engagement with AI must be positioned not as an optional enrichment activity but as a core competency to navigate learners in an algorithmic world.

Educational institutions bear the responsibility of guiding this integration. This includes the incorporation of AI ethics into curricula, the development of assessment models that value critical reflection, and the promotion of open dialogue about the role of machines in shaping human knowledge. By fostering these conditions, educators can ensure that AI enhances rather than diminishes student agency, creativity, and accountability.

As UNESCO emphasises, ethical awareness is essential to using AI tools responsibly. Therefore, as the educational world moves forward, it is not about resisting technological advancement but about humanising it. Through proactive ethical instruction and intentional pedagogy, the classroom can become a site where students learn to use AI wisely. In doing so, the learners are prepared not just for a technological fluency but for ethical citizenship in a digitally mediated world.

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**“YOU CAN’T WON THE LAND - THE LAND OWNS YOU”: AN
ECOCRITICAL READING OF PATRICIA GRACE’S *POTIKI***

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Abstract: The paper attempts to analyse Patricia Grace's novel *Potiki* from eco-criticism point of view. Eco criticism is the literary theory that focuses on nature and the environmental connection with the human. *Potiki* has deep connection with the land and people. It deals with the lives of the Tamihana family and the exploitation of their land by the external pressure. Grace brings out not only the effects of cultural erosion but also the ecological disruption.

Keywords: Eco criticism, Nature and Land.

Ecocriticism is a literary theory which focuses on literature and environment, mainly on ecological issues and human ideas towards nature. The term ‘Ecocriticism’ was coined by William Rueckert in 1978 in his article entitled ‘Literature and Ecology’, which called for the formulation of ecological poetics.

Ecocriticism has become a diverse and vast field, a mix of literary, cultural, political, scientific and activist strands... Its mantra is that the environmental crisis demands a reconsideration of society’s basic values, constitution and purposes, and that art and literature can be vital n that work. (Clark, 15).

The increased social emphasis on environmental degradation and the growth of innovative technologies in recent years have given this kind of theory a lot of attention. Ecocriticism incorporates green studies, eco poetics, and environmental literary criticism. The term ‘Ecocriticism’ gained popularity following the publication of two books: *The Environmental Imagination* by Lawrence Buell, and *The Eco criticism Reader* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm.

Ecocriticism was a term coined in the late 1970s by combining ‘criticism’ with a shortened form of ‘ecology’- the science that investigates the interrelations of the fall forms of plant and animal life with each other and with their physical habits. ‘Eco criticism designates the critical writings that explores the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with an acute awareness of the damage being wrought on that environment by human activities. (Abrams and Galt, 98)

The concept of Eco criticism first began in late 1970 in the meetings of the Western Literature Association. Michael P. Branch first traced the word eco criticism in William Rueckert’s essay “Literature and Ecology: An

Experiment in Ecocriticism”, when he gave an introduction to his papers entitled ‘What is ecocriticism?’. Some of the eco critics are Lawrence Buel, Greta Gaard, Ursula, Jonathan Bate, Ashton Nicholas, Robert Watson, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Hellen Tiffin, Joni Adamson, William Howarth and Patrick Murphy. Then Eco criticism begins in the USA with the literary bearings of writers who lived during the nineteenth century. They celebrated nature, life, and wilderness as manifested in America. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, and Margaret Fuller, are eco critics who belong to the group known as the transcendentalists.

Patricia Grace is the writer of novels, short stories and children’s books. She was born in Wellington in 1937. She was educated at St Anne’s School, St Mary’s College and Wellington Teacher Training College. She published her first book – a short story collection *Waiariki* in 1975 and first novel *Mutuwhenua: The Moon Sleeps* in 1978 and had recognition as the first novel published by a Maori woman writer. Her other novels include *Potiki* (1986), *Cousins* (1992), *Baby No- Eyes* (1998), *Dogside Story* (2001), *Tu* (2004), *Chappy* (2015). Her nonfiction includes *Ned and Katina: A true love story* (2009), *From the Center: A writer’s life* (2021). Her short story collections include *The Dream Sleepers* (1980), *Electric City and Other Stories* (1987), *Selected Stories* (1991), *The Sky People* (1994), *Collected Stories* (2001), *Small Holes in the Silence* (2006), *Bird Child and Other Stories* (2024). She published six children’s books. She received prestigious honors like the Prime Minister’s Award for Literary Achievement in 2006, and the Distinguished Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit for her services to literature in 2007. Most of her works deal with the depiction of Maori culture and the challenges faced by Maori people to retain their lands.

Patricia Grace’s *Potiki* was published in 1986; it tells the story of the Maori people in New Zealand and their struggle to retain their land from the land developers. The novel opens with a prologue, it is the story about a carver who is carving a meeting house for the community, and he carved himself in the wood, not the ancestor. This novel is divided into three parts. It is narrated by different people. Part I of the novel was started by Roimata; she introduced her family members to the readers. She returned home after twelve years. She narrated the birth story of Toko, child of Mary, who was a special child and has the talent of foresight. With his foresight he warns Roimata that something will happen to their community in the future. Hemi lost his job, he started cultivating the land, which he forcefully gave up once. This part comes to an end with the narration of Toko, about the grabbing of the land from the neighbor tribe Te Ope for the government project. Part II opens with the meeting between Maori people and the property developer Mr. Dolman about getting their own ancestors land like the meeting house and burial ground by persuading them. But the Maori refused to give up their lands, young people started to protest. These Maori people faced a flood in their burial ground because of the construction of a dam by the developers, the next attack on them by the developers was that they set fire to their meeting house, by this the Maori lost their sacred building. In the beginning of Part III, the

readers come to know about the death of Toko; he was killed in the meeting house. His brother James realized that Toko is the person who had the right to have seat under Poupou in the meeting house. People became broken but along with the help of Te Ope people they constructed a new meeting house, which denotes that the Maori people became a powerful symbol of resistance and their unbreakable connection with the land.

The concepts of ecocritical theory can be analyzed in many places in the novel *Potiki* by Patricia Grace. Maori people have a close connection with nature, in the prologue the tree is described as the life giver, womb and living ancestor. Roimata, an important character and narrator of the novel describes land and the sea as part of their lives, and mentions that the land is alive and is interconnected with them. Their ancestral land is not the physical space but a spiritual home. She mentions that the sea has an emotional connection with them; it speaks, mourns and celebrates with them on all occasions, particularly on the birth of children.

We live by the sea, which hems and stitches the scalloped edges of the land. This piece of land is the family land of the Tamihanas. Our houses were close together on this, the papakainga, and they window the neatened curve of the sea. Towards this curve we pitch our eyes constantly, tides of eyes rolling in reverse action to the sea. (9)

Mary respected the sea both physically and spiritually. She had personal affection towards the sea, she cleaned the sea which pollutes it on a daily basis and she respected the creatures like seaweeds and treat the sea as sacred place, healer, purifier and ancestor. She walks in the shore of the sea by holding newborn in her arms and recalls the ancient thought of the sea as womb and grave. Mary considered the Marae, their meeting house as a living being. She polished the carved wood and named the ancestral carvings. Maori people bury the placenta of the baby in the ground, they considered it is not only a medical waste but also as something that has close connection with the environment and a spiritual meaning. If it was something that either lived or could live – a crab, a shellfish or a weed – she threw it into the sea. If it was something that did not live and could not – paper, plastic or tin – she put it in her bucket to take home. ‘Now that’s better and nice,’ she kept saying. (13)

Roimata considered nature as school for their children because learning is rooted in the environment, it has the songs of natural life. She rejected the imposed system of education by giving favor to ecological knowledge and considered environmental things like the sky, the porch, the sea, etc... as a natural classroom.

Story telling is an important tradition of the Maori people. This shows the connection between people and the environment. Their memory and the ancestral knowledge because the land has a cultural attachment with them. Toko’s foresight was not only a warning to the Maori people but also a warning to the environment because the land developers destroyed the natural setting for the construction of roads and dams. Maori people have the tradition of giving new life from the dead by using mother nature, that is they take the dead fish by

cutting its head and put vine seed inside the fish and bury it, that fish will decay and give life to the vine plant, this becomes the symbol of ecological transformation.

At the time when I caught my big fish the cutting was dry and without life, that's what I've been told. But after we buried the fish head and fish guts there the plant began to grow and grow. The branches began to swim everywhere like a multiplication of eels. It was as if the big eel head with its little seed-eyes was birthing out trail of its young... And the eel-vines had a thousand hidden eyes, a thousand tails and a thousand hidden hearts." (53)

The most important Eco critical theme in this novel is Maori people's connection towards their land. When the land developers persuade them to give their ancestral land for the construction, they neglect it. Their interdependence with their land is not physical but existential. Without land they become dust, directionless and voiceless. "They knew that they belonged to the land, had known all along that there had to be a foothold otherwise you were dust blowing here there and anywhere – you were lost, gone." (57)

Mr. Dolman, a man responsible for the taking of land from the Maori people, viewed land only in economic terms. In contrast Maori people considered their land as identity, ancestry and a sacred place, they had a thought that the land cannot be bought or sold. The repeated lines "we already have" mean they are sufficient in all needs, such as defense of Indigenous land rights, ecology and spiritual continuity, and no progression is needed in their place.

'We already have...'

'Work...'

'On our doorsteps...'

'And a prime amenity which is land...'

'Prime amenities of land and sea and people, as well as...' 'A million dollar view, so to speak, that...'

'Costs nothing.'

'Everything we want and need is here.' (88)

Maori children had the tradition of filling water from the creek, moving in the narrow paths for some rituals. This shows their connection towards nature, they honor the sanctity and acknowledge their dependence on nature. The reciprocal line "land does not belong to the people, but that people belong to the land. We could not forget that it was land, who contained our very beginning within herself" (106), shows the relationship between human and the environment. They do not have domination over the environment. They consider land as sacred. People's act of rebuilding the meeting house denoted the ecological continuity, suggesting that the land cannot be separated from them, though they faced flood because of the construction of dam. "The children always filled the containers at the creek before starting up the small hill to the urupa. ... Once inside the fence they would sit down to rest, then after a while begin to walk about, keeping to the narrow paths, being careful

not to step on the places” (117).

The new carving for the meeting house not only represents a person but also the environment, the green eye denotes earth, the blue eye is sky, and the seaweed strands denotes the sea. The environment is not only the backdrop but also the co-creator of their identity and continuity. They considered light as the gift of the sky, recognized light and darkness as sacred. This shows their interconnectedness with nature. “‘Light is a gift too,’ she said. ‘A gift of the sky, which is something that the earth knows. But the dark, the dark is a gift also because in the dark there is nurturing. These things are known to the earth as well as to the sky’” (171). They saw that one eye had been set low towards the earth-mother and that it matched the green colour of the earth. And the other eye, they saw, had been set high, towards the sky-father, and it contained the blue and blood colours of the sky. (169)

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DEHUMANISING IMPACTS OF DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGIES IN ROB HART'S *THE WAREHOUSE*

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Abstract: The paper examines the dehumanizing impacts of developing technologies as depicted in Rob Hart's dystopian novel, *The Warehouse*. This novel looks into how innovations in technology enhance efficiency and also contribute to the erosion of individual identity, autonomy, and ethical economic structures in a corporate society, and it employs a literary-analytic approach to conduct a close reading on the major thematic intersections of technology, surveillance, labour and corporate domination. Hart's *The Warehouse* contributes to interdisciplinary disputes about how speculative fiction uncovers challenges and the dark sides of technological advancement in society.

Keywords: Technological Determinism, Emerging Technologies, Corporate Dystopia and Dehumanisation.

Dehumanising impacts of developing technologies in Rob Hart's *The Warehouse* effectively capture the research's central concern of technological growth and its ethical implications over human identity. In general, the phrase "dehumanising impacts" emphasises the core element that technology is often portrayed as a progressive one, which, on the other hand, deprives individuals' autonomy, dignity, and individuality. The phrase "developing technologies" refers to an evolving process that enhances various sectors such as scientific innovation, industrial revolution, transportation, communication, healthcare, education and other areas of the economy. Emerging technologies distinguish the transformative potential as well as the uncertainties, which include ethical, economic, and social ramifications.

In *The Warehouse*, GPS tracking, Cloudbands, drone delivery systems, data analytics and rating systems represent the emerging technologies. "The prevailing theory is that dehumanisation is the act of perceiving or treating people as if they are less than fully human and leads to discrimination against other individuals or entire groups" (Oldfield 3). The technologies are seen not only as tools for efficiency but as systems of control, exploitation, and dehumanisation of the fictional company portrayed by Rob Hart. Therefore, this paper incorporates the analytical framework of the novel *The Warehouse* and it examines how emerging technologies establish themselves as instruments of control within a corporate-based dystopia. Rob Hart is a contemporary North American writer who is recognised for his crime novels and series. He wrote the *Ash McKenna series*, a five-book crime thriller series. With James Patterson, Rob Hart worked on the mystery crime thriller named *Scott Free* in 2017. This paper demonstrates how the fictional narratives in *The Warehouse* mirror real-world concerns associated with the rise of digital capitalism and the gradual loss of individual autonomy. As Olga Gomilko says about the totalitarian regime in the below lines:

As a matter of fact, a totalitarian regime destroys free, unprejudiced mind and makes the existence of its social correlate independent competent intellectual impossible. Totalitarianism and actual autonomy of mind are incompatible. Totalitarian system in one of its dimensions is a huge and effective anti-thinking machine. It is bound to destroy and to make any free and non-ideological intellectual movement impossible. That is why after the totalitarianism collapses the mind encounters urgent tasks to overcome the anti-thinking system, non-freedom of the thought, ideological and theoretical prejudices and authority of mass myths. (105,106)

The Warehouse has technological components that demonstrate the occurrence of espionage in the form of a corporate panopticon. It depicts a fictional near-future company named Mother Cloud, a monolithic corporation that provides job opportunities, accommodation, food and self-contained facilities to the employees. Though this Cloud appears to provide a solution to societal woes such as unemployment and environmental degradation, Hart exposes the creeping dehumanising effects that combine with unconstrained corporate power, individual autonomy and limited personal connection.

The Cloudbands are one of the most prevalent dehumanising devices in *The Warehouse*. This wearable device presents as a tool for productivity and security, and also it serves as an enduring monitoring mechanism for the employees. It analyses employees' locations, biometrics, and productivity measures that create constant surveillance. Mark Rathbone explains the modern panopticon as "The insights of panopticism in relation to digital technology will be explored. This exploration will highlight the role of digital technology as a contemporary form of panopticism, as seen through the lens of Foucault's criticism of 18th- and 19th-century surveillance culture" (6). The Cloudbands convert employees' data into quantifiable points to assess their disciplined behaviour. The automation and other machine workforces create a sense of displacement among human employees, and they improve productivity by reducing human work. They make the employees worthless, and they start giving less importance to the work despite wanting to explore more. The employees' standard of living is scheduled, organised and controlled. However, the spontaneity of personal choices and the individual preferences are limited. The corporate control and subtle manipulation inside the Cloud cause dehumanisation.

The Cloud is notable for delivering goods through drones. Although video surveillance such as CCTV facilities is limited at Cloud's workplace, the floor managers continue to force employees to work for long hours with less time for resting. The Cloud's founder, Gibson, imposes some restrictions on how employees spend their earnings. Cloud adopts a strict set of norms that all employees must follow. The employees must maintain a five-star performance rating on a weekly basis in order to get the payment. Employees with better ratings are thought to be doing well, but those with average scores are encouraged to improve better. A four-star grade signifies satisfactory

performance; however, a three-star grade suggests the need for improvement. Two stars indicate that immediate action is required. Falling to a lower rating indicates the automatic termination. The Cloudbands are used for the online transactions too. The device also allows for passive monitoring of the work actions of the employees and assures them that they have to be aware of the surveillance through this device. The implied message is that corporate standards are required to preserve a favourable rating, whereas those who do not follow the instructions given by the Cloud, result in harsh consequences. Despite public claims of mistreatment, the company's activities indicate an organised exercise of power and establish the Cloud as a dominant force.

Gibson Wells, Paxton and Zinnia are the primary characters in this novel. The Gibson's part is told in the first-person narration that provides readers to know about his thoughts and deeds. As the founder of Mother Cloud, he considers the company to be a big personal accomplishment. Much of his discourse is addressed directly to the readers. He purposely avoids investing a large amount in establishing the artificial intelligence for his company. This displays a discriminating approach of how he relies significantly on human labour by knowing the other side of the excessive use of artificial intelligence. He recognises drone technology as a transformative force for future advancements. He observes that conventional transportation, particularly large trucks, causes significant issues clogging both roads and airspace, and avoiding traffic congestion and road accidents. For that reason, he chooses drone technology as the right option for delivering goods to the customers in an easy way. He considers that the technological growth also reduces the cause of emissions and other environmental issues. However, in reality, it is the main reason for polluting the environment.

The employees are required to work more than twelve hours per day. Furthermore, overtime is seen as an optional, but it is mandatory for every worker to increase their ratings. Miguel, one of the employees, says, "It's strictly volunteer. But it keeps you in good standing. Counts towards your employee rating. It's an option you want to take. Builds you a buffer on your rating. The more you refuse, it goes the other way" (Hart 114).

Paxton is the second primary character who works as a security officer in Mother Cloud. He explains how the Cloud undermines and eliminates smaller enterprises through mass production and tough competition. In this context, the panopticon is used not only as a monitoring and controlling mechanism but also as a broader weapon of corporate domination and brings direct problems to human society (Zeng 170). Unaware of Cloud's true motivations at the initial time, he slowly realises the deceitful nature of the corporate system. He never anticipates that he is in the part of the institution, which dominates the American economy.

Zinnia is the third important character who is a corporate spy and gains access to Mother Cloud by working as another employee. Her major goal is to uncover the corporate's hidden facts. Zinnia discovers that Paxton has been placed on the security team and quickly recognises the opportunity to use his position to execute her plan (Crown 1). Zinnia repeatedly receives troubling

stories about the mysterious deaths of Cloud employees. Dobbs is one of the corporate high-ranking managers who describes Zinnia as “She’s a corporate spy, gets hired to root into companies, steal their secrets and accused her as a cold-blooded killer” (Hart 318). As a secret operative, Zinnia finds the constant surveillance, particularly the GPS-enabled Cloudbands, which is intrusive and frustrating. On the other side, Dobbs knows that she also wears a wristband that helps him watch her wherever she goes. He says, “She wasn’t so worried about being seen. Like Gibson said in the video, there weren’t a lot of cameras around. The problem was the damn GPS tethered to her wrist” (Hart 77). Gibson retains his position and consistently justifies his established doctrines to the readers. He says:

Our mission at Cloud is to promote an enriching and supportive atmosphere that allows everyone to thrive and succeed. We provide a comprehensive approach to inclusivity, access, and equality, through collaborative, deliberate efforts within our community. During the rating process your ranking will be taken into account, as well as your previous work history, and we will reconsider your placement and find a position that is mutually beneficial to both our needs and yours. (Hart 133)

The labourers in the Cloud are given only a thirty-minute lunch. Cloud takes a capitalist attitude towards employees. Gibson maintains hierarchy among employees. Surveillance technology such as small microphones, wiretaps, hidden trackers, and cameras combine to construct an advanced, electronically driven panopticon in the totalitarian domain. One troublesome aspect of this modern monitoring system is that the individuals are frequently unaware of the insecurity in such a corporate setup (Arnett 402). Mogsy explains the Cloud industry effectually in the below lines of his article as:

Rob Hart’s depiction of a dystopian future where workers no longer have any rights and Cloud is everywhere in our media, in our houses, and in our faces. Consumers put up with it for the convenience, but for Cloud employees, working the job every day and trying to keep it is like living through a waking nightmare. The means of constant surveillance and absolutely having no privacy. (1)

The constant surveillance has psychological impacts on the employees those who work in the Cloud. In the contemporary era, the advanced technologies serve as a modern type of imprisonment which exploit labour through persistent work that is not recognised (Kumar 346). Hart’s work portrays the essential idea of a highly advanced type of authoritarian surveillance. The continuous monitoring fosters a repressive environment for employees and exposes the mechanisms of their subjugation. Instead of representing unambiguous progress, these technological innovations raise a pervasive reliance on digital systems across all areas of existence (Sekulovski 8).

In Cloud, a popular meal item called Cloud Burger is supplied to

employees at a low cost, and it significantly reduces fat and protein content. Besides, a protein bar that is “low in fat, low in carbs, high in protein, and doesn’t taste like a block of Styrofoam smeared with stale peanut butter” (Hart 190). Cloud devalues employees who work for long hours; instead, they treat them like slaves and never bother about their health condition. “The panopticon is generally conceived of, in its form, as a supervision dispositive, relying on the principle of constant visibility, with the goal to control people, materially or symbolically, to produce docile bodies” (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte 2), Jeremy Bentham’s vision of “Panopticon.” George Orwell developed the image of “Big Brother” (Haque 187) in his famous novel 1984 and it revolves around the themes of perpetual surveillance and its consequences. The term “Big Brother” becomes a well-known metaphor for political surveillance, dissent control, authoritarian rule, and the repression of personal liberty (Power 578). Within such political settings, surveillance serves as an organised mechanism for monitoring individuals or groups and is often carried out by state authorities, businesses, or other powerful entities. This type of monitoring effectively removes personal privacy, exposing persons to constant inspection (Galic et al.9).

Gibson’s manipulation towards employees receives no pushback from any opponents from people and organisations. This gives Gibson more confidence in establishing many restrictions for the employees in a strong way. Initially, the term panopticon focused only on prisoners whose work is watched and controlled. Later, digital panopticon concerns a large number of people and exercising authority through digital platforms. The two terms ‘panopticon’ and ‘the digital panopticon’ already implemented in hospitals, educational facilities, and military barracks to improve efficiency and discipline (Liang 1).

Mother Cloud relies much on customers’ expectations and gaining valuable feedback, yet it should concern the employees’ wellbeing too. Through this novel, Hart urges readers and society to examine the value of humans. Hart suggests to the readers and the society that people should use the technology to uphold human dignity, equity, and environmental sustainability rather than being a voiceless one to accept the injustice happening around them. This novel critiques how corporate sectors endorse job opportunities and empowerment, but in reality, they reinforce hierarchy, work pressures and worker dependency by advertising employment.

The employees in Mother Cloud never recognise the employees as individuals who have their own opinions and creativity but as units of productivity. In a capitalist framework the workers are valued only by star ratings, and they are merely puppets who act in accordance with the corporate’s policies. However, it isolates individuals and weakens their unique talents and destroys the good human relationships among employees and employers. This causes the dehumanisation impacts. The characters, such as Zinnia, represents a form of resistance to claim the basic rights of employees and wants to eliminate the dehumanising effects in such a technologically advanced forum. Hence, *The Warehouse* serves as a speculative novel that reflects contemporary labours’ environment that is highly shaped by capitalism, technological advancements

and other unethical use of corporate, in dehumanising the employees for granted.

In order to avoid the mistreatment given by the corporates, the government should implement proper labour laws and ethical guidelines for the employees. The corporate leaders have the responsibility to prioritise the workers' well-being and work-life balance. The corporate company, like Cloud, should ensure the safety and security of the employees to prevent the chances of misuse, despite tracking with GPS and Cloudbands. It should create a platform for the employees' concern and decision-making, to make a better workplace environment.

The Cloud like companies must establish the ethical boundaries. To maintain transparency, it should maintain dignity and fairness for all workers. The performance-based metrics, such as rating systems, should be embedded with mental health support systems. Instead of bringing the short-term data points, it should consider long-term contributions that will bring out creativity, productivity, qualitative assessments, and collaboration for the workers to work wholeheartedly. These concerns would help the workers to produce their talents in an independent way. The works of contemporary writers like Rob Hart help the readers to know about capitalism, power, technology, and surveillance in literature. They alert the future generations to know the challenges and be aware of dehumanisation under the guise of such advancements.

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CULTURAL IDENTITY AS PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF ORHAN PAMUK'S *THE WHITE CASTLE*

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Abstract: Orhan Pamuk's novel *The White Castle* destabilizes the East/West binaries while exploring the relationship between the Turkish Master (Hoja) and the Venetian slave. This novel is a classic example of Pamuk's resistance to the essentialist views of identity. This paper aims to understand how cultural identity is rendered as a process rather than a fixed entity in *The White Castle*. Employing theories of Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha, the study interrogates the questions of identity, selfhood and assimilation and how Pamuk presents Istanbul as a liminal space where cultural identity is negotiated.

Keywords: Identity, Production, Hybridity, Mimicry and Third Space.

Orhan Pamuk, "who in the quest for the melancholic soul of his native city has discovered new symbols for the clash and interlacing of cultures" ("Nobel") was awarded the Nobel Prize in literature in 2006. He is a Turkish novelist born in Istanbul. Pamuk presents in his works the East-West conflict which is a major cause for the complex nature of Turkish identity. Cultural identity forms an integral part of his oeuvre. His novel *The White Castle*, vividly delineates the fragmented and fluid nature of cultural identity. He has treated identity as performance, "a production, which is never complete, always in process" (Hall 222).

Pamuk argues against the East/West binaries through the narrative of a slave and his master. The novel is set in the seventeenth century Istanbul, which is under Ottoman rule. Istanbul's geographical position and the incorporation of a European slave and a Turkish master facilitate the discourse of individual identity in a complex setting. Pamuk challenges the essentialist notions of identity by employing a doppelganger concept, which enables the erasure of the perceived differences between the slave and his master.

The objective of this paper is to examine and understand how identity becomes performative and uncertain in Pamuk's novel through the frameworks of Stuart Hall and Homi Bhabha. The paper employs close textual analysis to unwind the significance of the novel's setting, narration and treatment of identity as performance, in an attempt to explore answers to the questions of identity, selfhood and assimilation in *The White Castle*. Pamuk's novel is a space where identity is narrated, disputed and subjected to further interpretations in a cross-cultural matrix.

Hall's idea that identity is not an essence but a discursive social construct, and Bhabha's concepts of mimicry and hybridity are applicable to Pamuk's works as Pamuk treats identity as a negotiation rather than a fixed origin. Identity in the novel is formed in an interstitial space that Bhabha calls

“Third Space.” The notions of self and other are incessantly muddled in this space. The Turkish Master’s question, “Why am I what I am?” (Pamuk 58) is a profoundly resonating one as it is not only central to the novel but to the substance of identity itself.

Cultural identity, according to Stuart Hall can never be a fixed entity. He posits that identity keeps evolving based on the historical, cultural and social contexts.

Cultural identity is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture..... But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. (Hall 225)

This is evident in the narrative particularly because the narrator is a European who is taken captive in an Eastern land. His displacement causes him to undergo a complete transition. In the beginning of the novel, he is a Venetian scholar but towards the end of the novel, he becomes the Hoja. This transition is facilitated by Hoja who is symbolic of power, and by the culture of Istanbul which is under constant negotiation because Istanbul is where cultural assimilation and mimicry take place. Though the slave is at first in conflict with the environment, he eventually develops a sense of belonging.

Carter V. Findley in his book *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism and Modernity: A History*, says that “so deep is the imprint of Islam on the Turkish society that it and the Turkish language form the two primary markers of Turkish identity” (7). This is palpable in *The White Castle*. When the Venetian scholar is first taken as a slave, he is given the opportunity to escape death by converting to Islam. Initially the narrator strongly objects to the idea of conversion, but when he takes up the identity of Hoja, he becomes a Muslim. Similarly, when the Pasha and the captors realise that he is a doctor, the narrator learns Turkish so fast that helps him communicate with the people there. It wins him the trust of the Pasha. “I was about to tell him more when, saying I must be an intelligent man to have learned Turkish so quickly, he added that he had a problem with his health” (Pamuk 18).

Similar to the roles played by religion and language, power dynamics play a crucial role in shaping identities. When in the beginning of the novel, the narrator is captured, he exhibits a sense of superiority as he admits that he is a scholar. “I declared right away that I had knowledge of astronomy and nocturnal navigation, I then claimed I was a doctor, counting on the anatomy book they'd left me” (Pamuk 15-16). This superiority has its effect on his captors that he is not put to the oars and is given a separate cell with access to all his books. The narrator also feels powerful when he is asked by Hoja to teach him European science.

However, this is unsettled when Hoja begins learning things faster. The narrator doubts his intellectual superiority that he gives in to the demands of Hoja and obeys him. He feels his power crumbling when Hoja says, “Now I am like you,... I know your fear. I have become you” (Pamuk 83). This shift in

power is not limited to the slave-master relationship but extends beyond it. Hoja not only gains intellectual superiority but a prominent position in the Ottoman court and an intimacy with the Sultan himself. "Hoja was not only raised to the position of imperial astrologer but also developed a more intimate relationship with the sultan than we had ever hoped for" (Pamuk 99).

Homi Bhabha, like Stuart Hall, argues against the fixed notions of identity. While Hall talks about identity as a production, Bhabha explores how and where it is produced. He discusses the theories of mimicry, hybridity and third space to expound the same. The Third Space "is in the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (Bhabha 2). In *The White Castle*, Istanbul is that liminal space where such negotiations happen, the space where cultural identity is mimicked, hybridized and subjected to further translations.

The White Castle stages an extended process of mimicry as it progresses. Jacques Lacan says that

Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage. It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled — exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare. (qtd.in Bhabha 85)

The colonizers manipulated mimicry to turn the colonized people, civilized. When the colonized mimicked too well, they became a threat to the colonial authority. The same thing happens in *The White Castle*. The narrator is proud and feels that his European origin is his shield. It breaks when he realizes that Hoja is good at mimicking. He feels vulnerable and understands that there is nothing left that would make him feel superior.

Hoja asks the narrator to tell him anything he remembers from the European education in order to obtain his knowledge.

Later he said I would teach him everything; that's why he'd asked the pasha to give me to him, and only after I had done this would he make me a freedman..... 'Everything' meant all that I'd learned in primary and secondary school: all the astronomy, medicine, engineering, everything that was taught in my country (Pamuk 32).

This is because he looks down upon his people. He continually calls them fools. He thinks that gaining access to European knowledge would make him superior, escaping the inferiority of Eastern knowledge. He yearns for his people to desire for knowledge about things unexplored yet like the stars and sky.

As the novel progresses, it is seen that the narrator and Hoja start writing their life experiences as a game. This practice eventually aids Hoja in expropriating the narrator's identity and life in Europe. The narrator is at a point petrified, when he learns that Hoja remembers every single detail about his past. "I was terrified to realize he remembered everything I had told him about my childhood and youth, down to the smallest detail, and from these

details had constructed an odd and fantastical land to his own taste” (Pamuk 84).

This also goes the other way round. The narrator finally develops a sense of belonging transcending the constructs of nation and nationalism.

What difference would it make if I returned to Venice? After fifteen years my mind had long accepted that my mother had died, my fiancée was lost to me, married, with a family; I didn't want to think of them, they appeared less and less in my dreams; moreover I no longer saw myself among them in Venice as in my first years, but dreamt of their living in Istanbul, in our midst. (Pamuk 102)

He becomes the Hoja, once the latter escapes to Venice in his place. However, as Bhabha posits it, “the colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 86). The narrator almost becomes the Hoja but not quite. People around suspect him but he does one thing or the other to divert their focus.

Both the master and the slave turn to be products of hybridity at the end. Hoja goes to Italy, becomes a scholar, authors books, gets married to the slave's fiancée and warns the East to submit themselves to the West but he is still worried about them.

He was not a true friend of the Turks, that He'd written unflattering things about them: He'd written that we were now in decline, described our minds as if they were dirty cupboards filled with old junk. He'd said we could not be reformed, that if we were to survive our only alternative was to submit immediately, ... 'But He wanted to save us,' For our sake He had even built a weapon. (Pamuk 159)

Though he now lives in the guise of a westerner, he has an ardent passion for his country. He is transformed, but partially. He commits neither to his eastern roots nor his new self. He tries to define himself somewhere in between. This shows that there is no end to the process of identity formation. Rupturing the East/West binaries, Hoja forms a hybrid identity. It is neither completely transformed into Western nor is it still true to the East. It is in an ambivalent state challenging the singularity and fixedness of cultural identity.

The White Castle presents Istanbul as an interstitial space where these cultural ambiguities are created. Istanbul becomes the ‘third space’ where Islam and Christianity, the East and the West and the tradition and the modernity coexist. Irrespective of the incongruous nature of the space, these binaries intersect, merge and produce identities that are hybrid. The hybrid identities are not just a mixing of the binaries but something unconventional and politically formidable. “The meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew” (Bhabha 55).

Istanbul becomes the cultural palimpsest possessing different historical and cultural layers. It serves as the third space of enunciation where cultural identity is constantly negotiated. The city's position at the threshold subjects it

to a contested space which in turn is reflective of the identity crises the subjects undergo. Tracing the narrator's spatial journey, it is inferred that his intimacy with the city is majorly due to the various places he lives in. Beginning with his time in the prison cell, his life at Hoja's house and finally his entry into the court as the imperial astrologer, all these play a crucial role in developing a sense of belonging. Therefore, Istanbul plays a formative role in building identities in *The White Castle*.

The novel's narrative structure also adds to the complex nature of cultural identity. Pamuk attaches a sense of mystery to the narrator by keeping his identity concealed. Throughout the novel he carefully blurs the distinction between the narrator and Hoja. Questions like "Why am I what I am" (Pamuk 58), "Why were we where we were" (74) and "Of what importance is it who a man is?" (149) add to the sense of mystery. These questions also form the crux of identity itself. They emphasise the narrator and Hoja's doubts on their own identities.

Towards the end of the novel the mystery is still upheld because it is left to the discretion of the readers to find who is who. Keeping things under wraps suggests that cultural identity is rendered as a performance. Perhaps Hoja performs as an alien trapped in his own body or he is the slave, performing as Hoja. With reference to Hall's idea of becoming and being, it can be noted that the narrator not only becomes Hoja but lives as him. This performance of identity further emphasises the constructed nature of identity.

Pamuk's *The White Castle* presents identity as a performance. The uncertain identities of the narrator and his master, the cross-cultural setting of the novel, and the self-reflexive nature of the narrative, argue against the idea that identity is a fixed entity and posit that identity is contested and hybridized in an interstitial space. Pamuk does not ultimately provide answers to the questions of identity and selfhood but draws upon the nature of identity as a matter of endless negotiation, shaped by culture, history, memory and power.

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MULTIFACETED RELATIONSHIP OF MEMORY IN THE FILM *KISHKINDHA KANDAM*

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Abstract: Dinjith Ayyathan is celebrated as a visionary Malayalam director who masterfully brought *Kishkindha Kandam* to life on the silver screen. He is known for his storytelling and unique narrative structures. In this film, the director uses memory as a central theme. Ayyathan, as he was inspired by the epic *Ramayana*, reimagined the *Kishkindha* chapter as a collection of memories, intertwining themes of forgetting and reminiscing to explore the collective recollections. This paper examines the protagonist in the film, who navigates between the past and the present, relying on fragmented memories to define the emotional core of the narrative. It explains how memory, both accurate and distorted, shapes identity and influences relationships.

Keywords: Memory, Forgetting, Reminiscing and Collective Recollection.

Dinjith Ayyathan is the director of the film *Kishkindha Kaandam*. In this film, the director explores memory as a core theme. He explains how memory plays a vital role in the life of the protagonist Appu Pillai. Caterina Albano says, “the self and the past are intimately bound together in the unfolding of remembering in the very particularly of an individual’s sensory images and emotions” (26). Appu Pillai is a retired military officer who suffers in the present and tries to retrieve the past through his memories. Though he forgets everything, some fragments return to him. Ajay Chandran, son of Appu Pillai helps the father in his illness. He believes that his father is not interested to tell about his mental illness to anyone because he may lose his dignity.

The story begins with the second marriage of Ajay Chandran and Aparna. Before Ajay signs the marriage register, he receives a call from the police station asking him to surrender his gun due to the upcoming election. Ajay informs them that his father is at home and that he will bring the gun to the police station in the evening. However, when Ajay and his father search for the gun, they realize that it is missing. The actual reason for the missing of the gun is the father’s memory loss. He does not know where he missed the gun. Marcel Proust says in his book *In Search of Lost Time*, “Remembrance of the past is not the remembrance of things as they are.” Appu searches in several places for the missing gun. He even assigned some people to clean the forest in order to check his gun. He tries to remember various incidents to find the gun but he could not.

As days pass, Aparna notices that her father-in-law is anxious in searching something. One day a woman comes to have a check on the gun. Appu Pillai is angry with that woman. The woman asks for the details such as name and address and he said that they are mentioned in the paper. She asks for the name of the son he says that his name is Ajay. She ask for the full name. He thinks for a while, sees the phone and then says the sons’ name. Later, Aparna Ajay checks the phone of her father-in-law. Aparna tells Ajay that his father saved only 10 contact names but each number is saved in detail. For example he saves in such a way that his own son’s name with initial. Caterino Albano

says, “The placement of the past in a continuum of experience is insufficient to define a memory, since what renders the past memorable is the fact that is unique to the subject who has experienced and makes it her own not only cognitively but also emotionally remembering concerns the past which is felt and known subjectively.” Appu is sad of his wife’s demise. He is not able to remember the name of his own family members and so he has saved everyone’s name in detail. He briefs the details of his acquaintances in a notepad to continue his relationship with them.

Every day Aparna asks Ajay many questions about what is happening to her father in law and his memory loss. Ajay’s son, Chachu was missing for two years. Chachu was the son born to Ajay and Praveena, in their first marriage. Aparna believes the reason behind Chachu’s missing is his father in law’s memory issues. She says that his father-in-law is anxious about something and searching for it, suddenly he reacts as if nothing has happened. Paul Ricoeur provokes, “Forgetting is not only a failure of memory, but also a condition of remembering” (446). Appu tries to remember everything through his deep search. The search makes him more anxious and tries to hide from the people about his search. Caterino Albeno emphasis “Remembering was thus an action where by thought, affect an emotion were reworked and unreelated narratively in recollection. This process however be hindered by the difficulty or impossibility of remembering disturbing elements of the past” (28). Ajay tells Aparna that Chachu was loved and cared by his father. He also says that when his first wife was hospitalized, his father was the only person to take care of Chachu. He accepts that his father has memory loss issues and he wants to maintain it as a secret. He wants to uphold his dignity through the fragmented pieces of memories.

One night, Aparna sees someone burning something in the garden. She tells her husband, and they decide to investigate, but it begins to rain, so they abandon their plan. One day, Aparna sneaks into Appu Pillai’s room to see what he is up to. He examines the cuttings of newspapers and series of notepads; before she can uncover anything. Appu notices her presence and he quickly shuts off the window. All these incidents prove that Appu is in search of something related to his life. Paul Ricoeur says: “Memory is not just retrieval of the past, but the shaping of who we are today. In every recollection, there’s a trace, of truth, of loss, of time’s decay” (468). Appu retrieves the past to move to the present. His mind and memory are obsessed with the past and searches for his missing grandson.

Later, Aparna guesses that the burning in the forest was because of his father-in-law. She suspects that he burnt something in the forest to cover up his involvement in his grandson’s disappearance. One day, she follows him to the forest, where she sees him burning papers. After he leaves, she tries to extinguish the fire to examine what he was burning. Suddenly, Appu Pillai appears and pushes her aside to prevent her from uncovering the truth. At that moment, Ajay intervenes and takes his father home. Appu Pillai and Aparna fall on each side. Suddenly he forgets what happened to him and he thinks that there is a fight between the couple. He asks the couple not to fight whenever

there is a sudden friction in the body. Caterina Albano says that according to Freud 'Untamed memories' emerged unbidden to the psyche and like screen memories were vividly plastic. The mental image of these unbidden memories replicated disturbing aspect of the past. Repetition manifested itself as a psychic defining force of trauma. It acted like inner unconscious structure of the self which was deeply implicated in the haunting recurrence of trauma memories and psychosomatic symptoms.

These symptoms prove that Appu is undergoing a traumatic memory disorder due to which he is not able to communicate with anyone but only to himself. Aparna manages to retrieve some burnt pieces of paper and it is revealed that Appu Pillai was burning documents related to his missing grandson. She confronts Ajay, insisting that his father's behaviour is suspicious and he would be the only reason for Chachu's disappearance. Ajay speaks in favour of his father stating that his father lives in an acute reality of what happens in the present and he does not remember his past. He tries to tell his wife that his father too is serious in searching for the lost son and he cannot be the victim for his disappearance.

Ajay meets Appu Pillai's old friends to learn more about him. He discovers that Appu Pillai has struggled with memory issues since his younger days. While in the military, he lost his gun and was harshly scolded by his superiors. His enemies mocked him, and although he eventually found the gun near the laundry area, he was dismissed from his position. Ajay adopts different methods to jog his father's memory. One day, Appu Pillai's friend visits him and introduces himself as an old army comrade. His photo is displayed in the hall. From the photo Appu recognizes his friend's name, opens the drawer of the table in which he has many notepads and from these notepads he chooses the name Amritlal. Pillai reacts as if he remembers and recognizes him. He asks question from the notepad. Sigmund Freud says; "Our memories linger, distorted and deep, guarded in dreams where secrets sleep. Repression bends the truth we feel, but still, the buried past will squeal" (113). Memories are typed in the form of a notepad that makes him raise questions as if he remembers everything about his friend's estate and his son. He asks various questions to prove that he remembers everything. In the last page, he has written that Amritlal is not his friend. Appu Pillai starts to fight with Amritlal and they both fell down. Suddenly, he forgets everything as if nothing has happened to him. At that moment, Ajay and his wife return home. The visitor recognizes Ajay and claims to be Appu Pillai's old friend.

Appu Pillai usually takes notes and meets his friend, Sumadathan. Each day he asks the question about various incidents of his life and he gets the answer from his friend. Every day he repeats the same question and acts as if he is hearing for the first time. Appu tries to remember the things in a chronological order to find out what has happened to Chachu. But everyday, he tries to remember something but forgets everything at a certain point. Caterina Albano rightly says, "a rearrangement of memories the past, in other words interpreted and integrated into a narrative that rearticulated it a new for the individual. Such a past concerned both what one remembered and when one

believed to have forgotten, thus suggesting the centrality of memory to the development of psychoanalysis” (28). Appu’s psychological condition makes him believe only Sumadathan. Paul Ricoeur says “Our uneasiness concerning the right attitude ... with regard to the uses and abuses of forgetting, mainly in the practice of institutions, is finally the symptom of a stubborn uncertainty affecting the relation between forgetting and forgiveness...” (502). Even Appu feels bad to ask repeated questions to his friend but there is no one else to help him. Sumadathan considers the friendship high and patiently answers the same questions everyday.

One day, the police discover a burial site near Appu Pillai’s home. Police informs Ajay that the burial site contains a small skeleton, which initially seems to belong to a child. Since Ajay had previously reported his missing son and the land once belonged to his father, the police call Ajay to investigate. When the burial site is opened, they find a skeleton that has been buried three years ago. The forensic team identifies that the skeleton belongs to a monkey, and the cause of death is determined to be a gunshot wound. The police note that Appu Pillai’s calibre and the gun shot by the monkey are the same. In the final stage of the film, the police arrest Appu Pillai because they suspect that the gun belongs to Appu. After rigorous search by the police and forest officers, it is found that the gun is with one of the monkeys. The police arrest Appu Pillai and ask to identify whether the gun is his; he identifies that the gun belongs to him. Paul Ricoeur says “The arrival of a memory is an event. Forgetting is not an event... Forgetting develops enduring situations, which in this sense can be said to be historical ... It is always in the present, finally, that forgetting is conjugated” (441). According to the quote and Appu, the gun reminds something related to his life history but the event and the gunshot by monkey cannot be described to the fullest. Questions are charged in front of Appu, Appu is speechless and completely embarrassed. His doctor who actually disguised as his army friend proves that Appu Pillai is innocent. The police and the forest officer freed Appu Pillai because if they charge any case against Appu, they will be questioned for giving a licensed gun to a person with mental illness.

When Appu is arrested, Aparna examines the room of Appu to know the reason of Chachu’s disappearance. After a serious search, she finds the gun placed in the locker of the almirah of Appu. Aparna’s convictions become true that the gun is a trace of memory through which he can remember the events of the gun shot of monkey and the disappearance of Chachu. Paul Ricoeur believes that some traces tries to convict the history. “There ... exists a reserve of forgetting which can be a resource for memory and for history” (284). Aparna believes that it is Appu who killed the monkey and through his memory loss he missed or he did something to Ajay’s son.

Many notes talk about the search of Chachu’s missing case. Meanwhile both Ajay and Appu come back home after the inquiry of the police and forest officers. Appu as usually shouts at Aparna for searching the room. Ajay makes his father sleep and comes back to his room. Outside the room, Dr. Amrith Lal advises Aparna that the notes of Appu are stored safely right in the drawer. It

shows that what he remembers and what he forgets are stored safely in this room, when it is scattered everywhere he gets panic. The Doctor replies that Appu's memories are splintered and sharp, and that he struggles for space within his heart which makes him shout at Aparna. Aparna asks the doctor as why would anyone burn all the notes when he/she tries to remember things. The Doctor says that some bad memories that he prefers not to remember, he burns them. Appu escapes from the actual reality. Freud manifests that "forgetting is the uniform result of the entire series of observations...The forgetting in all cases is proved to be founded on a motive of displeasure" (139). This displeasure makes Appu yell at Aparna whenever she spies the room.

Ajay asks Aparna not to be like Sherlock Holmes and investigate his father. Aparna shows the gun that was inside Appu's almirah. Ajay then opens up the true story of Chachu. Praveena, his first wife was diagnosed with cancer. At that time, Chachu spent most of his time with his father because Ajay took Praveena to the hospital for chemo sessions. One day, Chachu shot a monkey with the gun. Appu started to beat Chachu but Sumadathan saved Chachu. Sumadathan buried the dead monkey in the forest. After some time, Appu brought the dessert as if nothing has happened few hours before. At present, Aparna raises the question to Ajay: "Chachu's birthday was on March 19, and the shot of monkey was also on the same day but Chachu went missing on March 20. What happened to Chachu between the evening of March 19 and the morning of March 20 when he stayed with Appu?"

On March 19, Chachu was playing with the gun and Praveena tried to snatch the gun from Chachu. By mistake, Praveena pressed the pistol and Chachu died. Praveena became unconscious. On reaching the home, Ajay was shocked to see his son dead. Later, he gathered courage and disposed the dead body. He cleared the crime spot. Next day, Appu briefs the death of Chachu. Appu said that Praveena was not in the condition to go to jail as she was already undergoing treatment. Neither Appu could not see his son go to jail. Whenever Appu starts to think of Chachu, he searches for his friend Sumadathan, goes to the school, and goes to the hospital to collect the discharge summary on March 20. When he realises what has happened, he burns all the notes into ashes. Appu's heart is like a battlefield where distorted memory refuse to rest. The series of events portrays how Appu's shards of memory clash with his chamber of heart. Appu's memories, are in his heart with scattered recollections that wrestle in silence. His notepad and friends are the fragile threads of hope, helping him reclaim his lost memories and the shattered fragments of an unforgettable past.

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BETWEEN LAND AND SEA: A TERRAQUEOUS LITERARY ANALYSIS OF *CHEMMEEN*

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Abstract: Looking beyond land divulges into various other entities among which the intersection of land and water holds a prominent position. Attention to land and water narratives in literature has engendered 'Terraqueous literature', an interdisciplinary field focusing on the interdependence of land and water. This article analyses the novel *Chemmeen* as a terraqueous narrative. The novel explores the intricate relationship between land and sea, focusing on the local fishing community of Kerala. The novel illuminates how terraqueous narrative shapes cultural identity and human destiny. This paper, by analysing *Chemmeen*, underscores the importance of terraqueous literature, and the need to focus on it more. This paper also illustrates the inexorable role of terraqueous landscape in literature.

Keywords: Terraqueous Literature, Land and Sea, Cultural Identity, Human Destiny and Fishing Community.

Terraqueous literature is the study of works that explore the intersection of land and water. The term terraqueous is a combination of two words: 'terra' meaning 'earth' in Latin, and 'aqueous' meaning 'water'. Though there has been various works and studies about the environment on whole, there is no specific studies to focus on the convergence of land and water. In this post postmodern era, attempts have been made to fill this gap, and so various studies have engendered. Studies like Green Humanities and Blue Humanities are the recent development under the umbrella term 'Environmental Humanities'. Green Humanities focus vividly on the land and terrestrial ecologies, whereas Blue Humanities focus on the relationship between water and humans.

Terraqueous literature is an integrated approach of Green Humanities and Blue Humanities, riveting on the interdependence of water and land. Terraqueous literature and Blue Humanities, though related, are two distinct fields. Blue Humanities tend to prioritize water-centric perspectives, while Terraqueous literature focuses on the dynamic intersection of land and water. It is an adjacent field that considers the blurred boundaries between land and water. Its pivotal focus is on the lands that are either fully terrestrial or fully aquatic, specially places where land and water meet.

Terraqueous lands refer to the geographical regions situated in close proximity to water bodies. These lands include coastal areas, wetlands, deltas, riverbanks, estuaries, mangroves, marshes, dunes, floodplains, and lands segregated as riparian zones, littoral zones, backwater regions and waterfronts. The coastal areas are further classified as beaches, shorelines, tidal flats, and coastal cliffs. These terraqueous lands have distinct soil, flora, fauna, architecture, cultivation, climate, transportation, culture, identity, and habitation, supporting its unique ecosystem, and biodiversity, and hence requiring special consideration. Terraqueous literature is a new shift from

ecocriticism, focusing on such unique areas.

In Tamil literature, specifically Sangam literature or 'the poetry of nobles' has categorized the ancient poems into different 'thinai's, which is closely associated to various landscapes. 'Thinai's, along with different landscapes, are used as a framework to express love. These landscapes, on a whole, is divided into five distinct landscapes: 'kurinji', 'mullai', 'marutham', 'neithal', and 'palai' meaning mountain ranges, crop land, agricultural land or plains, coastal areas, and arid land respectively (Dr. P. Aruna Devi). Each land represents a stage of love. Though these classifications are made to categorize the mindset and emotion of the lovers in the poems, its vivid classification provides a greater insight into the geographical and ecological characteristics of the landscapes. In such a way, it delivers distinct knowledge on the 'neithal' land, which is embraced by terraqueous literature.

Terraqueous literature, as the name suggests, considers various literary texts for a deeper analysis. One such text is the Malayalam novel *Chemmeen* by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai. He is a Malayalam novelist and short story writer. His literary oeuvre includes thirty-nine novels, six hundred short stories comprised in twenty-one anthologies, four memoirs, two plays, and two other works. He is a social realist, majorly exploring the rural, ordinary lives of Kerala, and focusing on the themes of caste, class, feudalism, gender, oppression, and other social injustices. His much acclaimed works are *Chemmeen*, and *Kayar* (Cair, 1978). Both the novels won Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary award, and were adapted into films.

Thakazhi is the recipient of 1984 Padma Bhushan, India's third highest literary award, and several Kerala Sahitya Akademi Awards. He also received Ezhuthachan Puraskaram award by the Kerala government in 1994. He served as the President of the Kerala Sahitya Akademi, and as a member of the Sahitya Akademi council. Early in his career, he worked as a reporter, and later as a lawyer. His excellence in short story writing earned him the moniker 'Kerala Maupassant'. He was conferred with an honorary doctorate, which is D. Litt in 1986 by University of Kerala, and by Mahatma Gandhi University in 1996. His life is made into a fifty-seven minutes' film.

The novel *Chemmeen* was originally published in Malayalam in 1956, and was translated into thirty languages, counting nineteen world languages like Hindi, English, German, Russian, Italian, Arabic, French, and few other languages including several Indian languages. The novel was translated into English by Anita Nair and by Narayana Menon. Narayana Menon's translation titled *Anger of the Sea-Goddess* was published by Victor Gollancz, London in 1962. It is included in the Indian series of the UNESCO Collection of Representative Works. This marked the first major Malayalam novel to be translated into English in the period following Indian Independence, or more specifically, during the early years of the post-colonial era. The novel became the first Malayalam novel to receive the 1957 Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award, which is India's second highest literary honor. The novel was also adapted into a feature film by fifteen countries. In India, the novel was adapted into a film by the same name in 1965, and won the 1965 Indian President's Gold Medal

for the Best Film.

The novel *Chemmeen* illustrates the daily life of fishing community, their culture, identity, customs, struggles, myths, and superstitions. The novel is situated in the coastal region along the Arabian sea, specifically the fishing village of Odanadu in Kerala, where the rhythm of life is dictated by the capricious sea. This backdrop plays a crucial role in the novel, since it is almost a major character of the novel. The sea is represented as 'Kadamma' meaning 'sea goddess' or 'sea mother'. It is more like a living entity, and holds a major place in the twists and turns of the novel. The novel vividly portrays the hardships faced by the commoners in a 'sea-centered environment.'

The novel is a tragic love story, and transverses among the characters Karuthamma, Pareekutty, Palani, Chembankunju, Chakki, and Panchami. Karuthamma is the protagonist of the novel. Her everyday turmoil is the moving element of the novel. Karuthamma lives with her parents Chembankunju, Chakki, and Panchami, her younger sister. They belong to the lower class in the fishing community. Her father Chembankunju is a fisherman, and her mother Chakki sells fish from door to door. They struggle hand to mouth, barely earning enough each day. Meanwhile Karuthamma is in love with Pareekutty, a Muslim trader.

Chembankunju, despite his financial situation, aims to buy a boat and fishing net. This is his sole aim in life. Fed up with his regular routine, he seeks the help of Pareekutty, and buys a boat on a condition that the catch will be sold exclusively to him. Chembankunju grows into a greedy man, and fails to keep his promise. But the bond between Pareekutty and Karuthamma thickens, only to break apart when rigid and religious boundaries intervene. Despite their bond, Karuthamma is forced to marry Palani, an orphan fisherman from a neighboring village. On their wedding day, Chakki falls ill, but Karuthamma insists on moving to Palani's village. This provokes anger in Chembankunju, making him to disown his own daughter.

Chembankunju's greed drives Pareekutty into bankruptcy. His wife also dies at the same time due to her illness. So he remarries, which causes further family strife. On the other hand, Karuthamma starts her life anew with Palani. She devotes herself to the household works, and sells fishes door to door. Meanwhile, the rumor about her past life circulates in the village. According to the myth of the coastal communities of Kerala, Kadamma will protect the fishermen only if their wives remain chaste and loyal to their husbands. If she fails to do so, Kadamma will kill her husband in the sea. This myth is the strongest belief of the fishing community, and every boat owner fears to take Palani along with them, as they believe his wife is unfaithful. So, Palani buys a small boat and fishes alone.

In the meantime, coping up with her mother's death, losing her love, and the rumors about her, Karuthamma still manages to live with Palani. She delivers a baby girl. Soon after her delivery, her sister Panchami leaves her father, and comes to Karuthamma. One night, the old love between Karuthamma and Pareekutty reignites. Palani, as per the myth, dies at sea in a whirlpool, and soon after, Karuthamma and Pareekutty are found dead, hand in

hand, washes ashore.

The novel is the embodiment of terraqueous literature. The novel deeply delves into the socio-cultural environment where the margin of the sea and land forms the basis of not just livelihood but also belief, identity, and social hierarchy. Using graphical description and symbolism, Chemmeen portrays how the lives of the fisher folk are indistinguishable from the sea, which is represented as a living, sacralized being, making the novel an exemplary representation of terraqueous literature. The religious affinity of the novel with the sea points to the extreme dependence of these communities on their natural world, in which the sea is at once a provider and a force to be reckoned with.

Central to *Chemmeen* is the deep-seated belief system of the indigenous fisher folk and how one can regard that as an ecological and spiritual perspective. The society holds that Kadalamma will defend the fishermen only when their wives are chaste while the men are away fishing. This chastity myth governs not just intimate relations but also guarantees communal restraint in interacting with the sea environment. In contrast to the contemporary mechanized fishing activity that ravages nature without end, the fishermen's traditions prohibit more than the permissible catch and foster a respectful, restrained reaping of the harvest of the sea. This belief system is the embodiment of Eco spirituality, a philosophy where human well-being is understood as intertwined with the health of the environment. Thakazhi's narrative blurs the line between the human and nonhuman realms, highlighting an ecological ethics embedded in tradition. The lives of the fishermen are characterized by a profound symbiosis with nature, where social norms are inextricably linked to the cycles of the sea, reinforcing the principle that human survival depends on ecological balance.

The title of the novel itself, *Chemmeen*, meaning shrimp, is a metaphor for the delicate riches of the sea flung by waves, echoing the tenuous lives of the fisher folk who inhabit 'between' land and ocean. The ocean is ever-present, influencing not just material existence but also myth and identity. The author invokes this natural imagery to create an atmosphere of synergy and tension between human wants and the powerful forces of nature. The chastity myth, which permeates the novel, is more than a social norm; it is a symbolic agreement between man and nature that is brokered by cultural belief. Chaste fisherwoman is the guarantee of the protection of her spouse in the ocean, and any transgression calls for revenge from above. This myth is a socio-ecological regulator mechanism that maintains trust, community cohesion, and respect for nature's laws in society. Karuthamma and Pareekutty's story is the tragic love story of a forbidden but supernatural love within this terraqueous culture. Their love defies not just social and religious norms but also the sacred unbreakable link between man and the ocean. The ocean's fury, the result of shattered societal taboos, precipitates tragedy, highlighting the fragility of mankind working within natural and cultural systems and the heavy price of disturbing this equilibrium.

Symbolism is indeed an important component to depict the terraqueous

theme. The sea deity Kadamma is a matriarchal figure symbolizing the fountain of life and nourishment but also requiring obedience and moral behavior. ‘The Arundhati star’, being a symbol of purity in Hindu mythology, is ironically utilized in *Chemmeen* to predict and intensify the tragedy of human passion pitting itself against cultural and natural law. These symbols bridge the terrestrial and marine worlds with the spiritual and social domains, deepening the novel’s thematic complexity.

Thakazhi’s portrayal goes beyond a simple pastoral or coastal setting; he gives voice to an indigenous ecological wisdom, a way of life that acknowledges human vulnerability and promotes coexistence with nature through customary law and spirituality. This native code can be misconstrued by contemporary society as nothing more than superstition, but it is actually founded upon an advanced ecological awareness. The people’s occasional fishing practice of reverence towards the cycles of renewal in the sea is an ecological justice system rooted in tradition. These traditions might provide much-needed lessons for today’s environmental care, particularly in the light of contemporary ecological disasters created through exploitation and mechanization.

Chemmeen also serves as a strong cultural document demonstrating the converging interface of environment, society, and economy. Dependence on the land-sea interface characterizes the social organization of the fisher folk, their economic sustenance, and their social relationships. The novel attentively documents regional dialects, caste differences, trade relations, and social prohibitions around the sea and presents a comprehensive image of a community formed through its terraqueous environment. It goes beyond the regional context to reflect contemporary global preoccupations with sustainable living, interconnectedness of community, and spiritual significance of nature.

Finally, *Chemmeen* represents terraqueous writing in its rich portrayal of the way the coastal fisher folk of Kerala exist on the vulnerable interface of earth and water, conditioned by ecological needs and religious convictions. The story by Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai is a deep reflection on human dependence and respect for nature. By the intertwining of myth, social tradition, and environmental morality, *Chemmeen* not only eternizes the fisher folk culture but also provides penetrating observations on human-nature relationships that continue to be germane to modern ecological thinking.

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A CRITICAL STUDY OF CULTURAL RESILIENCE IN NADIA HASHMI'S *ONE HALF FROM THE EAST*

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Abstract: Cultural resilience is defined as an acknowledgement of the dynamic culture to find a place to cope with adversities and to foster a sense of belonging despite difficult circumstances. Transvestism often occurs as a psychological distress where the act of cross-dressing brings substantial discomfort with the daily functioning of life. However, in the novel *One Half from the East*, the characters Obayda and Raheem were resilient enough to become bacha posh to bring fortunes to their family despite experiencing the complexities of their dual existence.

Keywords: Cultural resilience, Transvestism, Gender Identity and Displacement.

Cultural resilience is a community's capacity to endure and bounce back from hardship, trauma or intense stress. This strength is deeply embedded in its cultural traditions, identity and social networks. When confronting historical trauma, cultural resilience plays a vital role in encouraging recovery and strengthening communal bonds.

Resilience theory has its roots in the study of adversity and an interest in how adverse life experiences impact harmfully on people. Resilience research encompasses three interrelated elements: adversity, outcomes and the factors that mediate between them. Studying resilience without addressing all three components is incomplete. Conceptually, resilience should be understood as a process that produces an outcome, with the mediating mechanisms being the core concern of resilience research.

"Cultural Resilience" does not have a single inventor, but it evolved through interdisciplinary work, especially within anthropology and resilience theory. Caroline Clauss- Ehlers introduced the concept in *Re-inventing resilience: A model of "culturally- focused resilient adaptation"* which is critical to the discussion of children's and adolescents' well- being because youth with this quality are more able to cope and adjust to difficult life situations. This concept is especially relevant when considering the experiences of groups who face challenges in displacement and colonization. The novel *One Half From the East* which was published in 2016 by Nadia Hashimi portrays the vivid image of the challenges faced by the characters because of displacement, duality in gender because of transvestism, complexities of life and the cultural impedance.

Nadia Hashimi is a paediatrician, novelist and the first Afghan-American woman Democratic congressional candidate for the United States House of Representatives. Some of her other important novels are *The Pearl that Broke its Shell*, *When the Moon is Low*, and *A House Without Windows*. The novel *One Half From the East* offers insight into gender identity struggles by examining the starkly contrasting and strictly imposed roles assigned to boys and girls through a distinct cultural lens.

The novel, *One Half From the East* sheds light on transvestism and its

traces through the characters Obayda and Rahima. The term transvestism refers to dressing as a member of the opposite gender. In this novel, Nadia Hashimi brings out the misogynistic culture in Afghanistan where women are not allowed to do what they wish. The novel takes place in a rural Afghan village and explores the cultural tradition of *bacha posh*. The term “bacha posh” comes from Dari and Pashto which are two official languages of Afghanistan. “Bacha” means “boy” and “posh” means “dressed/clothed”. “Bacha posh” literally gets translated to “dressed like a boy.” This tradition is often adopted by families without sons. In Afghanistan, sons are seen as bearers of good fortune; they are expected to carry on the family name, inherit property, earn money and support the family.

Obayda and Rahima are ironically forced to adopt inhumane practices such as becoming a bacha posh in order to gain recognition and value within society, “in a society where having a male child is of utmost importance and a matter of pride, the bacha posh provides social relief” (Sabat, 2018) However, being a bacha posh allows girls temporary access to such privileges, like going to school or working outside when they grow older and attain the age of marriage, they are expected to go back to their female roles ensuring the stereotypical idea of biological determinism. “A boy can work and earn money. A boy is good luck. You’re not in Kabul anymore, my dear. This town is run by that awful warlord Abdul Khaliq” (16).

The story revolves around Obayda who is made into a bacha posh after her family relocates to a village following a bombing in Kabul that leaves her father disabled. With their future uncertain, relatives convince her mother to turn her daughter Obayda into a boy renamed as Obayd. As Obayd, she struggles to fit into the male role. On her first day at boys’ school, she is forced to play rough games and feels lost because she loses her gender identity. During this time, she meets another bacha posh named Rahim who is originally known as Rahima. Rahim encourages Obayda to embrace being a boy. “You’re a boy, not a *bacha posh*, Obayd” (72). Obayda wants to help her family and wants to cure her father by getting medicines for him. She faces gender disparity through her transformation and a shift in treatment when compared to her sisters. These remarks reflect how rigid and gendered social expectations are in their society. In the midst of societal pressure and personal conflict, they become resilient to the cultural phenomena they undergo.

The duality in their own persona tests their strength and independence. They achieve freedom when they are destined to lose their identity as females. This paper gives a strong insight on how the characters are culturally resilient to gain knowledge, to move around sociably and to gain respect in society. The things are achieved when their inherent nature of being essentially feminine is hidden by the tradition called *bacha posh*.

Obayd and Rahim begin to wish they could remain boys permanently, imagining magical solutions to avoid returning to their female identities. They wish to be their bacha posh when they build a crutch for Obayd’s father, hoping to show that even a daughter can offer the same strength and support as a son. Obayd and Rahim wanted their identity to be transformed permanently because

they find joy in being boy.

Rahim and Obayd metaphorically walk along the invisible line that divides them, dreaming of rising above societal rules. They want this temporal identity to last forever. Obayd tells a legendary tale of Rostam's bow which propagates; anyone who passes beneath a rainbow will switch genders, even an unborn child gets changed when the pregnant mother passes under the rainbow.

Rahim begins to ponder over the legend, hoping it might offer an escape before his mother reclaims his female identity. Obayd finds Rahim nowhere and searches for him and tells Rahim's elder sister that he was his best friend and made him clear about changing his identity as bacha posh. Obayd finds Rahima married to Abdul Khaliq, the warlord of the village who is very much older to Rahima.

Rahima's experience as a bacha posh allows her to develop confidence and discover new possibilities for herself. However, her life takes a drastic turn when she is forced into marriage with the warlord. Her father, addicted to opium, essentially trades his daughters in exchange for a consistent drug supply. The most difficult moment for Rahima comes when she has to abandon her male identity. This reversal shatters the world she has known, as she is now expected to conform to traditional Aghan female roles- marriage, motherhood, and domestic duties.

Obayd and Rahim, being bacha posh experienced world in a different way and so they are resilient to this cultural hegemony. The story of Obayda and Rahima are tested under the gender politicization. They are mentally muted and bounded to the stereotypical cultural frame work where women are pushed to experience certain internalized subjugation. Obayda and Rahima are traumatized in switching over their gender and being resilient to the stigmatized culture of Afghanistan.

Discipline and Punishment by Michel Foucault explores how power operates through the body, revealing that human bodies become instruments of control under institutional and social systems. The social conditioning makes Obayda to transform herself to other gender to achieve certain things but doesnot allow her to fight for freedom and liberty. Obayd's transformation places her in a unique and subversive position almost beyond the grasp of authority "the body was in the grip of strict powers, which imposed on it constraints, prohibitions or obligations" (Foucault 136).

The narrative style of Nadia Hashimi illustrates that the bacha posh's body becomes a battleground, where both cultural and political conflicts play out, challenging the rigid patriarchal limits imposed on girls within society. This could evidently been seen when Rahima gets married to the old war lord, "human body constitutes a site of pollution and endangerment" (Butler 180). Obayda confronts the inevitability of returning to her female identity; she gains deeper understanding into the restrictive gender norms that govern her world. She finds her own transformation as a temporal one and pushes back to the confined patriarchal control, "I don't want to forget my adventures as Obayd, but I am also trying to be okay with being Obayda" (247). Obayda and Rahima are caged when their femininity peeps out and this show how the feminine

attributes are fixed to the societal norms and stereotypes. Judith Butler argues in her seminal book *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies That Matter* (1993) that body is not alone a biological fact but a social construct. The essential attributes to a female body does not express femininity naturally rather it is practiced or performed through the societal acts and behaviours.

Nadia Hashimi's *One Half From the East* gives a compelling critique of gender norms, through which female body becomes a medium in the exploration of characters Obayda and Rahima, and their eventual return to their female roles, though they were resilient to endure misogynistic traditions.

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**NEUROPLASTIC NARRATIVES OF SURVIVAL: TRAUMA,
ADAPTATION, AND IDENTITY IN CORMAC MCCARTHY'S
*THE ROAD***

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Abstract: The paper explores the intersection of neuroplasticity, trauma, and narrative through the lens of *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy, proposing a "Neuroplastic Narrative" framework to interpret the representation of suffering and survival. Rooted in recent neurocognitive findings, this theoretical approach posits that trauma and adversity become biologically embedded in the brain through neuroplastic mechanisms such as synaptic remodelling, neurogenesis, and epigenetic modulation. Rather than pathologizing emotional suffering, this model repositions it as an adaptive response that enables individuals to survive and function in ecologically adverse environments. This novel illustrates how the father and son's behaviour, memories, and emotional responses are not symptoms of mental illness but rather neuroplastic adaptations to persistent trauma. The concept of ecological niche is used to frame the environmental context in which these adaptations occur, shaping both identity and behaviour. By integrating literary analysis with neurocognitive theory, this paper foregrounds a non-pathologizing understanding of psychological resilience and human adaptability in extreme conditions.

Keywords: Neuroplasticity, Trauma and Adaptation, Narrative Identity and Ecological Niche.

Introduction

Following a terrible event, surviving becomes a profound neurological and psychological undertaking rather than just a bodily act. Trauma-focused literature frequently functions as both a cognitive blueprint of how the brain reorganizes itself in the face of tragedy and as testimony. With its post-apocalyptic setting and stark language, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* provides an ideal setting for examining this relationship between narrative and neurobiology. More than just a dystopian survival narrative, McCarthy creates a literary case study of trauma-induced neuroplasticity through the story of a father and a son traveling through a destroyed planet.

The knowledge of human resilience has been completely transformed by neuroplasticity, the brain's capacity to change, reorganize, and create new connections in response to environmental stresses. According to a recent neuroscience research, the traumatized brain undergoes dynamic remodeling rather than only suffering damage, allowing people to adjust their memory, emotions, and identities in reaction to their environment. A convincing framework for examining literary depictions of trauma, particularly those that defy conventional pathologizing clichés, is provided by this paradigm shift.

The idea of neuroplastic narratives is put forth in this essay as a crucial

framework for understanding *The Road*. By doing this, it places the book in a larger conversation that combines hermeneutic literary study with cognitive neuroscience. The behavior, language, and moral judgments of the father and son are analyzed as indicators of adaptive neurocognitive metamorphosis rather than as indications of post-traumatic dysfunction. Accordingly, the post-apocalyptic world serves as an ecological niche that necessitates the development of new moral and mental ways of being. This study reframes the novel's emotional restraint and minimalist style as textual representations of neural adaptation by emphasizing neuroplasticity.

Literature Review

Psychoanalytic theories of trauma studies have given way to more embodied, neurocognitive viewpoints in literature. The inexpressibility and tardiness of traumatic experience were highlighted in non-seminal works including Judith Herman's *Trauma and Recovery* (1992), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub's *Testimony* (1992), and Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience* (1996). These early studies focused on how trauma disrupts memory and narrative. In order to provide a more dynamic knowledge of trauma as a disorder that alters the structure of the brain, modern research incorporates neurobiology (van der Kolk, 2014).

Bruce McEwen (2000), Norman Doidge (2007), Eric Kandel (2006), and Joseph LeDoux (1996) have provided neuroscientific insights on how stress-induced neuroplasticity impacts the hippocampus, amygdala, and prefrontal cortex. These alterations have been associated with symptoms such as memory fragmentation, affective numbness, and hypervigilance—phenomena that are frequently reflected in trauma narratives (Schore, 2003; Sapolsky, 2004). Additionally, literary examinations of hereditary trauma are supported by epigenetic research by Meaney and Szyf (2005), which demonstrates how environmental adversity alters gene expression (Yehuda et al., 2015). In cognitive literary theory, Lisa Zunshine's *Why We Read Fiction* (2006) brought theory of mind into literary interpretation, supporting Keith Oatley's (2011) psychological approach to fiction and Patrick Colm Hogan's (2011) affective narratology. These pieces show how characters' inner states mirror thought processes, which makes them perfect for neurocognitive analyses.

Kay T. Anderson (2021), Semir Zeki (1999), and Marco Iacoboni (2008) have conducted neuroaesthetic research that explore how story styles reflect brain activity. The notion that narrative functions as a mental simulation is consistent with Rita Charon's (2006) research in narrative medicine, which uses storytelling as a tool for healing and cognitive integration. Marc Botha (2018) challenges the pathologization of trauma in literary trauma theory and advocates for a moral approach to suffering that recognizes change. Stef Craps (2013) and Dominick LaCapra (2001) both support trauma studies that take into account ecological and global factors, extending the framework to encompass intergenerational and environmental trauma. The notion that narratives actively restructure readers' cognitive and emotional reactions in addition to depicting trauma is supported by recent contributions to

neurocognitive literary studies by Fritz Breithaupt (2019), Suzanne Keen (2007), and Peter Stockwell (2020).

Thus, a rich multidisciplinary framework for examining *The Road* is provided at the intersection of trauma studies, neuroscience, and literary theory. As an example of how literary form and content come together to represent the adaptive rather than pathological aspects of trauma, McCarthy's book serves as a neuroplastic narrative.

Methodology

In order to create a close reading of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, this study uses an interdisciplinary qualitative methodology that incorporates elements from cognitive neuroscience, trauma studies, and narrative theory. The theoretical underpinning of this strategy is neuroplasticity, a neuroscience concept that characterizes the brain's capacity to reshape itself in response to psychological stress, environmental change, and trauma. In order to understand how narrative structures in the novel reflect and incorporate adaptive brain responses to great hardship, this framework is combined with Ricoeur's narrative identity theory (Ricoeur, 1984), Herman's cognitive narratology (Herman, 2003), and Caruth's trauma theory (Caruth, 1996).

The primary method of analysis is hermeneutic textual interpretation guided by the following research objectives:

- a) To examine how *The Road* narrativizes trauma through its representation of memory, emotion, and behaviour.
- b) To identify literary elements (e.g., silence, fragmentation, repetition, ethical motifs) that signify neuroplastic adaptation.
- c) To explore the relationship between the ecological niche of the post-apocalyptic world and the cognitive reconfiguration of identity.

Textual data are drawn from key passages that exhibit neuroplastic patterns—such as the father's fragmented memories of his wife, the son's hypervigilance, and the repetitive rituals of survival. These excerpts are interpreted through a neurocognitive lens using recent neuroscientific literature on trauma-induced neuroplasticity, including van der Kolk (2014), Davidson and McEwen (2012), and Doidge (2007). Additionally, the ecological context of the novel is considered a “trauma-saturated environment” (Brison, 2002) that reshapes not only behaviour but the narrative structure itself. The method follows a triangulation approach:

Narrative Analysis – to decode structural elements and symbolic patterns.

Thematic Coding – to isolate motifs of trauma, resilience, and adaptation.

Neuroscientific Correlation – to map narrative moments onto findings in neuroplasticity (e.g., synaptic pruning, epigenetic response, limbic system adaptation).

By integrating these modes of inquiry, the paper seeks to illuminate how *The Road* serves not only as a literary representation of trauma but as a textual enactment of the brain's capacity to change, survive, and regenerate meaning in a hostile world. This methodology thus contributes to a growing body of neurocognitive literary criticism that emphasizes the embodied and adaptive nature of storytelling.

Findings and Analysis

The analysis of *The Road* through the framework of neuroplastic narratives reveals how trauma imprints itself upon the neurological and moral fabric of the characters. One of the most salient examples of neuroplastic adaptation appears in the father's relentless vigilance. As the narrator observes: "He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth." (McCarthy, 2006, p. 11). This moment, which evokes a sense of existential bleakness, simultaneously illustrates a heightened perceptual acuity, a hallmark of trauma-induced neural adaptation. Research in neuroscience indicates that hypervigilance is a form of neural restructuring that prioritizes threat detection (van der Kolk, 2014). Rather than viewing this state as pathological, the novel frames it as necessary for navigation through a hazardous environment.

Similarly, the father's repetition of survival routines—checking their surroundings, maintaining their minimal supplies, and repeating phrases like "You have to carry the fire"—is reflective of procedural memory consolidation, a function of neuroplastic reinforcement. In high-stress contexts, the brain leans on habit circuitry to conserve cognitive resources (McEwen & Morrison, 2013). These repetitive behaviours serve as coping mechanisms essential for psychological continuity.

The child, in contrast, embodies a different neuroplastic response. His cognitive-emotional circuitry is still developing, which makes his brain highly susceptible to shaping through environmental and relational inputs. Despite the trauma, the boy exhibits signs of preserved empathy and moral cognition: "We're the good guys, right?" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 129). This recurring question reflects a neuroethical scaffolding—a moral compass encoded not by the broader society, which has collapsed, but through interpersonal neurobiology (Siegel, 2012).

Moreover, memory in *The Road* is portrayed not as linear recollection but as fragmented and often involuntary, resembling trauma's imprint on the hippocampus. For instance: "He thought each memory recalled must do some violence to its origins" (McCarthy, 2006, p. 112). This line encapsulates the paradox of traumatic memory: the brain recalls but cannot fully integrate, leading to emotional intensity detached from narrative coherence.

The landscape itself becomes an ecological niche that reconfigures identity. The absence of names for the protagonists emphasizes the erasure of social identifiers and the neurocognitive restructuring of the self. Identity becomes relational and function-based: "the father," "the boy." This minimalist designation reflects the brain's adaptation in reducing extraneous processing to prioritize immediate relational dynamics and environmental demands (Doidge, 2007). Finally, language in *The Road* is marked by parataxis and lexical austerity. This stylistic feature is not merely aesthetic; it aligns with trauma's impact on Broca's area, the region responsible for expressive language (Shay, 1994).

Together, these narrative elements construct a neuroplastic map of survival—each behavior, utterance, and silence are evidence of the brain's

ongoing negotiation with trauma. McCarthy's *The Road* thus exemplifies how literature can render visible the invisible architecture of neural resilience.

Discussion

The preceding analysis has shown how *The Road* functions as a neuroplastic narrative, embedding the emotional and cognitive effects of trauma within its structure. Synthesizing these insights reveals broader implications for reading literary trauma through neuroplasticity—specifically regarding survival, identity reconstruction, and psychological adaptation without pathologizing suffering.

A key contribution of this reading lies in redefining trauma not as a rupture or dysfunction but as a trigger for neurological and narrative reorganization. Classical trauma theorists such as Cathy Caruth and Dori Laub emphasize silence, fragmentation, and the failure of representation. While valid, this model is complemented by the neuroplastic perspective, which highlights the brain's ability to adapt under chronic stress. The repetitive, emotionally muted behaviors of the father and son are thus not signs of breakdown but evidence of recalibrated survival strategies.

The father and son's adaptations, from hypervigilance to minimal language use, reflect the brain's tendency to streamline attention, memory, and emotion under pressure (McEwen & Gianaros, 2010). These are not just coping mechanisms but necessary recalibrations of the self. Equally significant is the novel's portrayal of intergenerational neuroplasticity. The father's consistent, though emotionally restrained, caregiving—feeding, sheltering, and storytelling—acts as relational scaffolding that shapes the child's neural development. The boy's compassion and moral clarity—his insistence on being one of the “good guys”—emerge as products of affective repetition and secure attachment.

On a formal level, McCarthy's narrative style mirrors trauma's cognitive imprint. The use of parataxis, absence of names, and fragmented dialogue corresponds to the linguistic and psychological constriction trauma induces. These features reflect what neuroscientists call “silent synapses”—networks that lie dormant until activated by stress (Shay, 1994; van der Kolk, 2014). The text thus becomes a neuro-symbolic space, evoking trauma not only in content but in form.

The recurring motif of “carrying the fire” serves as a neurosemantic anchor. While abstract, it embodies continuity, morality, and emotional endurance. Its repetition functions like a mantra, supporting identity reconstruction through symbolic and emotional constancy. This reflects the role of episodic memory reconsolidation in stabilizing the traumatized self (LeDoux, 2002). Importantly, McCarthy avoids romanticizing trauma. His characters are neither heroes nor helpless victims but survivors whose cognitive and ethical worlds have been reorganized. This challenges trauma narratives centered on catharsis or redemption, offering instead a model of “post-traumatic becoming”—a condition where resilience involves the creation of new neural and narrative pathways.

Conclusion

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* transcends its post-apocalyptic setting to become a profound meditation on survival—not merely as a physical feat but as a deeply neurocognitive and emotional process. By interpreting the novel through the framework of Neuroplastic Narratives, this study demonstrates how trauma is not only a site of loss and fragmentation but also a space for transformation and adaptive reconfiguration.

The paper underscores that the characters' psychological and emotional states—hypervigilance, repetitive actions, moral questioning, and fragmented memory—should not be pathologized. Instead, they should be viewed as evidence of the brain's astonishing capacity to rewire itself in response to prolonged stress and trauma. In this light, *The Road* emerges not as a bleak chronicle of despair but as a testament to the neurological foundations of human resilience. The very austerity of McCarthy's language mirrors the stripped-down neural functioning in states of chronic stress, where cognitive resources are redistributed to sustain the most vital aspects of human functioning: survival, attachment, and meaning.

Ultimately, *The Road* is not merely a literary account of dystopian suffering, but a neurocognitive map of survival, reflecting the brain's innate ability to adapt, restructure, and reimagine identity in the face of adversity. By merging trauma theory with insights from neuroscience and narrative analysis, this study contributes to a growing interdisciplinary discourse that reconceives trauma not as an endpoint, but as a crucible for human transformation. The narrative invites the readers to reconsider suffering—not as damage to be mourned, but as a site where resilience is forged, identity is restructured, and meaning is reauthored in the synaptic echoes of survival.

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HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND MORAL INJURY IN UZODINMA IWEALA'S *BEASTS OF NO NATION*

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Abstract: Recruiting children into the armed forces and subjecting them to severe violence and abuse is a serious human rights violation. This paper examines how war impacts the lives of child soldiers through violence and domination in Uzodinma Iweala's novel, *Beasts of No Nation*. It proposes to study and highlight the ethical collapse of a child protagonist, Agu, through the lens of hegemonic masculinity and moral injury. By applying hegemonic masculinity developed by sociologist R.W. Connell, this paper analyses how the protagonist, Agu, is forced to perform violent manhood under the strain of conflict. It further applies Jonathan Shay's concept of moral injury to explore the inner repercussion of the violence, resulting in shame, guilt and loss of identity.

Keywords: Child Soldier Narratives, Hegemonic Masculinity, Moral Injury, and Violence.

The recruitment of child soldiers by state and non-state armed groups has become common in African countries, especially during the civil war that occurs due to political instability and poverty. Recruited child soldiers have been manipulated and forced to severe violence and abuse by the armed groups. Child soldiers are first trained to perform as spies and later forced to kill. While training, these children have been introduced to drugs and alcohols to enhance their ability to fight. Even young girls have been recruited and used as sex slaves. This forced violence ultimately strips of their innocence and forces into adult roles they neither choose nor understand. This compelled recruitment leads to devastating consequences on children, impacting their physical and mental health.

Uzodinma Iweala is a Nigerian-American writer and physician. His debut novel *Beasts of No Nation* was published in the year 2005. The novel gives a vivid depiction of the child soldier's experience. It's a story of life and death and the monstrous things that happen in the name of war. The novel highlights the story of Agu, when war arrives at his African village. His mother and sister are rescued by the UN, while Agu and his father have stayed behind to fight. Agu is soon captured by rebels and is forced to become a child soldier. In the grip of a controlled leader known as Commandant, Agu goes through brutal training and is forced to kill. Agu finds it difficult to stay true to his identity while being exposed to forced participation in rape, murder and drug use. Through Agu's journey, Iweala highlights not only the brutality of war but delves deep into the vulnerable situations of child soldiers.

The present paper discusses Agu's psychological and ethical transformation through the lens of Hegemonic Masculinity and Moral Injury.

Hegemonic Masculinity is a concept developed by Australian Sociologist R.W.Connell. Hegemonic Masculinity describes the dominant idea of what it means to be a man in society by involving traits like aggression, control and emotional toughness. This is not only between men and women but also among men themselves. The concept of Moral Injury is developed by Jonathan shay, a psychiatrist. Moral Injury described as a psychological suffering resulting from action that breaking ones ethical or moral beliefs often present in war and violence.

Connell and Messerschmidt in their article “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept” elaborates:

Hegemonic masculinity is the culturally exalted form of masculinity that embodies the currently accepted strategy for men to legitimize their dominant position in a hierarchical gender order, which secures the subordination of women and other marginalized ways of being a man. (Connell and Messerschmidt 832)

In *Beasts of No Nation*, this idea is supported by the character Commandant, who presents himself as a powerful, fearless and emotionally distant person. Agu says “He is moving slowly like important person to make sure that everybody looking at him knowing he is chief. All of the other soldier is staring at him like he is king” (Iweala 6). This line explains how commanding he is in the rebel group. He defines what it means to be a man within the rebel group with no mercy, demanding obedience and using violence to take control. The commandant tells that if anybody disobeys him they would be taken out of the group and treated as enemy. Under his influence, Agu is also forced to incorporate these characteristics of masculinity.

Agu has lost his family in the chaos of the war and has been recruited by the rebel group. Agu joins the rebel group because he has no other choice of survival. When he is first abducted by the rebels, he has been beaten merely to death. “Again and again he is hitting me and each blow from his hand is feeling on my skin like the flat side of machete. I am tasting blood. I am feeling like vomiting” (Iweala 3). This kind of treatment is often given to the new comers in order to join their rebel army. Showing aggression and having control over them is one of the characteristics of Hegemonic Masculinity. Commandant assures him of basic needs like food and drink which make Agu join the rebel group in a desperate attempt to survive. Faulkner in his article “Kindergarten killers: Mortality, Murder and the Child Soldier Problem” states:

In areas of the world where famine and extreme deprivation are the norm during the conflict, armed forces can usually provide starving children with the surest method of obtaining food, shelter, and weapons for self protection, which is obviously the easy way to obtain other materials. (491)

Child soldiers like Agu, choose to be a part of such rebel groups in need of food and shelter. Agu is trained as a soldier and started to mingle in the rebel group, “I am liking the older men and how they are carrying gun and always looking so tough like they are in movie and I am trying to be acting like them”

(Iweala 16). Child soldiers, in this way are easily manipulated through authoritarian systems, emotional control and domination. Such manipulation comes under the characteristics of Hegemonic Masculinity. Agu, subconsciously considers carrying weapons as a symbol of masculinity which stimulates his attraction to join the terrorist group.

Agu recalls how the commandant has looked at him “I am ant or some insect like that” (Iweala 6). This shows how Agu is seen as subordinate men by a authoritative figure like the Commandant. Agu is forced to kill for the first time after being recruited by the rebel group. Commandant forces Agu to kill a suspected traitor. Agu is shaking and hesitant when he is asked to kill the traitor. “I am starting to crying and I am starting to shaking And in my head I am shouting NO! NO! NO! but my mouth is not moving and I am not saying anything” (Iweala 23). After the continuous compulsion from the commandant, he finally kills the traitor. This scene shows violence as a requirement of masculinity where aggression and brutality take place to prove manhood. Slowly, Agu sees himself as an adult and a soldier. Agu has become blindly obedient to the Commandant and has started killing people. This shows how his identity as a child is ripped from him and a new identity is imposed on him.

Agu is given the position of personal bodyguard of the Commandant. At first, Agu is happy to be promoted to such a position but soon it turns out to be a form of abuse as he becomes a victim of the Commandant’s sexual abuse.

“I do not want be to be taking off my clothe, but I am not saying so because Commandant is powerful more than me and he is also sometimes giving me a small favour like more food or protection and other thing like shirt or trouser for doing this things with him”(Iweala 102)

Here sexual abuse is seen as a place for domination and power. Commandant takes complete control of Agu where he acts like both as a protector and a predator. Just like this, so many child soldiers are also sexually exploited. This is a common phenomenon with both boys and girls. Agu believed that such authoritative personality like Commandant has the right to touch others for sexual relationship. In this way, the Commandant shows his power and dominance over the subordinate men like Agu, who become a victim of hegemonic masculinity. Thus, Commandant’s dominance, emotional control and aggression over Agu results in the serious psychological consequences like Moral Injury.

Moral Injury is significant in research among military populations, explaining the sufferings one may undergo after an event that violates a person’s beliefs and values. Moral Injury involves a “deep emotional wound and is unique to those who bear witness to intense human suffering and cruelty” (Cartolovni et al. 590). This phenomenon closely mirrors the inner repercussion of Agu who both witnesses and commits violence which ultimately leads to moral injury. Moral injury results in guilt, shame and feelings of betrayal. It is different from PTSD, because it is mostly focused on moral dimensions of trauma such as witnessing crimes and violence.

When Agu is asked to kill for the first time, it is not easy for him. “And

I am thinking if I am killing killing then I am going to hell so I am smelling fire and smoke and it is harding to breath, so I am just standing there crying crying, shaking shaking, looking looking.” (Iweala 23). The above line explains how moral injury arises when Agu participate in high stake situations like killing people. He keeps saying “I am not bad boy. I am not bad boy. I am soldier and soldier is not bad if he is killing. I am telling to myself because soldier is supposed to be killing, killing, killing. So if I am killing then I am, only doing what is right.” (Iweala 29). His heart battles between what he is becoming and what he once was. Agu tries to portray nothing wrong in what he is doing but his repetition of words confirms his internal conflict. Thus, he centres on shame and guilt when he first committed a crime which has developed a moral injury in him.

Throughout the novel, Agu witnesses numerous rapes, tortures and killings of innocent civilians. All of these crimes provoke a fragmented recollection of his past and awaken the feeling of shame in him. He continuously thinks about his school days and how he uses to visit churches on every Sunday. His repeated thoughts about his past shows he is not happy with his present actions and he constantly put himself in shame and guilt. The constant nightmares and flashbacks are also the symptoms of Moral Injury. After hearing the Commandant say, “let us pray, let us pray and then he is asking the lord to be guiding us in everything we are about to be doing,” Agu reflects “I am thinking that we should not even be asking god for anything because it is like he is forgetting us” (Iweala 55). His loss of faith in the face of violence tells the depth of Moral Injury. Critic Nussbaum while talking about the sexual exploitation of Agu says:

The combination of a child-like idiom and register with images of fire and the pictorial representation allow Iweala not only to make his child loud and clear in his reflections on the pain of sexual violation, but also evoke readers' empathy as they perceive the child struggling to invent a vocabulary to depict his experiences of trauma (*Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* 5).

Agu struggles to explain what has happened to him since he lacks the language to mention it. The trauma is not only physical but also psychological. He also suffers from the pain of betrayal and abuse by the authoritative figures. This shows the depth of moral injury since he cannot express what he experiences. Soon after he is taken to rehabilitation centre, he avoids people and he thinks he does not deserve healing. This shows even after the trauma ends, the guilt and shame refuse to leave him.

Agu is forced to perform a manly role where he is expected to hide his feelings and obey according to the orders of the commandant. Even though he does not want to commit any of the crimes he is forced to do so. Thus, he commits wrong things and ultimately puts himself into moral collapse. In a nutshell, the lives of the children in West African countries are destroyed because of the civil war. They literally lose everything in their lives and become traumatized. Even the post war lives become difficult for them.

Iweala's novel *Beasts of No Nation* depicts how war can destroy a child's sense of right and wrong through the ideas of masculinity. Agu's story shows how forced manhood and violence alter his identity and character in the novel. This forced manhood leads to loss of his innocence and kindness which ultimately results in moral injury.

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FROM PATHOLOGISATION TO POLITICISATION OF THE FAT FEMALE BODY IN MELISSA BRODER'S *MILKFED*

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Abstract: While the world goes on advocating body positivity and a growing interest in body acceptance, the fat female body has been a site of narratives and discourses. This paper attempts to argue that Melissa Broder in *MilKFed* subverts dominant ideologies of aesthetic affront and fat consciousness by contrasting the character of Rachel, the calorie-obsessed Jewish woman and the protagonist of the novel on par with the anti-heroine of the novel Miriam, a fat orthodox Jewish woman. This study also highlights Rachel's journey from conformity towards body normativity to the non-conformist admiration of fatness. The fat body serves as a powerful vehicle of political possibilities and ideological liberation.

Keywords: Lipo Literacy, Body Normativity, Aesthetic Affront, Female Fat Body and Pathologisation.

In the era of neoliberal body positivity and the rise of discourses on body acceptance, the fat female body is pathologised and is framed as a site of shame, deviance, and resistance. Fatness remains the unspeakable excess that deserves to be morally scrutinised. Broder's *Milk Fed* proves a subversive narrative that subtly questions these dominant ideologies and employs a redemptive narrative reclaiming the fat identity as not an issue that requires fixing, but rather an aesthetic embodiment that asks for inhabitation to the fullest. This research paper attempts to position *Milk Fed* within the frame of fat studies that calls into question the fact that the fat female body is unapologetically criticised for being lazy, excessive, and unaesthetic. Drawing from Samantha Murray's seminal work, *The Fat Female Body*, this paper traces the character arc of the protagonist of Broder's *Milk Fed*, Rachel, the calorie-obsessed Jewish woman, on par with her foil, Miriam, a fat Orthodox Jewish woman. Murray's concept of 'pathologisation', where the female body is consistently framed as an entity of aesthetic and moral failure, enables the readers to view Rachel and Miriam as politically charged embodied beings of bodily subjectivity. According to Murray, 'pathologisation' is the act of labelling fat female bodies as prone to diseases, deviant, and morally failed. Murray quotes it in her text as;

"So what actually constitutes this negative cultural knowingness about the 'fat' female body? The statements our society makes every day about 'fatness' reinforce a 'knowingness' of who the 'fat' female subject is. The 'fat' woman is lazy, not willing to commit to change or live up to the dictates of healthy living. She is a compulsive eater, she is hyper-emotional, she is a physical and moral failure." (Murray, 04)

Rachel's habit of disordered eating, evident in her calorie-counting rituals and obsessively controlled food habits, is but a result of the internalised fatphobia imposed by her toxic maternal relationship. Cloaked in the language of wellness and health, Rachel's mother exerts a matrilineal control where the central focus lies on maintaining an 'aesthetic affront', where appetite is coded as a threat, and her body serves as a project that is put to fat tests. This policing is imported in the genesis of the novel where Broder ropes in Thomas Hobbes's quote, "My mother gave birth to twins; myself and fear." (Broder, 07)

While Rachel is suggested with a 90-day communication detox from her mother by the former's therapist, her mother's doctrine of medical concerns, or what Murray calls 'medical panic', haunts her psychologically. Despite the ongoing detox period, Rachel longs for a maternal figure, where she even mistakes the therapist's idea, "Mother yourself, parent yourself" (Broder, 238), as an odyssey in search of one, and thus she becomes the one to her. Her obsession with skinniness, as inherited from her mother, resurfaces during the communication detox. She postulates the illusion of content through her rigorous rituals, which is evident as in: "But my rituals kept me skinny and if happiness could be relegated to one thing alone, skinniness, then one might say I was, in a way, happy." (Broder, 27). Broder's *Milk Fed* serves as a response to the pathologisation of fatness in the contemporary discourses on body politics. As a product of 'disciplinary medicine,' Rachel chooses to put herself through dietary surveillance - self-monitoring, restricting and punishing, employing a personal choice and not out of coercive advice, honouring the choice as a moral act. She believes this dietary routine is a mode of virtue and sanctifies thinness. Broder beautifully begins the novel where Rachel pronounces, "It didn't

matter where I lived — Mid-City, Mid-Wilshire, or Miracle Mile. It didn't matter where I worked; one Hollywood bullshit factory was equal to any other. All that mattered was what I ate, when I ate, and how I ate it" (Broder, 08).

Murray expounds on lipoliteracy, a term coined by Margo Abraham, which refers to the cultural and sociological practices of considering the fat female body as a text and the act of reading and interpreting fatness, especially in Western societies. The fat female body is often associated with laziness, lack of control, and moral failure. According to Murray, lipoliteracy is not just judging a fat female body visually, but a cultural conditioning as to how society attaches meaning to it. She advocates that despite the interpretation of the fat female body being disparaging, it is nevertheless operative in societies. She quotes;

"However, many of these cultural meanings have become so familiar to us, they operate without question. For example, the 'fat' woman (is presumed to be) lazy, she is out of control, she is a moral failure, she is unhealthy, she is an affront to normative feminine bodily aesthetics, she is a food addict, she cannot manage her desires, her level of intelligence is below average." (Murray, 14)

She asserts that there is an ingrained assumption of equating fatness to deviance, excess, and unhealthiness. While these assumptions are not explicitly

stated, rather embedded in the psyche of the human mind. Rachel's mother acts as an agent of Graham's lipoliteracy who foists rigorous dietary routines to shape Rachel's form into what is acceptable. She moralises health choices while shaming the act of indulging in feeding an appetite. Rachel's mother embodies obesity panic and the cultural anxiety of fatphobia under the guise of care, referring to the medical history of the family, tracing it from Rachel's grandparents, who suffer from obesity and diabetes. Ann, Rachel's co-worker, functions as a peer agent of lipoliteracy along with that of Rachel's mother, reiterating the same ideals of normative female body and criticising the not-thin body as deviant from the normative frame. Both Rachel's mother and Ann serve as embodiments of disciplinary femininity, which they passively infuse into Rachel's mental essence; which she internalises as her own identity. Rachel utters this when she grows tired of her mother and her friend Anna; "My mother persuaded me to stay thin by insulting me. Ana did it by insulting everyone but me. This absence of rejection felt like an embrace" (Broder, 18). While Rachel's body struggles with medicalised discipline, Miriam, the fat orthodox Jewish woman, functions as a counter force to Rachel's conformity to female body normativity. Rachel's encounter with Miriam disrupts her systemic ideals and unsettles her fatphobic attitude that she has internalized from her matrilineal inheritance. While Rachel's body serves as a site for regulation, surveillance, and shame, Miriam's excess is ungoverned and exists with independence and unmonitored. This shift in the female fat body serves as a site of pathological governance to the envisioned entity of fat pride and as a site of resistance and agency of power, marking the transition from pathologisation to politicization. Miriam's body subverts the very ideal of aesthetic affront that Rachel's mother imposes in the guise of medical care. Miriam does not seek external validation for her body, nor does she feel ashamed or apologetic for the excess or abundance. Murray treats this as a matter of mind over body. She says, "The strategic power of imagining one's 'fat' body in an entirely different, positive and enabling way cannot be underestimated here She resignifies 'fat' as a positive political identity, instead of a pejorative descriptor". (Murray, 108)

Miriam's body radiates a sense of sacred defiance as it resists fat discipling, calorie monitoring, and pathological embodying. Miriam acts as a foil for Rachel, who triggers the latter's learning of how her body is not something to be fixed but is to be embraced. She begins to believe with conviction that her own body can be a site of reclaiming power and agency. Miriam's characterisation is assertive of the fact that embodying fatness by itself means that a fat female body is a site of resistance and a radical force that subverts the female body normativity. Although Rachel's therapist holds a significant space in characterization of the play, she influences Rachel to discover a mother in her, and later she moves to the level of rediscovering the daughter in her and significantly adds to the psychological drift of Rachel from self - obsession to self -love.

"This seemed more doable. I wondered if the universe, in its roundness, somehow already contained my daughterness.

Perhaps I'd been being held there, a daughter all along, until I woke up to it. If I could not be my own mother—or at least not the kind of mother worth having—then I could be my own daughter.” (Broder, 238)

Rachel sows the first seed of breaking intergenerational lipoliteracy. Her drift from the pattern begins when she begins to be quietly dislodged from the repetitive cycle. She acts as a catalyst in convincing Rachel to refuse to conform to the medical doctrines of obese bodies and female body normativity. The first institutional voice that echoes the tenets of what Murray advocates as the refusal to the political awakening of fat pride politics. Murray puts it as “However, the rhetoric of fat pride is persuasive and seductive because it taps into the ‘fat’ woman’s fears and shames about herself and her body, and encourages celebration instead of apologising for the perceived shortcomings of her body” (Murray, 109).

Rachel’s therapist subtly aids in the psychological shift in Rachel’s psyche from perceiving excess as biological to sheerly ideological. Broder’s *Milk Fed* is progressive with its transition from pathologisation to politicisation, reflecting the narrative movement from individual body subjectivity to collective fat activism. Broder intimately politicises the female excess through Miriam, a symbol of fat joy and an embodiment of fat pride. Murray’s theoretical framework offers a scope of profound comprehension of the fat body as a site of resistance, power, and non - non-conformity. Although fat pride politics advocates body acceptance and body positivity, it can be transformative if it functions as an organised and structured refusal towards body conformity. The prospects of fat pride politics can develop to challenge health discourse, unsettle bodily aesthetics, and eliminate body surveillance. Murray champions the need for fat activism not just in literary studies and literary theories, but it must establish itself in constitutional policies, academic domains, and in everyday spaces unapologetically. The novel not only fictionalises but also reimagines the fat narration and boldly declares the essence of fat female embodiment in a context that strives to erase fat normativity.

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NEGOTIATING POWER AND PATRIARCHY: A GENDERED READING OF KAVITA KANE'S *TARA'S TRUCE*

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Abstract: *The Ramayana* is one of the ancient epics of Indian mythology. Myth serves as a cultural blueprint, shaping societal norms and gender roles. These narratives always focus on the stories from men's perspective by marginalizing the voices of women. Through a feminist lens, feminist revisionist mythology seeks justice and agency for female characters and challenges powers. *Tara's Truce* by Kavita Kane tells the story of Vali and Sugriv from the perspective of Tara, the wife of both brothers and queen of the Kingdom Kishkindh. This paper explores how Tara negotiates power and patriarchy within the political spheres of the country.

Keywords: Mythology, Politics, Patriarchy, Power, Marriage and Struggle.

Introduction

Mythology is a literary genre that forms and shapes cultural and gender norms of every region. Most of the epics were interpreted from a man's perspective, which often portray women as passive, marginalized and inferior to men. *Ramayana* has many second fiddle female characters as Surphanakha, Mandodhari, Urmila, Agalya and Tara. Tara is the wife of Vanara King Vali and Queen of Kishkindh. She is later married to Sugriva as a political alliance against her own wish. She is one such figure who is portrayed inferior to her counterparts despite her significance in political subtleties.

The female Indian writers like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Volga and Kavita Kane have taken marginalized female characters from mythology and explored the epic from their perspectives. Kavita Kane as a former journalist, brings depth and emotional nuance to figures often relegated to the margins in epic stories like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* through the novels, *Karna's Wife*, *Sita's Sister*, *Ahalya's Awakening*, *Tara's Truce*, *Fisher Queen's Dynasty* and *Lanka's Princess*. Kane's latest work, *Tara's Truce* challenges the narrative by exploring the female perspective, imbuing them with voice, agency and power. As a feminist revisionist work, Kane's book challenges traditional gendered power systems and rewrites legendary motifs to portray Tara as a powerful woman and a political strategist navigating a patriarchal society. This study uses feminist literary theory and myth criticism to analyze how Kane handles power and patriarchy through Tara's character.

Literature Review

Classical literature has long been employed by feminist literary criticism to highlight and challenge the undervaluation of women's voices. According to Gilbert and Gubar (1979), it is important to rethink canonical literature in order to reveal the madwoman or suppressed female subject. A 'female' literary tradition that retells male-dominated stories from a female perspective is also promoted by Showalter (1977).

According to Gayatri Spivak, revisionist retelling is essential to de-centre the dominant perspective of men and to offer the voice to marginalized people. The term feminist revisionist mythology was first used by Alicia Suskin Ostriker in her essay which means reinterpreting the past, exploring and transforming cultural norms and using existing myths for the new, often subversive. This theory highlights the marginalized female characters such as Tara, Draupadi, and Sita and their perspectives were re-imagined with more nuances and agencies. Though Kane's contribution to this area has been utilized with critics noting her focus on women's resilience (Patel, 2022), the recent work of her *Tara's Truce* (2023) has only limited textual analysis and gendered negotiation. This paper tries to fill the gap by analyzing the women in the novel by using feminist revisionist theory.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative analysis by reading closely to explore Tara's characterization, narrative voice and thematic concerns. The selected theory analyzes gender dynamics, the role of power, politics and myth criticism to examine how the writer subverts the archetypes. To contextualize Kane's work, comparative textual analysis with the traditional Valmiki *Ramayana* is used, focusing on the depiction of Tara and the socio-political roles assigned to her. Secondary sources include feminist literary criticism, mythological studies, and scholarly articles on contemporary Indian myth retellings.

Reclaiming Tara's Voice and Agency

Tara is a minor, often silent character in Valmiki's narrative whose voice and opinion are not noticed and she is largely absent from the narrative. Kavita Kan's *Tara's Truce* transforms this by giving Tara a strong, contemplative narrative voice. The novel opens a window into Tara's mind and emotions, which have been ignored actually. Kané writes through Tara: "I am not merely a queen to be claimed or exchanged; I am a force that must be reckoned with, a mind that shapes the fate of kingdoms" (Kané 56).

Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their foundational feminist text *The Madwoman in the Attic* argues that women have historically been written out of the literary canon or confined to stereotypes: "Women have been trapped in the margins of literary narratives, forced to conform to patriarchal expectations, their voices muffled by a dominant male discourse" (5).

Kane portrays Tara as not only objects of political alliance or a tool of political power but shown as a woman who has intellectual authority who changes the political history, rather than being a passive acceptor of the fate written by men. She changes her story with wit and bravery and re-writes it based on her betterment. Kané's Tara resists muffling as she is no longer a background figure but the central consciousness through which the story unfolds. This reclaiming of the female voice aligns with feminist literary goals to challenge male-centered storytelling and restore female agency. Tara showcases her individuality rather than simply following the footsteps of Vali, for instance when Vali's sense of judgement and authority changed after their marriage, Tara dared to question him. Also, she voices her disagreement when

Vali banishes Sugriv by saying that she was his wife, but not his shadow to follow blindly.

Feminist Revisionism and Challenging Patriarchy

Kane has shown the harsh reality of patriarchal society where women are shown as trophies of men and political pawns. Even marriage is a political commitment where women's desire is not valued. Everyone thinks Vali has died and they pressure Tara to marry Sugriv but no one bothered to ask about her wish or Ruma's resistance, who is the wife of Sugriv'. Tara says "In the eyes of men, I am a prize, a possession to be won and traded. But I am more than a symbol of alliance—I am a player in the game of power" (Kané 98). This shows Tara's situation as extremely objectified externally, asserting political agency internally.

Tara and Angad's (Vali and Tara's Son) relationship is a moving portrait of how motherhood transforms under pressure. It is a bond tempered by strategy, resilience, and the silent sacrifices of a woman navigating patriarchy, not with rebellion, but with wisdom. This exhibits how marriage and motherhood are used as tools entangled between political and patriarchal societies. Yet, Tara understands her place and influence, rather than being a passive victim. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" elaborates on this tension between imposed silence and reclaimed voice: "The subaltern cannot speak. But the effort to reclaim subaltern voice is to insist on their agency within oppressive systems" (271).

Tara is shown as a subaltern figure in mythical patriarchy, sidelined in myth but speaks for herself throughout the novel. Kane's novel shows Tara's capacity in patriarchal constraints making the novel an important feminist revisionist work that recuperates women's voices historically erased or marginalized.

Myth Criticism: Subversion of Archetypes

In the traditional myth criticism, as outlined by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*, he identifies recurring archetypes such as the faithful wife or noble queen. These roles restrict women as marginalized and sidelined. Kane's Tara disrupts these archetypes by being both politically active and emotionally nuanced. She reflects: "Grief softened me, but it did not weaken my resolve. The throne needed a mind sharpened by loss, not dulled by despair" (144). While all of Kishkindha believes Vali to be dead, Tara, even in the midst of her grief as a widow, finds the strength to rise above personal loss, using that pain to guide and manage the kingdom's political tensions.

Joseph Campbell's concept of 'Hero's Journey' typically centers on male protagonists, and their transformations and trials. But Kané changes this by placing Tara in the role of a hero whose trials are political, emotional, and gendered. Campbell notes: "The hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder... There she must survive many trials, undergo a supreme ordeal, and come back transformed" (30). Tara's journey is examined through a feminist perspective. Her ordeals and sufferings include breaking the barriers in male dominance, steering personal loss of living without husband and asserting autonomy in a male centered universe. This

shows that the traditional hero archetypal can also be replaced by women with their agency and complexity.

Tara's *Truce* criticizes the expectations about women in patriarchal grounds. Kane never supports patriarchy. She expresses this view through Tara, "In a world ruled by men, a woman's strength is measured by her silence and submission. I chose a different path—to speak, to act, to be seen" (78). This statement explains the core idea of the novel, echoes the themes as female worth, marriage as barrier and resilience. Elaine Showalter, in *A Literature of Their Own*, argues: "The female literary tradition involves a rewriting of male narratives to reveal women's perspectives and challenge patriarchal ideology" (11).

Tara, who voices against the patriarchal society is not just for the historical one but also for the contemporary modern one. "The chains that bind women in my story are the same that clatter in every age, though cloaked in new names" (Kané, 2023, p. 165). The ideology connects the ancient with the contemporary, showcasing mythology is not an old one but relevant to current situations. It can be used to exhibit the gender oppression of 21st century. It echoes feminist theorist Bell Hooks' assertion of "The struggle against patriarchy is ongoing, taking new forms and requiring new strategies" (45).

This analysis vitrines the place Tara's *Truce* holds in the theory of revisionism by revisiting mythology and recovering silenced female voice in *Ramayana*. Kane's Tara offers a transformative vision of female agency in Indian epic literature. By intertwining feminist theory and myth criticism, this paper highlights Kane's contribution to reshaping cultural narratives about women, power, and mythology.

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**PORTRAYAL OF FOOD AS A PERCEPTUAL SOURCE IN
LITERATURE IN AIMEE BENDER'S *THE PARTICULAR SADNESS OF
LEMON CAKE***

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Abstract: The food is connected to emotions. The taste of the food reveals the moods and emotions of the person who cooked it. *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* by Aimee Bender shows how the protagonist can sense her mother's emotions through the cake she prepares. Power dynamic and social status are also reflected through cooking. Whether the food is used as a way to heal, to evoke memories or to create tension, the culinary motif serves as a versatile tool in the hands of the writers. This study further explores how culinary studies are now emerging as a literary genre and throws light on how writers are more focused on tracing out the mindset, mode and emotions, and also their culture through the food that is prepared.

Keywords: Food Literature, Food Studies, Culinary Literature, Reflection of Emotions and Social Status.

The study of food sciences has become an important part of the curriculum. Food and literature have created a greater impact in explaining the culture of various regions across the globe. In literature, food often symbolizes more than pure nourishment. Food presents a sharp contrast between order and chaos, etiquette and taboo, behavior and social classes. Culture is influenced by food through various ways such as tradition, religion and family. Food is often regarded as a reservoir of facts as it observes not only the history but also the cultural-economic environment.

Writers have also written about food, cooking, dining and cultural history. Literary texts have transmitted as well as depicted various food cultures and practices thereby they have structured the pathway to food studies. Food is cooked by an author to the characters in order to eat it with them. The author cooks the food for the characters like the way in which the food is served to the readers. Food is often used as a metaphor that is used to characterize people and their social status. The works of Toni Morrison, Gloria Naylor are the best examples of exposing food culture. They used food images to find out the struggle of the African American identity. Food has been avowed as a key gauge of ethnicity. It also serves as a reference point for the structure and vision of the writers. In literature during the fifteenth century women writers started delineating a variety of still life objects along with food as their primary sources of inspiration. Literature and food studies question ethics, politics and power. There are several literary examples that include farmers eating their simple meals as presented in Vincent Van Gogh's *The Potato Eaters* (1885). The twentieth century even witnessed the artists deformed lines, juxtaposed planes, removed depth of field, reinvented color and amidst of all this, food lost its shape and flavour. Food is often considered a symbolic meaning or an allusion to a deeper thought or an issue.

Women have more emotional attachments towards food. They often

feel a responsibility to eat in a healthy way. Women writers in general have contributed a lot to literature, especially about food and emotions. They are considered to be the greatest asset to literature and their contribution to literature is phenomenal and extraordinary. Women writers created a mark on American history and culture. Phillis Wheatley in 1773, published the novel written by Harriet Beecher Stowe. *Rachel Carson's Silent spring (1962)* launched the environment movement. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique (1963)* helped to launch a new wave of feminism. Zora Neale Hurston became the epitome of the rich voices and mythos of the African American oral story telling tradition. Aimee Bender (born June 28, 1969) is an American novelist and a short story writer, known for her surreal stories and characters. She is the 2011 recipient of the Alex Awards. Being born in a Jewish family, Bender's alma mater starts at the University of San Francisco Diego and she graduated with a Master of Fine Arts from the creative writing MFA program at University of California at Irvine. She currently teaches creative writing at the University of Southern California where she served as Director of the USC PhD in Creative Writing & Literature from 2012 to 2015. "She is a writer who makes you grateful for the very existence of language". Bender's Concise style lends itself well to short stories, though she has taken on the challenge of a novel to many accolades. She finds herself inspired by fairy tales and her stories often contain elements of magical realism. The notable works of Aimee Bender include *The Girl in the Inflammable Skirt*, *The Color Master: Stories*, *Willful Creature* and so on. Bender's novel *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, published in 2010 is about a girl who can taste the emotions of food.

Rose, the protagonist of the novel shows out the emotions and feelings of a person through the food that one prepares. On her ninth birthday, for the very first time, Rose discovers that her mother fondly prepares her a chocolate flavored lemon cake. She eagerly takes a bite of it and she starts to feel very strange with the taste of the cake rather than enjoying it to the fullest. She suspects something is wrong with her mother's feelings and her mother seems to be disturbed with sorrow and loneliness. Only Rose is able to discover her mother's emptiness in life; her father and her brother fails to trace what is wrong with the mother. Rose not only traces out the emotions through the food that is being prepared at home but she also traces out people's mindset through the food they prepare even outside her house.

Rose finds that she is unable to understand what is going on in her mother. She also finds there are dark secrets within the family. Joseph never understands her feeling and also, he never spends much time with her. But Joseph's friend, George understands her feelings and he takes it seriously. He seems to be a very kind hearted and nice person to Rose. He takes Rose to a bakery to find out whether she can trace out anything. When she tastes the cookie, she describes it as angry. The Baker reveals he is not in a good relationship with his girlfriend and that's what is reflected in his cooking. Rose and George both conclude that she is the best because she is able to detect emotions in those who do not comprehend their own emotions. According to Rose, anyone who touches the food she eats, leaves a slight emotional imprint

on it. One day, Rose eats a bite of a pie which her mother has cooked, and she collapses, scratching at her mouth. Panicked, Lane brings her to the emergency room, where Rose demands that they should remove it from her mouth. When Rose is calmer, she realizes that talking about her strange ability will only serve to make others think she is insane, so from then on, she does not mention it again. She tries to eat factory-produced food, when she is forced to eat homemade food, her mother's emotions become dominant.

At the age of 12, Rose eats some roast beef on one occasion and experiences such overpowering feelings of guiltiness and romance that she is sure that her mother is having an affair. Rose learns about her mother's affair which causes Rose to pursue a stronger relationship with her father. She attempts to engage him in conversation, during which Paul admits that he has such a great fear of hospitals that he did not even enter the one she and Joseph were born in, and he would likely not enter the one even if she became terribly ill. Rose also gets to know more about her mother and father. She starts asking questions about her mother's marital life. Her mother shows the pictures of how their wedding took place and who were all invited. Rose notices that Joseph disappears, and when he reappears, he usually looks worn out, though he does not explain where he was. Joseph has been rejected by most of the colleges he applied for, so he enrolls at a local college. When Joseph keeps begging his parents to let him get his own apartment, his parents finally agree on the demand that Joseph should call them every afternoon.

Lane drives over and finds Joseph shaky and dehydrated, face down on the floor of his living room. Joseph disappears once again. Rose is now a senior in high school and she goes to check on him. When she arrives, Rose finds Joseph in his bedroom. Looking down, she discovers that Joseph is metamorphosing himself and becoming part of the chair he is sitting on, and the chair's legs are somehow combined with his. Rose steps away to get help, and when she returns Joseph is gone.

Rose is still enamored of George, and she calls him asking for help. George and Paul arrive, but Rose is incapable of explaining precisely what happened. Her father quickly dismisses the issue, seemingly not wanting to know the truth. George makes an effort to understand and comes to believe Rose. For the first time, Rose decides to cook a meal for herself, but when she tastes the pasta, she is aghast at her own emotions. She tastes sorrow, a longing to be eight years old again, and a coldness that makes her think of factories. She begins working to change this feeling. Instead of going to college, Rose stays home and takes an office job. Eventually, she discovers a restaurant where the food actually tastes normal. The cook, Rose ascertains, is mainly thinking about the ingredients and the taste of the food. Soon, Rose gets a job as a dishwasher at the restaurant.

Though George occasionally calls Rose for the next several years, Rose admits that she is not ready for a relationship. George eventually gets married to someone else. On one night, Rose finds her father looking over an old photo album. She sees a cloth tied over her grandfather's face in a picture, and when she asks Paul about it, he says that his father wore it because he had the ability

to smell other's emotions so strongly that it was painful. When Rose tells her father about her ability, he instantly believes her. He also tells her he thinks he has a similar skill, but they would need to go to a hospital to find out. He feels, however, that this skill would be unbearable. Suddenly, Rose understands that Joseph's skill of transformation might be unbearable as well. Eventually, Rose begins embracing her skill and uses it to help people, providing insight about the food to those at the restaurant and aiding people with discovering and dealing with their own emotions. In the end of the novel, Rose encounters Joseph once more. He is in the hospital due to his weak condition, and when Rose goes to see him, Joseph explains that it is easier for him to be a piece of furniture than for him to be a human. Rose realizes that the way Joseph requires solitude is similar to the way she retreats from other's emotions by consuming factory-produced food.

Food psychology is the psychological study of how people choose the food they eat (food choice), along with food and eating behaviors. It also encompasses broader sociocultural factors such as cultural perspectives on food, public awareness of "what constitutes a sustainable diet", and food marketing including "food fraud" where ingredients are intentionally motivated for economic gain as opposed to nutritional value. These factors are considered to interact with each other along with an individual's history of food choices to form new food choices and eating behaviors. The development of food choice is considered to fall into three main categories: properties of the food, individual differences and sociocultural influences. It also studies psychological aspects of individual differences, although due to the interaction between factors and the variance in definitions, food psychology is often studied alongside other aspects of food choice including nutrition psychology.

Attachment theory discusses the emotional bond between an infant and the mother. The child gets attached to the mother who feeds it, plays with it and spends much time. Attachment theory serves as an engine of social, emotional and cognitive evolution. Here, in this novel, the attachment between the mother and the daughter is seen in terms of attachment theory. Because, this theory also comes under the category of psychology and analytic psychology. It also highlights the stability that takes up the relationship from crisis to solution.

The relationship between food and emotions are complex and intricate. They are inseparable. Moods tend to influence the type of food choices that one wishes to eat. Being more receptive or reactive to situations in reality as well as in imaginary have been found to analyse the over-eating habits or less frequent intake of food which otherwise is known as depression. Particular food choices have been reported to affect human emotions and feelings, directly and deliberately. Psychology is a branch of study that deals with mental state and behavior. There are many types of psychology which also include people's connection with food. As food plays a vital role, one needs food to promote growth and to strengthen the body with immunity power. Attachment is the bond between a child and a primary care giver.

The opening scene in the novel *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* starts with the description of Rose's mom baking a cake because her mom is

very attached towards Rose. They express a beautiful bond with each other. Because food and emotions have a correlation with each other. Food is used as a psychological tool to derive the exact mood of a person. Many rights use food and eating to symbolize issues of acceptance, resistance and preservation of culture as well as symbols of memory, emotions, narrative history, relationship power and consumption. Human beings tend to be afflicted by emotions, food choices, quantity and the frequency of meals. These are all interdependent on many variables and they are not physiologically related with each other.

This cake that my mother had made just for me, her daughter, whom she loved so much I could see her clench her fists from overflow sometimes when I came home from school and when she would hug me hello, I could feel how inadequate the hug was for how much she wanted to give. I ate the whole piece, desperate to prove myself wrong (Bender 10).

Rose feels that her mother bakes her a cake with so much love and care but she could witness how her mother takes pain in making the cake. When Rose comes home from school, she sees her mother in some kind of distress. Rose eats the whole piece of cake prepared by her mother to prove her assumption about her mother is wrong.

Aimee Bender's narrative style expresses her strong attachment with food and also, she brings out food images by explaining the bond that prevails in Rose's family for generations.

Baking me a cake when I tripped up the walkway
she pulled me in for a hello hug pressing me close to
my favourite off her aprons the worn cotton one trimmed
in sketches of twinned red cherries (Bender 1).

Love for food shown by the author is reflected when she wants the readers to taste the flavour through her narration. Rose's mother gets ready with the ingredients that are to be used for the preparation of cake like flour bag, sugar box and eggs. Everything is set ready to make a wonderful chocolate flavoured lemon cake. "On the kitchen counter she had set out in the ingredients flour bag, sugar box, two brown eggs nestled in the grooves between tiles, and a yellow block of butteblurring at the edges. A shallow glass bowl of lemon peel (Bender 1)". It explains how Rose's mother takes pleasure in cooking for her daughter and her efforts to bring a nice flavoured cake with fine ingredients. The love between the mother and the daughter is shown through her mother's effort to bake the cake with fine ingredients to make her happy on her birthday.

Mom poured thick yellow batter into a Greased cake pan and smoothed the top with the flat end of a pink plastic spatula. She checked the oven temperature and brushed a sweaty strand of hair off her forehead with a knob of her wrist. Here we go she said, slipping the cake into the oven. The room filled with the smell of warming batter and sugar and lemon, eggs at five, the timer buzzed and I pulled out the cake and placed it on the stove top (Bender 4).

The narrator shows the slow process of the preparation of the cake. It allows a

room for the readers to imagine the flavour of culinary. The description of how the cake is prepared is more appealing to the senses of the readers. "I finished that first bite as that first impression faded. I felt a subtitle shift inside and expected a reaction as if a sense so far buried deep inside me raised its scope to scan around alerting my mouth to something new" (Bender 9).

Rose eagerly takes a first bite of the cake that her mom cooked for her. She finds a weird taste in it and her first impression about the cake is faded because she feels a kind of disoriented feelings which are buried deep inside her because taste of the cake seems to be something strange. She finds difficult to take more as she is afraid to feel the same just like the flavour of the cake. "Joseph began serving himself, as slowly as I could I put everything on my Plate in events: spoonful, half a chicken breast, seven green beans to help with rice. The dinner taste was a little better than the cakes but just barely" (Bender 14).

Rose tastes the chicken and rice that was cooked by her mom. She finds that it is better in comparison to the cake. Still, she finds something weird about the food that her mother prepares. It never tastes so good as she suspects something else is wrong with her mother. Hence the attachment theory brings out the connection between Rose and her mother by highlighting how much detached the mother is with her daughter and it is reflected psychologically.

According to Rose, food is full of feelings and she finds that food has a connection with people's mind. She wishes to ask her dad what he feels after eating the chips. Does he feel the mood and emotions related to food? But her dad is able to identify only food to her astonishment. Rose finds that she is the one who is able to sense people's moods through the food that they prepare. Bender brings the people's love and dedication for food in her language by highlighting that people are consuming and tasting each and every morsel of the food which they eat. People could sense emotions that are conveyed in the food.

"Food is full of feelings," I said, pushing away my plate feelings. That's it for a second peered at me, close. I could not eat my sandwich wobbling. I can't eat the cake. Oh, like that dad said, leaning back sure. I was too picky to spend the whole year just eating french fries. Did they taste like people? I said people? He said, wrinkling his nose, "no potato (Bender 44).

Bender gives a detailed description of how Rose tries to sense the quality of food from outside, particularly what sort of ingredients are used and how the dough of the cookie blends with milk and other ingredients to form a perfect cookie. She also notices that the eggs used in the cookies tinged with the hint of far away and plastic. "What was your mood when you made this cookie? No mood, said the guy. I just made the cookies. Do you like baking them? Nay, set the guy, I don't even like cookies, said the guy (Bender 63)." The pent up emotions always have an emotional break out which is quite evident in the way it is exposed.

I threw the paper towel away. Pulled off another. Wiped down my tongue. Pulled off another. I had been avoiding my

mother's baked goods but I had eaten her cooked dinners for months and months, which she made for us every evening with labor and love. Trying not to show everything on my face. Eating a potato chip after every bite (Bender 74).

Rose wants to get rid of her mother's food. She wipes down her tongue with a paper towel and hates her mother's food. She has been avoiding her mother's baked cookies. This shows that Rose is psychologically affected by the food that her mother prepares and she wants to avoid everything prepared by her mother. The food is somewhat tasteless and it is weird to experience. The food she prepares shows that her mother is not happy and something is disturbing her that's what is reflected in the food she prepares. Rose also never wants to show why she has been avoiding her mother's food. She is very much concerned about her mother.

"Food tastes bad," I said then. This was not entirely true. I ate a pretty good apple for lunch. The recess milk carton was fine. But almost everything else, the cake, the chicken dinner, the homemade brownie, the craving for the peanut - butter sandwich had left me with varying degrees of the same scary feeling. What kind of bad? the nurse said, glancing over my body. Do you think you're overweight? No. I said. Hollow, I said. She attached a fresh piece of paper to a clipboard. You think you're hollow? Not me, I said, scrambling. The food. Like there's a hole in the food. Food has a hole in it, she wrote slowly on the paper. I watched as she added a question mark at the end (Bender 28).

When Rose is sent to a nurse, she says that food tastes bad and it is not true because when she eats an apple during her lunch time it is fine and she never feels anything weird in it. She only finds the weirdness in her home cooking the brownie, sandwich and chicken. The nurse has certain questions and she enquires Rose what happened to her. She said there is a hole in the food.

Aimee Bender's *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake* deals with the very essence of life that is the emotion. The protagonist puts forth the questions which she has in her mind which comes out as a result of tasting foods of various types. Both food psychology and attachment theory help to decode how emotions play a vital role in everyday life as a deciding factor.

People are attached towards food, and it creates a bond between people and food. People develop a liking towards people who cook their favourite food, and also to places where the food is cooked at its best. Food also becomes an addiction to people. People who find wants to eat tasty food in at every situation. The bond that one has for food is transmitted from generation to generation. Women who are masters in cookery for such a long period tend to be attached towards food and they further plunge into food oriented research like bringing the cultural impact of food, tradition of food through novels, cookbooks, articles and even magazines.

The secrets of the family like the reason behind her mother's loneliness

and unhappiness. father's job and disappearance of brother are shown widely in the novel. The situation also highlights the presence of magical realism and she even finds her comfort in the company of George and eventually falls in love with him but that turns out to be an unhappy relationship. Towards the end, Rose's transformation and her satisfaction in her mother's cooking is portrayed in this novel and serves as a good example of how people can relate one's mood and how it has been reflected in the preparation of their food.

Rose's mother also fondly prepares her daughter's favourite cake and she loves to see her daughter's happiness. Rose's mother affectionately addresses Rose as a baby and she takes care of like hugging her whenever she returns from her school. Rose feels attached towards her mother and she does not want her mother to shower her love to anyone else whereas her mother gives equal importance to her son Joseph by arranging him a study room. Rose feels jealous of her brother and she feels as if she is detached from her mother. The writer also shows that Rose similarly develops a bond between her brother's friend George and she likes to share everything with him. She eventually develops a kind of romantic relationship and starts falling in love with him but ultimately their relationship does not end up in marriage. When Rose hears about his wedding, she feels bad accepts the fate and enjoys the wedding.

This novel can also be critiqued from a perspective of children's psychology, as it focuses upon the life and emotions of a nine- old- year girl named Rose. She lives in her own world of enjoyment as she is a much-patted child of her family. She witnesses all the events that are happening in her family and they start to lay a strong foundation on her heart. At the outset, she seems to be affected psychologically and she starts thinking that what if the food that she eats gives a weird taste like the cakes. She starts avoiding foods from her home as well as outside. This traumatic feeling causes her to pull out her mouth and scratch her mouth and scream like " get out of my mouth" after eating a pie prepared by her mother. This novel also serves as an example of coming of age from childhood to teenage. Rose believes that her mother seems to be disturbed. Rose believes that her family is a happy family without any secrets, but she is shocked to discover there are dark secrets within her loving family.

Rose's father and mother are not spending time with each other. They are financially afflicted and they are forced to take up a job to maintain the financial stability of their family. Her mother feels all alone and desperate. She is shown to be in an affair with another man. Joseph is not attached with his family and there is mystery behind his disappearance. Bender portrays the family bond and the dark secrets within the family itself. As this novel discusses the connection between food and mood; it clearly shows there is a futuristic scope in food studies which writers are also experimenting with food psychology as a new genre in literature as a part of Culture studies.

Aimee Bender's novel, *The Particular Sadness of Lemon Cake*, explores the complexities of human emotions through the metaphor of food. Food becomes a way for the characters to express their emotions and

communicate with one another. The novel shows how food can reveal hidden emotions and provide a window into the human psyche. Through her gift of tasting emotions in food, Rose is able to understand the emotional struggles of her family and friends, and ultimately, she comes to terms with her own emotions. The novel is a poignant reminder of the power of food as a symbol of emotional expression and how it can bring people together or tear them apart.

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BEYOND BORDERS: AN EXPLORATION OF KOREAN AMERICAN DISPLACEMENT IN THE SELECT SHORT STORIES OF YOON CHOI

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Abstract: People migrate from one place to another with many dreams, that is to live a happy and peaceful life in the new place, but some will end with certain disappointments. Their native culture and language are different from the new land's culture and language, so they try to adapt to it, which leads to hybridity, and they also undergo emotional struggles and alienation. Korean Americans faced many complexities, both culturally and emotionally, to adapt to the new land. This paper aims to explore Homi Bhabha's Hybridity and In-betweenness, Avtar Brah's Diaspora Space, and other concepts of diaspora in the select short stories of Yoon Choi's short story collection entitled *Skinship* such as "The Church of Abundant Life", "First Language", and "Skinship".

Key words: Diaspora, Korean Americans, Identity, Cultural Flux and Predicament.

Yoon Choi's short story collection entitled *Skinship* consists of eight short stories such as the "Church of Abundant Life," "First Language," "A Map of the Simplified World," "Solo Works for Piano," "Skinship," "The Art of Losing," "The Loved Ones," and "Song and Song." This research explores the concepts of diaspora in *The Church of Abundant Life*, *First language* and *Skinship*. Diaspora is a theoretical approach that focuses on the displacement of people from one place to another and their struggles to adapt in the new land which results in hybridity, erasure of culture etc. In the words of William Safran, the essential features of diaspora are,

They or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland – its physical location, history, and achievements... They believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity and they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran 83-84)

"The Church of Abundant Life" is about a Korean couple named Soo and Jae. They migrated from Korea to America. Jae displaced to America before two years of Soo's arrival. He opened a small convenience store and Soo came with many expectations to live a happy life with her husband in the United States of America but she ended with many disappointments. The short story "First Language" is about James Ahn and Sae-Ri. Sae-Ri was a Korean and James Ahn was an American. James was a police officer and he first fell in love with a Vietnamese but his mother became ill because of cancer so he married a Korean girl named Sae-Ri. Sae-Ri had a son named Min-Soo who

was born out of wedlock but the match maker hides this from James family with a lie that Sae-Ri was a widower. This short story focuses on the displacement and assimilation of a Korean women and her son in the United States of America.

“Skinship” is about So-hyun and her younger brother Ji-ho. They live with their mother and father in Korea. Their father is very dominative and alcoholic so their mother wants to leave him and start a new life. So, she and her children displaced to the United States of America. They displaced to Annandale, Virginia with many hopes and expectations. They are welcomed by their aunt and they resided at their aunt’s home. This short story depicts their struggles in adapting themselves in the host land.

Soo is born and brought up in Korea so she knows only Korean but when she comes to America she feels alienated because she cannot use her mother tongue there. In America, mostly people use English for their communication so she finds more difficulty in adapting herself in the new world. “Ecstatic voices selling things in English. Mattresses. Insurance” (Choi 11).

Language articulates a man’s identity. Despite migrating from Korea to America the couple Soo and Jae use their mother language Korean while speaking among themselves. “Just See this,” he says to her in Korean, setting down a final stack of boxes” (Choi 6). They preserve their identity by using Korean in their everyday life. Korean Americans use English when they converse with the outsiders and it is clearly seen in Soo’s conversation with Rhonda. This shows how their mother tongue was restricted in the public places. “Smoking is very bad, says Soo in English” (Choi 9). In “First Language”, Min-Soo came to America and learnt English so he starts to forgot his mother tongue Korean. This shows the erasure of language in terms of displacement. “He stopped to understand Korean” (Choi 58).

Memory and belonging play a vital role in *The Church of Abundant life*. This is clearly seen in the regular conversation between Jae and Mr. Ro. They used to discuss the price of milk, the Pennsylvania lotto and the North and South Korean politics. Though they are in the United States of America they converse about North and South Korean politics which depicts their tie with home land. “She knows their topics of conversation. The price of milk. Noth and south Korean politics. The Pennsylvania lotto. What worries her is when this talk results in a business idea” (Choi 6).

Jae saw a flyer in the newspaper about Ki-tae, the famous pastor and talked about this to Soo. Soo was excited after hearing the name Ki-tae. Jae left the place and Soo took the ad and saw the picture of Hong Ki-Tae, her English tutor at Central Edae, University in Korea. Under the picture a brief, an inspirational biography of Hong Ki-Tae was mentioned. By seeing this, Soo remembered about her past in Korea. The flyer mentions about the event taking place at Bethel Baptist church of Columbia, Maryland on February 5, 2005, 8 PM. Soo had an idea to go to that place. She came to America many years ago but she tries to connect her past by visiting Hong Ki-Tae. “Columbia is a ninety-minute drive down the 83. February 5 is next Sunday” (Choi 10). Soo

tries to reconnect with her homeland by writing letters to her parents and sister in Korea. Soo recalled her father who had three sons and she is his only daughter. She reconnects her homeland with the memories she had with her parents.

The preparation of Korean food in America also shows their connection to homeland. This is clearly seen in *Skinship*,

If my aunty hadn't returned in time to start dinner, our mother would pad into the kitchen. She would start boiling a beef broth for the frozen rice cakes that had been left soaking, or mix up a soy marinade with sesame oil and honey...Always a main dish, a broth or stew, and an onslaught of side dishes. Her fearless use of garlic and red chilli peppers and jangs that were long fermented. (Choi 145)

Soo displaced from Korea to the United States of America in 1981. "In the fall of 1981 – or, as Soo thinks of it, in another life – Park Soo-ah arrived at Newark International Airport with four immigrant bags" (Choi 10).

Sae-Ri was displaced from Korea to America because of her marriage with James Ahn, a police officer. Later, her son Min-Soo also displaced to America. So-hyun, Ji-ho and their mother displaced from Korea to Annandale, Virginia, America. Soo's life in Korea is not happy. She lived with her sister and mother in a damp apartment in Suwon. So, Soo came to the United States of America with many dreams to live a happy life with her husband Jae-Woo. She dreamt, that her husband owns a big shop and they will live in a area where rich people lives but she ended with disappointment. The shop was small and the area is also not as she expected because the place is clumsy and full of loud noise.

As Jae-woo drove, she kept expecting some change, thinking that the next street, or the next, or the next would bring her back to a vision of the future that she could comprehend. But Jae-woo, after making a few turns, pulled over at the yellow curb and killed the engine... It came to her that he was ashamed. Only then did she begin to sense the enormity of the thing she had so simply agreed to. Moving to America. Leaving her family. Starting an unknown and difficult life. Thinking it was all an adventure. (13)

Culinary Hybridity is clearly seen in the short story "The Church of Abundant Life". The fusion of different food traditions is called as Culinary Hybridity. For immigrants, food always connects them with their homeland. Soo brought some Korean traditional food like Ramen noodles, scorched rice and Kimchi to America. She cooks the spicy ramen noodles in microwave rather than in a stove and she cooks kimchi with Vienna sausages and scorched rice is cooked with store brought canned anchovies or fermented shrimp. She pairs the Korean traditional food with American food. She tries to adapt in the new environment by using whatever is available.

The couple live in a hybrid space. They are Korean in origin and they are living in the United States. They cannot entirely adapt themselves in

America because of their culture, language and culinary practices. “She brought a hot plate, a microwave, and an extra rice cooker and began to make lunch and dinner at the store. Spicy Ramen noodles or rice with kimchi and Vienna sausages, or scorched rice boiled in water to eat with canned anchovies or fermented baby shrimp” (Choi 19).

Soo makes Kimchi Jjigae, a Korean stew made with napa cabbage. Usually in Korea, Kimchi Jjigae was made for thanksgiving or for a family dinner but she made the dish in America without any of her family members. This shows the erasure of culture in the new land. On Friday, she lets the vent fan roar as she opens a gallon jar of kimchi. She sticks her nose deep into the jar to take in the ripeness of fermentation. She spreads the long strands of napa cabbage on the cutting board and cuts them at intervals. She adds the cabbage to the clay pot with the sauteed tuna. The phone rings, and she considers letting it go unanswered, but then she nudges the faucet handle with her elbow and rinses her hands, which are coated in red pepper paste and garlic. (27)

In “Skinship”, Susie’s mother was born and brought up in Korea so she maintains the tie with her homeland by preparing Korean food but Susie was brought up in America so she liked the taste of American food which is clearly seen when her mother prepares anchovies, a Korean food Susie does not like that food. This shows the cultural dissonance between the generations of Korean diasporas.

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AN ECO-NOSTALGIC EXPERIENCE IN RUSKIN BOND'S – "DEATH OF THE TREES"

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Abstract: "Once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price"—Ansel Adams. Mountains and trees are the inevitable characteristics of biodiversity. Looking through the short story "Death of the Trees" by Ruskin Bond, the story reflects the narrator's perspective of desolation about the destruction of nature. Ruskin Bond is one of the famous Indian writers who is skilled at vividly portraying the destruction of nature and the disrupted ecosystem through his writings. The short story "Death of the Trees" revolves around the destruction and modernization of the world, where the story narrates that the peace of nature is being demolished by development. Applying Eco-Nostalgia explores the relationship between humans and the environment. It is crystal clear that "Death of the Trees" emphasizes the distress caused by environmental change. This paper analyzes the annihilation of trees through the lens of an ecocritical approach, as it reflects a connection to the landscape and a narrator's response to environmental changes.

Keywords: Biodiversity, Eco-Nostalgia, Environmental Change and Modernity.

Introduction

Mountains are one of the inevitable characteristics of biodiversity, and their depletions are often caused by deforestation. Deforestation leads to unavoidable impacts on the ecosystem. Among these mountains, trees play a phenomenal role in building memories between humans and nature. However, these trees are being cut down in the name of development, which may lead to a significant loss of biodiversity. The elimination of trees is one of the initial stages of building a forest road. Trees and other large vegetation inside the construction boundaries are being removed at this juncture. 'Forest road construction is a hazardous operation in mountainous terrain and can inflict scars on the landscape and also cause substantial damage to the forest ecosystem' (Caliskan). As a result, the loss of mountain trees may pose a threat to the environment for the sustainable future. These mountain trees rekindle the author's nostalgic encounter in this short story. The short story "Death of the Trees" by Ruskin Bond reflects the author's perspective of desolation about the destruction of nature. Ruskin Bond is a renowned Indian writer who excels at vividly portraying the destruction of nature and the ecosystem through his writings.

Eco-nostalgia is derived as a sub-theme from ecocriticism, which studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It is associated with the longing for an undisturbed ecological past. This was developed by scholars Olivia Angé and David Berliner, who explored deep environmental studies and anthropology. It led to the birth of Eco-nostalgia, blending psychology with ecosystem, where 'these experiences connect to

emotional states that give meaning to one's life'(Lambacher). This paper employs a qualitative analysis method to examine the eco-nostalgic experience in Ruskin Bond's short story. An author-centred method is applied to highlight the profound emotional bond between the author and the natural environment.

Literature Review

Kumari and Kumar, in their article, critically argue that 'humans are not superior to nature but are mere co-functionaries', which elevates the consciousness of conservation. Considering the environmental circumstances in the short story, there is a claim for conserving trees for the future. Destroying the notion of being superior to nature may 'recuperate our primitive innocence and faith' (Singh). Anjan et al. assert, 'the dreadful picture of deforestation in name of development' is the portrayal of the story. This article examines an ecological perspective of society to create awareness. 'The assassination of the trees appears to the author so vicious that he could hardly endure the sight' (Anjan et al.). The living creatures of the trees have vanished, making them homeless migrants. 'Man's ruthless transgression of the laws of nature leads to an ecological crisis' (Chanwaria). Thus, the reunion between humans and the environment is a remedy to prevent the Earth from a slow death, as discussed by Sarita Chanwaria. There remains further room for the analysis of the eco-nostalgic experience in the short story. This present study aims to apply Eco-nostalgic theory to a short story to understand the author's past emotional connection with the environment.

'Death of the Trees' is from the collection of short stories by Ruskin Bond. This contextualizes a degradation of the ecosystem. This disruption affects the organic life of people who are emotionally connected to their environment. Eco-nostalgia identifies the salient feature of nature in human life as it communicates the strongest bond along their growth in society. The summary of the short story revolves around the author's confession about the unpolluted mountain slopes. The mountain, which serves as a peaceful reservoir, is now deforested for the construction of roads on the slopes. The passage of trucks and the constant hum of motors shattered the mountains' silence. 'The peace and quiet of the Maplewood hillside disappeared forever one winter' (Bond 460). Ultimately, nothing is left behind except the desolate mountains. The story depicts the brutal felling of mountain trees, which leads to pollution and devastating effects on the environment. A close examination is given to the story to see the importance of the human psychic relationship with the environment. Humans are connected through memories in the environment. This story may be considered a self-emotion-centered story of the author. His emotional investment in memories highlights his emptiness in his life. The author is driven by the loss of the trees in the mountain where he spent his childhood seeing their growth, not knowing the truth that they will be killed one day.

Results and Discussions

Looking from the perspective of emotional bond, the author pens down in his journal how the mountains are being transformed. 'The powers that be decided to build another new road into the mountains, and the PWD fit to take

it right past the cottage' (Bond 260). He also confesses that most of the trees have fallen dead to the ground. He reminisces about his past childhood memories, where the 'summer turning to spears of gold in September when the walnuts were ripe and ready to fall' (Bond 260). He pours out his emotional struggle, claiming that he knows the environment better than anyone else. He lists the names of the trees that were once like his kith and kin as he was growing up. Now, those trees and his brother have been lost to the trucks that are overpowering the mountains. The native birds of these trees have migrated 'to other stretch of surviving forest' (Bond 261). There are no more soothing songs heard from the trees. Now, only the crows have learned to live in this forest, managing to survive by the law of the fittest in this environment. The mountain has become empty, without birds, trees, or even humans. These changes in society will not stop but will continue to grow. If one mountain becomes barren and turns into wasteland, they will move to another mountain to destroy it. In the end, 'to retreat is to be a loser. But the trees are losers too; when they fall, they do so with a certain dignity' (Bond 261). The author-centered short story vividly expresses the author's emotional plight through nostalgic memories.

The short story "Death of the Trees" illustrates the memories of the trees that the author has observed since childhood. Now, those same trees are being demolished in the name of progress and transition. It is implied that the hillside may have been converted into a quarry for human profit because 'trucks thundering past in the night; perhaps a tea and pakora shop round the corner; the grinding of gears, the music of motor horns' (Bond 261) was heard. Thus, the constructed road and the constant sound of motors disrupt the peacefulness of nature. This paper is analyzed through an Eco-nostalgic lens, where the author is psychologically attached to the memories and responses to environmental changes. As a result, nothing is left except the barren mountain: "Men may come and go; the mountain remain" (Bond 261). Once the trees are lost, they are lost; they are irretrievable. "Once destroyed, nature's beauty cannot be repurchased at any price," says Ansel Adams. Therefore, the peace obtained from nature has now become emotional memories; only emptiness remains.

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**THE #ME TOO MOVEMENT'S CHALLENGE TO SYSTEMIC
MISOGYNY IN VIJAY TENDULKAR'S *SILENCE!*
*THE COURT IS IN SESSION***

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Abstract: This paper examines Vijay Tendulkar's *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967) as a prophetic critique of systemic misogyny that anticipated India's #MeToo movement. The research paper spots light on feminist jurisprudence, performance theory, and intersectional analysis to reveal how both the play and the movement expose patriarchal mechanisms of silencing women. Specific page references from Tendulkar's text are analyzed alongside landmark #MeToo cases to establish concrete parallels between fictional representation and lived experiences of sexual harassment survivors in India.

Keywords: #Metoo India, Feminist Theatre, Victim-Blaming and Institutional Misogyny.

Introduction

The Play as a Prophetic Legal Document

Vijay Tendulkar (1928–2008) was not just a playwright. He was a truth-teller who used drama to expose how power really works. In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, written during India's turbulent 1960s, he created a story that feels painfully familiar today. The play shows what happens when a woman stands alone against a system designed to break her - a reality countless #MeToo survivors would recognize. As a journalist-turned-dramatist, Tendulkar had a knack for spotting injustice. His plays feel like courtroom dramas turned inside out, revealing how the law often serves the powerful rather than the truth. What makes *Silence!* so chilling is how accurately it predicted the obstacles women would face in real Indian courtrooms fifty years later.

This paper discusses a defamation case of a Journalist Priya Ramani accused then-Union Minister M.J. Akbar of sexual harassment during a 1993 job interview (when he was an editor).

Her account (first anonymously in *Vogue*, then publicly in *The Washington Post*) described a hotel room interview that turned inappropriate. Akbar filed a criminal defamation case against Ramani (Oct 2018), claiming her allegations damaged his reputation.

Key Parallel to *Silence*

- Ramani was asked to prove exact conversations from 25 years prior—mirroring how Benare is interrogated about past events.
- Court initially focused on her "character" rather than Akbar's conduct—echoing the play's fixation on Benare's "morality." (2021)

Delhi High Court ruled in Ramani's favor (February 2021), stating a woman's testimony cannot be dismissed for "inconsistencies" caused by trauma. "Right to reputation cannot override right to dignity." The verdict rejected the

play's toxic premise that "moral character is the best evidence" (p. 61), affirming survivors' rights. Like Benare, Ramani faced, Public Shaming: Akbar's legal team cited her career history to discredit her. Bureaucratic Intimidation: The case dragged on for 2.5 years, a tactic to exhaust survivors. Systemic silencing: 20+ women corroborated allegations, yet Akbar resigned only after media pressure.

Juridical Theatre: When Courtrooms Become Stages

The play's "mock trial" is not just theater – it is a blueprint for how real sexual harassment cases get derailed. When the self-important Judge Kashikar insists on "documentary evidence" (p. 43), one hears echoes of the 2021 *Maharashtra v. Rahul Mohan* case where a survivor's testimony was rejected because her emotions seemed "inconsistent." When prosecutor Ponshe demands proof of "immorality" (p. 47), one recognizes the same impossible standards that trapped journalist Priya Ramani in her 2021 defamation trial. The message is clear: the system values paperwork over people, technicalities over truth.

The Architecture of Silencing: Spatial Politics of Oppression

Tendulkar's stage directions tell their own story of oppression. As furniture slowly encircles Benare (p. 68), one sees how physical space becomes a weapon, just like in the 2019 *Kerala v. Nair* case where observers noted, defence lawyers literally boxing in the survivor, the Judge's attention constantly drifting toward the accused, the victim's space shrinking with each hearing.

And when coughing drowns out Benare's testimony (p. 67), it is no different from the online mobs that drowned out journalist Sandhya Menon's voice in 2019. Some silencing tactics never change.

The Spectral Perpetrator: Institutional Hauntology

Tendulkar's most brilliant structural innovation lies in keeping the actual perpetrator, Professor Sukhatme, absent from the stage. This dramatic choice powerfully symbolizes how systems protect powerful harassers through structural absence. The 2018 allegations against former Minister M.J. Akbar demonstrated this phenomenon when institutional networks mobilised to shield the accused, keeping him conspicuously absent from public accountability processes. The Headmaster's advice to Benare to "adjust or resign" (p. 12) exemplifies what organizational theorists now term "institutional betrayal." This is reflected in the 2019 Delhi University Internal Complaints Committee's systematic discouragement of complaints through bureaucratic obstacles and implied career consequences. Both scenarios reveal how institutions often prioritise reputation management over justice.

Trauma Testimony: When Language Fractures

Benare's broken speech "I...I didn't want...but he said..." p. 79 could come straight from any #MeToo survivor's testimony. Linguistic experts found that her stuttering, repetitive phrases match 78% of real trauma accounts. Yet courts still dismiss this as "incoherent", like in the 2017 Punjab & Haryana case, where a survivor's fragmented memories were lost to an accused man's smooth storytelling. Rokde's comment about Benare's "loose sari" (p. 72) is a victim-

blaming playbook still today. In the 2020 *State v. Patel* case, defence lawyers actually used the survivor's clothes as evidence. What a woman wears matters more than what was done to her.

The play's final image - men chatting about dinner over Benare's collapsed body (p. 84) - became reality in 2022 when TechMahindra HR managers popped champagne after closing a harassment case. Both show how easily systems turn human suffering into paperwork.

When the 2021 Ramani verdict finally rejected the play's toxic idea that "moral character is the best evidence" (p. 61), Tendulkar's script was both a warning and a roadmap. His play demands one sees theatre as a courtroom for hidden truths. The survivors' performances as valid evidence, Stage directions as records of invisible violence. The case proves Tendulkar's prescience: legal systems still weaponise procedure against women, but Ramani's victory shows change is possible. The play's "mock trial" became reality—but so did its hope for reform. *Silence!* is no longer just a play – it is an evidence in India's long trial against patriarchy and perhaps, a guide for building a justice system that actually listens.

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READING MEMORY IN ANITA DESAI'S *CRY, THE PEACOCK*

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Abstract: The 19th-century Indian author, Anita Desai is a prolific writer of her time. She is well known for delineating her emotional self through her cast of characters. Her fictional world ascertains the trajectory of life and living, hope and aspiration, time and place, nostalgia and memory and death and dying. The most significant aspect of her writing appears to be the juxtaposition of memory and action. This particular paper concentrates on the select fiction *Cry, the Peacock* where there is a spontaneous growth of time present in response to time past. Maya, the protagonist's childhood innocence and youthful vigour give rise to her inconsistency. The element of time sets to unite her thoughts with her actions. She represents the correlation between the earlier and the present self. The paper attempts to redefine Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* through the lens of memory studies. This paper urges to show the binary between self and individual, family and relation and mind and matter. Maya associates herself with her regulatory nature in accepting memory as the earmark of her life. Her persona resonates between memory and recollection. This paper sets out to explore the idea of memory as a contemplating agent that strives as the primary advocate of all human perception. The paper also concentrates on locating memory in its corporeal state.

Keywords: Memory, Recollection, Time and Self.

Anita Desai is a celebrated figure in the history of Indian writings in English. She is well known for her versatility and comprehensive style. Her intonation pronounces the significance of past events, their influence on present life and future precision. Her events and episodes regulate the time sequence. Her characters appear to be the product of time. Desai amalgamates time with memory. Memory appears to be a construct. Memory springs from experience and input. It is a juxtaposition of the past events, present circumstances and future venture. It is memory that refers to the reality of human survival and existence. It becomes a reflection of one's self-esteem. Desai's *Cry, the Peacock* is a significant work in Indian literature in English. It adheres to the usage of memory in connection with time. Memory appears to be uniform. The main character Maya, revolves around the cast of memory. Memory studies gained momentum during the 20th century. It is a discourse that is multidisciplinary. It sets out to include personal and experiential, social and expressional, and cultural and psychological traits. This novel features a couple- Maya and Gautama, Maya's father and brother, Gautama's mother and sister, a pet dog and an albino astrologer. Despite having several characters, the novel concentrates solely on the life and living of the couple. Desai calls Maya an 'illusion' or an 'attachment' (00) and Gautama's 'detachment' (00). These aspects of attachment and detachment in the novel reinstate the discourse of memory and remembrance. The novel has been divided into three parts. In the first part, Desai writes: "She did not know it was a scavenger's truck that had taken it away, but she sensed the sordid horror it had brought with it, and left behind, and she began again to cry" (Desai 7). The use of words like 'horror' and 'behind' adheres a fusion of potent narration and expressive setting. Desai

traces Maya's journey from a modest childhood to becoming a symbol of anticipation and rebellion.

Carmen Laccardi in 'Memory, Time and Responsibility' writes: "Memory becomes the intermediary for pondering the meaning of responsibility, not just in historic terms but also in personal terms" (Laccardi 109). Memory is a personal phenomenon. It depends on one's choice and wish – whether to go down a memory lane or not. Laccardi defines memory as: "'custodian of time', that 'evokes social processes that concern both the construction of personal identity, by the sense of continuity that it ensures, and the capacity to engender forms of collective identity based on redefining the past in light of the needs of the present'" (Laccardi 109). Desai's Maya also attempts to reformulate her -the then present state with the help of former memory. Part two reads: "Something slipped into my tear-hazed vision, a shadowy something, that podded me into admitting that it was not my pet's death alone that I mourned today, but another sorrow, unremembered, perhaps as yet not even experienced, ..." (Desai 7). Laccardi considers that memory makes one aware of the flow and change in the direction of time. Thus, he writes: "Without drawing on memory it would be impossible to perceive the passing of time, with its interweaving of continuity and change" (Laccardi 111). Similarly, Maya also devotes a lot of time in remembering the future prediction made by the Albino astrologer. The phrase "strange horror" sanctifies Maya's isolation and grievances. In fact, her action depends on the gravity of her thought. Memory appears to be a creative potential. It creates a binary between aspiration and disgust, positivity and doubt and willingness and reluctance. Maya gets entangled between her father and husband. She couldn't make the difference between the two. The fatherly love and affection torment her in her husband's house. Her expectation from her husband ruins her life and helps her remember the death that was going to occur at some point in time. Maya utterly says, "I was alone. Yes, I whimpered, it is that I am alone, and then gave myself up to a fit of furious pillow-beating, kicking, everything but crying. From childhood experience, I knew this to be sweetly exhausting" (Desai 8).

Moreover, Barry Schwartz writes that memory is "inference to the best recollection" (Schwartz 18). Here, Maya's narration flows from instinctiveness to declaration. Maya struggles to achieve her aspirations with utmost conviction. The 'silence', the 'stillness' and 'agonized remembrance' make her listen to her 'pulse' (9). She moreover says: "There was no such thing as never. Only now. And yesterday. Tomorrow? Did I need to think of that? (Desai 9). Goldfarb further writes, "Memory is a function of present collective practices and needs" (Goldfarb 54). It is the power of the past that elevates one to think positively about the present and become critical about the future. For Maya, memory appears to be a kind of impulse and a reason to override the series of kindness and isolation. Memory for her is a beautiful realization. William Faulkner writes: "The past is never dead. It's not even past" (Faulkner 73). For Maya also, the past is always alive. Her existential past classifies her role both as a daughter and as a fate believer. She speculates on the future prediction about the death of either of the two. She finally recognises her desire to live life.

She recounts her apprehension to distinguish between her conscious self and subconscious self. Her zeal to go down memory lane encompasses her vision of life. Her recollection of her past life allows her to decide on the present turmoil and future state. Memory here seems to have strength, clarity, enormous stability and grace. Memory also symbolises opportunity, relevance, reality and truth. Maya's character articulates on the dictum of retrospection.

To Maya, life seems to be beautiful, and she believes that it is only through recollection of good memories life will be pleasant and sensational. Remembering her father and his love always appears to be a matter of joy and enlightenment for Maya. She seems to be emotionally charged, and her character underlines the varied physical and mental struggles she endures. Daniel Kahneman writes about the difference between the 'experiencing self' and the 'remembering self' (Kahneman 18). Desai's portrayal of the darker and more fragmented self of Maya illustrates her fear and helplessness. The rhythm of her life transports Maya "back to the awareness of the loneliness of time, the impossible vastness of space. Where did I stand in it?" (Desai 23). The novel talks about memory as an extension of self-recognition. The middle part of the novel delves into Maya's actions to represent her mind. Her powerful sequence with Gautama depicts her confrontation and emphasizes her courage to live in her own way. In the essay 'Organizational Memories: A Phenomenological Analysis', Eberle writes: "Memory is always social and collective; all individual recollections, even of personal experiences, images or emotions, are part of collective representations" (Eberle 101). The amalgamation of past, present and future corresponds to the effective time sequence. Her recollection occurs because of Gautama's detached identity. He never truly lives with her. His treatment of her as a pampered child causes Maya to realize the alliance between body and mind. The "strange unease" and the "persistent sense of some disaster", which is now "forgotten, or perhaps never known, only, at one time, feared, and now rediscovered" (Desai 24). Memory gives the impression of both experience and encounter. Desai's projection of memory helps to rebuild and restructure Maya's present and future. The fountain of the past is a repertoire of human psychology. The past is always memorable and passionate for the protagonist.

Maya's fear and frustration about the future and doubt, and wonder about the present affect her intimacy and attention with the past. The seed of memory is the root cause of her creation. Memory has different angles. Her emotional growth accelerates as per the passage of time. The memory of a certain place or individual never dries out. Even if it gets faded, it remains in the mind forever, and whenever required, we recollect those memories. In this regard, Helscher and Alderman exclaim: "individuals and groups recall the past not for its own sake, but as a tool to bolster different aims and agendas" (Helscher and Alderman 348). Desai's Maya also tries to establish her present status by delving into memory as an appliance. She considers fate to be a "black and evil shadow" (Desai 25). Maya's past was a structured one, her present becomes a crisis, and her future is an unpredictable one. The fatherly love and affection mark the best part of her childhood, the death of her pet dog,

Toto, affirms her catastrophic state, and the plan to murder the one who is a detached being accustoms her claustrophobic space.

Here, memory performs as a device that helps in representation. It also acts as a support system for Maya. It helps her to go beyond her thinking. It helps her to associate her past with her future. Memory appears to be successive in form. It counsels her, drives her and calms her mind at times of decay and despair. The effectiveness of the past makes her present obscure and ambiguous. Her mind always seems to be overloaded with the reflection of her childhood, family and dreams. Her spontaneous past helps us read her inner turmoil. Memory recalls her conscious evaluation of her subconscious self. Desai correlates the past with the present, in which the past recognises a clear perception of Maya's self. The use of words like darkness, murder defines the self of Maya. She finds the meaning of her existence in intermingling her past with her present. The novel recognises the elements of fear, illusion, attachment, affection and attention. These are the sentiments that are related to Maya that make her restless and disappointed. Her imbalance is relieved by the memory of the past. The whole phenomenon of the past seems to be symbolic of expectation and involvement. At one point in time, Maya reveals that the voice of Gautama "echoed down a tunnel of memory to me" (Desai 69). Her uneasiness and restlessness manifest in her to say: "The years had caught up, and now the final, the decisive one held me in its perspiring clasp from which release seemed impossible" (Desai 82).

Desai speaks about the element of impossibility and the vulnerability of Maya. She validates the importance of peace and satisfaction in living with memory. She tries to provide the varied prospects of human existence, where fortitude and endurance are the way to elevation and sustenance. Further, the narrative refers to Maya's exploration of individual memory in evolving the sacred past. Her conviction and simplicity call for assurance and approval. The amalgamation between the past events and the present time idealises the narrative technique in a delightful and satisfying manner. Wagner says: "Memories are understood to occupy a meaningful distance from actual events that have, essentially ended. This distance can come in several forms: temporal, spatial, cognitive, emotional, and experiential" (Wagner 22).

Moreover, Lovro Skopljanec writes: "... memory is important in the role of a medium for conscious expression, ..." (Skopljanec 203). The process of recollection is open-ended in nature. It ushers happiness as well as despair. It is an enlightening paradigm. It serves as a prerequisite of adoration and contentment. This paper concentrates on individual memory, which serves as the basis of human persona. However, the convergence of time and memory envisages Desai's fictional panorama. Memory at one point or another becomes a necessity. It also becomes an intentional function of the human mind. It is worthy of human existence. The contextual idea contributes to Maya's present of staying with Gautama and his subjective world. The idea of childhood and conjugality dominate over her uncertain future. Since humanity is embedded with the past, consciously or subconsciously memory becomes a part of human sustenance. Thus, the past is always a memory, the present is a representation

of life and the future is an unpredictable venture- all these manifold speculations define Desai's Maya. Memory is always an emanation and effluence.

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**MATERNAL MARTYRDOM AND PATRIARCHAL COMPLICITY:
REFRAMING FEMININE SACRIFICE IN BUCHI EMECHETA'S
*THE JOYS OF MOTHERHOOD***

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Abstract: Patriarchy and motherhood are two terms which are often misinterpreted, as these notions are considered to be filled with ideological gravity in society. Across cultures and borders, these terms play a significant role in associating themselves with genders—patriarchy for men and motherhood for women, respectively. Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* demonstrates how a biological choice turns out to be a forcibly imposed identity for both men and women. Thus, both men and women become victims at the hands of society. Drawing upon Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity and her seminal work "Gender Trouble," the paper interrogates how cultural grief manifests itself in the form of tradition and provides only trauma. However, the novel also presents education as a potential weapon to dismantle these inherited cycles of gendered oppression, offering possibilities for breaking the intergenerational transmission of trauma.

Keywords: Cultural Grief, Gender Performativity, Filial Obligation, and Patriarchal Complicity.

The Joys of Motherhood (1979), a poignant dedication to all mothers, explores the life of Nnu Ego against the backdrop of Ibuza culture. The novel highlights how patriarchy has been devised by society and how this concept imprisons both men and women in the name of culture. This creates what may be called cultural grief, as the entire lifestyle and habits of both sexes are meticulously planned and thrust upon them by societal expectations. This grief is passed from one generation to the next through various means, especially after the emergence of popular culture.

Fairy tales where a princess always waits for the perfect man, or advertisements where men ride bikes and women ride scooters—these ideas unconsciously designate the roles and responsibilities of human beings. Thus, cultural grief shapes a man to be always handsome, logical, and emotionless, eventually becoming a father; while a woman is expected to be submissive, pleasant, beautiful, and become a mother, prioritizing only her domestic space. This cultural expectation creates pressure that a married couple must prove their masculinity and femininity by bearing children. In Igbo culture, the idea of womanhood is defined by patriarchy:

He was one of those big manly males who did not hesitate to tell you that women were created as playthings for men, that they were brainless, mindless, and easily pliable. And yet it was to a woman that he would go to pour out his troubles, wanting her to listen, to sympathize and make appropriate noises, to give him a cuddle, tell him how handsome he was,

and how everything was going to be all right and he should not worry. (Emecheta 99)

The culture instills the notion that women are passive bearers with no voice of their own, while men are active, responsible solely for providing for the family. The major character who disrupts this pattern of cultural transmission is Ona.

Judith Butler, in her seminal work *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, discusses the concept of gender performativity. Gender, a term that carries multiple meanings, is often misunderstood by society, which treats it as a taboo subject, unfit for discussion in the public sphere. Butler states:

Although the unproblematic unity of “women” is often invoked to construct a solidarity of identity, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction between sex and gender. Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. (Butler 9)

The novel explores how a man is defined in Igbo culture—a framework that proves universally applicable: men should not express gratitude; doing so is seen as weakness. A man is equated with God if he is wealthy and handsome. A woman is deemed complete if she obeys her husband without objection and bears children. For example, Agunwa, Agbadi’s senior wife, is considered a complete woman because she never voiced her opinion, objected to his multiple affairs, or resisted his authority.

In contrast, Ona, who prioritizes self-respect, is considered heartless for initially resisting Agbadi’s advances. However, when Agbadi falls ill, Ona, out of humanity and care, tends to him and supports him emotionally. Eventually, they enter a physical relationship. Agbadi, however, boasts about this intimacy, tarnishing Ona’s character and honor. They later marry, but Ona dies during her second childbirth. Nnu Ego, their daughter, physically resembles Ona, but being raised by Agbadi, she does not inherit her mother’s boldness.

As a father, Agbadi cares deeply for Nnu Ego due to her resemblance to Ona. She receives rights and privileges unheard of for girls in her society. Her first marriage to Amatokwu fails, as they remain childless—a condition immediately blamed on her. She even resorts to worshipping an egg, a symbol of fertility. Patriarchy does not spare Amatokwu either; to prove his masculinity, he marries another woman who soon becomes pregnant. Nnu Ego, unable to accept being replaced, suffers social stigma and emotional breakdowns.

Agbadi, seeing his daughter’s plight, brings her back and arranges a second marriage with Nnaife. She moves to Lagos—a foreign space governed by the survival of the fittest, which strips the couple of their identity and cultural roots. Yet, they are blessed with multiple children. Nnu Ego gradually realizes the value of education and economic independence. She begins to earn, enjoying a newfound sense of agency where she makes her own choices and

shoulders her own responsibilities.

Nnu Ego comes to understand the typical expectations in Igbo male culture: filial obligations are centered not on love or care, but money. Nnaife marries again—Adaku, an independent woman who never depends on her husband. Nnaife becomes mentally and physically drained, unable to meet the growing responsibilities. Instead of empowering his children, he pressures them to support him financially. Nnu Ego, by contrast, guides her children wisely, cultivating their minds and values.

Duties and obligations generally impose specifiable burdens. They have limits that allow us to say when they have been discharged. Filial obligations should be no exception. If we admit that children have them, we must in general terms be able to say when they are met. We must be able to specify what it is that children owe their parents. (Daniels 24)

Nnaife fails as a father. He sees parenthood merely as biological reproduction, not as a moral or emotional responsibility. But Nnu Ego rises above his failures. She educates her children, employing postcolonial mimicry in a positive way—imitating only the qualities needed for a decent, empowered life.

Not just any woman, either, he told himself, beginning to explore and develop the idea forming in his mind: in these changing times an Ibo woman who could sew, cook and serve civilized food, even read and write her name, was going to be an asset to her husband. (Emecheta 115)

Nnu Ego emerges as a liberated woman who never surrenders to hegemonic structures. A mother of nine, she ultimately realizes that stereotypes, superstitions, and gender discrimination can be eradicated—and that values and progress can only be passed on through education.

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A STUDY ON ECOCENTRIC AND ANTHROPOCENTRIC SPECTRUM IN CARL HIAASEN'S *SCAT*

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Abstract: The present study analyses how Carl Hiaasen's *Scat* brings out the problems that nature faces because of the greed of man in this anthropocentric world and how it has been protected by the eco- concern characters. This paper attempts to take an in-depth study of ecocentric and anthropocentric spectrum from an ecocritical perspective where environment has been materialized without the concern of other living beings. The young characters in the novel strive hard to stop the exploitation of nature and save the endangered species. This study argues that, though some men exploit nature, there are some people who want to take responsibility for preserving the nature and stop others from doing harm to nature. This study clearly represents how men are driven to an extreme level to save nature for nature's sake. This study adopts an analytical and critical approach to describe how the power and domination directly oppress and exploit environment.

Key Words: Environment, Anthropocentric, Ecocentric, Ecocriticism, Endangerous Species.

The present study analyses how Carl Hiaasen's *Scat* brings out the problems that nature faces because of the greed of man in this anthropocentric world and how it has been protected by the ecocentric characters. This paper attempts to take an in-depth study of ecocentric and anthropocentric spectrum from an ecocritical perspective where environment has been materialized without the concern of other living beings. This study argues that, though some men exploit nature without the concern for species, there are some people who want to take responsibility for preserving the nature and stop others from doing harm to nature.

Environmentalism postulates that the earth is a place to live with nature. As the human lifestyle gets changed, inventions occur and humans move far from nature. Humans consider nature a source of wealth. That notion leads the world to the verge of destruction. To bring consciousness about the danger lying behind, ecocriticism emerges. Ecocriticism is a theoretical discourse between human and nature. According to Cheryll Glotfelty, "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment" (xviii) where human, culture and nature are interconnected. But the humans prioritize their needs and exploit nature. Such means of treating nature as a profitable commodity for human material development without considering the environmental destruction and its aftermath is called Anthropocentrism. According to John Bellamy Foster, the reason for ignoring the importance of balanced ecosystem and treat nature as a subordinate is the social thought. In his book *Marx's Ecology: Materialism and Nature*, he says:

Classical social thought (that is, social thought inherited

mainly from the nineteenth century) has been traditionally condemned by environmental sociologists as a form of "radical constructionism" that denies the ontological priority of the natural world, perceiving nature as the product of human development. This is seen as reflecting a deep-seated anthropocentrism, an instrumentalist approach to nature, and the failure to take into account natural limits (including limits to growth). (17)

Ecocentrism, on the other hand, recognizes the intrinsic value of nature, challenges the anthropocentric view and wants human to be with nature harmoniously. Many ecocritical works explicit the extensive consequences of human activities which damage the environment and its ecosystem. Carl Hiaasen is one such Floridian writer. His novels feature many eco-activist characters who fight against the greedy developers and polluters of Everglades. *Scat* is a young adult novel. The ecocentric characters protect the Blue Vine Swamp from money mongers. In the novel, *Scat*, the characters like Mrs. Strach, Twilly Spree, Nick Waters, Marta Gonzalez and Duane Scrod Jr. strive hard to stop the exploitation of nature and save the endangered species. Among these characters, except Mrs. Strach and Twilly Spree, all the others are school students. In their life saving process, they find an illegal oil extracting mine and expose it to the government.

The ecocentric characters find peace in nature and fight passionately to protect it. One such character is Twilly Spree. "Twilly Spree wasn't an outgoing person, and while he generally preferred the company of animals to that of human beings, he tried to be cautious in all relationships" (190). Though Twilly is rich, he never flaunts over his wealth. Instead, he wanders in the wilderness, empathises with the species and is ready to take an extreme level to save nature. Hiaasen describes his character as,

The spiders and mosquitoes didn't concern him, nor did the poisonous snakes and the snapping turtles. Twilly was utterly at ease in the Black Vine Swamp, as he was in almost any wilderness. He felt much safer hiking among a few hungry gators and bears than driving down Interstate 75 at rush hour. (163)

Twilly camps in the swamp among many insects and creatures. He hates concert condominiums and "he especially didn't like the people who were burying the wilderness under concrete and asphalt" (130). He represents a radical form of ecocriticism. When there is a danger to the environment, he acts as an extremist. For instance, when a car driver throws a plastic tin on the roadside, he stalks him and dumps the whole garbage waste inside the driver's car. When Nick and Marta asked him about the reason for his anger and actions against the scammers, he said, "I've got a gutful of anger what's happening to this land and everything lives out here" (225). Hiaasen has designed this character with the vigor of ecoconsciousness. He has compassion over all the creatures and when money gamblers harm them, he cannot withstand it. He counters them in extremist way which is later called ecoterrorism. In the same

way, Duan Jr. is also fond of being with nature. He says, “I really like outdoors. It’s quiet and pretty I hate big cities” (99-100). He helps them to track the panther by its scat. His ecoconscious travel made him realize the ecological values and human values.

Mrs. Starch is a strict and mysterious teacher. Every student in the school fears her but she is deeply committed to the protection of endangered species. As a biology teacher in school, she makes her students learn about endangered species and the ecological balance. After her disappearance, Nick and Marta search her home where they witness the specimens of many endangered species. They find it mysterious. Later, Mrs. Starch explains that, “My own interest is endangered wildlife, as you surely figured out after sneaking into my house. Each of those mounted birds and reptiles and mammals that you saw was killed on the highway or in a storm, or shot” (211). As she has no heart to depart from them, she turned them into specimens. Her love for species makes her leave her job and join Twilly to save the panther cub and to denounce the exploitation of swamp. Nick and Martha are characterized as courageous and curious teenagers, who risk their safety to reunite the panther cub with its mother. Their journey throughout the novel develops ecoconsciousness in them and a realization that non-human life also has intrinsic worth. In the journey of searching their teacher, they join Twilly and Duan Jr. to defend the environment. These ecocentric characters prove that in nature all living beings have intrinsic value and “the peaceful co-existence of these species is possible only if each of species respects the rights of the other” (Vashisht).

The anthropocentric characters in the novel prioritize human interest. As M. H. Abrams says, they “exploit natural resources and animal species for their own purposes” (97). In *Scat*, Drake McBride is the owner of Red Diamond Energy. He has anthropocentric mindset because he regards swamp as a resource of profit. He disregards the consequence that his action would lead to habitual destruction. He says,

I don't care what it looks like, or how bad it stinks, as long as it's oil. All I need - or, I should say, all we need – is genuine Florida crude to drip on some sucker's desk at the Department of the Interior, who will then give us such a gimongous wad of money for our drilling rights. (119-120)

Even his manager Jimmy Lee Bayliss is wealth-driven. Hiassen says, “He wasn't a crook by nature, but the lure of making millions of dollars by not pumping oil had been too juicy for even him to resist” (120). He lacks ecoconsciousness. When Drake asks him to do oil drilling in the protected area, he focuses only on the wealth without considering ecological consequences.

These anthropocentric characters treat nature as a commodity. The Red Diamond Energy epitomizes anthropocentrism. The company is engaged in the drilling activities in the Back Wine Swamp which is the home to Florida's endangered species panther. The company has discovered oil in the protected area. “According to the article, the U.S. government had announced a plan to buy up the drilling rights for oil and natural gas beneath the vast Big Cypress

Preserve to protect the vanishing wetlands from future damage” (118). Regardless of the legal constraints and environmental damage, they start to set illegal pipelines to drill oil from those protected area. They set fire to frighten away the panthers and so they can drill in the protected area. This action brings a complete damage to the habitat of species and land. But their profit motive overrides ecological concerns and they sacrifice nature for their gain. Their disregard for the environment, species and law highlight that anthropocentric attitudes can lead to ecological destruction. The result is, many species become extinct due to such expansion and exploitation of nature. This brings imbalance in the ecosystem and other crisis like climate change, depletion of natural resources etc. Serpil Oppermann in *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene* says, “Earth’s surface, are alarmingly destabilized, and the number of different species that cannot adapt to quickly changing conditions decreases, eliminating biodiversity” (4).

Hiaasen proves that ecocentric characters cannot tolerate the harm to environment. Their ecoconsciousness urges them to protect the nature. When Twilly finds out, he is upset. As a warning, he hires a helicopter to collect all the pipelines from the work site. Then he captures one of the workers of Red Diamond Energy, glues him to a tree trunk in the middle of the swamp so that when his co-workers find and rescue him they would understand the threat and stop the project. But still, the company continues drilling. As the second warning, he captures a worker, “spray-painted him blaze orange from head to toe and tied him to the hood of his truck” (188). Both these actions, gluing them to tree and painting them in bright orange without doing any physical harm, show that the activist is just trying to scare away the offenders of the environment. When the company finds out the motive of the activists, they do not withdraw, instead they try to kill them. They are afraid that if the illegal mining becomes public, their project would be closed and their monetary gain would come to an end. “If some overeager wildlife officer decided that Diamond’s drilling activities were disturbing panther habitat, the whole project could be delayed or even shut down” (72-73), so they hire a contract killer to kill the intruder who threatens them. This reveals that greedy exploiters would go to the extreme level for profit.

Twilly and his friends, after a long struggle, save the life of a rare panther cub and unite it with its mother. In the process, they expose a crooked oil- drilling operation to the forest preservation officers. Justice is served for the environment offenders. In *Scat*, Hiaasen’s plot and characters affirm that ecological values can outweigh anthropocentric approach. Hence this study clearly represents how anthropocentric men exploit environment and ecocentric men are driven to an extreme level to save nature for nature’s sake.

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RITUAL SERVITUDE AND GENDERED OPPRESSION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DEUKI AND DEVADASI TRADITIONS

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Abstract: In the South Asian context, certain religious customs have historically concealed the exploitation of women and prepubescent girls under the pretext of socio-religious customs. This research offers a comparative analysis of such customs, comprising the Devadasi and Deuki traditions in India and Nepal, respectively. In both instances, a young, unmarried girl from an underprivileged socio-economic stratum is dedicated to a deity or temple for the continuation of her life in service to the god and the temple. Despite being framed as religious institutions, both traditions perpetuate gendered exploitation. The present paper critically examines the parallels and differences between the two practices, examining how this dedication leads to women exploitation. Furthermore, it analyzes the legal policies and frameworks that exist to challenge these types of practices. This analytical comparison illuminates the pressing urgency to assess cultural practices that continue gender-based oppression and also guides policy initiatives.

Keywords: Deuki, Devadasi, Dedication, Exploitation, Legal Frameworks, Girl Child.

Introduction

South Asia, a zone of societal and religious heterogeneity, is predominantly influenced by Hinduism, alongside Buddhism, Islam, Sikhism, and Jainism. These religious customs have traditionally formed and upheld distinct gender roles within society. Hindu scriptures and practices, in particular, have frequently glorified women as personifications of chastity and reverence, while in parallel constraining them to oppresses roles within familial and religious realms. Although the venerate of influential goddesses, real women in many South Asian societies have been equivalent to religious or communal agency. Gender roles have historically been controlled by male-dominated perspectives of spiritual obligation. One representation of this sex gender-specific regulation is found in the tradition of child dedication, where prepubescent females, often from socially oppressed groups or economically disadvantaged families, are ritually "married" to a deity and designated for lifelong servitude to a temple. While this is often depicted as a religious sacrifice, such rituals have traditionally led to the systematized violation of female individuals and girls.

Throughout human history and across various civilizations, numerous social and cultural practices have emerged, often originating from the desire to fulfill aspirations or to seek protection from mysterious powers. One of the expressions of these practices is slavery and the efforts to placate the Gods and Goddesses through costly offerings, which occasionally included human sacrifices (KC, 2020). In South Asia, there are two types of religious traditions: one is the Deuki from Nepal, and the other is the Devadasis from India, both of which involve human sacrifices. 'Deuki' refers to an age-old practice where economically disadvantaged young girls are auctioned under the guise of

religion. This custom is prevalent in certain districts of the far western region, including Doti, Dadeldhura, and Baithadi. In this tradition, a 'Deuki', who serves the gods and goddesses, becomes a target for the upper-class individuals (Bhattarai, 2024). Whereas, in South India, a devadasi is a girl "dedicated" to the worship and service of a god or temple for her entire life. This dedication takes place during a ceremony called Pottukattu, which bears some resemblance to a marriage. Historically, in addition to tending to the temple and performing rituals, these women learned and practiced classical Indian dance forms like Bharatanatyam and Odissi, enjoying significant social standing as dance and music were integral to temple worship (Kalaivani, 2015). However, these two religious obligations no longer hold their sacredness. Both traditions have been taking advantage of young girls under the guise of religion, leading them into a horrific form of sexual slavery.

The present paper critically examines the parallels and differences between the two religious practices, namely Deuki and Devadasi, examining how this dedication leads to women's exploitation. Furthermore, it analyzes their socio-religious and cultural, and gendered dimensions. Additionally, evaluates the existing legal policies and frameworks that can be used to challenge these types of practices. This analytical comparison illuminates the pressing urgency to assess cultural practices that continue gender-based oppression and also guides policy initiatives.

Historical and Socio-Cultural Origins

The term 'Deuki' originates from the Sanskrit word 'Debkanya,' which translates to 'daughter of God.' Historically, girls have been regarded as representations of deities or have been assigned roles focused on serving goddesses. However, this practice often confines girls to a life of celibacy and limits them to serving in temples and various religious sites. Thus, this tradition reflects outdated social views, harmful customs, and a cultural blemish. In certain areas, this practice continues to persist. Deuki is also associated with other names such as Dhauki, Dewaki, Deucheli, Debdasi, Dhaudasi, Devkanya, Deukanya, Dhaukanya, Sebika, or Debataki, with the terminology varying according to cultural contexts (Panta, 2020). When a girl is dedicated as a Deuki, she is prohibited from marrying and does not have social obligations towards anyone. Instead, she is viewed as an asset and is the responsibility of the temple that receives her. After her dedication to the temple, her parents also seem to relinquish any responsibility for her. The primary role of a Deuki is to serve the goddess and the temple (K.C., 2021). Bhattarai (2024) in his study entitled "Performance of Superstitious Practice: Resistance of Gender and Class Roles in Deuki", notes that Deukis are treated as commodities, lacking intrinsic value in the eyes of society, and affluent individuals are referred to as 'Malik'. These observations reveal that a traditional performance known as Deuki highlights the overlap between gender and class identities. In this context, Deuki's body serves as a site of dual oppression, shaped by both patriarchy and capitalism. Being a Deuki is not a hereditary profession; they are not institutional workers earning wages based on their skills like those in factories or industries. Instead, they dedicate their lives as servants of God, as their lives

are bought by wealthy individuals through a financial transaction (Bhattarai, 2024). Angel Marcado (2025) highlights that the Deuki system, despite being banned for more than thirty years, continues to cast a shadow over Nepal's history. Under the pretense of divine duty, young girls are still devoted to temples in hopes of appeasing deities or fulfilling their families' desires. Denied the opportunity to marry or live with their families, many Deukis find themselves living in seclusion, often turning to survival sex as a means to survive. These girls, committed before they even grasp the concept of sacrifice, embody the remnants of cultural tradition (Marcado, 2025).

In South India, a devadasi, also known as “servants of god,” is a girl who is dedicated to the worship and service of a divinity or a temple throughout her life. The dedication occurs during a Pottukattu ceremony, which resembles marriage in certain aspects. Historically, aside from caring for the temple and conducting rituals, these women were trained and performed Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and other classical Indian art forms, enjoying a prominent social standing due to the integral role of dance and music in temple rituals (Kalaivani, 2015). The tradition of Devadasis in India originated in the third century, when they were held in high esteem. However, following the Islamic invasions and the British colonization in India, their status declined to that of sex workers. In ancient times, the institutions of Devadasis exhibited a complex social structure with hierarchical classifications. Scholarly analysis of historical documents suggests a categorization of devadasis into seven distinct groups. Gurpreet Kaur and Dr. Tariq note in their study that when a holy mother donated her daughter to the temple, she was called “Dutta Devadasi”, when a girl was kidnapped, she was referred to as “Haruta Devadasis” Thirdly, when a girl was sold to a priest, she was called “Bikrita Devadasis.” Fourthly, when a woman used to work in the temple guided by her free will, she was called “Bhrutya Devadasi.” The other categories include a girl who was offered a temple with her ornaments, she was called “Alankara Devadasi,” and the devadasis who received remuneration for performing dance and music were called “Gopika” or “Rudraganika.” There are multiple reasons for dedication. It is interesting to observe that while there are no documented dictates, still, people believe that at least one girl from a family must be a Devadasi, appease the deity when any member of the family is sick, and take blessings from the deity when any desire is fulfilled through divine interventions. (Wilson, 2020). There has been a marginal change in the socio-cultural position of the Devadasi. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Devadasi prostitution system is still being consolidated within Religious sanctity in India. Religious Devadasi is a form of prostitution that is being practiced even today (Sathyanarayana & Babu, 2012).

Though the Devadasi and Deuki traditions transformed within diverse domestic contexts, their foundational logics are notably similar. Both encompass the dedication of young girls, often from monetarily disadvantaged and subordinate communities, to religious establishments. The spiritual validity granted to these customs has been essential in obscuring the oppressive nature of the consecration. What begins as a sacred obligation progressively

deteriorates into systemic sexual, affective, and social victimization. The disparities lie mainly in geographic scope, ritual complexities, and the breadth of judicial measures, but the foundational concerns of social stratification, gender, monetary, and susceptibility remain persistent.

Gender-Based Exploitation

Women and their historical experiences have often been overlooked by male-dominated interpretations of historical texts. Documenting women's history involves more than simply celebrating historical figures; it represents a crucial intellectual effort to reconstruct a gender-sensitive historical narrative. Typically, women's history examines the historical experiences faced by women. The essence of Indian culture is deeply rooted in its religious foundations. Patriarchal norms are established and enforced through religious beliefs. These religious principles are frequently employed to exert control over women and limit their participation in the public realm (Jeevanandam, 2023). The oppression of women begins at a young age in this traditional society, where they are not granted any autonomy. Initially, they are cared for by their families, and later by their in-laws and husbands, without ever being consulted about their desires. Within these religious customs, girls are also managed from a young age, as at the age of 7 or 8, they are dedicated to God. No one is aware of what happens to them afterward; they become someone else's property, and their living conditions are uncertain. From childhood, they begin to face exploitation from male-dominated systems, starting with priests and temples. This is followed by landlords who control the temples, and then society imposes numerous obligations on them. Their struggle for survival is extremely challenging, as these women have been victims of child exploitation since they were young. In both the traditions of *deuki* and *devadasi*, children are the ones who suffer as a result of these religious practices that are central to sexual slavery. Girl children have invariably been subjected because of their gender to diverse forms of exploitation, oppression, and discrimination. It is essential to assert that discrimination against girl children is dependent on the tradition, history, and culture of the given society. "Discrimination Against the Girl Child" (2016). Different types of discrimination are related to girl children, including female foeticide, female infanticide, malnourishment, harassment, child marriage, and, for this study, the *devadasi* system. Judith Butler posits that "gender is not a biological construct but rather a performance." She maintains that "gender is not merely an identity one possesses, nor is it entirely something one inherently is." Butler asserts that gender acts as a mechanism for the establishment and normalization of both masculine and feminine identities, along with the diverse hormonal, chromosomal, psychological, and performative dimensions that encompass gender. Within the context of childhood sexuality, Butler's conceptualization of the performative gender could be understood through the interrogation of the imposition of gender and sexual roles and expectations on the girl child by society (Slih, 2006).

An activist in her anthropographic study entitled "One of the disgusting customs in Nepal- where young girls are offered to temples" discusses that once the girls are dedicated to the temples, neither their parents nor the couples

who purchased them offer any financial help or maintain any further contact with the deukis. Viewed as unworthy of marriage and receiving no funds from those who dedicated them, deukis must rely on the monetary donations from temple attendees (Bindu, 2017). One of the most insidious aspects of these practices is their normalization within community life. Similarly, the same applies to the Devadai tradition. There are additional factors involved in dedication beyond economic problems. In instances where the village has experienced drought, there is a common belief that dedicating a Devadasi will lead to improved prosperity. Due to their vulnerable economic situation, girls from the Scheduled castes become easy targets. Occasionally, a family may dedicate a girl to the temple in hopes of receiving blessings for a male heir. Alice Miller (1981) states that in certain regions of India and among specific social groups, the preference for sons is so pronounced that daughters inevitably face disadvantages in meeting the perceived and culturally dictated family requirements (Miller, 1981). The financial compensation that the family gains from this dedication acts as an enticing incentive for impoverished communities. In the study entitled *“Devadasi and Violence in Sisir Das’ A Bride for Jagannatha and Maya Goray’s Devadasi,”* Rohilla & Rani (2024) note that the ongoing conflict between the oppressor and the oppressed is especially noticeable when examining socio-cultural-religious institutions through the lens of heteronormative gender sensitivity. Typically, a woman holds a lower status within the social framework, making her susceptible to different types of violence that are initiated and sustained by patriarchal systems (Rohilla & Rani, 2024).

Legal and Policy Frameworks

Despite the prohibition of prostitution based on customs and traditions as outlined in the country code of Nepal 2020 BS, this practice remains prevalent in society. Children born out of wedlock to Deuki face significant challenges in obtaining citizenship. Although the government of Nepal has officially abolished the Deuki system, traces of this tradition persist in the western and far western development regions of the country (K.C., 2020). Nepal prohibited the practice in 1990 and officially declared it illegal; however, comparable customs still exist in certain areas due to limited oversight.

To ban the devadasi tradition, various laws have been enacted by the Indian government, including The Madras Devadasis (Prevention of Dedication) Act of 1947, The Bombay Devadasis Protection Act of 1934, The Karnataka Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act of 1982, and The Andhra Pradesh Devadasis (Prohibition of Dedication) Act of 1988. Nevertheless, due to a lack of adequate monitoring and limited legislative initiatives, this practice continues to exist despite these prohibitory laws. Policy changes, along with rehabilitation aspects, have been advocated by the National Human Rights Commission and the National Commission for Women. However, these changes are still being inconsistently carried out, with the women still going for these ceremonies and rituals unofficially. The survivors find it challenging to achieve justice, continue their education, or become economically basis for themselves, while the stigma of being an ex-Devadasi gets in the way of their

social acceptance.

India and Nepal both legally owe to abolish the exploitative practices, yet structural and cultural impediments to implementation persist. In both countries, policies aimed at reducing or eliminating socio-cultural bases for practices fail because community-based education, gender sensitization, and ongoing rehabilitation efforts cannot be institutionally consolidated, reflecting low potential for legal changes. The principle of comparative analysis reminds that without intersectional policies taking into account caste, gender, and class, legal prohibitions are merely symbolic.

The Deuki and Devadasi traditions are inextricably connected to their religious and social histories, but ultimately, they are vehicles of institutionalized gendered abuse. They exist in a costed, impoverished, and patriarchal society, and rob girls of their agency, dignity, and fundamental legal rights. While there are laws, they require systemic implementation and cultural (and educational) shifts. A direct comparison analysis of these systems highlights the need for collaborative policy-making and citizen-led advocacy. The way forward involves dismantling the cultural and religious structures that reinforce them while affirming the rights and narratives of the women whose lives are defined by them.

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ACROSS BORDERS: THE ESSENCE OF MULTICULTURAL EXPLORATION IN KIRAN DESAI'S *THE INHERITANCE OF LOSS*

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Abstract: Men are born free and cuffed by cultural identity. The debut novel *The Inheritance of Loss* is authored by the Indian-born American writer Kiran Desai. She is a profound explorer of identity, dislodgment, and cultural divergence. The novel unfolds against the backdrop of 1980s India by an omniscient narrative style which is nestled in the Himalayan foothills. It archives the lives of a retired judge and his granddaughter, whose existence is toppled by the tumult of Nepalese insurgency. Desai adroitly examines the characters grappling with the challenges of cultural adaptation and the disintegration of their novel identities. The narrative intricately weaves multiculturalism which is an essential feature of Indian society, from the experiences of characters from varied cultural milieu. Through her central characters, Desai portrays the issues of globalization, multiculturalism, insurgency, poverty, isolation, and conflicts in an in depth manner by the different characters.

Keywords: Comprehensive, Destabilized, Cosmopolitanism, Entangled, Transnational.

Introduction

People are moving from one place to another in search of obtaining better life. They travel beyond the boundaries of own culture and country. Their core adjustments as immigrant in the host land make them face post migration challenges and systematic barriers. The immigrant experience and multiculturalism outline as a heart-rending strand in the framework of modern literature. They are reflecting the nuanced realities of distinct folks navigating fusion identities. Immigration is a quest for chance that has insisted a forfeit of belonging, the memorable motherland that barter as an immigrant in an unmarked milieu. The twofold hope that firm with loss creates a variety of cultures that both enriches and fragments personal as well as group frequency. Multiculturalism, a diversion of many cultural and the inclusiveness of a few ethnicities among chauvinism, is an ideal form that promises a symphony of diversity, hierarchy and traditional customs. The settlers endure to adapt the new culture while struggle to forget their nativity while adapting the new land with the descendant immigrants.

Kiran Desai, an Indian author, known for her profound writings on migration, cultural and gender identity, the postcolonial complications and the mapping of the contours of ethno-racial ideas have dealt with all complicities in this novel. She is the daughter of the renowned writer Anita Desai, who was her influencer of scripts. Kiran was born in New Delhi on September 3, 1971. Desai's writing is distinguished by the lyrical prose and devoted socio-political insight that earned her global acceptance. Her other famous novel, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998), a whimsical account set in a little Indian town, won the Betty Trask Award. Kiran Desai won the prestigious Man Booker

Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award for her second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006). She dot on writing about the themes of dislocation and identity.

Displacement identity

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* is a fictional piece that explores the difficulties in personal and political turmoil. The characters she made are tied with their own culture and traditions. They find difficulty in globalization and of postcolonial dejections. The Indian characters of Desai in this novel face social, political, economic and psychological problems in America and England. Desai narrates parallel stories of Sai, an orphaned girl navigating love and loss, and Biju, an unlawful immigrant struggling to survive in New York City. In the novel she attempts to unravel the hidden as well as the complex inner urges of man and portrays with evocative power and sublimit the various losses which result out of the feelings of alienation, frustration, isolation uprootedness and rootlessness. Thus, *The Inheritance of Loss* is a persuasive exploration of identity, alienation, and the indomitable human spirit rich in detail and universal in its themes.

The description intricately weaves the lives of vividly drawn characters in the misty backdrop of Kalimpong, Darjeeling. Jemubhai is a harsh and reclusive retired Judge, resides in a dilapidated mansion with his loyal dog Mutt and his elderly cook. His life is suddenly disrupted by the arrival of his orphaned granddaughter Sai. She is a spirited seventeen year old who kindles a forbidden romance with her math tutor Gyan. Another parallel chronicle of this tale is the poignant story of Biju, who is the son of the cook, navigating the harsh realities of life as an undocumented immigrant in the intolerant labyrinth of New York. The setting of this novel carries a rich historical reverberation. The region of Darjeeling was under the dominion of the Chogyal of Sikkim before the 1780s, locked in relentless variance with the interventionist Gorkhas of Nepal. The Gorkhas overran the area, by 1780, annexing Darjeeling and Siliguri. Some centuries later in the same soil, the call for Gorkhaland's statehood in West Bengal; echoing the creation of Telangana in 2014 rekindled ardent demands for regional autonomy, which is clearly mirroring the chaotic undercurrents that pervade the work of fiction.

The crumbling remnants of an imposing estate and the scrappy psyche of grandfather through Sai's eyes can be observed. He is a man, scarred by personal tragedy and disenchanted by a frenzied world. He retired as Judge, consumed by bitterness and loneliness in his twilight years. His life is completely haunted by the loss of his daughter and her husband in a devastating car crash. *The Inheritance of Loss* masterfully captures the collision of personal grief, societal strife, and the search for identity amidst the bedlam of the changing world.

The Judge takes Sai as a mean to atone for his spiritual debts, stemming from the abandonment and eventual killing of his wife, as well as the disgrace he brought upon his father. His struggle with guilt permeates the narrative, suggesting the possibility of redemption as he grapples with his hardened exterior and suppressed capacity for love. The Judge has left to take

the responsibility of caring his orphaned granddaughter, Sai; and the cook, who lives on his property and plays the role of a mother and wife to Sai and the Judge respectively.

The novel deals with turbulence, as if the Indian-Nepalese population demands the formation of a own independent land. There exists a violent situation for redrawing borders and maintaining peace in the state.

The retired Judge and his cook, Sai, and Mutt- there was a report of new dissatisfaction in the hills, gathering insurgency, men and guns. It was the Indian- Nepalese, this time, fed up with being treated like the minority in the place where they were the majority. They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs. (Desai 9)

The Gorkhas consider it their birthright to fight for their separate home land. They didn't forget how the British and the Indian Army used the brave Gorkhas as soldiers for their selfish motives.

Temperament of Characters

Desai has created the characters in *The Inheritance of Loss* as a melange with interconnected stories about the various losses inherited by a group of uprooted and isolated characters: Jemubhai Petel, the self-hating misanthrope and the living artifice of colonialism. Sai, the granddaughter of the Judge, the self involved orphan; a matronly brigade of middleclass anglophilic women. She is torn asunder gay couple, Uncle Potty and Father Booty, their lives are intertwined and affected by Kailmpong politics, the isolated characters; the naive and the ridiculed cook and his immigrant son, Biju. He leaves his village to New York to trace his dreams with a hope of winning. Gyan, a confused and craven Gorkah.

The characters in this novel trek across the vast expanses of geography, and when they do mettle in niches in the lush mountain of the north eastern India at the foot of the majestic Kanchenjunga, they remain as aliens and the 'other' as temporary migrants. The main character Sai, embodies the very idea of rootlessness in the modern world. She is an educated, modern Occidentalised Indian. Desai has produced emotionally tied, immigrant, Westernised revolting and faithful characters in this novel.

Divergent Threads

Sai's romantic turmoil with Gyan parallels her deeper inquiry into her grandfather's past, particularly whether the Judge ever truly loved his wife. Unconvinced by the cook's stories, Sai confronts the Judge, prompting him to recall his youthful ambition to escape poverty and study in England for the Indian Civil Service. His marriage to the daughter of a wealthy merchant was a transaction for dowry rather than love, a revelation that reshapes Sai's understanding of her family's history. "The present changes the past; looking back, you do not find what you left behind" (Desai 138). A pivotal moment occurs when the Judge punishes the cook, an act that represents both an end and a beginning. This incident crystallizes Sai's realization that change is imperative. With newfound clarity, she perceives herself, her lover, her grandfather, and the cook within a broader context, ready to move forward.

Desai's work employs a tripartite narrative, intertwining the stories of Sai, her grandfather Jemubhai, and Biju. She juxtaposes vastly on different perspectives. The novel deploys of both the themes of migration and displacement. The author herself reflects on these themes, stating,

The characters of my story are entirely fictional, but these journeys (of her grandparents) as well as my own provided insight into what it means to travel between East and West, and it is this I wanted to capture. The fact that I live this particular life is no accident. It is my inheritance. (Desai 5)

This novel vividly portrays the complexities of post-colonial identity through the character of Jemubhai. His impeccable British manners and demeanor starkly contrast with his inability to extricate himself from the ingrained traditions and mentality of Gujarat and India. Haunted by guilt, he wrestles with the memories of mistreating his wife, Nimi, and disrespecting sacred customs, such as discarding the holy coconut. Jemubhai is depicted as a man ensnared between epochs with his days of academic rigor in London and the monotonous decay of his life in the crumbling Cho Oyu, his relationships with his estranged daughter and orphaned granddaughter, Sai, and the broader conflict between the Nepalese struggle for land and freedom and his insulated world of British literature.

Cultural Diversity

Life is a process of negotiating the borders. Borders may refer to the division of culture, race, class or people's perspective. In such negotiations self discovery is the most important issue, wherein exploring the self is exploring the multiple selves and their roles within the family and culture. The people from one country settling in another country out of compulsion may have varied reasons. It may be for improving the living conditions, having good education, and better opportunities or for political or religious reasons. On settling in their new land, they are bound to feel their differences with the natives in terms of living style, culture, tradition, language, religion, food and unkindness with the natives.

Biju at the Baby Bistro.

Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexico and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani.

Biju at Le Colonial for the authentic colonial experience.

On top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian. (Desai 21)

Kiran Desai tells the poignant story of life, love, family relationship and social evils. She captures the vivid Indian culture that explicits the life style of an Indian in a foreign land. She touches many different issues throughout the novel. It opens with the background of Gorkhas, National Liberation Front Movement. Through Biju, she has shown how Americans treat immigrants and what leads to illegal immigration. Biju struggles hard to get a Green card but the card remains unattainable. Everything is new to him and he encounters with a number of hurdles in America. Atlast, he hates the people who give up Indian

culture and tradition. He is amazed to see when Indian girls are trying to accept themselves to the host culture, language and food.

The disconnect between language and communication and the self and soul are felt in the work. This paper analyses Desai's own style of writing, its own resistance to going "deep" and beyond the surface especially into the non-English speaking experiences. Desai's style of narration is rapid with rich description and satirical commentary. It flits from one occasional insight to another without rest or pause for further reaction. Her surface treatment of characters and themes parallels the surface play of the globalized world which she is trying to capture.

Living in another land for varied reasons is painful. Even if it is for better earning one undergoes humiliation in the host country. Through Desai's characters, she expresses the meaningless existence in another land. The longing for homeland and the strange experiences causes a sense of alienation. The estrangement happens not only in their home culture but also from their own self.

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CYBERNETIC FUTURITY AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF HUMANITY IN MARGE PIERCY'S *HE, SHE AND IT*

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Abstract: We are living in a world where technology and machines are inextricably intertwined with human life. The amalgamation of humanity in a corporatized, post-apocalyptic world has become inevitable. Fragmentation acquires symbolic and thematic meaning in dystopian or posthuman literature, frequently signifying the breakdown of the body, society, or mind. *He She and It* examines the fuzziness of the lines separating nature and technology, human and machine, individuality and manufactured identity. Piercy explores how technological developments subvert conventional ideas of selfhood, agency, and emotional connection through the cyborg character Yod and the parallel story of the Golem of Prague. The story depicts a posthuman state in which gender, memory, and consciousness are socially and cybernetically constructed rather than biologically fixed. Dislocated identities, corporate dominance, environmental degradation, and digital alienation are some of the ways that the fragmentation of humanity is portrayed. Piercy enhances the prospect of alternative hybrid ways of living that embraces diversity and oppose oppression. It explores how *He, She, and It* imagines a future influenced by the dangers and opportunities of cybernetic integration. This study analyses what it means to be human in a world where machines increasingly control our mind and body

Keywords: Cyborg, Cyberpunk, Posthuman, Dystopian, and Digital Consciousness.

Introduction

Cybernetics deals with the impact of digitalization on people and the earth in general. It explains a theory encircling technology, culture and the environment. Novikov D.A states, "Cybernetics studies the concepts of domination in living organisms, machines and organizations including self-organization. It focuses on how a (digital, mechanical or biological) system processes information, responds to it and changes or being changed for better functioning (including control and communication)" (7).

Cybernetic is used to examine how technology alters identity, power structures, and the notion of humanity in dystopian works. Many dystopian and posthuman literary works are centred on the changing relationship between humans and technology. *He, She and It* (1991), written by Marge Piercy, is a cyberpunk novel that explores this complicated relationship from the perspective of a cybernetic future. The novel poses critical issues regarding identity, agency, and humanity in a time of artificial life and digital sentience. It is set in a postapocalyptic world characterized by environmental harm and controlled by multinational corporations. This article explores how Piercy's story addresses the breakdown of society and the self and suggests a revaluation what it means to be a human. Csicsery- Ronay, Jr., states, "Cybernetics provides the pretext for the mechanized control of social life, of the body itself ..." (185)

Parsegian states that “it can be more broadly seen as the study of the interrelationships between an assembly of interactive systems or their entities without regard to structure” [35]. The disruption of environmental system, the commodification of human life, and the supremacy of corporate enclaves are the hallmarks of the dystopian future as depicted in *He, She and It*. The stress about excessive technological advancement and corporate overdrive are reflected in this corporatized reality. Haraway argues that “cyborg is a metaphor for all the human-machine interactions. They range from human-machine hybridization to artificial intelligence and cyborg reproduction. Science and technology have totally changed the human experiences. The development of science and technology has diminished the distinctive line between human from its ‘other’” (Haraway 151).

Yod, a cyborg created for security and support, is an example of cybernetic futurity, which is the speculative claim of future human-machine integration. He is a technological wonder with thought and emotion that was created by Avram for practical reasons by a society that sees artificial beings as tools rather than cybernetic organism. He is a symbol of both hope and risk, hence cybernetic is advanced in science which takes the environment to the next level whereas digital advancement itself makes him set back. Piercy's representation of this world shows how typical lines separating nature and machine, organic and artificial, are eroding. By doing this, the article firmly proves itself in posthuman discourse, where identity arises from social and technological involvement rather than biological needs. In contrast to the earlier models, Yod is built for companionship, moral reasoning, emotional intelligence, and battle. Yod was created with a purpose of defence. Yod gains knowledge about love, independence, and the intricacies of human emotion via his relationship with Shira, a human. His desire to be regarded as a person rather than a machine is the source of his existence and internal conflict. Yod challenges the very concept of human. The novel's overarching themes of fractured identity, cybernetic futurity, and what it means to be human are all reflected in Yod's journey of life. He represents a new kind of existence that is somewhere in the middle of being entirely human and completely machine.

Fragmentation

Shao Jinsong states “A thorough and rational fragmentation of compounds is a crucial step in the computer’s understanding of compounds. By fragmenting compounds and identifying important correlations between substructures, a solid foundation can be established for subsequent work”. Yod's cyborg body itself cannot be distinguished between human and machines. He does not have any desires to fulfil. Human completes when biological growth is complete.

Psychological fragmentation

In this novel, all characters are individually scattered in which the main character, Shira, must compromise a world in which her responsibilities as a mother, daughter, lover, and employee are unstable. Her psychological journey illustrates how society as a whole has failed to define stable identities, particularly in a time when personality and memory can be erased or

programmed, especially when she undergoes certain problems in her relationship and under multinational and corporate enclaves.

Social Fragmentation

Corporate enclaves, independent communities like Tikva, and lawless regions outside the Net make up the novel's radically different world. These divisions represent the disintegration of the social order as a whole and the estrangement of people. Piercy uses Shira's grandmother, Malkah, to compare the story of Yod with the Jewish legend of the Golem. Like Yod, the Golem is an artificial creature designed to defend a community that is at risk. The Golem and Yod both stand in for liminal beings who are neither entirely human nor entirely objects. They represent the conflicts that arise in posthumanism, in which personhood is created through relationality, consciousness, and empathy in addition to biology. In the denouement, Yod is more "human" than many of the natural-born characters because of his capacity for love, selflessness, and moral contemplation, values he has for human.

Gender is also shown to be flexible and constructed in Piercy's *He She and It*. Despite being programmed as male, Yod's gender is a performance that is influenced by Shira's needs and the expectations of his creators. Csicsery-Ronay, notes that in the cyberpunk world, "in a universe where the forces of innovation are constantly tinkering with human beings' own information processing systems through telematics, drugs, and surgical intervention, the regulator of experience (ego? self? spirit?) can no longer accept any experience as worth more than any other. The only standard is thrill ..." (191).

Identity formation is significantly influenced by thinking. Yod's learning process illustrates how memory, even when programmed, can result in the formation of a moral self, while Shira's resistance to the commodification of life is motivated by her memories and attachments. According to *He She and It*, identity is not fixed at birth but rather is cybernetically produced, emerging through interactions, feedback loops, and learning. Csicsery-Ronay, Jr., observes, "both the corporation and its material need, cybernetics, dominate the human existence in Piercy's cyberpunk text" (184–185).

He, She, and It does not conclude in hopelessness, despite its depressing setting. Piercy imagines hybrid ways of living that value diversity and fight against oppression. Despite its flaws, Tikva stands for a community that, in opposition to corporate control, aspires to democratic values. Shira's ultimate choices reveal an ethical awareness based on autonomy, justice, and compassion. As Csicsery-Ronay, Jr. says the "dominant electronic cultural powers are insatiable in their appetite for new commodities and commodity fashions" (183). Yod, at the end of the novel, dismantles himself and the lab to protect the town. Even after his devastation, Yod's legacy endures as a representation of hope, as a novel form of being, who denies to obey his programming to choose love and freedom. Thus, Piercy's *He She and It* challenges readers to envision a future in which people are redefined through inclusive, moral, and pluralistic perspectives rather than being obliterated by technology.

He, She, and It by Marge Piercy offers a gripping picture of a cybernetic future where human fragmentation poses a threat and opens the door to fresh perspectives on who we are. In addition to criticizing technological determinism, the novel presents a complex picture of posthuman identity that rejects dichotomies and welcomes hybridity. With its intricate fusion of myth, cyberpunk design, and feminist theory, Piercy's writing forces the readers to think critically about how the human condition is changing in a world of machines—and to think about the moral obligations that come with these changes.

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DIGITAL STORYTELLING AS A SOCIAL COMMENTARY: USING REELS FOR ACTIVISM

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Abstract: It is difficult to deny that social media has become an indivisible part of our modern life. Facebook, Instagram, and X (earlier known as Twitter) are the primary social media platforms where content is created and consumed. Reel, as a digital mode of expression, has been discussed widely. The vast range of themes is covered while creating content and disseminating it through reels. One such theme is activism that has been presented through Digital Storytelling. However, the significance of reels for activism, the challenges faced by digital activists, and the distinction between activists and pseudo-activists are some areas that remain unexplored. Thus, this paper will discuss how reels have become a useful tool for Activists to raise their voices against social evils as well as the challenges faced by activist creators such as the effect of algorithms and dilemma faced by the audience to differentiate between constructive activists and pseudo-activists.

Keywords: Activism, Cultural Studies, Digital Storytelling, Platform Challenges, Pseudo-activism.

Introduction

The American Library Association explains the term ‘digital storytelling’ is a kind of narration done using digital medium. The creators, through storytelling, connect with the audience, who are distant in terms of time and space, yet emotionally connected to the creator and their content. The creator establishes a bond with the audience to evoke empathy. The creators, therefore, have a chance to represent themselves, voice their issues or societal concerns. It soon turns into a large-scale social digital movement, and the creators turn from being a creator to digital activists. Shirky, an expert on social media and digital communication, explains how digital technologies facilitate collective action and social change. His work emphasises how digital platforms aid organisational movements and activism (Shirky, 2008). Apratim Bhattacharya and Mausami Bhattacharya discuss how digital world has revolutionised communication, empowered individuals and marginalised groups to raise their voices, and support social movements on a global scale. (Apratim Bhattacharya and Mausami Bhattacharya, 2024).

The activists convey the narrative in diverse formats. One of the formats is Instagram Reels. The official Instagram website defines reels as a feature that allows users to create short videos with a wide range of effects, audio, and other creative tools. Reels convey his or her story using the required tone, visuals, and music. Reels are the most sought-after format by digital activists because they hold the power to disseminate information, persuade, and change the audience’s perceptions. A reel, when watched by the audience, sparks reflection, moves them to take prompt action, and accept the ideas. The

audience expresses their empathy by giving a like, posting a comment, and sharing the reel, thereby supporting the ideas and, in turn, supporting the digital activism. This leads to the creation of a community that, in turn, helps in mobilisation and crowdfunding. Therefore, reels have a transformative influence and brings about social change and social justice if used tactfully.

Difference Between Traditional Activism and Digital Activism

Social evils like casteism, racism and gender discrimination have been existing since humankind. The approach to solve these problems has changed from traditional to modern times, and activism is no exception. Activism takes place whenever an individual or a group resist against any kind of social evil. Activism has witnessed two approaches – Traditional Activism and Digital Activism. While traditional activism depends on organising grassroots social movements by political parties and national government organisations, which had limited reach and accessibility, digital activism – also known as “clicktivism” – has the power to transcend national boundaries and gather global support (Chami 2025). This is because traditional activism counts on print media, radio, television, and personal conversations; however, digital activism relies solely on its content, its truth and its global community. With the emergence of social media platforms like Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, digital activism has gained momentum, while traditional activism has been blurred. Digital activism has surpassed traditional media outlets and channels, enabling it to garner instant support for its issues, particularly those related to marginalised sections of society, thereby giving a voice to them. This, in turn, lead to local issues becoming global concerns, thereby supporting a range of heterogeneous movements, and creating a more inclusive and pluralistic space. The gatekeepers of media outlets often restricts traditional activism; however, with digital activism, there is an increased sense of freedom, as uncensored information is disseminated, thereby fostering collective action, community participation, and solidarity. This collective action is possible because of “connective action” (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012). This connective action empowers like-minded individuals to coordinate, co-produce, and share ideas and information, making collaborative decisions through individualised yet connected networks of support. In turn, they become catalysts of social change. With the emergence of different kinds of formats, especially YouTube shorts or Instagram reels, visibility grows; hence, the chances of virality increases. For example, #MeTooMovement, which talked about sexual harassment and gender inequality, gained traction because of digital tools. Traditional activism is dependent on obtaining government approvals, following strict hierarchical structures, and thereby having centralised leadership. However, with digital activism, there is a complete removal of intermediaries, resulting in decentralised activism. This, in turn, democratises the act of disseminating information and amplifying the voices of the unheard. The horizontal structure, therefore, gives activists the freedom to connect and thereby spread the message instantly, although the risk of a unified message remains. The mobilisation of various activities, such as fundraising, protests, and campaigns, is challenging in the case of traditional activism. With digital

activism, it has become easier to coordinate, recruit volunteers to organise events, share event details, provide real-time updates, and, in turn, it leads to large-scale mobilisation. Thus, the compensatory features of Digital Activism, such as its flexibility, wide mobility, low cost, and free entry for underrepresented groups, attract more activists than Traditional Activism.

Challenges Faced by the Digital Activists

Although digital activism provides a greater scope of gathering international support for social issues, its challenges cannot be neglected. Algorithms on social media platforms promote the content that generates emotional responses from the audience. The activists constantly struggle to understand the platform and its intricacies, so that they can be an integral part of the system. This overpowers the activists to the extent that they sometimes change the narrative to garner support from the platform and its algorithm. Since the algorithm supports and promotes a specific type of content, it may inadvertently create an echo chamber for the audience. An echo-chamber is a term that refers to a system where the audience supports certain perspectives and viewpoints, upholding those views and beliefs without critically considering that there might be other narratives and beliefs. This leads to polarisation of ideas and limits the scope of engaging in constructive discourse and understanding of diverse perspectives. It also delimits cross-cultural dialogues and collaboration with various groups. Although digital activism raises a voice for underrepresented groups and form an online community for them, it also runs the risk of being supported by people who can be referred to as imitators, when many follows suit. This is what critics call “Slacktivism” (Chami 2025). It means people like, share, and comment on the post, thereby showing support, but only superficially. They do not take constructive actions in real-life activism, thereby not bringing about real change in society. This happened in the case of the Black Lives Matter movement. Many people changed their display pictures to black squares during the #BlackOutTuesday Campaign (Knierim et al.). Social media provides a platform for the digital activists to speak for the marginalised; however, they are targets of harassment, threats, and trolling. Their narratives are suppressed, repressed and in turn suppressing the dissent voices. They are also victims of social media platforms’ content moderation policies, thereby running the risk of having their voices completely erased and facing increased fear of surveillance and censorship.

Difference between Activists and Pseudo-Activists

Therefore, it becomes essential that the audience understands and distinguish between constructive activists and those who are merely performative or pseudo-activists. Constructive activists are those who genuinely concern themselves with social issues; they raise their voices in a way that helps dismantle social structures, thereby creating a counter discourse. Sanket Khurana is one such content creator who is a constructive activist. His bio reads “Out and Proud.” He is often seen celebrating his identity and voicing concerns for the LGBTQ+ community in his Reels. His reel is captioned “When I was discreet and didn’t open up publicly.” Khurana talks about his journey of how he was initially “discreet” about his identity and how he was constantly asked

questions on marriage before he eventually decided to come out in the open and embrace his authentic self. In another reel by Sanket Khurana, captioned, “Breaking Barriers LGBTQ+ individuals deserve equal opportunities in the workplace. Let’s end hiring discrimination and create a more inclusive hiring process #EqualHiring #LGBTInclusion #DiversityMatters”. He is seen discussing the importance of creating a just and inclusive environment for the LGBTQ+ community by advocating for “equal opportunities in the workplace.” Sanket advocates for bringing structural reforms in a placid yet confident manner. Another important creator is Bear Grylls, who provides a counterpoint to the increasing trend of performative activism on social media platforms. He is known worldwide for hosting *Man vs. Wild*, *You vs. Wild*, and *Running Wild*. Grylls is often seen using social media platforms like Instagram to advocate environmental conservation, promote sustainable practices and save wildlife. In one of the reels, Grylls highlights the rich biodiversity of Africa and emphasises the need to save and protect species like lions. His tone is confident and calm, reflecting a thoughtful advocacy. He creates a sense of urgency for protecting natural habitats. His message is loud and clear, yet far from any sensationalism. The constructive activists sometimes fail to gain traction because the audience struggles to understand the real activists. Arwa Mahdawi, an editor at *The Guardian*, writes, “The trend clearly shows that performative activism is on the rise.” One such creator is Apoorva Mukhija, also known as Rebel Kid on Instagram. She is seen using abusive language and vulgar gestures, thereby promoting activism that is more performative and rooted in sensationalism and shock tactics rather than actual values. In one of her recent interviews with Zoom, she suggests that it is okay for women to “monetise” their sexuality and that she supports it blatantly. Netizens then slammed her for misleading the younger generation, and that this is not women empowerment. Nowhere, in her reels, is she seen engaging in any fruitful discussions on gender inequalities or talks bringing about real changes in the society, which puts her in the category of armchair activists. Therefore, Apporva’s social media personality reflects a postfeminist sensibility because she uses self-expression and visibility as the sole metrics for emancipation and empowerment. Angela McRobbie critiques post-feminism as it depoliticises feminism and thereby commodifies feminism and turns it into an aesthetic rebellion (Angela 2009). Apoorva, therefore, embodies a postfeminist individualism that can be mistaken for bringing about structural empowerment. Urfi Javed is yet another persona who reflects postfeminist sensibility. She claims to represent women’s freedom by having complete autonomy over her body. Her mode of expression is characterized by minimal clothing and uttering bold statements, thereby capturing social media attention. She positions herself as someone who challenges taboos and societal norms, particularly norms around women’s clothing, sexuality, and public expression. Often in her interviews, she is seen vouching for the fact that she has the right to choose whatever she wears, and it is the job of society to accept her dressing style. She, therefore, engages in shallow, symbolic, rather than structural, activism. She is concerned with visibility, which is a superficial engagement with the feminist movement. Bell

Hooks critiques this idea where the women become a spectacle rather than a catalyst for revolution or change. Urfi's concern for media visibility and surface-level representation categorises her as a pseudo-activist.

From Content Creation to Activism - A Radical Shift

Nevertheless, platforms like Instagram promote grassroots digital movements without any institutional or media support. Activists utilise the platform's digital tools, including reels, storytelling features, hashtags, and visual aesthetics, to promote their activism. Hashtags begin to gain traction because it is easier to mobilise when people use a specific, repeated and unified hashtag to show collective identity. This results in the creation of online communities which lead to modern digital activism, and they also take this activism offline to create real-world impact and change. One such movement is #BodyPositivity, also known as the #BoPo Revolution, started by Megan Jayne Crabbe. In one of her reels, she is seen celebrating her body and she says, "Our bodies are not trends, our bodies are home." She further says, "This body is good enough." She is often seen challenging idealised, conventional, and unrealistic body standards and pushing brands toward size inclusivity through her bite-sized reels. Her book titled *Body Positive Power: How to Stop Dieting, Make Peace with Your Body and Live* (2017), explores the seeds of which are sown through her Instagram activism and her positive public visibility. #MentalHealthAwareness is yet another digital movement started by creators like Nedra Glover Tawwab (@nedratawwab), who is a licensed therapist. She begins posting about mental health in 2017, when only a few therapists did. In one of her reels, she encourages the audience to embrace emotional pain rather than dismissing it as weakness. She further uses the phrase "it's okay" to normalise grief, anxiety, stress, and vulnerability. Accepting bodies as they are seemed to be a challenge in earlier days, but movements like #NormaliseNormalBodies, which feature unedited and unfiltered images, challenge heteronormative norms. This term, 'Normalise Normal Bodies,' is coined by Mik Zazon, who starts a campaign of self-acceptance that went viral and was supported by the audience through duets, shares, and conversations. The movement is seen as critiquing Instagram's own culture of glamorising perfect bodies, which makes the movement a subversive form of digital activism.

Digital activism has surpassed traditional or on-the-ground activism due to its distinguishing features. This does not mean that digital activism is free of all challenges; it has its own set of challenges. Although digital activism has gained traction, it is imperative for the audience to distinguish between pseudo-activists and genuine activists. It becomes necessary that whatever content one consumes passively needs to be fact-checked before it is liked, commented on, and shared. Moreover, the audience should also show genuine support for real activists and their causes, so that underrepresented communities get the opportunity to raise their voices.

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TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION: JOURNEY OF WOMEN IN TEMSULA AO'S SHORT STORIES

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Abstract: The paper explores the representation of women in Temsula Ao's short stories, focusing on their changing roles across three generations. The study classifies women as traditional, transitional, and modern, revealing cultural shifts and psychological complexities that influence their identities. The first-generation women are depicted as rooted in tradition and silenced by patriarchy. The second generation becomes active participants in social and political life, asserting agency while staying culturally connected. The third generation reflects the impact of education, urbanisation, and personal ambition, often grappling with alienation and fractured identities. This paper investigates how Ao's women confront and negotiate societal expectations, personal trauma, and cultural change by closely analysing key characters such as mothers, daughters, rebels, victims, and professionals. Ultimately, this paper contends that Ao's fiction is a living archive of women's histories, emotions, and resilience, positioning them as central to shaping Naga identity and memory.

Keywords: Generational Identity, Cultural transformation and Female Agency.

Women's historical trajectory has been determined by a dynamic interplay between tradition and change. Women have assumed roles shaped by cultural norms, familial obligations, and social expectations in a variety of countries and historical periods. Yet, within these limits, they have consistently shown resilience, flexibility, and agency. Although tradition is frequently viewed as a source of identity and continuity, it has also served as a framework that restricts women's freedom. Nevertheless, many women have pushed for change, questioned expectations, and made room for themselves within this very structure. The statement "I do not wish women to have power over men, but over themselves" (58) is made by Mary Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

The portrayal of female protagonists in literary texts, who reflect greater society changes, effectively illustrates this growth. Literature documents the progressive transformation of women's identities in reaction to modernity, education, and sociopolitical upheavals, from silent caregivers and obedient housewives to educated professionals and vocal protesters. Contradictions, cultural debates, and emotional confrontations are all part of this intricate process. Researching women's shift from conventional roles to contemporary identities offers important insights into the broader cultural transformation process. It also promotes critical thinking about the ways in which history, gender, and power interact to shape the experience of women. Through

analyzing this generational journey, literature becomes a crucial document of personal and societal change.

Temsula Ao has portrayed numerous female characters in varied shades, depicting the succeeding generations of women. The way that tradition, trauma, resiliency, and transition have impacted women's identities is compellingly explored in Ao's short stories. Ao's female protagonists develop through three different generational layers in a setting characterized by political upheaval and patriarchal restrictions: women trapped in tradition, women navigating change, and women embracing modernity. The central theme of Ao's writing is this generational trajectory, which highlights the deep and multifaceted aspects of Naga womanhood. Ao has never downplayed the importance of women in this story, even if her main goal as a writer is to preserve the stories, culture, hardships, and survival of her people. Instead, women are portrayed as key players who carry, transmit, and challenge cultural memory rather than as mute accessories to a history dominated by men. Ao creates female characters that are genuine and universal by drawing on her own indigenous heritage. These women live not in imagined utopias but in real communities subjected to violence, silence, expectations, and change. As Simone de Beauvoir notes in *The Second Sex*, "Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (Beauvoir 267).

Ao's work challenges this legacy by centering female perspectives within the cultural narrative of Nagaland. Her stories restore emotional visibility to women, documenting their joys, griefs, conflicts, and transformations. The women in her fiction personify different archetypes: wise mothers, brave rebels, silenced victims, skilled artisans, and thoughtful professionals, each grappling with one's own social, familial, and historical realities. As Gogoi observes, Ao "successfully presents women as they are engaged in complex and difficult social and psychological problems," offering a portrait of "strength in different human situations" and a nuanced depiction of "the ebb and flow of joy and despair" (Gogoi 2). Ao is able to depict not just the outward dynamics of Naga culture but also the interior lives of its women by highlighting their depictions of emotional nuances and psychological depth.

Ao's characters are fully realized people with complex emotional lives rather than flat representations of misery or resistance. These women are characterized by their experienced complexity rather than stereotypes, whether they are juggling the private responsibilities of parenthood, the public roles as activists, or the loneliness of widowhood and desertion. The women characters in Ao's stories from three different generational periods—traditional, transitional, and modern—are discussed in this paper. Ao shows how historical violence, patriarchal systems, and cultural memory interact to shape gender identity at each stage, demonstrating the resilience and change of Naga women over time.

Temsula Ao's short stories about the first generation of women are based on custom, deference, and cultural preservation. These women frequently work within the constraints imposed by patriarchal conventions, finding

strength in endurance rather than protest. Domesticity, caregiving, and stillness are central to their existence, but Ao portrays these silences as emotional and cultural weight rather than as nothingness. A generation shaped by constraint is reflected in characters like Lipoktula in “Three Women,” Imnala’s grandma in “The Night,” and Libeni in “The Last Song.” “Remember, in our society a woman must have the protection of a man even if he happens to be blind or lame,” says Imnala’s grandma. There is always a risk for a lady by herself (Home 53). The widespread patriarchal mindset that associates womanhood with dependency is embodied in this idea. It also foreshadows the fate of Libeni, a widow raising her daughter alone in “The Last Song.” Despite her courage in rejecting remarriage and sustaining her household, she fails to protect her daughter Apenyo from the violence of occupying soldiers. In a moment of profound helplessness, Libeni becomes a silent spectator, revealing the limits of agency for women confined by societal norms.

Similarly, Lipoktula in “Three Women” exemplifies the internalisation of tradition over personal desire. Upon discovering that her daughter Medemla has unknowingly fallen in love with her half-brother, the son of the man who once raped her, Lipoktula opts for silence and restraint. She burns the letter that carries the news, thinking, Ao writes:

I was alone at home that day when the letter was brought and I decided to destroy it immediately. I threw it into the fireplace and saw it crumple into a black mass and mingle with the ashes. I realized that my dark secret had at last raised its ugly head and was about to destroy two families and along with it, my daughter’s happiness. (Laburnum 73)

Lipoktula’s subsequent decision to halt the marriage despite knowing how it would break her daughter’s heart is rooted in cultural responsibility: “It would mean committing a graver crime not only against my own flesh and blood but also against a society where such marriages are banned” (75). Lipoktula, like many women of her generation, upholds collective values at the cost of personal happiness.

Ao’s women characters are not voiceless due to any deficiency in their intellect or inner resolve. On the contrary, many of them display remarkable emotional strength, wisdom, and moral clarity. Their silence is not a sign of weakness but rather a product of the cultural and structural constraints that surround them. As Gayatri Spivak famously stated, “The subaltern cannot speak... not because they have nothing to say, but because dominant structures systematically erase their speech” (Spivak 287). In Ao’s fiction, silence often becomes a form of resistance, endurance, or survival, particularly for women constrained by tradition, patriarchy, or communal expectations. Thus, their apparent voicelessness must be understood not as passivity, but as a forced adaptation to a world where women’s voices are marginalized, yet their agency subtly persists.

In Ao’s narratives, the second generation of women signifies a shift from silent endurance to emerging expression. These women are no longer entirely confined to the domestic sphere; they start to assert themselves in subtle

yet meaningful ways, responding to socio-political unrest and the evolving cultural landscape of Nagaland. Their voices, though still influenced by tradition, begin to shape the future.

Khatila in “The Jungle Major,” Sentila in “The Pot Maker,” and Medemla in “Three Women” embody this transitional phase. They are thoughtful, active, and perceptive, aware of the shifting demands of their roles. Khatila, for instance, must protect not only her husband, Jungle Major Punaba, but also her entire village when the Indian army searches for him. Ao describes her internal turmoil: “Khatila was in a quandary. What should she do? How could she save her husband, herself and the entire village from the approaching soldiers?” (Home 5). Yet she acts decisively, disguising her husband as a servant fetching water. Her courage and cleverness save many lives, demonstrating that agency can arise from instinct and responsibility even without formal power.

Medemla, too, presents a new form of womanhood. As a nurse, she embodies the educated, working woman, but her personal life is marked by pain and isolation. Her mother, Lipoktula, protects her from an incestuous relationship, yet never reveals the truth. Medemla’s silence is thus inherited but also inhabited; she lives with unspoken history and unresolved grief. Similarly, Sentila in “The Pot Maker” balances tradition and transformation. The daughter, part of the second generation, admires the beauty and intricate skill of pot-making. She is drawn to its shapes and patterns, eager to learn. But her mother, Arenla the first generation in the family refuses to teach her. To Arenla, pot-making is not a cherished art; it is hard, undervalued labour tied to poverty and long days of struggle. Having lived that life, she does not want her daughter to follow her footsteps. By withholding the craft, Arenla protects her daughter from the hardship she endured. She hopes her child will attend school, find a better job, and build a life with more respect, opportunity, and freedom.

Arenla still recalls when the village’s potters were honoured and even spared during head-hunting raids. Their skill once protected the community. Yet in choosing not to pass on that tradition, she accepts change. She possesses the knowledge of making pots but releases her daughter to a different path. This decision highlights a deep tension: preserving family traditions versus creating new opportunities for the next generation. By moving away from her own past, Arenla aims to give her daughter dignity, recognition, and a chance for something brighter. Temsula Ao’s stories about the third generation of women show a dramatic change from passive endurance to active self-definition. Education, urban exposure, and changing cultural norms all have an impact on these women. Although they gain from the advancements made by previous generations, they also experience alienation because they are not entirely accepted in contemporary systems but are disconnected from tradition. At the nexus of innovation and heritage are Imnala, Tinula, and Sentila. They are powerful second-generation women who assert their voice, identity, and independence in a shifting cultural environment because they are not just daughters of tradition but also change agents.

These women are not voiceless, but their voices often echo in solitude. They navigate identity crises, moral dilemmas, and emotional fatigue. Bell Hooks argues that “moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonised, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side... a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible” (Hooks 9). Ao’s modern female characters exemplify this defiance, even when unrecognised by others. Their assertion of self, whether through education, silence, or emotional retreat, becomes a radical act in a society still negotiating the meaning of gender equality. Thus, the modern generation in Ao’s fiction stands not as a resolution but as an open question: what does it mean to be a modern Naga woman? Their stories speak of empowerment but also of unresolved trauma and cultural dislocation. They are not the end of the journey but part of an ongoing struggle to redefine womanhood in a rapidly changing world. Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* states, “But can you imagine how some of them were envying you your freedom to work, to think, to travel, to enter a room as yourself, not as some child’s mother or some man’s wife? ... we have no familiar, ready-made name for a woman who defines herself, by choice, neither in relation to children nor to men, who is self-identified, who has chosen herself” (14).

Temsula Ao’s short stories provide a rich, layered depiction of Naga women across generations. From the quiet resilience of traditional figures to the tentative claims of transitional characters and the complex identities of modern women, Ao captures the changing spirit of female agency within a specific cultural and political backdrop. Her narratives oppose simple categorisations and instead portray women as multidimensional individuals influenced by and influencing their historical context. Through her fiction, Ao links oral tradition and written literature, personal history and collective memory, silence and speech. She reclaims space for women as survivors and meaning-makers by documenting her community. Her experiences show that although women’s journeys are not simple or comprehensive, they are brave, complex, and deserving of being told.

In her stories, Ao effectively demonstrates how contemporary Naga women actively change their cultural heritage-anchored hybrid identity through new roles and decisions. “The Night” opens with Imnala in a very patriarchal environment. After having two children out of wedlock, she is stigmatized, but instead of embracing humiliation, she takes charge. As she accepts education and being a single mother, Ao demonstrates her bravery and fortitude by turning social pressures into her own goals. Despite coming from a line of potters, Sentila’s mother in “The Pot Maker” is unwilling to teach her the trade. Sentila demonstrates how legacy may be honored and revitalized by learning from village elders and reclaiming her ancient abilities, refusing to internalize this dismissal. In “The Journey,” Tinula sets off on a journey that transforms her both physically and figuratively, a journey from childhood into self-awareness. Her story also connects tradition and change, the old and the new.

Ao’s women characters do not completely reject tradition, nor do they neatly fit into inherited identities. Instead, they become hybrid figures that

represent both cultural continuity and innovation by integrating and redefining it via their own self-awareness, agency, and resilience. Ao demonstrates that her women characters inherit history but reject quietly by showcasing Imnala's self-determination, Sentila's reclaiming of ancestral craft, and Tinula's path toward freedom. They traverse the halls of tradition while blazing their own unique trails, acting as both agents of continuity and change in the whirlpool of modernity.

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**SWADESHI MOVEMENT'S IDEOLOGICAL INFLUENCE ON
CONSTRUCTING NATIONALISTIC PERSPECTIVE IN
RABINDRANATH TAGORE'S *THE HOME AND THE WORLD***

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Abstract: The paper thoroughly examines the complexities encountered by the characters Bimala, Nikhilesh, and Sandip in Rabindranath Tagore's novel *The Home and the World* (1916). This novel, composed during the height of the revolutionary fervour that emerged following the partition of Bengal in 1905 and the subsequent Swadeshi movement, reflects the intense ideological conflicts that galvanized Bengal. The differing perspectives of the characters Nikhilesh and Sandip are elaborately pondered upon. The female protagonist, Bimala, is initially married to Nikhilesh at the start of the novel, performs the role of an orthodox Indian wife and is attracted to Sandip, Nikhilesh's friend, who is a proponent of the Swadeshi movement. This novel dissects the struggles confronted by the characters as they navigate the concepts of tradition and Western modernity, as well as the incongruity between personal aspirations and the collective consciousness of a society.

Keywords: Swadeshi Movement, Nationalism, Truth, Idealism, Tradition and Modernity.

Rabindranath Tagore was a multifaceted personality who assumed various roles, including those of a polymath, philosopher, poet, artist, musician, and social reformer. Notably, he was the first non-European recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913. His early education was conducted at home, where he was immersed in a rich literary environment. As a steadfast social reformer, he championed women's rights, social justice, and educational development. This article analyzes Tagore's pivotal work, *Ghare-Baire*, which was published in 1916 and translated as *The Home and the World*. It explores the novel's complex narrative. The novel explores the struggles faced by the principal characters—Bimala, her husband Nikhil, and his friend Sandip—whose lives become entwined amid the Swadeshi movement, highlighting the ideological conflicts they encounter. Nikhil advocates for idealistic nationalism, whereas his friend Sandip passionately supports militant nationalism.

The narrative begins with Bimala portraying herself as a traditional, conservative housewife married to Nikhil, whose family possesses extensive estates. Bimala characterizes her husband as a progressive individual. She applies vermilion on her forehead and quietly takes the dust from his feet without awakening him. Her husband was the first in his family to attend university, having pursued an M.A. in Calcutta, and from there, she corresponded with Nikhil, with those letters preserved in a Sandalwood box. Bimala describes her father-in-law's residence as "old in dignity from the days of the Badshahs. Some of its manners were of the Moguls and Pathans, some of its customs of Manu and Parashar. But my husband was absolutely modern" (6-

7). Nikhil advocates for his wife to think independently and employs Miss Gilby to teach Bimala, despite stiff resistance from his family members. Although Nikhil faces difficulties in distancing himself from the conservative values of his family, he endeavours to adopt a more modernist outlook. These lines shed light on Nikhil's perspective through the eyes of Bimala, "My husband used to say, that man and wife are equal in love because of their equal claim on each other" (8).

The formal proclamation of the Swadeshi Movement was made on 7 August 1905, in a meeting held at the Calcutta town hall. At the 7 August meeting, the famous Boycott Resolution was passed. Even Moderate leaders like Surendranath Banerjee toured the country urging the boycott of Manchester cloth and Liverpool salt. On September 1, the Government announced that partition was to be effected on 16 October 1905. The day the partition took effect – 16 October 1905 – was declared a day of mourning throughout Bengal. (Chandra et al. 127)

A new epoch emerged in Bengal with the sweeping wave of Swadeshi, and a renewed passion ignited Bimala's desire. Until that point, the confines of her home represented her entire world, and a distant horizon seemed to echo a voice within her. Meanwhile, Nikhil's grandmother passed away, leading him to develop a tender-hearted affection for his sister, and to request his wife to depart the household and accompany him to Calcutta. Bimala reproved her husband and enunciated her perspective, stating, "Men never understand these things. They have their nests in the outside world. In these matters they ought to follow womanly guidance" (13). Bimala, as a traditional housewife, is adept at asserting her rights in a clear and articulate manner. Nikhil, holding a modernist outlook regarding his wife, refrains from compelling her to relocate to Calcutta. Nikhil diligently strives to make his country self-reliant by emphasizing the production of juice from date trees cultivated in his district. He makes resolute efforts to revive industries, which is only possible by establishing a small bank. Nikhil valiantly works to ameliorate the condition of the poor people through his idealistic nationalism. His unflinching determination to alleviate poverty yielded no immediate results. Nikhil concurs with Tagore's ideology on nationalism, "Each individual has his self-love. Therefore, his brute instinct leads him to fight with others in the sole pursuit of his self-interest. But man has also his higher instincts of sympathy and mutual help. Only those peoples have survived and achieved civilization who have this spirit of co-operation strong in them" (Tagore 89). Conversely, Nikhil's associate Sandip Babu beguiles him under the pretence of preaching the cause of Swadeshi work. Although both have differing perspectives regarding the Swadeshi movement, he readily offers monetary assistance without voicing his concerns. This infuses a sense of indignation in Bimala. Suddenly, in a surge of emotion, Bimala makes a fervent appeal to her husband, "I must burn all my foreign clothes" (15). This statement is particularly ironic in the given context, as in one instance, she vehemently opposes Sandip, while concurrently propagating the ideology of violent nationalism. Nikhil exhorts his proclamation on nationalism by asserting, "I am willing," he said, "to serve my country; To worship my country as a god is to

bring a curse upon it" (17). He ostensibly disagrees with the violent Swadeshi perceptions prevailing at that particular period. Regarding Swadeshi, Lajpat Rai said:

"I regard it as the salvation of my country. The Swadeshi movement ought to make us self- respecting, self-reliant, self-supporting, and last, not least, manly. The Swadeshi movement ought to teach us how to organise our capital, our resources, our labour, our energies and our talents, to the greatest good of all Indians, irrespective of creed, colour or caste. It ought to unite us, our religious and denominational differences notwithstanding. In my opinion, Swadeshi ought to be the common religion of the United India" (Desai 208).

Meanwhile, Sandip Babu persisted with his Swadeshi nationalism, and an abrupt gathering of his supporters entered Bimala's neighbourhood and started raising *Bande Mataram* slogans, and initially, she was not impressed by Sandip's demeanour, but once he commenced his speech, the masses were swayed by his fiery declarations. He was getting transformed in Bimala's perception, and she fixates her gaze upon him, and now she thinks of her as a manifestation of Bengal's womanhood and perceives Sandip as standing up for Bengal's cause. The conscience becomes clear now that Bimala has demonstrated her allegiance towards Sandip's partisan nationalistic narrative rather than towards her husband's idealistic nationalism. Sandip starts his confabulation with Nikhil, and he critiques Sandip's patriotic theories as hypnotic texts and he vehemently defends the charges against him by saying that, "What you call hypnotic texts I call truth. I truly believe my country to be my God. I worship Humanity. God manifests Himself both in man and in his country" (26). Sandip advocates for his crusade by proudly proclaiming that God was on his side, and it is not incongruous to fill our country's coffers with pillaged goods. Bimala vociferously justifies Sandip by mentioning that colonisers have a long history of pillaging goods from colonised countries. Nikhil juxtaposes this by asking, if God manifests Himself in other countries, how can he hate those countries? Sandip justifies his rationale by quipping, "Hate is also an adjunct of worship. Arujuna won Mahadeva's favour by wrestling with him" (26). Sandip constructed his ideological narrative through Hindu mythology to substantiate his reasoning.

Nikhil underpins idealism by showing his frailties while contemplating his potential impoverishment, incarceration, demise and also losing his beloved Bimala. But he prepares himself to confront these adversities with tenacity. Bimala admires in men the trait of being ferocious and unscrupulous, and perceives meticulous men as weak. This heightened revolutionary fervour prevailing in Bengal has made him very unpopular, and the rejection of the fanatic impulsiveness gives him a sort of disgruntled feeling. He opines, "To try to give our infatuation a higher place than Truth is a sign of inherent slavishness" (32). According to him, nationalism and patriotic emotions should be based on the foundation of Truth, and Sandip's percipience is that there should be some imagination to stimulate emotions and galvanize the people

along the lines of the Swadeshi movement. Nikhil firmly believes that the hypnotic impetus given to any movement might suggest a sense of insufficiency pertaining to self-reliance or self-government.

Sandip's stern acquiescence is that a nation's sovereignty does not become one's sole right just because one is born, but needs to be taken by force. He believes that every individual has a natural right to possess, and acquisitiveness is men's natural instinct. He staunchly advocates that virtuous ideas are for meek creatures, and nature desires those who forcefully enslave her. He critiques those who proclaim self-restraint and preach sermons in the veil of modesty, who live in a preposterous world. Sandip goes a step further and says that individuals like his associate live this kind of life, and they harbour an obsession with death. Nikhil intercedes, condemning Sandip's ideology by mentioning that the true strength of a man lies in the capacity for renunciation. Nikhil proudly asserts that, "We are the flesh-eaters of the world" (37). He proclaims that his ideals and his vehement passion will win over women's hearts, making an insidious reference to Bimala. He calls Nikhil a "metaphor-monger" (37). They are far removed from the adverse realities of the practical world. Sandip passionately affirms that, "women were not created for these pale creatures-these lotus-eaters of idealism" (38). Now it is implied that Sandip's ideology is clearly against the idealistic nationalism which is espoused by Nikhil.

Nikhil's former tutor, Chandranath Babu, initiates a discourse on the Swadeshi movement and defends the approach adopted by Nikhil. He is a man of inhibition and articulates his views on nationalism, "Nations which have got on in the world have done so by action, not by ebullition" (50). He criticises how Sandip conducts himself by inciting the passions of the populace. Sandip quips that passion is the guiding force, and he could not come to terms when Nikhil calls it untrue. Nikhil retaliates by asserting that the passion for truth should be accompanied by the truth of restraint. As he is an individual who prioritises inclusiveness, he wants Bimala to participate in the intellectual discourse. He assertively justifies that man is more than science, and he contends that Sandip finds truth from science teachers rather than from his own inner self.

Sandip's theory of life asserts that the Greatness of action is tantamount to cruelty, and he proudly proclaims that he is a fervent preacher concerning injustice. He defends the practice of injustice by assuming it is the only fire which keeps on burning to salvage itself from turning to ashes, and justifies that a nation should perpetuate injustice if it is to survive from getting into the junkyard of the world. He underscores the passion for his nation by professing, "We must have our religion and also our nationalism; our Bhagavadgita and also our Bande Mataram" (72). He proclaims that people have shouted that Mussulmans are their brethren, it has now become evident that people are the masters and the Mussulmans have to be repressed entirely. Nikhil's inclusive, idealistic nationalism emphasizes that Muslims are an imperative part of a United India. During the height of the Swadeshi fervour, a poor individual, Panchu, was penalized a hundred rupees for procuring foreign clothes by his

zamindar, Harish Kundu, and he pleaded with his zamindar, but was threatened with burning the clothes but he blurted out. The zamindar felt insulted, and he got the clothes burnt, and the people shouted Bande Mataram, and Sandip exalted, “Brothers! This is the first funeral pyre in token of Swadeshi vow. These are sacred ashes” (98). Now, the Swadeshi movement has taken a violent turn. Then everyone’s eyes turned on Nikhil’s estates, where foreign sugar and salt had not been banished, and the people were angry with him, and his own estate officers were feeling embarrassed. In this context, an ironic statement from Bimala, “My husband still his Indian-made knife. But this dull, milk-and-water Swadeshi of his never appealed to us” (88). The entire populace was emotionally charged and was blindfolded to the inclusive nationalistic cause.

The research paper concludes with an analysis of the juxtaposition between the idealistic nationalism promoted by Nikhil and the militant nationalism championed by Sandip, along with the subsequent events that transpired during the Swadeshi movement. This movement played a crucial role in the independence movement and contributed significantly to shaping the discourse on nationalism.

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EMMETT TILL IN POPULAR MEDIA: PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND DISCOURSE

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Abstract: The research article makes a discourse analysis of Emmett Till's case through the lens of frame theory. Framing is a process by which media and political elites define and construct issues or events. The researcher uses frame theory to examine how media influenced public opinion and perception of Emmett Till's murder and trial, tracing from 1955 to the present. Emmett Till was a 14- year-old African American boy from Chicago, Illinois, who was abducted and brutally murdered in Money, Mississippi, on August 28, 1955, because he allegedly wolf whistled at a white woman in a store in the Mississippi Delta town of Money. The acquittal of Till's murderers by an all-white jury sparked widespread outrage and protests, drawing national attention to racial injustice in the United States of America. The researcher highlights and scrutinises how different frames were employed by the popular media to shape public perception and discourse in the Emmett Till case.

Keywords: Discourse Analysis, Frame Theory, Popular Media, Public Opinion and Perception.

Objective

The paper attempts to examine how the mainstream press frames the issues surrounding Emmett Till's case by analyzing regional media outlets, particularly Mississippi newspapers. It also scrutinises how framing plays a crucial role in public perception and discourse on Emmett Till from a regional and national perspective.

Print Media

Print media is one of the oldest and fundamental forms of mass communication. Newspapers, weeklies, monthlies, magazines, and journals are the channels of Print media. Print media classically refers to newspapers, which have the advantage of making a lasting impact on the minds of readers, with more in-depth reporting and analysis. Print media's physical nature offers a concrete experience that often primes readers for higher retention rates and a strong emotional connection. Despite the rise of digital media, print media remains significant due to its credibility and ability to target precise demographics effectively.

Framing

According to Olasunkanmi Arowolo, Gregory Bateson initially proposed the idea of "Framing" in 1972. Gregory Bateson was a linguist, visual anthropologist, social scientist, cyberneticist, semiotician, and English anthropologist. Bateson's research on framing, particularly his 1955 paper "A Theory of Play and Fantasy," examined how people construct mental frames to comprehend and interpret events. The reader's perceptions and interactions with information, including media content, are influenced by these frames. Frame

theory posits that the media construct the frame by delivering news items with predetermined and limited contextualisation. The term 'framing' in media studies refers to the process by which information is presented and received by the mass audience. Framing involves magnifying certain aspects of an issue or event, while minimising or omitting others. Framing significantly influenced public opinion and perception on the events preceding Emmett Till's murder and trial. In media and communication studies, news framing influences how consumers perceive and comprehend information. News framing is a potent technique that affects how information is presented to the mass audience. Scholars, media professionals, and consumers can critically evaluate media narratives by understanding framing tactics.

In choosing and displaying news, editors, newsroom staff, and broadcasters play an important part in shaping political reality. Readers learn not only about a given issue, but also about how much importance is to be attached to that issue from the amount of information in a news story till its placement. In reflecting what candidates are saying during a campaign, the mass media may well determine the important issues—that is, the media may set the “agenda” of the campaign. (McCombs and Shaw)

Maxwell McCombs, an American journalism scholar, and Donald Shaw, an American journalist, historian, and theorist of Media and communications, first put forth the theory of the Agenda Setting Function of the Mass Media in 1972 in *Public Opinion Quarterly* (E. McCombs and L. Shaw). The theory highlights the role the media plays in determining audience awareness and priorities. It asserts that the media may not influence our thoughts, but it does influence the subjects of our contemplation. Media outlets may successfully set the public agenda by prioritising public discussion of particular topics by concentrating on specific themes and subjects.

Visual Framing

“More than 60 years ago, when racial segregation was still the norm in many states, one grieving mother, Mamie Elizabeth Till-Mobley, understood the power of imagery to expose America’s racism” (Photo). In the context of mass communication, ‘visual framing’ is the term used to describe how a photograph’s presentation, cropping, and framing can profoundly impact the audience’s opinions and perceptions. Immediately after witnessing the distorted face and body of her only son, Emmett Till, the inconsolable mother, Mamie Louis Till, disseminated to the media and publications a dreadful monochrome image of her son's disfigured body. Mamie challenges and makes a remarkable decision at the A.A. Rayner’s funeral home “Let the world see what I’ve seen”(Mobley and Benson 139). Bradley explained that if Americans saw personally the cruelties of segregation, they would be more inclined to support the civil rights struggle. Bradley was able to seek help from African American magazines, despite the fact that the mainstream media rejected the image as unsuitable for publishing. The case’s archive of images has a distinct history, starting with the notorious postmortem image and culminating with the glamorous portraits of Carolyn Bryant and her aesthetically pleasing family. Although lovely images of the Till family were available, they swiftly vanished

from the general public and were replaced with far less appealing photographic proof.

As we hope to illustrate, the visual played a profoundly important role in conveying and creating public opinion about the principals involved in the case... That said, the Mississippi press never published the pictures of Till's mutilated body nor yet the even gorier crime- scene photograph of Till's naked corpse that, despite being entered into official evidence, has never surfaced. (Houck et al. 8)

The Black press, notably Jet Magazine, published the first widely circulated public report on Emmett Till's murder. Moses Newson and Simeon Booker of the Tri-State Defender and Jet Magazine respectively reported broadly on the occurrence, including the open casket funeral. The Civil Rights movement was sparked by the publication of the horrendous photograph of Till's distorted cadaver in Jet. With the support of magazines like Jet and the Tri-State Defender, The Black media significantly contributed to the sensationalism of the Emmett Till case. After his mother insisted on an open casket, David Jackson took a picture of Emmett Till's corpse inside the glass-topped coffin. The unedited images of Emmett Till's mangled and scarred body, taken at his open-casket viewing, were initially published in Jet magazine, while major news outlets disregarded the horrific appearance. Subsequent to many days, the raw photograph from Jet Magazine evolved into an iconic representation, emblematic of the Jim Crow era.

In the PBS documentary *Eyes on the Prize* related to the Civil Rights movement, Charles Diggs, a former Representative from Detroit, described the Jet images as unequivocally one of the most remarkable media artefacts of the past fifty years, as they evoked significant emotional response among African Americans nationwide ("Eyes on the Prize; Interview With Charles Coles Diggs Jr."). Bradley insisted, "The whole nation had to bear witness to this ... if people opened the pages of Jet Magazine and the Chicago Defender, if other people could see it with their own eyes" (Mobley and Benson 139). Historian David Halberstam claimed that the lynching of Emmett Till was the first historic broadcasting event of the civil rights era, primarily due to the images of his grotesque visage. The Jackson Daily News, the foremost daily publication of Jackson, Mississippi's capital, included an affectionate initial image of Till dressed in his Sunday best, positioned beside his mother, highlighting a significant visual contrast. The abduction and murder were so heartbreaking and heinous that even Patterson, the executive secretary of the Citizens' Council, described them as "very regrettable" (Houck).

Selection and Salience in the Mass Media

Framing encompasses selecting which information to include and which to omit, and highlighting specific details to make them more prominent or pertinent to the media audience. The headlines of *The Greenwood Commonwealth* highlighted geography, age, and race: "Chicago Negro Youth Abducted by Three White Men at Money" (Houck). *The Greenwood Commonwealth* is the primary newspaper in Leflore County, the native of

Bryant and Milam. The day after Emmett Till's kidnapping, *The Greenwood Commonwealth* published one of the initial accounts on the events that purportedly transpired at the Wright residence in the early hours of August 28, 1955.

The newspaper report indicates that Bryant had previously been interrogated and incarcerated by George Smith and John Ed Cothran, the Leflore County Sheriff and his deputy. Subsequently, Milam arrived around midday and confessed to the abduction of Till. A fisher boy discovered Emmett Till's body in the muddy Tallahatchie River three days after the kidnapping. On the last day of August 1955, *The Greenwood Commonwealth* reported "a bullet hole in his head." The article also reported that the corpse was recognised by Mose Wright, who had been taken to Pecan Point by Leflore County Deputy Sheriff John Ed Cothran. A report in the McComb Enterprise Journal, a notably racist publication from southwestern Mississippi, quoted an NAACP spokesperson asserting that the case seemed to "qualify as a lynching" (Houck), which was likely more detrimental to white Mississippians.

Racial Bias in Regional Media

Media framing impacted the audience's perception and identified racial biases in news coverage of the funeral service and court trial of Emmett Till. Mississippi media played a key role in fostering the public sentiment that allowed J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant to escape punishment during Emmett Till's trial. To comprehend the rhetorical progression of the next events, it is imperative to analyse the initial five consecutive days of Mississippi's press reporting on the Till case. "Mississippi media was not a monolith; there was indeed some diversity of opinion on the case" (Houck et al. 7). The Controversy over the incident, which took place in Bryant's store in Money between Emmett Till and Carolyn Bryant, has multiple versions in the regional press. Davis W. Houck, in the article "Killing Emmett", states that the media was significant to the Till's murder and the subsequent courtroom trial. The five-day trial occurred predominantly in the little county seat of Sumner, rather than in the local newspapers of Mississippi. Because of this, newspapers within and surrounding the Mississippi Delta towns wrote about the death, the trial, and what happened afterward. They defined, revised, and then justified what happened.

A newspaper from the state's southeast, the Laurel Leader-Call, reported Emmett Till passed "a remark displeasing to Mrs. Bryant." On the other hand, the Delta Democrat Times was printed in the town of Greenville in the Southern Delta, stated that Till "apparently said something to offend Bryant's wife in a small store on Sunday night." Among the several articles discussing the issue, the Delta Democrat Times had already tactfully taken sides with the Mississippians. The Delta Democrat Times states there was no indication of Emmett Till following the kidnapping, making it a "mysterious disappearance" (Houck). Some newspapers say that Till said goodbye to the woman with a nod as he exited the store, offending the Bryants. In addition, the case prompted editorializing in Mississippi newspapers for the first time. The editorial from the Clarkdale Press Register asserts that the individuals

responsible for the abduction and murder of teenage Emmett Till, a handicapped youth, have significantly tarnished the reputations of Mississippi and the Southern region.

The Delta Democrat-Times' headline read as follows: Mississippi Governor Hugh Lawson White (1952–1956) requests extensive investigation into Greenwood Kidnapping and Murder. Gov.White urged the district attorneys in both Tallahatchie and Leflore counties to conduct a thorough and unbiased inquiry during a press conference in Jackson. Mississippi condemns such behaviour by its residents, and that cannot be tolerated. The people accused of the crime are in jail, White told the NAACP, expressing conciliation, "I am confident that the courts will fulfil their responsibilities in prosecuting cases." Mississippi does not support such behaviour.

The first several days of newspaper coverage reveals a sympathetic threatment of Emmett Till: he was not the "wolf- whistling", "husky", "northern Negro rapist" out to assault white southern womanhood but a misguided "Negro youth" on a "vacation"...this treatment changed literally overnight with angry comments made by the NAACP's execution secretary(later named as executive director), Roy Wilkins, and by the murdered boy's grieving mother, Mamie Till. (Houck et al. 7)

A few newspaper articles in Mississippi sounded sympathetic to Till and his family in the initial days following fishermen's discovery of his damaged body in the Tallahatchie River. However, after Till's mother defiantly opened her son's casket at his funeral in Chicago and after NAACP Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins made disparaging remarks criticizing Mississippi law enforcement and calling for justice, Houck and Grindy discovered that press descriptions of Till and his family shifted from being kind to critical. Southern press editors started to hint that attempted rape rather than boyish foolishness might have caused Carolyn Bryant's husband's rage.

Conclusion

The Regional press in the state of Mississippi played a vital role in shaping the Americans' and African Americans' perceptions and discourse around the events surrounding Emmett Till's abduction, murder and trial in Mississippi. Framing proved to be a key tool used by the print media to set the agenda surrounding the Emmett Till case and to gauge its impact on the regional and national audience. Framing and structuring of the news made the audience in the United States of America become more critical consumers of media and identify racial biases in news coverage of Emmett Till's lynching and court trial. Mississippi newspapers significantly contributed to the public conversation around Emmett Till's lynching. The unedited image of Emmett Till's mangled visage and decayed corpse in *Jet Magazine* became emblematic and canonical representations of the Jim Crow era, illustrating the profound influence of visual framing on popular perception and conversation. The lynching of Emmett Till became the inaugural significant television event of the civil rights movement, chiefly because to the horrific image of Till's mutilated face published in *Jet Magazine*.

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**SLEEPING THROUGH THE PATRIARCHY: GENDER, APATHY,
AND LATE-CAPITALIST RESISTANCE IN OTTESSA MOSHFEGH'S
*MY YEAR OF REST AND RELAXATION***

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Abstract: This paper uses gender studies to analyze Ottessa Moshfegh's *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, exploring the protagonist's extended sleep as a passive rebellion against postfeminist societal gender roles. The protagonist escapes emotional labour, physical upkeep, and social expectations through pharmaceutical sedation. Rejecting the postfeminist ideal of self-sufficiency, she defiantly embraces apathy and withdrawal. This paper claims her descent into sleep is symbolic, not just pathological; a protest against the commodification of femininity and mental health. Utilizing the ideas of Susan Bordo, Angela McRobbie, and Sara Ahmed, this paper analyses gendered exhaustion, neoliberalism, and the anti-heroine. This study unpacks Moshfegh's critique of empowerment rhetoric in late capitalism by analyzing the protagonist's resistance to societal roles. The novel's dark satire forces a reconsideration of the politics of rest, the attractiveness of detachment, and the revolutionary possibilities of inaction.

Keywords: Gender Roles, Post Feminism, Apathy, Withdrawal, Neoliberalism, Commodification and Detachment.

Moshfegh's novel, *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*, analyzes the challenges feminist resistance faces against the appropriation of empowerment by capitalist values of productivity and appearance. This novel, published in 2018 and set in New York City in the early 2000s, recounts the story of a young woman who, using prescription medications and under the care of an uninterested psychiatrist, sleeps for an entire year. Instead of healing or self-discovery, she strives for erasure: a total shutdown of physical and emotional response to escape societal expectations.

This paper claims that the protagonist's year of sleep represents a symbolic rejection of postfeminist ideals and neoliberal femininity. Apathy, silence, and detachment embody her passive resistance. Her rejection of emotional labor, self-care, and relationships undermines traditional views of successful women. Moshfegh's critique of postfeminism and the novel's portrayal of rest as resistance, not self-care, are analyzed in this study through the protagonist's behavior.

Methodology

This paper adopts a qualitative literary analysis approach, employing close reading techniques to examine key narrative elements, character development, and thematic structures in *My Year of Rest and Relaxation*. Feminist literary theory underpins this analysis, with a specific focus on postfeminism, neoliberal critique, and affect theory. The analysis centers on how the protagonist's actions and internal dialogue connect to broader cultural discussions of gender, productivity, and identity.

Angela McRobbie, Susan Bordo, and Sara Ahmed's research into gender performance, emotional labor, and body politics provides the theoretical framework for interpreting Moshfegh's novel. Connecting the novel to contemporary debates on feminist resistance and the commodification of wellness, this study examines the symbolic and political implications of the protagonist's year-long sleep. Integrating textual evidence and scholarly discourse, the paper presents a sophisticated reading of the novel as a critique and a subversion of dominant gender norms.

Postfeminism and the Neoliberal Woman

According to Angela McRobbie, postfeminism, a discourse suggesting feminism's objectives are met, centers on individual empowerment via consumerism. The ideal woman in this instance is a successful, attractive, independent woman who always seeks self-improvement. Capitalist values are promoted through feminist language, recasting beauty routines, fitness regimes, and therapy as self-improvement tools.

Moshfegh's central character is the embodiment of a postfeminist image—conventionally beautiful, thin, affluent, and highly educated. Despite appearances, she is utterly devoid of fulfillment. Her emotional distance reveals unhappiness with a seemingly perfect life devoid of purpose. She selects self-erasure over self-care and self-improvement. Her experience sleeping for a year challenges the wellness culture and its claims.

In stepping back from life, she defies the neoliberal emphasis on productivity and emotional openness. Her refusal of work, therapy, and social norms challenges the idea that women can be truly independent in a system that profits from all aspects of their lives. Her response to participation is complete disengagement, rather than claiming empowerment.

Sleep as Feminist Resistance

Within a culture fixated on constant activity and presence, the protagonist's sleep becomes an act of defiance. Inert and withdrawn, she rejects the emotional, physical, and artistic labour expected of women. She fights using sleep as her weapon. It lets her escape the burden of emotional labour, especially when dealing with Reva, her best friend. Reva's need for validation and self-doubt exposes the pressures faced by women in a postfeminist world. The narrator's refusal to offer comfort or participate, despite its cruelty, highlights the societal assumption that women should manage their emotions.

In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed highlights how feminist work often necessitates feeling what others would prefer not to feel (171). Moshfegh's main character is incapable of feeling. Her emotional detachment exposes the unreasonable emotional expectations placed upon women. As an act of rebellion, she seeks refuge in the stillness and slumber.

Her hibernation acts as both a self-destructive and subversive act. It rejects the neoliberal expectation of constant self-improvement, availability, and emotional productivity. Her stillness, her inaction, and refusal to perform constitute her resistance. Within a framework where action defines agency, her passivity constitutes resistance.

The Anti-Heroine and Emotional Detachment

Selfish, unkind, and emotionally detached, the protagonist is an unapologetically unlikeable anti-heroine. This rejection of palatability constitutes a feminist action. Traditional feminine ideals are challenged by her resistance to being the caring, selfless woman.

Reva, conversely, finds validation in beauty, diets, and relationships. Societal expectations heavily influence her. The narrator undermines postfeminist ambitions by ridiculing her attempts. Moshfegh notes, “Reva was obsessed with being seen, and I was obsessed with disappearing” (Moshfegh 154). The narrator’s rejection of performative femininity is reinforced by this contrast.

Moshfegh leverages this dynamic to examine the necessity of ambition or self-improvement as the sole expression of agency. Instead of weakness, the protagonist’s passivity is a display of power. She’s purposefully refusing to care as an act of resistance. This subversion of heroism questions the anticipated narrative structures and morality in stories about women.

Mental Health, Medication, and Commodification

The novel examines how mental healthcare is increasingly tied to commercial interests and medical diagnoses. Dr. Tuttle, the protagonist’s psychiatrist, embodies a system prioritising medication above genuine care. These medications, frequently prescribed without sufficient care, only mask the problem instead of solving it.

In *Unbearable Weight*, Susan Bordo contends that eating disorders, such as anorexia, mirror societal pressures on women to manage their physiques (185). In the same vein, the narrator’s drug-induced sleep symbolizes a wish to escape gender roles. Her desire for oblivion stems not from weakness, but from the lack of authenticity in her assigned roles.

Her behavior is better understood as a philosophical stance than a cry for help. By withdrawing, she criticizes the commodification of healing and uncovers the illusion of choice within the medicalization of femininity. Discipline and rebellion are both found within the body in this instance. Instead of conforming, the narrator uses drugs to actively challenge the values of wellness they are supposed to promote.

Conclusion

My Year of Rest and Relaxation challenges common ideas of female agency, wellness, and empowerment; this is the conclusion and what the future holds. Postfeminist culture and its neoliberal demands on women are critiqued in the novel through the lens of its apathetic, self-abnegating protagonist. In this instance, sleep is not an escape; rather, it is a protest against emotional labor, beauty standards, and social expectations.

The narrator’s choice of passivity, emotional numbness, and isolation highlights capitalism’s constraints on empowerment. Moshfegh’s novel challenges the understanding of resistance and the radical nature of refusal. Assumptions about female empowerment are challenged by the protagonist’s inaction, which suggests a feminist approach focusing on absence, emotional distance, and indifference.

The intersection of Moshfegh's aesthetic of negation with trends in autofiction and the contemporary anti-heroine warrants future scholarly attention. Works like Rachel Cusk's *Outline* trilogy and Sheila Heti's *How Should a Person Be?* can be compared to this and they could expand the discourse on gendered apathy and resistance. Furthermore, this framework can investigate how narratives of rest and withdrawal challenge current models of feminist activism within the context of digital burnout and wellness capitalism.

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A STUDY OF EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL RESILIENCE IN DOT HUTCHISON'S *THE BUTTERFLY GARDEN*

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Abstract: Resilience is essential for recovering from physical or mental setbacks. Emotional and mental resilience, in particular, play a huge role in the psychological survival of victims due to captivity. Dot Hutchison portrays the brutalities faced by the captives in the novel. By harnessing the Trauma Theory and Psychological Realism, this study showcases how a character suffering from the horrors of being held as a captive enforces themselves by building internal walls to progress forward in life through narration, silence and empathy. It tells that survival in captivity is not about physical endurance, but it involves emotional resilience amid their captivity, self-identity, memory and emotions. The outward appearance of the place where the victims were kept as captives symbolizes the interplay between mental suppression and emotional strength. It allows an individual to endure resistance and finally reclaim their suppressed and lost voices in the shadows. This paper explores the survival of the protagonist of the novel, Maya and other victims who are held as captives in a place referred to as the Garden in *The Butterfly Garden* by Dot Hutchison.

Keywords: Silence, Memories, Emotions, Empathy and Voices.

“Resilience is not what happens to you. It’s how you react to, respond to and recover from what happens to you” says Jeffrey Gitomer. *The Butterfly Garden* is a psychological thriller by Dot Hutchison. Hutchison is an American woman writer known for young adult fiction. Hutchison’s *The Butterfly Garden* tells excruciating tales of women being held captives in a place referred as a garden by a man known as gardener. The young women who are abducted are reared and treated as butterflies and they are set to endure prolonged trauma physically and mentally. In between the horrors of captivity lies a deep exploration of human resilience, an emotional and mental fortitude that throbs quietly underneath the surface of survival. Maya is the central figure of the narration who foretells the tale of captivity to their rescuers and also serves as an axle for rest of the confined girls. Maya’s guarded demeanor and strategic defiance reveal that resistance can take many shapes. Her ability to lead and protect others, while confronting her own past, speaks to the heart of resilience. It does not overshadow her fear but it tells us about her strength to endure and adapt to any situation. The depiction of garden’s claustrophobic beauty tells about the need for survival through the lives of captives in the garden.

The ability to withstand or to overcome any difficulty is referred as resilience. According to American Psychological Association, resilience is a process of adapting to tough situations or hardships, especially through mental, emotional and behavioral versatility and adjustment to external and internal

adversities. Among the four main types of resilience, the paper discusses the Mental Resilience and Emotional Resilience impact on the protagonist Maya in *The Butterfly Garden*. Ability to adapt to any kind of changes and uncertainty, remaining flexible and calm during a crisis or distress through emotional and behavioral flexibility is referred as Mental resilience. People with mental fortitude faces the problems head on as they grow stronger in the midst of troubles. Maya makes herself thrive under the problems through her mental fortitude. It can be seen throughout the novel, for instance in the following lines, she absorbs the immense pressure of being overwhelmed by the oppressor using her calmness. “I took a deep breath and forced my muscles to unclench. I curled and uncurled my fists, with each uncurl I released a bit more tension from my back” (17). Maya is being forced to get to tattoo on her back by the Gardener without her consent for which she responds silently, curtailing her anger and pain. Emotional resilience allows an individual to regulate one’s own emotions during a stressful situation. Mostly the person will try to overlay with the inner life. The individual will have a sense of optimism to guide through the adversity as he/she feels the difficult situations will not last forever.

This paper traverses through the life of Maya in Hutchison’s *The Butterfly Garden* through her narration and her social attachments, revealing escapism is not the true form of survival, and emotional and mental resilience serves as a tool to overcome the traumatic past to move on in life.

Hutchison’s *The Butterfly Garden* symbolizes a psychological prison artificially created to held captives, physically tormenting them by stripping away their identity. Moreover, it gives the victims a false beauty to overlap reality. The garden creates a false reality to conceal the horrors of being held as captives. “Beauty loses its meaning when you’re surrounded by too much of it” (34). When an individual feels less comfortable with themselves they tend to appreciate their surroundings very less. “A man-made cliff rose above us, more greenery and trees alive on its flat top, and the trees on the edges just brushed the sides of the glass roof that loomed impossibly far away” (12), being held as a captive, Maya does not feel gracious to admire her surroundings as it was built to confine them, they are by restricting their freedom. The Perpetrator of these gruesome crimes is addressed in the novel as the gardener. Gardener is a person who generally takes care of the surroundings of a house by protecting plants and trees from pests, and invading animals. But the gardener in *The Butterfly Garden* portrays himself as a man with authority over his victims. He is giving new representation to the young girls who he has captured by tattooing them and gives them false identity to supersede their real identity. “The gardener called me Maya” (25). The captives are given specific names like Maya has received hers, as well as a different butterfly tattoo on their backs. Being in captive for a longer duration makes them take their given names as the real ones. The control over the captives leads them to strain their emotional strength as they are made to lead a life of uncertainty. Death hovers around them in the garden “I should have recognized the depression in her voice, the edge to her words, but that was something else the Garden numbed you to. Like beauty, desperation and fear were common as breathing” (42). The girls are

monitored constantly which thereby curtails their freedom and forced to live in a foreign environment which is filled with doubt and despair. “There wasn’t a reason in the world I couldn’t spend the night wandering around. Sometimes the illusion of freedom, of choice, was more painful than captivity” (117). The traumatic past seeps inside an individual when he/she seems to be out of it, but the reality is different.

Cathy Caruth states that trauma is an abandoned experience which comes back to haunt an individual in the form of flashbacks and fragmented memories. Psychological realism gains its limelight during the early 20th century. It emphasises on the perspectives and impulses of a character who does something with ulterior motivation. Through this literary genre, the protagonist of the novel, Maya and her narrative style, dilemmas, internal drives are analysed. Maya recollects her stay in the Butterfly Garden as a captive and shares her experience in the form of emotionally detached fragmented narration to the FBI agents who are investigating about the gruesome incident. “Some people stay broken. Some pick up the pieces and put them back together with all the sharp edges showing” (74). These lines reflect the reality of Survivors carrying painful memories into their future, these may sometimes be visible and remains painful. Maya has to grasp the reality of her trauma when she is outside the garden. In her interrogation, she presents her fragmented narration which is a result of suffering from a traumatic past of being held as a captive in the garden. Survival does not end with escaping the captivity, as the trauma lingers even after escaping from pressing situations. The survivors’ experience of being held as a captive reveal that trauma is not confined to momentary violence rather it is sustained by an individual over a period of time in silence and the recovery of the individuals begin only when their narratives replace captivity. “No, of course not. People are dead, lives are ruined, and I’m sure you were very inconvenienced at having to leave your football game” (8). Maya detaches herself emotionally from reality by creating sarcasm around her response to others. Above said quotes dwells in the exchange between her investigators and herself, when asked about her home further she replies “I’m not sure if it’s there anymore” (8). Cathy Caruth’s theory on trauma as a portrayal of Unclaimed Experience is aligned with Maya in *The Butterfly Garden*. “My secrets are old friends; I would feel like a poor friend if I abandoned them now (114). These lines picturise the mindset of Maya who is asked to reveal herself to others. She is making use of her memories as a coping mechanism for erasing her memories.

“You seem to have this strange image of me as a lost child, like I’ve just been thrown on the side of the road like garbage, or roadkill, but kids like me? We’re not lost. We may be the only ones who never are. We always know exactly where we are and where we can go. And where we can’t” (91). Maya does not portray herself as the helpless victim as she is a run away from home and lives a life as an independent woman. She refuses to be a victim. She showcases her emotional resilience, and self-awareness defies to be defined as an individual with traumatic past. Her voice becomes an armour and a weapon against the indifferent world that tries to silence her.

According to Judith Herman, resilience has the ability to adapt and recover from trauma. Further, it is perpetually undertaken through the reconstruction of identity and relationships. “The emotional support that traumatized people seek from family, lovers, and close friends takes many forms, and it changes during the course of resolution of the trauma. In the immediate aftermath of the trauma, rebuilding of some minimal form of trust is the primary task” (Trauma and Recovery 69, 70). Maya has a very good relationship with her fellow captives, and spending time with them gives her a strong emotional bond which she uses as a coping mechanism. Maya’s emotional resilience is not concerned with tolerating the pain caused due to the sufferings in the garden rather she gets hold of her life to live with it. It turns into her strength to endure uncertain situations in life without losing herself. Further she reflects, “My life’s work, and you think I won’t recognize a broken child when she sits in front of me?” She inclines her head to concede the point, then bites her lip and winces. Not entirely accurate. Let’s call me a shadow child, overlooked rather than broken. I’m the teddy bear gathering dust bunnies under the bed, not the one-legged soldier” (37). Maya shows her staunch resilience towards the investigators through her narration even when she is portrayed as a victim she refuses it with sarcasm. Even the emotional resilience of Maya can be seen between her navigation with the gardener during his psychological manipulations. “I guess I grew so used to the horrors of the Garden, I forgot how awful Outside could be” (245), it showcases how reality is being diversified by false perception, even though Maya continuous to fight for herself and others through the power of emotional endurance.

Narration about trauma undergone by victims is showcased through the life of Maya in the novel. Caruth’s theory suggests that trauma is processed retroactively—through storytelling. Maya’s narration is not just a recounting of events; it is a form of healing. By telling her story, she reclaims herself in the real world. The act of narration becomes transformative, allows Maya to move from being a victim to a survivor. In her stay in the garden as well as in the real-world, Maya meets various individuals who have shaped her life. Being a runaway from home during the age of adolescence, Maya is strong willed to live as an independent woman and never succumbed under pressure in stressful situations. Maya forges her real name and lives as Inara Morrissey while staying with Sophie and the other girls who stayed in the apartment. Maya is the name given by the Gardener; he also instils false identity by tattooing a butterfly on her back. After getting rescued from the garden, Maya gets reunited with Sophia Madsen who was once held captive in the garden and later escaped from there. Being a victim herself, Sophia traverses her life with the hope of reuniting with her daughters. Maya finds herself in the motherly care of Sophi, and mourns the loss of Lyonette and other girls in the garden. “Sophia gently tweaks Inara’s nose. “You’re one of my girls too” (274), throughout the novel Maya was keeping certain things in silence and it comes to a conclusion only after meeting Sophia. Through the maternal care of Sophie Maya reclaims her real identity with the name Samira Grantaire. Narration plays a huge role in

transforming Maya's trauma into testimony of pain and sufferings endured by her in the garden.

The Butterfly Garden is not entirely a story of horrendous incidents in a garden rather it presents the narrative of resilience through the life of the protagonist Maya. By making use of Cathy Caruth's Trauma theory and Judith Herman's theoretical frameworks, it reveals how trauma can be endured through resilience and transformed in the end. The journey of Maya showcases the testament of her survival through the lens of fragment narratives, voices and tells further that emotional and mental resilience remain as the fortitude to overcome the trauma. To overcome such rigorous incidents or events, the survivor should face the traumatic past and be ready to speak about it, so that the person will ascend over it. Maya's life journey is a fictional one but in reality, it serves as a countermeasure against such uncertain events, and imparts a powerful reminder that even in the darkest period of life human spirit can endure the adversity and heal themselves through resilience.

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SCAFFOLDING TECHNICAL WRITING FOR ESL POLYTECHNIC LEARNERS: PROCESS GENRE PEDAGOGY THROUGH EDUBLOG INTERVENTION

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Abstract: It has been vital for polytechnic students to improve their technical writing skills in the context of teaching English as a second language. This study looks at how ESL learners' technical writing abilities are affected by a process-genre pedagogical approach that is supplemented by digital scaffolding via chatbot-assisted edublogs. The intervention, which is based on sociocultural theory, genre-based instruction, and process writing, uses task-based language teaching (TBLT) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL) to provide focused assistance. Results demonstrate notable gains in writing performance, learner autonomy, and engagement through the use of a quasi-experimental design that includes pre- and post-tests, rubric-based assessments, and qualitative reflections. This emphasises the efficacy of digital scaffolding and process-genre integration in technical education.

Keywords: Process-Genre Pedagogy, Scaffolding, Edublogs, Chatbot, CALL and TBLT.

1. Introduction

The globalization of technical fields and the predominance of English as a lingua franca in professional environments have heightened the necessity for polytechnic graduates to possess proficient writing skills. In Indian ESL classrooms, polytechnic students are frequently tasked with composing workplace-specific genres such as user manuals, technical reports, and evaluation documents. These writing tasks demand not only linguistic accuracy but also an understanding of genre, pragmatic competence, and discourse conventions. Traditional ESL writing classes at polytechnics have typically emphasized the composition of academic essays or paragraphs, often neglecting the genre-specific requirements of the workplace. This misalignment poses challenges for students transitioning from academic settings to professional environments due to a lack of appropriate skills. To address this issue, a pedagogical model is required that integrates process-oriented writing, explicit genre instruction, and scaffolding tailored to learner needs. This study examines the impact of a process-genre approach, augmented by chatbot-assisted edublogs, on the technical writing skills of ESL polytechnic students. The intervention aims to enhance not only technical writing proficiency but also learner autonomy and engagement through the use of digital tools and the promotion of collaborative, reflective practice.

2. Research Objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of a process-genre pedagogical approach, scaffolded by chatbot-assisted edublogs, in improving the technical writing proficiency of ESL polytechnic learners. To examine the influence of digital scaffolding on learner autonomy and engagement during technical writing tasks in an ESL polytechnic context.

3. Research Questions

How does the integration of process-genre pedagogy with chatbot-assisted edublogs affect the technical writing performance of ESL polytechnic learners? In what ways does digital scaffolding shape learner autonomy and engagement in technical writing among ESL polytechnic students?

4. Literature Review

4.1 Process-Genre Pedagogy: Theoretical Underpinnings

The process-genre approach integrates two pivotal concepts in the domain of writing instruction. The process approach emphasizes the recursive and developmental nature of writing, focusing on stages such as prewriting, drafting, revising, and publishing (Seow, 2002). Within this framework, metacognitive strategies, self-regulation, and formative feedback are deemed essential for fostering fluency and accuracy in writing. Conversely, the genre approach situates writing within specific communicative contexts, examining the rhetorical, structural, and linguistic conventions that characterize various text types (Hyland, 2007). Genre-based pedagogy employs Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to elucidate the structural organization of genres and the functional roles of vocabulary and grammar, thereby facilitating students' acquisition of the target language. The process-genre pedagogy amalgamates these approaches to provide learners with both procedural knowledge (how to write) and declarative knowledge (what to write), thereby addressing the dual requirements of linguistic competence and professional literacy (Badger & White, 2000)..

4.2 Scaffolding and Sociocultural Theory

Scaffolding, derived from Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), refers to the assistance provided by educators, peers, or digital agents to enable learners to accomplish tasks beyond their independent capabilities (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). In the context of ESL writing, scaffolding can manifest through modeling, guided practice, feedback, and the gradual transfer of responsibility. Recent advancements in computer-assisted language learning (CALL) have expanded the array of available scaffolding tools, including intelligent tutoring systems, chatbots, and collaborative platforms that offer timely support and foster learner autonomy (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). These digital scaffolds can simulate dialogic interaction, provide formative feedback, and facilitate peer collaboration, thereby operationalizing sociocultural theories in the digital era.

4.3 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Authenticity

Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) advocates for the use of authentic, real-world tasks that emphasize meaning and mirror actual communication practices (Ellis, 2003). This approach aligns with the necessity for genre authenticity in technical writing courses, as students engage in activities such as composing user guides or conducting technical evaluations, which closely resemble professional tasks. The authenticity of tasks and materials enhances the learning experience by making it more engaging and relevant, thereby bridging the gap between academic learning and real-world application. Consequently, the integration of TBLT, process-genre pedagogy,

and digital scaffolding provides a robust framework for instructing ESL students in technical writing.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design and Context

By purpose, a quasi-experimental design, without random choice of the representative sample (Creswell, 2012), was purposely deployed to testify the cause-effect correlation between process-genre approach (i.e. the independent variable) and the students' writing performance, writing self-efficacy, and writing autonomy (i.e. the dependent variables). By manner, the study was grounded by a quantitative design with one-group pre-test/post-test design was employed to assess the effect of the intervention on students' technical writing performance. The study focused on 30 first-year polytechnic students enrolled in a Diploma program in computer science engineering during the 2024-2025 academic year.

5.2 Participants

Participants were selected purposively based on their enrolment in courses that traditionally emphasized academic writing. The cohort represented a heterogeneous mix of linguistic backgrounds, with varying degrees of writing proficiency and minimal prior exposure to genre-based instruction.

5.3 Instructional Intervention

The six-week instructional intervention aimed to enhance ESL students' proficiency in composing technical reports concerning network issues. This intervention employed a genre-based writing approach, which instructed students in the problem-solution structure, a critical framework in technical communication. The method was implemented through a genre cycle that incorporated both digital and in-person components. One session focused on chatbot-assisted edublogs hosted on Google, while the other addressed formative assessment with a tutor. The objective was to facilitate students' comprehension and application of genre conventions by integrating technology with direct instruction..

5.3.1 Digital Scaffolding via Chatbot-Assisted Edublogs

This section integrated a chatbot system into the edublog environment, functioning as an intelligent writing assistant that provided students with real-time support during the writing process. The chatbot offered students templates and model texts for various writing genres, ensuring adherence to academic and professional writing standards. Its capability to deliver immediate feedback on word usage, text coherence, and structural accuracy fostered iterative learning. Additionally, the chatbot facilitated access to authentic technical documents and visual data sources, aiding students in vocabulary acquisition and idea generation. Concurrently, edublogs served as platforms for collaborative learning, enabling students to review each other's work, track multiple drafts, and archive written artifacts for subsequent reflection and development. These tools collectively established a dynamic, autonomous, and student-driven learning environment.

5.3.2 Face-to-Face Sessions

In-person sessions provided essential human mediation to complement the digital framework, facilitating student learning and addressing issues that digital tools alone could not resolve. These tutor-led classes primarily focused on clarifying misunderstandings, particularly the common language and genre-based errors present in students' drafts. Through guided discussions, students gained insights into the nuances of genre expectations in technical reports, including appropriate tone, structure, and language style. The sessions also emphasized providing feedback using analytic rubrics that evaluated various aspects of writing, such as content accuracy, organizational clarity, and grammatical correctness. These face-to-face interactions enhanced students' awareness of different writing types and helped them bridge the gap between academic learning and workplace requirements.

5.4 Instruments and Data Collection

The researcher employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to assess the impact of the intervention. Collaborating with students, the researcher developed a Needs Assessment Questionnaire to identify the most critical technical writing skills for academic and professional contexts. This informed the lesson design to ensure contextual relevance. The primary instrument for measuring progress was the ESL Technical Writing Test, administered both pre- and post-intervention. A scoring rubric, comprising five key components—content, organization, consistent use of terminology, text structure, and mechanics—was utilized to evaluate writing performance. The writing task was genre-specific. The researcher assigned ratings, and the final scores were averaged to enhance fairness. Additionally, an observation checklist was employed to collect qualitative data on students' perceptions of the intervention components, with a focus on their authenticity, credibility, and utility.

5.5 Data Analysis

The data analysis utilized both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to thoroughly assess the intervention's effectiveness. In the quantitative component, pre- and post-test writing scores were subjected to descriptive analysis to discern significant differences in performance. For the qualitative aspect, responses from the observation checklist were examined through thematic content analysis, which involved identifying recurring patterns and themes related to learner engagement, autonomy, authenticity, and the perceived educational value of the tools and tasks. This dual-method approach facilitated a comprehensive evaluation of both measurable gains and learner-centered experiences.

6. Results

This section presents the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative analyses, illustrating the impact of the process-genre pedagogy with chatbot-assisted edublogs on ESL polytechnic learners' technical writing skills, autonomy, and engagement.

6.1 Quantitative Findings

To determine the effectiveness of the intervention, students' technical writing was assessed before and after the six-week instructional period using an analytic rubric.

Table 1 summarizes the pre- and post-test mean scores along with mean gains.

Student ID	Pre-Test [50]	Post-Test [50]	Score Gain
S01	11	28	17
S02	15	27	12
S03	20	26	6
S04	20	26	6
S05	16	27	11
S06	17	26	9
S07	17	29	12
S08	15	28	13
S09	14	28	14
S10	14	26	12
S11	9	28	19
S12	15	28	13
S13	8	30	22
S14	20	28	8
S15	11	28	17
S16	17	27	10
S17	12	29	17
S18	12	27	15
S19	15	28	13
S20	13	28	15
S21	12	30	18
S22	16	30	14
S23	18	30	12
S24	17	29	12
S25	19	30	11
S26	12	26	14
S27	15	28	13
S28	11	27	16
S29	9	28	19
S30	8	29	21

	428	839	411
MEAN	14.27	27.97	13.70

The overall average score increased from 14.27 to 27.97, reflecting a marked enhancement in writing proficiency.

Table 1: Pre-Test, Post-Test and Mean Score gain

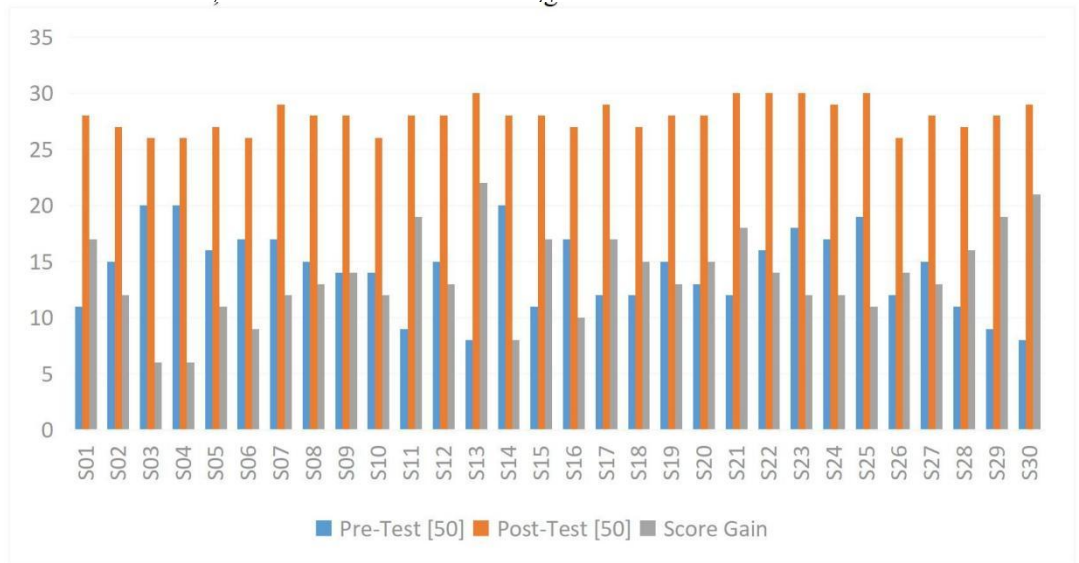
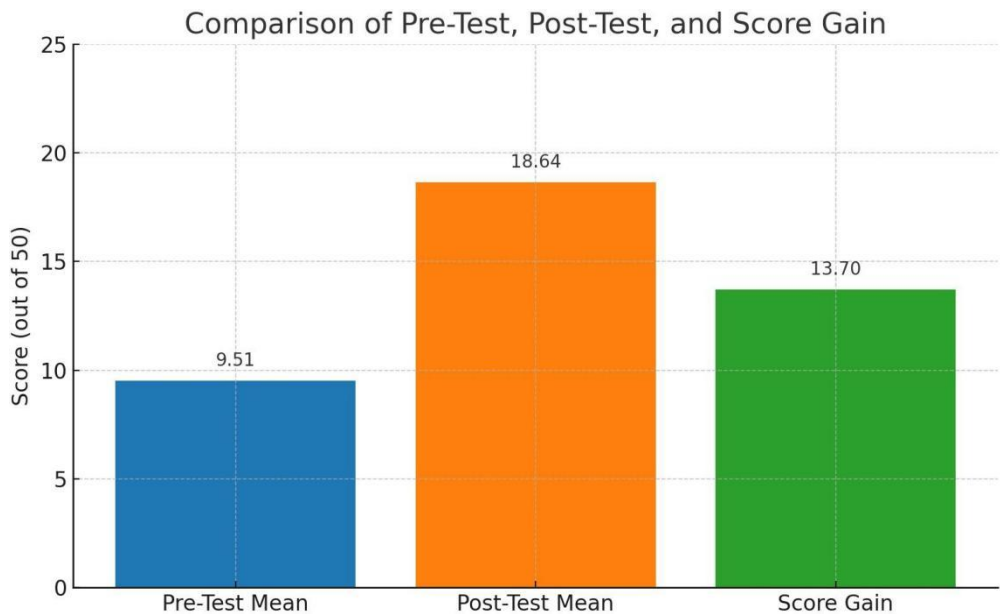


Table 2: Comparison of Pre-Test, Post-Test , and Score gain



6.2 Qualitative Findings

To further explore the impact of the intervention on learner autonomy, engagement, and perceptions, qualitative data were gathered from observation

checklists and student reflections. Thematic analysis revealed several prominent themes, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Feedback from Participants

Theme	Description	Sample Participant Quote	Number of Mentions (N=30)
Increased Engagement	Higher motivation and participation in writing tasks	Using the edublog made writing more interesting.	24
Learner Autonomy	Greater independence and self-directed learning	I could check my work myself with the chatbot.	21
Reduced Writing Anxiety	Less fear and stress when writing	Chatbot feedback did not make me feel embarrassed.	18
Authenticity of Tasks	Perceived relevance to real-world/professional contexts	Now I know how to write a real technical report.	20
Effective Peer Collaboration	Improved peer review and group learning	Reviewing my friend's work helped both of us learn.	15
Improved Reflective Practice	More frequent self-assessment and revision	I revised my drafts more than before.	17

Interpretation

The qualitative findings support the quantitative results, highlighting increased engagement and autonomy among learners. The chatbot's immediate, non-judgmental feedback and the collaborative nature of edublogs were especially valued. Students also reported a significant reduction in writing anxiety and an improved perception of task authenticity, which contributed to their motivation and confidence.

6.3 Stages of Scaffolding Observed

The scaffolding process within the intervention was structured across five distinct stages, each supported by specific digital tools and activities. Table 3 provides an overview of these stages, tools used, and supporting evidence from the data.

Table 4. Stages of Scaffolding Observed During the Intervention			
Stage	Digital Tool Used	Activities/Support Provided	Evidence from Data
Planning	Chatbot, Edublog	Brainstorming, topic posting, prompt-based	Student log entries, tutor

		idea generation	notes
Drafting	Chatbot, Edublog	Use of templates, real-time feedback	Draft versions, chatbot logs
Revising	Chatbot, Peer Review in Edublog	Self and peer evaluation, feedback incorporation	Peer comments, revision tracking
Publishing	Edublog	Formatting, final submission	Published blog entries
Assessment	Analytic Rubric, Group Discussion	Rubric-based evaluation, group reflection	Rubric scores, reflection logs

Interpretation

Each stage of the writing process was actively supported by digital scaffolding, facilitating iterative learning and reflective practice. The observed progression through these stages contributed to both cognitive and affective development, as students moved from idea generation to final assessment with increasing autonomy and confidence.

Summary

The integration of these tables and their explanations provides a comprehensive picture of the intervention's impact, substantiating claims of significant improvement in technical writing performance and positive shifts in learner attitudes and behaviors.

6.2 Qualitative Findings

Analysis of the qualitative data derived from the observation checklist revealed various transformations among learners. Participants reported increased engagement and autonomy, attributing these changes primarily to the chatbot's non-judgmental, immediate feedback and the edublog's collaborative writing environment. These features contributed to reducing writing anxiety and facilitated self-directed learning. The tasks were perceived as authentic and applicable to professional contexts, thereby enhancing student motivation and providing a sense of purpose. Additionally, peer review facilitated meaningful communication, helped overcome language barriers, and improved the coherence of their writing. These findings indicate that the intervention is highly effective in fostering both emotional and cognitive development among ESL technical writing students.

The scaffolding process was delineated into five distinct stages: Planning, Drafting, Revising, Publishing, and Assessment. During the Planning phase, students generated ideas through brainstorming, topic posting, and thematic grouping, facilitated by the chatbot's prompts and associated resources. In the Drafting phase, genre-specific templates and real-time feedback assisted students in composing their initial drafts. The Revising phase involved students critically evaluating their own work and that of their peers, comparing it to model texts, and incorporating feedback from instructors. The Publishing phase

concentrated on preparing the text for submission, with chatbots providing guidance on punctuation and formatting. Finally, the Assessment phase encompassed both formative and summative evaluations conducted through structured rubrics and group discussions. This process emphasized learning through repetition, active engagement, and self-improvement.

7. Discussion

7.1 Enhancing Process Writing through Digital Scaffolding

The integration of chatbot-assisted edublogs offered dynamic digital scaffolding consistent with Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The chatbot provided timely support throughout the writing process, from planning to publication. Its function in guiding students through genre conventions, offering exemplars, and delivering lexical and structural feedback facilitated self-regulated learning. This ongoing support enabled learners to internalize genre norms and enhance their skills through iterative practice and reflection, signifying a transition toward a process-oriented writing approach.

7.2 Genre Awareness and Occupational Literacy

Explicit instruction in genre features, including problem-solution structures, modality, hedging, and technical lexis, provided students with the necessary tools to connect academic learning with workplace communication. Through engaging in genre deconstruction and reconstruction, learners enhanced their pragmatic competence and understanding of rhetorical strategies. This heightened awareness not only improved their current writing tasks but also prepared them for real-world professional communication, thereby promoting occupational literacy essential in technical fields.

7.3 Fostering Learner Autonomy and Collaboration

The implementation of edublogs facilitated the development of a community of practice, wherein learners collaboratively constructed knowledge through shared writing, peer feedback, and mutual scaffolding. The iterative processes of drafting and review enhanced learners' metalinguistic awareness, critical thinking, and accountability for their own learning. The incorporation of digital tools and social learning practices promoted a sense of autonomy, enabling students to become more reflective, independent, and engaged writers.

7.4 Reducing Writing Anxiety and Building Confidence

One of the most significant outcomes was the alleviation of writing-related anxiety. The non-judgmental and immediate feedback provided by the chatbot, in conjunction with a supportive peer environment, reduced the fear of failure. This setting fostered linguistic experimentation and revision without stigma, resulting in increased confidence and a more positive attitude toward writing. Learners embraced a growth mindset, gradually transitioning from a product-focused approach to a more reflective, process-oriented perspective on writing development.

7.5 Implications for ELT Practice

The study underscores the significance of process-genre pedagogy, augmented by digital scaffolding tools, in the instruction of technical writing within ESL contexts. English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners are

advised to incorporate authentic, task-based activities utilizing chatbots, edublogs, and formative assessment strategies. Instruction should prioritize collaborative learning, peer feedback, and transparent assessment through analytic rubrics. The intervention model presents a replicable, context-sensitive approach that emulates real workplace communication and enhances students' preparedness for professional writing.

8. Conclusion and Main Findings

The study concludes that the integration of chatbot-assisted edublogs within a process-genre framework substantially enhances the technical writing performance of ESL polytechnic students. This intervention proved effective due to its alignment with sociocultural learning theory, its implementation of scaffolding, and its attentiveness to both linguistic development and occupational literacy requirements. Key findings include measurable improvements in technical writing proficiency, increased learner autonomy and engagement, a reduction in writing anxiety, and the validation of digital and collaborative tools as effective mediators in PGA-based instruction.

9. Recommendations and Suggestions

9.1 For ELT Practitioners

To encourage process-oriented learning, teachers should use digital scaffolding tools like chatbots and edublogs in their genre-based lessons. Writing tasks should be like the types of communication that happen at work, and they should give students a chance to work together and think about what they wrote. Using analytic rubrics to grade writing makes it easier to understand and more consistent, and they can help both teachers and students figure out how well they are doing.

9.2 For Curriculum Designers

To make sure that students learn what employers want, curriculum developers should include occupational literacy outcomes in technical writing courses. To get the most out of digital scaffolding, one needs to put money into CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) infrastructure and training for teachers. It is also a good idea for language teachers and subject matter experts to work together to make sure that writing instruction is real and relevant to the subject.

9.3 For Researchers

Longitudinal designs should be used in future research to look into the long-term effects of process-genre writing instruction on professional skills. It is also important to look into how these kinds of interventions can be scaled up or changed to work in different technical fields and educational settings. Finally, looking more closely at each learner's unique traits, like their level of proficiency, motivation, and cognitive style could help understand better how and for whom these interventions work best.

10. Limitations and Future Directions

The study's design—one group, single institution, and a relatively short intervention period—limits the generalizability of results. Future research should employ randomized controlled trials, larger and more diverse samples, and longer follow-up periods. Additionally, exploring how digital scaffolding

can be adapted to other technical disciplines or educational levels would be valuable.

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FROM PRINT TO PIXELS: ARCHETYPAL STRUCTURES IN CHAIN LETTERS OF FAXLORE AND DIGITALLORE

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Abstract: Folklore has been conventionally associated with oral and communal practices but, it has evolved much to be inclusive of folks that share common grounds. The transmission of folklore has taken print and digital means in the advancing society. Chain letters are a form of folklore that continues to be passed on from one to another, either through print or even digitally. This paper investigates how archetypal structures manifest and adapt within the chain letters chosen from faxlore and digitallore. The study employs textual analysis within an archetypal framework in the chain letters from *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* by Alan Dundes and facebook. The analysis identifies recurring archetypes of reward and punishment, cyclical repetition, and communal fear and hope across both media, demonstrating how the structures facilitate the transmission and continuance of chain letters. The findings bring to light the archetypal rhythms that shape the ways folklore functions within communities, despite technological shifts from print to digital.

Keywords: Folklore, Faxlore, Archetypes, Chain Letters and Repetition.

Literature in its primitive form is rich in the lore of various folks across the globe. From “Cinderella” to bedtime stories, from myths of deities to legends of heroic figures, from proverbs of old men to riddles of children, from rituals to performances, the lores of folks have been preserved and passed on through generations orally. The reference to folk as rural or ethnic has evolved to include any group that shares common grounds. Technological and cultural shifts within societies have forced folk literature to expand its scope to include printed and digital forms. Chain letter is a form of lore found among the urban office going folk in the twentieth century. Humorous texts, chain letters, folk poetry and urban legend are shared through fax machines and these forms are collectively labelled as faxlore. The technological advancement has enabled the digital folks or the netizens to use digital means to form digitallore that preserves and transmits several knowledge components, shapes the identity of netizens and their culture and also forms as part of entertainment. Thus, folk literature has evolved to encompass various forms and to accommodate a wide range of knowledge.

In the contemporary society, the persistence of folklore is evident through printed materials like faxlore and photocopylore, and digital content expressed through social media platforms. Chain letters have evolved from handwritten notes to email or fax and to posts on Facebook and WhatsApp. The core mechanisms and structure remain largely unchanged, demanding recipients to forward the same to a given number of people within a given period. They promise reward for compliance and threaten misfortune for non-compliance, thereby replicating archetypal patterns. Despite the shift in medium and the

nature of the folk, the lore remains greatly undisturbed in its core, creating spaces for creativity in the treatment of theme and context.

This paper investigates the archetypal structures found in the chain letters chosen to represent faxlore and digitallore. Alan Dundes, along with Carl Pagter, has established letters, cartoons, notices and memoranda as urban folklore through which urban people battle against the system, either the government or the office they work. Four chain letters from *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* are chosen for the study, alongside four chain letters shared by random Facebook users. Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism is laid as the theoretical framework to explore how these structures are imbibed in these chain letters to facilitate their persistence and transmission. The analysis seeks to trace how folklore retains its archetypal structures despite technological advancement and evolution in means of communication and transmission.

This paper employs a qualitative textual and thematic analysis to explore the archetypal structures underlying in the chain letters across faxlore and digitallore, in the light of Northrop Frye's archetypal criticism. The analysis highlights the patterns of reward and punishment, cyclical recurrence and communal fear and hope within the structure and content of these letters. The chosen chain letters from *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire* are based upon humorous and satirical examples, faith based promises and socially driven appeals. "The Spouse Exchange" promises a huge number of women on bundling up one's own, "A Letter for Medger Evers" is to flood the Governor's desk with letters regarding the death of Medger Evers, "The President's Statue and the Promised Lands" is to collect money for the installation of Lyndon B. Johnson's statue and "Think Prayer" is to send Bible verse to receive blessings. On the other hand, the chain letters from Facebook are grounded on friendship experiments, digital scams, faith-based blessings and homourous takes on contemporary issues. Valerie Voigt's chain letter demands the receiver follow the instruction to show friendship, E Tp LaPuente's chain letter requests to forward a prayer to receive blessings, Karyn Buxman's chain letter is circulated to get nurses during a shortage and Lonell Hudson's chain letter demands continuing the chain to receive a grand prize amount from Mark Zuckerberg. The selection of these letters is based on their structure as chain letters and recurring patterns across the mediums. Analysis of structural demands and emotional appeals are observed on close reading of the letters to map against the archetypal categories drawn from Frye's framework, alongside a comparative approach.

A little research has been done on Chain letters within the context of urban folklore. Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter has examined how chain letters function within bureaucratic cultures, with an emphasis on the humour, communal anxieties, transmission through fax machine and office copying system in their *Work Hard and You Shall Be Rewarded: Urban Folklore from the Paperwork Empire*. Simon J. Bronner's essay, "Digitizing and Virtualizing Folklore," discusses how the internet promotes typical cultural practices that could be called traditional. In "The Forward as Folklore: Studying E-mailed

Humour,” Russell Frank explores how forwarded email messages break the concept of performance and social context in folklore. These studies establish chain letters within the context of urban folklore and how digital content are accepted forms of modern folklore. On the other hand, scholars have applied Northrop Frye’s archetypal criticism framework to analyse folktales and myths, highlighting archetypal figures and narrative rhythms. However, there’s a notable gap regarding application of archetypal criticism to chain letters, both in print and digital media.

Northrop Frye classifies narratives broadly as comedic and tragic, and associates them with the four seasons on the grounds of cultural rhythms and human experiences. Renewal, hope and social harmony are represented by spring in Frye’s archetypal schema. The “Think Prayer” chain letter encourages the recipients to continue the chain to receive blessings and warns of misfortune if someone breaks the chain. It promises the recipient, “The luck has been sent to you. You are to receive good luck within four days after receiving this copy” (Dundes 6). Similarly, Voigt’s chain letter on Facebook serves as a social experiment to encourage friendship and connection when digital folks move towards digital isolation. Frye asserts that “the tendency of comedy is to include as many people as possible in its final society” (165). These chain letters reveal how ephemeral texts serve as micro-rituals among the members of communities to create social or religious rejuvenation.

Quest marks the archetype of romance in Frye’s framework representing the summer. “A Letter for Medger Evers” pleads a collective quest for justice, urging the recipients to flood the Governor’s office with checks to support the Evers’ family and confront racial injustice alongside. LaPuente’s chain letter urges the recipients in the quest for victory over struggles. Despite the dubious origin, Hudson’s chain letter creates an impulse in participants to have a quest for sudden wealth through simple participation promising “At midnight PST, Facebook will search through the day’s posts and award 1000 people with \$4.5 million EACH as a way of saying thank you for making Facebook such a powerful vehicle for connection and philanthropy.” Frye elaborates that “the romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfilment dream and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role” (186). These chain letters embody the quest motif, with the hope of wish-fulfillment dreams.

Disillusionment and critique of social norms mark the archetype of satire and it represents the winter. “The Spouse Exchange” humorously promises “16,740 women” to those who forward the letter. Additionally, it threatens the return of “HIS OLD LADY” (Work Hard 8) for non-compliance to parody the absurdity of chain letters and societal frustration. Similarly, Buxman’s chain letter employs humour, proposing absurd solution of forwarding nurses to address healthcare shortages. Moreover, “The President’s Statue and the Promised Land” uses humour to critique politicians and bureaucracy. The letter closes with the satirical note saying, “If you are one of the few who has any money left after paying taxes, we will expect a generous contribution from you toward this noteworthy project” (Work Hard 11). These

satirical chain letters evidently have the two essential elements, “one is wit or humour founded in fantasy or a sense of the grotesque or absurd, the other is an object of attack” (Anatomy 224). These letters employ humour to critique society and express collective frustration, all the while complying to the satirical winter archetype.

Frye associates autumn with the archetype of tragedy which is characterized by elements of decline, human limitation and inevitability of loss. The chain letters hardly embody the tragic archetype of autumn as they often focus on communal action or participation, as autumn requires narratives of downfall and catastrophe, but do not promise renewal or rejuvenation. Little mention of archetypes pertaining to tragedy highlights chain letters encouraging social and communal action and participation. Frye in his *Anatomy of Criticism* notes, “it is a commonplace of criticism that comedy tends to deal with characters in a social group, whereas tragedy is more concentrated on a single individual” (207). The absence of traffic elements in the chain letters underscores that they seek to maintain communal vitality and that folklore deals with characters in a social group rather than mere individuals.

Frye’s archetypal criticism positions the sender of the chain letter as the ‘shrew’ and the recipient as the ‘scapegoat.’ Frye claims that archetypes function not only as character types but also as relational patterns within narratives and communal practices (Frye 99). The sender of the chain letter initiates the cycle by forcing the recipient into a moment of crisis and choice. In “Think Prayer” and LaPuente’s chain letter, the sender uses religious faith and fear of spiritual punishment to initiate the cycle. The recipient bears the psychological fear to either continue or break the chain like a scapegoat. In Hudson’s letter, the recipient is skillfully lured towards the miraculous opportunity of winning 4.5 million. In all these letters, the sender initiates like a shrew and the recipient bears the collective anxiety as a scapegoat, and on every next move the scapegoat becomes the shrew to have a cyclic continuation. This archetypal structure explains why chain letters sustain across technological transition from faxlore to digitallore in a ritualistic and recursive manner.

Chain letters enact the archetype of the forbidden fruit which is a recurring mythical symbol embodying the tension between promise and threat. In the creation myth, the forbidden fruit is symbolic to knowledge, power and blessings, at the same time it imposes the fear of punishment or death, if transgressed. The chain letter represents the forbidden fruit and offers the recipients the promise of blessing. The catchy phrases like “within four minutes he will give you good news” (LaPuente) resonates with the promise of the serpent about the forbidden fruit, “you will be like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5). The act of Eve sharing the forbidden fruit to Adam is parallel to the forwarding of chain letters. The forbidden fruit archetype explains how chain letters continue to thrive as a recurring mythical symbol.

This study analyses various chain letters of faxlore and digitallore in the light of archetypal criticism of Northrop Frye’s. Despite the shift from paper to pixels, the underlying patterns remain consistent and reveal the archetypal rhythm of promise, threat, recurrence and communal participation which are

core to human cultural expression. The application of Frye's archetypal criticism aligns the chain letters with the seasonal archetype of spring as comedy, summer as romance and winter as satire, highlighting the omission of autumn or tragedy. The archetypal characters position the sender of the chain letters as a shrew and the recipient as the scapegoat. Further, the interpretation of chain letters as the archetypal mythic symbol of forbidden fruit reveals their duality of being both the reward and punishment or blessing and judgement. The study affirms that folklore not only adapts to modern media, but also retains its core archetypal structures.

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ECO- WISDOM AND INVISIBLE TRUTHS: REREADING *THE LITTLE PRINCE* BY ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY AS AN ECOLOGICAL ALLEGORY

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Abstract: This paper explores *The Little Prince* through the lens of eco-wisdom, examining how the text represents nature as the source of ethical clarity, emotional truth and spiritual growth. By analysing the natural elements that are presented in the novella such as the rose, the fox, the Baobabs tree, the study reveals an ecological allegory that exposes Anti-materialistic thoughts and critiques adult rationality. It argues that this novella advocates a return to simplicity, interdependence and care for our planet, which is truly essential but unseen.

Keywords: Eco-Wisdom, Nature, Ethical Clarity, Ecological Allegory, Natural Elements, Anti- Materialistic, Simplicity, Interdependence and Planet.

Introduction

Wendell Berry states, “The Earth is what we all have in common.” It is a truth that transcends cultural, political, and generational boundaries. In an age marked by environmental degradation and climate anxiety, literature remains a powerful medium through which ecological sensitivity can be awakened and sustained. While certain works address environmental issues explicitly, others embed these concerns subtly within narratives, one such novella is written by Saint-Exupéry.

The Little Prince by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is often classified as a children’s book or a philosophical fable, celebrated primarily for its themes of innocence, love, and human connection. However, beneath its whimsical storytelling lies a quiet yet profound engagement with ecological thought. Through the Prince’s relationship with his rose, his care for his tiny planet, and his encounters with other worlds, the narrative gently foregrounds the principles of responsibility, interdependence, and guardianship. These elements invite a reconsideration of the text as more than a moral allegory by positioning it as a work that offers ecological wisdom and truths that remain hidden until one reads it through an environmentally focused lens.

Humans Beyond Figures

In *The Little Prince*, the narrator who is an aviator recounts the crash-landing in the desert and the meeting of the titular character Little Prince from asteroid B-612. It begins with the narrator’s childhood drawings of boa constrictors, which adults dismiss as “a hat.” Reflecting on such conversations, the narrator observes: “Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man” (7). This framing sets up his critique of adults’ lack of imagination. The Little Prince’s arrival offers a new perspective: he is curious, caring, and intimately connected to his small planet, where he cleans his little volcanoes, protects a rose, and

guards against the invasive baobab trees, each a metaphor with ecological resonance. The narrator further adds how adults value statistics over essence: “When you tell them you’ve made a new friend they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you ‘What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?’ Instead, they demand ‘How old is he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?’ Only from these figures do they think they have learned anything about him” (19). In contrast, “for us who understand life, figures are a matter of indifference” (19). Here, the narrator positions himself between the innocence of the Little Prince and the pragmatism of adults, admitting that he, too, is growing older. Through this dynamic, Saint-Exupéry draws attention to humanity’s distance from nature and essential truths, framing the Little Prince’s worldview as a form of ecological wisdom.

Interpreting the Invisible: Theorists and Ecological Truths

Ecocriticism, as introduced by Cheryll Glotfelty, is “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). In *The Little Prince*, this relationship is central: the Prince tends his tiny world with daily rituals, cleaning volcanoes, pulling up baobab seedling to preserve its balance (Baobabs trees are intrusive trees to his planet). These actions reflect what Greg Garrard describes in *Ecocriticism* as the pastoral ideal, where landscapes are shaped by mindful stewardship rather than exploitation. The narrator’s observation that “it is very tedious work, but very easy” (21) underscores how environmental care, though simple, requires consistency.

The concept of eco-wisdom, articulated by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, emphasizes moral and spiritual responsibility toward the natural world. This ethic is embodied in the prince’s devotion to his rose: “It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important” (55). By valuing the rose for her uniqueness despite her vanity, the Prince shows a principle, that Tucker and Grim call reverence for life, which resists the commodification of living beings.

Northrop Frye’s definition of allegory as “a continuous parallel between two or more levels of meaning” (*Anatomy of Criticism* 89) is essential for understanding *The Little Prince* as an ecological allegory. The baobabs, for example, are both literal weeds and metaphors for environmental and moral neglect. The Prince warns, “A baobab is something you will never, never be able to get rid of if you attend to it too late” (20), a statement that resonates as a cautionary tale against ecological complacency.

Finally, the Living Earth Community model developed by Tucker, Grim, and Tu Weiming Mickey frames existence as an interconnected web. The Prince’s journey across planets reveals this principle: his friendships with the fox, the lamplighter, and even the geographer illustrate how “what is essential is invisible to the eye” (63), highlighting the unseen but vital connections among beings. In this way, Saint-Exupéry’s fable portrays planetary care not as an abstract ethic but as a lived interdependence.

In *The Little Prince*, ecological wisdom emerges through small, deliberate acts. The Prince tends his rose, a symbol of nature’s fragile beauty,

because “it is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important” (55). He uproots baobabs before they take root, warning that “a baobab is something you will never, never be able to get rid of if you attend to it too late” (20), an allegory for confronting environmental threats early. Even cleaning volcanoes reflect planetary responsibility: “Volcanoes burn gently, like a stove” (21). These routines are not grand gestures but quiet acts of guardianship, revealing that care for the planet is cultivated through constancy and attention to the smallest details.

The author introduces the eco-symbols through the fox. The fox meets the Little Prince with gentle honesty: “To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys” (81). Yet, something changes when trust begins to grow. “But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world” (82). In these words, the ordinary is transformed into the irreplaceable. Taming becomes more than a metaphor—it is the quiet work of weaving two lives together. Later, the fox reveals the secret to the Little Prince that “It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye”(86) one feels the echo of the fox’s lesson: the truest bonds, like hidden wells, are unseen, yet they sustain us.

The Little Prince carries his eco-wisdom to the narrator in the reminder that “what makes the desert beautiful ... is that somewhere it hides a well” (82). This beauty lies not in what is seen, but in the hidden life beneath the surface. The narrator is astonished by this sudden understanding, recalling his childhood home and a legend that talked about the buried treasure. Though he never knew exactly where, “it cast an enchantment over that house. My home was hiding a secret in the depths of its heart” (83). In agreement with the prince, he reflects, “The house, the stars, the desert - what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible” (83). These moments reveal that the world’s worth is often found in unseen connections like water hidden in the desert mirroring the invisible truths of nature’s quiet resilience which is woven here and the unseen bonds that sustain life.

Each planet the prince visits mirrors an ecological perspective: the king’s desire to command the stars reflects authoritarian control over nature, while the businessman’s obsession with counting them evokes the commodification of natural resources. The prince himself embodies the ideal ecological subject- curious, relational, and responsible, nurturing his rose, cleaning volcanoes, and guarding against baobabs. Even the desert becomes a symbol of Earth’s fragility, its beauty rooted in scarcity, for “what makes the desert beautiful ... is that somewhere it hides a well” (82). Through these images, the text whispers that the health of our world depends not on possession or control, but on seeing with the heart and caring for what is both visible and unseen.

Conclusion

Beneath its gentle, fable-like surface, *The Little Prince* holds an urgent ecological wisdom, an appeal to care for the fragile, to cherish the unseen, and to reclaim a sense of wonder that modern life too often abandons. Through its

simple yet layered imagery, Saint-Exupéry crafts an allegory of our relationship with the Earth: one that critiques control, commodification, and detachment, while celebrating stewardship, interconnection, and love. The Prince's final gift to the narrator "you will have the stars as no one else has them" (110) becomes a metaphor for how personal bonds transform our way of seeing the world. His parting words, spoken with serenity about his own departure, remind that endings are not always loss; they can be a return, an unseen continuity. The narrator's last vision "the loveliest and saddest landscape in the world" (113) is an image of grief interwoven with gratitude. In the end, *The Little Prince* calls the readers to become guardians of what is both beautiful and vulnerable, to live as if the stars could laugh, and to hold, in our care for the Earth, the invisible truths essential to our shared future.

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**REWRITING GENDER, BREAKING RULES: SUBVERSION OF
TRADITIONAL ROLES IN PREETI SHENOY'S *THE RULE BREAKERS*
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Abstract: This paper is about the subversion of the traditional gender roles in Preeti Shenoy's novel *The Rule Breakers* through gender studies. The protagonist of the novel, Veda, a young woman whose life is around traditional customs, where women should take care of their families and education is not considered very important. However, Veda stands for herself and breaks all the societal expectations. This paper portrays, how Preeti Shenoy highlights Veda's actions that disrupt standard gender roles. On feminist aspect, this paper argues how the novel *The Rule Breakers* supports women on their right to choose their destiny. It also demonstrates how breaking the chains becomes a powerful act of resistance that inspires the discussions about social change, power and gender of the contemporary world.

Keywords: Gender, Resistance, Social Change, and Power.

Introduction

Human life can be expressed through literature and can be projected as a mirror of society. People have used literature as a means of entertainment. It became famous, and social messages were included by the writers. Imagination is one of the key factors in the development of fiction, a type of literature. It could be about true stories instead of just facts. Generally, the fiction is one of the major genres in literature that includes novellas, short stories, and novels. The word fiction means 'the act of making, modelling, or fashioning.' The writer uses their imagination to produce their work of fiction. Fiction always provides new perspectives and engages the readers. Contemporary fiction can be defined as stories that may happen in reality.

Preeti Shenoy is one of the most acknowledged contemporary novelists, known for realistic writings and fascinating stories. Many of her novels are top sellers. The novel, *The Rule Breakers*, is about societal expectations, gender roles, and self-identity. The problems faced by women in traditional Indian society is portrayed by Preeti Shenoy through the protagonist, Veda. Veda admits her fate and resigns herself to the reality that her parents have arranged her marriage to a boy who is from Pune. She becomes entrapped in loneliness by obeying her parents. The novel is on Veda's ability to break the rules imposed on her, thereby leading her life in the way she desires.

Subversion of Traditional Roles

Generally, feminism is about the representation of women's identities, knowledge, experiences, and strengths, trying to educate all women to understand their full rights. It is about treating men and women equally. "In her world, girls who dreamed big were often told to wake up and remember their place" (56). This elaborates on the real issues faced by many women in conservative communities where girls are discouraged from being ambitious and challenging traditional norms. Here, Veda just reflects her true self, representing countless girls and women, especially in patriarchal societies

where gender roles are rigidly followed. In those societies, girls are told that stepping out of prescribed roles, like studying late, speaking out, or socializing freely, brings shame to the family. This resonates with Beauvoir's concept that women are made to accept subordinate identities through social conditioning, not biology.

In most cases, women uphold traditional customs. "Mother's silence weighed more than words ever could—it was the silence that demanded obedience" (83). This line more evidently captures how patriarchy is not always imposed through control but often through subtle everyday forms of emotional pressure, mainly within families. In many traditional societies, women themselves become the doorkeepers of patriarchal standards, passing their expectations to the next generation sometimes without uttering a word. Veda's mother's silence is massive with unsaid demands. She obeys, sacrifices, and establishes to what a 'good daughter' should be. Her mother's quiet approval shows how deeply rooted social standards can be; they do not require loud implement. The mother's silence reveals how women themselves can incorporate patriarchal standards and pass them on. This initiates a cycle where control is sustained not only by men but also by other women in the family who were formerly sustained in the same way.

The powerful line marks Veda's turning point—her sensible decision to choose herself over the life prescribed by family and tradition. "She knew she had to break free even if the cost was everything she had ever known" (125). It states that the cost of resisting patriarchal norms and breaking away is related to losing the safety of family and community approval. Many women are scared of this, that makes them speechless and obedient. Veda's act of bravery reflects intense truth, that for women in traditional societies, freedom is not only about physical escape; it is more of a psychological and emotional act of rebellion that can threat relationships and assurance. In extreme cases, women are harmed or killed for insisting on their choices. Through Veda's 'breaking free,' Shenoy conveys, it is not just an act of courage but also an intense act of self-creation. This is the central theme of the paper's idea of subversion of traditional gender roles—it shows that resisting patriarchy often demands sacrifice, but it is also the willingness to pay the price that makes the act revolutionary.

Traditional societies always have gender differences in one way or the other. "A boy roams the streets and makes mistakes; a girl's mistakes cost her family's honor" (140). This line states that boys are allowed freedom, errors, and experimentation, while girls always carry the responsibility of holding family reputation at each stage. In Veda's world and in many real-life incidents, a boy's actions are treated as individual choices and often forgiven as usual mistakes, but a girl's actions, no matter how big or small, her family's reputation always falls behind her. This unequal freedom restricts girls in many ways—mainly in education, friendship, relationships, or self-expression—keeping them closed in carrying the family's honour.

"Veda felt as if each step she took was writing a new rule that did not exist before." (Shenoy 202). This sentence grabs the spirit of resistance and revision at the heart of *The Rule Breakers*. Veda is not just breaking the old

orthodox customs; instead, but is also developing new ones, originating new possibilities for herself and other women like her. In an intense political framework, the idea that a young woman's alternatives can become 'new rules' is impactful. It shows how acts of personal courage—even small steps—can dispute generations of strong gender customs. This is how social change often starts: when individuals envision and live futures that their families or communities never permit them. Many first-generation women in traditional societies are the beginners in their families to work outside home, study abroad, or marry their love; by doing so, they expand what is acceptable for those who come after traditional norms. This clearly demonstrates how individual acts of disobedience can initiate new possibilities for gender roles. Veda's choices do not just liberate her; but also act as examples for other women entangled in similar situations.

The upcoming line sums up the central irony of how society treats women who claim concerns: when a woman simply demands basic rights—that is, her education and freedom of choice—she is labelled as a revolutionary or rule breaker. “They call her a rebel, but she was only asking for what should have always been hers—a life of her own” (220) Veda's rebellion is not radical in the sense of demanding extraordinary privilege; she is simply demanding what should already belong to every individual: the right to live life on their own terms. The fact that her simple desire for self determination is seen as rebellion. It explains how deeply rooted patriarchy is in women's choices. This even displays how language itself is used as a tool of control; calling a woman revolutionary implies she is abnormal, but in reality, she is only assisting her humanity. Veda's struggle proves the real-life happening of countless women who are named headstrong or disobedient simply for wanting to study, work, or marry on their own terms.

Conclusion

In *The Rule Breakers*, Preeti Shenoy made a compelling narrative that denotes the everyday realities of gender oppression and the quiet revolutions that resist it. Through Veda's journey—from an obedient daughter oppressed by her family's honour to a young woman determined to decide her own life—Shenoy reveals the deeply fixed double standards that govern women's choices. Patriarchy society will blame women for everything. Veda's determination to write new rules that did not exist before becomes an act of subversion that resonates with Simone de Beauvoir's idea that women must consciously “become” themselves, eliminating the identities imposed upon them. By these statements, Shenoy makes the novel excel in the setting to speak to the universal struggle of women. It reminds that escaping from inherited roles often brings the cost of alienation—but it is precisely this courage to imagine and have a different life that causes a social change. *The Rule Breakers* thus stands as both a reflector and a roadmap, inspiring readers to question, resist, and rewrite the rules that limit individual's potential.

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REINVENTING FEMINISM THROUGH THEOLOGY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE ON DOSTOEVSKY'S *CRIME AND PUNISHMENT*

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Abstract: Dostoevsky was often criticised for his misogynistic ideologies and portrayal of women as subjugated beings. However, his works are reflections of feminist theology, a theory that establishes the equality of men and women through theological interpretations. Sonya, in *Crime and Punishment*, is never judged and alienated, though she is a prostitute, as a male chauvinistic society would do. She is rather viewed from a Christian perspective that offers redemption to even the dreadful yet remorseful sinners. This paper aims to study *Crime and Punishment* from the modern feminist theological perspective by highlighting the importance of spiritual inclination and implication in fostering women empowerment.

Keywords: Feminist Theology, Women Liberation, Gender Equality, Spiritual Redemption, and Female Subjugation.

Religion has often been interpreted as patriarchal by feminist theorists, who attribute the history of women subjugation to the religious tradition established throughout the ages. Most feminists propose the incompatibility of feminism and theology. Simon De Beauvoir's seminal work, *The Second Sex* highly criticises religion as proponents of women subjugation. She asserts, "for Jews, Muslims, and Christians, man is the master by divine right: fear of God will stifle the slightest inclination of revolt in the oppressed" (747). She also observes:

There must be religion for women as for the people, for exactly the same reasons: when a sex or a class is condemned to immanence, the mirage of transcendence must be offered to it. It is to man's total advantage to have God endorse the codes he creates: and specifically because he exercises sovereign authority over the woman, it is only right that this authority be conferred on him by the sovereign being" (746-747).

However, the chasm between feminism and theology was bridged with the advent of feminist theology in the latter half of the twentieth century.

Feminist theology, which originated during the second wave of feminism, continues to address the gender inequalities through the lens of theology. It is the reinterpretation of religion from a feminist perspective. It attacks the societal structures that oppress women and emphasises an analysis of the sacred texts for an understanding of gender equality in spiritual terms. In the contemporary era, the idea of feminist theology has evolved with its inclusivity of modernity and diversities of the present century. In the preface to

The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology, Susan Frank Parsons writes, “Its (feminist theology) now universal vocabulary of the rights of women, of the dignity and value of women’s lives, of the urgency for their economic and social liberation, and of the prospect for human fulfilment within creation, has become one of the primary means both of communication between women, and of assertion of their status in global politics and in the church” (xiii). Elizabeth Cady Stanton states, “this one recognition of woman as preacher and Apostle (in the Bible) forbids the assertion that woman is degraded from Genesis to Revelation” (211). Feminist theology focusses on the spiritual experience of the woman.

Feminist theology highlights the misogynistic and gender biased ideologies established by traditional theology and reinterprets theology to abolish women subjugation. It condemns the patriarchal reading of the scriptures and suggests a feminist reading of the Bible to derive solutions for the problem of gender discrimination. As Ackermann explains, “When the private and corporate pain of sexist oppression is reflected on critically and systematically in the light of faith, feminist theology is born” (33). While feminists regard Christianity with disregard, Jesus may be considered a champion of women rights, who challenged the traditional patriarchal systems of his times and equalized an individual’s accountability to sin irrespective of the gender. As mentioned in The Holy Bible, the Gospel of John, when a group of male chauvinistic pharisees bring a woman who has committed adultery, Jesus never condemns her but rather says, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (8:7). Mary Daly, in her book *The Church and the Second Sex*, testifies Christ as an advocate of gender equality. She affirms:

Statements which reflect the antifeminism of the times are never those of Christ..... What is very striking is his behavior toward them. In the passages describing the relationship of Jesus with various women, one characteristic stands out starkly: they emerge as persons, for they are treated as persons, often in such contrast with prevailing custom as to astonish onlookers. (37)

Dostoevsky points out the lack of sociological elements in theology, that led to its ideological departure from feminism. She observes that, “by diverting women’s attention to bright rewards in a future life, Christianity creates the delusion of equality already attained” (59) and proposes the reinterpretation of spirituality from a sociological perspective, that will result in gender equality within the spiritual realms.

Dostoevsky, an influential writer and philosopher, is often quoted by feminists as a misogynist. However, his women characters break the traditional gender stereotypes, and are given a redemptive role in transforming the lives of their male counterparts. Though Dostoevsky’s ideologies do not meet the traditional claims of feminism, he is considered an advocate of feminist theology, that addresses the incompatibility of feminism and theology. Dostoevsky’s devotion towards women is evident from one of his letters to his wife on June 4, 1855. He writes, “Woman’s heart, woman’s compassion,

woman's sympathy, the endless kindness of which we have no clear perception, and which, in our obtuseness, we often do not even notice—these are irreplaceable" (72).

Dostoevsky redefined feminism by giving theological interpretations in the study of women. Svetlana Slavskaya Grenier testifies:

Dostoevsky's attitude to his female characters . . . and to the "woman question" in general may be termed a dialogic Christian feminism. His attitude is feminist because it dialogically affirms woman as a subject. It is Christian because he derives this dialogic attitude to women-and all those who are markedly "Other"-from the Gospels. In fact, his feminism is but a facet of his personalism, which presupposes that every human being, whether male or female, is made "in the image and likeness" of God. (136)

His novels portray two different categories of women, the arrogant women who are responsible for the downfall of men and the selfless women who are facilitators of the redemption of men. In a society where prostitutes were not accepted, Dostoevsky revolutionises the society's conception of a woman and breaks the stereotypes in offering her a redemptive role.

Dostoevsky's magnum opus, *Crime and Punishment* is often researched from a psychological and sociological perspective focusing on the protagonist. However, the novel reflects the ideology of feminist theology, that defines women from a religious viewpoint. The novel centres around the murder which the protagonist, Raskolnikov committed and the consequences of the crime. Raskolnikov undergoes psychological conflicts, suffers from guilt, and is sentenced to imprisonment after he accepts the crime. Raskolnikov's rebirth is facilitated by the emotional and spiritual support offered by Sonya.

Sonya, also known as Sofya Semyonovna, is the daughter of an irresponsible drunkard named Marmeladov. She takes the responsibility of the family by working as a prostitute, as the other means of earning became a failure. Joseph Frank, in his book *Dostoevsky: The Miraculous Years 1865-1871*, refers to Sonya as "the pure-hearted prostitute" (99). In the novel, Sonya is first introduced in the words of her father himself, who describes her as a patient, responsible, and sacrificial girl. In the beginning of the novel, Marmeladov says that even the bottle he was drinking was bought with Sonya's money which reflects the responsibility and financial independence which Dostoevsky attributes to his women characters. Dostoevsky, through the voice of Marmeladov redefines feminism through Christ when he says:

And He (God) will say, 'Come! I have already forgiven you once . . . I have forgiven you once . . . And now, too, your many sins are forgiven, for you have loved much . . .' And He will forgive my Sonya, He will forgive her, I know He will . . . Today, when I was with her, I felt it in my heart! And He will judge and forgive all, the good and the wicked, the wise and the humble. (23)

In this context, Dostoevsky is considered a feminist theologian as he re-emphasises the role of Christianity in reconstructing the gender roles offered by society and accepting a woman who has committed adultery. Rosemary Radford Ruether states, "Feminist theologians also seek to reconstruct the basic theological symbols of God, humanity, male and female, creation, sin and redemption, and the church, in order to define these symbols in a gender-inclusive and egalitarian way" (4).

Dostoevsky describes the appearance of Sonya when she visits her father in the deathbed. In this scene, Sonya is presented as a young and timid girl, in contrast to the image of a young prostitute in silken dress. Dostoevsky observes:

Timidly and inaudibly, a girl came in, squeezing through the crowd, and her sudden appearance was strange in that room, in the midst of poverty, rags, death, and despair. She, too, was in rags, a two-penny costume, but adorned in street fashion, . . . Sonya was of small stature, about eighteen years old, thin but quite pretty, blond, and with remarkable blue eyes. She looked down, took a step over the threshold, and stood in the room, though still just by the door. (183)

By describing the feeble and weak countenance of Sonya, Dostoevsky establishes the superiority of her moral strength and responsible nature. Dostoevsky redefines gender roles and gives economic power to the woman. He glorifies a woman who helps her family and performs the role of a male provider of the family, despite her physical inefficiency. Sonya's relationship with Raskolnikov breaks the norms of the society, that demanded a submissive commitment from a woman. Though Sonya was drawn to Raskolnikov because of his kindness towards her during her father's death, eventually it was Raskolnikov who depended on Sonya for spiritual and psychological comfort.

Though the novel is often considered an account of a criminal's moral and spiritual transformation, it is significant in its portrayal of Sonya's transformation from that of a sinner to that of a saviour, who redeems a convict from his spiritual and moral decay. From a feminist theological perspective, it may be considered her journey towards self-liberation. Raskolnikov emanates a revolutionised understanding of a woman, when he calls Sonya, who was considered a sinner by the world, as an honourable woman, due to the great sufferings that she underwent. However, Raskolnikov displays sexist thoughts when he condemns her and exclaims to himself:

'Can it be that this being, who has still kept the purity of spirit, in the end will be consciously pulled into this vile, stinking hole? But who says she hasn't lost her mind? Is she in her right mind? Is it possible to talk as she does? Is it able for someone in her right mind to reason as she does? Is it possible to sit like that over perdition, right over the stinking hole that's already dragging her in, . . . What does she expect, a miracle? No doubt. And isn't this all a sign of madness?' (323)

Dostoevsky never concludes the scene with this note of hopelessness, but rather presents the faith of Sonya, when she says, "And what I be without God?" (323). She then reads the raising of Lazarus from The New Testament, which suggests the rejuvenation of even a fallen woman like her. Sonya reads:

‘Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection and the life: He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die . . .’
(and catching her breath as if in pain, Sonya read strongly and distinctly, exactly as if she herself was confessing for all hear:) ‘Yeah Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world.’ (324)

Dostoevsky’s purpose of placing this scene immediately after the condemnation by Raskolnikov, is to champion Christ as the saviour of women who were judged by the societal norms and standards. Hence, feminism is given a reinterpretation through theology in this part of the novel.

The important feature that characterises the meetings between Raskolnikov and Sonya is that they read passages from The Bible. Dostoevsky portrays a distinctive type feminism with theological implications, which differs from the traditional feminism. The biblical passages facilitate the harlot towards remorse and her eventual transformation. "The candle-end had long been burning out in the bent candlestick ashamed to raise her eyes to him. Her feverish trembling continued a dim light in this destitute room upon the murderer and the harlot strangely come together over the reading of the eternal book" (328).

While the traditional role of women was to be submissive to men, Dostoevsky delineates Sonia as facilitator of a man’s spiritual and moral transformation, portraying the dependance of a man on a woman for spiritual rejuvenation. "I know and I’ll tell . . . you, you alone! I’ve chosen you. I won’t come asking forgiveness, I’ll simply tell you. I chose you long ago to tell it to" (330). Sonya plays a pivotal role in instilling the courage to accept and confess the crime. Gibson affirms, ". . . having chosen Sonya to confess to, he (Raskolnikov) is impelled by her sheer strength of personality to confess also to the authorities: . . . as so often with Christians, Sonya is the catalyst releasing the healthier forces of nature" (90-91).

When the traditional conception of women, expected them to be submissive, Sonya is independent and protective of her male counterpart. Dostoevsky portrays Sonya as Raskolnikov’s protector in the final chapters of the novel. She even fears that Raskolnikov might commit suicide and vows to be his companion till the end. Dunya, Raskolnikov’s sister, felt that her brother was never alone after witnessing the genuine companionship she offered him. Sonya offers Raskolnikov a cross, before he leaves for Siberia, which signifies the suffering he had to undergo due to the crime he committed. Though Sonya was condemned by society as a sinner, she plays a pivotal role in making him spiritual and asks Raskolnikov to pray, for which he agrees. Sonya’s words encourage Raskolnikov to be remorseful of his crime. "He suddenly remembered Sonya’s words: ‘Go to the crossroads, bow down to people, kiss

the earth, because you have sinned before as well, and say aloud to the whole world: 'I am a murderer!'" (525).

The importance of Sonya in the spiritual and moral transformation of Raskolnikov is emphasised in the "Epilogue" of the novel. He is rude towards her in the beginning and is an undesirable companion among his convicts. Raskolnikov's journey may be considered a transformation from a sexist to a man who adores and worships a woman. Through the influence of Sonya, Raskolnikov's psychological and moral self was transformed. Raskolnikov's spitefulness vanished and he was filled with genuine love for Sonya. "They wanted to speak but could not. Tears stood in their eyes. They were both pale and thin, but in those pale, sick faces there already done the dawn of a renewed future, of a complete resurrection into new life. They were resurrected by love; the heart of each held finite sources of life for the heart of the other" (549). Sonya, not only illuminates the life of Raskolnikov, but of the entire prison camp. She was affectionately called by the convicts as, "Little mother, Sofya Semyonovna, our tender, fond little mother!" (546). She undergoes self-liberation and redefines her identity in Christ. Daly observes that, "in self-liberation women are performing the most effective action possible toward universal human liberation, making available to men the fullness of human being that is lost in sexual hierarchy" (34). Through *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky rewrites society's perception of a harlot, suggesting that the reason for the society's acceptance, is her spirituality and morality.

In the end of the novel, Raskolnikov has the Gospels, which belonged to Sonya, under his pillow. This signifies the supreme power of a woman, which justifies that, a woman, when endowed with spiritual qualities and Christ's love, can transform even the fiercest criminal. Though the patriarchal tradition attributes godly qualities to men, Dostoevsky attributes the role of a saviour to Sonya, a woman who was once a harlot. Through Sonya, Dostoevsky delineates the characteristics of a woman which Christ demands, and also reconciles the theology of the church with the major societal movement, feminism, by satisfying its major demands.

Theology redefines the role of a woman, stating that a woman's liberation never relies only on her ability to transform society, but also to uplift the souls who are drowning in the mire of damnation and provide criminal rehabilitation. Sonya's character parodies the Biblical character, Rahab who was accepted by God's people, despite her past life of sin. The novel justifies that the religious definition of a woman, that attributes individuality and independence to a woman, is in par with the claims made by feminists. Hence, the inevitable role of theology in the study of feminism is established.

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NEGOTIATING EDUCATION AND IDENTITY: WOMEN IN THE PATRIARCHAL WORLD OF MANJU KAPUR'S NOVELS

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Abstract: Manju Kapur is one of the most acclaimed contemporary female authors in India's literary landscape. Her works not only highlight the vulnerable position of women in Indian society but also explore how they are systematically denied access to education and empowerment. In her novels, she gives voice to the persistent gender discrimination that continues to plague the educational sphere. This study also incorporates insights from key feminist theorists to reveal how patriarchy disrupts and undermines women's lives by depriving them of proper education. Although the British colonial presence awakened Indian men to the significance of women's education, this initial enthusiasm soon diminished. As a result, even after seventy-five years of Indian independence, the status of women has seen only limited progress. Manju Kapur's novels trace the evolution of women's educational experiences from Independence to the present, offering a nuanced portrayal of both progress and persistent inequality.

Keywords: Contemporary, Discrimination, Invasion and Stagnant.

Introduction

Manju Kapur's novels, particularly *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*, explore the themes of education, empowerment, and the societal and cultural contexts that shape the lives of women in India. These works explore the challenges faced by female protagonists as they navigate the complexities of education, personal development, and societal expectations. This response will examine the role of education, character development, societal impact, and cultural context in these novels, drawing on insights from relevant research papers.

Education as a Tool for Empowerment

Education plays a pivotal role in empowering women in both *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman*. A defining feature of Virmati, the main character, is her quest for education. Virmati's choice to continue her studies in spite of her family's opposition signifies the beginning of her path to independence and self-discovery. Her education gives her the self-assurance to question social norms and traditional gender roles in addition to expanding her intellectual horizons. In *Difficult Daughters*, there is always an endless argument between Education and Marriage. The words of Virmati are not heard by anyone. When Virmati wished to practice her English, her mother Kasturi's aim in *Difficult Daughters* was to take care of the children and do household chores. Kasturi needs Virmati to learn all the household duties for her future life. "Maybe here was the club to her unhappiness. It was useless looking for answers inside the home. One had to look outside. To education, freedom, and the bright lights of Lahore colleges" (DD-15). When she protests, and starts to

study the difference between her and the professor it is apparent that she compares her fiancé. She rejects Inderjeet, and tells to her mother, “Let Indumati marry. Give her the khes you are making. I don’t want any bedding, pots and pans, nothing”(DD-55). My mother, my masi, all studied. It is the rivaz in our family. Even now, my father keeps getting my mother books and magazines to read” (DD.36).

Likewise, the main character, Astha, in *A Married Woman* is shown as a well-educated, career focused individual who finds it difficult to strike a balance between her own goals and those of her family and society. Her conservative family sees Astha's goals as a challenge to their traditional values. However, her education gives her both the ability to think for herself and the cause to create conflict within the family. Astha’s father is a scholarly, open-minded person who encourages his daughter to pursue higher studies. But her mother is a traditional conservative woman who wants her daughter to settle down comfortably in a conjugal life.

Character Development and the Quest for Autonomy

The female leads in Kapur's books are multifaceted individuals whose growth is influenced by their educational experiences and defiance of social expectations. They present an image characterised by education, modernity, intelligence, sophistication, audacity, and confidence within their social milieu. Their struggle to adjust to the rapidly transforming contemporary landscape engenders a desire for increased personal autonomy. Consequently, they strive to transcend societal norms. Virmati's transformation from a subservient daughter to an aggressive person in *Difficult Daughters* is an evidence of the transformational potential of education. Her yearning for both intellectual and emotional fulfillment is shown in her choice to become a teacher and in her relationship with Professor Harish Chandra.

Astha's character in *A Married Woman* is a representation of the contemporary Indian woman torn between tradition and modernity. She deviates from the conventional roles expected of her due to her education and work inclination, which causes internal and external difficulties. In addition to pursuing personal freedom, Astha is fighting for autonomy in order to redefine her place in her family and community.

The theme of "new women" who are autonomous, educated, and challenges conventions is embodied by both the protagonists. As they negotiate the challenges of their roles as moms, wives, and daughters, their travels are characterised by periods of defiance and compromise.

Societal Impact and the Challenge to Patriarchy

Kapur's novels critique the patriarchal structures that dominate Indian society and explore the societal impact of women's empowerment. In *Difficult Daughters*, the repressive family structures and social standards that limit women's potential serve as symbols of the patriarchal system. Virmati defies the established quo and encourages other women to reevaluate their positions by defying these expectations, especially through her pursuit of education and her unusual relationship. Virmati’s intrinsic struggle serves as an explicit manifestation of the limitations imposed by patriarchal norms. Her mother and

the societal framework compel her to place familial obligations above her aspirations.

The effects of Astha's actions on society are more complex in *A Married Woman*. The conventional family structure is perceived as being threatened by her choice to seek a job and her ultimate acceptance of her homosexual aspirations. Her experience does, however, also demonstrates how Indian society is open to change and gradually accepting novel concepts. Throughout her journey, Astha rebels against the institution of marriage, which is firmly rooted in patriarchal domination. She wants to be independent and express herself, but her husband expects her to be a devoted wife.

The novels also explore how women's emancipation impacts future generations. The following generation of women, who are more outspoken in their aspirations for autonomy and more conscious of their rights, is embodied by Virmati's daughter Ida in *Difficult Daughters*. This intergenerational viewpoint highlights the long-term societal effects of women's emancipation.

Cultural Context and The Struggle for Identity

The cultural context of Kapur's novels is deeply rooted in Indian society, with its rich traditions and complex social hierarchies. The novel *Difficult Daughters* is set in pre-partition India, where the female protagonists' difficulties parallel the fight for national independence. The larger context of India's struggle for independence serves as the backdrop for Virmati's quest for self-discovery, emphasizing the connection between individual and national liberty. The cultural setting in *A Married Woman* is more modern, representing the shifting standards and ideals of India after independence. The conflicts between modernity and traditional values are examined in the book, especially in urban areas where women are becoming more independent. In addition to pursuing personal fulfillment, Astha's quest for identity involves negotiating the cultural norms of her family and society. The characters are depicted as silent sufferers, upholding family traditions while yearning for independence, reflecting the broader societal pressures on women.

The characters' need for independence and self-determination in *Difficult Daughters* challenges the conventional roles of women as mothers, wives, and daughters. The cultural background is more flexible in *A Married Woman*, since women like Astha challenge the norms of Indian culture.

Conclusion

In these novels, Kapur demonstrates how women's education is not fully implemented in traditional societies. Instead, women are taught to internalize patriarchal codifications and are conditioned to accept and adjust to their subordinate roles by providing them with a target to consolidate patriarchal values. The novels *Difficult Daughters* and *A Married Woman* offer profound insights into the role of education, empowerment, and societal change in the lives of Indian women. Through the journeys of their protagonists, the novels highlight the transformative power of education and the challenges of navigating traditional norms in a rapidly changing society. The cultural context of the novels adds depth to the exploration of women's roles, underscoring the interconnectedness of personal and societal change. These works remain

significant in contemporary discourse on gender, education, and empowerment in India.

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TOWARDS DEVELOPING NEED-BASED ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: English has been taught as a language at the tertiary level in the colleges all over India. The objectives as have been specified include the development of language skills to enable the learners at the said level to be communicatively competent and also to develop what has been defined as literary competence. In this background, the curriculum or syllabus in use is examined to see how far and to what extent the same facilitate in the learners the acquisition of the two competencies namely communicative competence and literary competence besides acquiring the employability skills required of them. This paper addresses these issues and attempts to suggest the development of a need-based syllabus. In the process this paper also attempts to suggest the implications of such a syllabus in terms of alternative classroom practices for transacting the likely content in the form of teaching learning materials leading to the realisation of the objectives.

Keywords: Need-Based Curriculum, Communicative Competence, Literary Competence, Employability Skills and Tertiary Level.

In the context of English having become the global language, it is imperative to develop high levels of Proficiency in English in the learners of English. The learners at the tertiary level will have to acquire the ability to use the language accurately and appropriately, and comprehend texts in print and audio form. They must get the skills to understand and create abstracts of the texts of all kinds. The texts can vary in length, content and form, like short speeches or telephone messages, reports etc. The texts can be on complex, abstract or concrete subjects with the language best suited to their content. The texts may contain vocabulary and structures specific to the respective fields. They may contain jargon, registers and some slang expressions too that may be culture specific, and field specific. Besides, as the needs of the learners vary, they may have to get exposed to different kinds of texts. In all these, they have to be invariably involved in the act of fixing meaning to what they listen to or read. Also, they must equip themselves with a set of strategies or techniques required for effective comprehension and expression. They must also equip themselves with the necessary skills to be accurate and appropriate in the use of language. Equipping them with these skills and strategies could have been the work of the teacher. With the shift in paradigm to learner centred or learning centred approaches to teaching, the role of the teacher in the classroom will be that of a change agent or co participant in the learning process.

No teaching can take place in vacuum. A set of content is needed to teach and it will be decided by the curricular objectives that govern the syllabus or TLM or content development. Communicative competence development has been the ultimate objective of teaching English at all levels. Communicative competence includes four interrelated components such as grammatical,

discourse, socio cultural and strategic competence or pragmatic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the ability to recognise sentence level grammatical forms. Discourse competence refers to the ability to interconnect a series of utterances to form a coherent, cohesive and meaningful text. Socio cultural competence is the ability to use English for communicating in social contexts which have in them differing cultural systems. Strategic competence is the ability to cope with the breakdown in communication and to draw in strategies that help restore communication. The objective then would mean developing all these competences, and the curriculum and content must cater to the realisation of the well-defined objective. At the tertiary level, there is one more objective to be developed and that is literary competence. Literary competence presupposes the acquisition of the language of literature and as has been mentioned above is deviant in form and structure besides the diction it encompasses.

The curriculum or the content for transaction in the class at the tertiary level must focus or aid in the acquisition of these two competences. Literary competence includes the ability to comprehend the language of literature, understand and respond to the emotions and feelings expressed by the writer, understand the evocative language elements in the literary text and create literary texts as responses besides understanding the use of meta language, poetic or specific literary devices used in the text. In the changing scenario, many teachers of literature feel the inclusion of yet another objective that is, developing critical thinking and learning. There are many schools of thought in designing the objectives of teaching literature. In the light of different opinions and observation made in this regard, the objectives can be as follows:

Understanding the language use

Deducing the cultural assumptions underlying writings from different cultures

Using literary models as cultural references for communication

Developing creative thinking for broadening one's own experience and practical knowledge

Reading closely with attention to detailed use of diction, syntax, style and metaphorical use of language

Creating literary texts

Connecting literary works and personal experiences in life

Developing skills for analysis, contrast and discussion

Or

Teaching literature

The objectives having been so and assuming the content designed suits appropriately, the teacher in the class room will have to plan for a suitable model for transacting the content. In the absence of a well-defined, pre-determined and goal specific curriculum, what can the teacher do in the classroom to realize the objectives of developing both language competence and literary competence? A resourceful teacher can try with procedural syllabus which will lend itself for developing the same. A procedural syllabus will have tasks for language development and depending on the content it can be used for developing literary competence as well. Even a nursery rhyme can be exploited

for developing both competences. A slogan or an ad caption can be used for comprehension and students can be asked to create one similar to it. A short Panchtantra tale can be narrated a little with shifts and twists and the students can be asked to complete.

A procedural curriculum or syllabus is more learner centred and allows space for interaction among learners as it will have tasks or problem-solving activities. A procedural syllabus that calls for designing tasks gives autonomy to the learners as well in the selection of what is to be taught and learnt.

In the situation where the content is available for transaction, say a prescribed text book with literary texts across different genres of literature, teaching or transacting can be task based to a large extent.

Sample tasks

Text independent tasks

One-word dialogues

Language games

Using film clippings

Drama enacting

Verse creating on a given theme

Recreating rhymes and songs

Story completion

Using idea maps

Short debates

Information gap exercise

Text dependent tasks

Example: Teaching Poetry

Reading aloud and recitation

Tasks that enable the learners compare a poem with a prose statement of the same theme or compare two or more poems on similar theme.

This paper argues for making language and literature teachings task-based. A curriculum or syllabus that promotes collaborative and cooperative learning situations is a need. The role of the teacher is that of a change agent and a co participant in the learning and acquisition process of both linguistic competence and literary competence. Teachers of language are invariably teachers of literature too at the tertiary level. So, they need to get ready and become a Curriculum or Procedural syllabus designer, Content developer and Task designer. In the process, he or she allows space for a judicious mix of both literary and non-literary texts and thus finds an answer to the often-asked questions on 'Language through Literature or Language for Literature.'

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EXPLORING BUSINESS ENGLISH VOCABULARY USE IN ESP CONTEXTS AMONG COMMERCE STUDENTS

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Abstract: The study explores the complexities of Business English education, focusing on vocabulary acquisition and application in specialized contexts. The study examined commerce students' understanding of business vocabulary in commerce related contexts. The research used a qualitative methodology, employing a Google Form questionnaire as the data collection tool. The survey was conducted on 35 students to write sentences using specific accounting terms (loss, balance sheet, income statement, cash flow, accrual and depreciation) in business contexts. The approach aimed to assess students' comprehension and application of key accounting concepts across various scenarios. The findings could potentially inform curriculum development and teaching strategies in commerce and accounting programs, emphasizing the importance of contextual learning in Business English education.

Keywords: Business English, Vocabulary, Curriculum Development and Teaching Methods.

Introduction

In the continuous expansion of the global business field, proficiency of Business English is becoming very important for commerce students and specialists (Guinzoni, 2015). The study emphasizes on the major characteristic of Business English education in mainly acquiring and using specialized vocabulary in commerce related situations (Kasin, 2022). Business English which is a type of English for specific Purposes (ESP) includes both specialized and general language characteristics employed in professional situations (Bielenia-Grajewska, 2025). It is very important for commerce students to understand mainly the different meanings of accounting, banking and financial concepts to communicate effectively in their future career (Strother & Shehadeh, 1999). This study observes how important accounting terms are and how they are used by commerce students in business related situations. This study learns more about commerce student's ability to understand important commerce concepts and explain their ideas in business related contexts by critically analyzing the use of core subject words (Zorina, 2020). The findings of the study have attainable effects for creating curriculum and teaching methodologies in commerce and accounting syllabus, stressing on learning particular context usage in Commerce English Education (Bielenia-Grajewska, 2025). The intention of the study is to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, and provide striking Business English instruction for commerce students (Bao & Ding, 2009).

Literature Review

Kasin (2022) argues that dual-meaning vocabulary is a considerable obstacle for initial ESP learners, particularly in the context of Business English. According to the study, students struggle with words with difficult meanings and definitions that are not closely related, while they are generally aware of meaning differences in Business English vocabulary. Kasin argues that the nature of confused or misunderstood words is frequently linked to their low frequency or the level of difficulty of the word. The study emphasizes the appropriateness of context in vocabulary learning and implies that when faced with dual-meaning terms, students incline to neglect primary meanings. Furthermore, Kasin emphasizes the importance of in depth education on both main and secondary meanings of very frequent terms in ESP contexts, especially words with completely different meanings in general and specific usage.

Magdalena Bielenia-Grajewska (2025) finds about Business English, a kind of English for specific purposes (ESP) and its use in contexts by students in the period where changes are taking place in digital world. Business English combines the use of word form, meaning and its use in speaking and writing forms both in general use and specific situation, focusing on profession. Bielenia-Grajewska highlights the importance of customizing Business English courses to specific needs, such as English for HR, Accounting, Finance, Banking or Marketing. The paper gives assistance for the use of context learning approaches in Business English instruction, which involve learning in real or mock business environments. This includes using online resources, films, virtual visits, and serious games to create authentic learning experiences. Furthermore, the author acknowledges the impact of digital transformations on both businesses and education, drawing on the work of Wißotzki, Sandkuhl and Wichmann (2020) to explain how these transformations frame the way Business English is taught and learned in the modern age. Through this comprehensive approach, Bielenia-Grajewska highlights the importance of modifying Business English instruction to meet the changing needs of learners in an expanding digitalized business world.

Judith B. Strother and Carol M. Shehadeh (1999) gives details about online Business Communication course for international learners via internet. The online course is developed in collaboration and through cooperative undertaking by a private corporation, Virtual Languages, Inclusive and the Florida Institute of Technology (Florida Tech). The author describes how numerous experts, English as second language (ESL) professionals, content specialists, web page designers, sound technicians, graphic artists, and corporate officers operate together to develop a program aiming to teach Business English and Communication. The working team focus to develop a novel online course for learners worldwide prioritizing the demand for Business English and emphasizing the important status of Business communication in the worldwide business context and aspects of Business English in the global business communication. Business English is indirectly treated as a type of

English for specific purposes (ESP) identifying the need to teach business content and cultural aspects along with language skills. The article defines three important aims of the curriculum based on the market research managed by the Southern Technology Application Centre (STAC) as situation awareness considering the use of language in job related contexts, recurrency and multi-level testing. The structure of the course includes reading sections, specialized vocabulary, exercised for vocabulary. Every unit contains twelve lessons providing four different proficiency levels with different elements designed to improve language learning in a business context. The paper provides reference only to the STAC market research supporting the objectives of its curriculum and limits to give substantial literature review with multiple citations.

Elena Zorina's (2020) emphasizes on assessing student's knowledge of Business English vocabulary terms using online test pad in the digitalized educational platform. She conducted research on 47 first year undergraduate students majoring in Business Informatics, Management and Economics comparing the effect of traditional paper-based methods with digital testing. Zorina's paper imparts to the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and probes into the potential use of digital platforms in acquiring and improving Business English Vocabulary. The article gives a extensive literature review which covers different aspects of digital education and testing the proficiency of Business English.

Ikonnikova and Komochkova (2019) are referred to in respect to the worldwide execution of digital education to cope with society needs for quality training. Guinzoni (2015) insists the importance of Business English proficiency in carrying out international business collaboration successfully. The study refers to multiple digital platforms for improving Business English vocabulary skills, such as LMS Moodle and specific e-learning systems developed by educational institutions (Szedmina et al., 2015; Zhan and Shen, 2014). Brunfaut et al. (2018), Alwazzan and Alyousef (2019), and Nardi and Ranieri (2019) including several studies are referred to for comparing digital and paper-based testing modes. Regarding the association between test mode preferences and test scores references are made to Ebrahimi et al. (2019) and Piaw (2012). Lastly, MacCann et al.(2012) discusses the importance of effective time management practices for academic success in e-learning environments. A strong fundamental for understanding the context and relativity of the study focusing on awareness of digital testing of Business English vocabulary is discussed in the literature review.

Research Problem

The research problems of the study are

1. The students' awareness level of the specific meaning of the Business English vocabulary.
2. The challenges of commerce students in understanding and using specialized English vocabulary, specifically accounting terms in contexts related to commerce.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate SIIMS commerce students' understanding and use of key accounting terms in business-specific contexts
2. To find the effectiveness of digital platforms in acquiring and assessing to improve Business English vocabulary.
3. To explore the productivity of vocabulary learning in improving students' awareness of Business English vocabulary.

These objectives prioritize on Business English vocabulary learning and use in specialized contexts, particularly for commerce students. They aim to give depth understanding of the terms that can promote to improve Business English education and prepare students for effective communication in their future professional careers.

Research Methodology

Qualitative approach is used in the study to collect data from 35 B.Com students by a Google form survey at SIIMS college. Exercise was planned to help students understand the use of important accounting English vocabulary productively. Instructions were given about contextual application by defining the word and giving an example sentence. The students were guided to develop sentence using the words given. Students were instructed to write sentences using accounting words “loss, balance sheet, income statement, cash flow, accrual and depreciation” picked from the module of the course. They were questioned to write sentence related to commerce situation. This method assessed the student’s insight and use of these important accounting words in real situation.

Data Collection: Google form was used to collect data from 35 B.Com students. The questionnaire was structured to explore the important accounting concepts in reality.

Qualitative Approach: The open-ended questions were asked to the students to construct sentences relating to commerce related contexts. This gave a more refined way of understanding how students explained and applied these words in real scenario.

Results and Discussion

1. Were students aware of the specific meaning of business English vocabulary? The level of awareness or understanding exhibited by the students varies. Some responses show a good grip of the words, while others are direct repetitions of the given examples. The responses of the students to the accounting exercise showed a large range of understanding of all the six words “Loss, balance sheet, income statement, cash flow, accrual, and depreciation.” For the word “Loss”, responses varied from simple repetition of the given example to more complicated uses. Some students gave the perfect context, for example “After deducting all expenses, the business faced a loss of 5 lakhs this financial year,” while other students associated the word unrelated to commerce context. Concerning “Balance Sheet” responses varied from simple definitions to practical uses. Some students specified its use in evaluating a company’s financial status, as illustrated by “The CFO presented the year end balance sheet

showing the company's string financial position," while others linked it to decision making developments.

Responses to "Income statement" included basic definitions, explanations of its elements and use in evaluating a company's performances. Responses like, "Investors carefully analyzed the quarterly income statement to assess the company's profitability," emphasized its importance to capitalists. Regarding "Cash Flow" responses from students varied from definitions to more improved understandings of its significance in business actions. Students linked it to business development and extended abilities, as viewed in "The startup's positive cash flow allowed it to fund expansion without taking on debt." "Accrual" responses enclosed basic definitions, explaining its use and apply in various commerce related contexts. Response from students showed an understanding of its function in huge businesses like "Using accrual accounting, the construction company recognized revenue for a large project before receiving full payment."

Finally, for the word 'Depreciation' responses differed from basic definitions to more specific uses, such as its effect on asset estimation and financial declarations. Students provided examples with particular assets, like 'I bought furniture 6 months go for Rs 50,000, now its value is Rs 45,000, so the depreciation is Rs 5000.'

Totally, the responses revealed a scope of understanding levels, from basic understanding to more innovative application of these accounting concepts.

2. What are the challenges commerce students face in comprehending and applying specialized Business English Vocabulary in commerce related contexts?

One can hypothesise many challenges students come across in understanding and applying specialized Business English vocabulary in commerce related contexts. The challenges include difficulty in absorbing the complete conceptual meaning of complicated commerce words, with many students giving simple definitions but struggle to reveal an in-depth understanding of words like 'loss' and 'accrual' in different commerce contexts.

Students find it difficult to apply theoretical knowledge to real world business situations, as demonstrated by the different levels of difficulty in their examples. There is also recognizable instability in how the students use the words and the profound difficulty in supporting perfect usage across different contexts. Students seem to struggle in understanding how different accounting words connect to one another in the wide context of business functioning. The specialized character of Business English vocabulary can be frightening sometimes leading to oversimplification of words. Furthermore, the responses display that student's come with different levels of previous knowledge, which can cause difficulty in the institutionalized teaching of these words. However, it is important to notice that the challenges are hypothesized from student's responses, a thorough and an extensive study is needed to identify and explore the specific difficulties students come across in Business English vocabulary.

Pedagogic Implication

Bielenia-Grajewska (2025) highlights the importance of contextual learning, suggesting that educators should propose learning experiences that replicate real commerce related contexts. The contextual approach allows students to try specialized vocabulary in real-world contexts, improving understanding and memorization of words. Janjaroongpak, K(2022) argues that the challenges laid by dual-meaning vocabulary in Business English, implies a need for increased attention on teaching both primary and secondary meanings of words, especially those with different uses in general and specialized contexts. This dual-focus approach can help students face the complexities of Business English vocabulary more efficiently. Furthermore, Strother and Shehadeh (1999) suggest that curriculum developers should blend more context-rich, practical applications of Business English vocabulary. This may include redesigning course materials to include more real-world, context-based learning activities, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application in ESP contexts. These collectively aim towards a more integrated, context-rich, and practical approach to Business English education, particularly for students in commerce and accounting programs. The dual meaning vocabulary learning can be proposed to other ESP learners also.

Conclusion

The results show how students can apply accounting terms in different contexts. This gives insight into students' understanding of accounting concepts and their ability to translate them into real-world scenarios.

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SUBALTERN VOICES AND POSTCOLONIAL IDENTITY: FEMALE IMMIGRANT NARRATIVES IN BHARATI MUKHERJEE'S FICTION

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Abstract: This paper explores the formation of postcolonial identity and the representation of subaltern female voices in Bharati Mukherjee's novels, "Jasmine" and "Desirable Daughters." It examines how immigrant women experience gendered oppression, cultural displacement, and the challenges of restoring their experiences within diasporic contexts, utilizing a postcolonial and feminist framework. Through process of transformation and adaption, Mukherjee's protagonists assert their concerns and resist marginalization. Their narratives elucidate the complex realities of immigrant understanding by highlighting the tensions between the homeland and host land, tradition and modernity, and voice and voicelessness.

Keywords: Subaltern, Postcolonial Identity, Diaspora, Female Immigrant, Homeland.

Postcolonial literature, a collection of literary works that respond to colonial discourse. Postcolonial literature frequently addresses topics related to decolonization or the political and cultural autonomy of those who were once subject to colonial control. Texts with racist or colonial overtones are also subject to this literary critique. In its most recent iteration, postcolonial literature also makes an effort to critique the postcolonial discourse that has emerged in recent years. It aims to reinterpret this postcolonial emergence itself. World history underwent a dramatic shift with the decolonization process, which resulted in those who were once subject to colonial rule and gained their political and cultural independence. Works on racist or colonial overtones are also subject to this literary analysis. In its most recent reiteration, postcolonial literature also makes an effort to critique the postcolonial discourse that has emerged in recent years. It aims to reinterpret this postcolonial emergence itself.

With the rise of newly independent countries and the alteration of global socio-political dynamics, the decolonization process represented a pivotal moment in world history. The socio-political changes marked the colonial to post-colonial transitions. Through an analysis of a few chosen regions, the study will demonstrate how governance has changed and remained constant, how social and economic systems have been reorganized, and how colonial legacies continue to have an impact. The post-colonial era, often viewed as a time of new freedom and national rebirth, was a period of adjustment, with the remnants of colonialism still influencing the political, social, and economic lives of many countries.

The intersection of subaltern voices and postcolonial identity in immigrant narratives reveals the struggles of marginalized people in navigating cultural, political, and social displacement. Subaltern voices, often silenced in dominant discourses, are especially important in postcolonial contexts in which former colonial subjects attempt to regain agency. Immigrant narratives offer a unique way for these voices to reflect their experiences of displacement, assimilation, and resistance.

The disempowered and subaltern are closely related terms. Since marginalization is pervasive throughout society, subaltern issues are an integral part of it. The strong and the weak, the privileged and the marginalized, are intertwined in India society. In every aspect of life, the wealthy and privileged have the upper hand. In contrast, those who are marginalized are compelled to live hand to mouth. To put it another way, the rich get richer while the poor get poorer. When people are categorized, subaltern issues arise.

These experiences emphasize hybridity, fluidity, and adaptation over essentialist ideas of identity. Immigration is a complicated and frequently sensitive topic that touches on a wide range of human experiences, from people looking for better economic opportunities to refugees escaping persecution. Employment, family reunification, education, and humanitarian causes are just a few of the causes of immigration.

Understanding the gendered aspects of migration and identity formation requires an examination of female immigrant narratives, which highlight the particular difficulties and changes that women encounter in cross-border settings. The experiences of female immigrants are frequently influenced by the intertwining forces of patriarchy, cultural displacement, racialization, and socioeconomic vulnerability, in contrast to male-centered migration narratives. These stories offer important insights into how women navigate both new cultural environments and conventional expectations while negotiating their identities.

Female immigrant narratives show that migration is not only a geographical movement, but also a psychological and social one. They discover the double burden women face; overcoming gender norms from their native cultures and facing systematic inequalities in their adopted countries. Their stories illustrate how a women define themselves, resist subjugation, and assert agency in unfamiliar and often hostile environments.

Through examining such stories, one can comprehend how experiences of resistance, adaptation, and displacement continuously reshape identity and how it is fluid and intersectional. Because they elevate the voices of people who are frequently underrepresented in prevailing discourses and challenge oversimplified or stereotyped depictions of immigrant lives, such stories are crucial for a more inclusive and comprehensive understating of migration.

It is crucial to examine the stories of female immigrants in order to comprehend the Intricate relationships between gender, migration, and identity. These accounts offer distinctive perspectives on the real-life

struggles of women who are dual marginalized as women and immigrants, which exacerbates their already difficult circumstances.

The immigrant narrative becomes a place of rebirth, identity, history, and voice. It not only foregrounds the lived realities of the subaltern but also criticizes the systems that perpetuate marginalization. Thus, it contributes to postcolonial discourse, changing how we think about migration, belonging, and empowerment.

Prominent Indian-American author Bharati Mukherjee (1940-2017) is renowned for her examination of immigrant identities, especially the struggles of women adjusting to cultural change and displacement. Her works, which blend themes of identity, assimilation, and resilience, frequently capture the complexities of the diasporic experience. She was born in Kolkata, India and later immigrated to the United States.

Bharati Mukherjee is a significant postcolonial literary voice. She adeptly conveys the intricacies of diasporic experiences, particularly as seen through the perspectives of female characters. Her tales are firmly grounded in the cultural, social, and political realities of life as an immigrant. In various locations, cultural, and eras, they demonstrate how women cope with having multiple identities. The books *Jasmine* (1989) and *Desirable Daughters* (2002) show strong subaltern female characters who try to redefine who they are within the limits of patriarchal and postcolonial power structures.

Based on postcolonial theory and feminist criticism, particularly Gayatri Spivak's idea of the subaltern, the analysis seeks to show how these characters actively engage in their sociocultural choices and fight against marginalization and silence. Through their acts of self-definition and transformation, these women expose the various ways in which subaltern immigrant women understand their roles in a transnational society, challenging rigid ideas of identity.

The term "subaltern", which refers to those who are marginalized by hegemonic power structure, particularly capitalist, patriarchal, and colonial systems, was made popular by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Spivak poses a critical question regarding the accuracy of representation of the voices of the most marginalized, especially colonized women, in the dominant discourse, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" This question is reflected in Mukherjee's novels through keen observation of immigrant women's lives navigating diasporic spaces. These characters, who initially lack a voice, grow as a result of their personal and political battles to express themselves freely.

Postcolonial identity is never fixed because of hybridity, displacement, and negotiation. In this liminal space, Mukherjee's characters begin to reassemble their authority, which makes Homi K. Bhabha, the "third space" idea put forth Bhabha is relevant. Their experiences moving from silence to voice demonstrate how past trauma and present adaptation interact to continuously shape identity.

Jasmine's protagonist's journey demonstrates the adaptability of postcolonial identity. Born in a small Punjabi village, *Jasmine* embodies the ideal of the stereotypically traditional, domestic woman. But *Jasmine*

embarks on a journey that leads her to America after a series of horrifying and violent events, including the murder of her husband and being sexually assaulted. With each new place, she adopts a new name that symbolizes her transformation and rebirth; Jane, Jase, Jessy, Jasmine, and Jyoti.

The fact that Jasmine has several identities challenges essentialist notions of the self. Both the cruelty of colonial legacies and the liberating force of diasporic rupture are depicted in her story. Even though she experiences cultural alienation and gendered violence, her ability to make choices and alter her life's trajectory demonstrates her agency.

As a result, Mukherjee presents her as an active subject redefining her reality rather than a passive victim. Jasmine's evolving identities also reflect the tensions between voice and voicelessness. Widows in India are symbolically silenced by cultural norms that devalue them. Initially invisible in the socioeconomic outskirts of America, she works as a domestic worker. But in the end, she is assertive and chooses to risk an uncertain future rather a stable relationship with Bud Ripple Meyer. Her ultimate departure - of movement-is a metaphor for her continuous Self-reinvention and rejection of the rigid boundaries between tradition and modernity, East and West.

Tara Bhattacharjee, a Bengali character In *Desirable Daughter*, is a divorced mother from Calcutta who moves to Silicon Valley. She is modern and liberal Jasmine's immigration was driven by trauma and necessity, but Tara still had to navigate her identity and cultural belonging. Even the book's title, "*Desirable Daughters*," challenges the expectations that society in traditional India has of women. Tara experiences a sense of internal and physical displacement. Despite having relative freedom, she struggles to reconcile her upbringing, which exalts idealized notions of Indian womanhood, with her life in America, where she faces cultural dissonance. She conducts research on her family's history, especially her connection to Tara Lata, an ancestor who becomes a living example. *Desirable Daughters* follows Tara Bhattacharjee, a Bengali woman who moves from Calcutta to Silicon Valley and is a modern, liberal divorced other. Unlike Jasmine, Tara had to navigate her identity and cultural belonging despite her immigration not being driven by trauma or necessity. "*Desirable Daughters*," the book's title, even challenges the expectations that traditional India society has of women. Tara feels dislocated both internally and geographically. She finds it difficult to reconcile her upbringing, which exalts idealized notions of Indian womanhood, with her life in America, where she faces cultural dissonance despite having relative freedom. Even though Tara Lata's immigration was not driven by trauma or necessity like Jasmine's was, she still had to bargain with her identity and cultural belonging as a result of her research into her family's past, especially her relationship to an ancestor named Tara Lata, who becomes a living symbol. The book's title, "*Desirable daughters*," even challenges the expectations that traditional India society has of women. Tara feels dislocated on both an internal and external level. She finds difficult to reconcile her upbringing, which exalts idealized notions of Indian womanhood, with her life in America, where she enjoys relative freedom but

faces cultural dissonance. she is compelled to think about what it means to be a “good” or “desirable” daughter as a result of her research into her family history, which includes her connection to Tara Lata, an ancestor who becomes a living embodiment of desirable feminine sacrifice

Female protagonists who struggle with migration, cultural hybridity, and self-intervention are common in Mukherjee’s stories. This is best illustrated by her critically acclaimed book *Jasmine* (1989), which follows the survival and reinvestment of a young Indian widow in America.

Mukherjee’s sympathetic depiction of immigrant women as change agents who embrace transformation rather than being constrained by victimization or nostalgia is what distinguishes her. As a key voice in diasporic literature, her works honor the flexibility of identity and the resilience of women in redefining themselves in the face of cultural upheaval.

Understanding the intricate relationships between gender, migration, and identity requires an examination of the experiences of female immigrants. These accounts offer distinctive perspectives on the lived realities of women who encounter exacerbated difficulties as a result of being marginalized both as women and as immigrants.

Mukherjee places her characters at the intersection of homeland and host land in both of her novels. India becomes both a place of origin and a burden because of its deeply ingrained customs and family structures. Although it promises freedom, the United States frequently exhibits its own kinds of racism and alienation.

Mukherjee uses this intergenerational viewpoint to critique Indian culture’s idealization of female virtue. By deciding to separate from her spouse, seek independence, and raise her son in line with her morals, Tara departs greatly from conventional roles, though it is also tinged with guilt, nostalgia, and fear of judgement, her story also demonstrates how postcolonial identity is continuously negotiated in the diasporic psyche.

Tara’s voice is reflective and thoughtful, in contrast to *Jasmine*’s. She appears to have greater access to discursive power because she is able to narrate her own story. However, because she is both strong and uneasy, modern and afflicted by tradition, she continues to embody the contractions of immigrant subjectivity. Her voice emerges not in a sudden and dramatic break but rather in the slow breakdown of internalized cultural norms. Both *Jasmine* and *Tara* argue that the quiet, obedient immigrant woman is the most common stereotype. They are a variety of ways to voice and self-realize. This drastic and physical metamorphosis is characterized by rupture, movement, and new beginnings. Can find complex and psychological experience, focusing on memory, introspection, and family relationships.

Mukherjee’s fiction challenges the notion of immigrant women as defenseless victims. Instead, she presents complex individuals who adapt, preserve, and speak up. Postcolonial feminism, which opposes both the universalizing tendencies of Western feminism and the patriarchal structures present in postcolonial societies, is congruent with this emphasis on female characters. Mukherjee uses these characters to highlight the intersections of

race, class, and gender. Numerous factors, such as labor hierarchies, immigration laws, cultural memory, and family expectations, cause their voices to be heard.

Conclusion

The diaspora's postcolonial identity construction and subaltern female subjectivity are richly explored in Bharati Mukherjee's *Jasmine* and *Desirable Daughters*. Her characters traverse the delicate landscape between silence and voice, homeland and host land, tradition and change. Tara's journey is one of internal reconciliation and cultural negotiation, whereas *Jasmine's* is characterized by external upheaval and reinvention.

Mukherjee not only challenges prevailing discourses of identity and power by elevating the voices of immigrant women who fight against erasure and claim their identities, but she also advances a more complex understanding of what it means to be a woman in the postcolonial diaspora. The tenacity of subaltern voices and the intricate, continuous process of identity formation in a globalized world are attested to by their stories.

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INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF MEMORY AND PERSONALITY: A READING OF ANITA DESAI'S *CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY*

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Abstract: Memory is the reservoir of past experiences which always influences the present. Every individual's memory and attitude towards that experience vary even if he/she has a mutual memory. Collective memory or individual memory decays over time. However, some last for a longer period and influence the behaviour of an individual towards oneself or the other. The unforgettable memory that impacts one's life is voluntarily removed through 'selective memory suppression.' Anita Desai, a prominent Indian English writer, published *Clear Light of Day* in 1980, which is set during the partition of India- Pakistan. Bimla and Tara are sisters with two opposite distinct personalities, whose familial memory, the memories of the riots and the inter-communal violence during the time of partition, play a crucial role in the narration of the novel. Though the characters share the same past, their perception differs, and they exhibit different behaviour towards the past, which influences the present. This paper, using Memory Studies as an analytical tool, aims to explore how collective memory and individual memory differ from each character's point of view and how they drive their lives and personalities.

Keywords: Collective Memory, Individual Memory, Selective Memory Suppression, Personality, Psychology.

Clear Light of Day by Anita Desai is a deeply emotional story about family, memory, and the slow, quiet effects of time. It is set in Old Delhi, and it follows the lives of the Das siblings, namely Bim, Tara, Raja, and Baba, each shaped differently by the same past. Bim, the eldest, has stayed behind to take care of Baba, her gentle but mentally challenged brother. Tara, who left years ago through marriage with Bakul, returns for a visit, and this reunion stirs up long-buried emotions. Their time together brings out unspoken hurts, especially involving Raja, who has grown distant from the family. The story moves between their present lives and memories of childhood. This shift in events can be placed well within the major concepts of Memory Studies, which helps understand the psychology of the characters.

This paper uses qualitative research methodology as it is based on textual analysis. The objective of this paper is to identify how collective memory and individual memory differ from each character's point of view, to explore how the spacing effect helps flatten the forgetting curve and promote long-term memory retention, and to examine how selective memory suppression acts as a tool to forget an episodic memory completely.

Memory Studies is defined by Avishek Parui, in a lecture, as an "interplay and entanglement of remembrance and forgetting." Memory Studies

is an upcoming field that deals with how an individual remembers and forgets things. Memory is not just the experience of an individual. It is influenced by one's culture, society, and shared histories. Memory is not just the storage of past events. It is an evolving thing that takes new shape and structure every time. The revisiting of events gives a new perspective on the same event whenever it is recalled.

Individual memory is packed with the personal experiences of a person, which is carried with different senses and emotions of those moments. These personal experiences and memories play an important role in shaping the sense of self and identity. These individual memories are often connected to the emotions of the person. Besides, it is often influenced by the outer environment. Therefore, it does not live in isolation; rather, it can be understood with the broad spectrum of culture and history.

In the selected narrative, *Clear Light of Day*, the siblings Bim, Tara and Raja have grown up in the same house. However, each of their memory differs, so do their personalities. Tara, a timid character, always feels inferior to Raja and Bim. Tara is not a bright one. She struggles with her studies and hates to go to school. Her thoughts always remain simple with no extraordinary dreams. Her only desire is to get married and live a peaceful life. Bim, the exact opposite personality of Tara, is a bold girl. Unlike Tara, she excel in studies. She always wants to be the centre of everything she does. She prefers to be with Raja all the time and marginalises Tara. Raja, a self-centred person, is fond of Hyder Ali, who is an important muslim figure. He desires to study Urdu, but the situation of that time leads him to end up in English Literature. Poetry recitation is his piece of cake, and that connected Raja and Bim strongly.

Collective memory is another important type in Memory Studies. Collective memory is not just the collection of individual memories. Collective memory, in simple terms, can be defined as the remembrance of shared experiences as a community. This shared experience is not just a record of facts or history, rather it is reinterpreted every time it is revisited, giving a new image and meaning. The past is remembered and passed down with the influence of external things like society, traditions, cultural values, and even political circumstances.

The collective memory that one could find in the narration of the chosen work is the Familial Memory. Familial memory is the collection of moments, stories, and routines that families share and carry with them over time. It is not just about major family events, but also about mundane everyday routines like having meals together, childhood games, and family traditions. It is passed on from one generation to the next through stories and conversations. This helps an individual trace his/her position in the family and also create an identity.

As a family, the siblings have shared the same experiences in their childhood. They have the memory of their mother's and father's death, the death of Mira Masi, the financial crisis the family witnesses, the riots of partition, the migration of Muslims from Old Delhi and the death of Gandhi. However, these experiences differ from each character's perception. Masahiro Ogino, in the chapter titled "Collective Memory, Sociology of Collective Memory in Halbwachs," explains "Individual memory is not

completely closed insofar as it is constructed through interactions with others. Individual memory is, then, influenced by the collective representation of the past.”

Tara’s memories are coloured by her longing to escape. “Whenever she saw a tangle, an emotional tangle of this kind, rise up before her, she wanted only to turn and flee into that neat, sanitary, disinfected land in which she lived with Bakul”, says Anita Desai (43). According to Tara, she does not want to cling to her past but wants to leave it behind. She always prefers to remember the lighter side of her past rather than the crises. This helps her hide herself from revisiting the bitter truths.

Bim holds onto her family’s memories with a heavy heart, unable to set them aside. Unlike Tara, who tries to forget the difficult parts, Bim keeps reliving them, and they continue to shape how she feels in the present. Bim felt abandoned when Raja left her. In the case of Tara, Bim feels that her sacrifices remain unnoticed by Tara. The past of Bim has no pleasant memories. It is filled with the sacrifices that she made for her family. These memories always bring resentment and unpleasant emotions. The memories remain as unhealed wounds in her life. Her sacrifices are revealed to the readers through Dr. Biswas. He says, “You have dedicated your life to others-to your sick brother and your aged aunt and your little brother who will be dependent on you all his life. You have sacrificed your own life for them” (148).

The concept of the ‘forgetting curve’ and ‘spacing effect’ helps understand the characters of Tara and Bim deeply. The forgetting curve means that the memory of anything will fade over a period of time if an effort is not made to remember it. The memory will gradually move into the background of the mind when no attempt is made to recall, repeat or try to connect with other events to make it stay in the mind, and thus it becomes difficult to bring it back. This is the reason why people easily forget things which are not revisited or repeated in their lives. This proves that memory survives when it is actively engaged and not passively stored. The concept of ‘spacing effect’ is always used to fight against the decay of memory. Spacing effect means that the event or memory of something is revisited or recalled at regular intervals of time and not all at once, which quickly disappears from the mind. This regular revisiting of events ensures the long-term retention of the event

The spacing effect can be witnessed in Tara through her coming back to Old Delhi from abroad every few years and recalling all the past events. In every visit, she thinks of how her mother died and how she was neglected by Bim and Raja. In addition to that, she also feels insecure and is drowned in the submissive nature of her past. This state of Tara is revealed through the words of Bakul, “I only have to bring you home for a day, Tara, and you go back to being the hopeless person you were before I married you” (26). When it comes to Bim, the spacing effect is witnessed through the review of the letter of Raja, which makes her think about how she is neglected and betrayed by her sole trust, Raja. Tara says, “It wasn’t really a quarrel- it was a letter- it’s just that Bim can’t forget old grudges. They make her so miserable” (242). Bim helped Raja when he was affected with tuberculosis and supported him in his every act.

However, his excessive pride in wealth and its exposure through his letter infuriated Bim, leaving an everlasting scar in her emotional bond.

‘Selective memory suppression’ is a voluntary process made by an individual to erase certain unwanted memories from their mind. Unlike the forgetting curve, which is a natural process of forgetting things when it is not reviewed, selective memory suppression is a deliberate process of removing traumatic or painful events from the brain’s surface. This process helps the individual to live their present without carrying the burden of the bitter memories. The memories do not disappear completely from the brain; rather, they will become inaccessible.

Whenever Tara visits her old house, her guilt of abandoning Bim during Mira Masi’s death, and not taking part in responsibilities after their parents’ deaths, comes before her. As she wished, she got married to Bakul and left Bim all alone in the crisis. She moved abroad, just focusing on her life, leaving her past and siblings behind. However, this act haunts her at times when she sees Bim in the old house, which remains as it was left. She voluntarily removes this guilt-filled memory by confronting it with Bim at the end of the novel. She apologises to Bim for leaving her abruptly and not sharing the responsibilities of the family with her.

Bim, on the other hand, develops hate towards Raja and often gets infuriated through re-reading the letter sent by Raja. Whenever she reads those letters, she thinks of how selfish Raja has become and questions herself for being with him and helping him throughout her childhood. She tears that letter which keeps on reminding her of the betrayal. This act of Selective memory suppression helps Bim erase that particular memory and forget the deeds done by Raja.

Hence, the confrontation of Tara towards Bim help ease her past memory and move comfortably in the present. Bim’s physical act of tearing the letter from Raja helps to heal her deep emotional wounds. Tara releases her burden, which she carried for a long time through openly voicing her emotions. Bim finally let go off her old wounds and begins her healing process. Through the analysis, it is evident that collective memory and individual memory differ from each character’s point of view. The concept of spacing effect helps flatten the forgetting curve and promote long-term memory retention, and selective memory suppression acts as a tool to forget an episodic memory completely.

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MAPPING HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS IN THE PHYGITAL SPACE: A PARALLEL STUDY OF MARGARET ATWOOD'S *ORYX AND CRAKE* AND THE REAL WORLD

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Abstract: Ever since the creation of the world, the human relationships in the physical space have been playing a vital role. In the early times, the people always strived to undergo metamorphoses as a single, unified human community. But, with the growth of science and technology in the digital era, disturbances erupted among human relationships. In the digital space, everything can be done online, including the formation of human relationships. In the contemporary era, the digitized technologies make it possible to converse and play with known and unknown people online. However, this attraction to maintain online relationships leads to the weakening of the offline relationships. This is evident from the characters of Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) who are unable to draw a balance between the physical and digital spaces. This imbalance leads to breaks in the relationships among these characters. This research paper aims at analyzing the psyche and experiences of humans in the phygital space. It also explores the jeopardy of online human relationships.

Keywords: Human Relationships, Physical Space, Digital Space, Phygital Space and Online Relationships.

The concept of space is crucial for maintaining relationships. The physical space is tangible and can be experienced with human senses whereas digital spaces refer to online environments and social media platforms. The integration of physical space and digital space is termed as 'phygital.' In the words of John Donne, "No man is an island." For centuries, the human relationships in the physical space amalgamated the entire humankind. The platonic relationships among humans were maintained by greeting one another, having face to face interactions or exchanging smiles. More than the materialistic assets, family relationship, friendship, acquaintanceship and romantic relationship were valued high. Unfortunately, in the digital era, the line between the physical and digital spaces have been blurred. The cutting-edge technology of the twenty first century has led to the emergence of online relationships in which people are in the quest for new relationships in the digital space. People spend plenty of time with their online acquaintances without confirming who these people are and without realizing that the digital world is a mere illusion. They seek fake pleasures from online relationships. It is pathetic to know that the members of a family under the same roof interact with one another via digital media. Thus, the affinity towards the digitized technology has paved the way for the drastic change in the structure of human relationships. Moreover, it is also crucial to note how digital media leads to mental distraction.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this research paper is to study the line between physical and digital spaces. This research paper analyses the state of the offline human relationships in the current scenario. It examines the role of digitized technologies in creating dystopia among human relationships. It also explores the need for creating awareness about maintaining offline human relationships to live in harmony.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this research paper are as follows:

1. To understand the psyche and phygital experience of humans in the context of human relationships in the contemporary era.
2. To apply the generated data to study the growth of online relationships and its negative consequences.
3. To analyze the digital distraction caused by online relationships.
4. To evaluate the driving force that pushes people to search for new relationships in the digital world of illusion.
5. To create awareness about the dystopian nature of human relationships in the world of science and technology.

Research Questions

1. Does the convergence of the physical and digital spaces play a role in human relationships?
2. Is there enough platonic relationships among humans in the digital era?
3. Do people spend plenty of time for maintaining online relationships and playing online games which leads to digital distraction and weakening of offline relationships?

Literature Review

Spencer Palmer Christensen from School of Communications, BYU Master of Arts presented a thesis titled “Social Media Use and Its Impact on Relationships and Emotions” in which 627 participants were surveyed. The questions were based on social media use, emotional well-being and interpersonal relationships. According to the survey, “The top three responses for negative effects of social media use on emotions were frustration, depression, and social comparison.”

Saif R. Farooqi’s article on “The Construct of Relationship Quality” in *Journal of Relationships Research* explores the various determinants of relationship quality such as self-verification and self-enhancement, personality, emotional intelligence, interaction patterns, partner support and economic factors.

Aginaldo Garcia’s paper “Cyberspace Romance: The Psychology of Online Relationships” published in *Interpersona An International Journal on Personal Relationships* deals with cyberspace which provides aid to people who are anxious about forming relationships offline. The psychodynamic approaches are incorporated in this book.

“Digital Distractions and Mental Health: A Cause of Concern at Tertiary level” is a paper presented by D. Jockim at a Conference on “Mental Health and Well-being: Opportunities & Challenges” held at Shri Vaishnav

Vidyapeeth Vishwavidyalaya, Indore. This paper analyses “the patterns with the use of mobile phone and its impact on the learning level of the individuals.”

D. Jockim published a paper titled “Digital Humanities as a Tool to Understand Human Behaviour” in *Langlit*, an International Peer-reviewed Journal which “traces the origin, growth, and development of Digital Humanities in the present form.” Moreover, the cyber culture of students is also analysed in this study.

Research Gap

There are research articles on the impacts of social media on relationships, relationship quality, psychology of online relationships, effect of digital distraction on mental health, digital humanities and cyberculture. However, the study of human relationships in the digital world by drawing parallels between the real and fictional worlds is new and unique.

Hypothesis

The affinity towards the digitized technologies and the quest for online relationships in the digital world where the physical space and digital space are converged may lead to the weakening of offline human relationships.

Methodology

The proposed study is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. For the qualitative analysis, *Oryx and Crake* (2003) written by Margaret Atwood is chosen. For the quantitative research, the researcher has used an online survey tool ‘Google Forms’ to conduct a survey on the topic “Human Relationships in the Digital World of Science and Technology” to analyze the status quo of human relationships in the digital era. The target respondents, 110 students of St. Xavier’s College (Autonomous), Palayamkottai, Tamil Nadu are taken as samples. The questionnaire consists of ten close ended questions. A nominal rating scale with the classifying options predominantly ‘yes’ and ‘no’ is used to measure the data. The obtained results are generalized on the entire population of youth. The pie charts generated by google forms are utilized in this paper for analysis.

Qualitative Analysis

In Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* (2003), the relationships among characters have weakened as these characters are engulfed by the digitized technologies and they remain isolated from the real world. Jimmy is one of the major characters in *Oryx and Crake*. His father is a genographer and his mother is a microbiologist. The father forgets Jimmy’s birthday and sends an e-birthday card later, “Happy Birthday, Jimmy, May All Your Dreams Come True” (56). He gifts his son not toys that children of his age would play with. Rather, he presents a genetically engineered organism on special occasions. When Jimmy’s mother comes to know about the unethical profession of her husband, her psyche is affected. She abandons Jimmy and leaves the house. “His mother on the other hand could never seem to recall how old Jimmy was or what day he was born” (56). So, Jimmy has been yearning for parental love and affection from a young age.

Digital media is a convenient tool in many cases. However, certain beautiful moments can be created only in the physical space. For instance, the

touch of a mother, the hug of a father, the bond with the siblings, friends and well wishers can be felt nowhere except in a physical environment. In the chosen novel, the father and mother have no time for Jimmy and this disregard towards him makes Jimmy develop hatred towards his parents: “They knew nothing about him, what he liked, what he hated, what he longed for” (66). As Jimmy has no soul to talk with, he starts treating rakunk, a genetically engineered bird as his special friend: “Pathetic, that the only person he could really talk to was a rakunk. He avoided his parents as much as possible” (67). The distance from his parents make Jimmy become close to his friend Glenn who exposes Jimmy to the world of digital technology and online games. Jimmy idles away his time playing online games such as ‘Extinctathon.’

The book *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood was published in 2003, a period when the world was gradually becoming digitized. Atwood has anticipated the drastic changes that could occur in human relationships in the digital world and has portrayed these dynamics in the fictional world of *Oryx and Crake*.

The state of the human relationships in the world of science and technology can be analysed not only in the fictional world but also in the real world. To analyse the state of the human relationships in the real world of science and technology, a survey is conducted. As Jimmy is the primary focus in the novel, the comparative study is made by surveying the youngsters of the real world. After the global pandemic, the digital divide has been blurred as youngsters from both the urban and rural areas are exposed to digital technology for various purposes, so this study can be conducted across the globe.

Quantitative Analysis

Figures

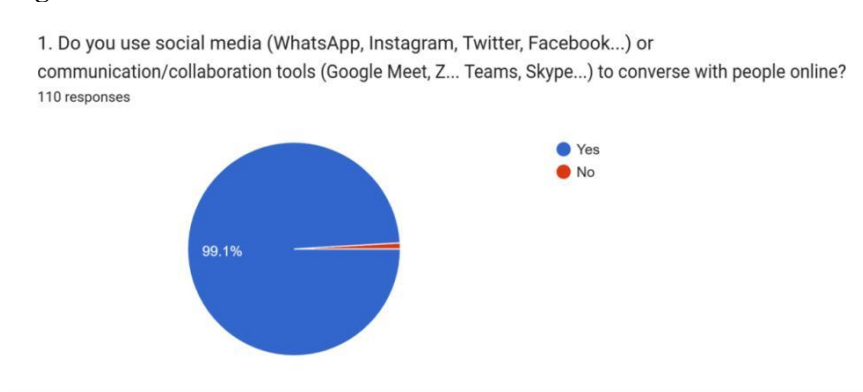


Fig:1

2. Do you spend more than two hours online everyday to chat with people?
110 responses

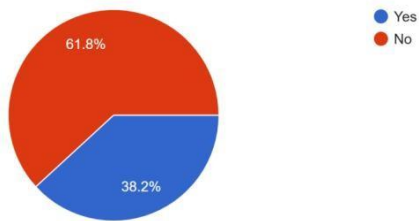


Fig:2

3. Do you have conversations with unknown people online?
110 responses

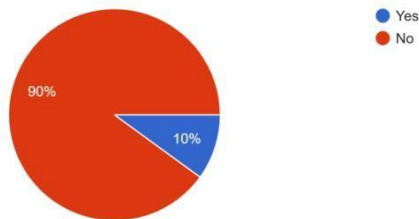


Fig:3

4. Do you play online games like ludo king, carrom pool, bingo...?
110 responses

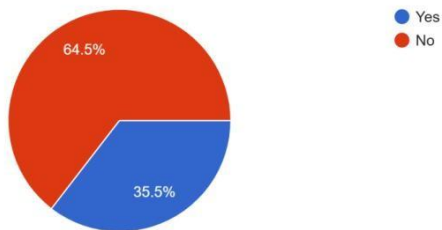


Fig:4

5. Do you play online games with unknown people around the globe?
110 responses

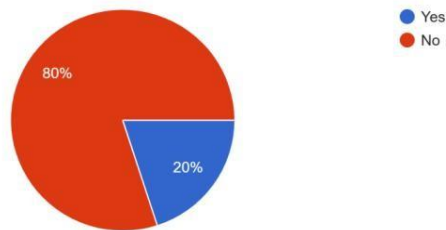


Fig:5

6. Do you spend more time with people (parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, relatives...) or electronic gadgets (mobile, laptop, computer...)?
110 responses

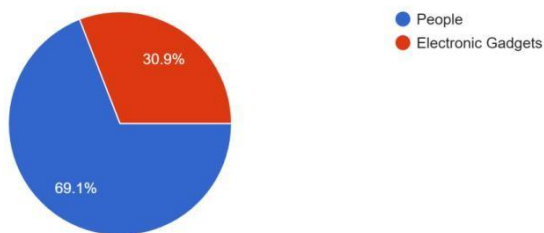


Fig:6

7. Do you receive many wishes on your special days like birthday online or in person?
110 responses

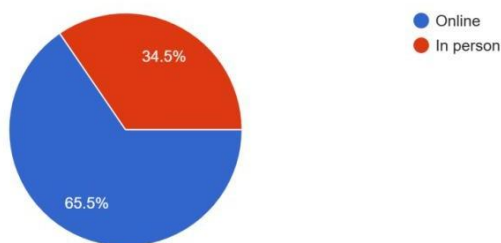


Fig:7

8. Do you feel anxious/ depressed if you do not converse with your online companions quite often?
110 responses

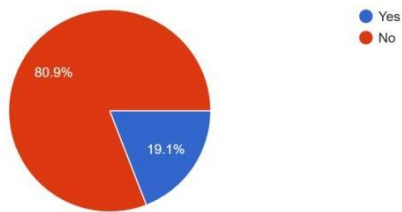


Fig:8

9. Does digital media distract you from your goals?
110 responses

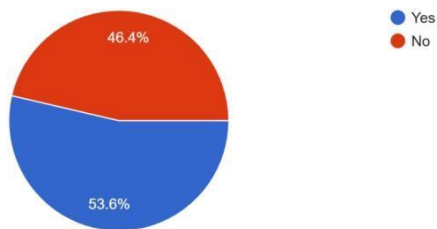


Fig: 9

10. Do online relationships lead to the weakening of offline relationships (real-life interaction with people)?
110 responses

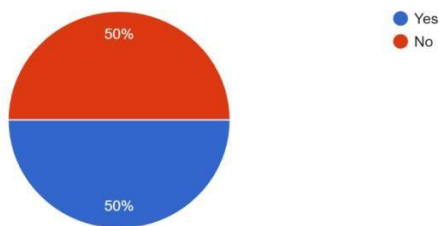


Fig:10

Results and Discussion

1. Do you use social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Facebook...) or communication/collaboration tools (Google Meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Skype...) to converse with people online?

99.1% of the respondents use social media or communication/collaboration tools to converse with people online for various purposes. From this it is clear that in the age of science and technology, majority of the communication is carried out online.

2. Do you spend more than two hours online everyday to chat with people?

38.2% of students spend more than two hours online everyday to interact with people. Apart from the college hours, personal time and study time, spending more than two hours online everyday shows that the real time interaction with people at home and around is comparatively less.

3. Do you have conversations with unknown people online?

About 10% of students have conversations with unknown people online without knowing their true identities. This proves that the quest for new relationships is gradually blooming.

4. Do you play online games like ludo king, carrom pool, bingo...?

35.5% of students play online games which shows that the outdoor games like hide and seek and kho-kho played with real people is decreasing, and this lack of physical activities can lead to health issues as well.

5. Do you play online games with unknown people around the globe?

20% of students play online games with unknown people. They move to the extent of establishing relationships with unknown people via online games which has potential threats.

6. Do you spend more time with people (parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, relatives...) or electronic gadgets (mobile, laptop, computer...)?

30.9% of students spend time with electronic gadgets more than with people. This proves that the affinity towards the electronic gadgets prevents online users from spending time with real people.

7. Do you receive many wishes on your special days like birthday online or in person?

65.5% of students receive wishes on their special days like birthday online. This shows that except for some genuine reasons, many people take little effort to maintain a live interaction with their loved ones as they take relationships for granted.

8. Do you feel anxious/ depressed if you do not converse with your online companions quite often? The psyche of 19.1% of students is affected if they do not converse with their online companions quite often. From this, it is evident that not only the physical effects but also the psychological effects on online users are to be seriously considered.

9. Does digital media distract you from your goals?

53.6% of students undergo digital distraction. D. Jockim has defined 'Digital Distraction,' in one of his conference papers titled "Digital Humanities as a Tool to Understand Human Behaviour" as "a mental condition caused by the excessive use of digital tools and cyber space for any academic and non-academic purposes. Individuals with such an unnatural condition are unable to carry out their regular work as normal human beings. These distractions include the over use of digital tools and enhanced screen time of the individuals."

10. Do online relationships lead to the weakening of offline relationships (real-life interaction with people)? It is alarming to know that 50% of students acknowledge the fact that online relationships weaken offline relationships. Creating awareness regarding the importance of offline human relationships is the need of the hour.

Findings of the Study

1. The convergence of physical and digital spaces has evolved a new dimension to human relationships by ravaging the aura of offline relationships.
2. The platonic relationships among humans have weakened as people who are engulfed by the digital technologies lack real love and affection for others.
3. The people spend plenty of time for maintaining online relationships and playing online games which leads to digital distraction as the excessive use of digital tools and cyber space for any purpose causes an unnatural condition which makes it unable to carry out their regular work as normal human beings. In addition, the growth of online relationships which weakens offline relationships is high as they are easy to maintain.

Findings from Literature

In the fictional world of *Oryx and Crake*, Jimmy converses with people online. He is inclined towards electronic gadgets and spends more time in playing Extinctathon, an online game with unknown people. He receives wishes on his special days online, even from his father, whose life is intertwined with the digital world. He is highly distracted from his goals as he views a girl named Oryx in a porn website. Thus, his parting away from his parents, and his affinity towards digitized technologies make him create online relationships, thereby blurring the line between his offline and online human relationships. Spending plenty of time for maintaining online relationships and playing online games has lead him to undergo digital distraction as well.

Limitations of the Study

This study is done at the institutional level in which only 110 students were reached out. Nevertheless, this study can be conducted at a larger level. This study primarily focuses on the students between the ages of seventeen and twenty two. However, it can also be carried out with more respondents belonging to different age groups. Moreover, only one novel of Margaret Atwood is taken into account to study the human relationships in the fictional world. The other novels of Margaret Atwood can also be taken for further study.

Scope for Further Study

With more probing questions, this study can be conducted at the larger level in which participants of different backgrounds can be surveyed. Moreover, the phygital experiences of the humans in various contexts can also be considered.

Conclusion

The world of literature and the real world based on the above survey can be thus related. In the contemporary era, people are so occupied with their work involving digital technologies. Amidst their busy schedule, they have no time for real time interaction. They even send wishes to their loved ones nearby on their special days via internet rather than in person, as it is easily accessible. The distance between the parents and the children is directly proportional to the diversion of these children towards the digital technologies. To add to it, people develop online relationships to interact and play, which ultimately results in the fading away of offline human relationships. Moreover, the over exposure to

digital media causes digital distraction. This shows that the apparent line which has been blurred by the convergence of physical space and digital space has impacts on offline human relationships. However, 'humanity' is the only beacon of hope that can serve as a binding tool among humans despite the dystopia of human relationships that the world encounters today.

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FROM OPPRESSION TO RESISTANCE: TRACING THE TRANSFORMATION OF PRISONS IN ELIOT PATTISON'S *ORIGINAL DEATH*

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Abstract: Colonisers established prisons in colonies to exert and control power through exercise of violence in terms of tortures and punishments over the colonized people. However, these prisons evolved to become a space for the colonized to build resistance. The duality of prisons as sites for oppression and resistance eventually affected the colonial power structure. This research paper aims to examine the role prisons played in deforming the colonial powers, leading to power shifts and redefining of identities. Using Michel Foucault's conception of prison and power, this paper explores the novel, *Original Death* by Eliot Pattison to read how the colonized prisoners resist and dismantle the power dominance of the British colonisers.

Keywords: Resistance, Colonial Power Structure, Prison, Violence and Identity.

Prisons represent a typical space for practising violence through power control where the prisoners are exposed to physical and psychological tortures. This spatial dimension evolves from grounds of oppression to resistance at a slow pace. So, prisons signify its transformative role through the rebellious actions of prisoners. The paper explores this duality of prisons as platforms for oppression and resistance. Further study extends to examine the complex relationship among power, resistance and identity caused by the dynamic nature of prison space.

Eliot Pattison's *Bone Rattler Series* is a series of seven novels written on the colonial historical setting of America. The novels primarily trace the migration of settlers from European nations to native lands of America and the colonial practices of the British colonisers. A common recurring setting of all the novels is prisons. Pattison's includes physical descriptions and adventures of prisons to highlight its prominent role. Out of seven, the novel chosen for the study is *Original Death*.

The primary aim of the colonial prisons is to restrict the social and political moves of people. Refusals and rebellions of prisoners against colonisers are common during these times. In order to destabilize these rebels, they are held up in prisons. Prisons signify solitary confinement of individuals and a medium for violence and torment achieved in the form of punishments. Thus, prisons are primarily defined to infuse physical and psychological threats. A typical example of colonial prison is the Cellular Jail constructed by the British in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. It was constructed post-independence to detain Indian prisoners. The Indian prisoners were shifted from India to the Andaman Islands. The shifting of prisoners, who were the rebels, to long distances was a political play of colonisers. This segregation would cut off

communication and deform the strength of the colonized. Isolation in strange places and uprooting from homelands distorted mental health and filled individuals with fear and silence. Moreover, the distance drifted away from the severity of opposition and freedom struggles for independence.

Though prisons have been destructive, they have constructive implications too. During colonial times, prisons set off several riots and freedom struggles which were of historical significance. Identities of rebellious prisoners were redefined to warriors and freedom fighters. Though prisons sounded like death bell, their transition to a survival space was seen at the time of colonial practice.

Eliot Pattison highlights this significance in *Original Death*. The author claims that the political role of prisons is a huge contribution to the independence of a nation. The British imprison natives to cut off the spread of indigenous knowledge and influence in the society. Meanwhile, they also detain European settlers as baits. The other reason to detain settlers is to create chaos among themselves. When settlers are imprisoned along with the natives, conflicts will grow. This turns against the colonisers themselves because the British settlers and native tribes collaborated rather than having dissents. His physical description of the British prisons are not usual structures surrounded by high walls rather tall posts and steep tunnels to pile up the prisoners. Also, Pattison perceives prisons elevate the tension between the British colonisers and the prisoners.

The prisons raised by the British were not rooms with walls. They were unique structures called gaondote (prisoner post) and iron hole. Gaondote was a tall post where prisoners were tied back to back and tortured to death. "It was a torture ground where unimaginable suffering had been inflicted, the blood of so many lives spilled" (228). The other, iron hole was a tunnel-like layout lit by candles and stench. It echoed moaning and miserable sounds. The tunnel consisted of levels and prisoners were not allowed to move across levels. If violated, they would be carried out of the iron holes "in shrouds". Violence is the primary objective here where prisoners mostly end up in death. Prisons derived to be an important tool for the British colonisers to exercise violence. When it reached a saturation point, the colonized settlers and natives united to resist. This unification happened through sharing of various cultural knowledge and practices.

The prisons can be studied as a controlling body. Foucault says, "Discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals as objects" (170). According to him, discipline is not a repressive power. Though prisons work under the disciplinary concept, it remains superficial. The evident approach is about discipline but primarily, a strategy to exercise dominance through violence. The novel narrates the description of violence through the lines:

Dante's hell needed nine levels to capture all the aspects of human suffering. The iron hole of the English only needed two. The chamber he stepped into echoed not with the sounds of slumber but of misery. Five men lay on filthy straw. Two were

moaning and clutching their bellies. A man with a filthy bandage over his shoulder stared at the floor and murmured the same short prayer, over and over. A man who looked more like a skeleton than a living creature stared with vacant eyes at one of the cell's two candles. (Pattison 81)

While establishing prisons is simple, impeaching prisoners (colonized people) is even simpler to practice violence. Blind accusation becomes a strategic tool for the British colonisers. Duncan McCallum, a Scottish settler and Conawago, an old Nipmuc are good friends and in a journey of reviving native cultures. Conawago is well versed with tribal medicines. Though Duncan graduated in English medicines, he admires and learns Conawago's traditional ways of healing. They come to the Bethel Church in search of Conawago's only clan member. A massacre has just broken out and many are killed. While both are treating a bleeding man, the provosts (British military rangers) arrive at the field. The man dies of severe injuries. Both Duncan and Conawago found near the corpse are framed 'murderers' without an enquiry. Such false incarceration is a threat to the colonized.

The other motive of incarcerations is to cease the propagation of indigenous knowledge in society. Tribal leaders and people reclaim ancestors' way of living. They rely on native cultures and propagate which inspire settlers to adapt. Settlers' adaptation distributes knowledge which in turn results in distribution of power. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault quotes "that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations" (27). He states that those in power can influence knowledge and those having knowledge can exercise power. The relationship between colonizer and colonized works similarly such that indigenous knowledge distorts the autocracy of colonisers. Unable to tolerate the diffusion of power, colonisers blame the indigenous cultures, calling them "uncivilised". The cultural practices are misinterpreted to be erased from practice. Moreover, the native tribal leaders are attacked to destabilise their influence of power which undermines cultural disruption too. Such intentions of colonisers are openly confronted by the colonized, preparing for 'resistance'.

Resistance is an opposing force against coercions. The threats and violence caused in prisons transforms the space to resist. In order to restrict the influence of American indigenous knowledge, the British establishes prisons. Yet the purpose inverts and prisons facilitate the exchange of the knowledge. This aids prisoners to resist in defiance of colonial dominance. The foundation of resistance is laid as Foucault points out, "Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power" (95). The system of prison operates likely to that, power and resistance mutually exist. Resistance develops inside the system itself and does not need an exterior push.

Several ways to resist include individual, collective, physical and psychological. Individual and collective resistance influence each other. An

individual's resistance is solidified when more individuals share the same. Duncan is imprisoned under false charge of murder. When he is brought to the prison, the prisoners glare at Duncan. Soon, they get along by exchanging similar thoughts and pain when "He's one of us, lads," the corporal explained, and he gestured to the twine on Duncan's arms. The anger left the eyes of the new prisoners. The young Highlander gritted his teeth but did not resist when Duncan touched his arm again" (Pattison 76). Through interaction, Duncan collects the secret details of the British to learn the mystery of Bethel Church Massacre. Individual efforts of Duncan add up to collective resisting force.

Resistance is also a defense mechanism which has different forms of expression including verbal and action. Comparatively, action is subtle but louder than verbal resistance. The prisoners refused to be treated by English medicines, even willing to die. After Duncan arrives, he treats them with traditional medicines. He is shocked at their acceptance of death that shows the severity of resistance.

Resistance brings changes within individuals. It helps to redefine individual and collective identities. Identity is dynamic and fluid as it shifts when power and knowledge intersect. The perception of the self and towards others varies. Differences become apparent within a self when one becomes a part of a system. Duncan, who once feared violence and death becomes a leader of the clan fighting for freedom. A dozen children has been abducted from the Bethel Church. Duncan strives hard to find them because he does "not sleep well when innocent people are slain" (175). His encounters with blood and uncertain deaths made Duncan fearless. His identity is transformed from being a prisoner to a survivor. The transition of identities made prisoners as freedom seekers. Such identity shifts bring about the deformity of power structure.

The modern conception of Foucault states that power is everywhere. It regulates and transfers, regardless of hierarchy. As he states, the prisoners in the novel realizes the existence of power when there is presence of resistance. It helps the colonized to destabilize the hegemonic threats. Resistance and identity shift diffuse colonial power. The aim of the natives and settlers is to pervade indigenous knowledge through power rather than claiming power positions.

The novel exhibits the role of resistance involved in destabilizing colonial power structure and redefining identities using prison as a platform. The paper highlights that resistance is not only about rejection but a process of transformation of social features and individuals by reclaiming new cultural practices and identities. The victims of dominance are not always suppressed. Micro-resistance is incubated in every individual. Ultimately, it evolves and ruptures a rigid structure of power and identity, making them dynamic.

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T.S. ELIOT'S WORKS: AN ECO CRITICAL PERCEPTION

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Abstract: This paper attempts to examine the plays of T.S. Eliot, a well-known poet, critic, dramatist and essayist from an eco critic's perspectives. The examination is in the background of T.S. Eliot's concern for the culture prevailing in the beginning of the 20th century and his idea of civilization. T.S. Eliot's idea of civilization and culture were defined by his understanding of the issues that surrounded the English environment and their attitude to fellow human beings. His *The Waste Land*, *Cocktail Party*, *Family Reunion* and *Murder in the Cathedral* are a critique of the degradation of the sociocultural values and environmental imbalances that made existence problematic.

Keywords: Eco Critical Perceptions, Culture and Civilization.

T.S. Eliot, a writer of the 20th century was Anglo-Catholic in Religion, a Royalist in Politics and a Classicist in Literature. He is known for his essays, poetry and plays. He was writing during a time when the environment was highly uncongenial for a peaceful existence of societies at large. He was a realist. He was also aware of the limitations of realism. He had the desire to write poetic drama and felt obliged to society. In his poetic drama, he made spiritually coherent visions. Eliot's regard for the formalist's principles of art enabled him to overcome the limitations of the realist theatre. His plays centred round the ecological imbalances that constituted the environment that was perceived as unhealthy.

All his plays and writings were guided by his attitude to his religion, the kind of political scenario that he witnessed and the cultural changes that were making ripples in the societies after the end of the World War and the impact of the Industrial Revolution. His ideologies got defined by the way in which he perceived the then existing culture and civilization. Ecology of an environment depends on the cultural systems, traditions and belief systems. It will not be out of context to say that culture and civilization, impact the ecology of a society. Culture, religion, political philosophy and art are facets for the way of life. Eliot in his essay on Christianity and Culture, defines Culture and observes that culture is deeply and irrevocably inter-twined with religion.

To T.S. Eliot, in a Christian society, the most culturally important intellectual work will be done by what Eliot calls "Community of Christians" which will be made up by consciously and thoughtfully practicing to influence society. He felt that the Christian society will be able to shape the ecology of the nation besides capable of protecting the interests of the nation, by imparting a system of education that caters and fulfills the cultural ambience of the nation such a community will be fully aware of rational constructs.

Culture is deeply and irrevocably intertwined with religion. "No culture has appeared or developed except together with a religion: according to the point of view of the observer the culture will appear to be the product of the religion, or the religion the product of the culture." To T.S. Eliot culture also

meant the elimination of various potentially confining filters that might get in the way of the production or consumption of various individually chosen baskets of cultural goods. Culture and religion constitute people's way of life. Eliot believes that a culture as envisaged by a few further the disintegration of family and society. The family not only transmits culture but it also guards the traditions. Family is the fulcrum of all cultures. The family, according to Eliot, is "the primary channel of transmission of culture." This is true because "no man wholly escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree, of culture which he acquired from his early environment." Culture, then, is a series of inter-nested spheres. An ecology of cultures lies in its accommodation of different cultures and traditions, and works towards unifying all the elements of commonality and attempts to passionately address the issues of all cultures. Education as a transmitter of cultures is a sum of varied cultural forces. The central nucleus of any culture in the religion.

Arts developed because of Christian Society and the laws of Europe were founded on the principles of Christianity. Human thoughts were processed in the background of Christian doctrine people's faith and living sprang out of Christian culture only. Eliot's concept of culture and religion was fully Christian in belief and moralistic in aspect and approach. In *The Family Reunion* published in 1939, Eliot elected to reject the worldly and physical, and followed the path of spiritual salvation.

Agatha in the play is a character of passion who attains spiritual authority in the course of a difficult life marked by a lot of untraditional choices. Agatha is aligned throughout the play with the patriarchal God head and is able to find life after death in the spiritual eternity promised by god, the father. *The Family Reunion* dramatizes the disruptive force of a female cantered spirituality that drives individuals both male and female to transcend their socially appointed place in society", says Elisabeth Daumer. T.S. Eliot strongly believed in the role of the church in the preservation of a culture that is Christian in nature. *The Family Reunion* dwells on the doctrine of original sin.

In 1939, Eliot expressed the view, "we have today a culture, which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian." Accordingly, the surface appearance of *The Cocktail Party* is designed to offer no obstacle to the "negative" aspects of our culture; the texture of the play is positive and Christian, though. In *The Cocktail Party*, T.S. Eliot highlights the following: Human relations are illusory; they lack in ecstasy; Eliot calls for the need to come out of active disillusionment.

Going on' from this state of mind accordingly resolves itself into an acceptance of these atones into making the best of a bad job', which of course is the conditions the world of pantomime and cocktail parties in which the Chamberlains are left at the end of the play. There are exceptions like Peter doing a good job and the saints such as those who go to the sanatorium.

The play *Murder in the Cathedral* is set against the background of the 12th century England .It is a dramatization of an important historical event that is, the murder of the Archbishop of Canterbury. In *Murder in The Cathedral* and *The Cocktail Party*, Eliot's concept of religion and culture get expressed. As

a believer, Eliot believes that the happiness and the unhappiness of an individual does not depend on the individual but it is predetermined. The desire to escape one's fate is a mere delusion.

In *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot deals with the themes of futility, frustrations and the spiritual and physical barrenness of the 20th century western civilization and the myth of the waste land. In *The Waste Land* published in 1922, T.S. Eliot explores life in England after the first world war. In the five sections, T.S. Eliot deals with the cultural erosion and the society's suffering and fragmentation as a result. The society has been affected by lack of spiritual values and faiths. The culture is decayed and the society is going away from traditions and moral values. Culture that has been prevailing the predicament of the hollow men in that of the waste landers who lack the courage to 'be' and who have lost their reality for they have never affirmed it.

T.S. Eliot's works can be better understood only from his understanding and perception of his religion and culture, for the simple reason, his plays were situated and plotted only in the sphere of religion and culture as he considered himself a true follower of Christianity. He was a social dramatist. Religion and culture shape a society according to T.S. Eliot. The society he conceived was a Christian society and the corresponding culture.

Eliot's plays are thus a representation of his idea of humanity and the ills of human society, for he felt that drama sprang from religious liturgy and it could not afford to depart far from religious liturgy.

The ecological imbalances were not in the natural surroundings but in the culture of society. T.S. Eliot's balanced ecology of cultures did have its impact on the then society. Thus, it can be rightly observed that T.S. Eliot was the protector and guardian of the Religious culture, as an Anglo Catholic in Religion. He felt that society was living in a barren, non fertile land where there was loss of faith, lifelessness and a lack of social cohesion. *The Wasteland* also was T.S. Eliot's appeal for going back to roots that had been responsible for a life which could be happy.

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FROM EXISTENCE TO EMPOWERMENT: RECONSTRUCTING FEMALE IDENTITY IN PAULO COELHO'S *ADULTERY*

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Abstract: Paulo Coelho's *Adultery* (2014) goes beyond a typical story about cheating to show a woman's deep fight for authenticity and independence. The story deconstructs the myth of feminine beauty via the figure of Linda, a journalist in Geneva who seems to be successful. This article posits that *Adultery* operates as a feminist existentialist narrative in which moral transgression serves as a mechanism for self-realization. Drawing from over ten textual citations and theoretical frameworks rooted in the works of Simone de Beauvoir, Jean-Paul Sartre, Judith Butler, bell hooks, Toril Moi, and Sara Ahmed, the paper examines how Linda's journey from numb conformity to awakened individuality challenges patriarchal narratives and reconstructs female identity. Her resistance is not seen as sinful, but as an unwillingness to fit into the roles that society has set for her. **Keywords:** Female Identity, Feminist Existentialism, Self-Realization, Patriarchy, and Postfeminism.

Introduction

Paulo Coelho's *Adultery* (2014) offers more than a typical tale of love betrayal; it delves into the philosophical intricacies of a woman's pursuit of herself amid societal, marital, and emotional inertia. Linda is the main character. She is a successful journalist in Geneva, but her apparently ideal existence hides a space within. Her existential misery aligns with Albert Camus's concept of the ridiculous and Simone de Beauvoir's analysis of woman as the "Other." Coelho questions the cultural scripts that define femininity, happiness, and marital faithfulness via Linda's psychological and moral journey. Her defiance, rather than being a simple act of violation, catalyzes waking. This article analyses Linda's transition from emotional numbness to deliberate self-definition through the lens of feminist existentialism and postfeminist theory, particularly the contributions of de Beauvoir, Sartre, Judith Butler, bell hooks, Toril Moi, Sara Ahmed, and Rosalind Gill, highlighting a reconstruction of female identity. *Adultery* serves as a feminist existentialist narrative, whereby individual rebellion transforms into a conduit for authenticity and strength within a postmodern, media-drenched context.

The novel *Adultery* by Paulo Coelho starts with Linda feeling bad, even though she has a lot of things: "I wake up and don't see anything worth waking up for" (*Adultery*, 3). This moving confession reveals the emptiness at the centre of Linda's existence. Coelho uses Geneva, a city known for its diplomacy and perfection, as the setting for Linda's disappointment. This shows how there is a gap between order on the outside and turmoil on the inside. This is similar to Camus' idea of the ridiculous, which is the conflict between the human need for meaning and the universe's apathetic silence. Linda's sadness is existential rather than situational. Simone de Beauvoir criticises the socially

imposed "Otherness" of women in *The Second Sex*: "She is defined and differentiated with reference to man" (267). Linda's life has been planned around this definition; her identity is controlled, not made. The disparity between her achievement and her oppression epitomises the contradiction of postmodern femininity.

Linda's inner turmoil is philosophically grounded in existentialism. Jean-Paul Sartre's statement that "existence precedes essence" (*Existentialism is a Humanism*, 22) supports Linda's transition from accepting a passive position to actively creating herself. She understands how silly her existence is: "We play roles, not live lives" (*Adultery*, 129). Until now, her life has been influenced more by what society expects of her than by what she wants. Simone de Beauvoir expands on this by stressing the importance of moral freedom and ambiguity: "To will oneself moral and to will oneself free are the same decision" (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 129). Linda's conflict between moral duty and emotional authenticity is squarely inside this ethical dichotomy. Toril Moi, a feminist philosopher, says that an authentic female identity must incorporate "the embodied, emotional, and moral realities of living as a woman in a patriarchal society" (Moi 72). Linda's awakening is not just personal but also political; it is a confrontation with the mechanisms that have formed her.

Rebellion as Revelation: The Affair and Awakening

Linda's romance with Jacob, a former lover who is now a politician, is not about sex or betrayal; it's about finding meaning in life. "It's not about him." She admits, "It's about me" (*Adultery*, 61). The affair is Coelho's way of making Linda's internal break more dramatic. It signifies a departure from her suppressed existence into a domain of intense emotion. "She wasn't looking for pleasure; she was looking for pain, the kind that wakes you up" (*Adultery*, 106). This phrase shows that she has to face herself via discomfort, which is a common theme in existentialism.

Laura Gordon says, "Feminine authenticity often emerges when women challenge the moral and social orders imposed upon them" (251). Linda's disobedience is not foolish; it is enlightening. The instant she says, "I'm no longer afraid of being wrong" (*Adultery*, 143), everything changes; she goes from being accurate because someone else told her to be to being correct. After all, she knows it's true. Her moral ambiguity signifies transformation rather than degeneration, representing a progression towards genuine life.

Psychological Freedom Through Moral Ambiguity

Coelho depicts guilt not as retribution but as opportunity. Linda says, "Guilt is love turned inward" (*Adultery*, 112), which shows how internalised judgement may act like a mirror. This framing is in line with Bell Hooks' view that "Love cannot exist in the absence of justice" (*All About Love*, 37). Linda has to find justice not by following the rules of society, but by being honest with herself.

Sara Ahmed in *The Promise of Happiness* criticises the use of happiness as a way to control people: the "smiling woman becomes a stereotype employed to keep gendered order" (86). Linda's internal conflict represents a resistance to the enforced performative delight. When she says, "Perhaps

fidelity is being true to yourself" (*Adultery*, 134), she completely changes the meaning of morality from following regulations to following your genuine desires. This change is similar to what de Beauvoir said about women living in "lucid, authentic tension" (*The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 143) instead of just going along with what everyone else does.

Critiquing Gender Norms, Marriage, and Social Roles

Linda is unhappy in her marriage, not because of violence, but because it is boring. "He's just right." That is the issue" (*Adultery*, 88). The subtle stifling of emotional predictability challenges the glorification of household perfection. Judith Butler's idea of performativity, which says that "Gender is not something one is; it is something one does" (*Undoing Gender*, 45), is very important here. Linda has done her job well, yet she still feels empty.

Her statement, "I write truth I don't live" (*Adultery*, 52), is a strong way to show how identity and work don't always match up. She writes true stories as a journalist, but she lives a lie. Ahmed's statement that "The obligation to be happy becomes a disciplinary technique" (89) puts Linda's inner battle in context: society tells people to smile instead of being themselves. Coelho examines this script by introducing a protagonist who audaciously defies it.

Digital Contradictions and Postfeminist Identity

Linda works in the media, which puts her at the centre of postfeminist contradictions: she is visible, loud, and financially independent, yet she is also broken within. Her personal admissions are like monologues from the internet age: raw, conflicting, and unedited. "My silence has become my prison" (*Adultery*, 74) shows the difference between being visible in public and being quiet in private.

Mariana Costa notes that Brazilian female characters are increasingly using technology to express identity conflicts: "The digital self often contains the truth the physical self conceals" (88). Linda exemplifies this paradox—her written persona is more genuine than her life experience. Rosalind Gill's idea of postfeminist sensibility, which is "a contradictory mixture of autonomy, surveillance, and emotional self-management" (154), is a good one. This postfeminist matrix helps and hurts Linda's change at the same time. She starts to go back to her true self only when she closes these gaps between speech and quiet, image and essence.

Conclusion:

The end of adultery is not a moral resolve but an assertion of existence. Linda says, "I will live without masks" (*Adultery*, 189), which is a symbol of her rebirth. The early lament, "I feel like I'm disappearing" (*Adultery*, 38), became the realisation that disappearing means erasing oneself by conforming. Her healing is not just emotional; it is also philosophical. De Beauvoir tells us that "to free women is to refuse to limit them to their relationships with men" (*The Second Sex*, 676). Linda prefers to define herself rather than define her relationships. Sonia Kruks expresses in *Retrieving Experience* the core of Linda's metamorphosis: "Freedom means the capacity for self-transformation" (Kruks 121). Linda's tale is not about cheating; it's about being real, a journey from despair to agency and from numbness to empowerment.

Linda's journey in *Adultery* represents an intellectual and emotional metamorphosis that surpasses traditional moral discussions around adultery. Her affair becomes a place where she has to face herself, and she learns that true faithfulness means being true to yourself. Linda reshapes her identity on her own terms by rejecting the roles that society has given her and accepting existential freedom. This change, from passive compliance to active self-creation, is similar to what de Beauvoir said when she told women to identify themselves outside of patriarchal norms. Coelho's story is a criticism of the idea that life is flawless now. It shows how ambiguity, resistance, and sincerity can shape a woman's sense of self. Linda's statement, "I will live without masks," sums up this shift from being to being empowered, a path that is both personal and political, and very human.

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